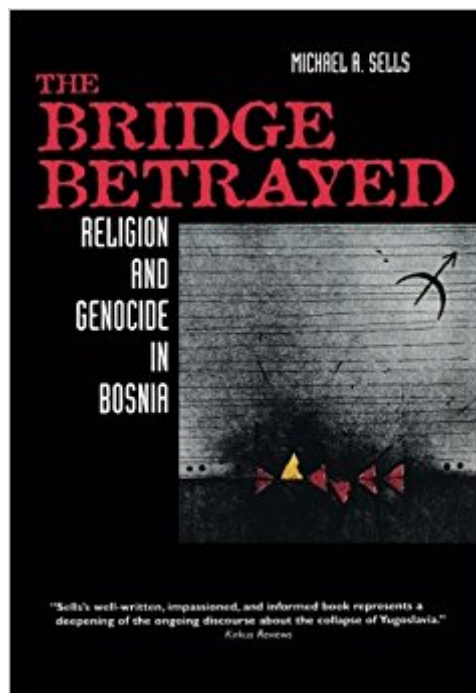




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The Bridge Betrayed: Religion And Genocide In Bosnia (Comparative Studies In Religion And Society)



Synopsis

The recent atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina have stunned people throughout the world. With Holocaust memories still painfully vivid, a question haunts us: how is this savagery possible? Michael A. Sells answers by demonstrating that the Bosnian conflict is not simply a civil war or a feud of age-old adversaries. It is, he says, a systematic campaign of genocide and a Christian holy war spurred by religious mythologies. This passionate yet reasoned book examines how religious stereotyping—in popular and official discourse—has fueled Serbian and Croatian ethnic hatreds. Sells, who is himself Serbian American, traces the cultural logic of genocide to the manipulation by Serb nationalists of the symbolism of Christ's death, in which Muslims are "Christ-killers" and Judases who must be mercilessly destroyed. He shows how "Christoslavica" religious nationalism became a central part of Croat and Serbian politics, pointing out that intellectuals and clergy were key instruments in assimilating extreme religious and political ideas. Sells also elucidates the ways that Western policy makers have rewarded the perpetrators of the genocide and punished the victims. He concludes with a discussion of how the multireligious nature of Bosnian society has been a bridge between Christendom and Islam, symbolized by the now-destroyed bridge at Mostar. Drawing on historical documents, unpublished United Nations reports, articles from Serbian and Bosnian media, personal contacts in the region, and Internet postings, Sells reveals the central role played by religious mythology in the Bosnian tragedy. In addition, he makes clear how much is at stake for the entire world in the struggle to preserve Bosnia's existence as a multireligious society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A Serbian American professor of religion, Sells (*Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, Univ. of Chicago, 1994) explores all angles surrounding the recent systematic destruction of the Bosnian Muslims. He lays down a solid background of the origins of the war and explains the Serbian attitude that religion equals nationality, which shows why the Serbs believe the Muslims are traitorous to their country. Sells also describes Croatia's role in the conflict. Along with some fascinating reports and details on the genocide, he spends the final two chapters blasting the UN, NATO, and the West for not becoming more involved in stopping the crimes against the Bosnians. His work is recommended for all academic and large public libraries for its ability to explain this confusing war clearly. ?Jill Jaracz, Professionals Lib. Service, Chicago Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Sells's well-written, impassioned, and informed book represents a deepening of the ongoing discourse about the collapse of Yugoslavia."--"Kirkus Reviews

This book is awesome and very accurate. My teacher who was there in Bosnia during the war said it was extremely accurate as well. Don't buy it from kindle they suck and are a bunch of jackasses. I tried for 2 hours with their "specialists" and they still couldn't get it to where I could read it they refunded my money but wouldn't do anything else to try to make it up to me. Holy crap they suck.

