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Noel Malcolm. *Bosnia: A Short History*. New York: New York University Press, 1994; 1996, new ed. Pp. xxiv + 360. No Price Listed.

[1] The recent destruction of a European country is reason enough, according to Malcolm, to investigate the history of Bosnia that led up to this catastrophe. More to the point, however, "is the need to dispel some of the clouds of misunderstanding, deliberate myth-making and sheer ignorance in which all discussion of Bosnia and its history has become shrouded" (xix). At the heart of the Bosnian myth is the claim that its destruction is the natural culmination of hundreds of years of internal economic, religious and ethnic struggles within Bosnia. This myth was propagated both by Bosnia's neighbors, Croatia and Serbia, who have long vied for control of this region, as well as the Western world, which sought a peaceful resolution to this bloody conflict. To accept such a simplistic historical analysis of Bosnia, however, is to cave into the myths of propaganda in the case of the former, and sheer ignorance in the case of the latter. The truth is that the primary impetus for the collapse of Bosnia came from external forces, caused to a large extent by misrepresentations of its history. Thus, Malcolm embarks on his historical overview - with a brief interlude on the Slavic occupation of Bosnia prior to the arrival of the Croats and Serbs in the 620s, up to the war in 1992-93. Included in the new edition of this history is an epilogue surveying major events in the aftermath of that war, from 1993-1995.

[2] The complexity of Bosnia's history does not allow for a single topical analysis or historical account of major events that shaped that state. Consequently, Malcolm weaves a complex historical tapestry of an ongoing dialectic between historical events that both shaped and were shaped by the complex ethnic, political, economic and religious dimensions of Bosnia. Malcolm begins his work by dispelling the ethnic myth that Bosnia was, at one time, either a homogeneously "pure" Serbian or Croatian region. The Croats and Serbs (who were either Slavic tribes with Iranian ruling castes or Iranian tribes with Slavic subjects) arrived in the Balkans in the 620s, a land already occupied by the Slavs. And while Bosnia was predominantly influenced by Croat-Hungarian culture and politics with a brief interlude of Serbian rule up until it emerged as an independent state in the 1180s, Slavic ethnic identity is its most distinctive quality. Chapter 2 investigates the Medieval Bosnian state detailing both internal feudal struggles for control of Bosnia and external attempts to annex this

territory, first into the Austrian empire and then, into the Ottoman empire which was accomplished in 1463. Chapter 3 focuses on the religious identity of medieval Bosnia. The schismatic Bosnian Church, according to Malcolm, "lies at the heart of Bosnian nationhood" for many historians. Both Croatian and Serbian scholars have constructed elaborate historiographies substantiating the Medieval Bosnian religious identity as either Catholic or Orthodox, respectively. As Malcolm demonstrates, the most credible theory on the religious identity of the Bosnian Church contains elements of both traditions. Consequently, neither Croatia nor Serbia can use ethnic or religious roots to "claim" Bosnia.

[3] Chapters 4-10 provide a detailed account of Bosnia under Ottoman rule. Initially, Ottoman rule in the Balkans was structured on the timar system - a feudal system that was strictly military-feudal - not along religious lines. Thus, both Muslims and non-Muslims could rise to positions of power in this system (ch. 4). While there was religious tolerance in the empire, the Islamicization of Bosnia "remains the most distinctive and important feature" of its history. Malcolm dispels the myth of forced conversions brought on by persecutions. Rather, certain legal, social and economic privileges (e.g., lower taxes) facilitated these conversions (ch. 5). Chapter 6 explains the spread of Orthodoxy into Bosnia during Ottoman rule. Popular Serbian history claims that the Vlachs - a distinctive ethnic group of nomadic shepherds that had a profound impact on the establishment of a Bosnian Orthodox population - were merely "Serbs with sheep," thereby justifying ethnic and religious claims on Bosnia. Malcolm rejects this claim for cultural and linguistic reasons. Chapters 7-9 examine the political, socio-economic, and religious (Jews and Gypsies in particular) life of the Ottoman ruled Balkans in the 17th and 18th centuries and the gradual decline of the empire through internal socio-religious strife and external threats that culminated in its conquest by the Austro-Hungarians in 1878 (ch. 10).

[4] Chapters 11-14 explore Bosnia's transformation from an occupied Ottoman territory to the establishment of Bosnia as a Yugoslavian state and the eve of its destruction. Chapter 11 depicts Austro-Hungary's unstable rule of Bosnia leading up to the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and Austro-Hungary's declaration of war on Serbia. Chapter 12 explores the establishment of the Yugoslav State in 1918, Bosnia's resistance to Serbian centralism and Croatian regionalism that dominated the politics of the inter-war period, and its capitulation to Axis powers in 1941. Chapter 13 investigates Bosnia in the Second World War period. Both the war between the Axis and Allied forces and Yugoslavia's own civil wars shaped Bosnia during this period, and largely entrenched religious and nationalist animosities between Muslims, Catholic Croatia and Orthodox Serbia that would become a central distinguishing factor of the destruction of Yugoslavia. Chapter 14 traces Tito's rule and influence on Bosnia from 1945-89. The economic failures that resulted from Tito's communist Yugoslavia created fertile ground for seeking a scape-goat for the economic woes of the country, and installing a strong leader to bring Yugoslavia out of its economic hardships. Slobodan Milosevic was that leader.

[5] Chapter 15-Epilogue focus on the external myths and Western ignorance of the Balkans that culminated in "the death of Yugoslavia," Bosnia's destruction, and its subsequent *de facto* partitioning into "mini-republics" based on ethnic divisions. Particularly significant is Milosevic's "propaganda machine" to raise ethnic, economic and religious hostilities both within Bosnia among Bosnian-Serbs and Serbia itself. The religious myth of establishing a

"greater Serbia" tapped into Bosnia's complex history and functioned to rouse nationalist sentiment that would lead to the destruction of a country (ch. 15). Bosnia's recognition by the EC as an independent state and its subsequent destruction by Serbia through ethnic cleansing and genocide are the focus of chapter 16. The failed attempt to negotiate peace in the Vance-Owen plan and the tenuous peace constructed through the Dayton Accords hampered a constructive long-term solution to Bosnia's existence and merely proliferated the ignorance that this conflict is the result of a centuries long ethnic hatred (Epilogue). The current Kosovo crisis demonstrates that the myth is alive and well.

[6] Not only is Malcolm's text a masterful historical account of Bosnia but the guide to pronunciation, maps spanning from Medieval to modern Bosnia, glossary and extensive bibliography provide the reader with helpful resources to navigate that history.

[7] One criticism of the text is its lack of historical development of the "Battle of Kosovo." Given its symbolic role in the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and its extensive use in Serbian propaganda justifying genocide in Bosnia, such an omission is troubling. Granted, this is a matter of Serbian history. However, a greater explanation of this external myth could have shed even more light on Serbian aggression towards Bosnia.

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