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## 'THE TRIAL'

by [Justin Raimondo](#), July 03, 2001

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I could hardly believe my eyes. Reading an Associated Press story, "[Racak Witness Prepares Testimony](#)," by Colleen Barry, I wondered: 'Are they really going to haul out *that* long-since discredited story – again? <<Sigh>> I knew, the moment news of Slobodan Milosevic's kidnapping hit the wires, that this show trial was going to be a *looong*, and excruciatingly drawn-out process – but I hardly suspected that it would become an extenuated flashback, in which every old saw and canard thrown at the Serbs by the NATO propaganda machine would be relentlessly recycled. Is part of their strategy *boring* us all to death with their deadly-dull propaganda – the idea being that we'll all fall asleep and let them get away with it – or are they just plain stupid?

## RHYMES WITH 'TOKES'

Racak is a name that, years from now, will become a synonym for *hoax*, for that is what it was, and is – and a fairly crude one at that. [The Berliner Zeitung \[March 24, 2000\]](#), and several French newspapers exposed the Racak "massacre" as an Albanian ruse, calling into question the January 1999 incident that then-President Bill Clinton cited to justify the Kosovo war. Forty villagers, civilians all, were alleged to have been cut down in cold blood by the Nazi-like Serbs, and a Finnish forensic team was dispatched to gather evidence. At what the *Berliner Zeitung* calls "a confusing news conference," the head of the team, Dr. Helen Ranta, left the definite impression that "an execution had taken place." Naturally, the Anglo-American media swallowed the story whole, but the *Zeitung* and a few others were suspicious – justifiably, as it turned out. A few months later, the *Zeitung* was able to somehow get its hands on the autopsy reports, and reveal their contents unfiltered by the politically-pressured Dr. Ranta. "Of all these reports," says the German newspaper,

*"None contain any evidence of an execution scenario. The Finnish forensic experts and their Yugoslav and Belorussian colleagues found traces that point to a gunshot fired "relatively close" on only one of the victims. In the other cases, the findings were negative. Neither is the alleged absence of gunpowder residue [on the victims'] hands documented. As a consequence, there is no evidence that the victims were civilians. We asked Mrs. Ranta*

*about the reason for this. After a brief consideration, she solved the puzzle: The Finnish team never looked for such traces. Rather, the tests mentioned at the press conference on March 17, 1999, were carried out to look for traces of executions or point blank shootings. These were the tests that proved negative. 'It was somewhat easy to misunderstand that at the press conference,' Mrs. Ranta admits today."*

## WHY LIE?

In short, the forensic report shows *zero* evidence of a "massacre." What it shows is that, yes, there was carnage at Racak, but it was the carnage of war, that is, of a pitched battle pitting the Yugoslav army against the armed guerrillas of the Kosovo "Liberation" Army (UCK). Yet surely that isn't stopping the NATO/Tribunal propaganda machine – which is still relentlessly spinning out the same story – from claiming otherwise, nor will it prevent their media echo chamber from reiterating a proven lie. But why repeat what amounts to a not-very-clever fabrication?

## DEVILS AND ANGELS

Surely Milosevic was no angel, and [something real could](#) indeed be discovered, considering all the digging that's been going on. Yet that assumes the officials of this Tribunal are at all interested in such arcane, outdated concepts as "truth" and "justice," which are they not. What they want to do is establish their legitimacy and authority, and so they need to create a myth: Milosevic must not just be convicted, he must be villainized, so that the Tribunal, with its imperious ways, its secret witnesses, sealed indictments, and closed sessions, seems positively angelic in comparison.

## POWERFUL STUFF

Furthermore, as a political instrument of NATO (and the EU), the ICTFY, by prosecuting the Racak "massacre" as a war crime, rather than what it was – a battle between two armed groups – is driving home the point that *they have the power*. The Serbs can now be accused of anything, and the world will believe it – not because of, but in spite of, the facts. Now that, folks, is *real* power, in the modern sense.

