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FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCHES

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**FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCHES**

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INSTITUTE FOR SERBIAN CULTURE PRISHTINA – LEPOSAVIC



The Institute for Serbian Culture, Priština – Leposavić  
International Association of Methodologists of Social Sciences, Belgrade  
The MB University, Belgrade

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## HISTORY AND/OR PROPAGANDA: THE BOOKS BY TIM JUDAH, NOEL MALCOLM AND MIRANDA VICKERS ON KOSOVO AND METOHIA\*\*

*Abstract:* This paper analyzes the methodological approach and original foundation of the books of three influential British authors whose books on Kosovo and Metohija, written on the eve of the war in 1999, had a strong influence on political decision-makers from the West. The aforementioned books define the dominant discourse and narrative in Western academia and journalism today. The influence of those books is still great since they are usually found on the bibliography of recent scientific papers and monographs. Such a far-reaching influence leads to the need to review their methodological and original foundation.

*Key words:* Kosovo and Metohija, Kosovo issue, Tim Judah, Noel Malcolm, Miranda Vickers.

At the beginning of the nineties, at the time of global intoxication with the triumph of the collective West and the end of the Cold War, the disintegration and civil war began on the ruins of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). The country that the left-leaning Western intellectuals during the Cold War considered one of the most successful results of the communist experiment - had disintegrated in blood. "The wars for the Yugoslav heritage", as the series of wars during the 1990s on the territory of the former Yugoslavia are most often called in non-fiction and academic literature in English, set precedents that still influence international relations, the activities of international organizations and international law. One of the phenomena characteristic of these wars was the influence of authors who responded to the sudden attention of the Western public focused on the area affected by the war. In a relatively short period, several "histories" were written in which the authors, mostly journalists, provided their interpretations of the past and the roots of the war.

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Over the past two decades, regarding the media coverage and its influence on the creation of public attitudes in the West, authors have written relatively extensively.<sup>1</sup> This is expected since the impact of the media campaign was huge. Less attention has been paid to the influence of books, especially historical books, since their resonance with the Western public was less obvious. Criticism of these books remained largely confined to the sphere of academia<sup>2</sup> – although their influence far exceeded academic boundaries.

Over the past two decades, a number of testimonies have appeared indicating that key political decision-makers read these books and changed their policies under their influence. The well-known journalist and winner of the Pulitzer Prize, David Halberstam, wrote that in 1993 US President Bill Clinton abandoned the interventionist policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the influence of Robert Kaplan's book "Balkan Ghosts". In this book, the author advocated one of several reductionist theories widely promoted during the nineties - that the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the result of "ancient hatreds". Kaplan claimed that people in the Balkans had been killing each other for centuries and that nothing can be done about it.<sup>3</sup> The book "Balkan Ghosts" is an obscure work, written by an author who did not know the area he was writing about, and it is based on a series of stereotypes, without any scientific basis; the book is sensationalistic and pretentious. The author did not refrain from making claims such as that Nazism had its origins in the Balkans and that under the influence of the Southern Slavs "Hitler learned how to hate in such an infectious way"<sup>4</sup>. In the days when simple answers to complicated questions were sought, the book gained great popularity and directly influenced key political decision-makers, such as US President Clinton in 1993. Six years later, during the escalation of the Kosovo crisis, Clinton also made the decision on NATO intervention against FR Yugoslavia under the influence of one book - the history of Kosovo by Noel Malcolm.<sup>5</sup>

1 Among the works in the Serbian language, the analysis of the writing of the German press written by Ljiljana Glišović stands out (Ljiljana Glišović, *Srbija u ogledalu nemačke štampe 1987-2006*, Službeni glasnik, Beograd 2011.) Slobodan Vuković dealt with the role of Western media in the breakup of Yugoslavia. (Slobodan Vuković, *Etika zapadnih medija, Antisprška propaganda devedesetih godina XX veka*, Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, Sremski Karlovci: Novi Sad 2009.) Attention should definitely be paid to the works by Jovo Bakić, especially in the book: Bakić Jovo, *Jugoslavija: razaranje i njegovi tumači*, Službeni glasnik: Filozofski fakultet, Beograd 2011.

2 Lenard J. Cohen, *Serpent in the Bosom. The Rise and Fall of Slobodan Milosevic*, Westview Press, Boulder 2001, 377-405; Noman M. Naimark (ed.), *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: understanding the Balkan wars of the 1990s*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2003; Dejan Djokic (ed.), *Yugoslavism. Histories of a Failed Idea 1918 – 1992*, Hurst & Co, London 2003; itd.

3 David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace. Bush, Clinton, and the Generals*, Scribner, New York, 2001, 228. About the influence of Robert Kaplan's works on President Clinton, the following write as well: Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1994, 157; Richard Reeves, *Running in Place: How Bill Clinton Disappointed America*, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City 1996, 91-92.

