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Kosovo, The Hoax-Begotten War

It is now obvious to even to the most ardent supporters of the war over Kosovo that it has not ended the bloodshed or produced a society where Albanians and Serbs can live together in peace. On March 24, the anniversary of the first cruise missile attack on Belgrade, the Washington Post ran a front-page story under the headline, "War to Preserve Multi-Ethnic Society Has Left Serbs Segregated in Ghettos." It said, "Since the war ended last June, revenge attacks by ethnic Albanians have left hundreds of Kosovo Serbs dead and hastened the flight of three-quarters of the province's pre-war Serbian population of 200,000. The wave of retribution has underscored that the most urgent and difficult task facing the United Nations and other international organizations is not repairing the physical landscape, but remaking the political psychology of two peoples."

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The Second Ethnic Cleansing

The estimate that 50,000 Serbs, a quarter of the pre-war Serbian population, remain in Kosovo is more than double other estimates that 90 percent of the Serbs have been "ethnically cleansed," a term never applied to the Albanian policy of driving out the Serbs. Less than half of the Albanian population fled Kosovo during the war, many of them expelled by the Serbs but many fleeing to escape NATO's bombing, according to stories in the New York and Los Angeles Times.

When the war ended in June, the refugees in Albania and Macedonia quickly went home. Despite the presence of NATO troops under UN command, the ethnic cleansing began anew, with Serbs and Gypsies as the targets while the UN peacekeepers looked the other way. The Washington Post said that while the killings have decreased, "the atmosphere is still murderous" and that the borders of the lives of the Serbs still in Kosovo are "defined by the presence of NATO tanks."

The irony of this was not lost on many in the media who had vigorously beaten the drums of war a year earlier. It has been discussed in editorials, columns and news stories, but conspicuously missing from these reassessments was any exposé of the fact that we were stampeded into war by lies and misinformation originating with government spokesmen and spread by our gullible news media.

A Policy Based on Lies

In his televised speech on March 24, 1999, announcing that we were launching air strikes against "Serbian forces responsible for the brutality in Kosovo," Clinton said, "We act to protect thousands of innocent people in Kosovo from a mounting military offensive." We had succeeded in stopping the fighting for a while, he said, and had "rescued tens of thousands of people from freezing and starvation in the hills where they had fled to save their lives."

Terrorist attacks by the KLA started the fighting in Feb. 1998. It resulted in "as many as 2,000 killed" on both sides over the next eight months. [That figure was reported by the New York Times on Jan. 17, but after Clinton's speech it was lost amidst the talk by high officials of genocide.] A cease-fire negotiated in October was violated in December by the KLA. Clinton, referring to negotiations at Rambouillet, France in February, said that while the Kosovar Albanians had signed a peace agreement that would "end the fighting for good," the Serb leaders "refused even to discuss key elements."

True, the Albanians signed a peace agreement at Rambouillet and the Serbs refused to do so. But the Albanians, represented by leaders of the KLA, agreed to sign only after they had been assured by our negotiators that the Serbs would refuse. They could give that assurance because Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had insisted on including provisions in the proposed agreement that were known to be unacceptable to the Serbs. Those provisions were (1) the right of NATO forces to move freely throughout all of Yugoslavia, and (2) an eventual plebiscite on independence for Kosovo in which the wishes of the Albanian majority were bound to prevail. The KLA leaders were told that when the Serbs refused to sign we would then threaten to bomb them. If they didn't cave in then, we would bomb and bring them to their knees in a day or two.

Clinton's Reliance On Racak

In his speech, Clinton asserted that the Serbs were preparing for a major offensive in clear violation of their commitments. As proof of this he said, "Now, they've started moving from village to village, shelling civilians and torching their houses." He painted a horrifying picture of Serb atrocities, saying, "We've seen innocent people taken from their homes, forced to kneel in the dirt and sprayed with bullets; Kosovar men dragged from their families, fathers and sons together, lined up and shot in cold blood. This is not war in the traditional sense. It is an attack by tanks and artillery on a largely defenseless people whose leaders have already agreed to peace." Clinton declared, "Ending this tragedy is a moral imperative."

