
Crisis and Genocide in Yugoslavia, 1985-1995

Ton Zwaan

'Dear Mimmy,

*More journalists, reporters and cameramen. They write, take photographs, film, and it all goes to France, Italy, Canada, Japan, Spain, America. But you and I, Mimmy, we stay where we are, we stay and we wait, and, of course, keep each other company. Some people compare me with Anne Frank. That frightens me, Mimmy, I don't want to suffer her fate.'*¹

Zlata, 12 years old

This comparison with Anne Frank, albeit hardly justified, made Zlata instantly famous. While Sarajevo was still under siege she was visited by journalists and reporters and parts of her diary were published. Due to her success as a writer, Zlata and her family were 'rescued' by her publisher and brought to safety in Paris.



Yugoslavia signs Genocide Convention, 1948.
Source: United Nations

Introduction

The war in Yugoslavia took place before the eyes of the world, being widely broadcasted. But instead of intervening, for the most part the world followed the atrocities on television. The bewildering complexity of the civil war did not help. People witnessed Serbs fighting Muslim Bosnians and Croats, Croats fighting Serbs and Muslim Bosnians, Muslim Bosnians fighting Croats and Serbs, and this all took place in what had been, at least superficially, considered the rather peaceful and ethnically mixed socialist federal state of Yugoslavia.

1. Historical Background

To understand the conflict, it is important to take a look at the history of Yugoslavia. The six republics which formed the federal state — Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia — shared a complicated and often violent past. The development of a power vacuum after 1980, serious political and economic problems including the issue of multiple nationalities, the decline of communism in neighbouring countries and in the country itself, followed by a turn to extreme nationalism, polarisation and the disintegration of the monopoly of violence, all contributed to the end of Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia, a country roughly seven times the size of the Netherlands, about half the size of France, and formerly inhabited by approximately 24 million people, no longer exists. After an in many ways difficult, tragic and turbulent development of less than 75 years as a relatively autonomous state-society, it disintegrated in only a few years. The decade between 1985 — when the threatening disintegration became more and more apparent — and 1995 — when the Dayton Agreement was signed on 21 November, thus ending the three and a half years of fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina — was of decisive importance for the disintegration of the federal state.

1.1 Between the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires

What became Yugoslavia after the First World War (1914-1918) was for many centuries a pre-eminent example of a disputed frontier territory. In addition to the original ethnic-cultural variety in the region, Islam and Christianity encountered each other here, and the dividing line between western (Roman-Catholic) and eastern (Orthodox) Christianity cut clear across the country between the two largest sections of the population, the Croats and the Serbs. In this region 'Europe' gradually changed into 'the Orient', and the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires fought frequently and extensively. Between the late 14th and the late 15th century the Ottoman Empire conquered a large part of the Balkans — including Macedonia, Serbia, parts of Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but not Croatia and Slovenia. These latter became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Habsburg and Ottoman Empires both recruited soldiers and militias from the local peasant population. In the battles of the 19th century, when the Ottoman Empire was driven back from the Balkans, culminating in the wars of 1912 and 1913, excessive violence was common. This affected armies on all sides as well as the civilian population.

Often lacking the protection of a reliable state authority, the peasant population had to rely on themselves for the protection of their lives, goods and honour. Blood feuds, vendettas, and banditry were widespread. For generations, large parts of the mostly rural population lived under harsh and violent conditions. A glance through history shows that the region experienced no significant period of peace in at least 150 years. A 'culture of violence' was manifested in aggressively masculine ideals, combining warrior notions with a predilection for weapons and the skill to use them. The population was willing and able to use force, and was easily caught up in revenge and counter revenge. For many, this resulted in a relatively limited sensitivity to violence.

1.2 The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes

At the end of the First World War, the new state of Yugoslavia — under the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes — consisted of territories and population groups with diverse ethno-cultural and political traditions. Considerable parts of the newly formed kingdom had been part of the two disintegrating empires, and had been at war between 1914 and 1918. Several contemporary observers therefore questioned the viability of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The former kingdom of Serbia acquired a dominant position in the new state. The Serbian elite became the elite of the new kingdom; its capital, Belgrade, became the capital of the kingdom; and Serbian troops, only marginally assisted by Croatian and Slovene soldiers, occupied the whole territory of the new Yugoslav kingdom in 1918 and 1919.

