
BALKAN TRAGEDY: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War. By Susan L. Woodward. *Brookings*. 536 pp. \$42.95

When the European Community declared the former Yugoslavia dead at a 1991 peace conference in the Hague, the six republics that lived within its bounds became locked in a bitter struggle over the decedent's estate. Long after borders are redrawn in blood and the spoils of war divided, debate over the causes of what happened will rage among journalists, scholars, and policy makers.

Woodward, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, has written the most thoughtful, detailed, and lucid work on the disintegration of Yugoslavia to appear thus far. It confronts head-on what will be the crux of the controversy—the alleged inevitability of the collapse of Yugoslavia into nationalist regimes and civil war.

According to the new Western dogma, Yugoslavia was doomed from the start. It was an artificial country that never should have lasted its 73 years; a hellish place, moreover, where the end of the Cold War lifted the lid from “a cauldron of long-simmering hatreds.” The “revival of ethnic hatreds in a return to the precommunist past” has become, says Woodward, the ideological explanation of choice in the West for the disaster: the breakup was unavoidable, and only its brutality was negotiable.

An entirely different dogma prevailed during the Cold War. Yugoslavia was once the darling of the West, and the Yugoslavs were America's pet Eastern Europeans. As Woodward explains, Yugoslavia was then an important element in the West's policy of containment of the Soviet Union, and the Yugoslav regime survived Tito's clash with Stalin thanks in large part to American military aid and economic assistance.

Balkan experts who were part of the earlier consensus, and proud of it, have since gone into hiding. But not Woodward. Her book runs counter to every tenet of the new orthodoxy on Yugoslavia. She begins her account a full decade before the fall of the Berlin Wall, when economic austerity and reforms in Yugoslavia triggered a breakdown of political and civil order and a slide toward governmental disintegration. This

was the real origin of the conflict.

Woodward is determined not to take sides in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, though she is fully aware that “all those who propose instead to analyze the conflict are accused of assigning moral equivalence between victims and aggressors—or worse, of justifying actions being explained.” She rejects the predictable argument that a longstanding Serb-Croat conflict exemplifies the historical character of contemporary Yugoslav politics, and she coolly discounts as “unlikely” the fashionable American theory that Yugoslavia unraveled because Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, devised a diabolical master plan for a “Greater Serbia.”

Woodward neither calls for bombings nor scrambles for the moral high ground. Her interest lies in understanding as clearly as possible why, over a prolonged period, government authority eroded. She sees the Yugoslav crisis as a “story of many small steps taken in separate scenes and locales,” and a drama to which Western governments and onlookers contributed significantly. Her exceptionally well-documented book will not buttress the dubious opinions one may acquire watching the evening news or reading the columns of the laptop bombardiers in the morning papers. But for those who care to know, it will explain why Yugoslavia perished, and why there has been so much death since its passing.

POSTETHNIC AMERICA: Beyond Multiculturalism. By David A. Hollinger. *Basic*. 210 pp. \$22

Does the debate over multiculturalism have to end at an impasse? Hollinger, a historian at the University of California, Berkeley, thinks not, and he proposes a novel way through the cultural and political tangles that obstruct any reasonable advance. His effort to tie a new civic nationalism to a vigorous endorsement of diversity will be especially welcome to readers who support cultural diversity but seek a common culture.

The problem with most defenders of pluralism, he argues, is that they don't go far enough. They erect artificial fences around each ethnic or