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Paul Bookbinder

University of Massachusetts Boston, paul.bookbinder@umb.edu

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A Bloody Tradition

Ethnic Cleansing in World War II Yugoslavia

Paul Bookbinder

When World War II began, a climate for mass violence already existed. The author examines the history of ethnic cleansing, cultural cleansing, mass murder, and genocide in Yugoslavia — Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo — and finds that the historical atrocities are alive in active memory today. With a new awareness of the consequences of ethnic hatred, people can study their own histories cleansed of myth and nationalist delusions so that wars that unleash ethnic violence can be stopped before these excesses erupt.

During the recent crises in Bosnia and Kosovo, the term “ethnic cleansing” was frequently used to characterize the policies being carried out in parts of the former Yugoslavia, but ethnic cleansing there can be traced back to the First World War, and it reached its most violent crescendo during the Second World War. The dynamics of ethnic hatred and violence that were manifested in the early decades of the twentieth century established patterns of behavior that played a role in the developments of the 1990s and provide a template for gauging present and future conditions under which ethnic cleansing may occur.

Ethnic cleansing, as we define it today, is an incomplete or somewhat random genocide that often occurs during declared or undeclared war. “Most genocidal acts are less than thorough,” Daniel Chirot observes, “as when masses of people are expelled from a region, and many die, through murder or the harshness of the expulsion, but some survive. We now call that ethnic cleansing, and it tends to produce many deaths.”¹ Clearly, wars are often at least the background for ethnic cleansing, and therefore the outbreak of a war between nations or a civil war are warning flares of potential mass murder. In the Ottoman Empire during World War I, for example, ethnic cleansing resulted when the Turks unleashed a major campaign to remove the Armenians from areas under their control.²

The lack of significant international response to the murder of the Armenians in 1915 may well have emboldened Hitler to envision his own genocidal schemes in which the term “ethnic cleansing” was constructed as a euphemism for mass murder. Whether Hitler actually asked the rhetorical question, “Who still talks about the Armenians today?” he may well have thought it. He was in Weimar Germany in 1921 when Soghomon Tehlirian was tried for the assassination of Talaat Pasha, the leader of the Young Turks who had presided over the killing of hundreds of thousands of Armenians.³ He witnessed the rapid fading of passionate public interest in the “Armenian genocide” after the trial.

Paul Bookbinder is Associate Professor of History, University of Massachusetts Boston.

The definition of “ethnic” in ethnic cleansing grew out of confused and distorted Nazi racial theory. The Nazis falsely distinguished “Jews” from other Europeans on the basis of racial pseudo-science that mixed religion, ethnicity, and nineteenth-century racial-biological theory in an antisemitic brew. Similarly, Balkan leaders used a distorted concept of ethnicity to create conflict among Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims all of whom were ethnically Slavs whose differences stemmed from religion, politics, and history. Calling these artificially imposed differences “ethnic,” these leaders acted as if the distinctions were racial and affected behavior and morality as well as physical appearance.

The word “cleansing” itself is ambiguous. In everyday use, it has positive connotations of cleanliness and purification, evoking images of soap and water. But when applied to human populations it connotes refugees, deportation, concentration camps, and sometimes even mass murder. Andrew Bell-Fialkoff characterizes the implications of cleansing as spelling “suffering and that is why the term is widely used; it is a euphemism that hides the ugly truth.”⁴

Even before World War II, leaders associated with violence in Germany and Yugoslavia as well as in other countries employed “cleansing” as part of their political discourse. For example, the Serb Vasa Cubrilovic was known for his violent discourse. “In 1937,” as Gianluca Bocchi and Mauro Ceruti recount:

Vasa Cubrilovic, who was considered by some Yugoslavs as a hero for his participation in the 1914 Sarajavo assassination of the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand, presented a paper to a conference of Croatian nationalists with the significant title of “The expulsion of the Albanians,” in which he summarized possible strategies for achieving ethnic balance in Kosovo. To illustrate his arguments, Cubrilovic referred to a map in which the region annexed in 1878 carried the legend: “area cleansed of Albanians.” He underlined with satisfaction expulsions that had occurred in the past and claimed the need to continue along these lines.⁵