On January 15, 1999, Serbian security forces had gone in force to Racak, a KLA stronghold 15 miles from Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, allegedly to arrest suspects in the killing of a policeman in a village nearby. Clinton implied that there had been numerous attacks of the kind he described, but there had been only one case of allegations of a massacre that matched his description. This was the alleged massacre of 45 "innocent civilians" at Racak on January 15, 1999.

An Associated Press story about this appeared on the front page of the New York Times on January 17. Headlined, "Mutilated Kosovo Bodies Found After Serb Attack," it said, "Some of the dead were found with their eyes gouged out or heads smashed in, and one man lay decapitated in the courtyard of his compound. The victims included one young woman and a 12-year-old boy. Many were older men, including one who was 70." It added that "many had been shot at close range" and that villagers said that "the Serbian forces had rounded up the men, driven them up the hill and shot them." Amb. William Walker, head of the Kosovo Verification Mission, had called this an "unspeakable atrocity" and "a crime against humanity."

French Reporters Cry Hoax

The AP said very little about the Serbian side of this story. It said, "International monitors and journalists came across the carnage this morning (Jan. 16), having been barred from the site by Serbian police the previous day." It reported that Serbian police, who were backed by Yugoslavian Army tanks, said they had killed tens of terrorists in the action," after having come under mortar and automatic weapons fire while trying to arrest suspects in the killing of a policeman.

The assertion that monitors and journalists were barred from Racak on Jan. 15, is absolutely false. The Associated Press Television News (APTN) sent a camera crew to videotape the operation at the invitation of the Serbs. If the AP had reported this, the Racak "massacre" would have been exposed as a hoax and Clinton would not have been able to use it as a justification for launching the air war. Who would believe that the Serb security forces would invite an American news organization to videotape a massacre that they intended to carry out?

What's more, the next morning, Saturday, Jan. 16, the Yugoslavian government press center in Pristina urged reporters to go to Racak. Renaud Girard, who was covering Kosovo for the French newspaper, *Le Figaro*, did so. He was shocked by the dead bodies he saw and wrote a story about this "crime against humanity" that was published on January 18. But two days later, *Le Figaro* ran a second story by Girard repudiating his first story and charging that he and other foreign journalists had been fooled by the KLA. At least two other French newspapers, *Le Monde* and *Liberation*, made the same charges. Such a reversal is unusual in journalism. Here is how it came about.

Girard told AIM that after his first story was published he heard from Christofe Chatelot, the correspondent in Yugoslavia for *Le Monde*. Chatelot had arrived in Pristina Friday afternoon. He saw the government's press release about its operation in Racak and decided to have a look. He got there about 4:00 p.m. He said the village appeared to be more or less normal. He spoke to an American observer, an army captain named Scott, who had been there all day. He learned that the operation had been covered by an APTN camera crew. Scott said nothing about a massacre, and there were no bodies in sight. There were a few people with minor wounds. Having found nothing worth writing about, he didn't revisit Racak the next day with the other journalists.

The Camera Crew And Their Tapes

Girard and Chatelot jointly interviewed the APTN camera crew, two locally hired Serbs. The government media center in Pristina had called them at 8:30 a.m. on January 15 and suggested that they be at Racak at 10:30 a.m. They went and were allowed to videotape the operation. They had seen no signs of a massacre. They showed Girard and Chatelot the footage they had shot that day. Girard said no villagers and no dead bodies were anywhere to be seen.

Some of the APTN footage was shown on television in Europe the next morning. Girard said no one linked it to the massacre because it showed no bodies. Some of it was used on a PBS "Frontline" documentary about Racak. At AIM's request, Jack Stokes of the AP's headquarters in New York viewed all the segments of the footage that had been shot on Jan. 15 that had been aired. He said that none of it, like the portion shown on "Frontline," showed any villagers or bodies.

Girard found the whole thing "weird." Why would the government urge journalists to go to Racak if they intended to commit a massacre or had committed one? Why did the observers who were in Racak on Friday neither hear about nor see any sign of a massacre? Why the big discrepancy between what the APTN camera crew saw and videotaped on Friday and the stories the villagers told the journalists on Saturday? Why weren't the police in the village a few kilometers away asked to conduct an investigation and tell what they knew about what had transpired the previous day or during the night? Girard's second article in *Le Figaro* raised these questions, and *Le Monde* published a similar story.

