

Globalizing the Holocaust: A Jewish ‘useable past’ in Serbian Nationalism

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Contrary to Anthony Smith’s view that national myth-makers derive meaning primarily from a nation’s own positive ‘useable past’, this article argues that the globalization and universalisation of the Jewish Holocaust has created new poles of identity for ethno-nationalists, existing outside ‘authentic’ local conceptions of history and culture. Also contrary to Smith’s view of a positive golden age at the root of national mythology, I argue that negative imagery can play an equally if not more significant role in some examples of nationalism. In Serbia, viewing the self through the lens of a persecuted victim became crucial during the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. As a new ‘strategic site’, the Holocaust functioned as a template for re-interpreting ‘self’ and ‘other’, while re-ordering history. A ‘Jewish trope’ emerged in popular discourse to legitimate the violent re-creation of national space. As Živković has argued: ‘Both Serbs and Jews are the ‘chosen peoples’—slaughtered, sacrificed, denied expression, yet always righteous, always defending themselves, never attacking’ (Živković 2000, 73). In promoting this view of Serbian history, both local and Diaspora nationalists were involved.

Smith and the Useable Past

This article problematises the work of Anthony David Smith, arguably one of the world’s best known theorists of nationalism. Smith’s work is located in the ‘ethno-symbolist’ school which he, Hutchinson, Armstrong, and others styled as a species of bridge between Primordialism and the later and more popular Modernist school (Ozkirimli 2000;

Smith 1998). I have chosen to look at Smith because of his school's interest in nationalist mythology and imagery. Modernists, such as Gellner, Breuilly, Hobsbawm and Anderson attach little importance to national myth. Gellner, after all, famously argued that '[t]he cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism are often arbitrary historical inventions. Any old shred and patch would have served as well' (Gellner 2000, 56; Breuilly 1985, 30)

Anderson has completely dismissed the importance of negative imagery throughout the process of national development and 'democratisation'. While he posits that 'nations inspire love, and often profoundly self sacrificing love,' inspiring such positive legacies as 'poetry, prose fiction, music and plastic arts ... how truly rare it is to find analogous nationalist products expressing fear and loathing' (Anderson 1987, 141). Anderson even advances that colonised people felt little hatred for their former colonial overlords. He was astonished at 'how insignificant the element of hatred is in these expressions of national feeling' (141-142). Despite Anderson's musings, not all nations focus exclusively on love, and like Smith, Anderson commits the fallacy of deriving general rules from select examples, in this case, examples from South East Asia.

Authenticity and the Golden Age

In his analysis of ethnic and national myths, Smith had privileged two arguments, which I will later question, using examples from Serbia. The first is the idea that the local or 'authentic' forms the very heart of national myth, while foreign or alien ideas are rigorously purged from the early proto-nation during its development. The second advances that nationalist mythology is fundamentally positive and inspirational, dealing with heroic and ennobling époques—what Smith has termed the golden age.

Arguably, Smith's main contribution to the discipline of nationalism studies, and hence to international relations, is his privileging of the 'ethnie', which he first popularised in 1986 as 'named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with specific territory, and a sense of solidarity' (Smith 1998, 191). Not all ethnie become nations, but most nations are derived from ethnie, particularly

'ethnic cores' that have the requisite characteristics to absorb and assimilate other ethnies, making them part of an emerging nation. Unlike the nations they may later become, core ethnies need to selectively borrow elements from other foreign groups through 'controlled culture contact' (Smith 1990, 35-39). This allows the ethnie to become vibrant, introducing new and diverse elements into the group's identity. As the ethnic core expands and absorbs other ethnies, it incorporates their elements within its growing ethnic (and ultimately proto-national) culture.

However, once the ethnic core forms a coherent nation (with a national homeland, a unified economy and unified myths and symbols) (Smith 1990, 40, 64-65), foreign elements and cultural borrowings can be perceived as a threat to the authenticity and purity of the nation. Diversity is abandoned in favour of a more unified identity, and a process of purging and exclusion begins. For Smith, nations are based on 'an ideal of authenticity which presupposes a unique culture-community, with a distinct and original character'. Each nation possesses its own 'peculiar historic "genius"' which the nationalists are tasked with rediscovering and possessing (Smith 2001, 442; see also Smith 1998, 194). A nation's view of the world must be both 'culturally distinct' and 'rooted'. Clear-cut territorial boundaries need to be established, and a 'keen eye' is required to determine the identity of "'alien" objects throughout trade and exchange, as well as for successive migrations, invasions and colonisation.' Throughout, images of cultural purity, of 'distinctiveness', 'originality', of what is "'our very own" and nobody else's', form a crucial part of identity construction (442-443).

The key to the nation's survival and popularity for Smith is its golden age mythology (Smith 1979, 26). A nation must be able to 'unfold a glorious past, a golden age of saints and heroes, to give meaning to its promise of restoration and dignity' (Smith 1983, 153-154). Nationalism creates secular heroes, saints, and great leaders, allowing co-nationals to dream of a glorious destiny, based on the 'model and guide' of the golden age. Similarly, 'the more glorious that antiquity appears, the easier it becomes to mobilise the people around a common culture' (Smith 1996b, 39, 57). Revisiting and re-presenting the past as one of glory, heroism and happiness inspires national members, and unites them

for collective action (Smith 1990, 14). In what Smith calls ‘the myth of the historical renovation,’ nationalist leaders attempt to recapture the nation’s golden past, to return to a basic national ‘essence’, a ‘basic pattern of living and being’ (22). Golden ages are replete with ‘poetic spaces’, ‘nature’, as well as ‘vivid recreations of the glorious past of the community’ (65-66, see also Smith 1996b, 37).

For Smith, local history and identity are crucial elements in the construction of national myth. The communal past of a nation forms a ‘repository or quarry from which materials may be selected in the construction and invention of nations’ (Smith 1996b, 37). History is fragmented into diverse elements which become collectively a ‘useable past’, wherein nationalists choose the myths they need in order to rally people together to reclaim national greatness (37). Different elements may be chosen at different times to suit the era and the state of the nation. Heroic myths may be chosen in times of defeat, while myths of peace and reconciliation may be chosen in times of war (37). Nevertheless, the key element is that such myths belong properly to the nation. They are rooted in the nation’s own past, not someone else’s.