The title of this book refers to the Bridge of Mostar in the city by that name in current day Bosnia. The bridge was built by the Ottomans in the 16th century and symbolized to many a bridge between East and West, Christian and Muslim etc. For hundreds of years, this area was home to a flourishing pluralistic culture that included Bosnian Muslims, Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs. This was all shattered when the nationalist tendencies that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia erupted in war and ethnic cleansing in the early 90s. In 1993, Croat nationalist forces destroyed the bridge in what Sells claims was a systematic campaign to eradicate Islamic culture from the region. Contrary to the myth of the Balkans as an inherently violent place of ancient hatreds, Sells sees the conflict's origins as much more recent. He describes how the Nazis occupied Croatia and engendered ethnic strife in the entire region. But the main thrust of the book is the religious nature of the conflict and what Sells describes as out and out genocide against Bosnian Muslims. This was

perpetrated by both the Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs, with the latter seemingly the main culprit. Sells makes the case that the Serb's fanatical "Christoslavism" (a view that sees Slavs as inherently Christian and any Slavic converts to Islam as race traitors) was the driving force behind the entire conflict and describes the horrific consequences of this fanaticism. Bosnian civilians were routinely raped, tortured, and murdered with the support of many high ranking clergy. One of the most disturbing aspects of the situation was the attitudes and actions (or lack thereof) of the UN along with the American and European governments. Sells claims they knew genocide was happening but used the excuse of perennial conflict in the region to justify their non-action. My only complaint would be that Sells is a bit heavy on the moralizing and comes across as quite anti-Christian. He even goes so far as to place the Bosnian genocide into an alleged long line of European (and American) Christian violence against non-Christians. While there may be some truth to this view, I would call it a gross simplification to say the least. Nevertheless, this was a compelling and disturbing read.

A book about the war and genocide in Bosnia from 1992 - 1995, with a particular focus on the role that religious ideology played during the violence. The author examines Serbian Orthodox nationalism which includes strong religious Serbian Orthodox language and, to a lesser extent, delves into Croatian Catholic language and nationalism as well. The book was sourced pretty well and gives strong supporting arguments for its claims. I wished it had been a little more fleshed out, and at times I felt as though the author repeated himself rather than truly expanding on what he had previously written. Overall, a solid and enlightening read.

Just one great study of the Bosnian war, of the Bosnian pre/war society, and irreparable damage done to it by the terrible 1992-1995 conflict. I write this short review (the book needs no longer review) as someone who was born, and raised in pre-war Bosnia, i.e. former Yugoslavia. The title of the book is a perfect description of what Bosnia used to be and what it lost due this war.

I am planning a trip to Bosnia I feel this book is a must to help get a feel for the thing I want to see & those that (because of the war) I will not be able to see. I cried as I read it. An excellent movie to see as a follow up to the book *In The Land of Blood & Honey* produced by Anjolinia Joli

My relatively high rating for "The Bridge Betrayed" is more a reflection of my agreement with the author's stance than praise for the strength of his arguments. The strongest aspect of this book is

the keen analysis and refutation of the key arguments used by both Serb and Croat nationalists to justify their actions in Bosnia-Herzegovina (aimed primarily against the Bosnian Muslims). He correctly notes the frequent contradictions involved in such racial stereotyping and he coins a term, "Christoslavism," to denote the merger of national and religious identity among both the Serbs and Croats. Sells explains that Christoslavic Serbs and Croats found it easy to demonize the Muslim Slavs of Bosnia as apostates and traitors to their Slav race. While this argument has merit and goes some way to explaining the hatred and violence in Bosnia, it does not explain the key national conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the one that more than any other led to its collapse: the conflict between the Croats and Serbs (indeed, Sells largely ignores the 1991 war in Croatia, although it was a full-scale, bloody dress rehearsal for Bosnia, with the Yugoslav Army and Serb paramilitaries honing the methods they would "perfect" in Bosnia later). Although much ethnic and religious stereotyping is involved in the mutual animosities between these two groups, it does not fit into the Christoslavic framework, simply because it is a matter of two Christian Slavic peoples. This leads to another, more important flaw: Sells' analysis is limited as an explanation, perhaps because he limits his focus on Bosnia. For even while it explains many of the hows and whys of the war in Bosnia, i.e. why the fighting was so brutal and why so many religious/cultural monuments were destroyed, how Serbs and Croats were mobilized against the Muslims and the concept of multiethnic Bosnia, etc., but it does relatively little to explain the deeper why: why this religious nationalism or Christoslavism (re)emerged at the end of the 1980s and eventually led to Yugoslavia's break-up.

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