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THE CULTURE OF MEMORY AS A RESPONSE TO THE POLITICS OF REVISION AND OBLIVION: DIANA JOHNSTONE, EVE-ANN PRENTICE, AND ELENA GUSKOVA ON THE KOSOVO WAR AND NATO BOMBING OF YUGOSLAVIA²

This paper deals with the texts by the American journalist and philologist Diana Johnstone, the British journalist Eve-Ann Prentice, and the Russian historian Elena Guskova. We shall focus on the analysis of the attitudes and insights which they have gained in their researches regarding the topics of the Kosovo and Metohija War and NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. Although it is often heard that it is difficult to write about newer history, including wars immediately after their termination, that it is necessary to deflect, let the events settle down and create a certain temporal distance, it does not always have to be so – a specific danger is hidden in the act of waiting, which stems from the progressive amnesia induced by the contemporary culture. Thus the question of the Yugoslav wars of the Nineties needs to be actualized, so that it does not become subjected to oblivion or, even worse, to radical revisions.

Keywords: Diana Johnstone, Eve-Ann Prentice, Elena Guskova, culture of memory, forging history, Kosovo and Metohija, NATO bombing of FR Yugoslavia

The archetypal experience of war and war chaos, recorded as early as in Homer's monumental epics, never ceases to beset the imagination as well as the reality of the modern-age European man. By telling a story about the hero's ten-year return from the war, the Greek poet points out the need for the culture of memory, which is particularly represented in the episode at the Lotophagi's, during which a part of Odysseus' crew succumbs to the challenge of tasting the lotus, which makes them forget about the return and erases the memory of their homeland. In his study *Stolen Memory*, Manfred Osten reminds that the history of robbed memory is ancient and reaches all the way to mythology. The author highlights that these unusual hosts, the Lotus-eaters,

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2 This paper is part of the research carried out on the project *Yugoslav Wars: another face of European civilisation? Lessons learnt and enduring challenges* co-funded by the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union. It was presented at the international roundtable *On the Phenomenon of War, on the Culture of Peace: Reflections, Analyses, Experiences*, University of Kragujevac, February 6th, 2017.

can also be perceived as the early anticipations of the modern society obsessed with entertainment and drugs (Osten 2005: 7-8). Today, Odyssey would hardly resist this overly alluring and contemporary temptation, precisely since the radical processes of modernization imply oblivion as a progressive amnesia which encompasses all areas of life. This is a process of turbulent acceleration and burial of tradition on a scale never seen before (9). In order to confirm his idea, Osten refers to a text by Walter Benjamin – “Thesis on the Philosophy of History” and his interpretation of the painting *Angelus Novus* by Paul Klee. The angel of history can be seen here as a metaphor of the loss of historical feeling as a sense that guarantees the ability to look back and understand past events with the aim of a better orientation in the present as well as obtaining lessons for the future. Benjamin writes:

“A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress” (Benjamin 1969: 249).

This painting, as Osten points out, represents the foreboding of irrevocable memory losses in the form of a scene of ruin and postmodern creations of devastation. It is the image of all-encompassing disaster, of consistent destruction of hypertrophic idolatry of the future (Osten 2005: 9)³. Bearing this in mind, restoration of the culture of memory is seen as the condition for humanity and finding one’s identity. It is the culture which Kierkegaard had in mind when he stated that life was lived forwards but could only be understood backwards (Ibid.).

Although it is often heard that it is difficult to write about newer history, including wars immediately after their termination, that it is necessary to deflect, let the events settle down and create a certain temporal distance, it

3 The story on the attempt to reconstruct the dispersed images of the past which would oppose the chaotic present is also told in the film “Ulysses’ Gaze” (“To vlemma tou Odyseea”, 1995) by Theo Angelopoulos. In this film, the protagonist, modern-day Ulysses initiates a quest for the disappeared images of the Balkans as a nostalgic counterbalance to the war terrors on the Balkan Peninsula (the Yugoslav wars of the Nineties). As he travels the Balkans, he is informed that the Yugoslav Film Archive in Belgrade possesses the reels of the film which was recorded at the beginning of the 20th century by the Manaki brothers (Yanaki and Milton, pioneers of the Balkan cinematography who travelled across the peninsula and recorded the history and customs of the various peoples of the area on the film tape). However, after the aged director of the Film Archive reveals that the object of his quest is captured in Bosnia, the journey continues. The following destination is war-affected Sarajevo, where the Balkan Odysseus, the film director, finally manages to obtain the film, but he is no longer certain that his nostalgic quest has provided any answers (Angelopoulos 1995).

does not always have to be so – a specific danger is hidden in the act of waiting, which stems from the progressive amnesia induced by the contemporary culture. Thus the question of the Yugoslav wars of the Nineties needs to be actualized, so that it does not become subjected to oblivion or, even worse, to radical revisions. This paper will deal with the texts by the American journalist and philologist Diana Johnstone, the British journalist Eve-Ann Prentice, and the Russian historian Elena Guskova, who is also head of the Centre for the Study of Modern Balkan Crisis of the Institute for Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. We shall focus on the analysis of the attitudes and insights which they have gained in their research regarding the topics of the Kosovo and Metohija War and NATO bombing of Yugoslavia.