4 Robert Kaplan, *Balkanski duhovi. Putovanje kroz istoriju*, Dan Graf, Beograd 2004, XXI.

5 Lenard J. Cohen, *Serpent in the Bosom*, 377-405.

Malcolm's book "Kosovo: A Brief History", along with the books "Serbs: History, Myth and the Breakup of Yugoslavia" by Tim Judah and "Between Serbs and Albanians: A History of Kosovo" by Miranda Vickers, are three influential books that shaped the development of the Kosovo crisis during the 1990s.<sup>6</sup> These three books influenced the decision of the NATO leaders to start a military intervention in FR Yugoslavia, and after the war they were used as an argument for the secession of Kosovo from Serbia. Malcolm and Vickers wrote their books in the format of academic histories, while Judah's book is a mixture of the history of the Serbs from ancient times (about half of the book) and an account of the latest war events during the nineties (the other half).

These three authors had very different careers until the moment they became interested in the war on the territory of the former SFRY and the history of this territory. Tim Judah (1962) graduated in law and diplomacy at the London School of Economics, after which he began a career as a journalist. In the period 1990-1991 he was the foreign policy correspondent of the London newspapers "The Times" and "Economist" from Bucharest, from where he reported on the days of the collapse of communism in Romania and Bulgaria. This recommended him for the position of correspondent of "Times" from Belgrade, where he succeeded the famous Dessa Trevisan who was well-known in Belgrade journalistic circles. He moved with his family to Belgrade, where he stayed until 1995. At the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he returned to London but continued to visit the Balkans frequently and to write about it. In addition to articles in "The Times", "Economist" and other British newspapers, his articles in "New York Review of Books" were also widely read.

On the eve of the outbreak of the armed rebellion in Kosovo, Judah published the book "Serbs: history, myth and the destruction of Yugoslavia".<sup>7</sup> The second edition of the book was published in 2000 and was supplemented with chapters on the war between NATO and FR Yugoslavia. The author wrote this part of the book mostly based on personal experience, since he was present on the ground when NATO forces entered the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. In the same year, 2000, Judah published the book "Kosovo: War and Revenge"<sup>8</sup>, after which he continued to occasionally write and come to the region, in parallel with reporting from other areas affected by rebellions and war.

6 These books have been extensively written about in Serbian historiography. Noel Malcolm's book attracted the most attention, due to the great influence it had on international diplomats. The answer to it was published by the Historical Institute of SANU: *Одговор на књигу Ноела Малколма Косово - Крајња испорука. Scientific discussion on Noel Malcolm's book "Kosovo. A Short History"*, ed. Slavenko Terzić, Istorijski institut SANU, Beograd 2000. Professor Predrag Simić also wrote extensively about the book in: Predrag Simić, Put u Rambuje. Kosovo crisis 1995-2000, Nea, Belgrade 2000, 107-136. Mile Bjelajac wrote extensively about the books of Malcolm and Žuda: Mile Bjelajac, Gordana Krivokapić - Jović, Contributions from scientific criticism. Serbian Historiography and the World, ISI, Belgrade 2011, 335-364.

7 Tim Judah, *The Serbs: history, myth and the destruction of Yugoslavia*, Yale University Press, New York (etc) 1997.

8 Tim Judah, *Kosovo: war and revenge*, Yale University Press, New Haven: London 2000.

Today, he enjoys the reputation of a good connoisseur of the situation in the region, which is why he is a frequent guest at conferences and a collaborator of several media and think tanks.

In his presentations, Judah often emphasized that his works are not academic, but that it is journalistic, publicist literature. According to the style, the depth of research and the predominant reliance on conversations, interviews and personal impressions - this is certainly true. However, Judah is a trained researcher whose books are often written in a history-like form, with a small but present scientific apparatus. In the foreword to the book "Serbs", he points out that his goal is not to provide "an analysis of the problems that led to the war" nor is it "an exhaustive history of the Southern Slavs, nor a book that refers to the entire war in Yugoslavia", but that it is "a book about the Serbs" written with the intention to historically explain "how they came to be where they are, and in the case of Croatia, where they were until 1995."<sup>9</sup> However, readers of the book will get the impression that Judah's book is exactly what the author rejects in the introductory part - a sketch of the history of the Serbs written in such a way that the cause of the wars during the 1990s is found in the "malign threads of Serbian history" (which Judah identifies). Judah rejected the reductionist theory of "ancient hatreds" as the main cause of the war - but he accepted another theory, since he labeled "manipulative and evil elites" - the nationalism-intoxicated leadership of the republics (primarily Serbia, then Croatia) as responsible for the collapse of the state and the bloody conflict.<sup>10</sup>

