

This is Google's cache of <http://www.fpif.org/fpifxt/6016>. It is a snapshot of the page as it appeared on 12 Dec 2009 21:24:12 GMT. The [current page](#) could have changed in the meantime. [Learn more](#)

These search terms are highlighted: **why yugoslavia still matters**

[Text-only version](#)

Foreign Policy In Focus



FPIF Strategic Dialogue

Strategic Dialogue: Yugoslavia



John Feffer and Ed Herman | April 6, 2009

Editor: Emily Schwartz Greco

Foreign Policy In Focus

www.fpif.org

As part of our strategic dialogue on Yugoslavia, [Ed Herman](#) and [John Feffer](#) contributed two viewpoints on the atrocities committed in that region 10 years ago. Here are their responses.

Reply to John Feffer by Ed Herman:

John Feffer uses the word "revisionism" or "revisionist" 16 times in his critique of my work on Yugoslavia. This is curious, as IPS and FPIF are supposedly dedicated to offering "unconventional wisdom," which clearly ought to "revise" conventional and established opinion. But Feffer's own analysis is hard to distinguish from that of Richard Holbrooke, Madeleine Albright, Michael Ignatieff, and the editors of *The New York Times*. Like them, he always makes the United States and NATO responsive to the actions of the evil Milosevic.

"The Clinton administration was dragged kicking and screaming into involvement in the conflict... Later, of course, the Clinton administration backed the Croatian army in its terrifying turning of the tables and bombed Belgrade to put an end to the Kosovo crisis." This is nonsense from beginning to end — the Clinton gang sabotaged a series of peace accords from 1992 till November 1995, as documented by Lord David Owen; the open design of the ICTY from 1992-1993 was to go after the Serbs in NATO war service; the Croatian "turning of the tables" was a long-planned operation to ethnically cleanse all Serbs from Croatia; and the U.S. underwrote the KLA, did nothing to end the Kosovo crisis by any peaceful means, and ended up, no doubt coincidentally, with its largest military base in Europe (Bondsteel in Kosovo).

Feffer makes my revisionism an effort to rehab Milosevic's reputation. This is as untrue as a claim that my critiques of the Vietnam War were to rehab Ho Chi Minh's reputation. The issues are twofold: truth, and the closely related desire not to allow a falsification of history to cover over Western policies no more defensible than those in Vietnam or Iraq, and to prevent the false showing that "humanitarian intervention" can work. In his own way, Feffer makes this false showing, claiming that Serbia is better off than earlier (which is completely untrue), and ignoring the sorry state of Bosnia and mafia-drug and women-trade capital Kosovo.

Feffer contests my claim that the Milosevic-Serb quest for a "Greater Serbia" is a fraud. My first argument is that the ICTY prosecutor, Geoffrey Nice, shocked the judges by conceding that this claim was untrue and that what Milosevic wanted was to prevent the dismantling of Yugoslavia, and if that wasn't possible, allowing Serbs to stay in one country. My second point was that Milosevic supported at least seven peace proposals from 1991 through Dayton in late 1995 that would have involved Serbs staying outside any "Greater Serbia." A third point was that Serbia was unique in the Yugoslav Republics in not doing any ethnic cleansing within its own borders. This isn't compatible with the theory of a Belgrade-based Serb drive for ethnic purification.

Feffer never mentions or contests any of these substantive points. He does, however, note that in making the third point I cite Mihailo Marković, and Feffer spends three paragraphs denouncing him, but never addressing or contesting the empirically valid point that Marković is making and that Milosevic uses.

Support FPIF



You Might Also Like:

Related Coverage of Europe

[Postcard from...Tirana](#)

Nov 16, 2009

[Postcard From...Dublin](#)

Sep 8, 2009

[The European Loser](#)

Aug 27, 2009

Related Coverage of Military Issues

[Poets for Peace](#)

Dec 2, 2009

[Bush-Style Military Spending Not Over Yet](#)

Nov 25, 2009

[Fort Hood: The War at Home](#)

Nov 20, 2009

I urge readers of the dialogue to consult my article with Peterson, whose points John Feffer ignores or misrepresents. "[The Dismantling of Yugoslavia](#)," *Monthly Review*, October, 2007.

