

Want a Scapegoat? Blame Serbia! (a Satire)

Written by Patricia J. Sohn

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PATRICIA J. SOHN, MAR 31 2017

Leave Israel and the United States alone. Leave alone the UK, monarchy, and even the French. Leave alone the Poles and all of the Polish jokes. Yes, the San Remo Conference was so much *merde-on-a-stick*. But it was a long time ago; although, as someone who regularly teaches *Arab-Israeli Conflict*, I can safely report that it, together with the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence and the Balfour Declaration, followed, as they were, by Sykes-Picot and then San Remo, helped to entrench a now 100-years-war in the Middle East. Nonetheless. You want someone to blame for the current state of world civilizational crisis, to draw upon Samuel Huntington's terms? You want someone to blame for the Islamo-Confucian block (which really should be called the Islamo-Confucian-Hindi-Buddhist-African-Latin Catholic-and-Orthodox alliance)? To paraphrase from *Southpark*: BLAME SERBIA!

Yes, the Rwandan genocide was chilling and horrifying. But it was largely contained within its own region in Africa. In terms of international politics, it had little impact outside of Africa (for better or for worse); although, it did generate a blockbuster film of international regard, which is more than I can say for our care to the genocide of Bosnian Muslims, which happened – *in Europe in the 1990s!* While a few Western films have come out on the topic, including one directed by Richard Shepherd and one directed by Angelina Jolie, they generated little interest in the West.

The Bosnian genocide, while smaller, marks the only time in post-Nazi history in which a Western power, in Comparative terms, implemented a policy to eradicate a part of its own European population based upon religion – in this case, Muslims. Does this set off any bells, whistles, or lights for one reading? We in the West, apparently, can generate great tears for Africa, but we could care less about Muslims being murdered and raped at the behest of a European post-Nazi state, again, in the 1990s on European soil. Do you think this lack of empathy is not noticed by, say, Muslims who become radicalized in the Middle East? If so, I have some swamp land for you in Vladivostok.

France, Germany, and the rest of the West sat by for several years before even putting pressure on the situation to diffuse it. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed in that war. Thousands of Muslim men and boys were killed in concentration camps and killing fields. Muslim women were held prisoner and systematically raped and impregnated as a way to change the culture of the next generation; this latter form of genocide, under UN definitions, seldom gets attention beyond feminist theorists and should be added to the quantified measures of the genocide by everyone. Serbs claimed that their policy was “ethnic cleansing,” which, they asserted, was not the same as “genocide.” Nonetheless, to quote Shakespeare, *a rose by any other name....* Or, the obverse.... Agreeing on the numbers involved in this conflict and in this genocide is still a matter of “niceties,” most likely because we are in fact talking about a European power in the 1990s, and everyone wants to remain polite around the conference table. I would aver that once a People chooses genocide as their policy of choice, they can give up any claim to polite conversation. We have no such obligation.

Do Muslims have a right to be angry at the West? Of course they do. But, in this case, it is far easier to blame the big guy on the block, because he and she will safely listen to the critique and not implement any *Troglodyte* policies against your people. But who will implement *Troglodyte* policies against your people for having the audacity to say bad words about them in public – like – oops! – *Genocide*:

The remaining *Troglodyte* and post-Nazi power of the West: SERBIA!

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How does Russia fit into this? Is our fearless leader, Vladimir Putin (who I like to call, in private, *Puttinesca* [sic]) in with the Serbs? I would not deign to make a claim in this regard, as I am not a Russia expert (although I note that Russia experts have no problem making big claims about my region of expertise – the Middle East – in academic and policy fora).

Suffice it to say, from the subject position of this Trotskyite-Libertarian-political-ethnographer with family *ethnie* hailing from Prussia, Ireland, Spain, the Philippines, and Holland, and possible extended family ties to our favorite anti-fascist, my hero, Garcia Lorca, I can say that it *all* looks like – *merde-on-a-stick*.

It does not surprise me in the least if it should look that way to the “IslamConfucian block.”

Serbia does not appear to have changed much to the non-expert eye. I recently heard an interview on National Public Radio of an ex-Guantanamo inmate who was released by the last administration and forced to live in none other than Serbia. In the course of the interview, Serbian police came into his home and threatened that if he did not concede to their on-going surveillance of him and do as they say, they would send him to the hospital. *Plus ça change*. The hospital, for them, clearly had nothing to do with physical health. I was reminded of Inigo Montoya: “I do not think that word means what you think it means.” For those who know their Nazi and Soviet histories, “the hospital” was a welcomed or terrifying (depending upon your vantage point) euphemism for the mental hospital, used regularly as a threat to instill fear and to control the population. All the interviewee on the NPR program asked for of the U.S. or Serbia was to be sent to a country of his own culture and language. As I understand U.S. law, one is either in prison, or one has served his or her time – even prisoners of war. But, then, I’m just a political scientist who works on judicial politics and the grassroots. What do I know? (That is to say, if he needs to be in prison, keep him in prison; if he doesn’t, send him home. What is so confusing about that?)

Some final thoughts: (1) If one thinks this *tell-prisoners-they-are-free-and-then-send-them-to-Serbia* thing is a neat and peachy, *twist-the-law-like-caramel-rather-than-going-straight* kind of idea: you are welcomed to watch the end of the U.S.’s ability to claim to be a Rule of Law society; I have no intention of joining you in that. (2) For those who think they will only have a job if there is continuing discontent in this world, I can recommend some land for all of you in Vladivostok. Siberia beckons. It is right across the Strait from my own birth state of Alaska. It is very beautiful! I assure you. And (3) for those who are interested in actually solving our issues with the Middle East, I can recommend listening to Middle East experts rather than experts on Russia, Cuba, Eastern Europe, or U.S. foreign policy as stand-ins for us.

Peace-Loving Peoples of the world, Unite! Let us create an ingathering of the exiles of the Secularist Nazi Reich and send them all to live, very happily, in Vladivostok, where the air is clean, the flowers bloom year-round, and there is milk and honey.

About the author:

Patricia J. Sohn is associate professor of political science and Jewish studies at the University of Florida. She is a scholar of comparative politics with an expertise in micro-level and historical institutional analysis, particularly as they relate to the politics of the Middle East, comparative judicial politics, and the intersection of law, religion, and gender politics. She is author of the book, *Judicial Power and National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel* (Second Edition).