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Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ancient Fuel of a Modern Inferno¹

Vamik D. Volkan

Based on clinical observation of how traumatized self representations are passed from one generation to the next, a group's involvement with a shared "memory" of a calamity and its transgen-erational transmission is explored. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, a 600 year-old Serbian trauma was reactivated to provide fuel for the atrocities committed against Muslims.

TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA IN INDIVIDUALS

According to their individual psychologies and according to the severity of the trauma, different individuals deal with the effects of a trauma differently. Consider a person who experiences a traumatic event in which drastic losses occur and helplessness, shame, and humiliation are felt. Because the person is traumatized and because the object losses and injury to the self representation are too great to accept, the work of mourning does not take the expected "normal" course. Furthermore, feelings of helplessness, shame, and humiliation cannot be worked through. One response is to "envelop" the traumatized self representation and externalize and control it in the "outside" environment. Thus, on the surface an individual may appear to go about daily life without showing signs of being traumatized.

The following is an example: a man's genitals were severely injured during his childhood. At the ages of five and ten he went through painful surgical and medical procedures to make his genitals appear regular, but one of his testicles was lost. In spite of his intelligence and potential for better jobs as an adult, he worked as an orderly in an orthopedic hospital, looking after symbolically castrated patients who stood for his childhood traumatized self. Through this profession he responded to his repressed fantasy of repairing himself and reversing his feelings of shame over having only one testicle. He was not successful, however, in modifying his traumatized self representation; he was doomed to remain a hospital orderly, until he came to analysis.

Another response, one I am here primarily concerned with, is when a traumatized individual envelops his traumatized self representation, with its associated object representations, affects, and conscious and unconscious fantasies, and externalizes it by “depositing” it into the self representation of a developing child. Through this *transgenerational transmission*, the effects of the trauma are passed to the next generation with the conscious and unconscious intention of finding ways of resolving and reversing them. In his interactions with the child, the older person attempts to control or direct the “deposited representation” (Volkan, 1987) in the child since it really “belongs” to the older individual. “Messages” are passed, consciously and mostly unconsciously, to the child, making it now the child’s task to do the work of mourning pertaining to the losses suffered by the older person and also to reverse the unpleasant feelings and remove the sense of helplessness.

Also, in interacting with the child, the older person gives overt and covert approval or disapproval of what kinds of ego mechanisms the child may utilize to perform his “assigned” task. Because of the older person’s influence, the child’s utilization of certain ego mechanisms, e.g., denial, avoidance, reversal of affects, becomes habitual, and the deposited representation with its associated ego mechanisms may be absorbed into his or her personality and modify identity. Alternatively or simultaneously, the child may develop symptoms to deal with the deposited representation. If the person who is the carrier of the deposited representation cannot effectively cope with it through the modification of identity or the development of symptoms, the deposited representation remains bothersome and influential. When he grows up—like the person in the previous generation and sometimes with the older person’s covert approval—he may externalize the original enveloped traumatized self representation into the developing self representation in the third generation, and so on.

The transgenerational transmission of a traumatized self representation is akin to well-known clinical observations of *replacement child syndrome* (Cain and Cain, 1964; Poznanski, 1972). In such cases, however, what is originally passed from one generation to the next one is not a *self* representation but an *object* representation. When they see their new child as a replacement for a lost one, the parents externalize and deposit the formed object representation of a dead or dying child into the developing self representation of their new-born or newly adopted child.

Like the deposited traumatized self representation, the deposited object representation of the replacement child syndrome is also associated with a loss: the parents’ loss of the older child. The new child is given a task to repair the parents’ loss and to respond to their affect of grief. The parents’ conscious, and more importantly, unconscious fantasy is that the new child replaces the dead or dying one. Blum (1983) has illustrated multigenerational involvement in adoptive situations.

The replacement child must make an internal adjustment to receiving a deposited (object) representation, a representation which usually the parent has idealized and seeks to retain in the new child. The child may successfully and totally identify with it and integrate it with the rest of his self representation. Or, he may identify with it but keep it unintegrated with the rest of his self representation. In the latter case the child may end up developing a borderline or narcissistic personality organization in which the splitting of the self representation is a prominent feature, or even a psychotic personality organization (Volkan, 1995; Volkan and Ast, 1992, 1994). If the child is female, but the object representation that is deposited in her is male, and vice versa, the child may then develop gender identity difficulties. The person with an unintegrated deposited

representation may respond to the situation by developing his own conscious and/or repressed fantasies even to the point of seeking the help of plastic surgeons in order symbolically to mend the two layers of their “skins” (Volkan, 1981, 1987).

It is often difficult, however, to differentiate the transgenerational transmission of a self representation from the transmission of an object representation. This difficulty is due to the fact that self and object representations are in constant interaction and that an object representation, through identification, becomes a self representation. Thus, this differentiation often remains only a theoretical concern.

We also need to separate transgenerational transmissions of self representations which carry trauma from those that do not. What differentiates the transgenerational transmission of trauma through a deposited self representation from other deposited self representations is its contamination with affects of shame, humiliation, and helplessness. These affects provide an extra burden for the individual who now possesses the traumatized deposited representation. Of course, some kinds of traumas do not incite shame and humiliation, but only helplessness. For example, being traumatized in an accidental explosion may not initiate shame and humiliation, for it is “fate” or the “accident” that is responsible for the person’s suffering, and thus there is less urgency to envelop and deposit the traumatized self representation. Such an example differs from one in which a subject is more clearly chosen to be “hurt” by someone against whom there is no recourse available, no way to fight back, or no means of even expressing anger freely. With no “solution” to this predicament, the traumatized self representation is passed on in hope that someone else may reverse it.