Reply to Ed Herman, by John Feffer:

In his apologia for Serbian war crimes, Edward Herman displays a well-trained eye for media analysis and a remarkable blindness to everything else.

As I argue in [Why Yugoslavia Still Matters](#), all sides committed atrocities in the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Every reputable analyst of the situation readily acknowledges these facts. But by quoting selectively and choosing only the observers that bolster his argument, Herman manages to construct an alternative universe in which Serbian military forces only acted in defense, Slobodan Milosevic was a benevolent Gorbachev figure, and the international legal community functioned as some kind of adjunct to NATO. Such a picture is as nonsensical as the demonization of all Serbs that Herman rightly criticizes.

Let's start with Milosevic himself. Herman shows a singular talent for deconstructing the propaganda of the West and swallowing uncritically the propaganda of others. So Slobodan Milosevic made a few speeches calling for "tolerance" toward other nations. You can find such lovely appeals in the speeches of all authoritarian leaders. What matters are the policies, not the words. Milosevic made his speeches even as he was whipping up anti-Albanian sentiment within Serbia. Later he would urge the maintenance of Yugoslavia while boycotting Slovenian goods and, after that, letting loose the army and secret police to kill Croats and Bosnians. But he also had no problems working with Croatian strongman Franjo Tudjman when it suited his purposes — when, for instance, the two met secretly in 1991 to craft the Karadjordjevo agreement on dividing up Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia. Later he even distanced himself from Bosnian Serbs because they wouldn't follow his orders. He had no allegiances but to himself.

Milosevic was a brutal and banal man who surrounded himself with toadies and apparatchiks, set into motion the nationalist forces that eventually tore the country apart, and then put on a sad and self-serving display at his trial in The Hague. He was the last great hope of unified Yugoslavia in the same way that Konstantin Chernenko was the last great hope of a unified Soviet Union. His reputation is as little in need of rehabilitation as Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet's.

Let's now turn to the demonization of the Serbs themselves. When a war lets loose demons, as the conflicts in the Yugoslavia did in the 1990s, it's not surprising that demonization takes place as well. We have to be careful to distinguish between the actions of state, army, and paramilitaries and the actions of millions of ordinary Serbs. Herman dances a remarkable two-step. First he ignores all the Serbs who opposed and criticized their government's policies and their army's actions. Second, he bends over backwards to excuse the deplorable actions of Serbian soldiers in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Were these actions at times inflated in the Western media? Perhaps: just as the violence committed by U.S. soldiers in Iraq has occasionally been inflated in the non-Western press. But through this fog of war reporting, Serbia like the United States was the aggressor state, and Serbian paramilitaries instigated violence. Did Bosnia attack Serbia and try to absorb its Muslim-dominated Sandzak region? Did Croatia shell Belgrade on behalf of Croats living there? No, it was the Milosevic government that waged war against Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, using the largely spent ideology of "Yugoslavia" to justify its actions.

It was certainly an embarrassment for the Bosnian government when the two alleged victims of Borislav Herak turned out to be living in a Sarajevo suburb. But this appalling miscarriage of justice doesn't somehow wipe away all the evidence collected at The Hague for killings and ethnic cleansings committed by Bosnian Serb forces in Srebrenica, Sarajevo, and elsewhere. On the numbers of dead at Srebrenica, Herman is simply out of date, as I detail in my initial essay. He tries to dismiss the DNA evidence by arguing that it was compiled by the Bosnian government. In fact, the evidence has been compiled by the [International Commission on Missing Persons](#). Although headquartered in Sarajevo, it is an independent organization with international staff and international funding.

On the prison camps, Herman makes it seem as though the journalists John Burns and Roy Gutman constructed this narrative by themselves. But in fact the camps are well-documented: from eyewitnesses, the reporting of other journalists, and work done by Helsinki Watch and the UN. As for the Markale Market massacre in Sarajevo, the canard that the Bosnian government shelled its own citizens to gain world sympathy has circulated for some time in the conspiracy underground. In 2004, the judges at The Hague reviewed all the evidence, including new data, and convicted Stanislav Galic, commander of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps of the Republika Srpska Army, of the crime. Herman also neglects to mention that, this particular controversy aside, Bosnian Serb shelling of Sarajevo [resulted](#) in 10,000 deaths in the city, including 1,800 children.