Smith does argue that at first, foreign elements were incorporated into the nation through Greek and Roman classicalism. In nineteenth century Europe, recasting the nation to reflect the ideals of Periclean Athens became ‘the standard and model for subsequent ideals of the golden age in other periods and civilizations.’ A broadening of the classical ideal occurred somewhat later to encompass ancient Persia, Egypt, Mesopotamia, etc (Smith 1996b, 37; see also Smith 1996a, 181). However, as modernisation spread, and most budding nations sought to find their own golden ages, ‘the true golden age had to be located in the pasts of the ethnic community or nation and it had to be a heroic age which could dignify the nation to be’ (41).

The local and the positive are both crucial to Smith’s golden age. After all, its five functions buttress such ideas. It is meant to ‘satisfy the quest for authenticity’; to ‘establish and delineate the “true self”, the authentic being of the collectivity’, while similarly locating and ‘re-rooting’ the community. Additionally, the golden age

establishes continuity between generations, reminds co-nationals of past greatness and their own 'inner worth', while also pointing towards a 'glorious destiny' (Smith 1996b, 48-51). Archaeology further also allows nationalists to 'locate "ourselves" and dignify "our communities" by reference to an ancient pedigree and time-honoured environment' (Smith 1996a, 180-181). And for Smith, myths can only change so much. Changes when they do take place occur only 'within the boundaries of the nation'. He adds:

[T]his 'nation-building' activity operates within a definite tradition; it is not made over entirely anew by each generation, but inherits the mythologies and symbolisms of previous generations. A new generation may come to reject the interpretations of the predecessor, and question its values, myths and symbols, forsaking its holy sites for new ones and replacing its golden ages and heroes by others; but all this question and replacement is carried on within definite emotional and intellectual confines, which constitute far more powerful and durable barriers to the outside than any physical boundaries. This is because a social magnetism and psychological charge attaches to the 'myth-symbol complexes' of particular ethnies which in turn form the basis of a nation's core heritage (Smith 1996a, 206-207).

Thus while some things may change, the basic character of the nation does not, and nationalists, whether consciously or not, operate within proscribed boundaries set by their forefathers.

The role of Negative Imagery

For Smith, nationalism is primarily a positive phenomenon, 'lifting present generations out of their banal reality' (Smith 1983, 154). Smith's general position on the use of Holocaust imagery and negative imagery is to dismiss it. While he has argued for the importance of warfare as an important 'mobiliser of ethnic sentiments', and as a 'provider of myths and memories for future generations', he has also concluded that 'it would be an exaggeration to deduce the sense of common ethnicity from the fear of the "outsider" and paired antagonisms' (Smith 1990, 27). As for negative myths in the nation's past, 'the period of decline is regarded as "unnatural", a matter of "betrayal" from within, or "subjugation" and decay from without'. National history is meant to be linear, progressing towards a positive endpoint (Smith 1996a, 191). In his discussion of 'anti-colonialism', Smith has dismissed any sort of fear or loathing of others. 'Men', he writes, 'do not seek collective independence and build states simply to react to a "common enemy"' (Smith 1983, 65-68). In his taxonomy of groups (tribe, ethnies, and nation) Smith

includes 'In-group sentiment', but excludes any mention of how fear or loathing of the outgroup could also be important (189).

Again, this is primarily because national myths are meant to promote nostalgia for the past, a simpler, better time in the nation's past. The alienation, the anomie, the feelings of 'estrangement and homelessness' brought on by modernity and industrialisation are mitigated through a return to national 'roots'—a 'satisfying social framework' and a 'surrogate religion' (Smith 1996a, 174-176). Everything about national history needs to be positive and glowing (200). A reading of Smith's work thus reveals that local, positive, forms of imagery are seen to be crucial to the formation of nations and nationalism. The question arises then as to the role of negative imagery and foreign or external elements and history. For Smith, both seem to be relatively unimportant. This paper seeks to claim otherwise, through an examination of national identity in late twentieth century Serbia.

Negative Mythology and the Holocaust

As we shall later see, Serbian nationalism in the 1980s and 90s relied on a series of heroic myths of the golden age. However, these myths were not wholly positive, containing elements of defeat, suffering and national tragedy. As well, nationalists having recourse to this golden age brought in *inauthentic* or *foreign* Holocaust and Jewish imagery, seemingly to strengthen the appeal of nationalism. Why any nation would wish to do this falls squarely outside of Smith's theoretical framework. In *Nationalism and Modernity* (1998) Smith purposely excludes discussion of genocide, ethnic cleansing, national minorities and several other current topics, first, in order to save space, and second and more importantly, because 'it is by no means clear that they can further the task of explaining the origins, development and nature of nations and nationalism' (Smith 1998, xiii). This, I would argue, ignores an important aspect of nationalist mythology that has emerged since the mid-1980s, not only in Serbia, but around the world. Smith's privileging of the local and positive as the only sites of 'authentic' meaning need to be carefully examined and problematised.

Smith's ideal of a positive golden age as the crucial lynchpin of nationalism has been contested. Many theorists approach negative myths differently, seeing these elements as crucial to national development and consolidation (MacDonald 2003, Chapter 2). Trevor-Roper's 'normal nationalism' included a sense of persecution and danger, comprising such things as 'great national defeat', and 'danger of being swamped by foreigners' (Trevor-Roper 1962, 12). For Alter, 'social groups also tend to define their national identity and national consciousness in negative terms ...' (Alter 1992, 7,19). Kecmanović has operationalised 'Counteridentification' and 'pseudospeciation', both of which deal with the centrality of enemies and negative myths in a nation's past (Kecmanović 1996, 36). One sees similar perspectives in the work of Claude Lefort, Marc Howard Ross, and Michael Ignatieff.¹

Both Schöpflin and Kecmanović have created useful 'taxonomies' or classifications of negative myths which counter Smith's ideal of a positive golden age. Schöpflin's work includes 'myths of powerlessness and compensation for the powerless'—stressing the importance of justice and status reversal for those who have been wronged in the past (Schöpflin 1996, 29). A second type, 'myths of unjust treatment', advance that 'history is a malign and unjust actor that has singled out the community for special, negative treatment' (29-30). Schöpflin has stressed the purposeful nature of collective suffering, endowing persecution and victimisation with meaning. The world 'owes' such nations—they have 'suffered a special debt ... the victims of suffering are helpless because they suffered for the wider world and the wider world should recognise this, thereby legitimating the group's special worth' (29-30). He has placed Holocaust myths here, as well as myths which copy the Holocaust, appropriating its symbolism (30-31).