Because of the extra burden of the transgenerational transmission of the traumatized self representation, the person in the next generation who receives it must do much internal work to deal with it. The receiver is not always successful with this task. Externalizing it and passing it along once again into the developing self representation of a person in the *third* generation—and subsequent generations—remains a strong possibility. References to such multi-generational transmissions have appeared in the psychoanalytic literature, especially in relation to victims of the Holocaust. A very recent study by Kestenberg and Brenner (1996) of the families of Jewish children who survived Nazi concentration camps shows that the deposited self representations of the survivors are very much “alive” in their grandchildren. All indications are that these deposited representations, in new forms, will be dealt with by multiple generations to come.

As the deposited representation is passed from one generation to another, its meaning goes through transformations. This transformation occurs because the unconscious fantasies associated with the trauma present in succeeding generations are different and because different ego mechanisms are used by each to respond to the conflicts that the deposited representation initiates. As the meaning of the original enveloped traumatized self representation changes through several generations of transmissions, the individual’s internal adaptations to the situation go through a “change of function” similar to the phenomenon described by Hartmann (1939) and by Apprey in this issue.

When the carrier of the deposited representation grows up, he or she usually also has a conscious knowledge of the traumatic event that had befallen the parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents simply through hearing family stories. But, what influences him or her on an internal structural level is not the historical truth about the trauma, but the unconscious obligation to deal with the deposited representation.

Three Generations of Transmission

The following is a clinical example of the transgenerational transmission of a particular traumatized self representation into the next two generations of a family. The analysand belonged to the second generation, and he reported stories of himself and others in the first and third generations. The hidden parts of the stories of all of the affected individuals were reconstructed during his analysis. I call the analysand Peter the Hunter. His total case as well as his total analysis have been reported in German (Volkan and Ast, 1994) and in a long summary form in English (Volkan, 1995). Here I will not follow the typical format of presenting psychoanalytic clinical material. Instead, I will describe only relevant material pertaining to each of three individuals and illustrate how certain “psychic contents” passed from one to another and how the meanings and functions of these contents were modified during their transmission.

Gregory

The first generation is represented by Gregory, an individual who suffered a trauma that resulted in losses, and experiences of shame, humiliation, and extreme helplessness.

During the early phases of World War II, Gregory was a submariner stationed in the Pacific. He was unfortunately in the Bataan peninsula as the Japanese surrounded Allied forces on the Philippines. Supply lines disintegrated and efforts to loosen the Japanese grip on the island fell apart, severely decreasing morale on the once-paradisal base. With defeat seeming imminent, General Douglas MacArthur relinquished his command to a junior general, leading to an even greater break-down of the spirit of American and Philippine troops. The song the beleaguered troops sang reflected their feeling like helpless orphans:

We're the battling bastards of Bataan,
No mama, no papa, no Uncle Sam,
No aunts, no uncles, no cousins, no nieces,
No rifles, no planes, no artillery pieces,
And nobody gives a damn!
(Hopkins, 1991, p. 52).

After a futile struggle with limited supplies and ammunition, the American general was forced to surrender in the worst defeat in American military history. Gregory was among the over 75,000 prisoners of war who participated in the infamous Bataan Death March in which thousands died during the three-day journey to the site of their prison camp and the subsequent confinement. Gregory's and his comrades' helplessness and humiliation were extreme.

After the war, Gregory returned to the United States and became the boyfriend (and later the husband) of a divorced woman who had a young and very fat child named Peter. Peter was three years old when Gregory entered his life. For years Gregory did not (for psychological reasons *could* not) work. While his wife worked, he acted as a parent for Peter during Peter's formative years.

Gregory did not speak of his traumatic war experience at home. It is not unusual for people like Gregory, who are traumatized beyond belief, to speak of their trauma *only* with others who have had the same experience. This for example is often found to be true of the survivors of the Holocaust. When Peter grew up, he knew that Gregory was a prisoner-of-war and Peter also knew, mostly through reading, about the United States' crushing defeat at Bataan.

After moving to Peter's mother's house, Gregory erected a multistoried purple martin birdhouse on a high pole in the back yard. He exercised rigid rituals regarding this birdhouse for the rest of his life, until he was in his late seventies, when fully-grown Peter was nearing the termination phase of his analysis. Gregory took pains painting (and re-painting every year) numbers on each of the many "apartments" for the bird families to occupy. For decades it was filled with birds that, in due course, laid and hatched eggs and launched their fledglings. Gregory banded the legs of all the fledglings, marking each one with the number of its family apartment. If a baby bird had an untimely fall from the martin house, Gregory knew to which apartment it belonged, and returned it; a fledgling rescued by a human hand and returned to the wrong apartment would die.

What we see here is Gregory's attempt to change his death march or death/prison camp experience and make it a "life camp." The fallen fledglings represented his imprisoned self as well as the object representations of his fallen and imprisoned comrades, much as the orthopedic patients stood for the injured self representation of the man who lost a testicle as a child. By rescuing and having control over life and death issues, Gregory could deny his former helplessness, shame, and humiliation and the occurrence of losses. In fact, for most of his life, during most of his daily activities, he functioned as if he had not been unbelievably traumatized.

In the house there was another "bird" to be rescued: fat little Peter. Peter's biological father had left the family when the boy was only two weeks old. Peter was being raised by his mother and grandmother, who hated Peter's father and men in general. They had turned their aggression to the little boy, overfed him and made him fat, and interfered with his autonomy and individuation. In turn the little boy felt that he was a prisoner of the two women. In repeated dreams he saw himself living as a prisoner under a dome ruled by two women.