Miranda Vickers (1958) received her master's degree in Balkan history from the University of London. In the early nineties, she worked as a journalist and researcher in the Balkans. In a short period of only four years, she published four books in which the central theme was the history of Albanians.<sup>11</sup> She belonged to the circle of British Albanologists gathered around Sir Reginald Hibbert, an SOE officer in Albania during the Second World War. Miranda Vickers, together with her colleague James Pettifer, dedicated the book "Albania" From Anarchy to Balkan Identity", published in 1997 to her mentor. In this book, the authors dealt with the last years of communism, the period of disintegration of state institutions in Albania and the short civil war. Although somewhat biased (since Vickers, influenced by Hibbert, was a sympathizer of Albanian socialists) the book provides a good insight into the years of transition in Albania and is an excellent supplement to the modern history of the Albanians published by Vickers in 1995. With these books, Vickers made a kind of introduction to the book "Between Serbs and Albanians: the history of Kosovo", which was published in 1998, at a time when the Albanian armed rebellion in Kosovo had already begun.

9 Tim Džuda, *Srbi: istorija, mit i razbijanje Jugoslavije*, Dan Graf, Beograd 2003, XIII.

10 Ibid. XII.

11 Miranda Vickers, *The Status of Kosovo in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Research Unit in South European Studies, University of Bradford 1994; Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: Modern History*, I.B.Tauris, London 1995; Miranda Vickers, James Pettifer, *Albania. From Anarchy to Balkan Identity*, NYU press, New York 1997; Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: a history of Kosovo*, Columbia University Press, New York 1998.

The history of Kosovo by Miranda Vickers has the form of an academic history, but the text combines a historical approach and a political analysis. The scientific apparatus shows that the author used literature in Albanian and Serbian, in addition to literature in English. The choice of literature used is scarce, when considering the ambitiousness of the topic, while archival and other primary sources have been used sparingly. One gets the impression that the author got the most information about the topic during conversations with Serbs and Albanians, whom she met during her stay in the region, working on previous books. Her knowledge of the history of the region and Serbian-Albanian relations is often quite superficial (since she dealt with them only incidentally in earlier books), which is why she was forced to rely on selected literature in numerous situations. The choice of books she used for certain narrower topics was not the best, so some disputed information and claims ended up in her book. Most of the time, Vickers refrained from trying to deal with myths and, as an indisputable arbiter, untangle the biggest historical controversies of this complicated space. It seems that this is precisely why her book attracted significantly less attention than Noel Malcolm's *History of Kosovo*.

British historian Noel Malcolm (1956) was educated at Eton and Cambridge. He holds a doctorate in history from Trinity College. In the early eighties, he devoted himself to an academic career, but in the second half of the decade he turned to journalism. By 1995, he had built a successful career as a political commentator for the *Daily Telegraph*, sympathetic to Margaret Thatcher's Tories. During the first part of his career, until 1995, he wrote two biographical books, the first about Marco Antun de Dominis, an Italian Jesuit, mathematician, physicist and philosopher who lived at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries; and another about George Enescu, Romanian composer, pianist and conductor. In 1994, Malcolm's book "*Bosnia. A short history*"<sup>12</sup> - the history of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina from ancient times to modern days was published. The book attracted public attention because it had all the hallmarks of a well-researched academic work, written from the pen of a trained Western historian. Malcolm, writing the history of Bosnia, essentially provided his view of the genesis of the war's causes, advocating the same reductionist theory as Judah - according to which the main culprit for the war was the "evil elites". In the book, he took a pro-Bosniak position. He accused the Serbs, their nationalism and territorial pretensions as the main culprits of the war and clearly advocated for the preservation of whole Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The book was received mostly with praise in the English-speaking world and it influenced the attitudes of British journalists and politicians, as well as influential American diplomats, such as Richard Holbrooke, who publicly praised it on several occasions.<sup>13</sup> "*Bosnia: A Short History*" brought Malcolm considerable publicity, which encouraged him to leave his journalistic career

12 Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia - a Short Story*, Papermac, London 1996.

13 Richard Holbrooke, *To end a war*, Random House, New York 1998, 22-24.

and turn to another crisis area on the soil of the former SFRY - Kosovo and Metohija. His most ambitious and influential book "Kosovo. A Short History"<sup>14</sup> was published in 1998, at the time of the rise of the Albanian armed rebellion.

The three books analyzed in this paper differ in the author's approach, the scope of the conclusions, the authors' aspirations to be chroniclers, interpreters or arbiters, as well as in the influence they had after publication. Judah's book is a work of non-fiction, Miranda Vickers's book is a mixture of history and political analysis, while Malcolm's book is an academic history. Judah wrote with the clearly stated goal of finding arguments in history for the interpretation of current war events. At first glance, Vickers and Malcolm had no such goal. However, when considering the moment of publication of their books - it can be concluded that their motive was similar to Judah's.