Kecmanović's myths include such themes as 'damage', which highlight the historic deprivation of the nation at the hands of antagonists (Kecmanović 1996, 61-63). As with

¹ Discussed in Sandra Bašić-Hrvatin, "Television and National/Public Memory", in James Gow, Richard Paterson, and Alison Preston (eds), *Bosnia By Television* (London: British Film Institute, 1996) pp. 63-4. Marc Howard Ross, "Psychocultural Interpretation Theory and Peacemaking in Ethnic Conflicts", *Political Psychology*, 16:3 (1995) p. 533. Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (Toronto: Viking Books, 1993) p. 14. Minogue's three stage process of nationalist awakening similarly includes a crucial "struggle" phase where the nation must confront and fight against its enemies. Kenneth R. Minogue, *Nationalism* (London: B.A. Batsford, 1967) pp. 25-8.

Schöpflin, themes of ‘victim and sacrifice’ are important, where nationalists believe themselves to be ‘victims of envy, of the hegemonic and expansionist tendencies of other people, victims of minority or majority groups that continuously demand greater autonomy or more rights’ (66-67). At a general level, the above theorists have noted the importance of negative forms of identification as a means of rallying co-nationals together. Such views challenge Smith’s theories that members of the nation rely primarily on national history for inspiration and a sense of positive belonging. They propose that fear, anger, resentment, insecurity and defeat also form crucial aspects of national imagining.

At a more specific level, the Holocaust has played a crucial role in re-presenting national history. As a stock series of metaphors, images, and symbols for good and evil, righteous and demonic, the Holocaust has become increasingly influential in structuring and rescripting nationalist narratives, especially since the 1970s and 80s, when the Holocaust arguably became ‘industrialised’ (Finkelstein 2000). I will argue that, contrary to Smith’s view of authentic, local and positive myths comprising national mythology, Holocaust imagery has formed its own generalized ‘useable past’ that can be used for Serbs, and indeed any other group seeking to advance itself. As Finkelkraut has observed in many very different cases:

Nazism is invoked almost religiously to represent civilization’s Other ... Since Hitler’s time, every villain is a fascist, and every victim wears the yellow star. There is no revolution, no revolt, no struggle, no matter how minor its object, that fails to go rummaging through the past only to end up presenting itself in terms of this particular period of history. ... Antifascism had established the Jews as *value*: as the gold standard of oppression, as the paradigm of the victim (Finkelkraut 1998, 99-100)

Arguably, the Holocaust has achieved a pre-eminence unequalled by any other genocide in history. As Goldstone notes: ‘No other genocide has evoked this response from the international academic community’ (Goldstone 2001, 42). For Rubenstein: ‘Few events of the twentieth century have been the object of as much persistent and popular interest...’ (Rubenstein 2001, 33), while Novick describes ‘a flood of books, films, university courses, and docudramas ... invoked as reference point in discussions of

everything from AIDS to abortion' (Novick 1994, 159; see also Levin 1993, 197; Sydnor 1993, 74).

Stemming from the idea that the Holocaust has been successfully commemorated or even 'industrialized' has emerged a debate about whether the Holocaust can be compared to other tragedies, and more specifically, whether or not the word 'holocaust' itself should be borrowed by other groups seeking to commemorate their own histories of victimization. Generally speaking, there are three main schools of thought on the subject, classified by Rosenberg as 'absolutists', 'relativists' and 'trivialists' (Rosenberg 2000, 150-151).

The absolutist school stands solidly against any 'inappropriate' use of the term, relativists favour qualified comparisons, while trivialists advocate the application of the term and its associated imagery to a wide variety of contexts. The absolutists use terms such as 'hijacking'; 'grotesque competition in suffering'; a 'growing lapse of memory'; 'facile Holocaust victimology'; and 'word-napping' to describe the 'borrowing' of Holocaust imagery and vocabulary (Finkelkraut 1998, 59; Landau 1998, 3-5; Huysen 1994, 13; Rosenbaum 2001, 13-14). Such 'absolutist' views, Rosenberg argues, negate the very idea that the Holocaust can be compared to anything that preceded or followed it (Rosenberg 2000, 150-151). Allied to this group are what I have termed 'hard relativists', who compare the Holocaust with other tragedies, but largely to promote the Holocaust's unique and unprecedented nature (Katz, Bauer and Melson are good examples here) (Katz 2000, 21, 26; Bauer 2001, 10-11, 12; Roth 2000, 155; Melson 1992, 26-27, 29).

Some historians, however, see Holocaust comparison and borrowing as inevitable. Moshman argues that since our contemporary understanding of genocide is based on the Holocaust, we have little choice but to invoke this 'prototype' as a symbol for comparison (Moshman 2001, 432, 444-448). For Flanzbaum, the Holocaust has attained a 'cult-like status ... augmented by its use as a touchstone of victimization' (quoted in Moshman 2001, 447), while Berenbaum finds in comparison a way of 'deepen[ing] our moral sensitivity while sharpening our perception ... [displaying] generosity of spirit and

ethical integrity' (Berenbaum 1990, 34). Charny defends the right of groups to compare their suffering with the Holocaust (Stannard 2001, 192), while Novick accuses those who promote Holocaust uniqueness of 'gerrymandering', and 'an intellectual sleight of hand' (Novick 1994, 9).

The third position promotes Holocaust comparison and extensive borrowing, advancing that 'holocaust' can validly be used to describe a wide variety of tragedies. Here, the Holocaust becomes a generalized, universalized form of evil that can be applied to many different contexts and situations. It becomes a generic 'useable past' that any group can use to advance itself. For Rosenberg, these 'trivialists' are 'quite willing to see the Holocaust as an event of major importance, but they nevertheless agree that the claim of uniqueness cannot be sustained in any non-trivial form' (Rosenberg 2000, 150). For Stannard, (a 'trivialist' *par excellence*), while the Holocaust (with a capital 'H') 'clearly applies exclusively to the genocide that was perpetrated by the Nazis against their various victims', holocaust with a lower-case 'h' should 'belong to anyone who cares to use it' (Stannard 2001, 272-273). Others like Chicago have universalised the Holocaust as 'a window into an aspect of the unarticulated but universal human experience of victimization', as well as a 'bridge towards the creation of "a new global community based on human shared values"' (discussed in Langer 1998, 12).

Serbia and the Rise of Nationalism

As will hopefully become apparent in the second half of this article, while Serbs had recourse to positive, local golden ages, the primary focus of Serbian mythmaking during and after the collapse of Yugoslavia was on negative events in the life of the nation, featuring images of persecution and genocide. In this, Jewish Holocaust imagery played a key role.

