

“Free Speech” Scandal in Vancouver

Serbian American Scholar barred from entering Canada

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I am not alone in being utterly astounded by the fact that Dr. Srdja Trifkovic has been refused entry into Canada. This amazing decision is all the more scandalous in that it was taken ad hoc in response to the hate campaign by self-declared representatives of one Bosnian ethnic group carrying out a vendetta against another Bosnian ethnic group. Is this what you mean by “multiculturalism”?

The banning of a peaceful speaker is contrary to the democratic principles which the Western NATO powers, including Canada, constantly preach to the rest of the world. It would be reprehensible regardless of the circumstances. However, upon examination, the circumstances aggravate the case.

The hate campaign launched against Dr. Trifkovic by certain groups claiming to represent Bosnian Muslims is based on distortions, lies and glaring sophistries. I say this as one who by no means shares all of Dr. Trifkovic’s political analyses or religious convictions, but who recognizes that he defends his convictions with an intellectual integrity totally lacking in the attacks against him.

In particular, I tend to consider Dr. Trifkovic’s assessment of an alleged Muslim threat to the West to be misplaced or exaggerated. However, the treatment that he has received from Canada in response to the complaints of a Muslim lobby provides unexpected support to his argument.

One point on which I do agree with Dr. Trifkovic is precisely the point for which he is most fiercely attacked: Srebrenica. I wish to point out the ambiguities in the expression “genocide denial” used to characterize Dr. Trifkovic’s position on Srebrenica.

The ambiguity concerns the difference between facts and interpretation of facts. I must insist that everyone has the right to be wrong about both; Canada has no means to exclude from its territory all the people who are constantly misstating facts and interpreting them erroneously. But I wish to point to a difference.

On Srebrenica, the facts are partly established, partly disputed, and partly unknown. This is because material evidence is by no means as clear and comprehensive as the general public has been led to believe. Independent studies have been hard to carry out, but certain facts can now be considered established. There were a large number of Muslim casualties following the July 1995 fall of Srebrenica, some of them victims of executions, in violation of international law. These were massacres that took place in the context of a bloody three-sided civil war in which massacres were committed by all sides.

Description of the massacres that took place in Srebrenica as “genocide” is not fact but interpretation. It hinges on the disputed question of intention. To some observers, including myself, the crime of genocide implies intent to exterminate a population, and cannot be done by sparing women and children. The Serb forces who captured Srebrenica helped women, children and the elderly leave the war zone for safety. The execution of captured military-age men is more plausibly explained by revenge or by desire to weaken the enemy forces. This would indeed be a war crime, but not “genocide”.

The International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, largely financed and staffed by the NATO countries which took the Muslim side in the Bosnian civil wars, found a way to describe Srebrenica as “genocide” by redefining the term. The three-judge panel accepted a sociologist’s theory that by killing all the men, the Serbs meant to commit a localized “genocide”, since in that “patriarchal” society, the women would not come back without their men. This is not what most people understand by the term “genocide”. The ICTY verdict has subtly deceived the general public, while providing a justification of NATO intervention in former Yugoslavia against the Serbs, stigmatized as responsible for “genocide”.

This stigmatization of Serbs as “genocidal” (which incidentally can be seen as amounting to incitement to racial hatred) is a major obstacle to genuine peace and reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, over fifteen years after the war was ended. It is deplorable that the Canadian government acts in a way that can only exacerbate dangerous tensions.

The “Bosniak” lobby takes advantage of widespread ignorance and confusion in NATO countries concerning the wars of Yugoslav disintegration to pursue a hidden political agenda under cover of “respect for victims of genocide”. In reality, their activism can do nothing for the men who died. Rather, it is intended to delegitimize the Serbian entity, Republika Srpska, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, recognized by the US-sponsored 1995 Dayton Accords that ended the war. The purpose is to revise the accords in order to abolish Republika Srpska and create a centralized Bosnia-Herzegovina that would be under full control of the Muslim party, since Muslims are assumed to enjoy a narrow demographic majority. Since the Orthodox Christian Serbs of Bosnia remember their past as second-class citizens in the officially Muslim Ottoman Empire, they fear, rightly or wrongly, being returned to inferior status in a Muslim-ruled Bosnia.

Not being a Serb and not having shared that experience, I may find that fear exaggerated. But it is deeply hypocritical for the West to demand that Serbs must be the only Westerners to welcome Muslim rule over their own historic territory.

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