



JAMES BISSETT

**NEW DIPLOMACY
OLD AGENDA**





There are those who believe the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia marks a turning point in the way the international community (or at least the nineteen NATO countries) can react to human rights violations or repression that take place within the borders of a sovereign state. In other words that the principle of state sovereignty can be over ruled in the name of humanitarian intervention

Apologists for the bombing argue the war in Kosovo was fought in the interests of human rights—not territory. The president of the Czech republic went so far to say in a speech in the Canadian House of Commons that Kosovo was the first war fought for human values rather than territory. He received a standing ovation by our parliamentarians—but I suspect president Havel would not care to be reminded of that pronouncement now when it is evident that the war has in fact handed over to the Albanian Kosovars a large part of Serbian territory.

President Clinton told the American people that the war was being fought for humanitarian reasons and to contain the fighting so that it would not imperil or destabilize the rest of the Balkans. The bombing was necessary, he said, to stop the atrocities being committed there. This was justification for the violation of Yugoslav sovereignty.

Our own ministers of national defense and foreign affairs assured us the war was being fought to stop ethnic cleansing.... But the facts of course show that the vast majority of Kosovars were forced out of Kosovo after the bombing not before it. Nevertheless, these ministers were not alone in heralding the war as ushering in an era of new diplomacy. Humanitarian reasons it is now argued can over ride the long-standing principle of sovereignty. Interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states can be justified even without United Nations approval.



Some pundits have suggested the theoretical basis of the new interventionist doctrine had its origins-ironically-in a Carnegie endowment for international peace report, entitled, "Changing our ways: Americas role in the world" This report argued for the necessity of the United States to realign NATO and the organization for security and cooperation in Europe, (OSCE), in order to better deal with new security problems in Europe. Military intervention for humanitarian objectives was to be encouraged. The Carnegie report was published in the summer of 1992 and is thought to have wielded strong influence on president Clinton and the Democratic Party's foreign policy elite.

Let us not forget that all of the political parties in the House of Commons supported the war in Kosovo. Moreover, almost all of the Canadian media were in favour of the NATO intervention. Few prominent Canadians spoke out against the bombing. There was little concern expressed that NATO's military intervention in Yugoslavia was done without reference to the United Nations. The Canadian establishment it would seem, stood solidly behind the aggressive bombing campaign.



The new diplomacy, it would appear, has been accepted, but has it really----. Now that the war is over and there has been time for some sober after thought, more and more commentators and analysts are beginning to realize that the Kosovo war was an unmitigated disaster. None of the policy objectives claimed by NATO were achieved.

In the name of humanity the NATO bombing caused a humanitarian catastrophe. Over a million Kosovars were displaced and the subsequent Serbian retaliation and NATO bombing devastated the region. Yugoslavia's infrastructure has been destroyed. The bridges across the Danube have been blown at inestimable cost, not only to Serbia, but as well, to the other neighboring countries. The environmental price tag in the long run will be measured not only in millions of dollars but in serious human health and medical disabilities.

The claim that by intervening in Kosovo stability in the Balkans could be secured has also proven to be illusory. The NATO action has had the opposite effect. Yugoslavia's neighbours are in a state of turmoil. Montenegro is on the verge of civil war. Macedonia is uneasy about its Albanian minority. Albania has been encouraged to believe that its dream of greater Albania is not beyond reach. Finally Serbia itself is torn apart with internal strife and injured pride. The Balkan time bomb has been given a shorter fuse. All of this has been done in the name of containment.

In diplomacy things are not always what they seem. NATO's stated reasons for bombing Yugoslavia had really little to do with humanitarian factors or concerns about Balkan stability. There were far more serious humanitarian issues elsewhere in the world. Stability is not enhanced by waging war. The real reasons must be found elsewhere.



The U.S. Led attack on Yugoslavia was designed to improve president Clinton's public image and restore credibility to NATO, whose existence since the end of the cold war was in jeopardy. This was the real agenda of the NATO war. In terms of Balkan history it is an old agenda.

Traditionally western intervention in the Balkans has proven to be disastrous. From the congress of Berlin to World War and the Second World War, the western powers have interfered in the Balkans for their own selfish policy objectives. These aims have had

little relevance to the issues affecting the peoples of the Balkan countries. What was true of the past has proven true again in Kosovo.

Because of the demonic image the western media had already created of Slobodan Milosevic it was not difficult for him to be blamed for committing outrageous atrocities in Kosovo. In fact prior to the bombing the total casualties in Kosovo, Serb and Albanian, did not reach beyond 2000, which by any standard was not cause for military intervention. Nevertheless, NATO needed its war.

The immediate cause of the bombing was Yugoslavia's refusal to sign the Rambouillet agreement. The fact that the Albanian side had also refused to sign proved only to be a temporary embarrassment. It seems obvious that the agreement was deliberately designed to ensure the Yugoslavs would not sign. This was ensured by the provision of two clauses in the agreement; one calling for a referendum in Kosovo in three years and the other demanding access to all of Yugoslavia by NATO troops. As expected the Yugoslav government refused to accept these provisions and, as planned this enabled the bombing to take place.