What makes these texts significant, among other things, is the fact that the mentioned authors strive to provide an objective analysis of war confrontations in the Balkans during the Nineties. Hence in her study *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions* Diana Johnstone explores the causes and consequences of the breakup of Yugoslavia based on a broad variety of reliable sources, documentary corpus, and scientific studies dealing with the described topic. She especially highlights the key role of the Euro-Atlantic forces in this process, which represented the NATO Alliance's war of 1999 to the public as a happy ending of an array of dramatic events. Numerous significant elements were systematically hushed up or forged, which caused the creation of collective fiction that was endlessly perpetuated, and it was spread by news reporters, editors, hired propagandists, ambitious politicians, mythomaniacs, talented opportunists, and conformists. Infinitely repeated, the collective fiction became a frightful myth that was reinforced and approved by powerful institutions and individuals and whose credibility rested on its repetition. The fictional story of Yugoslavia of the Nineties could be summed up in several sentences: Yugoslavia was a *dungeon of peoples* in which the Serbs *oppressed* other nations that endeavoured to avoid it by creating their own states, and the Yugoslav Army, which was actually Serbian, invaded them (see, Džonston 2002: 4-5).

In her study *Kosovo and Metohija – war and conditions of peace*, Elena Guskova states that “the Americans have long planned the military intervention in Yugoslavia, and in such a manner that nothing could alter it or stop it. Everything else was a well-directed scenario. The bombing would follow inevitably, no matter how the events unravelled. In order to convince the uninformed world public opinion of the validity and necessity of a military intervention, the following image was imposed: the cruel Serbs, who brutally deal with Albanian civilians, are the only culprits for the ending of negotiations and therefore deserve to be punished” (Guskova 2014: 177).⁴

4 She addressed the study dedicated to the question of Kosovo during the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of NATO bombing, on 24th March 2014, at the conference named “Global Peace vs. Global Interventionism and Imperialism” organized by the Belgrade Forum for the World of Equals.

Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEADxV_1ERI, accessed on 20. 10. 2017.

The Yugoslav crisis in the Nineties instantly provoked a vast number of texts, studies, and articles penned by political scientists, historians, journalists, and writers. As Slobodan Vuković points out in his work *Western Media Ethics*, the majority of these texts is laden with “traditional prejudices, opportunism and demagoguery of their authors, and also, it will be argued, by the interests of the key participants in the events themselves” (Vuković 2012: 5). The mentioned publications rather contributed to the additional blurring and forging of what had happened during the breakup of Yugoslavia by the end of the 20th century than to an objective research and representations of the causes, sequence, and consequences of the Yugoslav crisis (Ibid.). Western European researchers often perceive the Balkans as the European Orient, so they allow themselves to make judgements on the situation on the peninsula lightly and without strictly checking the information. Still, it is clear that not all Western intellectuals have succumbed to prejudices, since the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2005: 15) and the British linguist John Theobald uncover the racist prejudices about the Serbs and point to the satanization of the Serbs in the media which can be traced from the First World War until the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. Theobald compares the representation of the Serbs in the Austro-Hungarian press after the outbreak of the First World War and the titles in the media over eighty years later regarding the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, and he remarks that nothing has changed. The anti-Serbian pursuit in the media in both cases prepared the European public to enthusiastically support the barbaric attacks on Serbia, all in the name of “freedom,” “democracy” and “human rights.” The author also enlists numerous examples of conscious manipulation of the media performed by the NATO Alliance officials who were driven by systematic anti-Serbian propaganda (see, Theobald 2000: 97-106).⁵

In memoir prose work *One Woman's War*, Eve-Ann Prentice delivers her own testimony on what happened on the field during the Nineties. As a journalist and correspondent for *The Times* in the Balkans, she initiated her research wishing to re-examine the official image presented by the Western media at the time. Her case is significant as it points to how collective fiction, also described by Johnstone, dominated the official reports, and only those who sincerely wanted and had the strength to initiate checking the information on the spot, through direct experience, managed to reach the truth. Thus her testimony, described by the British author Harold Pinter as a “powerful and important book” (Pinter 2000), deals with a woman's battle for truth. At the very beginning she emphasizes that the image formed through numerous