I'm not sure what mainstream propaganda Herman was reading when he concluded that the mass killings of Serbs during World War II were "blacked out." Every reputable book about Yugoslavia treats the Croatian Ustasha period and details the atrocities committed against Serbs. It would also

perhaps complicate Herman's own black-and-white reading of history to find out that the Chetniks, in addition to being quite ruthless themselves when given half a chance, also collaborated with the Nazis when circumstances dictated (see Philip Cohen's *Serbia's Secret War*).

And Herman writes as if only he is revealing for the first time the atrocities committed by the men under Bosniak leader Naser Oric. Did Herman read David Rohde's *Endgame*? Mark Danner's pieces in the *New York Review of Books*? More importantly, Herman seems to forget that Bosnia was under siege, that Serb forces had surrounded the towns of Sarajevo, Srebrenica, and Gorazde and were trying to starve them into submission. Herman seems to forget how the Bosnian conflict broke out in the first place, when the Serbian paramilitaries, including the criminal leader Arkan and his Tigers, crossed into Bosnia to begin ethnic cleansing. Only then did Oric and other Bosniaks begin to arm themselves in response. But the Bosnian army was always out-gunned and out-manned.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) isn't a perfect institution. But it was by no means an extension of NATO. It tried and convicted Croats for war crimes, and the Croatian army was the closest thing to an ally that NATO had in the region. It's a rare occasion when justice is meted out after a conflict as horrendous as what happened in former Yugoslavia. One can argue with this or that verdict. But in general, the ICTY investigators worked long and hard and in as balanced a way given the circumstances. The United States was by no means always cooperative. When chief prosecutor Carla Del Ponte pressed CIA Director George Tenet to work harder at apprehending Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, he [replied](#) "Look, Madame, I don't give a shit what you think."

Let me repeat: All sides in the Yugoslav war committed atrocities. As the region known as Yugoslavia creates a future for itself, an honest appraisal of the responsibility of all parties for these atrocities is necessary. But like Germany in Eastern Europe, Japan in East Asia, the United States in Iraq (and many other places), Indonesia in East Timor, and many other aggressor countries, Serbia must come to terms with the disproportionate role that the government of Slobodan Milosevic played — through the army he directed, the paramilitaries he supported, and the nationalist ideology that he promulgated.

The revisionists aren't engaged in such an honest appraisal. They are engaged in a whitewash.

*Edward S. Herman, Professor Emeritus of Finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, is the author of many books on economics, foreign policy, and the media, including *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis* (with Philip Hammond, eds., Pluto, 2000).*

John Feffer is co-director of [Foreign Policy In Focus](#).

Subscribe to
[World Beat](#)
FPIF's weekly ezine

[Support FPIF](#)



Published by Foreign Policy In Focus (FPIF), a project of the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS, online at www.ips-dc.org). Copyright © 2009, Institute for Policy Studies.

Recommended citation:

John Feffer and Ed Herman, "Strategic Dialogue: Yugoslavia," (Washington, DC: Foreign Policy In

Focus, April 6, 2009).

Web location:

<http://fpif.org/fpiftxt/6016>

Production Information:

Author(s): John Feffer and Ed Herman

Editor(s): Emily Schwartz Greco

Production: Jen Doak

Latest Comments & Conversation Area

Editor's Note: FPIF.org editors read and approve each comment. Comments are checked for content only; spelling and grammar errors are not corrected and comments that include vulgar language or libelous content are rejected.

Name: Benny **Date:** Apr 06, 2009
Milosevic number one goal was "Greater Serbia"

Name: Goran M **Date:** Apr 06, 2009

I like that after so many years of one sided reporting that more balanced articles are coming out in the media. It does sadden me that so there are still so many people like John Feffer who still blindly follow the hollow sounding propaganda about the war in Yugoslavia.

