

## THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE DESTRUCTION OF BOSNIA

### *Unfinest Hour of Intellectuals*

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Review of: Simms, Brendan:  
*Unfinest Hour. Britain and the  
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*The best ruler is the one sitting with scholars, and the worst scholar is the one sitting with rulers.  
(Hasan Kafija Prusak: The Foundation of the Wisdom on Constellation of the World)*

In the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, intellectuals found themselves gravely tested three times both ethically and intellectually. These three turning points, in which the moral as well as the expertise capacity of wise men were to be asserted, were: Spain, Viet-Nam and Bosnia. The two world wars are deliberately not mentioned here, for they did not pose such serious temptations to declare for a straight cause. During the Spanish civil war, intellectuals were defending the Republic with weapons in their hands; in the case of Viet-Nam intellectuals confirmed that they took the side of the people with their critique and protest, including the moral condemnation of the war spoken from Bertrand Russell's tribunal. In Bosnia, however, the world's intellectuals – Europe's in particular – recognized the crime only in a few cases and took the side of the victim, but largely they remained silent often telling absurdities such as that they were overtly protecting Evil, and that some even took shots in Sarajevo! The 20<sup>th</sup> century was the century of temptation for intellectuals. For the sake of Bosnia, some intellectuals, even among themselves had – not only because intellectuals have often been inciting evil, but because they were not able to recognize it and unable to counter it – disappointedly given up of intelligentsia. I have also, I admit, after Bosnia, become faithless in Mind, science, and critical consciousness.

But then, something happened to seriously moderate my doubt: A book was published: *Unfinest Hour. Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia* by Brendan Simms brings back the trust in men and women of knowledge. Perhaps, after all, not everything is lost about us. This is a book by an intellectual who speaks critically about the role and responsibility of his own country in the destruction of another country, but above all it deals with the role and responsibility of the political and scientific mind for the tragedy of Bosnia. It is hard to find a similar case. The country which has (internationally) most likely played the most shameful role in the destruction of Bosnia – if the immediate aggressors are not taken into account – was given the opportunity with this book to be the only one to have the right to claim having intellectuals who will save its honour and the honour of intellectuals in general. Maybe it had to come like this, and maybe this was even the only possible outcome: Where shame was at its greatest, there would first arise the need to struggle for honour. Britain was not the only state to have disgraced itself in Bosnia. Nor is the vague sintagma of the »International Community« dense enough to conceal other countries and their national intelligentsia. We still know very little about the roles played by other countries and their intellectuals and experts, both those in the service of the state and those who acted independently. Admittedly, there are two additional countries and another two intellectuals who corroborated with the critique of their intellectual environment, so that not everything appears lost with intellectuals even after Bosnia: The Greek Takis Michas [1] and Norwegian Kjell Arild Nilsen [2] are both journalists. The books they have written stand firmly side by side with Simms' intellectual adventure. Even if the sintagma »critical intelligentsia« is a pleonasm, I have to apply it for intellectuals from other countries who critically assess the role of their own states and colleagues in the course of the war in Bosnia. After Bosnia, it can no longer be taken for granted that the noun »intelligentsia« implies the attribute »critical«. Just as Simms' book is not a proscription of those compromised in the case of Bosnia, so too, similar books about France, Germany, Austria, Italy etc. will not be anything else but a contribution to depicting the genuine intellectual and ethical line dividing the intelligentsia from the »intelligentsia«.

It appears that Simms, along with very few others, has guarded in the case of Bosnia that which is best, but still so rare, and so often entangled or even subdued – the independence of intellectuals from censors of any kind and from self-censorship in particular. The message by Hasan Kafija Prusak, the Bosnian scholar, 400 years ago, much earlier than the existence of the state of Henry Kissinger, refers to all those countering Bosnian statehood. It is though, seemingly, scholars and philosophies that make decisions about the statehood capacities of peoples – as Hegel maintains, but on the condition that they do not sit with rulers. At least not with questionable rulers and at least not in just any regime.

Simms overtly takes the side of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its multi-ethnic composition, including the war-time Bosnian government about which he though claims that it »never entirely lost its distinctive multi-ethnic complexion«. (p. ix) By this, he means to say that the Bosnian government has also considerably – albeit not entirely – lost its multi-ethnic complexity. He thereby announces at the very beginning his disregard for the »balanced approach« of the »dialectical« analysts of the Bosnian tragedy. This is his starting point and the premise that will also enable him to address Edmund Burke's warning to his contemporaries on page 350:

Wise men will apply their remedies to vices, not to names; to the causes of the evil which are permanent, not to the occasional organs by which they appear. Otherwise you will be wise historically, a fool in practice.