5 Such media war in which the anti-Serbian propaganda was taking place in the areas of history, philosophy, literature, psychotherapy, journalism and even literary theory, which is thoroughly discussed in the paper “The Serbs as the barbarians of Europe in the discourse of certain postcolonial theorists.” Apart from the demonization of the Serbs led by certain Western intellectuals, there is also the other fraction of authors who manage to perceive the genuine image and provide an objective analysis, defending the Serbs, who are still treated today as the Third World within Europe by the West. Those are authors such as Patrick Besson, Peter Handke, Harold Pinter, Alan Badiou, John Pilger, John Berger, Eduardo Galeano, Noam Chomsky, Michael Parenti and others (see, Arsenijević Mitrić 2015: 401-425; Arsenijević Mitrić 2016: 504-542).

interviews of soldiers in southern Serbian towns, police officers, lawyers of humanitarian organizations and observers differed significantly from the image projected by NATO spokesman Jamie Shea and his assistants in Brussels. During the bombing, the larger part of the world believed that the essentially innocent community of ethnic Albanians had been forced under gun threat to leave Kosovo simply because they were not Serbs (Prentis 2004: 23). However, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA, original: UÇK) intensely induced the departure of the Albanians in order to confirm and seal the image of exodus which hypnotized the entire world (117). The fact is that part of Albanians left Kosovo only after NATO bombing had begun, and there were also those who took cover because of the combats between the Yugoslav Army and the KLA. What was not told to the Western audience was the Serbian side of the story; that the KLA became so powerful in 1998 that certain areas of Kosovo became forbidden land for the Serbs and that Serbian families practically lived as hostages in certain villages where the Albanian population was the majority (133). D. Johnstone provides similar insights:

“In the months leading up to the NATO bombing, the rebels stepped up their armed attacks. The UÇK systematically exposed ethnic Albanian villagers to reprisals by conspicuously turning villages into bases for attack on Serbian police. Inasmuch as the UÇK could not expect to defeat the Serbian police and army militarily, its murders of policemen can be understood only in the framework of a strategy of provocation. Civilian victims would help to bring in NATO [...] In the early days of the air strikes, the spectacle of masses of Albanian refugees leaving Kosovo provided a more emotionally appealing objective – to avert the humanitarian catastrophe that was underway” (Johnstone 2002: 234-249).

As she had experienced a near miss with death from NATO bombs, Prentice felt the need to leave a testimony because, as she said, she had been born for the second time in Kosovo (Prentis 2004: 30). Guskova testifies about her own disturbing experience regarding the bombing of Yugoslavia in the appendix at the end of her study. Namely, the author emphasizes that until then she has never kept a journal. However, in March 1999, “the beginning of a bizarre and pointless war” (Guskova 2014: 411) prompted her to start keeping it. It was another way of expressing her revolt against the gruesome and heartless act:

“In broad daylight, in civilised Europe, someone bombs someone with no reason at all. It is hard to describe the feelings that overcame me. Fear? – No. Horror? – No. Helplessness? – No. It was rather the pain for those who were bombed, the desire to be beside them, to help, to fight for justice, against evil and hatred. My hand reached for the quill by itself. Although the days were extremely tense, I wished to write down what was most important: we did not sit idle. Everyone fought: some in front of the American embassy, some in protests, some in newspapers and magazines, in front of a microphone and camera. It only got easier for me in April, when I finally managed to thread my way to Yugoslavia, to see everything with my own eyes, to understand and elaborate on the plan of action. At that point I didn’t write anymore. I have forgotten about my notes, only recently have I found them by accident and decided to publish them as a testimony from that period” (Ibid.).

Prentice especially highlights that she was irritated by the constant representation of the Serbs as culprits for both the Bosnian War and the Kosovo crisis. The West has clearly chosen its side by doing so. When over two hundred thousand Serbs and Romani were forced to leave Kosovo after the entrance of NATO troops and their protégés, the KLA, hardly anyone reacted in the West. Two months later, almost entire Serbian population left the province, and on that occasion at least half of the Serbian refugees were children, according to the data provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Prentis 2004: 67). She also writes about seeing dozens of undamaged mosques, which stood in sharp contrast to the later widespread burning and destruction of Serbian Orthodox churches committed by ethnic Albanians. Several Orthodox cemeteries were vandalized, as well (120). Diana Johnstone also discusses the preparation of the public opinion for the NATO intervention, underlining that the Serbs were exposed to an extremely intense campaign of racial hatred, especially in the member states of NATO. The chief strategy of the Albanian side during the Nineties was based on gaining international support, primarily political, and later military, with the aim of territorial secession of Kosovo. Both Albania and the Albanian diaspora, especially in Germany, Switzerland, the United States, and Turkey, were engaged in aggressive pro-Albanian propaganda. The conflict provided the opportunity to demonstrate the new mission of NATO Alliance as well as a convenient field for operations of numerous governmental and non-governmental organizations which saw the Yugoslav adversities as a perfect opportunity and justification for implementing their operations. With regards to Kosovo, the Western public opinion was under a strong influence of biased organizations which fought for human rights in co-operation with Western governments (Johnstone 2002: 221-222). Johnstone wonders how and why it happened that numerous officials consciously allowed themselves to be convinced of things which all informed observers knew to be false (Džonston 2005: 283). Michael Parenti, a historian and political analyst, in his study *To Kill a Nation: The Attack on Yugoslavia*, in the chapter titled “Demonizing the Serbs”, states that the American public relations agency “Ruder & Finn” played the key role in the media satanization of the Serbs while working for their Muslim Bosnian, Croatian and Albanian clients. The author points out that the creation of anti-Serbian climate was particularly aided by “half-informed intellectuals” (Parenti 2000: 93) who supported the NATO crusade campaign against the Serbs and global imperialism. The most prominent among them were Günter Grass, Karl Popper, Salman Rushdie, Susan Sontag, and many others (Ibid.). The same topic is dealt with in the study *Kosovo: a “just” war for creating a mafia state (Kosovo: Une guerre “juste” pour un État mafieux)* by the French journalist Pierre Pean. In the chapter titled “Disinformation and media intimidation during the war,” he notices that the Western media became “NATO-ized” by undertaking the colossal task of creating the public opinion in order to provide support for the actions of NATO Alliance. In that endeavour, every opinion that differed from the officially proclaimed version of events advocated by most commentators was proclaimed to be “negationist

