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# Separating History from Myth: An Interview, Part III (1993)

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LIFSCHULTZ: Among the many who oppose any military action against the Belgrade regime is Misha Glenny, the BBC's Eastern European correspondent. In his April 1992 Op-Ed piece in The New York Times, for instance, he states that "for those of us who live and work in the Balkans, things look a little different. We know that a bombing of the Serbs will let loose a sea of blood in which Southeastern Europe will drown." As someone who has a long history of involvement in Balkan affairs, what do you make of Glenny's position (and his more general perspective on the conflict in his book, The Fall of Yugoslavia)? Glenny also advances the view that "only the Vance-Owen plan has recognized the complexity of the situation." What is your view of Glenny's assessment?

BANAC: Mr. Glenny is not a very reliable reporter on the Balkan conflict. This is because he sticks to the appearance and never delves deeper. He truly believes in all these myths of the Balkan savagery and imagines that Milošević has the resources to withstand a well-directed blow. He claims, for example, that should Serbia be attacked she would spread the war to Kosovo. But Serbia already is at war in Kosovo. It is a silent war, a desperate war, but war all the same. This war cannot be negotiated away. Certainly not by Milošević.

Glenny is representative of all the good partisans of civil rights who find resistance to national inequality more distasteful than the causes. Time will not work wonders. Only struggle against Serbian aggression will change the Balkan battlefront. The Vance-Owen plan is no substitute for the defeat of Milošević and Karadžić, nor has this plan accounted for any special complexities. It has created some by tempting the "owners" of the national provinces to full possession of their mini-states. But this is not an advantage.

ALI: We have already touched on the issue of the resurgence of nationalism in former Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe as a post-Communist phenomenon. We talked about how this was not just a phenomenon which had suddenly materialized after communism, but it was always there—repressed, contained, inhibited—and the forms that it is taking now were, perhaps, partly determined by the way it had been contained and repressed and not allowed to find expression within the political system of the time. To return to that discussion again, how would you define or analyze this

whole phenomenon across Eastern and Central Europe which we are witnessing after the collapse of the Communist states? Hobsbawm, for instance, makes a distinction between the project of nationalism in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century as it was taken up by the anti-colonialist movements in Africa and Asia, and the kind of nationalism that we see now, certainly in Eastern Europe, and in other parts of the world.

According to Hobsbawm, the earlier brand of nationalism sought to expand the human social, political, and cultural unit; it subsumed various ethnicities, various regional, parochial, linguistic differences within a larger nation, so to speak. That particular nationalism had a project, a program, a wider vision; it was building a particular kind of state. (Whether it succeeded or not, of course, is a different matter.) On the other hand, the nationalism that we see today is exclusionist, seeking more sharply to distinguish "us" from "them," focused almost entirely on ethnicity, race, language, and not having, therefore, a larger, overarching ideological, philosophical, or political project. How do you respond to Hobsbawm's view?

BANAC: First, I think Eric Hobsbawm is singularly ill-prepared to deal with this particular issue because he sees nationalism as basically the revenge of society for the failure of socialism in Eastern Europe. He then goes as far as to question the Leninist project of national self-determination, which he sees as the Original Sin of the Communist movement that basically brought about its downfall. All of this is wrong. Leninism could not have succeeded had it not taken into account the most serious problem of the Russian Empire which was a collectivity of unequal nations.

Second, there is this notion of the "icebox effect"; namely that communism froze all discussion of nationhood in Russia since the Revolution in 1917, and in Eastern Europe, more or less, since 1945, and all of a sudden, now, with the collapse of communism we are going back to 1939, or to 1917; that we are witnessing the return of history, and so on and so forth. There are many other metaphors that are being thought up to describe the supposed "revival" of nationalism. I repeat once again: the national question never disappeared in any of these countries except that it was debated under adverse circumstances, and, basically, within the ruling Communist parties.