The authors' political engagement clearly indicates that they had been motivated by current events. It is most obvious in Noel Malcolm's and Tim Judah's books, while Miranda Vickers is more reserved about it. Throughout his book, Malcolm clearly underlines the thesis that Kosovo's ties with Serbia are loose, "artificial", that the Albanians are the indigenous population of this area, that in 1912, Serbia imposed a "colonial rule" on Kosovo fueled by mythomania, that in modern events, Serbia had "already lost" Kosovo - from which it is easy to draw the conclusion that the entire history of the Kosovo issue inevitably leads to the only possible solution - the secession of Kosovo from Serbia. Malcolm is trying to prove that there is no "organic" connection between Serbia and Kosovo, unlike Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose integrity he defended.<sup>15</sup> His views are identical to those of Tim Judah, who wrote that "the reintegration of Kosovo into Serbia in 1944 was tantamount to reintroducing cancer into the Serbian political fabric."<sup>16</sup> Miranda Vickers avoided such judgments to some extent. Maybe that's why the book was followed by comments that it is somewhat favorable to Serbs<sup>17</sup>, for which it is difficult to find confirmation in the text itself.

The three analyzed books differ greatly in their original foundation. At the end of the book, Tim Judah provides a list of selected bibliography with 120 titles of books and publications, almost entirely in English. In addition, as he states himself, he was greatly helped by reviews of the press, reports of international and non-governmental organizations, committees for refugees, etc. The list of selected literature at the end of Miranda Vickers' book is even more limited - 106 titles are listed. The impression is that both of them relied to a considerable extent on the information they received first hand, on the ground, through conversations or even directly attending some events.

14 Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: a short history*, New York University Press, New York 1998.

15 „In modern historical terms, the relation between Kosovo and the rest of the Serbia is less close or organic than the relation between any part of Bosnia and the rest of Bosnia. Objections on grounds of historical identity to the partitioning of Bosnia, in other words, need not entail any equivalent objections to the dividing of Kosovo from Serbia.” (Ibid, xxxiii).

16 Tim Džuda, *Srbi*, 116.

17 Mile Bjelajac, Gordana Krivokapić-Jović, *Prilozi iz naučne kritike*, 294.

The list of references and bibliography at the end of Noel Malcolm's book is impressive. The source base of Judah's and Vickers' books cannot be compared to his "short history" in which Malcolm refers to documents from 14 archives and 870 items of literature, written in 11 languages. Even a cursory look at this list leads to the question of how it is physically possible for someone, who has never dealt with this topic before, to conduct research in so many archives and consult such a large amount of literature in various languages in a period of only 2-3 years. Nevertheless, when we put such dilemmas aside and take a closer look at Malcolm's list of used sources - symptomatic deficiencies are noticed. Although in his work he used documents from archives in England, the USA, Italy, Austria and the Vatican, he did not find it appropriate to visit any of the archives in the Balkans, primarily in Belgrade and Pristina. Such a decision can be somewhat justified for the period of the Middle Ages and early modern history, however, writing the history of the Kosovo issue in the 19th and 20th centuries is impossible without using local archives. The support of the text with sources and literature is far better for earlier periods than for the second half of the 20th century. It is especially noticeable regarding the period of communism, which was written about without relying on archival sources and on the basis of scarce literature. In the months after the publication of the book, this complaint against Malcolm's book was publicly expressed by some historians and journalists, such as Misha Glenny and Tim Judah, who otherwise mostly wrote praises of the book.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the differences in the original foundation, the difference in the author's tone is also noticeable. Judah writes in a "relaxed", journalistic style, characteristic of journalistic works. Head titles (We chose the kingdom of heaven; You warmed us like the sun; Franks and Badja go to war; Madmen take over the asylum; etc) and sub-chapters (From pig traders to princes; Bosnian sulfur vapors; Croatia, Kaputt; Frankenstein's monster; etc) reflect the tone of his book in adequate manner. On the other hand, the books by Vickers and Malcolm are written in a restrained tone, characteristic of academic works.

Finally, although the motivation for writing the book was similar for all three authors, prompted by the actuality of the Kosovo crisis, the "central thread" and the kind of goal that the authors of the books wanted to achieve with them are significantly different. Tim Judah wrote about the Kosovo crisis, and before that about the war in Bosnia, for years. The book was a practical way to wrap up this topic, at a time when the breakup of Yugoslavia was approaching its epilogue. On the other hand, in the earlier period, Vickers dealt with Albania and the history of Albanians, so writing the history of Kosovo was somewhat related and the topic was much more exposed in the media. Therefore, Judah's and Vickers' motivations can be described as predominantly opportunistic, while Noel Malcolm had more far-reaching aims. His book was written with the intention of providing a scientific contribution (through "breaking

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18 Tim Judah, "Will There Be a War in Kosovo?", *New York Review of Books*, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1998.

Serbian myths”) as well as a historical basis for the secession of Kosovo - for which Malcolm openly advocated.