## TECHNIQUES OF FICTION

Truth has nothing to do with it. The ICTFY prosecutors are interested only in constructing a narrative to justify their virulent Serbophobia and their investment in Albanian victimology. Del Ponte's amen-corner in the Fourth Estate has a similar investment: victimology of any sort is useful from a tabloidal "human interest" angle, and journalists found it irresistible during the Kosovo war, just as they are finding it almost obligatory in reporting events surrounding Sloba's upcoming trial. It is interesting to note that the following quote from the AP story utilizes a technique more appropriate to fiction than a news story. It presents the Albanian side of the story as cold hard fact by seeing the alleged massacre through Albanian eyes:

*"For six hours, Rame Shabani lay motionless, his face pressed to the dirt, while Serb police and army units shot and mutilated 25 men on a hillside above the Albanian village of Racak. He escaped by throwing himself into a ravine when they opened fire. Now with former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in a U.N. prison, Shabani's memories have gathered the weight of testimony. 'I heard their screams as they were being massacred. They were begging for their lives,' Shabani said, sitting cross-legged on the floor of a spartan room decorated only with a photograph of the victims' coffins blanketed with Albanian flags. When they were finished they sang a nationalist song: 'Who is saying, who is lying Serbia is small? Serbia is not small. Serbia is not small.' A bullet had ripped a hole through Shabani's leather jacket and nicked his belt, but spared him. He was meant to be a witness, and could provide key testimony at Milosevic's war crimes trial in The Hague, Netherlands. 'I am not afraid any more even to stand in front of him,' Shabani, 34, said with a steady gaze."*

## STRICTLY HOLLYWOOD

Oh, the precious novelistic touches, especially that bit about the singing of a "nationalist song"! I wouldn't be surprised if Steven Spielberg buys the screen rights: Ms. Barry, your talents are wasted toiling away in the vineyards of the Associated Press. You belong in Hollywood, where your talents are sure to be appreciated to the tune of a salary in six figures. I suppose more than half the hack journalists on earth imagine themselves to be potentially great writers of fiction, but it is unfortunate when they apply their screenwriting talents to their day jobs.

## THE SOUND OF MUSIC

That bit about the "nationalist song" is the giveaway, a bit *too* contrived to be true. One wonders: if the Serbs were singing as they slaughtered, then how come the Western television crew from [AP TV](#) on the scene didn't hear it, see it, or film it, as they well might have? If those dastardly Serbs were yodeling as they mutilated, tortured, and ceremoniously slaughtered their victims, then why did the Serbian military alert the media to what it identified as a "terrorist attack" and direct them to the scene? Rame Shabani's tall tale is hardly a scenario the perpetrators would care to advertise. As Renaud Girard reported in *Le Figaro* [January 20, 1999]:

*"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 communiqué 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."*

## THE EMPTY VILLAGE

At that point, as far as anyone knew, there was no massacre: what was observed by the monitors and the media was a gun battle. The observers did not find any evidence of a civilian slaughter: they remarked to a French journalist at the scene that they could not as yet "evaluate the battle toll." It

wasn't until 9 a.m. the next day that a horrified world woke up to a grisly scene: scores of Albanian corpses dressed in civilian clothes lined up in a ditch. Racak, a stronghold of the UCK, was that morning swarming with armed Kosovars, who escorted the media to the alleged massacre site. At noon, US diplomat William Walker arrived and declared that this was unequivocal proof of Slobodan Milosevic's Hitlerian evil. The Albanians gave out identical stories: the Serbs had conducted a pogrom, breaking into civilian homes, separating the men from the women, and virtually wiping out half the village. But, as Girard points out:

*"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."*

## “I WOULD SMOKE A CIGARETTE”

As the encircled UCK guerrillas tried desperately to break out, the fighting reached a crescendo – and some did manage to escape, among them probably our friend, Mr. Shabani, who has now transformed a battle into a “massacre.” To give you some idea of what we are dealing with in Mr. Shabani, the AP story quotes him on how *he* would deal with Milosevic: “I would smoke a cigarette. I would beat him until he had open wounds, I would pour salt in the wounds, then I would leave him to live like that.” His objectives are perfectly in line with those of the Tribunal, although Carla Del Ponte's special style of virulence is somewhat subtler: this, to the Tribunal, is a credible witness, and, indeed, no better exemplar of Albanian ultra-nationalism at its crudest and most violent could be imagined. If Mr. Shabani did not exist, then surely the Tribunal would have to invent him.

## INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

But what *really* happened that day? Girard asks: “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?” He reports “a disturbing fact”: the journalists present “found only very few cartridges around the ditch where the massacre supposedly took place. 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.” Unfortunately, we will have nothing of the kind in The Hague.

