

EPSTEIN'S TRAFFICKING ARCHITECTURE: EASTERN EUROPE AND THE BALKANS

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A lot has been talked about the horrors that continue to surface from the recently released Epstein Files. Men in positions of power shown to be complicit to some of the most unspeakable crimes, especially involving sexual abuse of children.

Despite clear proof of email exchanges between Epstein and his vassals, response to the news has been divided. The most galling ones are those in the middle, ones who inherently see the case of Epstein and his lackeys as a deviant one-off despite high-level associations and disgraceful resignations of political elites like Peter Mandelson, Miroslav Lajčák and Terje Rod-Larsen. NGO communities within child advocacy and peace circles who were riddled with the ultimate irony. The likes of Joanna Rubinstein (World Child Foundation) who were meant to safeguard children, were instead vacationing with Epstein on Little St. James in 2012, when he had already been convicted. Then there are the opportunistic partisans who are least concerned with the victims, but looking for ways to link political enemies and gathering ammunition to benefit their vote banks. Finally, there is the unsurprised “told you so” cohort: the women and girls who suffered hell.

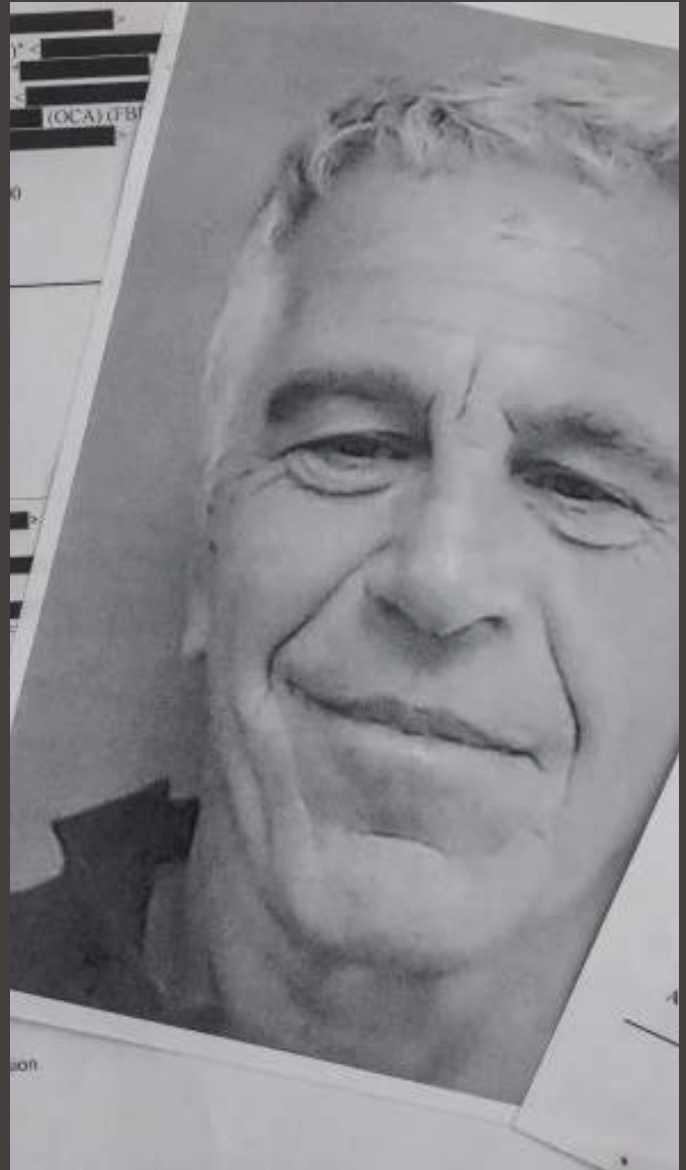
To fully understand the extent of Epstein's operations, one must consider the coming together of several actors, and the parts they played in keeping up the pyramid of abuse that lasted decades. In the Eastern European region, post-Soviet systemic economic collapse, military atrocities and institutional betrayal turned an entire region into a “hunting ground” of sexual predators despite whistleblowers' testimonies.

For women from the region, the release of Epstein files was just a confirmation of three decade-long trauma. The DynCorp in the 1990s set the ground running for gross mistrust in authorities among the public, by trafficking girls and women into prostitution in Bosnia. To these survivors, the files aren't “news”.

Why the Balkans?

Wars have a way of destabilising social and economic grounding of affected nations. And for the Balkan region, life was rooted in the mishmash of war and economic ruin. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, and wars in former Yugoslavia, Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Croatia were left crippled. And it was this lack of anchor and safety that enabled traffickers to exploit them.

It was a simple, age-old strategy: small towns and villages were scrounged for victims with a promise of a “better life” that comes with university scholarships, modeling contracts, and better life.





Girls as young as 15 were put on a pipeline that moved them to transit hubs in Prague and Warsaw. In 2006, the US Justice Department Attorneys described the Balkans providing new opportunities for the traffickers as they targeted displaced and impoverished women in the region.

To make matters worse, the system sent to protect the affected became a source of further abuse. During the height of regional upheaval, women from Bosnia and Kosovo were trafficked by those in uniform. When whistleblowers like Kathryn Bolkovac attempted to speak out against this, she was fired from her position as a human rights investigator for the UN International Police Task Force. When asked after her whistleblowing whether DynCorp suffered any loss of business with the UN officials, she said: “No. They did not. The UN continues to use them, the US government continues to use them. DynCorp has grown bigger and bigger every year.”

