

## **The NATO war - a confident investment in a rather unconfident future**

Bilyana Martinovsky

It is rather surprising that the reaction against NATO's armed attack on the Balkans has been so shy in Sweden and presumably in other European countries. In fact, we have witnessed a very clear tendency towards a pro-American and pro-war interpretation of the events. The persons who opposed NATO's actions by signing a protest letter in the newspaper 'Aftonbladet' were officially called intellectuals, as if intellectualism is something disqualifying people from being realistic (which is a very communistic view in itself). They have also been called communists, unofficially, which immediately turns them into cold-war enemies. In both cases, views of this kind are not considered as influential. We have also seen reactions of 'intellectuals' from all around the world, none of them supporting NATO's violent moves. The position of the Swedish government, on the other hand, has been a clear example of a lack of political and civil courage. The media has acted as nothing but a mirror of this lack of a position. It has played on the feelings of Western people, who are far emotionally, culturally and historically from the problems on the Balkans, but has not made serious unbiased attempts to provide the readers or the viewers with a deeper understanding of the political, historical and ethnical situation in this part of the world.

### Clearly the media has a problem — who can one believe?

— the NATO's propaganda organs CNN, BBC, etc.? Or the Serbian media? Or the Kosovo-Albanians? The Swedish media has regarded and explicitly referred to the Serbian media sources as being pure propaganda pipes. But the NATO army's actions are presented as humanitarian reactions to some evil primitive forces, which have embraced civilized Europe; they need to be destroyed so that the good and the bright can rule again. The 'victims', the Kosovo—Albanians are also well-accepted source of reliable information. I wonder why these groups get a more privileged position in the Swedish media. The very few articles referring to the historical background of the events (which I read in the main morning newspapers) are absolutely sure in their positions and sources. But it must be very clear to everybody who ever wanted to get a clue of the Balkan situation that there are no independent objective sources of historical truth, not even by non-Balkan authors. All sources are biased in one or another way. What we can follow are the real historical events and interpretations, which have appeared to be true, proved by the test of time and by preserved documentation. We can believe the sequences of events, which provide us with evidence as well. Historians who are pro-Serbian interpret the Serbian politics during the last centuries as courageous, as an expression of honest desire to gather all Slavic people under one flag, similar to the little state in Piedmonte, which grew to contemporary Italy. The historian who has anti-Serbian orientation would interpret the Serbian politics as hostile activities of a usurper.

So, we are put in a difficult situation, definitely not a Hollywood situation: nothing is black and nothing is white; Milosheвич is not necessarily the Anthony Hopkins' monster from the 'Silence of the lambs', nor Mrs. Albright is the blue-eyed student-agent, nor are the Yugoslavian Albanians the lambs; neither the historical sources and opinions nor the real-time reports from the events of the actual war are completely reliable and adequately described one-dimensionally.