Angry Anglo Reporters

Girard says these articles created "a huge fuss." He said, "Anglo-Saxon reporters were telling us we were killing the story. Killing the story! We were doing a reporter's job." Girard's article said that Amb. William Walker, who headed the verification mission "may have been a little too quick

in condemning the Serbs." Girard was also critical of the AP, saying, "What is very interesting is that the hierarchy of the AP warned the two Serb cameramen not to talk to journalists any more or they would be fired. They are poor Serb cameramen and they need the salary to live in this destroyed country. This was a big scandal." He thinks the president of the AP should be told that "he must allow these people to talk, telling what they saw, for the sake of the truth."

A spokesman for AP President Louis Boccardi said that it is their policy not to allow their newsmen to be sources of news for rival news organizations. That is understandable, but the AP has failed to use the information its cameramen had to correct the inaccurate reports that its correspondent sent about what had happened at Racak. That correspondent apparently did not know that an AP camera crew had been in Racak when the massacre allegedly occurred. It was no doubt embarrassing to have cameramen saying that what the correspondent had reported was not true. It should be even more embarrassing to be caught muzzling those that were exposing the error.

The AP, holding videotapes that proved that the massacre was a hoax, did nothing to correct its correspondent's false report before it was put on the wire. It did nothing when the French papers exposed the hoax. It did not act on AIM's suggestions that it conduct a new investigation. If it is interested in the truth, it should interview its cameramen, Christofe Chatelot, and Scott, the American army captain who had talked to Chatelot four hours after male villagers were allegedly dragged from their homes and marched to the outskirts of the village and shot. Scott, according to Chatelot, had seen nothing like that. It should interview the Serbs who participated in the operation and tell their side of the story. AIM was told that the AP was investigating allegations that a large number of South Korean civilians were killed by American troops in 1950. There was no interest in investigating what really happened at Racak last year.

What Really Happened At Racak

The KLA returned to Racak that Friday night and were in full control of the village the next day. Girard says that late Friday night the government media center told him that the number killed in the Racak operation could have been as high as 50 or 55, not the 15 reported early in the afternoon. The Serbs were using tanks, armored vehicles, machine guns and mortars, enough firepower to inflict heavy casualties on the KLA who were hiding in the hills. Videotapes show about 20 of the those killed lying end to end in a ravine on the outskirts of the village. Others are shown in different locations lying side by side. The openness of the Serbs, the video shot on Friday and what the cameramen and Chatelot saw that day indicate that there was no massacre. The video shot on Saturday does not provide any convincing evidence to contradict this.

There is no site analysis that proves that the men were shot where the bodies were found. The footage shot on Saturday does not show the bloody mess that would be found if all these men had been shot in the head at close range where the bodies were lying. The headless body is a good example. Not a drop of blood can be seen on the white bench lying on its side just inches from the body. Reporters called it a decapitation, but where was the head? Very few head wounds are visible in the video footage. One man had his hand blown off. Another had been shot in the abdomen. It did not appear that the bodies had been riddled with bullets, and Girard said there were very few spent cartridges near the bodies. The sites were not cordoned off. No forensic experts inspected them. The KLA was allowed to move all the bodies to the Racak mosque. The evidence indicates that this was not the first time they were moved.

The Autopsies Inconclusive

The Serbs moved in with force on Tuesday, Jan. 19, to take the bodies to Pristina to be autopsied. A week later, the head of a Finnish team that was invited to help perform autopsies stated that

some of the bodies tested positive on paraffin tests, indicating that they may have fired weapons. She said that it was difficult to reconstruct the chain of custody over the bodies, suggesting that there may have been some tampering with the evidence. She said it might be impossible to determine whether they were massacred or killed in the fighting. The State Department has shown no interest in getting the autopsy reports and making them available for examination in this country. This suggests that they fear they do not support the massacre claim. Our gullible establishment media have swallowed the massacre story and attacked the French journalists for exposing it. They should join AIM in demanding that the AP put out a report on what its camera crew and their tapes reveal about what really happened at Racak.