Throughout the conflict, the myth of the Battle of Kosovo was touted as a key moniker of Serbian identity, figuring as the locus of a historic defeat, but also the awakening of Serbian values and spirituality. In legend, Serbian Prince Lazar was handed an ultimatum, where he was either to pay homage to the Ottoman Sultan Murad I, relinquishing control

of Serbian lands and taxation, or bring his forces to Kosovo Polje to face the Sultan's army. Lazar was later approached in a dream by a grey hawk (or falcon) flying from Jerusalem, and was offered a choice: an earthly kingdom (implying victory for his forces against the Sultan), or a heavenly kingdom, (where the Serbs would be defeated in battle but become a divine and chosen people) (Hall 1994, 235-290). The details of the battle are sketchy, including the identity of the actual winners and losers (Kaplan 1993, 35-36; Marriott 1930, 65; Judah 1997, 31; Malcolm 1998, 75-79). However, in legend, the Serbs lost, and were thereafter subject to five centuries of Ottoman rule. What has emerged most prominently, however, was the heroism of the Serbs, dying so that their nation could be elevated as a spiritual entity (Velimirovich, Nickolai and Popovich 1996).

The nineteenth century development of the myth through linguist Vuk Karadžić transformed Lazar into a Christ-like figure—who led the Serbian nation to holy martyrdom so that it would achieve divine status. As well, Lazar's enemies became Judas-like traitors (Sells 1996, 31; Judah 1997, 36). Kosovo and its lessons would be developed further through such works as 'The Mountain Wreath', by Petar Petrović-Njegoš (a prince-bishop from Montenegro), and geographer Jovan Cvijić's writings on his 'Dinaric man'—the archetypal Serb, 'consumed with a burning desire to avenge Kosovo ... and to revive the Serbian empire about which he has never ceased to dream...' (Judah 1997, 62-63, 65-66).

In many respects, Kosovo does function as a golden age myth in the Smithean sense. It provides heroes, villains, stimulating action, ennobling virtues, and elevates the nation to a holy and chosen entity. Yet it is profoundly negative. The Serbian people are victims of Turkish control for 500 years, their autonomy crushed until the nineteenth century. Traitors abound within their own camp, especially those who convert to Islam. Certainly the pull of Kosovo on its own was immensely powerful. Celebrations for the 600th anniversary of the Battle in 1989 drew enormous crowds, as Kosovo fever gripped the population. The relics of Prince Lazar were paraded around Serbia, with full media coverage. The official celebrations helped to seal Milošević's own growing personality cult. (Jacobsen 1996, 48; Vulliamy 1994, 51-52; see also Glennly 1993, 33-36).

Yet in many respects, Kosovo itself was not enough, and the 1980s would also herald the introduction of specifically Jewish imagery into emerging conceptions of the Serbian nation. This foreign imagery was certainly similar in style to Kosovo victim myths. There was certainly no shortage of feeling that Serbs were righteous and chosen victims. Yet Holocaust imagery pushed the envelope, allowing Serbian nationalist goals to gain wider, more universal appeal. It could resonate with domestic Serbs and those in the Diaspora, as well as with Jews and non-Jews. The 1980s would inaugurate what Živković has called the ‘Jewish trope’ in Serbian national identity, where myths of Serbian and Jewish suffering were interwoven, providing a new series of national myths. (Živković 2000, 69-73).

Serbian nationalism in the 1980s was largely a reaction to rise of nationalism amongst Kosovar Albanians in the former Serbian province of Kosovo. Demands for autonomy spurred a crackdown on dissent and a fear of Albanian secession in Serbia’s heartland (Pavković 1996, 78). While Albanians constituted 90 per cent of the population, Kosovo was also the seat of the early Orthodox Church and many of its best-loved buildings, while Kosovo Polje was the scene of the Serbs’ epic battle against the Ottoman Empire in 1389 (Judah 1997, 21-22). The use of the Jewish trope was first in evidence by 1983, when a petition was drawn up by Serbian Orthodox bishops, protesting Serbian persecution in Kosovo. This made the links between Serbian and Jewish suffering clear and drew what later became common parallels between Kosovo and Jerusalem:

The Jewish people, before the menace of their annihilation and by the miracle of the uninterrupted memory, returned to Jerusalem after 2,000 years of suffering, against all logic of history. In a similar manner, the Serbian people have been fighting their battle at Kosovo since 1389, in order to save the memory of its identity, to preserve the meaning of their existence against all odds. (quoted in Yelen 1989, 132-133, my translation).

By 1985, novelist and politician Vuk Drašković wrote his well known ‘Letter to the Writers of Israel’, in which he argued that ‘Serbs are the thirteenth, lost and the most ill-fated tribe of Israel’ (Živković 2000, 236). Drašković would later link Serbia and Israel together, seeing both ‘liv[ing] in a hellish siege where the sworn goal is to seize and the cover with mosques or Vaticanize the lands of Moses and the people of St. Sava [Serbia’s

patron saint]’ (Cigar 1995, 236). Further parallels emerged from here. Kosovo would be compared to the Jewish legend of Masada, where approximately 1,000 Jewish warriors committed mass suicide, after a losing battle with the attacking Romans some 2,000 years ago (Levinsohn 1994, 16). Others saw ‘genetic’ similarities between both groups. Milan Bulajić, Director of the Museum of Victims of Genocide in Belgrade, located Serbian bravery and heroism in their ‘genes’, making them both ‘victims by destiny’ and ‘chosen people, like the Jews’ (Levinsohn 1994, 251). Žarko Korać of Belgrade University similarly promoted Serbs as a ‘heavenly people’ because of Kosovo, making it possible for them to ‘identify themselves with the Jews. As victims yes, but also with the idea of “sacred soil”’ (quoted in Judah 1997, 37).

Rejecting the previous pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist position of Tito’s Communist government (itself a co-founder of the Non-Aligned Movement), the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts drew up a controversial *Memorandum* in 1986—a long list of Serbian grievances against their treatment within the Federation. Much of the document dealt with the ‘genocide’ of Serbs in Kosovo, and articulated the need for Serbs throughout Yugoslavia to assert themselves collectively. The *Memorandum*’s architects would eventually play a prominent role in spurring nationalism, a highly controversial step for a seemingly impartial communist organisation (reprinted in Čovic 1993).

Attempts by Serbian Party President Ivan Stambolić to deal with Kosovo’s civil unrest proved ineffective, and friction between Serbs and Albanians escalated (Denitch 1994, 119-120). Slobodan Milošević, a former banker and bureaucrat, would ride on the coattails of nationalism by 1987, toppling his former mentor (Tanner 1997, 214). Milošević appealed to an emerging sense of Serbian unity, and claimed to speak for Serbs throughout Yugoslavia. Promising to end the persecution of Serbs in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, he advocated constitutional revision, a strengthening of the Orthodox Church and a privileging of Serbian cultural and social institutions, which he argued had long been repressed under Communism (Magaš 1993, 110; Cviic, 1993, 73). From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, almost 600,000 Kosovars, over half of the adult

population, would face arrest, interrogation, or police harassment (Seroka and Pavlović 1992, 77; Thompson 1994, 128).