Apart from the differences between them, the three analyzed books also have a lot in common. All of them belong to a kind of “instant history” class - works written in a relatively short time, on a topic that the authors had not dealt with before, and all with the aim of clarifying to the public in the West the history of the area that became one of the central topics in the media due to the war. The way the media in the West reports from the war zone is evidenced by the information provided in the work of four long-term researchers of the history of Yugoslavia. The authors write that during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on a Friday afternoon, one of them received a call from a journalist who was heading to the war zone two days later, and wanted to be informed in the meantime about everything he needed in order to understand the events and write the story.<sup>19</sup> During the war, long-term researchers of the history of Yugoslavia hesitated to present their interpretation of events - because complicated and measured explanations were neglected. In their place, as noted by the British historian of Serbian origin, Stevan Pavlovic, others quickly appeared ready to respond to the demands of publishers and earn a few pounds or dollars by writing “short” histories of a region about which they knew practically nothing until then. Mile Bjelajac wondered if a thorough and scrupulous historian could accept the offer to write two comprehensive histories in just four years, from the early Middle Ages to the present day, of such complicated areas such as Bosnia and Kosovo?<sup>20</sup>

A striking common feature for all three books is a kind of ease in drawing conclusions and pronouncing judgments about complex problems, for which there are usually few first-rate sources. In part, this is a consequence of the same “ease” with which the authors made the decision to accept the writing of complicated histories of an area about which they did not know much until then. An additional factor is a kind of feeling, characteristic of authors from the West, that it is them who are called upon to resolve dilemmas over which local historians have been arguing for decades. Such a relationship has a similar source as Balkanism, which Marija Todorova writes about. A special testimony of this relationship is the episode recorded by Maria Todorova after a conversation with the British journalist Misha Glenny. Todorova wrote that Glenny, a war correspondent for the BBC, “The Guardian” and the author of the influential book “The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War” (1992), admitted in a conversation with her that he “probably wrote under the influence of Balkanism.”<sup>21</sup>

19 Gale Stokes, John Lampe, Dennison Rusinow, Julie Mostov, „Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession“, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), 141.

20 Mile Bjelajac, „Tim Džuda: Srbi. Istorija, mit i razaranje Jugoslavije, Beograd, 2003“, *Tokovi istorije*, 2004 (1/2), 2006-2007.

21 „The most gratifying response to me came from a very good British journalist, Misha Glenny, who has written well and extensively on the Balkans. He said, ‘You know, now that I look back, I have been guilty of Balkanism.’ [http://www.clas.ufl.edu/events/news/Articles%201996-2004/199911\\_todorova.html](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/events/news/Articles%201996-2004/199911_todorova.html) [27. 10. 2014]



The comment was meant to praise Todorov's work, but the implications of Glennie's words are far deeper. The admission that he wrote about the war in Yugoslavia under the influence of deep-seated prejudices (which is the essence of Balkanism) Glennie expressed practically as an anecdote – even though his writing directly affected the destinies of thousands of people in the war-torn area. It is precisely this unburdenedness by the influence of what is said and written, together with the belief that they are called to be the supreme arbiters - an important feature of the books analyzed in this paper and is especially expressed in the writing and public performances by Tim Judah and Noel Malcolm.

Throughout the whole Judah's book there are practically incidental comments in which he gives his view on certain disputes, taking an apparently neutral position, according to which the truth is almost always "somewhere in the middle". In hindsight, neither Judah's position is neutral nor was he really trying to find some "objective middle". There is a very symbolic detail which indicates the way Judah gives his objective interpretations. Writing about the reasons why Serbs emigrated from Kosovo during the seventies and eighties of the 20th century Judah states that the one part that forced them to migrate was the atmosphere of fear caused by occasional attacks on people and property. According to Judah, the second reason was demographic - there were more and more Albanians and they didn't spare the money to buy Serbian properties. Judah wrote:

"Stories began to circulate about the 'persecution' of Serbs, about the destruction of their churches and cemeteries, and about frequent violence. But the rumor mill produced a thousand others for every real incident. [...] Rumors about Serbian 'refugees' from Kosovo circulated more and more, and the fact that many of them sold their houses for large sums of money because of the lack of housing in the overpopulated province was less and less mentioned."<sup>22</sup>

Taking an "objective", "neutral" position, Judah writes that the real reason for emigration was lost in a sea of rumors and lies. He illustrated this with the example of Devič Monastery, a medieval place of worship in the heart of Drenica, which was burned and destroyed many times throughout history, and the monks were expelled or even killed. Judah cynically states that it is certain that the "hated nuns" were harassed, even attacked, but it is also certain that this did not happen exactly "day and night", as they claimed.<sup>23</sup>

