

“The CIA recruited and trained the jihadists”

Jürgen Elsässer interviewed by Silvia Cattori

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The Yugoslav Caldron

In his latest book, “How the Jihad Came to Europe”, German journalist Jürgen Elsässer unravels the Jihadist thread. Muslim fighters recruited by the CIA to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan were used successively in Yugoslavia and Chechnya, still supported by the CIA, but perhaps sometimes out of its control. Basing himself on diverse sources, mainly Yugoslavian, Dutch, and German, he reconstructed the development of Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants at the side of NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina. –

Silvia Cattori: Your investigation into the actions of the secret services makes a frightening report. We discover that since the 80’s the United States has invested billions of dollars to finance criminal activities and that by means of the CIA they are directly implicated in the attacks attributed to the Moslems. What is the contribution of your book?

Jürgen Elsässer: It is the only work that establishes the tie between wars in the Balkan of the 90’s and the attack of September 11, 2001. All the large attacks, in New York, in London, in Madrid, would never have taken place without the recruitment by the American and British secret services of these jihadists who have been blamed for the attacks. I bring a new light on the manipulations of the intelligence agencies. Other books than mine have noted the presence of Ossama Ben Laden in the Balkans. But their authors presented the Moslem fighters in the Balkan as enemies of the west. The information that I collected from multiple sources, demonstrate that these jihadists are puppets in the hands of the west and are not, as one pretends, enemies.

Silvia Cattori: In the case of the war in the Balkan, the manipulations of various States are clearly designated in your book. The United States supported Ben Laden whose work was to form the Mujahidines. How can anyone continue to ignore that these attempts that horrify public opinion would never have existed if these «terrorists» had not been driven and financed by the western intelligence services?

Jürgen Elsässer: Yes, indeed, it is the result of facts that one can observe. But one cannot say that the western intervention in ex - Yugoslavia had for objective to prepare attack of September 11. To be precise: these attacks are a consequence of western politics of the 90’s because NATO put these jihadists in place in the Balkans and collaborated with them. The Moslem militants who have been designated the persons responsible for the attacks of September 11 were part of this network.

Silvia Cattori: According to you, what was the interest of the United States and Germany to set the people of the Balkans one against the other?

Jürgen Elsässer: The west had a common interest to destroy Yugoslavia, to dismember it, because, after the end of the soviet bloc, it would have been a model of the intelligent combination of capitalist and socialist elements. But the west wanted to impose the neoliberal model on all countries.

Silvia Cattori: Is not Europe itself imprudently committed to a war manipulated by the neoconservatives?

Jürgen Elsässer: It is difficult to say. I believe that in the 90's, the politics of the United States was inspired by their victory against Soviets in Afghanistan. It was the model that they wanted to apply in Balkans. If, during those years, the economy of the United States had not fallen into depression, maybe the more realistic politicians, such as Kissinger, could have kept control of American politics. I think that the coincidence between the economic depression and the aggressiveness of the neoconservative school determined what happened.

Silvia Cattori: Do you think that a leader like Blair, for example, once embarked in the neoconservative project, has become a hostage to a certain point?

Jürgen Elsässer: I don't know the position of Blair enough well. It is easier to see what goes on in the United States. One can see that Bush is the hostage of those around him. And, as he is not very intelligent, he is not able to take decisions and must follow ideas of his entourage. It is clear that his father was against the attack on Iraq in 2003.

Silvia Cattori: Wasn't the first Gulf war part of a plan aiming to trigger other wars thereafter?

Jürgen Elsässer: No, there was no tie with the war in Iraq in 1991. There were two phases. Until the end of the Clinton period, the politics of the United States were imperialistic, but at the same time, pragmatic. They chased the Soviets out of Afghanistan. They defeated Iraq in 1991. Their war stopped once Kuwait was free. Then they attacked Bosnia and Yugoslavia; but it occurred stage by stage. Everything went out of control after September 11.

Silvia Cattori: The neoconservatives don't count for anything?

Jürgen Elsässer: The neoconservatives, grouped around Pearl, had written a document one year before September 11, according to which America had need of a catalyzing event similar to the attack on Pearl Harbor. September 11 was this catalyzing event. I believe that people around Pearl wished for the attacks of September 11.