For many, Serbian claims to Kosovo were no different from Zionist claims to Israel. Serbs were a persecuted nation, as were the Jews, and both *deserved* to have a national homeland because of past victimisation and future threats. This style of argumentation became all the more interesting when Kosovar Albanians likened themselves to Palestinians, suffering from similar troubles. Shkelsem Maliqi, for example, drew out a series of links between the two cases:

Israel used all coercive means to ‘liberate’ and ‘redeem’ Palestine as a ‘sacred land’ which had been ‘usurped’ by the Palestinians. In the same way the dominant state machinery of the ‘unitary’ republic of Serbia decided to apply all coercive means to the task of bringing Kosova back into the national possession of the Serbs, on the grounds that Kosovo had been historically ‘sacred Serbian soil’, which had been ‘usurped’ by the Albanians a couple of centuries ago (Maliqi 1996, 142).²

Maliqi posited that Serbian nationalists and militant Zionists had much in common:

... the Serbs as a persecuted and historically tragic people, the notion of the historical right to gather all Serbs within one state, the idea of the crusade against (in this case) the Albanians as an alleged vanguard of Islamic fundamentalism, the right to recolonise ‘sacred soil’, the right to impose demographic control over the ‘usurpers’ (Maliqi 1996, 142).

This is no doubt what the Serbs intended. If it was acceptable for one chosen people to take control of ancestral lands, then surely the Serbs could claim the same rights, if they too were chosen.

Curiously, this dilemma was also apparent in Israel during the 1999 NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. In America, Jewish groups largely sympathised with Kosovar Albanians. One organisation ran pictorial ads depicting trainloads of Albanians, reminiscent of Jews being shipped to the death camps. American Jews contributed to various relief funds and

² For an Israeli commentary, see Igor Primoratz, ‘Israel and the war in the Balkans’, <http://www.hr/darko/etf/isr2.html> (Accessed 23 November, 2000). Primoratz argues that the pro-Serbian bias of the Israeli government had much to do with their own policies of expelling the Palestinians in 1948-49. However, he draws the line at saying that Serbian actions and Israeli actions can be compared equally, since: ‘The crucial difference, of course, is the fact that “ethnic cleansing” was carried out in part by means of genocide.’

Jewish agencies sent teams to the region to help reduce the refugee crisis (Plotz 1999). In Israel, the country's top singers organized 'Israel Must Help', which raised money to help establish a hospital on Macedonia's border with Kosovo (Andersson 1999).

However, within Israel there was also a different view. Derfner, writing in *The Jerusalem Post*, noted a surprising ambivalence to the Serbian occupation of Kosovo. He cites a 'false perception' in Israel, promoted by a 'Serbian lobby', that Serbs were completely pro-Jewish during the Holocaust, while the Croats were consumed with anti-Semitism. The reality, he argues, was substantively different. A further point of comparison concerns the belief that both Serbs and Israelis have been unfairly condemned as 'neighborhood bullies'. Haifa university professor Arnon Sofer has thus argued: 'Many Israelis see the West interfering with the Serbs' affairs out of ignorance and arrogance, just like they see the West interfering in Israel' (Derfner 1999). The linkages between Kosovar Albanians and Palestinians were not lost in Israel, with some politicians seeing NATO airstrikes as a 'dangerous precedent'. As well, Ariel Sharon (Israel's Defence Minister at that time), used a nuanced approach to Kosovo as a means of courting the over 1 million new Russian Jewish immigrants to Israel. While not particularly pro-Serbian, Russian Jews valued Sharon's courting of Russia, which included three visits to the country in mid-1999 (Plotz, 1999). While most Israelis remained unconvinced of Serbian arguments, they found them attractive on some levels, no doubt encouraging Serbs to continue this rescripting of the Kosovo narrative.

Croatia, Tadjman, and Serbophobia

Serbian-Jewish connections also became important during the war in Croatia from 1991 to 1995, with Croats seen as modern-day Nazis, bent on exterminating the Serbian people. Former Yugoslav general and historian Franjo Tadjman emerged as the head of the Croatian Democratic Community (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica, HDZ), which by 1990 became the primary nationalist force in the republic (Cigar 1995, 88). Tadjman's party appeared western and progressive, but did practice some discrimination against the republic's 12 percent Serbian population, leading to Serbian anger and eventually, violent protest (Cohen 1995, 18; Silber and Little 1993, 100-105). Conflict began in 1990

between Croatian Serbs and Croatian security forces, to which were added Serbian-financed militia groups and later, the Yugoslav People's Army (Silber and Little 1993, 146-147). By September 1991, Serbian forces controlled almost one third of Croatian territory, and by October, had pushed southward to Dubrovnik (Silber and Little 1993, 195-201).

Serbia at this stage was reviled internationally as the aggressor, with Croats seen as hapless victims. As part and parcel of the Serbian strategy of playing the victim while invading other countries, the concept of 'Serbophobia' was introduced, denoting a historic fear, hatred, and jealousy of Serbs, often likened to anti-Semitism. Nationalist author and politician Dobrica Ćosić could thus claim: 'We Serbs feel today as the Jews did in Hitler's day.... Today, Serbophobia in Europe is a concept and an attitude with the same ideological motivation and fury as anti-Semitism had during the Nazi era' (Ćosić 1994, 44). For Smilja Avramov, (an advisor to Milošević): 'The departure point for the genocide of the Jews was anti-Semitism, and of the Serbs, Serbophobia' (Avramov 1992, 18). Ćosić also saw Tudjman's regime as an emerging Nazi dictatorship. He had this to say in a published collection of his wartime essays:

We see in Croatia, many aspects of a Nazi resurrection. This state is governed by a totalitarian and chauvinistic regime, which has abolished the elementary civil and national rights of the Serbs by simply erasing them from its Constitution. This provoked a Serbian insurrection in Croatia, those who justly fear a new program of extermination, the same as the one during the Second World War to which they fell victim (Ćosić, 1994, 58-59, my translation).