Although at times ethnic cleansing comprises various methods of destroying a people considered alien, such as expropriation, expulsion, torture, and rape, the process is generally synonymous with and a cover for genocide. Writing from his refuge in the United States, the Jewish-Polish jurist Raphael Lemkin coined the term “genocide” in 1944. He submitted a proposal to the international coalition that would become the United Nations “to declare the destruction of racial, religious or social collectives a crime under the laws of nations.”⁶ In the midst of war, Lemkin was still hoping to awaken the international community to Hitler’s intentions, warnings it had ignored during the 1930s when he had appealed unsuccessfully to the League of Nations and directly to the world’s democracies.

Memories of World War I played an important and often inflammatory role in the interwar period. “The fact that the memory of mass killing was widely employed by such divergent interests [as right-wing politicians, veterans groups, writers, artists, and teachers],” Omer Bartov observes, “introduced a violent dimension to postwar political discourse, channeling it toward a constant preoccupation with human and material devastation.”⁷ Thus, when World War II began, the political, intellectual, and psychological climate for massive violence already existed.

Inspired by World War I memories and violent interwar rhetoric, the twentieth century’s most dramatic examples of ethnic cleansing began to unfold. The struggle for power and influence in a destabilized environment set the stage for ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia during World War II. In 1940, Yugoslavia’s position became both precarious and strategically significant as Hitler contemplated expanding the war and



his Italian allies moved from Albania into Greece. The German military feared that the British would use Yugoslavia as a base for supplying an expeditionary force in Greece.

The Allies and the Axis were both pressuring the Yugoslav government to commit to their sides in the struggle. Most of the dominant Serbian leaders who controlled the government were sympathetic to the Allies. But the king and his ministers “recognized the dangers of directly confronting the Germans and they continued to declare their neutrality while playing for time. Hitler was not pleased with that situation but was willing to accept it until documents intercepted by the Gestapo revealed secret military agreements between the Yugoslavs and the French and British, who were attempting to support the Greeks.

Tensions between the Nazis and the Yugoslav government escalated as suspicion, fear, and intrigue continued to increase. In the same year, the Yugoslav secret service uncovered a German plan to overthrow the Yugoslav government. This discovery increased the likelihood that the Yugoslavs would commit to the Allied cause.⁸ This probability, in turn, contributed to Hitler’s decision to move troops into Yugoslavia. Germany presented the Yugoslavs with an ultimatum: Yugoslavia had to commit to the German side or face a German invasion. Under this threat, the Yugoslav government agreed on March 25, 1941, to join the Axis Pact, but the agreement was short-lived. The next day, the Yugoslav Army and its leaders, who were pledged to the Allied cause, carried out a coup d’état that in turn, led to a German invasion.

The German conquest was relatively easy, and the inadequate Yugoslav response had devastating repercussions. The Yugoslav Armed Forces proved ill-prepared, insufficiently armed, and ineffectively led. Many Croatian troops refused to fight and greeted the Germans as liberators. In the ensuing destabilized environment, ethnic cleansing followed. War allowed the unthinkable to become possible and created a climate in which widespread atrocities were committed against targeted civilian populations.

The most dramatic example of World War II genocide was the German program of mass murder of the Jews, commonly called the Holocaust. This program was unprecedented in its breadth and commitment. The Nazis intended to use whatever resources and manpower were required for as long as it would take to murder every Jewish woman, man, and child wherever they could be found. The murder of Yugoslav Jews, particularly in Serbia, was an early stage in the Nazi plan to exterminate all Jews. As Franjo Tudjman, the president of the independent state of Croatia in the 1990s, declared, “The Holocaust was the greatest evil that the world has ever known. It was not just mindless barbarism but an intentional and organized strategy of total genocide, carried out by a mechanized bureaucracy.”⁹