I was amused, for example, by what a Russian participant at a conference I recently attended in Istanbul had to say. In his view (and we now are going back to Hobsbawm) there are essentially two possibilities: on the one hand there is the nationalism of Jefferson, which is constructive, civic nationalism, a state nationalism devoid of any sort of ethnic bias; and on the other hand there is the nationalism of Adolf Hitler. Now, this is, of course, a gross vulgarization because it excludes all types of phenomena, possibilities, in between—including such things as were happening in the Soviet Union under Stalin who demonstrated that you could be a nationalist under the label of proletarian internationalism. You could exile whole national groups to Central Asia simply because they were somehow suspected of undermining your war effort, however true or untrue this might have been.

So the national issue did not disappear. It did not disappear in the Soviet Union, certainly, and, needless to say, it did not disappear in Yugoslavia or in any of the

multinational countries of Eastern Europe, and even in those that were uninational. There was the problem of Soviet hegemony in such places as Poland, for example, and one cannot forget to what extent that was a stifling influence from the point of view of the system itself, and one that could not be corrected.

Now, as my third point, I would like to introduce, perhaps, a more sensible way of looking at nationalism, which to me is always an ideology. This is very important because under the term of nationalism Hobsbawm confuses any number of entirely different phenomena. To him it is a political movement, an ideology, a civic project, an identity—all of these things which are not necessarily the same. Nationalism is in ideology and, moreover, is an extremely adaptive ideology as opposed to, say, socialism, which has a very basic, firm, and clear structure. Nationalism is adaptive, and it adapts to the intellectual concerns of the center. (Here, again, we go to the issue of center and periphery.) It reflects the principal intellectual concerns of any given historical period; it cannot assume the characteristics of a particular historical period in another age. I think that nationalism in Europe, in its different manifestations, has reflected a whole series of intellectual changes in Europe. For example, there was a nationalism of the period of the Enlightenment; of the French Revolution; of the period of Romanticism; and there was a nationalism of the Positivist period at the end of the nineteenth century—integral nationalism, a particularly unwelcome form that had many deleterious effects in Eastern Europe. Integral nationalism viewed national conflict as war in which the weaker group inevitably would suffer losses. During the interwar period in Eastern Europe the dominant concern was that of national independence. To some extent it resembled the problems of the post-1989 period. Then there was a nationalism of the period of fascism, and also a nationalism of the period of socialism, of communism.

In each one of these cases, what was important was that the existing form of nationalism reflected the dominant concerns of the center, albeit with some exceptions. For example, the split in Europe after the Second World War created two centers, and this was unusual. Now, once again, Europe is being reintegrated basically around the West European center. Bearing all of this in mind, given the adaptive nature of nationalist ideology, you cannot have the fascist type of nationalism in an era of Enlightenment. Should present-day East European nationalisms turn fascistic, it will be because of the changes in Western Europe. Therefore, worry about fascism in Eastern Europe, when Mr. Le Pen comes to power in France; worry about it when Solingens become commonplace in Germany or in Britain. Extreme, rabid nationalist movements are not yet—perhaps, they will not be—significant in European politics. This is a surmise. Still, we do see in some countries the growing political importance of extremist nationalist movement. When Šešelj wins eighteen percent of the vote in Serbia, that is a very dangerous sign because it is the first time in the postwar Europe that a party that is fascist by anybody’s definition is in possession of almost one-fifth of the electorate. But I don’t think that even under the circumstances of isolation in Serbia, politics can take a direction that would be totally dissonant with the developments in Western Europe. I think that Serbia is an isolated case, a case of a country that is undergoing a tremendous internal crisis. But I don’t think that this particular movement can sustain itself forever as long as it is at odds with the dominant ideological currents in Western Europe.

Now, is this reassuring by itself? This doesn't, in any sense, foreclose the possibility of tremendous reversals in this very soft area of post-Communist Europe—economically, politically, ideologically. All the same, there is some room for optimism. The turn of events in the former Yugoslavia, the establishment of an extreme chauvinist regime in Serbia, and the war that it has imposed on some of the other successor states of Yugoslavia—that sort of a phenomenon has not happened anywhere else. That is why it is still an isolated tendency. Yeltsin could have, with equal logic, conducted operations against the other successor states of the Soviet Union, moreover with the same arguments: Russians are in danger in the Baltic states, in the Ukraine, in Kazakhstan, everywhere! We have to defend them; we have to create a new Russian state; we have to re-gather the Russian lands! In other words, a Russian version of the Milošević program. But this has not happened.