When Gregory came into little Peter's life he sensed a fit between his humiliated and helpless prisoner's self representation and little Peter's smothered self representation. He then externalized his unwanted self representation into the little boy and as he had done with the fledglings, tried to "rescue" and repair the representation within the child by giving Peter the "task" to do so.

Gregory's role, by the way, was unconsciously perceived by Peter's mother, who erected a statue of St. Joseph next to the birdhouse and painted the statue's eyes the same color as Gregory's. Gregory/St. Joseph had come to this house to raise Gregory/little Jesus. As a child Peter perceived Gregory as a saint.

As Peter grew up, Gregory helped him to lose weight and develop an athletic body. When the boy became an adolescent, Gregory gave him a gun, taught him how to hunt, and eventually enrolled him in a military school. Peter became a professional soldier and remained so until his retirement from the military. Then he began working in a military-related civilian organization. In order to repair the humiliated and helpless self representation that he had deposited in Peter's self

representation, Gregory unconsciously told Peter: “It is better to be a hunter than to be hunted. It is better to turn deadly weapons on others than to have others turn them on you.” As we will see, Peter developed a certain type of identity and symptoms to respond to this assigned task.

Peter

The little boy in the second generation unconsciously perceived Gregory’s arrival as the arrival of St. Joseph; the older man would rescue him, reverse his helplessness, shame and humiliation, and then support his omnipotence and his sense of being above hurt. Once he became conscious of this perception (during analysis) he dreamt:

[I was] standing with a man who was handsome, as my stepfather used to be. I saw red foxes running along a valley. I pointed out the foxes, and he pointed to another animal, a disfigured deer with thick, clumsy legs and no horns.

Peter associated the red foxes with his mother and grandmother since he remembered that his grandmother used to wear red Capri pants. Peter, as a child, used to sleep in the same bed with his grandmother, and in his analysis it was reconstructed that he had seen her genitalia, and also the genitalia of his mother who might have been menstruating. In the dream Peter was the clumsy, fat, castrated, and humiliated deer.

Peter grew up to have a narcissistic personality organization with malignant personality traits: he had to have “aggressive triumphs” (Volkan and Ast, 1994) whenever his grandiose self was threatened. He was a hunter, but not a sportsman. He would hire a helicopter, fly over a herd of deer and machine gun the herd (representing his childhood humiliated self condensed with Gregory’s humiliated self); thus unwanted aspects of him would be massacred!—to be distanced and denied.

After his military career ended, Peter had a profession in which he controlled—in reality and in fantasy—a major part of the American war machinery, especially deadly missiles. Missiles (guns) had to be aimed at others. At one level, in these activities he tried to reverse his and imprisoned Gregory’s helpless experiences. In a series of repeating dreams, Peter, like Jesus, walked on water. After a great deal of analytic work, Peter reported that he was not, after all, actually walking on water. In a new version of his dream he saw himself walking on a submarine (Gregory’s military self representation before his humiliation—remember that Gregory had been a submariner) submerged just under the surface of water. Peter used Gregory’s pre-war “submarine” representation to become like Jesus and reverse helplessness, shame, and humiliation. As Peter began to get well and shake off the helpless self representation, he had no more need to utilize Gregory’s “submarine” representation as a support. In a new dream, when the submarine he was walking on dove into deep waters, Peter fell in the water. He was no longer Jesus. As he learned to swim to safety, so to speak, he got well and gave up his narcissistic personality organization and his symptoms of massacring herds of deer and other animals.

What I have described so far can be summarized as follows: Peter was the receiver of Gregory’s traumatized self representation, as well as his unspoken “instructions” on how to reverse this shame, humiliation, and helplessness, and to allow Peter to distance himself, in his daily life, from his traumatized self representation and remain grandiose. When he was no longer

the carrier of the traumatized self representation, Peter had no further need to hold onto his narcissistic personality organization.

Peter's abdication of the role of carrier of Gregory's externalized, deposited representations made Gregory, now in his seventies, upset. He dismantled his birdhouse as well as the statue of St. Joseph. No longer having an externalized reservoir for his traumatized self representation—even decades after the original trauma had occurred—caused Gregory to develop psychosomatic symptoms which almost killed him. Later he re-erected the birdhouse and the statue of St. Joseph, but not on their original locations.

Julie

Peter's daughter Julie belongs to the third generation. At home, Peter was overtly aloof and treated his wife and children with indifference. Covertly he was dependent on them; the existence of such a simultaneous overt and covert behavior pattern is typical in narcissistic individuals (Akhtar, 1992; Kernberg, 1984; Volkan and Ast, 1994). Peter had a special room where he hung the mounted trophies of his hunts, which he had prepared himself so skillfully that they looked alive. Julie had, since her childhood, watched her father's work in taxidermy. Elsewhere we (Volkan and Ast, 1994) have described multiple meanings of the stuffed animals. At one level they represented Peter's own childhood "fat" self when he was "stuffed" with food by his mother and grandmother. Furthermore, by being surrounded by dead animals, Peter was re-creating Gregory's self representation in the Bataan Death March and in prison camp where the older man was surrounded by dead comrades. Since Peter took pains to make the animals look as if they were alive, he was also creating an illusion—such as the one connected with Gregory's birdhouse—that death could be deluded.

Julie must have sensed all of this. Peter encouraged her to go to veterinary school. While she remained distant from her father on the surface, as a veterinarian who repaired and saved animals, she was repairing her father's clumsy and humiliated hornless deer image which had condensed with Gregory's imprisoned self representation and which was split from Peter's omnipotent aspect (grandiose self). We can say that Gregory's traumatized self representation was also located in Julie and that she was responding to her grandfather's unconscious message that there should be no death, and that the horrors of the Japanese prison should be reversed.