He is, therefore, from the outset to the end, on the side of the »Bosnian« cause, including the Bosnian government, as I said, in spite of all its »foolishness in practice«, and against the »Serbian« cause, irrespective of all its »historical wisdoms«. Only the reader who is not obsessed by any »balanced« approach will be able to grasp the Bosnian cause in practice is not standing in opposition to the Serbian historical cause, and that this book is, in short – as well as being pro-Bosnian – not only a pro-British, but also a pro-Serbian book. As such, it will find its public in a Belgrade of »another Serbia«, as well as in »another Britain«. Unlike the »balanced« truths – like the one used by Vojislav Koštunica and intellectuals around him who claim that »crimes have been committed by all sides« – are already justifying the practice, and are already preparing the historical foolishnesses in the Serbian as well as British future – and the Bosnian one as well. This is the standpoint that had recognized genocide in Bosnia long before Srebrenica occurred, unlike the one which even after Srebrenica was balancing, perhaps even unwillingly, thereby preparing, however, the ground for future Srebrenicas.

The standpoint of the »balanced approach«, aiming to minimize the crimes of one side via tricks of illusion, enhancing the crimes of the other side, is nothing else than the continuation of that standpoint that opposed ensuring »military balance« by lifting the arms embargo and thus granting the Bosnians at least the right to defence throughout the war. As if its intercessors were not aware that the justification of the crime is worse than the crimes themselves, since the justification of crime is already the preparation for a new crime. Moreover, any new crime, even if it is a minor one, is always bigger than the previous crime – being, as it is, the continuation of that previous crime.

The wise architects of the Dayton accords should not be exempted here, of course. They deserve our gratitude for ending the tragedy and the war, but they have virtually divided Bosnia into two (three!) mini-states and made it into »a profoundly traumatized country, a land damaged to a degree unique in Europe since 1945« (p. xi). Bosnia »made in Dayton« is nothing but a decoy-duck for those obsessed with its division and the cleansing from the ethnically dirty ones to try something similar again. Such a political creation is a provocation for those who consider it anachronistic.

Although Britain is named as the subject of research already in the title, I dare to say – without wanting to refute the author's intention – that the book does not reveal the issue of the role, responsibility and guilt of Simms' homeland, but the issue of the role, responsibility and the guilt of the worlds' leaders for what they are doing now, and for what the outcome of current international events are going to be. This is not to say that the book did not hit its target, for it did, but that it hit it deeper and more broadly than the author himself announced in the preface. Even though the tragedy of Bosnia was more profound – it was destroyed as political entity and one of its peoples vanished as the victims of genocide –, the feasible tragedy the book points to, the dismemberment of the international community and the principles the world order rests on, as well as of peace, if this world continues to be lead by the people who decided on the fate of Bosnia, is much greater.

It is the architects of the Dayton accords – including those who decided to intervene almost four years after the beginning of the aggressions in Bosnia – to whom the authors' critical standpoint at the outset, argued in the first chapter »*No Intervention*: Defining Government Policy« pertains. If I am correct in this reading, if thus the Americans are also responsible for having waited so long in obedience to the Britons and others, before their intervention, then the immensity of the British government's responsibility is only confirmed thereby, as well as the responsibility held by its entire apparatus of experts for the effects of their policy of non-interventionism. The Americans could thus have intervened earlier. They cannot give

the blame for their own hesitation only to others, however. The role of Britain and other allies from the banana continent cannot be suffice as a justification. The Americans acted nevertheless, and in doing so proved that British caution of tragic (global) consequences caused by any intervention were ungrounded. This whole chain of events only increases the level of British responsibility. However, it does not reduce the level of American responsibility for their delay. Simms' explicit naming of the brightest British political minds as responsible for Bosnia does not mean that he believes the Americans of their own portion of responsibility. In fact, he even calls on his American colleagues to also write a book like his. The gap that did indeed exist between Britain and the US existed within the United States as well. »Non-interventionism« and arms embargo for the Bosnian government were two points underlying the British policy. But what is it that kept others from opposing that policy? For the sake of that the question, Simms' decision to call the policy of his own government into question is a manifesto to intellectuals – contemporary historians first of all – to question their own governments in the same manner.

What about French intellectuals, for instance? Why did France intervene in Rwanda already after eight weeks but was not ready for such an action in Bosnia after almost four years of war? One year alone, even in Bosnia, has 56 weeks.