The Nazis also implemented an ethnic cleansing program aimed at the Roma and Sinti people, which Henry Friedlander characterizes as the only other example of Nazi genocide.¹⁰ But this program was more sporadic and limited, and it never had the priority and the commitment of manpower and money of the campaign against the Jews. It was never applied in all areas under German control or influence, and it never had the same interest and passionate support from Hitler that the “War against the Jews” inspired.¹¹

The murder of Serbian Jews during World War II became the focus of heated debate among German historians and political figures in the 1990s. Germans have been confronting their own past with great courage and skill for at least the last

thirty years. Yet, some members of the military and many historians have attempted to distance the regular Army (*Wehrmacht*) from the mass murder programs that SS (Schutz staffed) squads that concentration camp personnel and support units (*Einsatzgruppen*), specially recruited from Central and Eastern European ethnic groups, executed. But it was the *Wehrmacht* that implemented the murder campaign against the Jews in Serbia. At that time, the SS only served in a support capacity. Most of these murders were carried out before the five death camps located on Polish soil were in place in the fall of 1941.¹²

The murders that the *Wehrmacht* committed in Serbia were at one with the ideology that Hitler and the Nazis had effectively propagated in Germany. They argued that Germany needed *Lebensraum* (living space), and they warned that the problems that Germany had faced in the twenties must not be allowed to return. Summarizing the Nazi argument, Irwin Staub states, “The material needs of the German people were to be fulfilled (and their superiority affirmed) through the conquest of additional territories, or living space. The ideology identified Jews as responsible for life problems and a primary barrier to the creation of a pure superior race.”¹³

The murder of Serbian Jews began under the guise of reprisals aimed at curbing the many partisan attacks that were launched against German occupation forces. The German Army took a large number of Serbian Orthodox and Jewish hostages for reprisal purposes. On October 10, 1941, Franz Böhme, the German commanding general in Serbia, issued the following order: “In Serbia it is necessary because of the ‘Balkan mentality’ and the great expansion of the communist-camouflaged insurgency movement to carry out the orders of the OKW [Army High Command] in the sharpest form. . . . In every communal area in Serbia . . . all communists, all those suspected as such, all Jews and a certain number of nationalist and democratically inclined inhabitants are to be seized as hostages.”¹⁴ Hostages from these groups were murdered in retaliation for partisan attacks.

But there were considerable differences in the way members of these groups were treated. The German military leaders accepted the fact that not all Serbs were their enemies, and some of the Serbs held as prisoners were released after investigation showed that they were neither partisans nor partisan sympathizers. Because the same military leaders believed that all Jews were enemies of the Reich, they concluded that there was no need for investigation in the case of the Jews.¹⁵

Long-standing racial, ethnic, and antisemitic prejudices were combined with a concept that was fundamental to Nazi ideology: that all people could be divided into two categories — friends and foes.¹⁶ That made for a deadly pairing in time of war when the community of Nazi friends concluded that it was willing to kill its foes, particularly Jews. Identification of a group as the foe places them outside the normative rules and laws of society and makes them potential candidates for ethnic cleansing or genocide. This degree of polarization can serve as an early warning sign of potential genocide and a signal that preventative intervention may be called for if it is to succeed.

In the months following the invasion of Yugoslavia, the number of male Jewish prisoners grew in camps such as Topovske Supe where Jews from Banat and Belgrade were interned. German military leaders frequently suggested that Yugoslavian Jews be deported to Romania or Germany, but the Reich Foreign Office and the SS vetoed these suggestions. Foreign Office representative Martin Luther and Reinhard Heydrich, second in command of the SS, overall commander of the



police, and the “Protector” of Bohemia and Moravia, met to discuss the situation. They sent Franz Rademacher, who was Luther’s “Jewish Affairs” expert, and Friedrich Suhr, Adolf Eichmann’s deputy, to Belgrade to argue for settling the “Jewish Question” in Serbia itself. By the time they arrived, however, the process of murdering Jews had already begun.