To summarize: The person in the first generation had a traumatized self representation. He externalized it in the purple martins and into a person in the second generation and there attempted to repair it. The person in the second generation externalized the traumatized self representations onto animals and killed them. The way of dealing with the traumatized self representation thus changed. His attempts to repair it—through taxidermy—were ineffective. The person in the third generation once more predominantly used repairing activities, like her grandfather had attempted to do, also in an externalized fashion.

RESEARCH ON LARGE GROUP PSYCHOLOGY

The study of the transgenerational transmission of trauma as it is carried within the traumatized self representation to successive generations provides an opportunity to research an important aspect of ethnic or other large group psychology. Interdisciplinary work among

psychoanalysts, historians, political scientists, and diplomats carried out by my colleagues and I at the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction at the University of Virginia focuses on the transgenerational transmission of a trauma caused by a neighboring enemy and shared by thousands or millions of members of the traumatized group. Members of the victimized group, while individually different, possess similar traumatized self representations associated with helplessness, shame, and humiliation pertaining to the traumatic event. The mental representation of the shared trauma is then passed to the next generations through the deposited traumatized self representations. This legacy then links the group members of future generations and influences their group identity.

I call the shared trauma a “chosen trauma” (Volkan, 1991). Since a group does not *choose* to be victimized, some of my colleagues take exception to my term “chosen trauma.” But I hold that the word “chosen” fittingly reflects a large group’s unconscious choice to have their group identity be defined by the transgenerational transmission of the shared trauma. Apprey (1993) is studying the effects of slavery—a shared trauma—on present day African-Americans’ behavior patterns and the role of the transmitted traumatized self representations in black-on-black incest and crime. Howell, (1993, 1995) who was the American ambassador to Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion, with other colleagues (Saathoff, 1995) has examined a “chosen trauma” in the making in Kuwait. Itzkowitz, a historian, and I (Volkan and Itzkowitz, 1993, 1994) have examined through a psychoanalytic lens one thousand years of Turkish-Greek relations and have shown how the trauma of the Turks’ conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453 has been carried down through traumatized self representations of the Byzantines. It now appears in the present day, in modified forms, in the self representations of many persons in the Western world, especially among present-day Greeks who consider themselves the heirs of the Byzantines.

TRANSGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

In order to illustrate the group phenomenon of transgenerational transmission of traumatized self representations, I will now turn my attention to Bosnia-Herzegovina which is so prominent in the news today. What I present here is not a total psychopolitical analysis of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. I will focus only on the fate of one particular event, a shared trauma which took place 600 years ago, and its present-day consequences.

Kosovo

After becoming independent from Byzantium in the twelfth century, the kingdom of Serbia thrived for almost 200 years under the leadership of the Nemanjić dynasty, reaching its climax under the beloved Emperor Stefan Dušan. By the end of his twenty-four year reign, Serbia covered a territory from the Croatian border in the north to the Aegean Sea in the south, from the Adriatic Sea in the west to Constantinople in the east. Dušan died in 1355 and the Nemanjić dynasty came to an end a short time thereafter. In 1371, Serbian feudal lords elected Lazar Hrebeljanović as leader of Serbia, though he assumed the title of Prince or Duke rather than King or Emperor.

The decline of Serbia that followed is primarily attributed to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into Serbian territory, culminating in the Battle of Kosovo on June 28, 1389 at the Kosovo Polje (the Field of the Black Birds) in the southern part of the Yugoslav Federation.

Despite a gap of some seventy years between the Battle of Kosovo and the total occupation of Serbia by the Ottoman Turks, a belief gradually developed that equated the two events.

Thanks to recent works, such as Emmert's (1990) efforts, we now have, in English, various versions of the "historical truth" of the Battle of Kosovo. We know that the Turkish Sultan, Murad I, was fatally wounded by a Serbian assassin during or after the battle. We also know that the wounded Sultan or his son Bayezid ordered the execution of Prince Lazar, who had been captured during the battle. Chroniclers have disagreed, however, on other outcomes of the battle. With heavy losses on both sides, and the death of both leaders, many consider the immediate result of the battle to be indecisive. Ottoman forces apparently returned to Adrianople (Edirne) after Kosovo, and Lazar was succeeded by his son, Stefan Lazarević, who reportedly became a close ally of Murad's successor.

Seventy years later, however, the Turks had gained substantial control over Serbia, and the Battle of Kosovo slowly began to evolve into a "chosen trauma" for the Serbian people. Mythologized tales of the battle were transmitted from generation to generation through a strong oral and religious tradition in Serbia, perpetuating and reinforcing Serbians' traumatized self representation. What is important in this case, as in others, is not the historical truth, but the impact of the shared mental representation of the "chosen trauma" on a large group's identity. Markovic (1983) refers to the memory of Kosovo as a "sacred grief" (p. 111) and adds that "mere mention of that name suffices to shake a Serb to the depths of his soul" (p. 111).

There is ample evidence to support the fact that the "interpretation" of events at the Battle of Kosovo has gone through various transformations. For example, early chronicles of the Battle of Kosovo did not specify the name of Sultan Murad's assassin. One version of the story says that a small group of Lazar's soldiers slipped through Turkish defenses and one was able to stab Murad, another says Lazar himself led this group, while a 1497 account identifies Miloš Kobila (or Kobilic or Obravitch), one of Lazar's son-in-laws who had been accused of being a traitor prior to the battle, as the heroic assassin. After some time, Miloš was accepted as the actual assassin.