As a result, considerable parts of the non-Serbian population, especially in Slovenia and Croatia, felt they had been annexed by Serbia. Callous Serbian policies contributed to growing resentment among Croats and Slovenes, who often considered themselves culturally superior

124 to the Serbs. Serbs, in their turn, fought heroically during the war and had suffered huge losses. These sacrifices were not fully appreciated by the Croats and Slovenes, which was considered 'ungrateful' by the Serbs and led to further tensions.

The new state quickly developed from a weak democracy into an authoritarian monarchist-militaristic dictatorship. The majority of the population had very little opportunity to exert any notable influence on the structure of rule. The political autonomy of the state in the interwar decades was extensive.² This meant that the state elites had considerable power of decision and latitude, and no accountability to the population. The ruling apparatus did not tolerate political opposition. This led to violent political assaults and terrorist attacks as well as a few peasant uprisings. Thousands were imprisoned for political reasons. Another important feature of this state formation was a severely limited identification of the population with the new state. Although Yugoslav nationalism and patriotism were imposed by the regime, the different ethnic groups continued to be strongly divided.

1.3 Second World War

The violent German invasion in April 1941 intensified the bitter internal conflict and fighting. It has been estimated that a total of around one million people perished, possibly 300,000 of them in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Individual and collective memories of that time played an important role in the crisis of the 1990s.

During the Second World War, armed groups claiming allegiance to various ideologies and ethnic factions fought both against each other and against the Nazi occupiers. Croatian fascists (Ustaše) launched genocidal campaigns against Serbs and Jews and were notorious for killing Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, Communists, and political opponents. The nationalist and royalist Serb Chetniks were also responsible for many mass killings. The Communist-led Partisans fought against both groups and were victorious (with allied support) at the war's end. The Partisans then unleashed genocidal violence against both Ustaše, Chetniks, and ethnic Germans and killed tens of thousands of perceived political opponents in the first years after the war. From 1945 on, the Partisan leader, Josip Broz Tito, ruled the country as a one-party socialist state.³

1.4 Marshall Tito

The federal and communist 'people's republic' in fact continued much of the pre-war state structure. Yugoslavia did not become a pluralistic democracy, nor a constitutional state, but a communist-militaristic dictatorship in which the party — later called the Communist League — dealt with opponents, whether real or imagined, thoroughly and violently.

The new communist state built an extensive repressive apparatus with an all-powerful secret service — modelled on the Soviet NKVD — a large police force, and a massive army. The supremacy of the party and the monopoly of coercive force of the party-state were maintained by these institutions. The old royal court was replaced by a more centralised court in which one

man — Tito — ruled supreme. The now communist political-bureaucratic elites obtained great decisive power. Very little opposition was allowed, and the population's political influence was extremely limited.

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2. Nationalism and increasing polarisation

2.1 Issue of the nationalities

Tito and the other central and republican leaders in the new Yugoslav federation were very much aware of the precarious 'nationalities issue'. Initially, 'collaborators', 'fascists', 'royalists', 'nationalists' and 'counter-revolutionaries' were persecuted. On the one hand supposedly 'national' sensitivities of the most important ethnic categories among the population were taken into account. Governmental, administrative and cultural organisations had to be made up of different ethnic groups. The concept of 'dual sovereignty' was assigned to the different republics as well as to the individual 'nations'. Paradoxically, political or cultural manifestations of group nationalism, other than those officially permitted (traditional costumes, music, songs, etcetera), were strictly taboo, and any politically nationalist activity was out of the question. Officially, the slogan was 'Unity and Brotherhood'; in reality, the situation was one of 'divide and rule'.

The overwhelming majority still tended to define themselves as 'Slovene', 'Serb', 'Croat', or 'Muslim'. It can be concluded that the process of nation formation still remained quite fragile and the population's identification with the state and the identification of the ethnic-national groups with each other remained limited. The issue of nationality never entered the public debate, due to the lack of political, cultural, and intellectual freedom, and society never came to terms with the collective and individual traumas from its recent war history. At the end of the 1980s the repression would return with a vengeance.