Other writers urged Croatian Serbs not to surrender any weapons to the Croatian police, since politics had blossomed into 'mass chauvinist hysteria' (Vilić and Todorović 1996, 14-15). World War II era mass graves were exhumed amid great display to hammer home the point (Bowman 1995, 56-57; Brčín 1991, 3-5). Even Croatian democracy was dismissed since 'Hitler came to power in Germany within the framework of a multi-party mechanism but subsequently became a great dictator, aggressor and criminal' (Ilić 1992, 93). Others referred to 'fascist state policy and kalashnikov democracy' (Dakić 1994, 48).

Serbophobia was developed in part to excuse land grabbing in Croatia and elsewhere. Past and future potential persecution was at the root of land claims outside of Serbia

proper. For Drašković, the true borders of Serbia were to be marked in the west by the Jadovno pits, the scenes of historic massacres of Serbs during World War II. These were to be ‘pits that must become sacred places’, while the eastern border was to be Kosovo, ‘sacred places that must not become pits’ (Živković 2000, 72). Geographer Jovan Ilić would also use historic persecution as the basis for territorial claims. He claimed historical Serbian lands in Croatia for Serbia, but also claimed the Croatian city of Dubrovnik and several admittedly non-Serbian islands in the Adriatic as well. While Ilić could admit that ‘according to the ethnic principle this area [Dubrovnik] should belong to Croatia’, the new territorial arrangements were to be seen ‘primarily [as] a therapy for the treatment of ethno-psychic disorders ... primarily among the Croatian population’ (Ilić 1992, 98, 100-101). For Ilić, Serbs had an ‘additional right to self-determination and uniting’, because of their exposure to ‘genocidal extermination many times’ (Ilić 1992, 31). A mixture of compensation and punishment for past crimes were often held to be at the root of Serbian claims to Croatia.

World War II era Serbophobia and Jasenovac

Serbophobia would reach its apogee during World War II, when in 1941, Yugoslavia was invaded by the Italian and German allies, and split into different spheres of influence. 40 percent of Yugoslav territory was given over to a Croatian (Fascist) Ustasha controlled *Independent State of Croatia* (or *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH) (Pawlovich 2002, 139-141). In representations of World War II, Croats were lumped together with German Nazis as genocidal killers, Serbs and Jews as fellow victims of genocide (Serbian National Defence Council of America 1993, 28-30; Petrović 1991). According to Milan Bulajić et al’s *Never Again*, the Ustaša regime killed 30,000 of Croatia’s Jews during the war, as well as a majority of the Gypsy community (Bulajić, Miletić and Lukić 1991, 2). These numbers are roughly born out by more impartial historians (Goldstein 1999, 135, 158; Lebor 2002, 332).

Avramov refers to a united ‘Jewish-Serbian-Capitalist-Democratic front’ that ‘had to disappear forever from the world ... Jews and Serbs were struck with the same dagger.’ (Goldstein 1999, 32). For Drašković: ‘Jewish-Serbian martyrdom was sealed and signed

in blood'. Both, after all, were 'exterminated at the same concentration camps, slaughtered at the same bridges, burned alive in the same ovens, thrown together in the same pits' (Živković 2000, 69-73). Ćosić went so far as to assert that the genocide of Serbs was worse than that of the Jews, in terms of its methods and bestiality (Ćosić 1994, 24). Thus Yugoslavia's dominant and largest ethnic group lumped themselves with one of the smallest and weakest minorities as fellow victims of Fascist terror. Two very unlike peoples became one.

In Serbian eyes, the Catholic Church in Croatia was instrumental in bringing about a Serbian genocide, with the Church featuring as a strong supporter of 'policies of clericalism and racism, marked by mass killings, forced conversions and the deportation of the Serbian Orthodox population as well the slaughter of the Jews and Gypsies' (Bataković 1997). For others, the Ustaša state was 'soundly and joyously received by the majority of the Croatian people', while Church leaders were 'the most loyal [of] Hitler's collaborator[s]' (Ilić 1995b, 330).

Embodying Ustaša crimes was the Croatian-run death camp Jasenovac. Serbian historians have called it 'the dark secret of the Holocaust' and 'the suppressed chapter of Holocaust history.' (www.jasenovac.org). During the Milošević era, The SUC (Serbian Unity Congress) would claim Jasenovac as 'the third largest concentration camp of the WW II occupied Europe' (Serbian Unity Congress 1996). The Serbian Ministry of Information also depicted Jasenovac as a Serbian 'holocaust' (Serbian Ministry of Information). Imagery of a violent, annihilatory Croatian other proved central in motivating the Serbs to 'defend' the Serbian minorities in Tudjman's Croatia. It was not only Jasenovac, but also the covering up of the genocide after 1945 that captured the imagination of Serbian writers. Slobodan Kljakić's *Conspiracy of Silence* traced a Communist conspiracy to lower the number of Serbian dead, a project propelled in part by the Vatican (Kljakić 1991, 23). Tudjman's revisionist writings were also frequently attacked for their continued 'Ustaša clerico-nationalism' and 'a certain form of clerical Nazism' (Bulajić 1994, 13-14; Bulajić 1993, 23).

The numbers of Serbs killed at Jasenovac was a frequent subject of scholarly debate, with numbers ranging (on the Serbian side) from 700,000 to 2 million casualties (Ilic 1995b, 333; Đurđević 1995, 15; *Nouvel Observateur et Raporteurs sans Frontières* 1993, 277; Bataković 1992; Zečević 2000, 7; Kontić 1995, 2; Pavlovich 1988, 226; Damjanov 1995, 6; Avramov 1992, 170; Anzulović 1994, 103-104). Revisionist novels and scholarly works were also designed to maintain or increase the Communist estimate of Serbian deaths. Some of these include Strahinja Kurdulija's *Serbs on Their Own Land* (1993)³ and Lazo Kostić's *The Holocaust in the Independent State of Croatia* (1981), reprinted by the Serbian government. Such books, as well as shorter surveys by Serbian academics, perpetuated a high number of deaths, continuing the theme that Serbs were victims of the worst genocide in World War II, with only the Jews and the Russians ahead of them. Even after the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, Serbian interest in Jasenovac continued. In the context of escalating tensions in Kosovo in 1998, Diaspora Serbs formed a 'Jasenovac Research Institute', designed to promote the 'Serbian Holocaust' in North America (Jasenovac Research Institute <http://www.jasenovac.org/index.asp>).

The Serbian Jewish Friendship Society and Tudjman's Croatia

In 1988, a group of Serbian intellectuals formed the Serbian-Jewish Friendship Society (SJFS), in the hope of paralleling the plight of Serbs and Jews. The SJFS was headed by Klara Mandić, a Jewish dentist who lost 73 members of her family in the Holocaust. A charismatic character with long red fingernails and two gold stars of David around her neck, Mandić gained increasing fame, as connections between Serbs and Jews were increasingly drawn by nationalist intellectuals (Lebor 2002, 331). The SJFS was in large measure affiliated with the government. It had the backing of both Milošević and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić, who was even rumoured to be Mandić's lover (331).

