

Introduction

It is perhaps an unusual gesture to introduce an issue of a journal in such a formal manner. However, the five texts in this issue call for it. While some might appear more radical and/or passionate than generally considered appropriate for academic writing, their radicalism must be understood as a refusal to subordinate substance to conventions or structure. Without passion, life and death, and the memories of them, would be nothing more than a boring statistic. It is precisely their radicalism and passion that convinced me these five texts belong together in a special issue devoted to war, crimes, the atavistic passions of ideology and nationalism, and our unwillingness to face demons from the past.

This issue takes us on a journey from WWII Ukraine, across the bloodied landscape of the former Yugoslavia to the seemingly distant but televisually close land of the Chechens. It is also a journey through time: from the camps in which victims' last breaths slipped away at the point of a soldier's bayonet to the eerie silence of a hi-tech war room in a desert.

I am enormously pleased to have John-Paul Himka's article appear in this issue. Doubly so because of the topic he chose to address: the unwillingness of the Ukrainian diaspora to acknowledge crimes committed during WWII. While the issue of any given diaspora and its selective memories of the past is inherently sensitive and politically charged, I am glad that such a black box is now open.

James Sadkovich's contribution also tackles a sensitive theme: the politically motivated misrepresentation of the past in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sadkovich successfully and forcefully dismantles the myth of Bosnia always being a multicultural paradise, thus, countering the claims of modern-day transitologists and 'grantoid' organizations in the region. His article also sheds a new light on the manner in which the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia could be analyzed.

My own contribution also addresses the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. More specifically, it analyzes the 1991 siege of the Croatian city of Dubrovnik and raises the question of personalization of responsibility for crimes committed as the necessary point of departure in the process of reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia.

W. Andy Knight & Tanya Narozhna present a powerful account and analysis of war-torn Chechnya and the ruthless way this war has been waged by the Russian government. By highlighting issues of extra-judicial executions, forced disappearances, murder, rape and torture, their article emphasizes grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and of other horrendous violations of international humanitarian law.

Lise Hogan and William Anselmi graciously accepted my invitation to reflect more philosophically on war. Their series of "interventions" address war as part of our common imaginary and the way language and image help dehumanize and sanitize it for the general public.

All these texts remind me of the power and the pleasure of academic writing, and I hope readers will enjoy them too.

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