ALI: Not as yet. And let us hope that it will not.

LIFSCHULTZ: How, then, do you actually characterize Milošević?

ALI: That he is an aberration?

BANAC: Milošević's fascism is aberrant, yet.

LIFSHULTZ: Nevertheless, in terms of ideology how does one characterize the Milošević regime in Belgrade? Šešelj's movement in Serbia is clearly a reflection of fascist ideology. Milošević and Šešelj both stand behind the program of "ethnic cleansing" and the "Greater Serbia" project. Is the Belgrade regime a fascist formation reminiscent of Mussolini with a few technical borrowings from the Nazis vis a vis "ethnic purity" and the targeting of civilians?

BANAC: I did not mean to exculpate Milošević by calling Šešelj a fascist. There have been arguments that Milošević's regime resembles the early Mussolini regime in Italy. Indeed, if one looks at what is possible and what is not possible in Serbia, one can argue that the Milošević regime, too, is a fascist regime. In Italy, in the early 1920s, you did have oppositional deputies in the parliament. Terror was conducted against them—for example, the assassination of Matteotti. You had an oppositional press, which you also have in Serbia, but it is marginalized—Vreme, Borba, Ekonomska Politika, and so on. These are newspapers that are not widely read, and I don't think they have any influence on the behavior of the masses in Serbia. So one can have pockets of opposition within certain types of fascist regimes. From every other point of view, I would say that the Milošević regime is a fascist regime. Yes, I have argued that. There are many people who see this as not terribly significant. To me it is, because it helps us understand the social nature of this phenomenon.

LIFSCHULTZ: But Mussolini also had an economic project, did he not? It is not quite clear what economic project the Milošević regime seems to be pursuing.

BANAC: Yes, this is true, there is no equivalent economic project in Serbia, of any sort. What is confusing about the Milošević regime is its origins, of course, because it emerged from the shell of the ruling League of Communists of Serbia. But it is entirely misleading to say, as is frequently said, that Milošević is some sort of an unreconstructed Bolshevik. He is certainly not that. There is no connection with his

origins that is obvious to me. His is a sort of a mixed system that has not yet fully denied itself, and probably prefers not to do so, leaving all sorts of possibilities open for itself. But I think that the basic defining element is fascism.

ALI: Would you say that this fascistic element in Serbia today reflects any kind of continuity, in the historical sense, to the political current represented by the Chetniks in the earlier part of the century.

BANAC: The Chetniks are an interesting lot, but I would very much hesitate to call them fascists, and not simply because they arose in the context of opposition to the occupation of Serbia. The Chetniks were, essentially, a premodern phenomenon whereas fascism is a modern phenomenon. The Chetniks were premodern in the sense that they were a continuation of the armed bands that operated in Macedonia in the period before the Balkan wars, at the time when all the interested neighboring states—Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria—were trying to develop their own insurgent groups in Macedonia. There was a tradition of this non-political, nationalistic activity that existed in the interwar period in Yugoslavia where the Chetnik movement existed in two forms: as state-sponsored and independent clubs, and also as guerrilla units inside the Yugoslav Royal Army which were then very easily rejuvenated after 1941.

But in all of this you do not see the presence of any modern political ideologies. What you see is Serbian nationalism, and during the Second World War, the program of "ethnic cleansing." Stevan Moljević, who was one of the ideologists of the Chetnik movements during the Second World War, wrote a document that is extremely interesting from the point of view of what is happening today. He, too, wanted to get rid of Muslims and Croats in all areas where there were Serbs, to create a mini-Croatia on the fringes of an expanded Serbia as a sort of colonized entity, and to have a somewhat larger Slovenia in alliance with Serbia on the northwestern extremities of Yugoslavia. Moljevic's program can easily be detected in the ideas of Milošević, Šešelj, or other ideologists of Serbian nationalism in the 1980s and 1990s. So there is that continuity. But, all the same, the Chetniks are really a hoary Balkan phenomenon—an armed band that has its roots in the Hajduk movement during the Ottoman times.