The primary goal of the SJFS was to strengthen contact between Serbia and Israel, relations which had soured during the Communist era. Activities such as city twinning were popular, with 22 twin cities between Serbia and Israel, where mutual activities, from

³ See a synopsis of this at the Serbian Unity Congress Website <http://suc.Suc.Org/~kosta/tar/knjige/atlas/index.html> (Accessed 18 June, 1999).

sporting events to commercial transactions were encouraged. Mandić brought the mayors of fifteen Serbian cities to Israel during the Gulf War, while Serbian Crown Prince in exile Aleksander visited Israel (Cohen 1996, 117). Other activities included a 'Serbia Week' in Israel, with much help from Dušan Mihajlović, the future Serbian Minister of Internal Affairs (Biserko).

At its height, the SJFS would claim more than 5,000 members worldwide, with American chapters in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. The majority of members were in Yugoslavia, primarily in Belgrade (Yearwood 1999). Mandić was well known for her glowing portrayals of the Serbian people, and her constant invocation of their kindness and tolerance to Jews: 'You are really one of the rare people of the world which can be counted on the fingers of one hand, a people that simply does not know how to hate' (Mandić 1993). In token of this philosemitic ideal, Belgrade dedicated its first public Holocaust memorial in 1990; created by Jewish sculptor Nandor Glid (Gruber 2003). North of Belgrade, in Zemun, the supposed ancestral home of Theodor Herzl was restored and turned into a museum, to show the historic 'Jewishness' of Serbia (Levinsohn 1994, 199). SANU contributed by issuing two editions of Predrag Palavestra's *Jewish Writers in Serbian Literature*, which featured the work of 67 Jewish writers based in Belgrade. As the Ministry of Information argued, the book was designed to stress that 'the Jewish challenge to all the Christians in the world, especially to the Orthodox Serbs, should be strengthening of one's own religious and national identity, a call to Serbs to be united, in order for them, just like the Jews, to preserve, strengthen and justify their existence in the world.' Jews were to be a crucial inspiration for how Serbs should see themselves (Serbia Info News, 12 February 1999).

By 1992, Mandić and her colleagues went on a lecture tour of the United States, drumming up support for the Serbs while demonising the Croats for their supposed anti-Semitism. The SJFS, together with other groups such as the Serbian Unity Congress and Serbnet began actively trying to co-opt Jewish public opinion in the United States. As with Mandić's strategy, this involved primarily demonizing Croats as Ustaša supporters, while highlighting some Bosnian Moslems' support for the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, a

Nazi ally during World War II (Gruber 2003; Blitz 1994). The key here was to demonstrate to Jews that Serbs had saved Jews during World War II, unlike other groups. The SJFS would promote awareness ‘of the living historical memory about genocides committed to Serbs and Jews since Medieval Ages till nowadays, especially during World War II...’ (‘Appeal By the Serbian-Jewish Friendship Society of Belgrade’ 1999). Their work also included highlighting Croatia’s anti-Semitism, including charges that Croatian Jews feared for their lives from the authorities.⁴

Laslo Sekelj, in a study prepared for the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism, noted the increased ‘functionalization’ of Jews taking place through the work of the SJFS: ‘the use of Jews, Jewish symbols, and the Holocaust for political manipulation’. Sekelj notes the overtly political nature of the SJFS, specifically how an ‘enormous quantity of public statements were made in support of Karadzic and Serb paramilitary groups in Bosnia and Croatia ... [e]specially in attempts to legitimize Serbian ethno-nationalism ...’. In reality, the SJFS enjoyed little support amongst Jewish groups and indeed, were instrumental in harassing anyone critical of Serbian nationalism, including some Jewish intellectuals (Sekelj 1997). Some Jewish leaders did promote such pro-Serbian policies, even seeing ‘Serbophobia as a twin sister of anti-Semitism’, with others calling America ‘a monster of this earth’. However, some coercion on the part of the government seems to have taken place.⁵

Serbian plans, argues Živković, were naïve—to curry Israeli support for the ‘reconquest of Kosovo’, while petitioning the ‘American Jewish lobby’ to help their cause (Živković,

⁴ ‘Excerpts from the ‘War Raises Old Anxieties for Croatian Jews.’ Including statement by the slain Jewish leader, Klara Mandić From: London 'Independent,' 21 October, 1991’ <http://emperors-clothes.com/cos/usefula2.htm>; Such accusations would later be countered by the president of the Zagreb Jewish Community Nenad Porges, who, in turn, accused the Serbs of anti-Semitism and expressed support for the Croatian government. See Ruth Gruber, ‘Our Yugoslavia’ (1 June, 2003, Our Jerusalem). <http://www.ourjerusalem.com/history/story/history20030601.html>.

⁵ Other Jewish leaders were also co-opted into service. In 1995 during the NATO bombing of Bosnia, Danon Cadik, Chief Rabbi of Yugoslavia, issued an ‘Open letter to the American Jewish Committee’ urging American Jews to stop the campaign. Cadik would blame the bombing on ‘unrestrained anti-Serbian propaganda, raging during all this war, following the Nazi model, but much more efficient means and in a much more sophisticated and more expensive way.’ Danon Cadik, Chief Rabbi of Yugoslavia, et. al., ‘Open letter to the American Jewish Committee’ (1995) <http://emperors-clothes.com/articles/danon/YugoRabb.html> For further claims of Jewish support, see Serbia Info News, ‘Rabbi Asiel: deep sorrow for our fatherland’ (Belgrade: Ministry of Information, April 05, 1999)

2000, 74). In neither cause were they particularly successful. The Society fell from favour as the Milošević regime dragged on, and in 2001, Mandić was murdered in her apartment in Belgrade under mysterious circumstances (Lebor 2002, 336).

Kosovo II: 1999

In March 1999, NATO began bombing Yugoslavia in *Operation Allied Force*, designed to stop the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians by Serbian militia units linked to the Milošević regime (Daalder and O’Hanlon 2000, 101). The *Operation* lasted 78 days, culminating in the destruction of most of Yugoslavia’s military and much of its civilian infrastructure (Greenberg 2000, 212; Daalder and O’Hanlon 2000, 143-144, 209). In the context of this air campaign, the need to stress Serbian-Jewish linkages increased. Among some Diaspora groups, there was palpable anger against Jews for being at the root of NATO attacks.