Wehrmacht commanders determined that they could not provision the increasing number of prisoners in camps, and they concluded that they had two choices: they could either release the Jews, which they did not favor; or they could shoot them as hostages. They decided that the Jews would be shot, and the fate of the male Jews of Serbia was sealed. Jewish women and children were also imprisoned in camps and were soon targeted for murder. Initially kept on low rations, many died of malnutrition and disease, but by late 1941, the Army expanded the murder program to include women and children to speed up the process of eliminating the remaining Jewish Serbian population.

The use of mobile gas vans for this ethnic cleansing was introduced in Yugoslavia at the Semlin concentration camp. These vans had first been used in Germany as part of the T4 Euthanasia Program initiated in 1940 to murder people classified as physically or mentally unfit to live. A memo from SS *Obergruppenführer* Heinrich Müller, Reinhard Heydrich’s Berlin Gestapo chief, reported on the implementation of the program in Serbia: “Subject: Jewish operation in Serbia. Commando with special *Saurer* [acid] truck underway overland with special assignment.”¹⁷ SS officers, who had been sent to assist the Army in the campaign against the Jews, operated the van.

Christopher Browning argues that the operation was both ghastly and public. “Clearly if the Germans could drive a gas van through downtown Belgrade while its passengers screamed and pounded against the back door in their death agony,” Browning states, “secrecy was not the highest priority.”¹⁸ About 35,000 Serbian Jews were murdered during this phase of ethnic cleansing.¹⁹ The other chilling statistic of the murder program is the large number of German officials who competed to receive credit for the claim that “*Serben ist judenfrei*.” Word of what the Germans were doing with their vans spread throughout the Balkans and created a climate in which forced expulsion of ethnic populations was conceivable and ethnic hatred could be channeled into genocide. Gypsies also fell victim to ethnic cleansing in Serbia at the hands of the Germans.

In that climate, the Chetniks also used ethnic cleansing to realize their vision of a Greater Serbia. The Chetniks were conservative Serbian nationalists who fought the Germans in the early stages of the conflict but soon made accommodations to the occupying troops so that they could do battle against the communists’ anti-German partisan forces under Marshall Tito. Stevan Moljevic, an associate of the Chetnik leader Colonel Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic, may have been the first Yugoslav to use the term “*Ciscenji*” (cleansing) in 1942 to advocate sending all non-Serbs in the Kosovo area to Albania or to Turkey in the quest for a Greater Serbia inhabited only by Orthodox Serbians.²⁰

Yugoslavia was a flagrant example of ways in which contrived racial theories and ethnic hatreds can be contorted to serve political agendas. Heinrich Himmler, commander of the SS and one of Hitler’s closest associates, and many of the other Nazis, including academic theoreticians who worked for them, defined race in such bizarre terms that all sorts of racial gymnastics were possible. Hoping to exploit the racial tensions in Yugoslavia, Himmler categorized Croats as proto-Germans and

Bosnian Muslims as Croats. Ironically, a number of Croatian nationalist leaders also argued that Muslims could be Croats and that only Orthodox Serbs and Jews were “ethnic” enemies.

Although Himmler was obsessed with “cleansing” Germany and Eastern Europe of inferior non-Aryans, he worked very hard to recruit Bosnian Muslims for his elite, “racially selective” SS. He allowed Muslims to observe Islamic rituals in the hope that he could channel Islamic crusading spirit into his Germanic crusade to purify Europe by destroying “Jewish Slavic” culture, which he believed was the major agent of corruption. He even brought in the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem to try to whip up Muslim hostility to Jews. He planned that the Bosnian Muslims would initially serve as a support group but would eventually join with members of the Croatian Ustasha to create new SS divisions.²¹ Nazi propaganda told the Croats and Bosnian Muslims that they were defending European culture and, in the case of the Croats, Western religion against the Jews and Orthodox Slavs.

The Nazis exacerbated the already existing uneasy relationships that barely held the southern Slavs together in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. These tensions frayed during German occupation. It is not surprising to see these developments in a nation founded by fervent nationalists. Croatian and Bosnian nationalism proved to be stronger than Pan-Slavism. Power-hungry politicians manipulated nationalistic and religious differences to concoct an explosive mixture. They added political ideologies — fascism and communism — and stirred the pot to the boiling point.