Another characteristic of Judah's book is that, at first glance, in his long historical survey he did not attempt to resolve the disputed issues. Instead, as a publicist, he simply expressed "impressions" - which were in fact his interpretations of the most complex issues, such as the ethnic structure of the population of Kosovo and Metohija over the centuries, the reasons for the mass emigration of Serbs during the SFRY, etc. Judah often conveys the controversial opinions

22 Tim Džuda, *Srbi*, 140.

23 "The hated nuns from Devich were most likely mistreated or even attacked, but it is hard to believe that this happened 'round the clock.'" Tim Džuda, *Kosovo. Rat i osveta*, Samizdat B92, Beograd 2002, 68.

of various authors, e.g. Professor John Fine's assertion about the Iranian origin of the Serbs, Croats and Bulgarians, who assimilated with the mass of Slavs.<sup>24</sup> We get the impression that Judah was doing this simply because he found some claims interesting. Nevertheless, the way in which he mentions such claims, practically in the same way as the claims that are considered to be a consensus among historians, creates the impression in the insufficiently informed reader that they are much more likely than they really are.

Miranda Vickers does not have the cynicism characteristic of Judah nor the tendency to pass judgments lightly, without giving arguments. It is obvious that she was trying to point out cause-and-effect relationships and to see the wider context of the event. As noted by Mile Bjelejac, in several places she stepped out of the narrative that was dominant at the time she wrote the book. For example, she connects the economic backwardness of Kosovo in the SFRY with the huge natural increase of Albanians, then points out the huge dislocations in the labor market that were further deepened by the educational policy (80% of students were at the faculties of humanities and arts), etc.<sup>25</sup> However, in some places one can argue with Vickers's views, such as, for example, when he considers all the Muslims from the 1931 census to be Albanians, when she makes judgments about the "national" character of the Kačak struggle after 1918<sup>26</sup>, or when she talks about the "mass massacres" committed by the Serbian army in Kosovo in 1918.<sup>27</sup> There are a lot of similar examples in the book, and the impression is that they are primarily the result of too much reliance on selected literature and insufficiently reliable sources. In the case of the alleged mass slaughters committed by the Serbian army in 1918, Vickers uses the reports of British journalists, from whom she takes the facts and the narrative. These are secondary sources, the authors of which were not only objective witnesses of the events. In this and in a series of similar cases, it becomes obvious how much the author was limited by the decision not to use primary sources, that is, archival documents from the archives of the area she is writing about.

Noel Malcolm has gone the extra mile in wanting to be an arbiter debunking the myths. His book was written with the aim of making two major contributions. The first contribution is the author's conclusion that the ties between Kosovo and Serbia are not "organic", that they were largely imposed by the Serbs and that the secession of Kosovo is the fairest outcome of the Kosovo crisis. The second contribution of Malcolm's book should have been a reckoning with Serbian myths based on sources and irrefutable evidence, and in the right place with the myth of the great migration of Serbs in 1689-1690.

Malcolm seems to convincingly prove that the whole story of the great migration is a later construction, based on secondary sources of questionable quality, that the population movement that took place after the retreat

24 Tim Džuda, *Srbi*, 7.

25 Mile Bjelajac, Gordana Krivokapić-Jović, *Prilozi iz naučne kritike*, 297.

26 Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 99.

27 *Ibid.*, 93-95.

of the Habsburg army was smaller in scale (30,000 evicted instead of “500 thousand” - a figure that does not appear in the serious works of Serbian historians) and is dramatically less consequential than what Serbian historiography claims. Thus, Malcolm essentially simultaneously “debunks the myth” and provides evidence for his claim about the autochthonousness of Albanians in the territory of Kosovo and their numerical dominance practically throughout the entire period from the Middle Ages to the present day.

Malcolm presents his “discovery” as completely new, based on research in the archives of Rome, Venice and Vienna. It was supposed to be his personal contribution to historiography and the elucidation of an important episode of the Kosovo issue. In fact, Malcolm’s conclusions are far from definitive and irrefutable. As experts on this topic have already pointed out, Malcolm tended to use certain sources, while he accidentally or deliberately overlooked the other sources. His debunking of the Serbian migration myth earned him the opportunity to teach for a year as a visiting professor at Branson College, Oxford, but most researchers in the academic community rejected his conclusions.<sup>28</sup> More importantly - his “discovery” is not original, as he presents it. Practically the same claims were made more than two decades earlier by the Albanian historian from Kosovo, Skender Rizaj. Malcolm uses Rizaj’s works widely and uncritically, even though Rizaj was a tendentious historian, prone to falsifications that were proven by his fellow Albanian historians. In addition, during the SFRY, Rizaj was sentenced as an Albanian nationalist and secessionist.<sup>29</sup>