With his book, Simms raised the issue of responsibility of his government for refusing to recognize the reality of the existence of the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but he also implicitly obliged American intellectuals to raise the question of responsibility in their own country for establishing the state of Bosnia in an unsustainable shape, making it necessary for the government to dismantle it as it is in order to make it possible for it to attain a sustainable shape at all. Dismantling Dayton's Bosnia is not the obligation of Bosnians, as Richard Holbrook asserts, but it is the duty of those who created it. If Simms had not implied this assertion in his book, and he did – at least this emerged in my reading of the book –, then his critique of the role of his own state in Bosnia's destruction would not make any sense.

The global message of the book is referred to our contemporary intellectual as such, and to the contemporary subject of his ideologized science, and not to any Simms' anxiety with Britain, or conservatives, or, even the more senseless – Douglas Hurd. The causes of the conflicts cannot be rooted in cultures, ethnic identities or religions. They lie somewhere much deeper. Islamophobia cannot necessarily replace Germanophobia or anti-Catholicism. Rather, it implies them. Or – more accurately – they are its assumption, and the consequences are overlooking »the distinction between aggressor and victim« (p. 25), »moral equivalence« (p. 26), the equation of »a major politico-military crisis in the middle of Europe with more remote African and Asian quarrels« (p. 23), laying »as much blame as possible on the Bosnian Muslims« (p. 29), and eventually, in tune with the theory on »bloody borders of Islam«, the »attempt to force the Bosnian government to accept the Owen-Stoltenberg partition plan« (p. 31). Why would the words by Sylvane Foa, the UNHCR spokeswoman, whom Simms quotes in order to question the policy of his own government, apply only for Britain and only for that time: »Does that mean Britain wants only children? Maybe you want only blond and blue-eyed children, maybe only children under six, only orphans?« (p. 36). Dayton Bosnia is nevertheless the fruit of fear. But it is also a source of fear, a scarecrow, and fear is the cause of any aggression and contention. If Bosnia is to be a fruit of the mind, the mind does not have to be used. It only has to be made to be what it used to be.

The divisions that unfolded in Bosnia still continue after the alliances have been set up in Iraq. Madeleine Albright, who was an advocate of the Bosnian cause and intervention, now opposes the American presence in Iraq. Al Gore, who was the most insistent advocate of the US taking the side of the »civilizationally distinctive« Bosnian Muslims next to Bill Clinton, today supports a candidate for the American presidency who opposes the war in Iraq. Margaret Thatcher opposed British non-interventionism throughout the tragedy in Bosnia and was exciting Americans to intervene. Those who just removed the regime of Saddam Hussein did not intervene against Milošević, who was supported by Saddam Hussein in his genocide against Bosnian Muslims. Disagreement about Bosnia and agreement about Iraq are not civilizational, but ethical issues, as well as being questions of expertise and competence. These issues are what the British-American alliance reduced to »the lowest common denominator« or rounds up to »the highest common denominator«. The Britons' fear of Huntingtonians' surmises that the intervention of the West on the side of the Bosnian government and against the Serbs could have provoked Russia to take the side of Serbia, starting a third World War, had its cause

in theoretical foolishness. »Russia's alleged Serbophilia« (p. 84) was merely a justification concealing the British lack of expertise on the circumstances in the Balkans and served as the justification for the morally doubtful view on non-interventionism. When they have to choose between Serbia and America, Russians do not care much about the civilization of Orthodoxy. The readers have to conclude for themselves in which cases the common denominator rests on ethical issues and on knowledge and in which cases these premises are missing.

