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NATO's Rape of Yugoslavia

By Stephen Lendman

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March 24, 1999 will go down in history as a day of infamy. US-led NATO raped Yugoslavia. Doing so was its second major combat operation.

It was lawless aggression. No Security Council resolution authorized it. NATO's Operation Allied Force lasted 78 days.

Washington called it Operation Noble Anvil. Evil best describes it. On June 10, operations ended.

From March 1991 through mid-June 1999, Balkan wars raged. Yugoslavia "balkanized" into seven countries. They include Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia.

Enormous human suffering was inflicted. Washington bears most responsibility.

Diana Johnstone's book titled "Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions" is a definitive account of what happened.

Claims about Milosevic's "Greater Serbia" ambitions were false. Washington-led wars wanted Yugoslavia balkanized. Germany was very much involved.

Both countries encouraged cessation. They provoked conflict. After ravaging and destroying Yugoslavia, they took credit for ending it.

Milosevic wanted Yugoslavia's disintegration prevented. He wanted minority Serbs protected. Johnstone said Washington's aims included:

- preventing a European-backed settlement;
- "assert(ing) its dominance over European allies in the arbitration of European conflicts;"
- expanding NATO through a new "out of area" humanitarian mission (aka US dominated colonization); and
- "gain(ing) influence in the Muslim world by championing the Bosnian Muslims."

She called "government by international bureaucracy (a) new trend in the New World Order."

After the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Dayton Accords), "Bosnia-Herzegovina (was) ruled by a complicated set of local authorities under the strict supervision of a 'High Representative' (a contemporary Proconsul or Viceroy) who can, and does, annul laws adopted by the local democratic institutions or dismiss democratically chosen officials" not supportive of US imperial aims, said Johnstone.

In other words, democracy was verboten. It prevented from emerging. Washington rules were instituted. Colonization ended Yugoslavia's market socialism experiment.

Predatory free-market harshness replaced it. Complete with IMF-imposed financial terrorism. In October 1998, a NATO air verification mission was agreed to for Kosovo.

In November, Milosevic agreed to a framework political settlement. A second Verification Mission was established to assure compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions 1160 and 1199.

The former banned arms sales to Serbia. It imposed economic sanctions. The latter ordered both sides in Kosovo to end hostilities and observe a ceasefire.

The so-called February 1999 Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo (the Rambouillet Agreement) was prelude for war.

It was an ultimatum Milosevic couldn't accept. It was designed for rejection. It was a take-it-or-leave-it demand.

It ordered Milosevic to surrender Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) sovereignty to a NATO occupation force.

It demanded unimpeded access to its land, airspace and territorial waters, as well as any area or facility therein.

It required the FRY to let NATO freely operate outside federal law. Demanding it was outrageous. Milosevic's justifiable refusal became pretext for war.

It followed mercilessly. Nobel laureate Harold Pinter denounced what happened.

He called US-led bombing and dismemberment of Yugoslavia "barbaric (and despicable), another blatant and brutal assertion of US power using NATO as its missile (to consolidate) American domination of Europe."

For 78 days, around 600 aircraft flew about 3,000 sorties. Thousands of tons of ordnance were dropped, as well as hundreds of ground-launched cruise missiles. Up to then, its ferocity was unprecedented.

Nearly everything was struck. Massive destruction and disruption followed. Known or suspected military sites were targeted.

So were civilian sites and infrastructure unrelated to military operations. They included:

- power plants;
- factories;
- civilian transportation;
- telecommunications facilities;
- roads, bridges and rail lines;
- fuel depots;
- schools;
- a TV station;
- China's Belgrade embassy willfully on a false pretext (claiming a mistake didn't wash);
- hospitals;
- government offices;

- churches;
- historic landmarks; and more.

Cities, villages and other areas were struck throughout the country. NATO began running out of targets. It didn't matter. Bombing continued relentlessly.

It was willful, lawless aggression. Horrendous war crimes were committed unaccountably. Humanitarian disaster followed.

Outrageous claims about humanitarian intervention were fraudulent. Washington claimed another imperial trophy. The former Yugoslavia no longer exists.

An estimated \$100 billion in damage was inflicted. Environmental contamination was extensive.

Large numbers were killed, injured or displaced. Two million people lost their livelihoods. Many their homes and communities. Most their futures.

Serbia's sovereign Kosovo territory was lost. It's now US/NATO occupied territory. It's home to Camp Bondsteel. It's one of America's largest military bases.

Kosovo is run by Hashim Thaci. He's a former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright protege.

In 2000, she ordered then chief Hague prosecutor Carla del Ponte to exclude his name from a list of suspected war criminals.

He's a street thug posing as prime minister. He's nicknamed "The Snake" for good reason.