### Why then do we have to be attacked by the media's pro-war interpretations?

Let me demonstrate now some of the concrete ways in which the media are forming our impressions. One day before the TV-concert collecting money for the war-victims we heard title formulations on TV such as "20 Albanian women serving as sex slaves to Serbs". Later on after this accusation we could hear dramatic stories by victims. When the NATO bombs hit Albanians we couldn't hear much of the victims (they were dead, of course) but we could hear the accounts of the offenders. We sympathize them because they express remorse. Yet their remorseful excuses and explanations are paradoxical and even cynical. Why? Because it is impossible to believe that generals experienced with wars in all possible parts of the world could not predict that the war they have started here will cost a lot of lives. Especially not after Spielberg's last Oscar. 16-17th of April we could hear about the war 'incidents' (are there incidents in such a war!) in which NATO killed about 70 Albanians on the way out of Kosovo. We could also hear that NATO is intensifying the air-attacks. But how is this presented? The first part of the news: "more and more Kosovo-Albanian immigrants are leaving Kosovo driven away by the Serbian soldiers"; may be not literary but very close to this formulation. The next sentence is: "NATO have decided to renew and intensify their attacks". We get the impression that each day NATO is on the way to stop the attacks but the provocations of the Serbs make them continue. Which is obviously not the case, or is it? If I say: "My mother came home. I went to the shop" naturally you will think that first my mom came and then I went to the shop, maybe to buy her a cake. So, once again we are already presented with a scenario: the cause, the actions of the Serbs and the effect, the humanitarian reactions of NATO, humanitarian because they want to help the Kosovo-Albanians. But is this true anymore? Even if one could sell to me the theory that NATO and especially US are very concerned with the fate of the few Kosovo-Albanians whom we know almost nothing about, is it really the case that the NATO attacks are simply reactions to the Serb's reactions to the Albanians? Isn't it yet clear that this is a real war and a very uneven war, where the only thing that hinders NATO from destroying Yugoslavia completely is the international opinion and non-the-less the intellectuals' opinion? In 1915 a British soldier describes the Serbs as "enthusiastic, idealistic, mystical and devoted to the tradition of their church and nation". What do we know about them today? How many US films are we stuffed with per hour, per channel, per day, per week! How many Serbian films or serials or even other kinds of programs have we seen? How many Albanian, Bosnian, Kosovian, etc. books have we read? Not many. Why not? Well, we do get some kind of information from the charter-trips' brochures, we do. And in these circumstances of cultural 'knowledge' whom are we going to believe and like more — the one we know, or the one we don't?

Why are the Shiptari called Kosovo-Albanians? Why aren't they called Yugoslavian Albanians? They are part of this country and miraculously enough this country still exists. Besides, if the Serbs are so systematic (another favorite word of the Swedish media, i.e. NATO's killings are incidents, no intention, no planning but the Serbs, they kill according to an algorithm and in an ugly way) in their ethnical cleansing then they would cleanse all Albanians, not only those in Kosovo. And if they get what we are told that they want, namely independence from who is the new country going to be independent and from who is it going to be dependent? Less than 1.5 million people population, covered with ruins.

At last, the American style of warship — not against a nation, or a people, or a country but against one evil person, a dictator, a demon. As if it is a personal vendetta! As if Miloshevic is completely alone in this 10 years long war, as if he is completely alone in this at least more than 100 years long war. But it is kind of not very fashionable to accuse a whole nation. Usually, talking of a country by referring to its leader was a rhetorical figure, but not in the US political super-realism. We could even consider the NATO plans to organize Miloshevic'

assassination in order to end the disorder in a most efficient way. Do you hear that?! This means, to organize a terrorist act. All of us, together, including the TV viewers, the radio listeners, the paper readers, the blanket donators. Give me, please, one argument why the NATO activities on the Balkans do not confine to the definition below:

*" Terrorism is the illegal use of power or violence against people and property, in order o scare or repulse a government, civilian population, or a part of it, in order to achieve political or social objectives. (The FBI definition of terrorism)"*  
www.gov.yu/kosovo\_facts/enter6.html , 19.04.1999.

Now that 25 million SEK have been collected from the Swedish public they have to be also motivated. Thus we will see even more one-sided stories where the Albanians are the lamb and the Serbs — the monster. We will also be informed that the refugees get warm food and blankets. It sounds cynical, yes, because the reality we are forced to observe is cynical. I am not less touched by the horrible fate of these people than any other peaceful member of the world but why do we need all this blankets actually? Why didn't we give the same money for a peaceful solution? Why are we paying EU taxes actually? Why couldn't one react and act earlier and lead real negotiations not impossible power impositions (yes, I have read all the Paris treaty proposal and yes, it painfully reminds me of much much older treaties.)? The newspapers, the radio, the TV, none of these sources informed us about the clauses in the Paris meeting. The only clear message was that Miloshevich doesn't agree, or better, obey. But gives us the conditions, the reasons, not only interpretations. And why do we react when the cancer has already spread all around the body?