Silvia Cattori: What was the objective pursued by the United States in attacking Serbia? Was it merely about, as is indicated in your book, the US getting itself installed in a strategic region situated on a transit line for the oil and the gas of central Asia? Or did the alliance of the United States with the Moslem fighters directed by Izetbegovic have a second objective: to create a Moslem extremism at the doors of Europe in order to make use of it in the setting of terrorist manipulations? And, if yes, towards what goal?

Jürgen Elsässer: The United States wanted, as did Austria at the end of the 19th century in Bosnia, to create a "European" Islam to weaken the Islamic states in the Middle East, meaning, at that time, the Ottoman empire, and today, Iran and the Arab states. The neoconservatives had other plans again: to construct a clandestine network of "fundamentalist" puppets to do the dirty work against "old" Europe.

Silvia Cattori: The result, a terrifying civil war. How could Europe have participated in the destruction of Yugoslavia, which appeared as an example of the perfectly successful cohabitation between ethnic groups? By making the Serbians the guilty party, didn't Europe destroy a country that was one of the major constructions of the postwar era? On what legitimacy did Europe base its intervention?

Jürgen Elsässer: First, in the beginning of the 90's, Germany led the attack based upon the principles of the self-determination of ethnic groups: in other words, Hitler's old ruse against Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1938/39. Then, the United States took the relay and praised "human rights", an obvious swindle.

Silvia Cattori: In your investigation Israel is never mentioned. Have you not minimized the importance of pro-Israeli neoconservatives inside the Pentagon, who serve interests of Israel more than those of the United States?

Jürgen Elsässer: There are Israelis who collaborated with the neoconservatives; it is a fact. But I am not sure of the role played by Israel in this business. Sharon was against NATO support for the Albanians of Kosovo. And, in 1998, he expressed his worry over the idea that NATO support the setting up of pro-Islamic elements in the Balkan. I also believe that he was not favorable to this war the following year.

Silvia Cattori: Don't you see ties between the Israeli secret services and the attacks of September 11, 2001?

Jürgen Elsässer: There are ties, but I didn't analyze the character of these ties. For example, immediately after September 11, a certain number of Israeli agents were arrested in the United States. They were present in places where the attacks were prepared. There are analysts who say this is proof that Israel was directly implicated in these attacks. But it could also mean something else. It could be that these agents were watching what happened, that they were aware that the American secret services supported these "terrorists" in the preparation of these attacks, but that they kept their knowledge to use it at the appropriate moment, and to be able to use it as blackmail when the moment came: "If you don't increase your support for Israel, we are going to hand over this information to the media". There is even a third possibility: that these Israeli spies wanted to warn about the attacks but failed. At the moment, we only know that these types were there and that they were arrested. Supplementary investigations are necessary.

Silvia Cattori: Do these ties put in evidence that the attacks of September 11, 2001 were part of a plan conceived a long time before?

Jürgen Elsässer: I am not certain that a plan had been established for a long time. It could be that people such as Richard Perle improvise a lot and use criminal elements that they put in place but that they don't permanently control. As, at the time of Kennedy's murder, it is clear that the CIA was implicated, but one doesn't know if it had been planned at the top, at Langley [the headquarters of the CIA], or if it was conceived among the most violent Cuban exiles working for the CIA, the headquarters of the CIA limiting themselves to tolerating it.

Silvia Cattori: If tomorrow these characters grouped around Pearl were removed, would that stop the anti-Muslim war strategy of the United States and the manipulations that justify it?

Jürgen Elsässer: It stops when they lose a war.

Silvia Cattori: The war, didn't they lose it in Iraq?

Jürgen Elsässer: The war will only be lost when they leave the country, as in Vietnam.

Silvia Cattori: These Moslems who, like Mohammed Atta, were just ordinary citizens before being enlisted by the CIA, how could they be driven to such terrifying actions, without knowing that they were being manipulated by intelligence agents of the opposite camp?

Jürgen Elsässer: There are some youth that can be turned into fanatics and manipulated very easily by intelligence services. High-placed characters are not unaware of what happens and know by who they are hired.

Silvia Cattori: Ben Laden, for example, did he know that he served the interests of the United States?

Jürgen Elsässer: I didn't study his case. I studied the case of Al Zawahiri, Ben Laden's right arm, who was the chief of operations in the Balkans. In the beginning of the 90's, he traveled all through the United States with an agent of the US Special Command to collect money for the Jihad; this man knew that he participated in this collection of money as an activity that was supported by the United States.