It is astonishing to hear from a cynical British intellectual to what extent »Britain, in all her ancestral wisdom« (p. 90) was responsible for restraining America and NATO from intervention in Bosnia. For the same reason even the officials at the US State Department (George Kennedy, Marshall Harris, Jon Western, Stephen Walker, Warren Zimmermann) resigned. However, Simms' critique irresistibly reminds one of the role played by France and the responsibility of French intellectuals, some of whom, in the middle of the war, exhibitionistically drove through Sarajevo. Why did their intellectual and ethical interest for Bosnia cease as soon as the war had ended? Can the interest for the causes of the war and the role of those guilty and responsible for the Bosnian tragedy really abate as soon as *Chanel 5* and CNN cameras are turned off? It is true that there were those who obliterated the word »genocide« in both American and British administration, but it is also true that there were also in these governments those who used the word in documents and reports from the very beginning. When will we know of the French, American and other intellectuals who was the first in their countries to speak up against the genocide in Bosnia, and who disputed it? It was not difficult for a civilationally declared America to have preferred taking on the Bosnian cause before dealing with the question of Northern Ireland in its relationships with Britain, even despite the cleavage between »interventionists« and »isolationists« at home. But, why was it so difficult for France to make such a decision? Britain imperilled even NATO because of the American attitude to employ NATO troops to halt the tragedy in Bosnia – on the basis of principle, not civilizational ethics. But why were the other NATO state members not more engaged for the preservation of NATO, i.e. complied more readily to the American intention to employ NATO in Bosnia? Does that mean that these countries were ready to sacrifice NATO for the sake of Bosnia? These questions are not only relevant in Britain but ought to be raised by intellectuals in many countries. Disappointed in the principles their own alliance rests on, but also in the behaviour and practice of their own civilization, the US in tandem with Iran and other Muslim countries, were secretly arming the government in Sarajevo. (p. 121) This provides the room for intellectuals in other countries, by the declaration of which to join NATO has been accelerated because of Bosnia, to examine the role of their governments. In this way, Poland serves as a good example. Previously, NATO isolationism, in the period when intervention was the basic principle, paved a good foundation for engagement, though under American leadership, when principle-related reasons were not present. Today, Poland has a prominent presence in Iraq (at the time of writing – 2004), and it is partly due to the tragic Bosnian experience that Poland is in NATO. Mazowiecki and Michnik are not enough for a country like Poland.

The fourth chapter of Simms' book is entirely devoted to David Owen. As the author has written the book for the British public, he warns it that Owen and others were the public face of Britain. However, the message is much deeper, revealing how someone confident his own opinion can also be opposed to his own opinion if he becomes a part of – *Leviathan*. We, having lived in the states on the other side of the Iron Curtain know this very well. But we did not know that it can be so in democratic states as well. Hence, after he had seen »news coverage of Serbs concentration camps« (p. 135) in July 1992, and before he had become the EU mediator, Lord Owen wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, the *Evening Standard* and the *Press Association* in which he alleged that

it is no exaggeration to say that we are witnessing, 50 years on, scenes in Europe that mirror the early stages of the Nazi holocaust under the dreadful description of »ethnic cleansing«. I urge you not to accept the conventional wisdom that nothing can be done militarily. [...] The first essential step is to stop by threat of force the use or movement of any military aircraft, tanks, armoured vehicles or artillery in the former territory of Yugoslavia. It is perfectly within the power of NATO to enforce such a ceasefire. [...] If no action is taken now there will be virtually nothing left of Bosnia for the Muslims population to negotiate about. (p. 135f.)

In the immediate wake of his having been designated to the post of EU mediator, and after he went to take his opinion in his government, he addressed Bosnians at Sarajevo airport with these words: »Don't , don't, don't live under this dream that the West is going to come in and sort this problem out. Don't dream dreams.« (p. 138) This may have helped Bosnians, Bosniaks in particular, to begin dreaming of Americans. But, again, Simms' chapter on Lord Owen is, as I said, much deeper, and the message is addressed to Britons and Americans rather than to Bosnians: »Don't dream that the problems in Europe can be solved without Americans!« Or, more precisely, for it is deeper, and more fitting, if I understood him correctly: »Don't dream that Americans will solve the problems of the world only because you join them!«

One of the puzzling dilemmas in the course of the war in Bosnia was the purpose of the presence of international armed forces who were neither adequately armed nor authorized to intervene. Were soldiers – including among them British troops – in Bosnia in order to prepare and assess the probability of intervention or in order to deter it? This is the crucial question addressed by the fifth chapter. As far as Britons are concerned, Simms gives his take already in the first sentence. He is even more explicit on the moral side of the international »forces« – including British ones: The front cover of the book shows a photo displaying general Michael Rose, UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia throughout 1994, cordially shaking hands with general Ratko Mladić, currently indicted for war crimes and genocide. The chapter, however, raises a much graver question. General Rose, who has deemed »the Bosnians savages« – albeit he himself shook hand with one of them –, did not only consider himself several classes above them (p. 176), but he also opened the question of the cultural education of British officers in general. If British officers can conceive their political and ethical attitudes on »anti-Muslim« and »anti-Catholic« (p. 178) prejudices, then there must be some British intellectuals who stand behind such opinions. It certainly raises irresistible question whether officers in Catholic and Orthodox NATO member states pass through strategic briefings imbuing them with anti-protestant prejudices? If this is so, as I understood the message to be from this chapter, then the world should be scared of those who are to safeguard us, no matter whether we are Muslims, Catholics, Protestants or Orthodox. Perhaps we ought to fear most those who are actually designing NATO. »Indeed, Rose's memoirs are peppered with Natophobic statements which sound extraordinary on the lips of a British general.« (p. 203)

