



The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia

Michael A. Sells

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The recent atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina have stunned people throughout the world. With Holocaust memories still painfully vivid, a question haunts us: how is this savagery possible? Michael A. Sells answers by demonstrating that the Bosnian conflict is not simply a civil war or a feud of age-old adversaries. It is, he says, a systematic campaign of genocide and a Christian holy war spurred by religious mythologies.

This passionate yet reasoned book examines how religious stereotyping—in popular and official discourse—has fueled Serbian and Croatian ethnic hatreds. Sells, who is himself Serbian American, traces the cultural logic of genocide to the manipulation by Serb nationalists of the symbolism of Christ's death, in which Muslims are "Christ-killers" and Judases who must be mercilessly destroyed. He shows how "Christoslavic" religious nationalism became a central part of Croat and Serbian politics, pointing out that intellectuals and clergy were key instruments in assimilating extreme religious and political ideas.

Sells also elucidates the ways that Western policy makers have rewarded the perpetrators of the genocide and punished the victims. He concludes with a discussion of how the multireligious nature of Bosnian society has been a bridge between Christendom and Islam, symbolized by the now-destroyed bridge at Mostar. Drawing on historical documents, unpublished United Nations reports, articles from Serbian and Bosnian media, personal contacts in the region, and Internet postings, Sells reveals the central role played by religious mythology in the Bosnian tragedy. In addition, he makes clear how much is at stake for the entire world in the struggle to preserve Bosnia's existence as a multireligious society.

The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia Details

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Beth says

Chilling. Wonderfully documented account of Bosnia's genocide with a profound (and sickening) conclusion: the guilt was on the West's hands for not stepping in because it was Muslims being killed, not Christians.

Loved the message at the end about culture: any attempt to create a fixed barrier is an act of violence to BOTH sides.

Aryanne says

I got half way through. It is simply too biased for me. I was more looking for a strictly objective account of events. The book does go to great lengths to explain the mechanics of what is and isn't genocide (which I appreciate). It also thoroughly explains the mix of religion and politics that arguably caused the atrocities (which I didn't know about) but it is obvious there is serious empathy for one side and animosity for the other. It's just not what I'd hoped. Someday I may pick it up again, but not soon.

Blake says

The is an academic treatment of the subject (but not without heart). Difficult and dark, but I think worthwhile. History may not judge the West kindly, once the West stops controlling popular historical perspective.

Claire S says

Wow, sounds like it touches on a bunch of things I'm really interested in.

Yas says

A passionate must-read book on Yugoslavian affairs. Factual defense for Bosnian who suffered the most in the war amidst western complicity. An illuminating historical background help us understand the myths and factors that led to the religious genocide.

Carrie says

Great book; happy to have found it again, post-college.

Sarah Fisher says

The writing style was kind of dry. This study takes a very good look at the underlying problems and how a conflict like this ever began. It also tries to make a case for why the Western world largely ignored the atrocities. This latter part seemed a little rushed and not as well supported. Also, it was hard to get a clear idea of major events within the conflict as he focussed on idea surrounding the conflict. It's best to brush up on dates and key events first.

Andy says

this book some of the horrific events of the Balkan area, the hate and fear that bred torture, rape and genocide, things I had almost no idea about until reading this well-written and researched book...

Bosnian23 says

This book is an amazing read for all of those who want to get familiar with the bloody conflict in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 90's.

Perfect analysis of Serbo-Croatian expansionism on behalf of Bosnian territorial integrity.

Followed with the in-depth examination of the racist/anti Islamic "arguments" they used in their campaign of ethnic cleansing, genocide, genocide and culturecide against the Bosniak Muslims and later on, Kosovar Muslim Albanians.

From their presentation of muslims as the killers of Christ (revived in the body of the fallen Serbian count Lazar, killed at the battle of Kosovo in 1389.) to the false allegations about "Islamic fundamentalism ridden Bosnian state", author examines all of the examples of nationalistic and religious extremism of Bosnia's neighbours.

In the final chapter of the book, author exposes the role of the world in the genocide which unfolded in Bosnia, showing how French and English rulers were openly pro-Serbian, how the leading powers of the world played the "balkanization" card while others tried to present all sides involved as equally guilty.

The book is short, and it could be longer, because it covers such an interesting and wide topic. But it's great, with a lot of sources and useful informations.

Santa says

Really amazing book that you should read if you want to learn about region. You can add "Bosnia: Short History" by Noel Malcolm and you have respectable starting point and more.

