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ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ

The Racak Hoax

By Diana Johnstone. Paris | 20 January 1999 (<http://emperors-clothes.com/articles/Johnstone/racakhoax.htm>)

French newspaper and television reports today feature evidence apparently ignored by U.S. media, suggesting that the “Racak massacre” so vigorously denounced by the U.S.-imposed head of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) “verifiers” mission to Kosovo, William Walker, was a setup. This coincides with reports in the German press indicating strong irritation with Walker among other OSCE members. Meanwhile, the ineffable State Department spokesman James Rubin appeared tonight on CNN for short glimpses between Clinton impeachment dronings, plodding forward amid questions from journalists who were even more gung-ho for NATO bombings than he and his bride Christiane Amanpour, whose love story apparently owes so much to the common anti-Serb cause. It seems the U.S. is clueless as to the doubts being cast elsewhere on the “massacre” story, and the only questions well-paid U.S. journalists could conjure up were variations on the theme, “Why isn’t cowardly NATO already bombing the Serbs?”

RENAUD GIRARD has covered virtually all the Yugoslav wars of disintegration on the spot for the French daily *Le Figaro*. Below is my rough but accurate translation of his lead article published in 1999:

Kosovo: Obscure Areas of a Massacre

By Renaud Girard | *Le Figaro* | January 20, 1999

The images filmed during the attack on the village of Racak contradict the Albanians' and the OSCE's version Racak.

Did the American ambassador William Walker, chief of the OSCE cease-fire verification mission to Kosovo, show undue haste when, last Saturday, he publicly accused Serbian security forces of having on the previous day executed in cold blood some forty Albanian peasants in the little village of Racak?

The question deserves to be raised in the light of a series of disturbing facts. In order to understand, it is important to go through the events of the crucial day of Friday in chronological order. At dawn, intervention forces of the Serbian police encircled and then attacked the village of Racak, known as a bastion of UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA) separatist guerrillas.

The police didn't seem to have anything to hide, since, at 8:30 a.m., they invited a television team (two journalists of *AP TV*) to film the operation. A warning was also given to the OSCE, which sent two cars with American diplomatic licenses to the scene. The observers spent the whole day posted on a hill where they could watch the village. At 3 p.m., a police communique reached the international press center in Pristina announcing that 15 UCK "terrorists" had been killed in combat in Racak and that a large stock of weapons had been seized.

At 3:30 p.m., the police forces, followed by the *AP TV* team, left the village, carrying with them a heavy 12.7 mm machine gun, two automatic rifles, two rifles with telescopic sights and some thirty Chinese-made kalashnikovs. At 4:40 p.m., a French journalist drove through the village and met three orange OSCE vehicles. The international observers were chatting calmly with three middle-aged Albanians in civilian clothes. They were looking for eventual civilian casualties. Returning to the village at 6 p.m., the journalist saw the observers taking away two very slightly injured old men and two women. The observers, who did not seem particularly worried, did not mention anything in particular to the journalist. They simply said that they were "unable to evaluate the battle toll".

The scene of Albanian corpses in civilian clothes lined up in a ditch which would shock the whole world was not discovered until the next morning, around 9 a.m., by journalists, soon followed by OSCE observers. At that time, the village was once again taken over by armed UCK soldiers who led the foreign visitors, as soon as they arrived, toward the supposed massacre site. Around noon, William Walker in person arrived and expressed his indignation. All the Albanian witnesses gave the same version: at midday, the policemen forced their way into homes and separated the women from the men, whom they led to the hilltops to execute them without more ado. The most disturbing fact is that the pictures filmed by the *AP TV* journalists — which *Le Figaro* was shown yesterday — radically contradict that version. It was in fact an empty village that the police entered in the morning, sticking close to the walls. The shooting was intense, as they were fired on from UCK trenches dug into the hillside.

The fighting intensified sharply on the hilltops above the village. Watching from below, next to the mosque, the *AP* journalists understood that the UCK guerrillas, encircled, were trying desperately to break out. A score of them in fact succeeded, as the police themselves admitted. What really happened? During the night, could the UCK have gathered the bodies, in fact killed by Serb bullets, to set up a scene of cold-blooded massacre? A disturbing fact: Saturday morning the journalists found only very few cartridges around the ditch where the massacre supposedly took place. Intelligently, did the UCK seek to turn a military defeat into a political victory? Only a credible international inquiry would make it possible to resolve these doubts. The reluctance of the Belgrade government, which has consistently denied the massacre, thus seems incomprehensible.

Contrary to what Renaud Girard says in his conclusion, “The reluctance of the Belgrade government” is not, in fact, entirely incomprehensible, since Belgrade is convinced that the U.S.-led “international community” is determined to frame the Serb side in order to justify NATO bombing. The hasty and virulent William Walker (<http://emperors-clothes.com/analysis/sixty.htm>) condemnation of the Serbs for “the most horrendous” massacre he had ever seen (and that after four years in El Salvador!), not to mention the latest in a series of fatal “captures” of Bosnian Serbs accused of war crimes, has only confirmed the view of most Serbs that they can expect only unfair condemnation, not justice, from such “investigators”.

Doubts are cast on the reality of the “Racak massacre” even by *Le Monde*, which for years has led the crusade against the Serbs. But *Le Monde*’s own correspondent, Christophe Chatelot, sent the following report from Pristina:

Were the Racak Dead Really Coldly Massacred?