While the Wehrmacht, with later help from the SS, was the chief agent of the mass murder program in Serbia, the situation was different in Croatia. There the Germans created a puppet state under the rule of Ustasha and a partnership responsible for the murder of the Croatian Jews. Ustasha extended the ethnic cleansing process to include Serbs, and approximately 90,000 Serbs were murdered in addition to 40,000 Jews during the course of the war.²² Ustashi were Croatian nationalists with a strong dose of fascism in their doctrines.

In the nineteenth century, Ustasha had been one of a number of manifestations of Croatian nationalism. The Croats had struggled to maintain their national identity during centuries of Ottoman domination and in the nineteenth century under the Austrian Habsburgs.²³ A popular Croatian poem declared:

Get up from your knees!
Sword now in your hands!
May the foreigner fall.
And Slavdom rule!²⁴

A number of prominent nationalist leaders emerged in the tense atmosphere of nineteenth-century Croatia including Josip Jelacic, Bishop Strossmayer, and Ante Starcevic.²⁵

In the 1850s, Starcevic founded the movement from which Ustasha would develop. He came to believe that Serbs were racially inferior, and he argued that Croatia should absorb Serbian land. Starcevic distinguished the Croats as a nation organized as a state in contrast to the Serbs who, he declared, were not a nation capable of being effectively organized as a state.²⁶ These ideas would figure prominently in Ustasha.

On January 7, 1929, Ante Pavelic established Ustasha, which derives from the word “*ustanak*” (uprising).²⁷ The movement grew in strength and importance during



the short-lived history of Yugoslavia following the Treaties of Versailles and St. Germain, which ended World War I and created the new southern Slav state. In the 1930s, Ustasha's aggressive orientation climaxed in the murder of the Yugoslav, King Alexander, in Marseilles in 1935.

Pavelic led Ustasha through the period of the Second World War. The ideology he and his organization promoted was a mixture of Italian fascism, East European agrarian populism, reactionary Catholicism, and to some extent German Nazism. The group opposed liberal democracy, communism, and what they termed "capitalist plutocracy." Pavelic and his Ustashi also hated Jews. When German forces entered Yugoslav territory, they came predisposed to favor Pavelic and the Ustasha movement. Hitler and Pavelic shared their hatred of Jews and Serbs.²⁸

Pavelic called for an ethnically pure Croatia cleansed of all Serbs. He articulated Ustasha's commitment to an all-powerful state, a universal Roman Catholic Church, and an omnipotent leader. Pavelic's cleansing program against the Serbs began with the order requiring all Serbs to wear blue armbands with the letter P for *Pravoslavac* (Orthodox) and culminated in genocide. The same cleansing program engulfed the Jews of Croatia.

Pavelic's verbal attacks on the Jews pleased Hitler. Using rhetoric that the Nazis could understand, he accused the Jews of fostering Serbian dictatorship, of dominating the economy and media, and of leading the communists and the Freemasons.²⁹ These attacks resonated with Pavelic's traditional Catholic Croatian hostility to Jews, which had been part of Ustasha ideology since the organization's inception. When Bosnia and Herzegovina were annexed to Croatia on April 17, 1941, as a celebratory gesture, Croats and Germans burned down the ancient and renowned synagogue of Sarajevo, which had been founded in the early sixteenth century.

Inspired by the example of Germans murdering Serbian Jews, Pavelic and Ustasha joined with the Germans to murder the 40,000 Jews of Croatia. Rape and torture often preceded the killings. "Much of the horrible killing," R. J. Rummel notes, "was done in Ustashi camps particularly Jasehovic."³⁰ Contemporary eyewitness accounts such as those of the Chilean Ambassador in Belgrade describe the tearing off of limbs, the quartering of women, and the use of hot iron rods on men and children.³¹

The Italian Army imposed the only limits on Ustasha's murder campaign. In the small part of Croatia that Italian troops controlled, Serbs and Jews found safety because the Italian Army intervened to protect these minorities. Other Jews from the Ustasha-controlled areas sought sanctuary with the Italians who took many of them back to Italy when they retreated in 1943.³²

Unfortunately, too often institutions founded on moral principles, which should work against ethnic and racial hatred, fail in their mission and even compound the problem. Most damning was the strong support the Vatican gave to the Ustasha regime and to Pavelic. With the help of Vatican connections, Pavelic was smuggled out of the country to Argentina at the end of the war and died in Spain clutching a rosary that the Pope had given him.

