

## **The Banality of Evil** <sup>[1]</sup>

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Arrest of Radovan Karadzic shows Serbian security services can locate war crimes suspects if the political will is there.

What does a war crimes indictee on the lam do in his spare time? Well if your name is Radovan Karadzic, you grow your beard, wear your hair bundled in a ponytail atop your head and become a doctor specialising in alternative medicine. And along the way he found – according to Serbian media – the love of his life, a mysterious dark-haired woman.

That's quite a life journey for one man, to go from destroyer of a country, cities and entire ethnic groups, to bio-energy healer and lover. Evidently, Karadzic wasn't bad at his new job – testimonials from some former patients claim he healed them.

Under the name of Dr Dragan David Dabic, Karadzic worked at a private clinic in Belgrade's city centre. He openly lectured throughout Serbia – in Novi Sad, Smederevo, Kikinda and Sombor – and contributed to the magazine *Zdrav Zivot* (Healthy Life).

His last public lecture, advertised on the internet, took place on May 23 at Belgrade's popular Ada Ciganlija recreation area, and had as its subject "Nurturing Your Own Energies". Last December 10, he lectured on meditation at the Smederevo Cultural Centre. His internet site <http://www.psy-help-energy.com> advertised programmes to cure diabetes, sexual and fertility problems, asthma, arthritis and a host of other health issues. The website also sold metal spirals claimed to have healing powers and listed two mobile telephone numbers, both of which are now switched off.

Serbia's government should be congratulated for finally unmasking and detaining Karadzic. Yet the arrest reinforces what has been known all along – that Belgrade knows where the remaining war crimes suspects are and can arrest them whenever it wishes.

The government should take advantage of the momentum and arrest the last two remaining indictees, Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic, by the end of this year. Until it does so, the European Union should hold off on offering concessions or incentives.

There is, however, a degree of confusion about how proactive the government was in ordering this arrest.

Some unconfirmed reports assert that western intelligence services played some role, while others speculate that someone turned Karadzic in – possibly a figure from the BIA secret service who wanted to ingratiate himself with the agency's new director and with President Boris Tadic. Still others suspect that someone from Karadzic's support network gave him away to claim the reward money.

The arrest itself is shrouded in mystery. The government has said only that he was arrested "in the vicinity of Belgrade" on the evening on Monday, July 21. Karadzic's attorney says he was arrested on Friday, July 18 on a transit bus running between New Belgrade and Batajnica, and that he was held incommunicado over the weekend.

One newspaper with connections to the BIA reported he was arrested near Mt. Kosmaj; another that he

was picked up in the Vracar neighbourhood of central Belgrade, with a bag all packed for a holiday at the Croatian seaside town of Split.

The truth may never be known.

At the official press conference on July 22, the authorities were represented by Special War Crimes Prosecutor Vladimir Vukcevic and Minister for Labour and Social Policy Rasim Ljajic, who is also president of the national council for cooperation with the Hague tribunal. At the beginning of the press conference, they announced that they would not be taking questions. It was evident that neither man was particularly well informed, and Ljajic said that they were still assembling facts about the arrest.

Both gave brief statements. Vukcevic limited his remarks to three or four mumbled sentences. Ljajic spoke at greater length, but gave no real details other to say Karadzic had been living openly under his alias and was employed at a Belgrade clinic.

Ljajic claimed that the information leading to Karadzic's location and arrest came from tailing suspected associates, but he did not say who carried out the arrest.

The new head of the BIA was named only a few days before the arrest, and it is unclear whether he would have been able to organise this operation on such short notice.

Indeed, it appears that the BIA was assisted by the Serbian army. Interior Minister Ivica Dacic, who is also the head of the late Slobodan Milosevic's Socialist Party, immediately said that no personnel from his ministry took part in the arrest, and sought to distance himself and his party from it. He also said that the arrest was a gift from the previous government.

Despite the lack of clarity on some of the details, the operation shows that Serbia's security and intelligence agencies are aware of the whereabouts of Hague suspects and that they are able to arrest them when the political will exists.

Whether there will be more arrests, and if so how that would happen, is unknown. It is also unclear whether Dacic and the SPS will obstruct further detentions, although some believe Dacic will confine himself to muted public protestations designed for his party's constituency, and refrain from active obstructionism.

Nonetheless, one cannot rule out the possibility that attempts will be made from within the interior ministry and the rest of government to prevent the detention of Mladic and Hadzic.

There can be little doubt that Karadzic's arrest would not have happened if the previous prime minister, Vojislav Kostunica, had continued in power. The new government thus deserves full credit. Belgrade has already sent signals that it hopes to capitalise on this.

It is to be hoped that the arrests of Mladic and Hadzic will swiftly follow. That would clear away the last remaining major hurdle for Serbia to move forward in the EU accession process.

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