After the death of Marshall Tito, 'president for life' of Yugoslavia, who passed away in 1980 at the age of 87 without having appointed a successor, the country was faced with a number of serious problems: the power vacuum after the death of Tito, the degree of centralisation, the nationalities question, and serious economic issues. Managing these four problems, which were interrelated in several ways, was a formidable and difficult task for the Yugoslav leadership. It became even more difficult when two additional problems emerged during the 1980s. The first of these was internal: the rising demands of various groups and parties for more political and economic autonomy; the second was external: the fast changes in international relations, mainly as a consequence of the crumbling of communism in Europe and the end of the Cold War.

2.2 Signs of crisis

One of the first signs of crisis for Yugoslavia in the era after 1980 was a rising demand for Albanian autonomy in the southern province of Kosovo. In effect, Kosovo was already governed

126 by a largely Albanian communist elite — Albanians made up nearly 80% of the population of the province — but now they demanded independence from Serbia and a status equal to that of the six republics. Many Serbs, however, regarded Kosovo as an integral and unalienable part of Serbia.

In the spring of 1981, the Albanian autonomy movement, supported by large groups of the Albanian population in the province, was violently repressed by the police and the federal army of the nationalist Serbian leadership. By 1989, Kosovan autonomy had been completely abolished. This showed that the dominant Yugoslav and Serbian leadership lacked the ability, courage and imagination to handle the rising demands for more freedom in the early eighties in any other way than through fierce repression.

In reaction to this movement, Serbian ethnic-nationalist activism arose among the small Serbian and Montenegrin minority in Kosovo. Propaganda depicted Albanians as primitive barbarians who bred too many children in an effort to outnumber other races. They were accused of wanting to kill hard-working Serbian and Montenegrin peasants, take away their land, and rape their women. Albanians supposedly wished for Kosovo's secession from Serbia and unification with Albania. Although there were almost no factual grounds for these statements, they fed existing feelings of anxiety and threat among local Serbs.

This mechanism of polarisation would often repeat itself in the next decades in Yugoslavia. When faced with circumstances of rising instability and insecurity, groups of people start to perceive other groups as potentially threatening and feel they might become victims. This fear of enemies becomes mind-narrowing and a self-fulfilling prophecy that can only be fought with violence.

3. Serbian Memorandum

In 1986, a group of Serb intellectuals and writers from the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in Belgrade drew up a document, the so-called Serbian Memorandum. This Memorandum presented a radical ethnic-nationalist view of Serbia's position in Yugoslavia. Under Tito's rule, according to the authors, Serbia had always been treated unjustly. The Serbs felt they made the largest military contributions during the World Wars, and suffered more than others. But they had won the war and lost the peace: Serbia was considered the victim of ongoing Slovenian and Croatian political and economic discrimination within the federation. Serbs outside central Serbia, especially in Croatia and Kosovo, were exceptionally poor. These Serbs were considered to be in immediate danger and under the threat of total genocide. Resolution of the Serbian 'national question' had to be given instant and absolute political priority, or the consequences would be incalculable.

According to the Memorandum, the ideal of an independent Greater Serbia was still as valid as ever. It was considered that the only means of securing 'the survival and development' of the Serbs and achieving the 'territorial unity of the Serbian people was by uniting all Serbs

in one Serbian national state'. 'Establishing the full national integrity of the Serbian people, irrespective of which republic or province it inhabits, is the Serbian people's historical and democratic right.' It was a direct attack on the foundations of the Yugoslav state-society and the idea of 'Yugoslavism'.

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Excerpt from the Memorandum:

'The attitude taken by those in power and the authorities in Kosovo towards the violence directed at the Serbian people is particularly significant. The hushing up or glossing over of these crimes, the practice of suppressing the whole truth, and dilatory tactics in enquiries and prosecution all encourage large and small acts of terror, and at the same time a false, "sanitised" picture of conditions in Kosovo is created. Moreover, there is a persistent tendency to find a political excuse for the violence perpetrated against Serbs in the alleged existence of hatred on both sides, intolerance, and vindictiveness, while of late more and more is being heard of the imaginary activities of an "external" enemy from outside the Province, viz., Serbian nationalism emanating from "Belgrade".'