As the "chosen trauma" evolved, several factors, including the disunity of the Balkan Slavs and even that of Lazar's own family, Lazar's apparent ineffectiveness as a leader, and the continued existence of Serbia for many decades after the battle, were repressed. As a shared "object representation" involved in transgenerational transmission of the Serbians' traumatized self representations, Lazar initially had to be absolved for sealing the fate of Serbia. According to legend, Saint Ilya, in the shape of a gray falcon, appeared before Lazar on the eve of the battle with a message from the Virgin Mary. Lazar was given two choices: 1) if he wished, he could win the battle and find a kingdom on earth or; 2) he could lose the battle, die a martyr's death and find a kingdom in heaven. The following is a version of a Serbian folk song on Lazar's dilemma:

Dear God, what shall I do and
Which kingdom should I choose?
Should I choose the Kingdom of Heaven
Or the kingdom of earth?
If I choose the kingdom,
The kingdom of the earth,
The earthly kingdom is of short duration
And the Heavenly is from now to eternity
(from Markovic, 1983, p. 114).

The legend says that, being a devoutly religious person, Lazar “chose” defeat and death. Through the proliferation of this legend the Serbians collectively tried to deny shame and humiliation. But helplessness and victimization could not be denied since the Serbians, under Ottoman control, had no power to bring back their glorious past. They held onto the “martyrdom” of the legend and identified with it. In fact, the sense of martyrdom fit well with their pre-Ottoman perception of themselves. Even during the Nemanjić period, the Serbians thought that they had sacrificed themselves for other Christians in Europe as they had served as a “buffer” against the advancing Muslim Turks. The Serbians, belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church, however, received no appreciation from their Roman Catholic neighbors in Europe for their “sacrifice.”

As a result of these traumatized and transmitted self representations pertaining to the same “chosen trauma,” the Serbians held onto an identity of victimhood and became “perennial mourners” (Volkan and Zintl, 1993) of the loss at Kosovo. Of course, the reality that they were occupied by the Ottomans supported this shared perception, and the Church and folk singers effectively kept the “chosen trauma” in public awareness. June 28, the day of the Battle of Kosovo, was commemorated as St. Vitus Day and through the centuries became the subject of other legends that strengthened the victimized group identity.

The Field of Black Birds became a “monument” similar to Gregory’s purple martin birdhouse. But unlike Gregory’s birdhouse, which he had transformed into a “camp” of life, the battlefield remained a symbol of grief and helplessness which could not be reversed by the Serbians living under Ottoman rule. A folk story sprang up saying that the flowers on the mountainous plain of the Kosovo battlefield were “crying”—referring to the fact that their stems are bent and the flowers appear to be bowing their heads in grief.

The Ottomans did not directly force the Serbians to convert to Islam—except for the youngsters they collected to go through the *devşirme*, a process through which a Christian youth was taken away from his family, became a Muslim and received education so as to serve the sultan. After the Ottomans moved into Balkan territory, “The Orthodox Patriarch himself testified in a letter to the Pope in 1385 that the Sultan left to his church complete liberty of action” (Kinross, 1977, p. 59). Even during the reign of Murad I, the seeds of the multicultural, multireligious, and multilingual society of the Ottoman Empire had been sown. Nevertheless, “in the Ottoman Empire everyone was equal, but the Muslims were more equal” (Volkan and Itzkowitz, 1994, p. 64). Thus, some Slavs gradually became Muslims during the first two centuries of Ottoman rule, especially in Bosnia, a gray area between Orthodox and Roman Catholic influence. During the Ottoman period these ancestors of today’s Bosnian Muslims became the middle and upper-middle class city dwellers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while peasants in Serbia and Croatia remained Orthodox and Roman Catholic. By the middle of the sixteenth century, half of the population of Bosnia was Muslim, and Sarajevo was nearly all Muslim.

Among those who remained Christian, the idea that Prince Lazar and by extension the Serbians had chosen a Kingdom in Heaven rather than a kingdom on earth remained alive in a rather covert fashion—except during some rebellions such as the one in 1804-1815. The Serbs held onto their victimized identity and glorified victimization in songs such as the following:

Drink, Serbs, of God’s glory
And fulfill the Christian law;

And even though we have lost our kingdom,
Let us not lose our souls
(Markovic, 1983, p. 116).

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, as the decline of the Ottoman Empire coincided with the awakening of nationalism in Europe, other aspects of the Lazar and Kosovo legends became more readily observable. Lazar was first transformed from an ineffective leader to a saint and martyr, but slowly Lazar's and Miloš's images were changed from martyr, victim and tragic figure to hero and then ultimately to avenger. For example, while paintings and icons of Lazar and Miloš from the Renaissance typically depicted them as saintly or Christ-like, some from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century featured them as increasingly strong and warrior-like figures. There would be no shared Serbian identity outside the context of the symbol of Kosovo, whether it induced a shared sense of victimization or shared sense of revenge. Mothers began to greet their children as the "avengers of Kosovo"—the direct and indirect message was to reverse not only the shame and humiliation, but also the grief and helplessness within their shared representations.

In 1878, after much political scheming as well as many wars, the Serbians (as well as Montenegrins) were declared independent from the Ottoman Empire by the Treaty of Berlin. The treaty, however, placed them under the control of Austria-Hungary, which in turn tried to suppress Serbia's Kosovo spirit. Serbia soon found itself in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, but was finally able to "liberate" Kosovo after over 500 years. A young soldier later recalled this liberation:

... The single sound of that word—Kosovo—caused an indescribable excitement. This one word pointed to the black past—five centuries. In it exists the whole of our sad past—the tragedy of Prince Lazar and the entire Serbian people....

Each of us created for himself a picture of Kosovo while we were still in the cradle. Our mothers lulled us to sleep with the songs of Kosovo, and in our schools our teachers never ceased in their stories of Lazar and Miloš.

My God, what awaited us! To see a liberated Kosovo....When we arrived on Kosovo ... the spirits of Lazar, Miloš and all the Kosovo martyrs gaze on us (From *Vojincki Glasnik*, June 28, 1932, reported in Emmert [1990, pp. 133-134]).