The Vatican's efforts to save the leader of the Ustasha ethnic cleansing campaign sent a most disturbing signal that reverberated throughout the Balkans as well as the rest of Europe. In a recent study, John Cornwell criticizes the Vatican and specifically Pope Pius XII for failing to intervene in the Ustasha carnage. Noting that, "Even by comparison with the recent bloodshed in Yugoslavia at the time of this writing, Pavelic's onslaught against the Orthodox Serbs remains one of the most

appalling civilian massacres known to history,” Cornwell condemns the Pope’s action.³³ “For his part,” Cornwell concludes, “Pacelli [Pope Pius XII] was never anything but benevolent to the leaders and representatives of the Pavelic regime.”³⁴

As in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the pot was also boiling in Kosovo where numerous conquerors added to the mixture and then divided it in parts. In the brief period before the successful German invasion, the Serb-dominated Yugoslav Army had occupied Kosovo, sparking ethnic conflict between indigenous Albanians and Serbs who lived in the area or who had moved in after the initial conquest by the Yugoslav Army. Violence and victimization grew on both sides as Slavs and Albanians burned down each other’s houses, killed as many people as possible, and stole livestock, goods, and tools. But the Serbs were the principal victims. In the first two or three months following the onset of hostilities in 1941, an estimated 20,000 Montenegrins and Serbs had fled from their homes and up to 10,000 houses were burned down.³⁵

After Germany defeated Yugoslavia, Kosovo was divided primarily between Bulgaria and Albania who were German allies. Since the king of Italy ruled Albania, the part of Kosovo given to Albania was actually under the control of the Italian military, and fighting between Albanians and Serbs intensified there in October and November 1941. Germany also occupied a small part of Kosovo as a prize of military conquest.

Himmler took advantage of the opportunity to recruit a unit of Albanian SS supporters called the Skandebeg Division to carry out his plan of ethnic cleansing in the area.³⁶ This SS division existed more on paper than in reality because most Kosovo Albanians preferred to support the Allies. Yet, the division took its cue from its SS brethren and, although much smaller than envisioned by Himmler, engaged in several episodes of ethnic cleansing aimed at Jews and Gypsies. At least a thousand of Kosovo’s Gypsies were murdered. The effort of the Skandebeg Division to round up and deport Kosovo’s Jews, who had been residents of the area since the fifteenth century, contributed to ending the long history of Jews in Kosovo. The Italians did not participate in these roundups. The Bulgarians, who refused to deport Bulgarian Jews, did occasionally deliver Jews to the Germans in the parts of Kosovo that they occupied.

In Kosovo and other neighboring areas, ethnic cleansing was accompanied by what can be called cultural cleansing. This included attacks on religious, communal, and educational facilities, on such cultural products as books and artworks, and on teachers and clergy. When campaigns were carried out against Jews, Serbs, or Albanians, their cultural symbols and institutions and their cultural leaders were attacked. Synagogues, churches, seminaries, libraries, and newspaper offices and book publishing houses were burned; and rabbis, priests, and teachers were specifically targeted for attack and murder. The goal was to obliterate the culture as well as the people.