'Serbia's economic subordination cannot be fully understood without mention of its politically inferior status, from which all other relationships flowed. As far as the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) was concerned, the economic hegemony of the Serbian nation between the two world wars was beyond dispute, regardless of the fact that Serbia's rate of industrialisation was lower than the Yugoslav average. This ideological platform gave rise to opinions and behaviour which were to have a crucial influence on subsequent political events and inter-communal relations.'

'The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts once again expresses its willingness to do everything it can, to the best of its abilities, to assist efforts to deal with these crucial tasks and the historical duties incumbent upon our generation.'

The Serbian Memorandum appealed to considerable numbers of Serbs from all layers in society, within as well as outside the party. Serbian party leader Slobodan Milošević was well aware of this and largely adopted the ideological diagnosis of the Memorandum, making it his own programme. He was subsequently able to bring down other communist leaders in Serbia, strengthen his own power base and that of his lieutenants and allies, and initiate a process of ethnic-nationalist reorientation, unitarism and renewed centralisation in Serbia. Few means were shunned. His tactics included political intrigue within the party and purges, press campaigns, television manipulation, and stage-managed mass demonstrations, for which 'the masses' were transported across Serbia on buses and were brought into action for manifestations in other republics by the same means.

Kosovo Polje, April 1987

Slobodan Milošević, the communist leader who up until that time had not been very outspoken in the nationalist debate, travelled to Kosovo Polje, to the historic grounds of the Battle of Kosovo. Here he addressed the Serbian crowds in an orchestrated demonstration: 'Comrades, comrades!' Then someone in the audience shouted at him 'The Albanians got in among us. We were beaten up. Please! They're beating us up!' Milošević then spoke ominous words that would prove to be a turning point in his career as a Serbian leader: 'No one should dare to beat you again!'

Later he told his audience: 'This is your land, your fields, your gardens, your memories are here. Surely you will not leave your land because it is difficult here and you are oppressed... You should also stay here because of your ancestors and because of your descendants. Otherwise you would disgrace your ancestors, and disappoint your descendants. I do not propose, comrades, that in staying you should suffer and tolerate a situation in which you are not satisfied. On the contrary you should change it.'⁴

Instead of carefully curtailing ethnic nationalism, it had now been openly proclaimed a political priority. Communist ideology was replaced by a radical Serb nationalist ideology. The masses were now mobilised in a pseudo-democratic, populist way. This process of polarisation further destabilised the Yugoslav federal state. And although there was some moderate and liberal opposition in Serbia against the increasingly nationalist course, it proved itself too weak to stem the swelling nationalistic tide.

Serbian nationalism provoked the neighbouring republics. Shortly after the Serbian Memorandum was published, the 'Contributions to the Slovene National Programme' appeared in Slovenia. The document called for closing the Slovene ranks, criticised communism, denounced the large economic and financial contribution of Slovenia to the federation, and suggested that perhaps Slovenia would do better to withdraw from Yugoslavia. Partly due to heavy pressure from Belgrade and the national army JNA (*Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija*), the Slovene communist leadership initially rejected these ideas publicly, but growing Serb nationalism led to a rapprochement between the communist establishment and the dissident elite in Slovenia. In rapid succession the leadership decided upon a multi-party system, free elections, a thorough and largely covert preparation for national independence, the proclamation of sovereignty in September 1989 and, after many political entanglements that led to a further radicalisation of points of view, independence in June 1991.