neurosis” (Pean 2013: 107-117). Emphasizing the need to re-examine numerous Western colonial and imperial crimes, in his book *On Western Terrorism: From Hiroshima to Drone Warfare*, Noam Chomsky introduces the term „selective blindness“ (Chomsky, Vltchek 2013: 24), as he considers the common Western practice that certain crimes are constantly discussed with mandatory disgust, while others are neglected and frequently negated, as well (23-24). Andre Vltchek, his interlocutor in the same book which was envisioned as a dialogue of two intellectuals, suggests the following when he discusses the media propaganda:

“But it is Western propaganda that is capable of mobilizing the masses for whatever ends or goals anywhere in the world. For whatever reasons, it can trigger coups, conflicts, terrible violence, and ‘strive for change.’ It can call the most peaceful large country on earth the most violent; it can describe it as the real threat to world peace; and it can call a bunch of Western nations that have been, for centuries, terrorizing the world, the true upholders of peace and democracy, and almost everybody believes it. Almost all people in the West believe it. Most of the people on this planet do...because Western propaganda is so perfect, so advanced. And China, Venezuela, Russia, Iran, Bolivia, Cuba, Zimbabwe, and Eritrea are not the only victims of this, naturally. Any country that stands in the way of Western interests becomes legitimate target” (37).

Prentice highlights that only a small number of foreign journalists has actually spent time in Kosovo, especially during the bombing. From the beginning of NATO campaign, this area represented “an informational black hole” (Prentis 2004: 96), as she puts it. While she was in Serbia, this British journalist quickly managed to realise that NATO Alliance targets were not only military objects, but also bridges, maternity hospitals, the Chinese embassy, RTS headquarters, the oil refinery in Novi Sad. In Niš, she witnessed the disaster that occurred in the city centre, when on 7th May over thirty civilians died of NATO bombs, and an even larger number of them suffered severe injuries. During this air strike, NATO used cluster bombs, a weapon prohibited by the Geneva Convention. The author points out that this was the first time that she had seen so many dead civilians, although she had already heard and seen a lot about the consequences of explosions in Belgrade and its vicinity. It seemed to her that until that point she had observed the war from the wrong side of the binoculars (100-102). The NATO criminal politics and bombing of Yugoslavia were reported on in a series of texts published during 1999 by the Australian journalist, writer and activist John Pilger. In the article “Acts of Murder” he notes:

“The room is filled with the bodies of children killed by NATO in Surdulica in Serbia. Several are recognisable only by their sneakers. A dead infant is cradled in the arms of his father. These pictures and many others have not been shown in Britain; it will be said they are too horrific. But minimising the culpability of the British state when it is engaged in criminal action is normal; censorship is by omission and misuse of language. The media impression of a series of NATO ‘blunders’ is false. Anyone scrutinising the unpublished list of targets hit by NATO is left in little doubt that a deliberate terror campaign is being waged against the civilian population of Yugoslavia.”

Eighteen hospitals and clinics and at least 200 nurseries, schools, colleges and students' dormitories have been destroyed or damaged, together with housing estates, hotels, libraries, youth centres, theatres, museums, churches and 14th-century monasteries on the World Heritage list. Farms have been bombed, their crops set on fire. As Friday's bombing of the Kosovo town of Korisa shows, there is no discrimination between Serbs and those being 'saved'. Every day, three times more civilians are killed by NATO than the daily estimate of deaths of Kosovans in the months prior to the bombing.

