

YUGOSLAVIA--6/14/99

As all the inhumanity of man to man characterizing recent Yugoslav history enters a new phase with the current peace accords, I hear very little comment from the press or radio (other than propaganda or cant) seeking with any success for the moral center of this situation. Religion (the court of last resort in quandaries of this kind), is represented in the region by three great founts of moral wisdom, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Islam. Alas, these clerical robes conceal knives, while revealing bloodstained hems.

We are assured that Milosevic is a dangerous criminal, and that Serbs indulge ethnic hatreds going back centuries. Yet Tuchman's atrocities on Bosnia's behalf were perhaps worse. The Albanians are brigands and dope-smugglers. But the trail of immoral brutality doesn't stop at the border. A Turkish king decimated Serbia because the Serbian king raped his daughter when she was nine. Or was it the other way around? The Germans left the country in ruins in WWII. And now NATO has executed a more surgical reprise.

Thousands of miles away, the United States has been guilty, first of the passive aggression of non-involvement, and then of purposely contriving a negotiation posture it knew would lead to war. Clinton wanted the war for personal political reasons. Republicans in Congress then criticized the war from a pacifist standpoint to oppose him, thus morally compromising both pacifists and themselves. Meanwhile, Congress abdicated its constitutional responsibility to declare war, while NATO, devised as an instrument of West European defense during the Cold War, fought its first military action as an aggressor outside its usual corral. The media's widespread pimping of the official line, combined with "our boys in uniform" schtick, reinforced all American's need to avoid knowledge productive of national low self-esteem.

It seems that the former Yugoslavia is a moral swamp, or worse, tar-pit. Once defiled by the bloody ooze, all unfortunate slime-slippers begin to seek in vain for the hidden basic moral trap that greased their feet. They who try to put their finger on it, succeed only in leaving fingerprints at the scene of the crime.

I, personally, feel guilty for bringing to attention the degree of our own culpability in exacerbating pan-Balkan hostilities, if only through reporting them.

I'm going to quit now before I implicate myself any more deeply; but the nagging questions remains.