Croatia also responded to the Serbian nationalist mobilisation. A previous revival of Croatian nationalism within the party and in cultural organisations had been forcibly repressed around 1970. Part of the political and intellectual party officials had been purged, some had fled, others, including the former partisan leader, JNA general and military historian Franjo Tuđman, had been imprisoned. Croatia bordered on Serbia and there was a sizeable Serbian minority of more



Articles in Serbian press: ‘Scholarly conference “Genocide of Serbs in the Second World War” completed yesterday in Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences: The Evil is Warning’. ‘1991: The Evil is repeating, with photos of “Serbian victims”’
Source: *Politika Ekspres*, 26 October 1991, p. 15

than half a million people that was well represented in the government, the administration, and the republican police force. However, as Serb nationalism radicalised, the Croatian elite became increasingly worried. This radicalisation was accompanied by harsh campaigns in the Serbian mass media against Muslims, Croats, and against the spectre of the fascist Ustaša regime of the 1940s. In 1989 the nationalist-Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*), was founded, headed by Franjo Tuđman. Under his populist leadership, ethnic nationalism was no longer restrained, and the Croatian population was politically mobilised, just like in Serbia.

The rise of ‘Croatian fascism’

After a multi-party system and elections were decided upon in late 1989, the HDZ started a Croatian nationalist campaign. This campaign purposefully linked up with old Croatian symbols, dreams of a Greater Croatia, and the past of the Ustaša movement, both before and during the Second World War. The campaign focused on the potential Serb threat and the imagined barbaric nature of the Serbs. During mass rallies Tuđman permitted himself remarks like: ‘Thank God, my wife isn’t Jewish or Serbian’, and: ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina is

a national state of the Croat nation', which were warmly applauded. Furthermore, communities of Croatian emigrants abroad, partly formed of Croats who had taken flight in 1945 and partly Croats that had fled around 1970, were mobilised.

The polarisation process within Yugoslavia was propelled forward. In April 1990 the HDZ won the elections by a narrow margin and in May Tuđman became president of Croatia. The declaration of independence followed in June 1991.

4. From political polarisation to mass violence

Yugoslavia was neither a democracy nor a constitutional state. The forces of the monopoly of violence — the police, the army, and various secret services — were neutral institutions only to a limited degree. Nevertheless, individual and collective violence in daily life was relatively rare.

The Yugoslav People's Army JNA contained around 70,000 officers, approximately 70% of whom were Serbs and Montenegrins. The great majority of the officers corps considered the JNA predominantly as the national guardian of the Yugoslav federation and of party communism. The national strategic doctrine anticipated possible hostile attacks, and as Bosnia-Herzegovina formed the central part of the country, large military installations and supplies were concentrated there.

Parallel to the national army, a semi-military organisation was set up, the so-called Territorial Defence Forces TO (*Teritorijalna Odbrana*). These forces were organised per republic and each consisted of several tens of thousands of workers, peasants, and civilians. Trained and equipped, they could mobilise quickly in the event of enemy attack and could then operate as guerrilla troops. The TO had its own command structure and its own, mostly light, arms and supplies. The TO meant that many Yugoslav males had military training and experience. Considerable stocks of weapons and ammunition were available everywhere, and people could easily gain access to these stocks.

The emergence of paramilitary armed groups, militias or gangs, and of local warlords, operating either in close collaboration with the regular forces of the JNA, the Croatian and later the Bosnian-Serb army, or more independently, played an important role in the turn towards violence. Once the chain of decisions of the various political elites in Belgrade, Zagreb, and later also Sarajevo, had opened the way to civil war and war, first in Slovenia, then Croatia and subsequently in Bosnia, the paramilitary groups became active. They were responsible for many of the most extreme atrocities against defenceless citizens committed in Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s.



Serb paramilitaries burn the Croatian flag as they take over a town, Autumn 1991.
Photo: Ron Haviv



A member of the Tigers, a Serbian paramilitary group, kicks the dying bodies of the first Muslims to be killed in the war in Bosnia, Spring 1992.

Photo: Ron Haviv

4.1 Conflict and war in Bosnia-Herzegovina

‘You want to take Bosnia and Herzegovina down the same highway to hell and suffering that Slovenia and Croatia are travelling. Do not think that you will not lead Bosnia and Herzegovina into hell, and do not think that you will not perhaps lead the Muslim people into annihilation, because the Muslims cannot defend themselves if there is war — How will you prevent everyone from being killed in Bosnia and Herzegovina?’