Silvia Cattori: All of this is very troubling. You bring the proof that that attacks that have occurred since 1996 (attacks in the subway of Paris), would never have been possible if the war in the Balkan had not taken place. And you impute these attacks, that left thousands of victims, to western intelligence services. Has opinion in West therefore been deceived by governments that have embarked on terrorist actions?

Jürgen Elsässer: The terrorist network that the American and British secret services formed during the civil war in Bosnia and later in Kosovo provided a reservoir of militants that we find implicated later in the attacks in New York, Madrid, London.

Silvia Cattori: How did this happen concretely?

Jürgen Elsässer: Once the war was finished in Afghanistan, Osama Ben Laden recruited these jihadist militants. It was his work. It was he that trained them, partially with the support of the CIA, and put them in place in Bosnia. The Americans tolerated the connection between the President Izetbegovic and Ben Laden. Two years later, in 1994, the Americans began to send weapons, in a common clandestine operation with Iran. After the treaty of Dayton, in November 1995, the CIA and the Pentagon recruited best of the jihadists that had fought in Bosnia.

Silvia Cattori: How does it happen that these Moslems got into the hands of services that served ideological interests opposed to theirs?

Jürgen Elsässer: I analyzed testimonies given by some jihadists interrogated by the German judges. They said that after the treaty of Dayton, which stipulated that all foreign ex-fighters had to leave the country, they didn't have any more money and had nowhere to go. As for those that could remain in Bosnia, because they had been provided with Bosnian passports, they were without work and without money. The day when the recruiters came and rang at their doors and proposed to pay them 3000 dollars a month to serve in the Bosnian army, they didn't know that they were recruited and paid by emissaries of the CIA to serve the United States.

Silvia Cattori: After, when they were sent to prepare the attacks in London in July 2005, for example, did they not become aware that they were in the hands of western intelligence agents who manipulated them?

Jürgen Elsässer: It is not clear that it was really the young Moslems from the suburbs of London that committed the attacks, as the police claim. There are other indications according to which the bombs were fixed under the trains. It is possible the bombs were attached under the trains without these young men knowing about it. In that case it is not sure that the young Moslems, incriminated by the investigation, committed these attempts.

Silvia Cattori: It is hard to understand the goal that the western States pursue when they engage their services in criminal manipulations?

Jürgen Elsässer: This is not easy to say. Remember Kennedy's murder. Who did it? It is certain that it was people from the CIA that supported the second killer, it is certain that Oswald was murdered by a man who had been mandated by the CIA. What is not clear is if these men recruited by the CIA acted on order of Johnson or Dulles, or if they were link to the milieu of extremist Cuban exiles, which means affiliated to the mafia. I don't believe that Bush or Blairs are chiefs. I don't believe in the theory of the big conspiracy. I believe that the secret services hire men who are ordered to carry out the dirty business; these agents act as they want. Perhaps you know that on September 11, 2001, someone tried to kill Bush. What does it mean? It is difficult to explain.

Silvia Cattori: Do you mean that Bush is, for example, himself hostage of the people who, inside the Pentagon, form a State within the state, one that also escapes the command of the American army?

Silvia Cattori: Are you thinking about people that are under the direct influence of characters such as Pearl, Wolfowitz, Feith? Do you think that it is they who, after the war of the Balkan, would have been the real backers of these attacks and that these attacks are not separate from each other, that there is a link between Madrid and London? Does it mean that the Americans are ready to ally with the devil to sow chaos everywhere under the pretext of this anti-Muslim, anti - Arabic war waged under the banner of terrorism? A fabricated terrorism?

Jürgen Elsässer: Yes, there is a duplicate government that escapes Bush's control. It is the neoconservatives, such as Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Pearl, the people tied into the oil and the military industries,. The global chaos is in the interest of the military industry: when there is the chaos all over the world, one can sell weapons and oil for a bigger price.

Silvia Cattori: Youssef Asckar described this State within in the state very well, to which you give credit [1]. Isn't Israel the first country interested by this strategy of chaos, therefore by the manipulation of terrorist attacks? Doesn't the propaganda of the pro-Israeli lobby have the tendency to make us believe that Israel is threatened by Arabs fanatics?

Jürgen Elsässer: It is not certain that this strategy can serve the interests of Israel because, if things continue this way, the whole Middle East will be in flames, including Israel. They used the same process during the war in Bosnia. In order to demonize the Serbs, the western media invented stories of concentration camps and made photo montages that compared the Serbs to the Nazis. This propaganda aimed to win opinion over to the war against Serbia, but, with regard to the United States, it was not nourished necessarily by the

Jewish lobby, but by the Christian and atheist strategists. These strategists play the “Jewish” card. That is my thesis. One sees it currently with the propaganda against Iran; strategists of the war play the “Jewish” card to impress people that have more morals than intelligence.