Quote: it was the Milosevic government that waged war against Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, using the largely spent ideology of "Yugoslavia" to justify its actions.

So in your opinion the Then Federal republic of Yugoslavia (Comprising of Serbia & Montenegro) invaded the Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Kosovo?

It was not Tudjman's destroying the rights & killing of Serbs in their ancestral lands that started the war in Croatia, it was Milosevic's "invasion".

It was not Izetbegovic radical Muslim ideology & paramilitary killings of Serbs that started the war in Bosnia, it was Milosevic's "invasion".

It was not Albanian terrorists killing or kidnapping Serbs for their organs that started the war in the still officially Serbian province of Kosovo that started the war, it was Milosevic's "invasion".

Although Mr. Feffer also points out a few correct points about Milosevic & Serbian resistance, most of his article just sounds so hollow.

Quote: I'm not sure what mainstream propaganda Herman was reading when he concluded that the mass killings of Serbs during World War II were "blacked out." Every reputable book about Yugoslavia treats the Croatian Ustasha period and details the atrocities committed against Serbs. It would also perhaps complicate Herman's own black-and-white reading of history to find out that the Chetniks, in addition to being quite ruthless themselves when given half a chance, also collaborated with the Nazis when circumstances dictated (see Philip Cohen's Serbia's Secret War)

I often wonder how these strange notions are so easily accepted by seemingly intelligent people, but after seeing a few of John Feffer's sources, I can see why one would think like that.

I will not go in too this part of the Former Yugoslavia's history, but if the article John Feffer wrote is based on sources like dermatologist Phillip Cohen's ghost-written book about Serbia seemingly (at least until recently) successful secret war for Balkan domination, then I definitely understand how he comes to his conclusions.

This is not an attack against John Feffer. I just (like many other) are getting tired of hearing the same old rhetoric that suits a predetermined view about a conflict which will haunt not only the people's of former Yugoslavia, but also the foreign interventionists that helped destroy the former Yugoslavia.

Name: Johan Sjosdedt **Date:** Apr 07, 2009

John Feffer's response is by far the more accurate.

He is right in saying that although all sides committed atrocities (which happens in almost every war – even the Allies committed them during and after WWII), it was the Serbs with Milosevic and his henchmen who instigated and had the vastly disproportionate role in committing crimes against non-Serbs.

One correction to Herman's response, out of the many I could make, relates to where he states, "a third point was that Serbia was unique in the Yugoslav Republics in not doing any ethnic cleansing within its own borders". This is incorrect as Kosovo was technically within Serbia although autonomous when the Serbs set upon cleansing ethnic Albanians out of the province. Furthermore, the other autonomous region of Serbia, Vojvodina, was ethnically cleansed of non-Serb populations mainly Croats. In fact, Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj is currently being tried by the ICTY for his role. For example, the village of Hrtkovci was a Croat village in Serbia before the war but Seselj came to down and drove the Croats out and resettled the village with Serbs.

Name: Suvorov **Date:** Apr 09, 2009

Oh dear, Feffer still claims that Milosevic attacked Slovenia even though it is well-known, documented, and established even by ICTY that it was Croat Ante Markovic, President of Yugoslavia at the time, who sent the Yugoslav troops after Slovenes seized the customs houses on the Italian border. And it was Milosevic who ordered the troops back! By the way, how would London react if the Welsh did the same in Britain? Or if Seminoles seized some federal building in Florida in order to regain their native land? No doubt both would be hailed as heroes who stood against occupation and oppression. Right? Feffer and numerous others take for granted the God-given right of anyone in Yugoslavia to secede as long as it isn't Serbs. Of course, equally laughable (if the subject were lighter) is the claim that the war in Bosnia started when Arkan entered it. Needless to say, Feffer does not discuss the significance of the American diplomatic involvement in causing the war, in particular the fact that Izetbegovic withdrew from the agreement he earlier reached with Karadzic and Boban, two days after meeting with Warren Zimmerman. Similarly, he is not willing to recall the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 by Germany and others who soon followed, in violation of Helsinki Act of 1975, which all of these countries signed. This is as if leading European countries recognized the Confederacy and introduced the term "Yankee aggression" in 1861. Of course, the comparison of Yugoslav army's presence in its own country to American army's presence in Vietnam and Iraq is highly dishonest and unfortunately represents a common trend in what passes today as journalism.