Corroborating Bolkovac’s claims, Andrew MacLeod, the chief of operations at the UN’s Emergency Co-ordination Centre blew the whistle on UN staff where he estimated that 60,000 rapes have been carried out by the UN staff, and 3300 pedo-criminals work in the organisation and its associated agencies. Speaking to the media, he said: “There are tens of thousands of aid workers around the world with pedophile tendencies, but if you wear a UNICEF T-shirt, nobody will ask what you’re up to.” Hear Their Cries, an organisation that MacLeod co-founded, estimated in a report that up to 30,000 incidents of sexual abuse were carried out by the woefully titled “peacekeepers”.

This undertaking was conducted on an industrial scale with financial backing amounting to USD three million. All through this time, Epstein was found making wire transfers to people with Eastern European surnames despite heavy redactions in the files. The JPMorgan’s Anti-Money Laundering compliance group’s report confirmed the amount. Considering the fact that American President Trump was mentioned 38,000 times in the files, it is no surprise that his Justice Department is omitting information regarding the extent of Epstein’s connections with Trump himself, along with high-ranking Pentagon staff and UN officials.

Even in 2009, a year after Epstein’s conviction, his associate Daniel Siad emailed Epstein stating he would spend the summer “scouting in small villages” in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. Victims were moved to Paris, where Epstein’s associate Jean-Luc Brunel ran a “modelling agency” as a front for his pimping business. Witness statements confirm the use of keypad locks that prevented escape from captivity. These Eastern European women were carefully chosen for their inability to speak another language should they dare to seek help in a foreign country.

Epstein’s Recruiters: Women as the Face of his Sex Mafia

Epstein’s women played an important role in keeping his business thriving. At the centre of all this was Ghislaine Maxwell, dubbed the “Lady of the House” and the fundamental cog in this wheel of abuse. Incidentally, Robert Maxwell, her father, was from erstwhile Czechoslovakia, and she is reported to have made the most of his European ties to facilitate the abuse. She too has mastered the age-old grooming techniques luring young girls in spas, schools and trailer parks by love bombing; her disarming, upper class socialite appearance gave her another layer of leverage in her tactics.

Maxwell did not act alone; her aides, Sarah Kellen, Adriana Ross, Lesley Groff, and Nadia Marcinkova cast the net wider at her behest. Marcinkova’s role is especially symbolic of the Balkan route. Some claims by victims allege that Epstein purchased her from former Yugoslavia when she was merely fifteen years old. She characterises the role of a victim turned perpetrator - a prostituted-woman turned pimp - with utter

Desperation forced young women to recruit more victims, and school yards turned into hubs of solicitations. Often paid a measly \$200 for adding to the list, many fell in line out of fear, and perhaps to escape their own abuse by transferring the focus on someone new.

From Kremlin to Silicon Valley: the Role of Maria Drokova

While there is no direct mention of Putin the files - an unsurprising detail considering the dictator's discipline at obfuscation and secrecy - Epstein, without a doubt, had a large volume of shared connections with him; Maria Drokova being one of them.

With a reputation of being "the girl who kissed Putin" preceding her when she met Epstein, Drokova's role in being Epstein's "fixer" would undeniably be a spine-chilling story for history to remember and retell. The former Kremlin youth spokesperson who went on to find her footing in Silicon Valley as a PR Pundit, made full use of her earlier notoriety, especially with a documentary made about her life. What followed after was not an ex-soviet sorting out her life in a foreign country, but a much darker, sinister turn to the worse. Drokova's role in this crime syndicate demonstrated a psychopathic brand of greed and power hunger. She didn't just enable Epstein to continue her trafficking business, she crafted an indubitable PR strategy to turn Epstein the predator into Epstein, the benevolent patriarch, saviour of women's lives.

Her suggestions ranged from Epstein conferring academic scholarships and opportunities to young, marginalised women, to setting up a workplace sexual harassment combating strategy. The latter, she surmised, would foster "good optics among women". Drokova who seemingly was subjected to Epstein's grooming herself, sending nude pictures to appease his benevolent side, did so, so he would continue to fund her avarice.

With Putin's notorious misogynistic comment about Russian prostituted women as "undoubtedly the best in the world" and the historic use of prostitution to collect "kompromat" against powerful men, Drokova's training in Russia was without a doubt instrumental in her approximation with Epstein who used powerless women and girls to access and control powerful men.

The Files Are Out: But What About the Victims Past and Present?

The unsealing of these three million pages represents a window into a machine that was meant to never stop. No amount of names, resignations of high-profile people would give back the peace these women lost along the way. Before the world caught up with Epstein's transgressions, the 'Balkan Route' had already been subjected to decades of military impunity and apathy from institutions. In the end, we sit in the wake of a colossal failure of justice, and a bone-chilling realisation that the 'peace' that was brokered in Eastern Europe was built, at least in part, on a foundation of thousands of women's bodies, and silenced screams. But if we continue to treat these as anomalies, or isolated incidents, we all remain complicit. The conversation should expand beyond Jeffrey Epstein, and dig deeper into what it represents. Because the question is no longer how many powerful people Epstein knew, but how many young women are still being groomed in the convenient shadows of social instability, economic collapse and aftermaths of modern-day conflict. And in an off-chance we believe the victims, why providing mountains of evidence would still never be enough to end this catastrophe.