Former Clinton Balkans envoy Robert Gelbard called him and likeminded figures "terrorists."

Former US DEA official Michael Levine said:

He has known organized crimes ties. "The KLA (he formerly headed) is tied in with every known Middle and Far Eastern drug cartel."

"Interpol, Europol, and nearly every European intelligence and counter-narcotics agency have files open on drug syndicates that lead right to the KLA"

He remains unindicted. Washington, EU nations and UN officials elevated him to power.

He's a former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) commander. Post-war, he usurped power. He took control of many municipalities.

It doesn't matter. He's Washington's man in Kosovo. He runs it like a crime family. Friends in high places support him.

Washington and complicit EU partners opened an avenue to Eurasia. A permanent US military presence was established where it previously didn't exist. It serves America's broader imperial agenda.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria followed. So does slow-motion genocide in Palestine. Iran's turn awaits.

Washington's dirty hands want Venezuela's democratically elected government ousted. Obama's war on humanity continues.

Russia is in the eye of the storm. Global war is threatened. Neocons infest Washington. They influence administration and congressional policy.

What's ongoing bears eerie resemblance to events preceding WW I. Barbara Tuchman's "The Guns of August" explained its beginning and early weeks.

One thing led to others. Events spun out-of-control. Deadly consequences followed. Before it ended, over 20 million died. Many more were wounded and/or maimed. An entire generation of youth was lost.

Weapons used then were toys compared to now. A possible armageddon end times scenario looms. Irresponsible leaders risk it. Mainstream media support what demand opposition.

History has a disturbing way of repeating. George Santayana famous dictum is forgotten. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," he said.

George Bernard Shaw once said: "We learn from history that we learn nothing from history."

Damn fools run things now like before. Today's super-weapons make earlier ones seem like toys.

Crazies act like nuclear missiles and bombs are king-sized hand grenades. Humanity's fate hangs in the balance.

Will Ukraine become a flashpoint for East/West confrontation. Will something erupt making Yugoslavia's destruction look insignificant by comparison?

Will Washington neocon extremists challenge Russia belligerently? Will mainstream media support them? Will public outrage fail to materialize?

Will potential armageddon be risked? Will never again really happen this time? Einstein once said he didn't know what WW III weapons would be used.

"WW IV will be fought with sticks and stones," he said. Bertrand Russell was an Einstein contemporary.

“Shall we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war,” he asked? It’s the only way to live in peace. The alternative risks annihilation.

The choice is clear. The wrong one assures potential disaster. America heads humanity dangerously toward it. Either we end wars or they’ll end us. There’s no in between.

A Final Comment

The late Michael Mandel (1948 – 2013) was among a group of law professors wanting justice. They filed war crimes charges against numerous Western officials and complicit allies.

They did so at International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Notable US ones charged included Bill Clinton, Madeleine Albright, William Cohen and General Wesley Clark.

European ones included Tony Blair, Robin Cook, George Robertson, Javier Solana, Jamie Shea, and numerous others – 68 in all.

On February 22, 2000, in his testimony before Canada’s House of Commons, Mandel explained he “specialize(d) in criminal law and comparative law with an emphasis on domestic and foreign tribunals.”

He got involved because of the outrageous “killing and maiming of innocent people for what were purely self-interested motives.”

He called it “the farthest thing from humanitarianism.” NATO’s war was illegal, he stressed. Force is justified only in self-defense or when Security Council authorized.

He explained relevant UN Charter provisions. They leave no ambiguity. They were systematically violated. So was the NATO Treaty and Canadian law.

The NATO Treaty Preamble states:

“The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments.”

“Article 1: The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.”

“Article 7: This treaty does not affect, and shall not be interpreted as affecting in any way the rights and obligations under the charter of the Parties which are members of the United Nations, or the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security.”

The Canada Defense Act states:

- “31. (1) the Governor in Council may place the Canadian forces or any component, unit or other element thereof on active service anywhere in or beyond Canada at any time when it appears advisable to do so.
- (a) by reason of an emergency, for the defence of Canada; or
- (b) in consequence of any action undertaken by Canada under the United Nations Charter, the North Atlantic treaty or any other similar instrument for collective defence that may be entered into by Canada.”

Mandel was unequivocal saying:

“The illegality of NATO’s war on Yugoslavia is not disputed by any legal scholar of repute, even those who had some sympathy for the war”

“NATO has no humanitarian lessons to teach the world,” he stressed.

“Much more plausible than the humanitarian thesis is the one that the United States deliberately provoked this war, that it deliberately exploited and exacerbated another country’s tragedy for purely selfish (political) and economic” reasons.

It ravaged and destroyed a country for power and profit. War crimes charges against culpable officials are warranted.

Grave international law breaches were committed. No Western or complicit official was held accountable. Justice remains denied.