In response to Mr. Sjosdedt:

ICTY never proved that Milosevic "set upon cleansing ethnic Albanians out of the province". The final version of the indictment (the indictment was revised several times by the prosecution, as a result of which the claim that Milosevic sought "Greater Serbia" was dropped as an absurdity for which they desperately and unsuccessfully tried to find proof) charged Milosevic only with the murder of little over than 600 Kosovar Albanians. Even if this was proven to be true (which according to prosecutor Geoffrey Nice's own admission about 3 weeks before Milosevic's death hadn't been done in four years of trial), that still wouldn't prove the existence of government policy of genocide or expulsion of Albanian population from Kosovo. It should be noted that nearly every one of these crimes was committed after the bombing of Yugoslavia started. As to Vojislav Seselj's case, it is also a highly curious one. After 6 years of trial and only a few hours remaining for the prosecution, the case was suspended for an indefinite period of time... But ICTY surely knows what it is doing. That's why Naser Oric was released after he showed to journalists tapes of massacres his troops committed, and so was Ramush Haradinaj, after nine witnesses in his case were murdered (three of them "protected" witnesses) and the tenth one refused to testify after he was shot at and wounded. Thus, as John Feffer rightfully claimed, ICTY is by no means partisan.

Name: Panayiotis **Date:** Apr 10, 2009

Time is passing, information slowly appear in different sources. Allegations of "rampaging Serbian forces killing hundreds of thousands Croats/Bosnian muslims/Albanians" (pick up

appropriate), of course always innocent civilians, seem to fall slowly. People like Mr. Feffer prefer to stay on same old course, repeating good old story about Serbian monsters murdering hundreds of thousands.

We have heard from all mainstream media and all politicians responsible for NATO attack on Serbia allegations about 100.000 Albanian men killed in Kosovo, when NATO leadership had problems with public opinion at home. Later, almost all mainstream media downplayed it to a "10.000 Albanians dead".

Here is report from UNMIK Office of Missing Persons and Forensics from Kosovo. After several years of research, they have following results: about 5000 dead on all sides. Victims of the conflict. Those killed by NATO bombs included.

But have any of mainstream media changed their numbers since? Not a chance. 10000 innocent Albanian civilians murdered in cold blood by Serbian forces.

Mr. Feffer is just following the stream.

Name: Daniel **Date:** Apr 12, 2009

I would like to thank John Feffer for exposing fallacies of Edward Herman's Srebrenica genocide denial.

In response to people who commented AGAINST Mr. Feffer using same-old Serb war crimes apologist arguments, here is one question for them:

You claim that Muslims trapped in Srebrenica raided Serb villages, but you fail to mention that Serbs around Srebrenica murdered more than 1000 Muslims in 1992. Furthermore, Serbs around Srebrenica torched Muslim villages and expelled predominantly Muslim population of Podrinje. Serbs in villages around Srebrenica NEVER demilitarized. Serb villages around Srebrenica were armed and used as bases to attack hungry Muslim population that was trapped in the Srebrenica enclave.

To view photos of Serb terror around Srebrenica, go here: <http://srebrenica-genocide.blogspot.com/2008/12/bosniak-women-children-burned-alive-by.html>

John Feffer is a man of credibility and a man who stands up courageously against the genocide denial. Thank you John.

Srebrenica Genocide Blog Team

Name: Daniel **Date:** Apr 12, 2009

In Edward Herman's latest Srebrenica genocide denial article, conveniently titled "Serb Demonization as Propaganda Coup", he criticised the UN-court for not allowing Serb "experts" to testify. He claimed:

(quote) "[Zoran] Stankovic and the Serb authorities could never get the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) or Western media interested in these massacres."
(end quote)

Edward Herman is WRONG, again. In fact, ICTY records show that Dr. Zoran Stankovic testified in numerous cases. According to Dr. Stankovic's testimony:

24 THE WITNESS: [Interpretation] I testified before this Tribunal on
25 two occasions. Once, I was present during the proceedings of
Page 13487

1 General Krstic, and then in May I was an expert witness for the Defence
2 in the trial of Milutinovic, Sainovic, Ojdanic, Pavkovic, and Lazarevic,
3 and Lukic.