The British people are not being told about a policy designed largely by their government to cause such criminal carnage. The dissembling of politicians and the lies of 'spokesmen' set much of the news agenda. There is no sense of the revulsion felt throughout most of the world for this wholly illegal action, for the punishment of Milosevic's crime with a greater crime and for the bellicose antics of Blair, Cook and Robertson, who have made themselves into international caricatures" (Pilger 1999).

Prentice points to the Amnesty International reports which describe the conditions in Kosovo after the arrival of NATO, suggesting that although the international community intervened in Kosovo with the declared goal of preventing a humanitarian disaster, at the end of this undertaking the violation of human rights occurred on a daily basis (Prentis 2004: 215), while Kosovo, the main excuse for the NATO intervention, continued to be both political and ecological mine field. The last section of her book is dedicated to the ecological consequences of the bombing. While at the beginning of January articles regarding the impact of depleted uranium on NATO peacekeepers were occasionally published in the Western press⁶, the risks to which the civilians were exposed were not mentioned on those occasions, of which the author testifies, as she reminds of the people who worked on clearing up the ruins after air strikes and soon afterwards died due to the exposure to depleted uranium, since they came into contact with the radioactive material from NATO bombs (217-226).⁷ Bakary Kante of Senegal, head of UNEP mission, reported on the lethal effect of depleted uranium used in NATO attack on Yugoslavia in May 1999. He was the first to direct the public's attention to the committed ecological disaster in a report that was censored soon afterwards.⁸ However, the information surfaced when journalist Robert Parsons published them in the Geneva daily newspaper

6 Depleted uranium ammunition was used the most in the area of Kosovo and Metohija. All Italian soldiers who were part of KFOR and came into contact with this ammunition underwent an organized examination. To this moment, out of 225 soldiers, 45 have died of malign diseases, and the children of 25 of them have been born with genetic anomalies (see, Jovanović, Petković, Čikarić 2012: 71-75). Spain and Portugal also ordered medical examination for all soldiers who were in the Kosovo area. Amy Worthington also writes about the effect of depleted uranium which does not spare even its own troops (Worthington 2003).

7 The author highlights the case of Milenko Žarković from Priboj, who was employed on the clearing the ruins after air strikes on Niš Airport and in the area of Vranje, near the Kosovo border. He passed away by the end of May 2000, and it is assumed that the cause of death was the exposure to depleted uranium during the contact with radioactive materials from the NATO Alliance's anti-tank missiles (Prentis 2004: 218).

8 Available at: <https://inserbja.info/today/2014/02/un-hid-alariming-report-almost-10-tons-of-depleted-uranium-on-kosovo/>, accessed on 4.2.2020.

“Le Courrier” in his text “Depleted uranium: A tale of poisonous denial” (Parsons 2000).⁹ According to D. Johnstone, “[t]he NATO assault had transformed the small province of Kosovo into a proving ground for advanced U.S. weaponry, cruise missiles, laser-guided bombs, cluster bombs, depleted uranium explosives” (Johnstone 2002: 248). Guskova reminds that during the bombing of Yugoslavia NATO tested the latest type of cluster bombs CBU-97, “high-tech and of great destructive power” (Guskova 2014: 232).

In Belgrade, Kragujevac and elsewhere across Serbia doctors simultaneously notice a dramatic increase of cancer rates and deformities in infants. Vets also mark a rise in number of deformed new-born animals. The reports of The Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe which recorded the toxic effects of NATO campaign bring to the foreground the “hotspots” where contamination linked to bombing is particularly high: Pančevo, Bor, Novi Sad, Kragujevac. Poisons detected in air, soil and water are also mentioned – mercury, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) and vinyl chloride monomer (VCM). PCB is linked with cancer and other diseases and has been banned in the USA since 1977. Furthermore, the amount of the compounds of PCB and dioxins released in Kragujevac during the bombing of the automobile and arms factory “Zastava” was a thousand times above the level which would cause the declaration of state of emergency in Germany. The VCM compounds lead to neurological damage and liver damage, as well as foetal damage, causing severe defects in infants (Prentis 2004: 220-224). Depleted uranium has been used before, e. g. during the Gulf War, but the bombing of Bosnia in 1995 and of Yugoslavia in 1999 represented the first uses of such weapon on the European soil and against Europeans (see, Vongar, Bilčić 2010: 152). Moreover, according to the author’s words, it is naïve to think that such ecological problem, more precisely disaster, could be contained within the borders of a single nation, but it is a problem for all the countries in the region (Prentis 2004: 220-221).