In reality the anticipated "victory surge" of popular opinion in favour of president Clinton did not happen. His tarnished image was not improved by the NATO war. Nor was NATO's credibility enhanced by the Kosovo intervention. That organizations desperate attempt on the eve of its 50th birthday to justify its continued existence after the end of the cold war has shattered its image.



NATO which was dedicated to the peaceful resolution of international disputes and sworn to uphold the UN charter, violated everything it had stood for since its inception. In so doing it has lost forever the moral high ground, which had been its underlying strength and influence.

NATO was after all, for the peoples of the free world much more than just a military alliance. It stood for peace, democracy, and the rule of law. Now, because of its illegal bombing of Yugoslavia it has become a threatening and aggressive force prepared to wage undeclared war on any state whose policies do not conform with its idea of humanitarian justice.

NATO's role as the enforcer of the so-called new diplomacy has caused irreparable damage to its image and reputation. As the bombing campaign continued and the list of military targets diminished, NATO bombers were forced to switch to civilian installations with consequent loss of life. Some of the NATO allies began to seriously question the purpose of the war and the methodical destruction of a modern European state. Public opinion in Germany, Italy, France and other NATO states began to turn against the bombing.

The new diplomacy does not subscribe to the concept of limited war. Unlike the days of the British Empire when the British were prepared to accept casualties among their troops as the inevitable price of empire, the new diplomacy insists on total war but one without suffering casualties. The war is to be total and antiseptic. The destruction of a

country and its people is preferable to the loss of one NATO soldier. But not all of the NATO countries were willing to accept this novel approach to international police enforcement.



As enthusiasm for the bombing waned, it became obvious to the NATO leaders that a negotiated settlement was essential. The problem was how to extricate themselves without losing face. Ironically, they turned to the Russians. After discussions with president Milosevic, the Russian negotiator, Victor Chernomyrdin, successfully convinced NATO leaders to drop the two conditions contained in the Rambouillet agreement which the Yugoslav government had refused to accept during the first attempt at resolving the dispute peacefully.

These conditions, as indicated before, were the insistence on a referendum in Kosovo in three years and access to all of Yugoslavia by NATO forces. The two key clauses of the infamous Rambouillet agreement, which had caused the war, in the first place were readily dropped by NATO when it was realized the bombing campaign was not working.

Further concessions made by NATO stipulated that Yugoslavian sovereignty over Kosovo was to be acknowledged and Kosovo was to be occupied and managed under United Nations authority. It remains to be seen if these conditions will be honoured. The first few months experience in Kosovo does not augur well for the continued sovereign control of Kosovo by Serbia.

The fact remains, however, that NATO was forced in its desperation to end the illegal bombing to rely on the two entities it was at the outset determined to keep out of the Kosovo affair; namely, the United Nations and Russia.

The long-term implications of the NATO bombing are threatening and far-reaching. The framework of world security, which served us well since the end of the Second World War, has been fractured. NATO has assumed the role of the United Nations but it represents only nineteen western states. What about the rest of the world? Moreover NATO's promise to Russia that its eastern expansion had only peaceful intentions now sounds gratuitously hollow. Can NATO's guarantee ever again be trusted? NATO's unnecessary war has returned us to the days of the Cold war. Russia and China will begin to step up the production of their nuclear arsenal.

If Kosovo is to serve as an example of what the new diplomacy means then the world is in jeopardy. If it means the rules of international conduct can be broken at will by the states with the greatest military power then this is a return to the rule of might, not the rule of law. The leaders of the nineteen western democracies have chosen war over peace and bombing over negotiation. They must be held accountable for this historic miscalculation. The new diplomacy has failed us and failed us badly.





Ambassador Bissett was born in the small village of DELORAINE, located in the South-West corner of Manitoba close to the U.S. border and the Province of Saskatchewan. During the Second World War his family moved to Winnipeg and he received his secondary and university education in that city. It was there he became interested in Eastern European cultures and history

After pursuing postgraduate studies in history and political science he won a fellowship to study Public Administration at Carleton University in Ottawa. Upon obtaining his Masters Degree he joined the public service in 1956.

He spent 37 years as a Canadian Public Servant in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and Foreign Affairs. He was appointed head of the Immigration Foreign Service in 1974 and became Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Social Affairs in 1980. In the early '70s he served at the Canadian High Commission in London England. He was appointed Canadian High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago in 1982 and served there until 1985 when he was seconded to the Department of Employment and Immigration as Executive Director to help steer new immigration and refugee legislation through Parliament.

In 1990 he was appointed Canadian Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania. He therefore witnessed at first hand the Yugoslav tragedy to which he attributes much of the blame to Western diplomatic blundering and deliberate scheming. He was recalled from Yugoslavia in the summer of 1992.

He retired from the Foreign Service upon leaving Yugoslavia and accepted a job in Moscow as the head of an International organization helping the Russian Government establish a new Immigration Ministry and designing and implementing settlement programs for the thousands of Russians returning to Russia from other parts of the former Soviet Union. He returned from Moscow in 1997 and is enjoying retirement in Ottawa but continues to do contract work from time to time.



Ambassador Bissett is married and has 5 children and 8 grand children. He was shocked at NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia and has been an outspoken critic of the war, appearing frequently on radio and television and on speaking engagements across Canada.