By Christophe Chatelot | *Le Monde* | 21 January 1999

The version of the facts spread by the Kosovo Albanians leaves several questions unanswered. Belgrade says that the forty-five victims were UCK “terrorists, fallen during combat,” but rejects any international investigation.

Isn't the Racak massacre just too perfect? New eye witness accounts gathered on Monday, January 18, by *Le Monde*, throw doubt on the reality of the horrible spectacle of dozens of piled up bodies of Albanians supposedly summarily executed by Serb security forces last Friday.

Were the victims executed in cold blood, as the UCK says, or killed in combat, as the the Serbs say? According to the version gathered and broadcast by the press and the Kosovo verification mission (KVM) observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the massacre took place on January 15 in the early after-noon. “Masked” Serbian police entered the village of Racak which had been shelled all morning by Yugoslav army tanks. They broke down the doors and entered people's homes, ordering the women to stay there while they pushed the men to the edge of the village to calmly execute them with a bullet through the head, not without first having tortured and mutilated several. Some witnesses even said that the Serbs sang as they did their dirty work, before leaving the village around 3:30p.m.

The account by two journalists of *Associated Press* TV television (*AP* TV) who filmed the police operation in Racak contradicts this tale. When at 10 a.m. they entered the village in the wake of a police armored vehicle, the village was nearly deserted. They advanced through the streets under the fire of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) fighters lying in ambush in the woods above the village. The exchange of fire continued throughout the operation, with varying intensity. The main fighting took place in the woods. The Albanians who had fled the village when the first Serb shells were fired at dawn tried to escape. There they ran into Serbian police who had surrounded the village. The UCK was trapped in between. The object of the violent police attack on Friday was a stronghold of UCK Albanian independence fighters.

Virtually all the inhabitants had fled Racak during the frightful Serb offensive of the summer of 1998. With few exceptions, they had not come back. “Smoke came from only two chimneys”, noted one of the two *AP* TV reporters. The Serb operation was thus no surprise, nor was it a secret. On the morning of the attack, a police source tipped off *AP* TV: “Come to Racak, something is happening”. At 10 a.m., the team was on the spot alongside the police; it filmed from a peak overlooking the village and then through the streets in the wake of an armored vehicle.

The OSCE was also warned of the action. At least two teams of international observers watched the fighting from a hill where they could see part of the village. They entered Racak shortly after the police left. They then questioned a few Albanians about the situation, trying to find out whether there were wounded civilians. Around 6 p.m., they took four persons — two women and two old men — who were very slightly wounded toward the dispensary of the neighboring town of Stimje. The verifiers said at that time that they were “incapable of establishing the number of casualties of that day of fighting”.

The publicity given by the Serbian police to that operation was intense. At 10:30 a.m., it gave out its first press release. It announced that the police had “encircled the village of Racak with the aim of arresting the members of a terrorist group who killed a policeman” the previous Sunday. At 3 p.m., a first bulletin announced fifteen Albanians killed in fighting. The next day, Saturday, it welcomed the success of the operation which, it said, had resulted in the death of dozens of UCK “terrorists” and the capture of a large stock of weapons.

The attempt to arrest an Albanian presumed to have murdered a Serb policemen turned into a massacre. At 5:30 p.m., the police evacuated the site under the sporadic fire of a handful of UCK fighters who continued to hold out thanks to the steep and rough terrain. In no time, the first of the Albanians who had got away come back down into the village, those who had managed to hide came out in the open and three KVM vehicles drove into the village. One hour after the police left, night fell. The next morning, the press and the KVM came to see the damage caused by the fighting.

It was at this moment that, guided by the armed UCK fighters who had recaptured the village, they discovered the ditch where a score of bodies were piled up, almost exclusively men. At midday, the chief of the KVM in person, the American diplomat William Walker, arrived on the spot and declared his indignation at the atrocities committed by “the Serb police forces and the Yugoslav army”. The condemnation was total, irrevocable.

And yet questions remain. How could the Serb police have gathered a group of men and led them calmly toward the execution site while they were constantly under fire from UCK fighters? How could the ditch located on the edge of Racak have escaped notice by local inhabitants familiar with the surroundings who were present before nightfall? Or by the observers who were present for over two hours in this tiny village? Why so few cartridges around the corpses, so little blood in the hollow road where twenty three people are supposed to have been shot at close range with several bullets in the head? Rather, weren't the bodies of the Albanians killed in combat by the Serb police gathered into the ditch to create a horror scene which was sure to have an appalling effect on public opinion? Don't the violence and rapidity of Belgrade's reaction, which gave the chief of the KVM forty-eight hours to leave Yugoslavia, show that the Yugoslavs are sure of what they are saying?

Only an international inquiry above all suspicion will make it possible to clarify these obscure points. Finnish and Belurussian legal doctors were expected to arrive in Pristina on Wednesday to attend the autopsies being carried out by Yugoslav doctors. The problem is that the Belgrade authorities have never been cooperative in this matter. Why? Whatever the conclusions of the investigators, the Racak massacre shows that the hope of soon reaching a settlement of the Kosovo crisis seems quite illusory.

More at: www.tenc.net (<http://emperors-clothes.com/splash.htm>) *Emperor's Clothes*

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