“Myth debunking” is the central theme of Malcolm’s work, while such tendencies are incidental in Judah and Vickers. It is noticeable, however, that all three authors fundamentally do not understand the identity significance of Kosovo and Metohija for Serbs. They write about the “Kosovo myth”, point out that “Kosovo is the Serbian Jerusalem” and that the Serbs consider it the “cradle of the nation” - which are phrases that have been running through literature and media articles for decades. The authors explain this understanding with the facts that numerous Serbian medieval monasteries are located there, that the seat of the Serbian Patriarchate is located there, and that Kosovo is the site of a historic battle. They miss the deeper, identity-based, practically metaphysical significance of the “Kosovo myth” or “Kosovo covenant” for Serbs. Interpreting it exclusively through historical events, the authors deal with it in a way. For example they are trying to prove that on the Kosovo field in 1389, the “Christian alliance” fought against the Turks, an army in which a significant part of the Albanians was also present, and that the Serbs later practically appropriated the battle.<sup>30</sup> Whether Albanians participated in the Kosovo battle, in what numbers and under whose banner is still a matter of debate among historians,

28 *Odgovor na knjigu Noela Malkolma Kosovo – Kratka istorija*, 113-121.

29 Petar Ristanović, *Kosovsko pitanje 1974-1989*, Prometej: Informatika, Beograd: Novi Sad 2019, 71.

30 Tim Džuda, *Srbi*, 28; Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 13; Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 59-62.

largely motivated by modern tensions between the two nations. Whatever the answer to this historical dilemma is, it has practically no effect on the significance of the Kosovo covenant for the Serbs. The “myth” developed over the centuries and decisively influenced the formation of Serbian identity. Disputing its “historical validity” in order to prove the modern delusion of Serbs by myth makes as much sense as disputing the historical validity of events from the Old Testament in order to settle accounts with the beliefs of modern Christians. In the academic discussion after the appearance of Malcolm’s book, Professor Tomas Emerat challenged Malcolm’s “debunking of Serbian myths” and pointed out that the author does not understand that “myth exists by itself, has its own duration and represents reality.”<sup>31</sup>

Such claims remained a minority. Serbian “intoxication with myths” was the easiest explanation for the wars of the 1990s and their resolution. Such an interpretation was easy to present to the Western public, politicians easily understood and used it, and it had a strong influence even on some distinguished historians. During a lecture to the students of the Central European University in Budapest, in 1993, Eric Hobsbawm said: “The Battle of Kosovo in 1389 really took place, the Turks defeated the Serbian warriors and their allies and it really left deep scars in the national memory of the Serbs. However, this does not justify the oppression of the Albanians, who now make up 90 percent of the population of that region, or the Serbian claim that the land is essentially theirs.”<sup>32</sup> Similar views can be found in the works of influential historians written years later. In his history of the Serbs, Holm Sundhausen wrote that among the Serbs, “singing epic songs, playing the fiddle, poetic outpourings and preaching hate went hand in hand.”<sup>33</sup>

Another common characteristic of all three analyzed books is the reliance on a number of documents and books that during the nineties acquired the status of indispensable reading for understanding the Kosovo crisis - but whose importance, objectivity and especially the context can be questioned. The most striking examples are the report of the Carnegie Commission in 1913 on the Balkan wars<sup>34</sup>, then the book “Serbia and Albania”<sup>35</sup> by Dimitrije Tucović, then the lecture of academician Vasa Čubrilović at the Serbian Cultural Club... All three authors use these documents (to varying extents), although it is obvious that they do not fully understand the context in which the documents were created (Maria Todorova<sup>36</sup>, among others, wrote about skepticism and criticism

31 The answer to the book by Noel Malcolm “*Kosovo – Kratka istorija*”, 113.

32 Erik Hobsbaum, *O istoriji*, Otkrovenje, Beograd 2004, 18.

33 Holm Zundhausen, *Istorija Srbije od 19. do 21. veka*, CLIO, Beograd 2008, 484.

34 *Report of the International Commission to inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington 1914. During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1993, a reprint of this edition was published, under the title “The Third Balkan War”, with a foreword by Morton Abramovic and an introduction by Ambassador George Kenan.

35 Dimitrije Tucović, *Srbija i Albanija: jedan prilog kritici zavojevačke politike srpske buržoazije*, Socijalistička knjižara, Beograd 1914.

36 Marija Todorova, *Imaginarni Balkan*, Čigoja štampa, Beograd 1999, 15–21.

of the Carnegie Commission's report), the way in which the dominant narrative about them was created today (the interpretation of Tucović's work is heavily influenced by the narrative formed during communism) nor do they subject them to their own analysis, but mostly uncritically convey the conclusions of other authors (Čubilović's lecture is interpreted under the great influence of Albanian historiography and especially the works of Sabrina Ramet).