ALI: One of the reasons I brought that up is because there has been a tendency on all sides to define one another by terms that conjure up an unsavory historical past. The Croats refer to the Serbs as Chetniks, while the Serbs use the blanket term, Ustasha, to describe all Croats (and both have labeled the Muslims, the Mujahideen, a term of more recent vintage in Western discourse). How would you explain the resurgence of this sort of rhetoric? As cheap, manipulative propaganda which has no connection with any reality on the ground?

BANAC: It is sad to say that the term Chetnik is no longer considered pejorative in Serbia. And there are actual Chetnik units with all the paraphernalia. It is very interesting to analyze the iconography. For example, the beard—which in the peasant culture of Serbia is a sign of mourning: somebody dies, one does not shave. This was something that happened in times of war and times of mourning. Then the fur hat, usually with symbols of skull and crossbones—intimidating symbols—and the black flag, again with skull and crossbones with such inscriptions as "For King and Fatherland," and so on. This is a throwback to premodern forms of consciousness. The

Ustasha, on the other hand, had an element of this Balkan primitivism, but they were also a modern movement in the sense that they were a fascist movement. So the two groups were entirely dissimilar in their origins, although, in fact, in everyday encounters during the Second World War they probably were not all that much different— very similar methods, very similar types of organizational and behavioral forms.

ALI: What is the strength and the significance of the Ustasha element in Croatia right now?

BANAC: Formally nothing, but there is a certain nostalgia for it which I find extremely unpleasant and dangerous. There is a certain suspension of critical reading of this period which did enormous damage to Croatia. It is not an exaggeration to say that the legitimacy of the Croatian state, to a very large extent, was compromised precisely because the very idea of a Croatian state after 1945 was seen as necessarily a revival of the Ustasha experience in the Second World War. So it upsets me enormously when I see these graffiti in Croatia that essentially glorify Ante Pavelić's fascist dictatorship of the forties or when I see that some Croat units in Bosnia-Herzegovina have the names of the Ustasha commanders of the Second World War. I think that this is an extremely negative and self-defeating development. On the other hand, the reason why this is happening is precisely in the context of Serbian aggression, and also in response to the Serbian version that all Croats are, in fact, Ustasha. There is a certain bravado element which turns that around, and says, "They want to call us Ustasha. So that's what we are. By God, we are Ustasha!" It is infantile, it is primitive, it is dangerous, and I think not enough is being done to suspend it.

LIFSCHULTZ: What proportion of the Croat population separates itself from this, and makes the distinction?

BANAC: An overwhelming majority. Parties that play up these symbols are politically marginal.

LIFSCHULTZ: In light of our earlier discussion on the nature of the Milošević regime in Serbia, how would you characterize the Tuđman regime? What would you say is the project of this regime and the forces which support it?

BANAC: To begin with, the Constitution as it stands today gives excessive powers to the president and, in addition the role of the parliament is limited almost to that of an extra in the political system. This is precisely what Yeltsin has proposed for Russia, and it is an extremely dubious proposition which can be defended only in light of the nature of the current Russian parliament. I would hope that one would get a better parliament in Russia and limit the powers of the president. That is precisely the formula I would like to see applied in Croatia as well.

Despite all the bad aspects of the Tuđman government, Croatia is not a dictatorship and it is not a state in which civil liberties are systematically suspended. I think that Croatia has many problems. There is an attempt on the part of the current government to monopolize the political scene, but, on the other hand, this has to a large extent been successfully resisted. The elections for local government in

February 1933 show a great loss of influence on the part of the ruling HDZ. In many localities, including the three most important cities outside Zagreb, the opposition won. There is a real mobilization on the part of the opposition that is channeled within the legal and constitutional grounds. There is no attempt to fight the weaknesses of the government on the extraconstitutional plain—which is good, despite the fact that one would wish the opposition were more successful under the current rules of the game. I think that one should not worry about the consolidation of democratic institutions in Croatia, provided there isn't an upsurge of the right-wing forces. This, of course, is a real possibility. The strength of the right will be determined by a very, very threadbare situation on the fronts, and the fact that Croatia is in real danger of losing significant portions of its territory—ironically, precisely because of its policies in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For there is an analogy at work here: by backing Croatian claims to the "Croat" regions of Bosnia, the Croatian government strengthens the Serbian claims to the "Serb" regions in Croatia.