#### The deep historical memory

Or why didn't we get as engaged with the fate of the Bulgarian-Turks about 10 years ago? This was a clear communistic move, a real ethnical cleansing. Because it was not that systematic, because it was almost instant? No war, not much 'incidents'. Now the few Bulgarian-Turks are even represented in the parliament by a party devoted to the defense of the human rights. Despite the fact that there was not even a Turkish gerilla in Bulgaria, this political move could work because of the historical memories of the Slavic population. With the first reading act every child on the Balkans gets the message that the Turks/Muslims have been devastating the respective country and the Slavic ethnos in centuries. One grows to be proud of the patriots who fought against the occupation. So, despite the modern democratic voice for tolerance to minorities, in the Balkan countries one has a special situation — a strongly motivated historical fear for big powers and especially for Muslim powers. It is an indisputable fact that the Balkans has been retailed number of times exactly by the big Powers, which happen also to be the big Powers even today. Independently of our praised rapid post-war humanitarian development these Powers continue to pursue the same ultimatum-based opinion-manipulating politics.

In 1875 when insurrection broke out in Herzegovina, Austria-Hungary decides to take action. The British historian, participant in the First World War, writes in 1917:

*"Here was Austria-Hungary's chance. If she could march her armies into the provinces and restore order, she could then turn to Europe, point out the eminent service she had rendered to civilization, and insist that she had better remain to administer the country in the interest of the inhabitants."* R. G. D.  
Laffan, 1989: 51.

Why can't we say the same thing today? What would prove us wrong?

1877, the treaty of San Stefano — the Balkans are cut in such a way that Bulgaria gets Macedonia, Eastern Roumelia and the Aegean coast, dividing European Turkey into two parts, a Serbian one and a Greek one.

1878, the Berlin Congress — the Balkans are cut again. Serbia's land increases with 50%, including Nish, Vranja, Pirot and Lescovatz but it is surrounded by lands controlled by Austria-Hungary and Turkey. This time Bulgaria is drastically reduced and gets a German Prince; Bosnia is under the control of Austria-Hungary although Turkey's suzerainty is guaranteed and Turkey keeps under control Macedonia, Albania and Thrace.

Today, as Giacomo Ferrari said, Turkey is playing the role of a political virgin again. Have you heard anything about Turkey's attitude to the fate of the Muslims on the Balkans? Except through NATO's actions?

Why are those questions and circumstances important? Because the war planned and conducted by NATO is a demonstration of the modern politics inability to perform not even humanitarian but also diplomatic solutions to conflicts. Because if we are informed better of the exact historical circumstances maybe we could be able to understand that armed actions are the worst kind of solution on the Balkans. History has repeated itself again and again. The Western demagogues are repeated again and again. The violence and ethnical intolerance on the Balkans is provoked again and again and sustained. The NATO war is nothing but the most certain investment in an even more uncertain peace and ethnical co-existence on the Balkans in Europe.

It is rather funny to hear the vice-prime minister of Sweden giving opinion on the events where she expresses only one regret with the NATO's war, namely, that the NATO generals did not foresee what the horrible effects of the war could be. But let me ask again some simple rhetorical questions: if one starts to bomb an area, what do you think people will do — move from this area or stay there? And if you bomb an enemy do you think this enemy is going to simply watch you or he will do something which you can not do much about? I have no idea how some politicians can express such thoughts on military strategic problems, in public, although it is more than clear that many brains have worked on the conduct of the war - in the air, in the bushes and on the screens. And if in NATO there are such unwise military experts who could not foresee the upcoming war-disasters, why do we rely on them in the first place? And if the effects of the war are obviously bad for everybody why don't we insist on stopping it? Well, now that it has started it can not end just like that, not because it is legitimate, but because it is impossible to proclaim that Milosheвич defeated NATO. Milosheвич is following an imperialistic political line allowing the commitment of seemingly forgotten, disgusting atrocities and heartbreaking injustice. That is why we can get such inexplicably fierce non-humanitarian statements as the one I heard on 18.04.1999 by a NATO speaker: " if... then we will destroy everything that is dear to them". At least there is a progress — it is not a personal vendeta anymore.