Cvijic (1966) supports the idea that such identification with the martyrs of Kosovo was an attempt to reverse humiliation and helplessness: for a soldier "to kill many Turks means not only to avenge his ancestors but also to ease the pains which he himself feels" (Emmert, 1990, p. 135).

Less than two years after Kosovo's liberation, on St. Vitus day of 1914, a Bosnian Serb named Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his pregnant wife in Sarajevo, thereby signaling the beginning of World War I. What is known about Princip is that as a teenager he, as most other Serbian youngsters, was filled with the transformed images of Lazar and Miloš as avengers (Emmert, 1990). Although Serbia was now "free," the Austro-Hungarian empire exerted significant influence over much of the region after the Ottomans. In Princip's mind, it appears that the old and new "oppressors" were condensed, and the desire for revenge was transferred to the Austro-Hungarian heir apparent.

After World War I, the attempt to bring all the South Slavs into one kingdom slowly succeeded and the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was founded, later to be known as Yugoslavia, which means “land of the Southern Slavs”—distinguishing them from northern Slavs such as Poles, Slovaks, and Romanians. Yugoslavia was formed of five “lands”: Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia. As one might expect, the kingdom was fragmented by frequent quarrels. In 1941 Yugoslavia surrendered to the Nazis, and while what happened in the Nazi period is another story which tells much about the present day Serbian-Croat-Muslim enmities, I will not dwell on it here.

In 1945 Yugoslavia was reorganized as a Communist state with Marshall Josip Broz Tito as its head. The new Yugoslavia included the original five “lands,” now called republics, plus Macedonia. Kosovo and Vojvodina, in southern and northern Serbia, respectively, remained “autonomous” republics. Under the Communist regime in Yugoslavia, Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Slovenes, Montenegrins, and others lived together in relative peace, although this was not the case at all times. For example, in the late 1960s and early 1970s Croat nationalists demanded the formation of an independent Croatia. To combat such problems, the Communists attempted to create a “Yugoslav man” similar to the Soviet ideal of “Soviet man” in which all peoples were considered equal and connected through the higher objectives of Communist ideology. Prince Lazar’s representation was officially degraded as a “symbol of reactionary nationalism” (Kaplan, 1993, p. 39), and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, more than one-fourth of all marriages were mixed and less than three percent of all Muslims attended prayers in a mosque (Vulliamy, 1994). But we now know that each group in Yugoslavia strongly held onto its own identity rather than becoming a single “Yugoslavian” people. After Mikael Gorbachev’s introduction of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in 1987, the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia began to shake: each group began to ask “Who are we now?” and “How are we different from others?”

The Reactivation of a “Chosen Trauma”

In April 1987, Slobodan Milošević, present president of Serbia and then a Communist bureaucrat, was attending a meeting of three hundred party delegates in Kosovo. At the time only 10% of the population in Kosovo was Serbian. The majority, as it is today, were Albanian Muslims. During the meeting a crowd of Serbs (and also Montenegrins) tried to force their way into the meeting hall. They wanted to express their grievances about the hardships they were experiencing in Kosovo. The local police blocked and prohibited the crowd’s entry into the meeting hall. At that moment, Milošević stepped forward and said: “Nobody, either now or in the future, has the right to beat you.” The crowd responded with a frenzy, spontaneously began singing “Hej Sloveni,” the national anthem, and shouted “We want freedom! We will not give up Kosovo!” In turn, Milošević was excited; he stayed in the building until dawn—for a 13-hour period—listening to the tales of victimization and the wish to reverse shame, humiliation, and helplessness.

Milošević came out of this experience a transformed person, wearing the “armor” of Serbian nationalism. In a speech, he would later declare that Serbs in Kosovo are not a minority since “Kosovo is Serbia and will always be Serbia.” I do not have sufficient data to make a sophisticated attempt at understanding Milošević’s inner world or to know if this transformation occurred suddenly. The information that is available, however, does offer some insights about Milošević, the second son born to an Orthodox priest during the Nazi occupation of 1941. He is a

loner, aloof, humorless, and self-centered. He has severe diabetes. We also know that he comes from a dysfunctional family. When he was seven, his favorite uncle killed himself with a bullet to the head. When he was twenty-one his father did the same. When he was in his early thirties, his mother hung herself in the family sitting room (Vulliamy, 1994). Those who know him describe him as alternately angry and depressed. He married his teenage sweetheart but is not known to have many other lasting and trusting relationships. A saying in Belgrade goes something like this: "Have pity on the person whom Milošević has called a friend."

The former German ambassador to Yugoslavia, Horst Grabert, knew Milošević well. When I spoke with him in November 1995 in Berlin he confirmed that Milošević is a loner and has no genuine Serbian friends. It is possible that for his own personal reasons Milošević wanted to wear the "armor" of nationalism in order to make his own identity more cohesive. Ambassador Grabert, however, as a follower of *Realpolitik*, believed that Milošević used nationalism as a calculated tool for benefiting his political position. Milošević was aware that nationalism would inspire the Serbs to embrace their identity more fervently, but Grabert was concerned that Milošević would not be able to control the results of his calculated speeches to increase nationalism. The ambassador one day told Milošević the story of the apprentice in Goethe's (1878) *Der Zauberlehrling* ("*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*"). It is the story retold by Walt Disney in his film *Fantasia* in which Mickey Mouse plays the intrepid apprentice. As the story goes, when his master the sorcerer is away, the apprentice experiments with the sorcerer's magic and orders a broom to carry water to a basin, normally his own chore. But when the basin is filled with water, the apprentice does not have the magical skill to stop the broom. The apprentice says:

Look, here it comes trundling back again!
Wait till I get to grips with you,
You hobgoblin,
I'll knock you flat:
Smack goes the smooth sharp blade!
Hurrah! Well hit, sir!
Look, I've cut him in two!
And now there's hope,
Now I can breath freely!
Oh! Oh!
Both pieces stand up at once,
A couple of ready-made servants!
Oh, help me, you powers on high!
(Goethe, 1964, pp. 176-7).