The most entertaining part of the book is the one I deem the most essential as well: the chapter on experts. If Americans are responsible for the political monster made in Dayton, that is today called Bosnia and Herzegovina, if then the Dayton constitution of BiH is due to the good will of Americans to halt the war, if their will followed upon the four years dealy of intervention, if the late American intervention is due to NATO, and behind NATO stand Britain and Britain means the government of John Major and foreign secretary Douglas Hurd, then further there must be experts, i.e. intellectuals, who stood behind that government – just as behind the Serbs genocide in Bosnia there stood Serbian intellectuals. The case of Bosnia has – as is proved by the role played by Britain in its destruction – compromised those who are called experts and intellectuals. Simms directs his critique of the role of Britain at the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary, but he does not neglect to highlight that behind their decisions stood experts – and institutes. Whereas the concentration of power (and money) in the military sector in this country, as in other sectors after all, belongs towards the concentration of expertise in this sector, it is logical to presume that this expertise ensures relevant premises for political answers to be given and decisions to be taken.

When John Major asked his experts how many soldiers would be needed in order to separate the three parties in Bosnia, the answer was 400,000. (p. 224) It is correct that experts are often used by people of power to justify their faulty decisions, but it is also accurate that experts are often more anxious about power than about the truth. As intellectuals cannot be justification for politicians' catastrophic moves, so intellectuals cannot remain without moral and competent responsibility for their ideas on the basis of which someone in power acts, or does not act. Moreover, their ideas are perhaps more responsible than the moves ensuing from them.

If I were the citizen of a political arrangement protected by NATO, and used the knowledge of experts such as those who were deciding on the fate of Bosnia, then I would feel just as insecure as when I was assaulted by the army that was supposed to defend me because it had been consulted by intellectuals who were supposed to be wise – and moral. The case of Omer,

alias John, alias Jovan Zametica, lecturer at the training courses of the British government and afterwards adviser to Radovan Karadžić, speaks for itself. Perhaps »the lack of sensitivity in official circles« (p. 228) for the nationalisms in the Balkans does not deserve Simms' irony, but I do nevertheless understand him when it comes to the »prestigious International Institute for Strategic Studies« and its deputy director Michael Dewar. Opposed to any intervention in Bosnia, the expert for Strategic Studies Colonel Dewar estimated that it would need 500,000 soldiers. (p. 229) »He did not say how many troops it would take to defeat Greater Serbia, but, extrapolating from the Bosnian case, he must have had a truly astronomical figure in mind. [...] One would naturally assume that he knew what he was talking about.« (pp. 229-231)

Of course, we now know where Major's impressions of the Balkans and their »ancient hatreds« came from. Charles Dick, lecturer at the Royal Military Academy offered an expert's assessment: »The Slavic nationalities of former Yugoslavia are tribal societies, governed more by their emotions than their intellects.« (p. 231) It is hard to believe that South Slaves, even after the period of very emotional governments, would choose a government of Dick's intellect. John Keegan, a lecturer of Military History and journalist, also »anthropologized« the war in Bosnia, calling it »a primitive tribal conflict, of a sort known to a handful of anthropologists«. (p. 234) If the genocide in Bosnia was a tribal conflict, then civilized people indeed ought to fear the conflicts in which civilized societies would be taking part. The advisor to Lord Owen, former British Ambassador in Belgrade, Sir Peter Hall, wrote to the Prime Minister: »Prime Minister, the first thing you have to know about this people is that they like going around cutting each other's heads off.« (p. 241) Sir Hall, of course, does not know that the homicide rate in his then-host country (Yugoslavia, including Serbia) while he was in his post in Belgrade was lower than the rate in his own country according to the UN data. [3]

And, while American experts were resigning because of the continued American policy of non-interventionism or were continuing to stand for it, there were no such cases in the Foreign Office.

The advent of the Bosnian war found the Foreign Office unprepared. [...] There was also a shortage of regional expertise. [...] Those regional experts who were available tended to be pro-Serb, supporters of engagement with Milošević (i.e., appeasement), or at least equally sceptical of all sides. (p. 240f.)

Nothing more could have been expected from British experts in Belgrade: »The Serbophilia of the Belgrade embassy and the ›old Balkan hands‹ was something remarked upon by visiting journalists.« (p. 241) These few lines are to be read in a mere book! No interpretation could be enough.