*"Whereas the Habsburg expansion into Bosnia-Hercegovina did not wittingly promote deislamization and national homogenization, the 'Balkan liberation' pattern did. This was a throwback to the anti-Ottoman wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was also repeated in Greece and partially in Bulgaria." Van den Heuvel & Siccama, 1992: 5.*

The ethnical conflicts we witness lately appear in a special European context, which influences our attitude to them. After the Second World War and the holocaust, ethnical tolerance and disintegration of the concept of nationalism, has been one of the strongest values, which brought about the European Union we try to enjoy today. Values are functional; west-European anti-nationalism and ethnical integration values are functional in the contemporary political and economic geography. They were functional also in the Soviet and in the Yugoslav's federation. One of the main virtues of communism was the internationalism, the world was not divided in countries or nations but in classes and the members were supposed to sympathize and help all proletarians in their fight for justice. But because of historical reasons when it comes to tolerance to Muslims these values are not functional. To enforce with bombs these values to the Balkans means to amplify the volume of centuries of rotten historical memory. In fact, the recently announced NATO plan to imprison the Serbs with foreign troops on all sides is not new to the Serbs at all — just see what was the result of the Berlin Congress 1878. And in fact, one may construct the following hypothesis: there is one common line in the Western powers' politics on the Balkans — non-allowance of the development of a strong Slavic power in this region. How does the NATO war argue against such interpretation of the events? Let me remind of the Slav's Manifesto, Vienna, 1850:

*"Lord, declare to us faults that Thine anger is appeased and that Thou has pardoned our faults. Lord, set an end to the punishment of the sons of Lazar, the martyr of Kosovo. Lord, grant us our place in the midst of the nations and deliver us from the Turks and the Germans." The Manifesto, 1850.*

It seems that after this war one could add "...deliver us from the Turks, the Germans and the Americans". Or am I wrong?

The idea was to unite the Southern Slavs, because they are one people, one language, no matter of state, church, and alphabet. In 1868, Prince Michael of Serbia was assassinated. In 1917 the historian, the officer and the fellow of Queens' college, Cambridge, R. G. D. Laffan still doesn't know by whom. But he did ask: Cui bono? After Michael comes Prince Milan, who lived most of his life in Paris. He abdicated, leaving Serbia with 400 million francs debt, mainly to Austria-Hungary.

Why shouldn't one be able to make such associations? What is the European Union building today — a cue of begging to be accepted less developed countries, most of which are the post-socialistic ones. While Western Europe has been signed by a growing tendency to unification the Eastern Europe has been slaughtered in pieces. By itself, of course, or in the best case because of the arch-enemy, the communism. What have the Western democracies contributed to the application of their unifying and tolerance-based values in the non-western European countries today? Well, until now NATO's humanitarian war. Congratulations, to the guilt compensating new all-German Reichstach and the guilt compensating and sexual farce dumping American White House. You have succeeded in promoting this guilt to the next generations on the Balkans instead of acting in a true humanitarian and diplomatic manner. And by diplomacy I do not mean power games across the table or ultimatums for throwing dust into the eyes of the international and Internet opinion. More than 2000 years of negotiations must have taught us how to find solutions to conflicts without necessarily encouraging the military part of our humanitarian budgets.

The expert on psychological defense, Göran Stütz, claimed in an interview in 'Aktuellt' on 19.04.1999, that without the media the war in Yugoslavia would not have happened. We also heard few days earlier that NATO wants to bomb the enemies' broadcasting stations, obviously a decision backed by serious media-research. But let me remind you that during the ca 135 years, from the Serbian loss of the war against the Ottoman invasion in Kosovo, 1360s, to the capitulation of Belgrade, there was no TV and most of the Slavs (as well as other folk groups around the world, not the Americans, they didn't exist yet) were analphabets.

So, cynically enough, the only, kind of positive result of the NATO war, including the propaganda war, is the enrichment of the Serbian heroic folklore where even the murders will be remembered as patriots.

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(Bulgarian + European, Asian, Swedish, Macedonian, Polish, Ukrainian, Vlach, Greek, Jewish, who knows, may be even 'Shiptar' (or Albanian)),  
today, 19.04.1999, when Reuter informed the world that the Bulgarian Parliament has agreed to offer the Bulgarian Air space to NATO, although the Bulgarian parliament didn't know that yet!

Gothenburg, Sweden.