Ambassador Grabert reminded Milošević that the old Communist master, Tito, was dead and could not help if Milošević was unable to stop the doubling and spreading of nationalism. Obviously, Milošević was not in a mood to listen to this advice; instead in his speeches he accused Tito, who was a mix of Croat and Slovene, of having pursued an anti-Serb policy.

One story in particular illustrates how Milošević unleashed Serbian nationalism. According to historians, about one year after his execution, a tomb in Ravanica monastery was completed for Lazar's body and he was declared a saint. As the "myths" of Lazar spread, numerous icons began to appear in Serbian churches and monasteries in which he was depicted as a Christ-like figure. When Ottoman rule came to Ravanica, Lazar's remains were moved to Frushka Gora northwest

of Belgrade. In 1889, the 500th anniversary of Kosovo, plans for moving Lazar's mummified body back to Ravanica were discussed, but never materialized. As the 600th anniversary approached, however, Milošević and others in his circle were determined to bring Lazar's body out of "exile." Lazar's mummified body was placed in a coffin and taken "on tour" to every Serbian village and town, where he was received by huge crowds of mourners dressed in black (Kaplan, 1993). As a result of the collapse of 600 years initiated by Serbian leadership,² Serbs began to feel that the defeat in Kosovo had occurred only yesterday, an outcome made far easier by the fact that the "chosen trauma" had been kept alive throughout the centuries. As they greeted Lazar's body, they cried and wailed and gave speeches saying that they would never allow such a defeat to occur again.

What interests us here is that Milošević apparently reactivated Lazar's representation in the Serb's minds so that grieving his defeat at the Battle of Kosovo could at last be accomplished, and the reversal of helplessness, humiliation, and shame could be completed. In any case, affects pertaining to traumatized self representations were felt freshly; sharing this invisibly connected all Serbs more closely and they began to develop similar self representations in which there was a drastic change: a new sense of entitlement for revenge, although it is unclear whether this is what Milošević intended.

Nevertheless, Milošević continued to stir nationalist sentiments. For instance, he ordered the building of a huge monument on a hill overlooking the Kosovo battlefield. Made of red stone, representing blood (Kaplan, 1993), it stands 100 feet over the "grieving" flowers, and is surrounded by artillery shell-shaped cement pillars inscribed with a sword and the dates 1389-1989. On the tower are written Lazar's words before the battle calling every Serbian man to come to the Field of Black Birds to fight the Turks. If a Serb fails to respond to this call, Lazar's words warn: "He will not have a child, neither male or female, and he will not have fertile land where crops grow." By building the monument and linking 1389 with 1989, Milošević was re-sending Lazar's ancient message in the present. The message to the Serbian men was clear: "Either you fight against the Turks or be castrated!"

On June 28, 1989, the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, a helicopter brought Milošević to the Field of the Black Birds. He "took the podium from dancing maidens in traditional folk costume and transported the crowd to heights of frenzied adoration with a simple message: 'never again would Islam subjugate the Serbs'" (Vulliamy, 1994, p. 51). In one photo of this rally I noted that Lazar's ancient call to battle against the Turks was imprinted on the T-shirts of many of those present. Riding this wave of nationalism, Milošević's prominence increased. In 1990 the six Yugoslav republics held elections in which the Communists were defeated everywhere except Serbia and Montenegro. In Serbia the Communists were now called the Serbian Socialist Party, and Milošević was elected as party head. In 1991 Milošević summoned Radovan Karadžić, the Bosnian Serbs' leader, and others to meet with him to discuss the future of the republics. In June 1992, after disposing of his "friend" and mentor Ivan Stambolić, then the State President, whom he had accused of betraying the Serbs in Kosovo, Milošević was elected president of the third "Yugoslavia" (the Serb-Montenegrin federation).

Meanwhile, Turks once more became the "clear and present" enemy. Hasan Aygün, who ran the Turkish embassy in Belgrade, described how he was considered "public enemy number one" in the Serbian capital city. Everywhere he went Serbs asked him "Why are you [Turks] planning

to invade us?” Mr. Aygün thought that almost every Serb believed in the imminence of a Turkish invasion and literally feared for his safety because of the “time collapse” there. One of his observations interested me. He said that many Serbian youngsters had developed a new game: playing Russian roulette with pistols loaded with live ammunition. Many of these teenagers had to be taken to the hospital—dead or with head wounds. This shared new “game” suggested to me an identification or attempted identification with Lazar’s representation carried through generations. Like Lazar, these youngsters were experiencing two choices: death/martyrdom or life/vengeance on Turks.

The Bosnian Muslims were now experienced by the Serbs as the extension of the Ottomans, and Serbs often referred to them as Turks. There is, of course, a basis of truth to this perception since Bosnian Muslims played a significant role in Ottoman Turkish history. For example, one of the most famous Ottoman Grand Viziers was a Serbian raised through the *devşirme*. Many Bosnian Muslim epic songs refer to their glories under the Ottomans (Butler, 1993). Within the emotional atmosphere resulting from a time collapse, the Serbs, especially those living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, began to feel entitled to do to Bosnian Muslims what they believed the Ottoman Turks had done to them.