Ivor Roberts himself [British Ambassador in Belgrade from 1994, DS] – who was only executing government policy – claims that he was engaging in »analysis« not »apology«. Robert was instructed, as he put it, »to get inside Milošević's head and find out what his real bottom lines were.« (p. 242)

In the next sentence, however, the point of Simms' critique is contained – not the critique of Roberts himself, but the critique of the British »analysis« of the Bosnian question and the critique of »analysis« of experts as such, those who were grasping nothing.

Yet the criticism – and the defence – both miss the point. The problem was not the apologia, or the morality, but the analysis, which hinged on the assumption that Milošević – who was primarily responsible of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia – could be corralled into some sort of acceptable behaviour, and that he *might* be part of a stable solution, however unjust. (p. 242)

Take note: Milošević is not mentioned as responsible for the war in Slovenia – which had been entirely unnecessary, illegitimate, and illegal –, but is held entirely responsible for the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. Neither the American, nor certainly the British administration were capable of such an analysis. Nor could many British experts or institutes for strategic studies arrive at such an analysis. Milošević could have been even less responsible for the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and the Slovenian »Blitz-Krieg« than others, and yet he could have been the principal offender for the wars and crimes in Croatia and Bosnia. In contrast, British and American experts strived to include him in finding a solution and to preserve him by non-intervention and by the arms embargo. Eventually, they included him among the architects of

the Dayton accords. This means that – depending on this review's time of publication, whether before or after Milošević's sentence in the Hague –, that the Dayton accords, and that also means by result Dayton's Bosnia, is the result of the one charged with or sentenced for genocide, and those who worked with him!

Another distinctive approach to the solution of the Yugoslav question requires intellectuals to whom the truth is more important than political will. The expert and deputy director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Colonel Michael Dewar, the same one who opposed the intervention strategically advising that it would be necessary to deploy half a million soldiers in Bosnia alone, said on October 1992:

My view is that military intervention is perfectly feasible from a military point of view and that Douglas Hurd and others, for entirely political reasons, are fighting shy of saying that it is viable. What they mean is that it is not politically desirable. (p. 272)

And Simms, ironically, adds: »This time, he knew what he was talking about.« (p. 272) The question is whether (not including Dewar [!], who lives already with his questions and conscience) British intellectuals have to say something for themselves in the aftermath of Bosnia.

Diplomats, journalists and professors knew that military intervention was viable, and they knew that politicians knew that as well. They also knew that such an option was not advisable, for it was not politically desirable. But does that mean that they desired what was happening in Bosnia? The Hague trials are taking place today not only for the immediate crimes committed, but also for command responsibility as well. Will experts ever be tried for the results of their expert responsibility – in their associations as experts at least? Have any expert associations raised the question of expert responsibility by its members – for genocide?

The seventh chapter of Simms' book is devoted to the role played by the Parliament and media in the destruction of Bosnia. It is taken for granted that politicians are intellectuals. Members of parliaments, i.e. the legislative part of Montesquieu's tripartite authority, are supposed to be the *crème de la crème* of the political creation called a state. The parliament of the state made by the Dayton accords, Bosnia-Herzegovina, is another case. In Bosnia, people are entertained by and laugh at their MP's and their meetings, the laws passed by which enter into force largely only by the approval of the High Representative. Admittedly, people should, at least according to Jefferson, be laughing at themselves, since it is the people themselves who elected and mandated this parliament to spend lavish amounts of money from their taxes. Since reading Simms' book, however, I see that the British people also have to laugh at their own MP's and at themselves.

While the »American lawmakers« (p. 273) in Congress corroborated »the strength of their beliefs on Bosnia« and that »Bosnia was no small far-off country for them«, »no such debate took place in Britain«. (p. 274) On the contrary, in spite of some honourable exemptions (Sir Patrick Cormack), it was Bob Wareing, known as »Slob-a-Bob«, who was sominated the atmosphere in the House of Commons. Although he strove, by his later pro-Croatian attitudes, to alleviate his »pro-Serb« image, he undoubtedly confirmed what a British legislator thinks about genocide and ethnic cleansing by his trip to the part of Bosnia under Serb control immediately after Srebrenica and a meeting with Mladić and Karadžić. For the comfort of British tax-payers (and only them), he was suspended in 1997 for expenses of his paid by Serbian companies. (p. 277) It is hard to believe in democracy after the »developed democracies« committed such fatal errors as those made in Bosnia. I beg readers not to resent that I do not cite at all what was said in Parliament about Bosnia and Bosniaks. Such citations can be read in Simms' book or at least in the seventh chapter. For someone coming from Bosnia, and even being a Bosniak, it is beneath my dignity to quote such prejudices and ignorance. After all, perhaps these are »interacting tribal affairs and ancient rivalries« between British MP's and a handful of British intellectuals such as Simms. (p. 283)