Although the lethal consequences of depleted uranium have been familiar for a long time, there is still no organized tracking of the effects of depleted uranium on people and the environment in Serbia. Few experts dare to speak officially about it. Among them are Vladislav Jovanović (a lawyer), Slobodan Čikarić (a doctor) and Slobodan Petković (a General), who published the study *Crime in War – Genocide in Peace* in 2012. Diplomat V. Jovanović emphasizes that NATO disregarded its own statute in the operation that was not approved by the United Nations Security Council and at the same time broke a range of international laws by committing numerous crimes against civilians and civilian targets, but none of the NATO leaders was held responsible for the committed crimes:

9 The revelation of truth about the lethal effect of depleted uranium in the areas of Serbia, Bosnia, and Iraq is dealt with in the documentary film *Deadly Dust (Todesstaub, 2007)* by German director Frieder Wagner. The rapid growth of the number of cancer patients in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region is also discussed in the documentary film *Balkan Cancer* (Abdullah 2014).

“NATO and the USA did everything so that the conducted propaganda machinery would create the most convincing image possible about the validity of their ‘humanitarian intervention.’ They ignored the fact that the international law does not recognize and does not acknowledge an armed intervention under such name and excuse. The prohibition of military interventions outside cases predicted by the Charter of the United Nations was in power and remained so until today. However, NATO officials and leading members did not actually give a careful thought when they launched that ‘humanized’ form of their aggression. Deputy Secretary of State of the United States Strobe Talbott openly declared that the main goal of bombing was to break Serbia’s resistance to the new world order, while high official of the US government Frank Wisner admitted that the military attack on Serbia in 1999 was executed for strategic reasons” (Jovanović, Petković, Čikarić 2012: 10).

It is also vital to mention a collection of articles titled *Secret of depleted uranium: Consequences of NATO bombing of Serbia* from 2014, which contains texts from various fields and whose authors deal with political, ecological and legal consequences of NATO bombing.¹⁰ Furthermore, two significant medical studies documenting the lethal effects of the military use of depleted uranium on nature and human health. The first one was the study *Early and postponed health effects of depleted uranium* by Svetlana Žunić in 2016¹¹, and then in 2017 Alek J. Račić reported his own findings in the study *Health consequences of NATO bombings 1995/99*.¹²

10 On the basic characteristics of depleted uranium as well as its health effects, see the text by Dragoljub P. Antić, expert for nuclear energetics and associate at the Vinča Institute for Nuclear Sciences – “The destruction of chemical and oil industry, bombing of energy sources, and use of depleted uranium ammunition during NATO war of aggression against FR Yugoslavia” (Antić 2014: 138-162).

11 In the study’s conclusion, the author infers the following: “The growing trends of malign and benign diseases’ rates in Serbia as well as in Europe and the world provide a new insight and are necessary for a critical attitude and elimination of half-truths. [...] The topic concerning the health effects of depleted uranium in Serbia does not have a conclusion. After the military use of depleted uranium, our reality is no longer the same. It is time for demystification and a factually based action so that the consequences of its use could be controlled as much as possible, if at all. The depleted uranium used for military purposes is the ideal, invisible assassin, the Trojan horse of nuclear war. [...] There are three possibilities: 1) not to admit the existence of the risk of military use; 2) to accept the facts with the attitude *Ave, Caesar, morituri te salutant*; 3) to initiate meticulous analysis of the consequences and form a strategy for overcoming them. The last option is also the only possible one, if we wish to count on the future of the country and the preservation of the population’s health in permanently altered environmental conditions” (Žunić 2016: 109-110).

12 In the chapter “Chemical weapons used during NATO aggression of 1999,” Račić states that a special war was waged on the territory of FR Yugoslavia that based on its effects can be defined as chemical warfare. Although NATO Alliance did not use chemical agents (classic poison gasses), by premeditated bombing of special targets such as industrial facilities and chemical agents storage facilities, and by setting oil refineries and depots on fire, it indirectly produced the effects of chemical warfare. Objects in Pančevo, Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Lučani, Prahovo, Bor, Barič and other locations were bombed. In September 2001, a group of domestic and foreign scientists organized an international conference on the effect of war warfare on the environment – “The First International Conference on Recovery of Yugoslavia”. On that occasion, it was disclosed that the samples of DU missiles collected on our territory also contained small amounts of plutonium (which does not exist in nature)