E-MAILGATE

Larry Klayman's Judicial Watch scored a breakthrough in March when Judge Royce Lamberth gave the White House two weeks to explain its failure to search several million e-mail messages for material that had been subpoenaed by Judicial Watch, Congressional committees and the Office of the Independent Counsel.

The White House claims this was a glitch caused by a flawed instruction to the computer server programmed to record the e-mail in a form that facilitated searches. For 27 months, beginning in August 2000, incoming e-mail messages for the Executive Office of the President were not stored in a system designed to facilitate searches for subpoenaed material. [If it is true that the office receives 20,000 e-mails a day, the total for 27 months would be around 12 million.] It wasn't until June 1998 that employees of Northrop-Grumman, which managed the computer system, discovered what was going on. They called it to the attention of a White House staffer who in turn notified a senior official. No corrective action was taken until November, five months later, when steps were finally taken to store the new incoming messages properly, but nothing has yet been done to find the missing messages and respond to the subpoenas.

Robert Haas, a Northrop-Grumman employee, ran a check on thousands of the concealed e-mails. His supervisor, Betty Lambuth, says he told her that they contained references to Filegate, the Monica Lewinsky scandal, the sale of Commerce Department trade mission seats in exchange for campaign contributions, and Vice President Al Gore's involvement in illegal campaign fundraising. Haas has since denied saying that. This dispute can be easily settled. The results of his test are on a zip drive that is now in the custody of a White House security officer.

Was This An Accident?

The White House wants us to believe that this was an accidental computer programming error, not a deliberate effort to keep potentially damaging information from being surrendered in response to subpoenas. That is not the impression conveyed by a sworn declaration by Betty Lambuth, the Northrop-Grumman employee who first reported the problem. She said that she and her staff were warned not to discuss this matter with anyone, including their boss. She was told that if any of them violated that order they would be fired, arrested and jailed.

Lambuth said, "I was initially instructed to work up technical plans and cost estimates to fix the e-mail problem. But within days, I quickly came to the conclusion that the Clinton White House had no intention of fixing the problem, despite their knowledge that the e-mail in issue contained many e-mails from and to Monica Lewinsky, who was then involved in an ongoing criminal investigation. My conclusion was based on the fact that nothing was done to fix the problem and the e-mails continued to be left out of any searches in response to subpoenas and other document requests."

Betty Lambuth's conclusion is borne out by the fact that it took the White House five months to resume entering incoming e-mail messages in the system where they could be easily located and searched. It failed to notify any of the parties that had subpoenaed documents that no search had been made of e-mail received in a twenty-seven month period. And it has done nothing to recover and search those messages since the problem was first discovered nearly two years ago.

White House Tries The "Old News" Ploy

In February, White House spokesman Joe Lockhart brushed off a question about a Washington Times story on how the White House had hidden e-mails suspected of containing highly damaging information about a number of Clinton scandals. Recalling that it had been reported by Insight magazine in December 1998, he dismissed it as old news. But when Insight broke the story, no other media, including the Washington Times, its sister publication, picked it up. It developed no legs.

But last month it came to life, making the front pages of major newspapers. Paul Rodriguez, the editor of Insight, says that when they broke the story it was also known to the Government Reform Committee and to the Office of the Independent Counsel, neither of which pursued it. When it came up at a conference on March 10 on Judicial Watch's suit on behalf of the victims of Filegate, Judge Royce Lamberth read the riot act to the lawyer representing the White House. He gave him two weeks to explain why the e-mail had vanished and what was being done about it. He said he would hang anyone who destroyed evidence.

Rep. Burton has since held two hearings, taking testimony from the employees who discovered the messages were missing and had been warned not to discuss this with anyone, the White House officials who issued that warning and White House Counsel Beth Nolan, who didn't seem to know much about anything.

More Trouble For Gore

The Justice Department asked Judge Lamberth and Congress to lay off while it conducted an investigation of the matter. Independent Counsel Robert Ray agreed with that approach. Larry Klayman, the chairman of Judicial Watch, denounced this as a White House ploy to delay the exposure of its obstruction of justice. Judge Lamberth questioned the Justice Department's track record, calling some of its probes "bogus." He told its lawyer that he faced an "uphill battle" to convince him a delay was necessary. The judge gave the Justice Department a week to prepare its arguments.