Radovan Karadžić, October 1991

In March/April 1992, war spread to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the central republic of Yugoslavia, when the JNA and Serbian forces attacked several cities close to the border with Serbia in the north of the republic. In early March 1992 Bosnia and Herzegovina was proclaimed an independent state by the government under Bosnian president Izetbegovic. Soon after this fighting broke out in and around Sarajevo, the capital of the republic turned state. This war lasted for three and a half years, until November 1995.

The course of the war reflected the complicated ethnic and ideological composition of the population of former Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At least ten armed factions, sometimes in shifting alliances, participated in the fighting. These were mostly Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim Bosnian.

Many people were killed in the war. Some civilian casualties were a result of the fighting, but most were due to widespread so-called ethnic cleansing, which in many cases was nothing more or less than genocidal practices. Ethnic cleansing resulted in large streams of refugees and caused enormous material damage.

Ethnic cleansing

This term is euphemistically used by perpetrators to hide their real intentions and practices. It is well to remember that such practices imply sustained, hostile and violent activities by an organised actor against a largely defenceless population group, whose members are targeted simply because they are perceived to belong to the group. However, it is not easy to attain more precision on these points — a problem frequently encountered in cases of war and civil war, massacres and genocide.

5. Victims

A United Nations Commission estimated that by late 1994 around 200,000 people had probably been killed, and approximately 50,000 tortured in as many as 800 prison camps and detention centres in Bosnia. At present, the total number of fatal casualties has been scaled down to not more than 150,000 for Yugoslavia as a whole, with over 100,000 victims in Bosnia alone.

According to the latest data from the Research and Documentation Center in Sarajevo, as well as the demographic expertise of the office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), of the roughly 1.89 million Muslim Bosnians, over 60,000 died. Of the 1.36 million Serbs in Bosnia, around 25,000 died, and of the Croat population, almost 8,000 died. In terms of absolute numbers the Muslim Bosnians suffered the most: they lost more than twice as many people as the Serbs, and almost eight times as many as the Croats.

Overall it seems that almost as many civilians were killed as combatants. Although men from all three sides were guilty of raping women from the 'enemy group(s)', it was only on the Serbian side that the rape of Muslim women appears to have been a sustained tactic of war and 'ethnic cleansing'.⁵

5.1 Refugees

One-half of the total pre-war population of Bosnia and Herzegovina became uprooted and displaced in one way or another. For the Muslims in Bosnia, the total figure for refugees amounts to around 60%. It is impossible to say how many people fled before their communities were actually attacked, how many fled, or were forced to flee, immediately after being attacked,



Detainees in the Manjača Camp, near Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Source: ICTY

and how many were forced out later. Fleeing before the communities were actually attacked has been called 'ethnic self-cleansing'. In this respect it should be emphasised that hardly any refugees in Yugoslavia left their homes voluntarily.

Some conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, all parties to the conflict suffered very serious losses of life, property, and goods. Secondly, they all, albeit in different ways, contributed to the developments that led to the war, and as part of their actual warfare they all committed various genocidal atrocities and massacres. It follows, thirdly, that in this conflict there is no single side, party, ethnic or population group that can be predominantly considered as 'the perpetrators', or as 'the victims'. On the contrary: within every ethnic category involved there are perpetrators as well as victims. However, this does not imply that all sides are equally responsible and to blame. The actual warfare was started by Bosnian Serbs, with decisive military aid from Serbia proper, and Serbian troops committed a far greater number of war crimes than any of the other parties involved in the conflict.

One of the worst atrocities of the war took place between 6 and 16 July 1995, when the Bosnian Serb Army, under the political leadership of Radovan Karadzic and the military command of Ratko Mladić, captured the formerly 'safe area' of the small town of Srebrenica. Tens of thousands of Muslim Bosnians had taken refuge there from 'ethnic cleansing' elsewhere in the region, and the area was formally protected by a small and insufficiently armed battalion of Dutch UN-soldiers (around 370 peacekeepers). The Dutch UN-soldiers did not — and could not — prevent the Serbs from occupying the area. They did not receive the repeatedly requested and promised close air support which might have stopped the Serbian attack. After capturing the area, the Bosnian Serb Army separated the Muslim men from the women and children. These latter were removed from the area on lorries and buses and taken to territory held by the Bosnian government. The men were taken elsewhere and subsequently executed, for the most part between 13 and 15 July. More than 7,000 Muslim men were deliberately killed in mass shootings.