So it is a precarious situation, and there is much to be worried about. But it is by no means as precarious as may appear from many of the reports on Croatia. The economic situation is extremely difficult; production is down to half of the prewar period; markets have been lost; integration with Western Europe has not been accomplished; there is a certain embargo, as it were, against Croatia. But I think that all these difficulties can be surmounted if one could reach a lasting peace and, with it, see the decline in the influence of the HDZ, which is inevitable given the fragmentation of this party into several factions.

ALI: Do you feel that people like Jelena Lovrić are exaggerating when they say that certain elements among the Croatian nationalists were mirror images of Miloševíc; that, in a certain sense, they welcome the emergence of the particular extremist brand of Serb nationalism we are seeing today because it provided them with the rationale to secure their own project. She is referring, in particular, to Bosnia-Herzegovina when she says that Miloševíc and Tuđman were in agreement on a number of things, whether implicitly or explicitly. "The division of Bosnia-Herzegovina was the subject," she says, "of their deepest mutual understanding."

BANAC: There is a problem with this particular argument because it does not take chronology into account. Milošević was an established political fact in Serbia in 1987. It was during this time that many errors were committed—not just by the West, but also by the Communist leaderships of Slovenia and Croatia. I was recently discussing with an Albanian intellectual who was "differentiated" in 1991, which is to say that he was essentially expelled from his teaching position because he would not agree with the new pro-Serb line in the League of Communists of Kosovo. And what were the errors committed by the Slovenian and Croatian leadership—and I would also say the leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia? They did not take advantage of Tito's Constitution of 1974, which could only be changed by complete unanimity. They were so frightened by the phenomenon of Serbian nationalism under Milošević's leadership that they were only too willing to appease him. In fact, everybody was appeasing Milošević. They were prepared to grant him all the leeway to reintegrate Kosovo and Vojvodina into Serbia—and this was done by some of the best people on the Yugoslav political scene! Some of the worst things in the Kosovo were done while Janez Drnovšek was the chairman of the collective presidency and Ante Marković, the

premier of Yugoslavia. It was Marković who was breaking bread with Milošević in 1989, at a time when Milošević was about to give a new Constitution for Serbia. They were all convinced that if only the Kosovo issue was resolved to Milošević's liking, he would stop. That was not the way it worked. Milošević expanded pressure, took on Montenegro, showed every sign of trying to subvert not just Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also Croatia and even Slovenia. And while this was happening, the so-called Croat nationalists of the Tuđman type were not permitted to participate in any political dialogue. They emerged precisely because the Croat society felt tremendously threatened by Milošević, and the issue in the election of 1990 in Croatia was precisely what to do in order to escape from the deathly grip of Milošević's policy. Tuđman, initially, tried to resolve these dilemmas by bringing about the confederal proposal. One can argue whether independence was his principal aim all along, but one should not underestimate how popular that demand was in Croatian society—particularly in light of Milošević. But I think that it is quite unfair to equate the phenomenon of Milošević with the sort of defensive mechanisms that developed in Slovenia and Croatia to try to withstand it. No, it was Milošević who was the active force; everybody else was constantly reacting to him. And this is happening even now.

LIFSCHULTZ: The Slovenian and the Croatian Communists walked out of the Party at the last Congress in 1990. Could they not even at that stage have attempted to secure adherence to the 1974 Constitution?

BANAC: No, by then the Constitution was already a dead letter. That Congress marked the end of the Party. It was too late by then. The time to stop Milošević was earlier, precisely on the issue of Kosovo. And it was the Croat and Slovene Communists who betrayed Kosovo.

LIFSCHULTZ: Finally, now with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, how do you see the economic prospects for the successor states? Will the severe narrowing of the national market and a cautious European Community concerned about cheap imports from low-wage countries lead to the new states being relegated to the economic periphery? In other words, is Slavoj Žižek correct when he suggests that the new states might not make it into the ranks of those who are allowed "inside" as opposed to those who are condemned to remain "outside," like most countries of the Third World, for instance?