Silvia Cattori: The recent manipulations confirm, in part, your thesis: at the same moment where the United States wanted the Security Council to pass sanctions against Iran, a Canadian newspaper wrote that Iran wanted to force Iranian Jews to wear the equivalent of a yellow star [2]]. But I refer to these openly pro-Israeli personalities that, in France for example, play an important role in the formation of opinion because they occupy some strategic positions in the media, and whose community allegiance psuyhes them to support the policies of Israel and the United States, even if it is criminal. Remember the active support brought to Izetbegovic in Bosnia by Bernard-Henri Lévy and Bernard Kouchner. As soon as Serbia was on the knees, they immediately turned their propaganda against Arabs and Moslems; this time it was to mobilize opinion in favor of the so-called “war of civilizations”. When they spoke of “concentration camps” to associate the Serbs with Hitler, didn’t they participate in manipulations of NATO?

Jürgen Elsässer: We watched the same phenomenon in Germany. The Jewish journalists that supported the war against Yugoslavia had access to the televised studios. But the journalists that were against, whether they were Jewish or not, were excluded from the debate. I think that the media and politicians use the Jewish voices for geostrategic stakes.

Silvia Cattori: So, as you see it, what happened in the Balkan was only the repetition of what had happened in Afghanistan, what followed was part of the same process. Do you think that our authorities know risks of the wars provoked by their intelligence agencies?

Jürgen Elsässer: My hope is that there is a reaction on behalf of the military in the United States. There are among them people who know very well that all these wars are not intelligent. They know that the United States is going to lose this war. In the American army, they are imperialistic but they are not crazy, they don’t agree with what is happening. But the neoconservatives are crazy, they want to wage the Third World War against all Arabs and all Moslems, just like Hitler who wanted to kill all Jews and to attack all other countries; the German generals had warned Hitler of all that he risked.

Silvia Cattori: Is your hope that a change occurs unexpectedly?

Jürgen Elsässer: To stop this madness I see possibility of change only among those forces that remained rational. The high command of the American army wrote a letter to Bush to say that it doesn’t want to participate in an attack against Iran with nuclear weapons. Maybe Bush will attack; but the consequences would be more serious than in the case of Iraq. The same thing happened with the Nazis: they attacked, they attacked, and one day there was Stalingrad and the beginning of the defeat. But this adventure cost the lives of 60 million human beings.

Silvia Cattori: Is that what motivated your effort while writing this book: to alert people’s consciences in order to avoid new disasters and new suffering? Moreover, that after Iraq it would be Iran’s turn?

Jürgen Elsässer: Yes. But characters like Bush don’t care about all of that. I am not completely pessimistic on Iran: one could see a repetition of the Paris, Berlin, Moscow axis. Our chancellor, who is normally a puppet of the United States, offered strategic cooperation

with Russia, because Germany depends entirely on Russian oil and gas. It is a strong argument. Germans are imperialists, but they are not crazy.

Silvia Cattori: In the Balkans, was it not Germany that opened the door to the war?

Jürgen Elsässer: Yes, it is true. But, today, you see that Joschka Fischer and Madeleine Albright have sent an open letter to Bush to tell him not to attack Iran. Mrs. Albright specified that one cannot attack all the people that one doesn't like. It is rational.

Silvia Cattori: Were you able to collect these elements that illustrate the actions of the intelligence agencies because, today, people, worried of the evolution of international politics, are beginning to speak?

Jürgen Elsässer: Yes. I depended a great deal on information from people that work in the belly of "the beast".

Silvia Cattori: Everywhere in the world?

Jürgen Elsässer: I can only tell you that it is people from Western Europe. It is people that haven't stopped using their heads.

Silvia Cattori: To obtain the proof of the manipulations surrounding the "Gulf of Tonkin Incident", the incident that permitted the United States to unleash the war against the Vietnamese people, it was necessary to wait a long time. Have things therefore changed today, permitting a response in time?

Jürgen Elsässer: There is a big difference between the situation in the 60's and the one today. In the Federal Republic of Germany, they were, for example, at that time in favor of the war against Communists in Vietnam. The official version that said our republic was in danger of being attacked by Communists was shared by a big part of public opinion. What has changed is that, today, the majority of the population is against the war, without discussion.