Before the ethnic cleansing and systematic rape of Bosnian Muslim women began, Serbian propaganda increasingly focused on inflaming the idea that the Ottomans, now symbolized by the Bosnian Muslims, would return. One piece of propaganda against Bosnian Muslims read:

By order of the Islamic fundamentalist from Sarajevo, healthy Serbian women from 17 to 40 years of age are being separated out and subjected to special treatment. According to their sick plans going back many years, these women have to be impregnated by orthodox Islamic seeds in order to raise a generation of janissaries [Ottoman troops] on the territory they surely consider to be theirs, the Islamic republic. In other words, a fourfold crime is to be committed against the Serbian woman: to remove her from her own family, to impregnate her by undesirable seeds, to make her bear a stranger and then to take even him away from her (Gutman, 1993).

This propaganda aimed to create a fear among Serbs that the Bosnian Muslims intended to resurrect the *devşirme* and create a new janissary army. There is a kernel of truth in this idea since Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegović had intimated in speeches and writings the possibility of an Islamic enterprise in Bosnia for which he sought the help of other fundamentalist elements in Muslim countries.

The fear equating Bosnian Muslims with Ottoman Turks was mostly based on fantasy, however, for the former had virtually no military power. Yet the massive projection of Serbs’ aggression onto the Bosnian Muslims was so great that it began to “boomerang”—they perceived a “real” threat, based on the past trauma, when one did not realistically exist, and felt compelled to act against it. Thus, the collective idea that Muslims had to be exterminated slowly began to occur. The Serbs emotionally prepared themselves to “purify” their identity from any possibility of contamination by the Ottoman Turks/Bosnian Muslims. For example, Sarajevo housed many buildings, works of art and manuscripts that reflected the city’s past under the Ottomans. A precious Koran, given by the Grand Vizier Mehmet Pasha, was featured in the city’s famous Gazi Hüsvrev library. What is interesting is that many Bosnian Serbs who bombarded Sarajevo were from the Bosnian capital itself (Butler, 1993). In their collective regression and response to “time

collapse,” the city needed to be “purified” of any Muslim connection. Thus, they bombed their own city.

In conjunction with the shared fantasy that Muslims must be cleansed or exterminated was also the shared fantasy that the *devširme* must be reversed—that the number of Serbs also must be increased to carry on the battle. Hence a conscious strategy of intimidation was condensed with an unconscious one, resulting in the systematic rape of thousands of Muslim women by Serbian soldiers. The underlying assumption of the Serbs was that the child produced by the rape of a non-Serb woman would be a Serb, and not carry any of the traits of the mother. Questioning this belief, Beverly Allen (1996) noted, “Enforced pregnancy as a method of genocide makes sense only if you are ignorant about genetics. No baby born from such a crime will be only Serb. It will receive half its genetic material from its mother” (p. 80). This fact hardly seems to need explanation, yet the author clearly was focusing on logical thinking and biological reality, although in the case of inflamed ethnic animosities, it is the “psychological truth” that is more important. Thus Serbs sought to both kill young Muslim men and replace them with new “Serb” children and truly avenge Kosovo. Fact and fantasy, past and present were intimately and violently intermingled.

Conclusion

In closing, I will return to some observations from the individual-oriented perspective with which I began. Like my knowledge about Slobodan Milošević, what I know about Radovan Karadžić is very limited. He is a psychiatrist and once told a colleague of mine, Dr. Joyce Neu of The Carter Center, who met him while accompanying former President Jimmy Carter on cease-fire talks in Bosnia-Herzegovina, that he specializes in the treatment of depression! I will limit my comments about Karadžić to those that relate to the theme of this paper—to the internalization of a past trauma in a person who is born in a generation after the original trauma took place.

In 1985 Dr. Karadžić was convicted of fraud (misuse of public funds) and was put in jail where he remained for eleven months until he was freed by a Serbian judge. He is a poet. After his prison experience, in 1990, he published *Crna Bajka* (“*The Black Fable*”), a collection of his new poems. In one of his poems entitled “A Man Risen from the Ashes” one can detect the effect of imprisonment on him (Deklava and Post, 1995). What is most interesting for me is that in another poem in the same book he refers to Serbs being trapped in a fortress surrounded by advancing Turks and waiting for the Czar (Lazar?) to come to their rescue. I suspect that his imprisoned self representation was condensed with the imprisoned self representation of his ancestors which had been transferred down through the generations—similar to the condensing of Gregory’s and Peter’s imprisoned self representation which was located in Peter. I do not wish to say more about Dr. Karadžić’s poems except to note that he was not immune from being a carrier of the Serbians’ “chosen trauma,” which may be further revealed if he is tried as a war criminal. According to Dr. Neu, at the cease-fire negotiations with President Carter, Karadžić spoke at some length about the Battle of Kosovo along with the immediate and “real” purpose of the discussion. As for Milošević, U.S. and European leaders hope that he will go through another transformation and help bring peace and democracy to Yugoslavia.

Finally, by writing about Bosnia-Herzegovina I do not mean to reduce what happened there to the reactivation of a “chosen trauma” only. But I do want to emphasize that knowing about psychological processes, especially the unconscious processes, can enlarge our understanding about how they may become the fuel to ignite the most horrible human dramas and/or keep the fire going once hostilities start. Psychoanalytic research into the transgenerational transmission of shared trauma, its activation in leader-follower relationships, and the associated phenomenon of “time collapse” may illuminate many hidden aspects of ethnic or other large group conflicts and tell us how internal and external world issues become intertwined.

Footnotes

1. A version of this article was originally presented at the Sixth International Psychoanalytical Association Conference on Psychoanalytic Research, London, March, 1996.
2. While this 600-year “time collapse” is unusual, it is not unprecedented. Freud (1909) in the case of Little Hans reported on a similar phenomenon.

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