BANAC: The economic prospects for the successor states are grim. There is no question about that. Much depends on Western Europe's willingness to invest and to integrate these countries. It would be difficult in the best of circumstances because there is a competition, not just among the successor states of Yugoslavia but among all the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe. Now who can blame Western investors if they concentrate on stable countries, such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, perhaps Poland? In this competition one has to demonstrate certain attractions for the Western interests, and this is, among other things, a political question— the ability to create a stable state, one which is in accord with the rules of the game of Western Europe. Those who can manage it, do have a future; those who think that they can pursue some sort of separate, "third" road are very likely to go into isolation and autarchy which is no solution at all. So there is going to be a certain natural selection.

I think that Slovenia has taken several steps which have put it in the most favorable position among all the successor states of Yugoslavia. Žižek's commentary, of course, is probably more metaphorical than real, although I am not underestimating the problem of Slovenia. Croatia, on the other hand, has a tremendous problem because it has become three islands, really. It has a precarious geography even in the best of circumstances, which is now further threatened by the fact that the unity of the state is essentially cut in two very important areas. Dalmatia has become an island, and the connections between north-western Croatia and Slavonia are also very tenuous at the moment. For Croatia it is essential to regain the occupied territories. This is going to be extremely difficult. I do not see any serious effort on the part of the European Community, the United Nations, and others involved, to extend to Croatia the realistic prospect of reintegration in spite of the fact that there are some efforts on the part of the Serbs in the occupied territories to get out of their isolation by making local deals with the Croat authorities—something which is continuously obstructed by the more extreme forces in the occupied territories. So, this is an issue upon which Croatia's future, to a very large extent, depends. If one wishes to marginalize Croatia, the best way to do it is to deny it any prospects of reintegration with its occupied territories. And, I am afraid, to some extent this is happening; there are some forces in the West who see the separation of these lands from Croatia as a long-range project. This is extremely dangerous and helps only the most reactionary forces in Croatia at the moment.

LIFSCHULTZ: This situation, of course, is similar to the situation in Bosnia itself.

BANAC: Absolutely, I think this is one reason why Bosnian policy is the most controversial and acute internal issue in Croatia today. The stand one takes on Croatia's Bosnian policy will, to a very large extent, determines one's position on the further development of Croatia.

ALI: In effect, then, would not the best way forward be the actual military defeat of the Serb variant of fascism in Serbia? Both in Germany and Italy it was only military defeat that brought fascism to an end.

BANAC: The military defeat of Serbia would be good not only to everybody who was subjected to Serbian aggression, but it would be good for Serbia too. However, one thing that one would not wish for is the total collapse of Serbia because this would engender unnatural appetites in the neighborhood, including in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. What one wants to have is a "normal" Serbia which would give up its imperial ambitions, not just in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina but also in Kosovo and Vojvodina. But this is a very tall and difficult order, something that is at the moment entirely unacceptable not just to Milošević, and those to the right of Milošević, but even to those forces in Serbia which are considered sympathetic from the Western point of view. The one thing that unites all of them is the notion that Serbia cannot exist unless it realizes its integration with all the communites across the Drina and Sava rivers. This is a belief which is shared by a whole spectrum of Serbian political parties with very few exceptions. Those who resist it are the most positive forces in Serbia, and they are the most isolated forces in Serbia. So, in the end, I think the military defeat of Serbia is the only way out.

ALI: Returning, at the end, to the theme with which we began—of the “wild Balkans” in general, and of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a land in the grips of millennial hatred and blood-letting—let me ask you about Ivo Andríć, the celebrated writer of Yugoslavia. He has been resurrected lately as a witness to the insensate savagery of Bosnia by some among those who warn darkly against coming to the aid of the Bosnians. Passages from his writings have been cited, among others by Milovan Đilas’s son, Aleksa Đilas (quite recently in a letter to The New York Times of April 16, 1993), to demonstrate that the people of Bosnia are imbued with an organic hatred—something which they are almost born with, or absorb from the earth they walk on, the air they breathe. How do the writings of Ivo Andríć, the Nobel laureate, lend themselves to this sort of anti-intellectual, mystical stuff?