## A STREET NAMED ‘WILLIAM WALKER’

The International Criminal Tribunal for War Crimes in the Former Yugoslavia (ICTFY) has invested its prestige and its aspirations in this trial, and they cannot afford to lose on this crucial point. Del Ponte claims that “the history of Serbia is not being judged,” but who can deny that the history of that war is being weighed in the balance in these proceedings? For the Racak “massacre” was cited not only by Clinton but also by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer as “the turning point” when the moral imperative of making war on Serbia became apparent. The road to Racak has been renamed “Ruga William Walker,” after the US diplomat who declared on the spot that “From what I saw, I do not hesitate to describe the crime as a massacre, a crime against humanity. Nor do I hesitate to accuse the government security forces of responsibility.” [As Mark Ames and Matt Taibbi put it](#) in *The Exile* [April 22, 1999]:

*“Years from now, when the war in Serbia is over and the dust has settled, historians will point to January 15, 1999 as the day the American Death Star became fully operational. That was the date on which an American diplomat named William Walker brought his OSCE war crimes verification team to a tiny Kosovar village called Racak to investigate an alleged Serb massacre of ethnic Albanian peasants. After a brief review of the town's 40-odd bullet-ridden corpses, Walker searched out the nearest television camera and essentially fired the starting gun for the war.”*

## THE HARPIES OF ICTFY

This Death Star is not just American, but also European, and its latest incarnation, the ICTFY, headquartered at The Hague, in the Netherlands, is more a creature of the latter. The [imperious Carla Del Ponte, former Swiss Attorney General](#), and the officious [Louise Arbour](#), a Canadian magistrate, are the twin Inquisitors of this International [Star Chamber](#). They derive their authority and their methods not from the American and British common law tradition, but from an edict of the United Nations. In auditioning for the roles of Supreme Justices of the proposed International Criminal Court – another UN invention – these two Harpies have pursued Milosevic to the very ends of the earth, harrying him all the way to The Hague. Like the [Harpies of Greek mythology](#), now that they've cornered him, they intend to tear him to shreds. But they won't do it with the dull instrument of Rame Shabani's rather dubious and easily refuted testimony. Del Ponte is going to have to come up with something more substantial if she doesn't want to fumble this, her moment in the spotlight.

## A SURREAL CIRCUS

But of course it isn't just up to her, but also to Slobodan Milosevic and his legal counsel – to be headed, I am now told, by none other than [Ramsey Clark](#). Picking an American is, I suppose, a good move – that is, if you don't look at it too closely. To anyone who knows anything at all about left-wing politics, however, the choice of Clark is . . . well, it's consistent with the whole surrealistic circus atmosphere generated by a show trial.

## SHOWTIME

For a show trial is quite literally intended as an *entertainment*, a kind of political slapstick in which stereotypes knock each other over the head and go through their stylized paces. Clark is nothing if not a walking stereotype, ever since he joined up with the Workers World Party (WWP) cult that runs his “International Action Center” (IAC). Longtime readers of this column will remember my own experiences with this wacky bunch during the Kosovo war, when they tried to take over the antiwar opposition, and put on rallies where old Sloba was praised as the next best thing to Fidel Castro. Now *there's* a way to reach out to the naturally “isolationist” sentiments of the American people – tell them we have to get out of Kosovo in order to “defend the gains of the socialist revolution” in Yugoslavia!

## INVASION OF THE POD PEOPLE

The WWP pod people, having taken over the body of an ex-US Attorney General, use Clark as a front to push their own zealous defense of virtually every tyrant on earth, from Saddam Hussein to the black “anti-imperialist” militias of Rwanda, to Slobodan Milosevic. Naturally, the War Party is going to have a field day with this, and the Del Ponte-Ramsey Clark Punch-&-Judy show will become a Morality Play for Our Times. Clark is positively spooky, and his “International Action Center,” of which he is the titular leader, not only defends tyrants against US intervention – it glorifies them as heroic fighters for “socialism.” But of course what else can you expect from a group that can trace its origins to a split in the old Socialist Workers Party, onetime followers of Leon Trotsky, over the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary: the Workers Worlders, you see, were *for* it, and they walked out of the SWP and formed their own party over the Hungarian issue. Now, all these years later, one of their prize catches, formerly a high official in the cabinet of Lyndon Baines Johnson, is defending the record of the last Stalinist in Europe. Somehow, it seems all too fitting, the final nightmarish touch to this elaborate parody, *The Trial of Slobodan Milosevic* as co-authored by Carla Del Ponte, Ramsey Clark, and Franz Kafka.

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