This was page-one news. The Washington Post advanced the story, reporting that the "White House counsel disclosed that a vast quantity of e-mail from and to Vice President Gore and his staff was never properly recorded—and therefore was never reviewed to determine if it was relevant to investigations of Democratic fund-raising abuses in 2000." The Post said this failure dates back to 1994 and that nothing was done about it until March 2000. This was a pre-emptive strike by Gore that worked. His e-mail scandal was buried in a few paragraphs in the Post instead of making headlines.

It appears that E-mailgate is attracting attention because if Judge Lamberth rejects the Justice Department's request that he cede the field to them, we may finally see a substantive probe of wrongdoing at the White House that doesn't end up as just another cover-up.

AIM Report NOTES FROM THE EDITOR'S CUFF

THE AIM REPORT ON AL GORE'S SKELETONS (FEBRUARY-B) INSPIRED MANY FAVORABLE comments and requests for additional copies. NewsMax.com got our permission and posted it on their site in three installments. You may recall that we listed 17 lies that Gore has told, and we can now add one more big one. The Associated Press recently reported that Al Gore had stated that "his family's involvement with Armand Hammer's Occidental Petroleum began after his father was defeated for reelection to the Senate in 1970. He said his father opened a law firm and Occidental became a client." The relationship with Hammer had started long before that. Hammer, who needed a lot of help to keep J. Edgar Hoover from recommending that he be prosecuted, boasted that he had Gore, Sr. in his back pocket. And when Gore left the Senate, Hammer gave him a \$500,000-a-year job as head of Occidental's coal division. So you can add #18 to the list of Gore lies, lying about when his father developed a mutually profitable relationship with Armand Hammer.

I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO HAVE TO SUBTRACT ONE LIE FROM OUR LIST, #9, AL Gore's claim that he uncovered the pollution at Love Canal. I saw a fellow named Bob Somerby on C-SPAN's "Washington Journal." He was a roommate of Gore's at Harvard, and C-SPAN had him on to talk about Gore and about his web site, dailyhowler.com, which devotes a lot of space to defending Al Gore against people who claim that Gore has a tendency to exaggerate or say things that aren't true. On C-SPAN, Somerby made what seemed to me to be a persuasive case that the charge that Gore had claimed credit for uncovering the pollution at Love Canal was based on a misquotation.

HE ACCUSED THE WASHINGTON TIMES OF LYING TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT GORE had lied. In an editorial it had quoted an AP story of Dec. 2, 1999, in which Gore was quoted as saying, "A girl wrote (him) that her father and grandfather suffered mysterious ailments she blamed on well water that 'tasted funny.' I called for a congressional investigation and a hearing. I looked around the country for other places like that. I found a little place in upstate New York called Love Canal...Had the first hearing on that issue. That was the one that started it all. We made a huge difference and it was all because one high school student got involved." The Washington Times editorial had not used the entire quote, omitting the stuff about the high school student and saying, "I" instead of "That" in the next to the last sentence. Somerby seems to think that Gore was giving credit for uncovering Love Canal to the student, not himself. That I don't buy, and I see no need to retract lie #9. I found support for this in a quote I found on Somerby's web site by a reporter Somerby says is "a straight shooter," Bill Turque of Newsweek.

HERE IS HOW TURQUE DESCRIBES GORE'S PROBLEM WITH THE TRUTH IN HIS BOOK, IN-venting Al Gore: A Biography. This is the book that exposes Gore's big lie about his smoking pot being "rare and infrequent." Turque says, "(T)he old Gore — the one with a penchant for embellishing the facts — still shows up. Describing his investigation of toxic-waste sites as a young House member in the late '70s, he said, 'I found a little place in upstate New York called Love Canal.' Gore did hold the first congressional hearings on [Love Canal]. But Love Canal had been declared a disaster area two months before his hearings after grass-roots organizing by residents, not Gore's heroics. The next day, Gore corrected the 'misimpression.'" Somerby says this is "admirably restrained by current standards," but he sees it as "the kind of microscopic parsing that could make any public speaker a liar." Somerby himself is very good at "microscopic parsing."

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