Claims of Jews ‘owing’ the Serbs for their goodness in World War II emerged in SJFS rhetoric during this time, reinforcing Jewish duplicity. Thus Heather Cottin’s position a month after *Allied Force* began:

Today is Yom Hashoah. Today, the little nation of Yugoslavia is being bombed in a blitzkrieg more deadly than any the Nazis ever leveled at any nation in World War II. The Serbs, who were the only friends Jews had in Yugoslavia during World War II, have been demonized and accused of genocide (Cottin 1999).

Cottin went on to question why a ‘false analogy’ had arisen between Jews and Kosovar Albanians, concluding that a ‘terrible manipulation’ had been perpetrated by the media and the American government (‘Borba’ 15 August 1999). Similarly, Ljubomir Tadić, president of SANU and member of the SJFS board claimed Serbs as ‘victims of monstrous lies and accusations. The inflamed Serbophobia is a new, modern form of Nazi racism’ (Yearwood 1999).

A year after the Kosovo campaign, William Dorich would angrily accuse the World Jewish Congress of having ‘set the stage for public relations sponsored Serbophobia throughout the 1990s.’ He further added, accusing Jews of ingratitude:

Serbs can't count on the Jews to be honest anti-genocide brokers when they have never lifted a voice to recognize the thousands of Serbs who share common graves with Jews because those Serbs were caught hiding their Jewish neighbors in their attics, barns and basement during the Holocaust (Dorich 2000).

The 'SACRU Serbian-American Civil Rights Unlimited Documenting Jewish Genocides on Serbs' would outline a bizarre conspiracy during the conflict, blaming the 'Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs' for US aggression against the Serbs. The ten year history of the conflict, from 1989 to 1999 is encapsulated in the actions of various US leaders, journalists and lobbyists, labeled as 'Jew', who are seen to be at the root of American intervention in Yugoslavia ('SACRU Serbian-American Civil Rights Unlimited Documenting Jewish Genocides On Serbs', <http://www.compuserb.com/sacru/>)

Sekelj does note the rise of anti-Semitism in Serbia during the 1990s, as people looked for someone to blame. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were reprinted on several occasions, while various academics outlined Jewish conspiracies, tying Jews and Masons together. Russian recognition of Croatia and Slovenia was also traced to 'the Jewish lobby in the highest echelons of Russian diplomacy.' At the same time, the anti-Semitic works of Ratibor Đurđević and Orthodox Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović were warmly received in some quarters, while rejected in others (Sekelj 1997).

However, despite works by Ljubica Stefan and Philip J Cohen (Stefan 1993; Cohen 1997) averring the deep anti-Semitism of the Serbian people, Sekelj sees a relatively low level of anti-Semitism in Yugoslavia: 20.8 percent in Serbia (excluding Kosovo), and 15 percent in Montenegro. He thus argues: 'Anti-Semitism was not of major importance in the former Yugoslavia, unlike the case of Poland, the former Soviet Union, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia' (Sekelj 1997) Živković (himself a Serbian Jew) similarly argues that he has not experienced any anti-Semitism in his own country (Živković 2000, 80).

Conclusions: The Holocaust and Classicalism

As I have tried to demonstrate, the Jewish trope in Serbian nationalism became a central facet of national identity in the 1980s and 90s, particularly when conflicts in Kosovo,

Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina began. If nationalism in this case was formed by negative, foreign myths, must we substantially alter Smith's understanding of national identity and the role of the golden age? How would a Smithean analysis respond to the above criticism? I would argue that there are aspects of Smith's work which can be used to understand the Holocaust's role in nationalist mythology. This may involve going back to his ideas of classicalism as a framework for presenting national history. The Holocaust needs to be interpreted as a new frame of reference, a new form of negative classicalism. As Britain, America and other countries imitated the ancient Greeks and Romans in their presentation of the nation, so too has Serbia now used a foreign frame of reference to elevate itself, even if it does not harken back to a pristine, classical époque (Smith 1998; Smith 1996a, 199).

In his work on the growing importance of the Holocaust in national identity, Furedi argues that the time of positive golden ages has passed. Over the past two hundred years, myths stressing the 'unique greatness of a particular people or culture' have been privileged, especially those promoting 'heroic deeds and glorious events'. Such myths were designed to 'construct a positive vision of the future'. However, modern representations of history are 'driven by a very different impulse'—acting as a 'monument to people's historic suffering'. The Jewish Holocaust emerges as 'the icon for therapeutic history', and '[t]he language associated with Holocaust discourse—particularly the imager of the traumatised survivor—has been appropriated by numerous activists determined to state a claim to the status associated with emotional suffering'. (Furedi 2002).

At a purely practical and pragmatic level, manipulating Holocaust imagery did ultimately accomplish three main goals. Domestically, it rallied the people together in a time of escalating tensions and hostilities, convincing people that genocide might well be around the corner. 'Defensive' ethnic cleansing could thus be promoted as a means of saving members of the nation from annihilation. Targeting external enemies using such vitriolic language underpinned the Milošević regime and allowed violent ultra-nationalism to come to the fore.

Internationally, the barrage of Holocaust imagery from all sides served to confuse and obscure the true identities of the perpetrators. Yes, most knew that the Serbs had committed the lion's share of atrocities, with the Croats in second place. Yet the frequent rhetorical attacks and claims of persecution from Serbs, Croats, Kosovar Albanians and Bosnian Moslems served to reinforce the idea that everyone was fighting everyone else, and that the conflicts had ancient roots that could not simply be resolved by cursory negotiations or even air strikes. Inaction could thus be excused. Former American Ambassador Lawrence Eagleberger's comments were typical in this regard: 'Until the Bosnians, Serbs and Croats decide to stop killing each other, there is nothing the outside world can do about it'. (quoted in Holbrooke 1998, 23).

A third goal concerned the Jewish people themselves, domestically in the rump of Yugoslavia, as well as in America and in Israel. Such imagery was targeted to gain Jewish sympathy and support for the Serbian cause. It did work in Israel to some extent, as discussed previously. Negative imagery against Croatia was also designed to reduce Israeli and American support for this breakaway republic. This was also effective to some extent, although Tudjman's writings and speeches did more to alienate the Israelis than any Serbian undertaking.

In these ways, Holocaust imagery served the Serbian nation in time of war, although it took an obvious destructive toll on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Whether such a framework for analysing history will be useful in times of peace is debatable. I would argue that in the post-Milošević era, such imagery has become less welcome and less interesting for those struggling to overcome a decade of crippling sanctions, worldwide condemnation, violence, and corruption.

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