While some observers equate cultural cleansing, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, other observers see significant distinctions. Allan Ryan refers to cultural cleansing as “ethnocide” and argues that this process should be distinguished from genocide. “Genocide,” he observes, “is accomplished by mass killing (usually accompanied by other things as well); ethnocide leaves the victims but destroys their community, their heritage, their common bonds, either directly as by outlawing or destroying the manifestations of community (such as religious ceremonies and language) or indirectly by dispersing the community so that it is no longer a community at all.”³⁷



While, in a perfect world, ethnocide or cultural cleansing ought to trigger intervention, Ryan recognizes the need for a more nuanced response. In spite of the devastating effects of ethnocide or cultural cleansing and given the difficulties inherent in and restrictions on intervention, he argues that such action must probably be limited to the direst demands of genocide itself.

The deeper one delves into the subject of mutual hatred, the more one becomes aware that World War II is not even remotely historical in the minds and consciousness of the Southern Slavs. "That horrendous war is ever present," Miron Rezun reminds us, "it is always invoked, taught to generations of children today as if it had happened only yesterday. The war's haunting memory suffuses the hatreds and antipathies of the people. What happened during World War II is central to the whole investigation of the European and Yugoslav drama, for we cannot understand the events of the present if our memory of the past is weak."³⁸ Omer Bartov reinforces this argument: "Chronological time and detached historiography play a minor role in people's perception of reality, especially at times of crisis (produced to some extent by precisely this hiatus of historical perspective). The heroes and martyrs of days gone by reappear on late twentieth century battlefields, reenacting the sacrifices and atrocities of their forefathers. Thus, the Croats describe the Serbs as 'Chetniks,' the Serbs call the Croats 'Ustashe,' and the Muslims are seen as 'Turks.'"³⁹

In light of American failures in Cambodia and Rwanda and late intervention in Bosnia, Samantha Power concludes that Americans at all levels have not read the signs of ethnic cleansing and have shown an unwillingness to act.⁴⁰ General Romeo Dallaire, the Canadian general in command of the UN force in Rwanda who warned of the coming 1994 genocide there but was not allowed to take "protective action," expresses his horror and frustration. "The will to intervene is the problem," he observes. "The instruments of intervention are there in a spectrum that needs to be harnessed, then to be improved and brought about in a systematic fashion. We need a whole new conceptual base to conflict resolution, multi-disciplined, political, diplomatic, military, humanitarian, all working on one plan, not working on separate plans, and for a long time."⁴¹

Yet, John Shattuck looks at the four separate military actions to protect human rights at the end of the 1990s in Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, and Haiti and sees some basis for optimism.⁴² Positing the need for a better early warning system and a better understanding of when and how the international community should intervene, he believes that effective action will ensue if specific guidelines are instituted. Even General Dallaire claims some optimism if we can get beyond ethnic and racial characterizations and see all people as human beings. "And so do not despair and do not be pessimistic," he suggests, "I am optimistic because time is not a factor and so ... the responsibility of humanity is the responsibility of humanity, and those who do not use their capabilities in recognizing that every human is human and we're all the same, will carry the guilt of their self-interests into history."⁴³

With new awareness of the consequences of ethnic hatred, people can learn their own histories cleansed of myth and nationalist delusions, and wars, which unleash ethnic violence, can be stopped before these excesses erupt. ❀

Notes

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14. Quoted in Christopher Browning, *Fateful Month: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985) 48-49.
15. See Browning, *Fateful Month*, 77.
16. This theory, basic to Nazi political thinking, was developed most clearly in the late twenties and early thirties by the jurist Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (München, 1932).
17. Browning, *Fateful Month*, 77.
18. Ibid., 83.
19. Report, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.
20. Rezun, *Europe and War*, 160.
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25. Ibid., ch. 7.
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36. Ibid., 309-10.
37. See Allan Ryan, "Genocide: What Do We Want It To Be" in this volume.
38. Rezun, *Europe and War*, 51.
39. Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction*, 140.
40. Power, "Problem From Hell," xvii.
Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, 79.
41. Romeo Dallaire, "Humanitarian Intervention & Human Rights: The Responsibility To Protect," unpublished transcript of speech at EPIIC Symposium at Tufts University, March 1, 2003.
42. John Shattuck, *Human Rights, Wars and the Roots of Terrorism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003)13.
43. Dallaire, "Humanitarian Intervention and Human Rights."