All three authors share the common attitude that the so-called “humanitarian bombing” of Yugoslavia, under the excuse of preventing a “humanitarian disaster,” which was promoted by the Euro-Atlantic powers, marks a turning point in the international law as well as a violent imposition of the new world order to a sovereign state. According to D. Johnstone, “the war against Yugoslavia set an extremely dangerous precedent. It showed how a ‘humanitarian calamity’ could be used to conquer or destroy a target country. The procedure for leading NATO into war against Yugoslavia followed a series of steps that amounted to a formula for transforming contemporary internal conflicts into pretexts for military intervention” (Johnstone 2002: 262). Thus she believes that for a start it is necessary to “demythologize the ‘good humanitarian war’ in Kosovo and show that it was a filthy war to which ‘humanitarian’ pretexts were given by its protagonists” (Džonston 2005: 340). Guskova, who deals with the Balkans crisis during the second half of the 20th century in her texts and especially with the recent conflicts in this area, believes that in the Balkans “the ultimatums of the potentates, and not harmonizing the attitudes of the warring parties, became the chief method of endeavouring to establish peace. If the ultimatum were rejected, severe methods of pressure would be applied – imposition of comprehensive sanctions (Yugoslavia), political isolation (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska in the second half of 1994), direct use of military force (Republika Srpska, Yugoslavia)” (Guskova 2012: 966). Guskova points out that the same principles were also applied by the international organizations of shady legal statuses which emerged overnight and mostly blackmailed, persecuted and punished only one side of the conflict – the Serbs. One such organization was the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Today, twenty years after its foundation, it is clear to everyone why such an organization was established. For all years of its operation, the Tribunal endeavoured to create false representations and spread disinformation in the international community on the participants and events of the Balkan conflict. The history of breakup of Yugoslavia was altered, and all the blame fell on the Serbs. The statistics show it as well – 66 per cent of the indictees were Serbs, out of nineteen deceased during the investigation sixteen were Serbs; so far the Tribunal has sentenced Serbs to 904 years of prison, Croats to 171 years, Muslims to 39 years, Kosovo Albanians to 19 years, and Macedonians to 12 years. It is a devastating fact that a large number of Albanians was acquitted, and those were particularly the ones who committed the greatest atrocities in Kosovo (Fatmir Limaj, Isak Musliu, Idriz Balaj, Ramush Haradinaj) (Ibid.). Hence the author concludes the following:

as well as the isotope of uranium (U-236) which also cannot be found in natural uranium. It is vital to emphasize that this radionuclide is cancerogenic (leukaemia), and the half-life of plutonium is 24,360 years. The determined presence of U-236 supports the thesis that the DU ammunition was made of recycled waste. That depleted uranium is extremely harmful to human health is confirmed by the fact that in 1980 court order of the state of New York banned the operation of “National Lead Industries,” a factory producing OU penetrators, as the emitted radioactivity exceeded 150 μ Ci (see, Račić 2017: 39-60).

“The tribunal exclusively serves a political goal – to confirm the guilt of only one nation in all wars of the later Balkan crisis in order to justify NATO aggression against Yugoslavia in 1999 and thus provide a legal foundation for it. [...] The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia practically does not even prosecute the crimes committed by Muslims, Croats, Albanians, etc. The Tribunal generally follows the idea that the Serbs were the aggressors in all wars or that in a vast majority of cases it was they who had committed war crimes, while all others combated only in self-defence, so to speak. The seal that the Serbs are to be blamed for everything has been stamped in 1991. Unfortunately, it is very hard to remove it today, because both the subjects of the conflicts and various other international organizations have laboured long and persistently to create it. Everything is done now in order to create a ‘guilt complex’ in Serbs for everything that took place in the Balkans during the Nineties. Moreover, the authorities in Belgrade do not oppose this at all, relating the period with the name of Slobodan Milošević and his guilt. [...] The world gloated without getting into the essence of what had been going on. The patterns about the Serbs’ guilt over everything that has taken place in the Balkans have been imprinted in people’s heads, almost everyone writes following the same blueprint, and often they do not even know what or who they are writing about. We who study the events in the Balkans, who are well-acquainted with documents, facts, political leaders, military leaders, the chronology of the events, are well familiar with what had actually occurred during the breakup of Yugoslavia, we have written a lot about the general [Ratko Mladić – A/N] and his surroundings. The political background of the Tribunal’s creation and the anti-Serbian pursuit by numerous European and world institutions are also familiar” (968-972).

She also mentions that “it was particularly the Balkans that was meant to have become the trigger for transforming NATO from a military organization to an organization for imposing peace, as well as a place for gradual dislocation of NATO troops in Europe” (976). Camp Bondsteel, the United States military base built in Kosovo and Metohija (named after James Bondsteel, the United States Army soldier who served during the Vietnam War) with the aim of controlling this part of the Balkans speaks in favour of this claim.¹³

The tactics of the Euro-Atlantic powers tested in Yugoslavia is developed as a stable practice at the beginning of the new millennium, which is especially

13 According to D. Jonstone, “immediately upon sending its troops to Kosovo, the Pentagon set about constructing a large permanent military base called Camp Bondsteel at a strategic crossroads. Without consulting NATO allies or bothering to compensate farmers deprived of their land, much less asking permission of the occupied country’s authorities, the U.S. expropriated some 775 acres of rolling countryside, flattened it out and covered it with facilities for thousands of troops, including two chapels and Burger King. Described as the biggest U.S. overseas military base since the Vietnam War, Camp Bondsteel is a solidly-built enclave which may be able to survive political upheavals in Kosovo just as the U.S. Guantanamo base has endured revolution in Cuba. It also happens to be located near two of the future European transport routes, ‘Corridor 8’ and ‘Corridor 10’. This military base commands the most strategically interesting corner of Kosovo, in close proximity to the two main north–south mountain passes allowing traffic to pass from northern Central Europe to the important Greek port of Thessalonica on the Aegean. If acquiring this new base was not one of Washington’s motives for going to war, it looked that way to some of the United States’ NATO allies” (Johnstone 2002: 232-233).