It is of special importance for the Bosnian public to learn a bit more about the attitudes held by Paddy Ashdown at the time, now the High Representative, a man playing a very difficult role in which he has to pretend that he is not the governor of Bosnia. Although welcomed by Bosnian liberals as a friend of Bosnia and themselves (although the liberal party has mainly one member, even though there are even two liberal parties!), Ashdown only in »1995 became an advocate of ‚lift and strike‘ (along with almost everybody else)«. (p. 296)

»Unlike the United States, the British government did not come under sustained and irre-

sistible pressure from the press.« (p. 300) With some exceptions, such as *The Independent*, the media was trying to ensure a »moral equivalence of the antagonists«. (p. 302) Moreover, it seemed at times that it was tempted to claim that the Croatian and Bosnian side made mistakes in order to let the reality on the ground provide support for the already formed preconceptions on the equal responsibility of the war parties. If Croats did make mistakes and committed crimes it helped those who were claiming from the beginning that »all are the same there«, as if it did not matter who started the war, who perpetrated crimes and what sort of crimes, and who did not want a peaceful and just solution. It seemed that the carriers of the balanced approach were only more eagerly awaiting the news about Bosniak crimes against Serbs and Croats than about Croat crimes. And they got them. Senseless preconceptions about Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, and indestructible prejudices about the eternal historical responsibility of one party and the eternal heroism and legitimacy of the others were nurtured by the mistakes on the Croat and Bosniak side. The refusal to support the idea of intervention while there was still time, and to allow Bosnians to defend themselves was largely unfamiliar to the British press. There was no moral dilemma about that. Only the *Daily Telegraph* was capable of assessing analytically the consequences of the arms embargo as direct support to the »Serb aggressor«. (p. 304)

Disappointed in intellectuals, Simms consoles himself that this is not the first time intellectuals betrayed themselves. He cites Julien Benda and his *La Trahison des clercs* about intellectuals who »abandon the universal values of the Enlightenment in favour of nationalism, racism and the exaltation of the strong over the weak«, and adds:

Similar criticism might be made of the response of many British intellectuals to aggression and ethnic cleansing in Croatia and Bosnia. [...] »Treasonable clerks« were to be found on the left, on the right and in the centre of the political spectrum. [...] The result of this was a kind of renewed Grand Alliance between intellectuals of the left and the right. [...] The fact that some intellectuals – especially on the left – were prepared to »understand« Serb aggression and ethnic cleansing in the light of »history« is a striking example of the »treason« described by Julien Benda some seventy years earlier: the abandonment of universalist values for a worldview based on custom, history, the past [...] in opposition to the rights of reason. (p. 306, p. 307, p. 311, p. 312)

The last chapter, under the metaphoric-ironic title *Reckoning*, is a word of caution to the political mind to the consequences of beginning with prejudices. The attitudes towards Bosnia and Serbia respectively could have cost Britain even its partnership with America.

By early 1995, British policy on Bosnia had reached a complete dead end. [...] Indeed, the Major administration insisted that Britain should not only abandon the legitimate Bosnian government to its fate, but that it should do all in its power to prevent the Americans from coming to its aid, even at the price of a catastrophic transatlantic rift. (p. 314)

Today, while listening to the debates about the role of the UN, and the then-Secretary General, the unfortunate Dutch battalion, and the distressed Japanese Yasushi Akashi, the revelation that everything around Srebrenica was perhaps known for months before it took place comes as an alleviation. British officer C.A. le Hardy warned that »Srebrenica has to be dealt with before the situation further deteriorates«. (p. 316) If the writer of these lines were to fall down to the level of the prejudices from which Britain and Europe by and large looked at the Bosnian tragedy, then I could shout: they all knew about everything! Or even better: they are all same there! Or, the best: we are all the same! Clearly, if the political mind upon which current Europe rests has such low standards in either expertise or morals, or both, then Srebrenica and the genocide in Bosnia should worry the EU more than the Spanish Civil War worried the League of Nations. Otherwise, few anarchistic letters will further be more important for Europe than the arrest of Karadžić and Mladić. The dreams of genocide, ethnic cleansing and great political neighbours »will not simply go away. It needs high level attention.« (p. 316) Let us use the words of an experienced intelligence officer.