Name: Eel **Date:** Apr 14, 2009

Hrtkovici was a Croat village as much as John F. Kennedy is truly ein Berliner. A speech metaphor can not be taken for absolute truth. Even the often inaccurate Fascist Wikipedia lists

an ongoing decline in population of Hrtkovici decades before any hostilities:

Historical population

- * 1961: 3,265
- * 1971: 3,102
- * 1981: 2,855
- * 1991: 2,684

Blame Milosevic and Seselj for the decline in population also? Why not? 1961 to 1991 the population dropped by one fifth (about 20%), that's a rather alarming drop for any town during peace-time, wouldn't you think?

Name: Miss Jill Louise Starr **Date:** Apr 18, 2009

#I don't think that Radovan Karadzic is a war criminal at all. I invite everyone to view some of the evidence in my possession about it at my blog site. I think it is easily proven that the CIA and Richard Holbrook are the Balkan War culprits,

Respectfully Yours,

Jill Starr

PS: I probably have other documents I'll have to check. Start reading these including a scanned photo image of the secret Richard Holbrook and Radovan Karadzic Immunity Agreement.

<http://sites.google.com/site/jillstarrsite/jillstarrinternationalnews>

<http://sites.google.com/site/jillstarrsite/>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/lpcyusa/>

<http://obamavideos.bottmer.com/i-am-a-witness-in-the-icc-war-crimes-trials-10047.barack>

<http://lpcyu.instablogs.com/feed>

Name: Dimitri **Date:** Apr 21, 2009

John Feffer and Co. are smearing Ed Herman and echoing the cult of Bosnia propaganda which made the 1999 NATO intervention possible. It is particularly ironic (and appalling) that Feffer accuses Herman of "revisionism" or even "genocide denial" while Feffer himself relies on the work of notorious Croatian apologist Phillip Cohen, who wrote a propaganda tract for the Croatian government during the 1990s. Cohen has claimed that the Chetniks committed genocide against the Croats during WWII; that Serbia was pro-Nazi while most Croats were not; that archbishop Stepinac was NOT complicit in the murder and persecution of Serbs; that Tudjman's government was not really nationalistic or racist etc. The acceptance of this Croatian nationalist argument is a form of revisionism and genocide denial not only prevalent in Croatia but also, ironically, among numerous leftwing supporters of the interventionist narrative on Bosnia.

As with so many other commentators, Feffer has no knowledge of the Milosevic trial or what was actually revealed there but blindly parrots interventionist journalists and repeats claims that fell apart in court. Feffer's weak apologetics for the ICTY "it isn't a perfect institution" while ignoring its heavy reliance on and connection to the NATO powers and its role as a propaganda arm for those same powers is wildly naive or dissingenuous. It is clear that Feffer has not read the sources cited by Herman or is too hysterical to understand them.

Name: jill starr **Date:** Apr 28, 2009

#I don't think that Radovan Karadzic or Ratko Mladic are war criminals at all. I invite everyone to view some of the evidence in my possession about it at my blog site. I think it is easily proven that the CIA and Richard Holbrook are the Balkan War culprits.

Respectfully Yours,

Jill Starr

<http://sites.google.com/site/jillstarrsite/jillstarrinternationalnews><http://sites.google.com/>

<http://sites.google.com/site/jillstarrsite/>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/lpcyusa/>

<http://obamavideos.bottmer.com/i-am-a-witness-in-the-icc-war-crimes-trials-10047.barack>

<http://lpcyu.instablogs.com/feed>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/lpcyusa>

You may add a new comment here. **It will not appear on this page until it has been approved** by the moderator.

Your Name:

Comment:

Contact FPIF's [webmaster](#) with inquiries regarding the functionality of this website.
Copyright © 2009, Institute for Policy Studies.