BANAC: I do not think that there is more contradictory figure in the Balkans than Ivo Andríć. Here was a man who came from the Bosnian Croat community; no writer has written more positively about the Bosnian Franciscans than Ivo Andríć. He entered into literature as a participant in an anthology called Young Croatian Lyrics, published in 1914. At that point, he was still thinking of himself as a Croat, but he belonged to the Yugoslav Nationalist Youth, specifically to Young Bosnia, and as a result was arrested by the Austro-Hungarian authorities during the First World War. He then came into his own in interwar Yugoslavia. He was picked up by one of his mentors, again a Bosnian Croat who was a minister in the early post-World War I Yugoslav governments. He entered into Yugoslav diplomatic service and, in the 1930s, became very much of a fascist fellow traveler. His political articles in the journal XX vek (Twentieth Century) justified such things as the Munich Pact, and so on (he wrote under the pseudonym of Patrius). He was the Yugoslav envoy to Berlin at the time of signing of the Tripartite Pact, and if one looks carefully at the photographs of the signing of the Pact in Vienna, behind Ribbentrop and Cincar Marković, one will see the silhouette of Ivo Andrić. During the war, he was in Belgrade under the occupation. He did not participate in any of the political activities during that period. He was invited into the Chetniks but, to his credit, he resisted. And it was during the period of the occupation that he wrote his major novels, Bridge on the Drina and Chronicle of Travnik, and started some others.

After the war, the Yugoslav Communist regime needed a cultural icon, and there were, really, two candidates. One was Andrić, politically compromised during the interwar period, and especially vulnerable as a result, and welcome, too, as a result. The other was Miroslav Krleža who was a Communist from 1919, but had two problems. He was in conflict with the Party from 1937 onwards and was expelled in 1939. He was a critic of Stalinism, a covert critic, and did not participate in the Partisan resistance. The other problem Krleža had was that he was entirely too Croat—his themes are Croat themes, themes of cultural alienation within central Europe, obsessions with the Habsburg heritage, obsessions with the marginality, and so on. This did not lend itself to the sort of Yugoslav synthesis that the regime needed in 1945. So they settled on Andrić and very quickly made him the pinnacle of the Socialist cultural establishment, ending with his joining the Party very soon after the war. He became the first president of the Yugoslav Writers Association, and so on. He was always a political conformist, although he had absolutely no common ground with the Communist ideology. If one reads his diaries and his reminiscences, one can see this perfectly clearly.

Andrić had one problem which makes it possible to misuse him in the context of the current situation in Bosnia. He saw the Ottoman period—and the Muslim community, as a consequence of the Ottoman period—as a particularly negative element in the history of Bosnia- Herzegovina. His doctoral dissertation, which he defended at the University of Graz in 1924, and which was published soon after Tito's death in 1982, is an explicit anti-Muslim document. I became aware only recently of the debate about Bridge on the Drina in the exile Bosnian Muslim publications from the 1960s after Andríć won the Nobel prize. The famous dramatic scene of impalement of a Serb Hajduk by the "Turks" in the novel was seen by Muslims as a commentary on the whole Ottoman period and, indeed, on the Muslim presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The notion that Bosnia is a dark vilayet, the land of hate, and so on, is something that accords with his general temperamental disposition—he was not a very happy man, or an optimist—but also accords with his vision of Bosnia-Herzegovina which then justifies all these notions about the incongruity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. So, perhaps, one of the most important writers from the land of Bosnia has, posthumously, become an inspiration for those who are destroying it. His views have become part of the thesis—advanced, among others, by Robert D. Kaplan [author of Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History]—that the people of Bosnia—Serbs, Croats, Muslims—are the best haters around. These are banal half-truths. There is no sane reason to believe that in this particular corner of the world there is some sort of a special concentration of hate. Human beings are human beings everywhere.

*Editors' Note: This interview first appeared in Why Bosnia? Writings on the Balkan War, edited by Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz (Stony Creek, Conn: Pamphleteer's Press, 1993). We thank Ivo Banac for permission to re-publish this still timely text. This is the third and final part of the interview which has appeared in previous issues.*

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