The moral consequences of the international community failure, from which Britain should not be exempted, are even more catastrophic. Lone voices meant a lot, but were not decisive. Newt Gingrich, the Republican leader, maintained that »the entire world's honour« was

being ruined in Bosnia; the former Prime Minister to Poland and then-UN rapporteur on Human Rights Tadeusz Mazowiecki resigned after Srebrenica; Tony Lake, the national Security Advisor, reiterated that »this is larger than Bosnia. [...] Bosnia has become and is the symbol of US foreign policy.« (p. 324f.) Nevertheless, it was Srebrenica that made the American decision to intervene. Thousands of Bosnian Muslim boys and men had to be executed in one single massacre in order for the West to decide putting an end to the genocide. Two questions which inevitably arise from this are: First, why were 200,000 victims before Srebrenica not moral reason enough for an intervention in Bosnia? Does that mean that 200,000 people being killed systematically in the course of few years is less morally questionable than 8,000 men killed in a few days? Second, what would have happened if Srebrenica had not happened? Would the genocide have gone on in a morally more acceptable way, systematically, in consecutive portions of time, and in respective numerical portions acceptable for European moral standards, up to the utter extermination and ethnic/religious cleansing of Bosnian Muslims/Bosniaks? I know that there are no answers to these questions, but that is no reason not to raise them.

I am not sure that the intervention – the opponents of the intervention do not deserve to be mentioned from an ethical point of view – provoked by a crime that cannot be compared even with Guernika, released even those who intervened from moral responsibility. Srebrenica remains an ethical warning also for those who changed their opinions after it occurred.

Nor was France released from responsibility after Jacques Chirac condemned the West's hesitation and compared it with Chamberlain's and Daladier's talks with Hitler in Munich. Srebrenica remains the shame of the French as well as of the entire world as much as the British, in so far as there is still honour in politics. And it must be, for »only those who share the virtue of shame can deal with politics« (Protagoras). Otherwise, neither Britain nor France will have any chances greater than the one Bosnia had.

Interventions in Bosnia, as well as the later one in Serbia for the sake of Kosovo were not adequate responses by the West to what was and is happening in Serbia. The perpetrators of the genocide in Bosnia must by no means be rewarded with the division of this unhappy country. The bombardment of Serbia must by no means have as an aim the establishment of the protectorate only over Kosovo. The removal from power of Milošević is not the solution of the problem, for Milošević is not the center of the problem. The problem of the Balkans is nationalism. There is only one solution for its deepest, fascist layer. The moment for it to be applied was missed. That is why Balkanization is still on the agenda both in Europe and the Balkans.

I would happily say of Brendan Simms' book that it is a good book on Bosnia, but I cannot – it is the best book on the issue of Bosnia I have ever read! I would also very gladly say that it is the best book for patriotic reasons, but I cannot. It is the best book not because of its content and subject, but because of the method applied in it. If deduction and induction are modes or methods used by our mind in comprehending and elucidating reality, then a deductive-inductive method is the peak of such a mode on the road toward the truth. However, without the intention to declare what is primary in this syntagma – the deductive or the inductive –, since I do not know, I have to say that it is most important in mere deduction to start not from theoretical generalities, but from what lies the basis of the theory – the philosophical general or in this case ethics –, no matter how non-scientific that might sound. Simms' starting point in his exploration on Bosnia is an ethical one, moreover a generally ethical one, which is the essential element enabling the author to reach the truth, even when considering an elementary piece of the mosaic called Bosnia. The book is thus historiographical. Moreover, this is a textbook of historiographic science. I would recommend it to every MA or doctoral student, and in particular those who in their search for impartial, balanced approaches, depart from the facts that corroborate that in Bosnia all were doing crimes, and arrive to the conclusion that in Bosnia all committed crimes. However, the book is methodologically much higher. Owing to its starting point it is also a philosophy of history. I do not know if there is something like that, after G.W.F. Hegel and his philosophy of history, but I propose this book to be proclaimed the basis of a new discipline – the philosophy of modern historiography. This is indeed a philosophy based on facts. Or, even better, the book is a textbook on facts which cannot be understood without philosophy. Simms' book proves that science is not any morally neutral *'art pour l'art'*, and that morality is the assumption of truth. If science is anxious about the truth – something that I do not have any doubts about, even in the case of those justifying the crime by equalizing the victim and criminal – then it has to start from morality in order to make



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morality the purpose of the truth, i.e. its own purpose. Otherwise, it – and it is pretentious – will serve only itself, or, even more often, Evil.

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