Silvia Cattori: You rightly underline the extremist religious character of Bosnia-Herzegovina under Izetbegovic, but, whereas you doubt the support of Israel to this sort of draft of the emirate of the Talibans, don't you overvalue the role of Iran and Saudi Arabia? Richard Perle was the principal political advisor to Izetbegovic. Didn't the Iranians and the Saudis raise the ante on the question of Islam hoping to take the control of a Moslem regime that only took its orders from Tel Aviv and Washington? In fact, was Izetbegovic not an agent of Israel?

Jürgen Elsässer: The Mossad helped the Bosnian Serbians, they even provided them weapons. There is nothing that indicates that the Israeli government helped Izetbegovic. It was supported by Americans, and Clinton depended upon the Zionist lobby in the United States, but this lobby didn't have the support of the Israeli government during the war of Bosnia.

Silvia Cattori: With regard to some of your sources, can one grant credit to the assertions of Yossef Bodanski, director of the Working Group on Terrorism and Non-Conventional war close to the American Senate?

Jürgen Elsässer: I don't trust anybody. They claim that Bodansky has ties with sources in Mossad and it renders a number of his findings suspect. On the other hand, he brings to our

knowledge a lot of interesting facts that contradict the official propaganda. In my book I show the contradictions within the dominant elites of the United States, and, in this respect, Bodansky, is very interesting.

Silvia Cattori: It says in your book: "Terrorism exists in Kosovo and Macedonia, but in its majority it is not controlled by Ben Laden but by US intelligence". Do you doubt the existence of Al Qaeda?

Jürgen Elsässer: Yes, as I wrote it in my book, it is propaganda manufactured by the west.

Silvia Cattori: One has a bit the impression that, to go to the end of its logic, your investigation is not finished. Certainly, Yugoslavia was a laboratory for the manufacture of the Islamic networks, and your book shows well that these networks serve the interests of the United States. However, you seem to believe in the existence of international Islamic networks who would have a popular base in the Moslem world, whereas at the same time your research demonstrates that these networks are only mercenaries of the United States and that they have never done anything for the Moslems?

Jürgen Elsässer: Look at the example of Hamas: in the beginning of the 80's, it was fomented by Mossad to counter the influence of the PLO. But thereafter, Hamas developed its own popular base and, now, it is part of the resistance. But I bet that there are still foreign agents inside Hamas.

Silvia Cattori: You mentioned that the inspectors of the United Nations are infiltrated by spies from the United States. Could we have some precisions?

Jürgen Elsässer: Some blue helmets of the UNPROFOR in Bosnia transported weapons to destinations of the Mujahidines.

Silvia Cattori: When Peter Handke affirms that Serbs are not the only guilty party, that they are victims of the war of the Balkans, one banish it. Who is right in this business?

Jürgen Elsässer: On all sides – Serbs, Croatians, Moslems – the ordinary people have all lost. Moslems won the war in Bosnia with the help of Ben Laden and Clinton but, now, their country is occupied by NATO. They have less independence today than at the time of Yugoslavia.

Silvia Cattori: How does your research relate to that of Andreas Von Bülow and Thierry Meyssan?

Jürgen Elsässer: We share the same opinion on the events of September 11, 2001: we think that the official version is not true. All this combined research is very useful to be able to continue to deepen the reality of the facts. My specialty is to have made the link between wars of the Balkans and September 11, while Thierry Meyssan analyzed the attack on the Pentagon to demonstrate that it was due to a missile and not to a plane, and Von Bülow arrived at the conclusion that planes were guided by a beacon.

Silvia Cattori: To having put into question the official truth, Thierry Meyssan was discredited and blocked by the media. Are you going to escape that?

Jürgen Elsässer: There is also a blockage against my book. It is not possible for one author alone to break this blockage. However, it can't prevent our theses from making their path.

The public is not in agreement with what the media says: in spite of their blockage 35 to 40% of people don't believe what media tells them. There is the example of Kennedy's assassination: today, 90% of people don't believe in the official version and think that Kennedy's murder was an action of the CIA.

Silvia Cattori: Isn't it dangerous to uncover the manipulations of States that use their intelligence services in criminal ways?

Jürgen Elsässer: I believe that the danger only comes when one sells more than 100 000 books. In Germany, in eleven months, my book has only sold 6 000 copies.

Silvia Cattori is a Swiss journalist. Translated by Signs of the Times.

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