seen in the examples of Libya, Ukraine, and Syria. Namely, the beginning of the 21st century was marked by several disasters in various parts of the world. The Arab Spring will be remembered by the flyover of American and NATO helicopters over Libya. On that occasion, the scenario conspicuously reminded of the bombing of Yugoslavia, of the repeated Ides of March, except that “Merciful Angel”¹⁴ was now replaced by “Odyssey Dawn” (see, Arsenijević Mitrić 2016: 488) as the code name for the operation determined by random selection method, according to the official reports. It is this perfidious name that points to the tested mechanism of the abuse of myth, of usurping and forging facts, on which occasion collective fiction is presented as the truth. Eve-Ann Prentice, Elena Guskova, and Diana Johnstone wrote about this comprehensively in their works, while at the same time they were involved in the tasks of the quest for truth and the restoration of the culture of memory, which is the condition for humanity and finding one’s identity.

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14 Although there are theories today that the mentioned code name of the operation is actually a warped construct of the Serbian media, there is evidence that the term appeared at the very beginning of NATO intervention, as the unofficial code name used by the U.S. State Department (see, Floyd 2009; Guskova 2014: 186).

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КУЛТУРА СЕЋАЊА КАО ОДГОВОР НА ПОЛИТИКУ РЕВИЗИЈЕ И ЗАБОРАВА: ДАЈАНА ЏОНСТОН, ИВ-ЕН ПРЕНТИС И ЈЕЛЕНА ГУСКОВА О РАТУ НА КОСОВУ И МЕТОХИЈИ И НАТО БОМБАРДОВАЊУ ЈУГОСЛАВИЈЕ

Резиме

У овом раду биће речи о текстовима Дајане Џонстон, америчке новинарке и филолога, британске новинарке Ив-Ен Прентис и Јелене Гускове, руске историчарке. Фокусирали смо се на анализу њихових ставова и увида до којих су дошле у својим истраживањима бавећи се темом рата на Косову и Метохији и НАТО бомбардовањем Југославије. Иако често можемо чути како је незахвално писати о новој историји, па и о ратовима непосредно по њиховом окончању, да је неопходно учинити отклон и пустити да се догађаји слегну и створи одређена временска дистанца, то ипак не мора увек да буде тако, у чекању се крије својеврсна опасност, управо због прогресивне амнезије коју савремена култура подстиче. Тако и питање југословенских ратова деведесетих мора бити актуализовано, како не би било подвргнуто забору или што је још горе радикалним ревизијама. Оно по чему су њихови текстови значајни, између осталог, јесте и чињеница да поменуте ауторке настоје да пруже објективну анализу ратних сукоба на Балкану деведесетих година прошлог века. Дајана Џонстон тако у студији *FOOLS' CRUSADE: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions* истражује узроке и последице распада Југославије и то на основу великог броја поузданих извора, документарне грађе, научних студија посвећених том питању. Она посебно истиче кључну улогу евроатлантских сила у том процесу, које су рат НАТО алијансе 1999. представљале јавности као срећан завршетак низа драматичних збивања. Многи значајни елементи су у медијима током целе деценије прошлог века систематски прећутквани или кривотворени, што је довело до креирања колективне фикције која се перпетуирала унедоглед. Ив-Ен Прентис, у мемоарској прози *ONE WOMAN'S WAR*, износи сопствена сведочанства о томе шта се догађало на терену током деведесетих. Као новинарка и дописница *Тајмса* за Балкан у истраживање је кренула са жељом да преиспита званичну слику коју су западни медији у то време пласирали. Гускова, која се у својим текстовима и студијама бави кризом на Балкану током друге половине XX века, а посебно недавним сукобима на овом простору, сматра да је на Балкану главни метод настојања да се успостави мир постао не усаглашавање ставова зараћених страна, него ултиматуми моћника. Све три ауторке деле заједнички став да такозвано „хуманитарно бомбардовање” Југославије, под изговором спречавања „хуманитарне катастрофе”, какво су промовисале евроатлантске силе, означава прекретницу у међународном праву као и насилно наметање новог светског поретка једној сувереној држави.

Кључне речи: Дајана Џонстон, Ив-Ен Прентис, Јелена Гускова, култура сећања, фалсификовање историје, Косово и Метохија, НАТО бомбардовање СР Југославије

Примљен: 25. фебруар 2020. године
Прихваћен: 10. децембар 2020. године