It took some time for the news about the mass executions to reach the rest of the world. It took even longer for the world to realise that this had been a clear case of genocide by the Bosnian Serb Army. In August 1995 the international community at last resolved that firmer action should be taken against the Serbs by the US, NATO and UN. The horrible massacres near Srebrenica certainly contributed to this decision. From the end of August, Serb targets around Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia were systematically bombed by NATO planes. This forced the Bosnian Serbs and the leadership in Serbia proper to retreat, accept peace negotiations and come to an agreement to end the war.

6. The ICTY and the Dayton Peace Accords

For nearly three years the international community, represented by the UN, more or less turned a blind eye to the war and the atrocities being committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The UN limited itself to weak interventions: endless international negotiations, an arms embargo and some humanitarian aid. UN Peacekeeping ground troops had a strictly limited mandate.

However, journalists made courageous efforts to inform the world about the mass atrocities taking place in Yugoslavia. They visited Serb-run concentration camps, reported on the appalling conditions and treatment of Croat and Muslim detainees, and investigated other war atrocities. Under public pressure, the UN eventually took up its responsibility to investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Yugoslavia. In February 1993, the Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), to be located in The Hague. The ICTY was the first international criminal court since the Nuremberg trials in the aftermath of World War II. Its prosecutors issued indictments against more than 160 suspects, including most of the main figures responsible for the Yugoslav catastrophe. Slobodan Milošević was the first head of state to be put on trial, accused of war crimes and genocide. He died before the verdict was passed. With the recent arrests and trials of Karadzic and Mladić it may yet be



Karadzic on trial at the ICTY
Source: ICTY

that those who ordered the mass killings at Srebrenica will finally be judged.

The war itself ended in late 1995 when all the parties concerned agreed to the Dayton Peace Accords, under pressure from the US and the international community. The Dayton Peace Accords form the foundation of the present state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which consists of two entities, the Bosnian Serb Republic on 49% of the territory and a combined Croat and Bosnian Muslim entity on the remaining 51%.

The Yugoslavian drama resulted in poor overall living conditions for the large majority of the population and for many people they are far worse than they were around 1985. The destruction of the old federation has led to the formation of seven new states — Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo — and one deeply divided territory, the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The violence may have ended but the peace is under pressure, as both entities are run by mainly nationalist politicians who are in continuous conflict and competition. After sixteen years of peace, the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is still bleak.

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For genocide and crimes against humanity



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Milosevic, Karadzic, and Mladic have been indicted by the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia for crimes against humanity, including murders and rapes of thousands of innocent civilians, torture, hostage-taking of peacekeepers, wanton destruction of private property, and the destruction of sacred places. **Mladic and Karadzic** also have been indicted for genocide.

To bring **Milosevic, Karadzic, and Mladic** to justice, the United States Government is offering a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to the transfer to, or conviction by, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia of any of these individuals or any other person indicted by the International Tribunal.

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Wanted for crimes against humanity — 5 million dollar Reward

Source: ICTY

Damage done

At the time of the second Croatian military offensive against Serbian enclaves in Croatia in August 1995, television images were broadcast of fleeing Serbian civilians. One of these showed a Serbian peasant family in flight, the father grim-faced at the wheel of his tractor, pulling a wagon containing a few visibly anxious women and children, and some household goods. They were speeding down a narrow road along a forest. Standing in front of her house at the side of the road an outraged middle-aged Croatian woman shouted abuse at the top of her voice and threw big stones at the passing refugees. These images perhaps symbolise the greatest damage of all: instead of the formerly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Yugoslavia in which people could move about more or less freely, most of them are now locked up in their own ethnic-national groups and small territories, hemmed in on all sides by borders and frontiers, with bitter memories, and frequently still fearing and hating each other. It will take generations for that damage to be repaired.