Finally, it should be pointed out that in all three books one can find a considerable number of statements that are disputed or even clearly wrong. Most often, this is the case with citing various numbers and estimates. An example can be the estimate of the number of victims during the demonstrations and attempted rebellion of the Albanians in Kosovo in 1981. Malcolm and Vickers state the official death toll, nine, but immediately question it and cite various estimates. Both mention Albanian claims that the number of dead could be up to 1,000, but then dispute it as unlikely.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, they cite the figure of a possible 300 dead, which reached the literature from a later report by Amnesty International. Tim Judah's statements are very illustrative of his approach to writing about the Kosovo crisis. He states that "officially" 57 people died and that the real number could easily be several hundred. The figure of 57 dead is certainly not official nor does it appear in any report or book about the Kosovo crisis. How Judah arrived at this, according to him, "official" number will remain a mystery. This attitude towards the facts was not foreign to him in several other places in the book. For example, he claims that hundreds of Albanians were arrested in the province of Kosovo during 1979.<sup>38</sup> The truth is, however, that in the period from 1979 to 1981, a total of 27 Albanians were convicted of separatism.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Judah cites a series of obviously fabricated data that Albanian propaganda has put out, such as the one that "in the eight years since the demonstration, 584,373 Kosovo Albanians." [...] i.e. half of the adult population has been arrested, interrogated, detained or sentenced.<sup>40</sup> This number was mentioned by Redžep Čosja in an interview and it has been completely fabricated. As for the actual number of victims during the demonstrations in 1981 - in the books of the Albanian historians from Kosovo, Sabila Kechmezi-Bas and Etem Ceku, it is stated that eight demonstrators and one policeman died.<sup>41</sup>

All of the above indicates that the three analyzed books should be read, understood and used exclusively with an understanding of the context of the moment in which they were created. Due to the lack of space in this paper, their flaws are mostly emphasized herewith. All three books have their virtues as well. Tim Judah personally witnessed a series of events during the nineties, spoke with dozens of well-informed personalities and built a network of contacts that allowed him to be well-informed. Miranda Vickers approached the writing

37 Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 335; Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 198.

38 Tim Džuda, *Srbi*, 135.

39 Petar Ristanović, *Kosovsko pitanje*, 146.

40 Tim Džuda, *Kosovo*, 67.

41 Petar Ristanović, *Kosovsko pitanje*, 200.

of the book with enviable academic integrity. In numerous analyses, she tries to take a balanced point of view. The main flaw of her book is the insufficient knowledge of the history of Serbian-Albanian relations, but it is also obvious that she has a very good knowledge of the history of Albanians. Finally, Noel Malcolm's book was written with a bias and a clear political-ideological goal, which is visible in numerous segments. Still, the fact remains that the author used a wealth of sources in his work and the book can be very useful to careful researchers who will be able to read it as an obviously politically motivated work.

All three books analyzed in this paper should be viewed not only as histories, but also as a specific, research-worthy phenomenon in the history of the Kosovo issue. More than 20 years after the war between FR Yugoslavia and NATO, the titles of these books are mostly known only to historians and publicists who deal with the Kosovo problem. However, at the time of publication, the influence of these books was profound and far-reaching. Professor Leonard Cohen convincingly pointed out the connections between historiographical papers on the Yugoslav crisis and the protagonists of politics in global power centers, especially the USA.<sup>42</sup>

Malcolm's "Short history of Kosovo" attracted a lot of media attention and caused controversy in the academic public. The book was praised and recommended by influential American and British politicians Richard Holbrooke, Paddy Ashdown, Norman Stone, Michael Foote... Holbrooke distributed the book to journalists and advised them to read it in order to understand the causes of the war.

The influence of the book "Serbs" by Tim Judah is vividly evidenced by the fact that Samantha Power used it when writing the book "Problem from Hell", which laid the foundation for the American policy of interventionism and "genocide prevention". The key chapter of the book is dedicated to Kosovo, and Tim Judah is the most quoted author in it.<sup>43</sup>

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Петар Р. РИСТАНОВИЋ

ИСТОРИЈА И/ИЛИ ПРОПАГАНДА: КЊИГЕ ТИМА ЏУДЕ,  
НОЕЛА МАЛКОЛМА И МИРАНДЕ ВИКЕРС  
О КОСОВУ И МЕТОХИЈИ

Резиме

У раду је анализиран методолошки приступ и изворна утемељеност књига троје утицајних британских аутора чије су књиге о Косову и Метохији, написане у предвечерје рата 1999. године, имале снажан утицај на доносиоце политичких одлука са Запада. Наведеним књигама дефинисан је данас доминантни дискурс и наратив у западној академској заједници и публицистици. Утицај књига је и даље велики будући да се по правилу налазе на списковима литературе новијих научних радова и монографија. Такав далекосежни утицај наводи на потребу да се преиспита њихова методолошка и изворна утемељеност.

*Кључне речи:* Косово и Метохија, косовско питање, Тим Џуда, Ноел Малколм, Миранда Викерс.

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