THE BALKAN TRAGEDY

by Jukka Male
CROATIA
MIRA BRDARIĆ. Wounded in Osijek, 1.11.1991. Left eye destroyed by shrapnel, replaced with prosthesis. Optic nerve of right eye also damaged.
Shot in both legs.

Croatia, July 1992

MARINKO MARIANOVIC. Shot in both legs.

Croatia, July 1992
A bomb fell on the Begovic's home in Vinkovci. A piece of shrapnel was embedded 6 cm deep in Ivan's head. Martina has a torn muscle in her forearm caused by shrapnel and two shrapnel wounds in her back. At the time of the incident Ivan was 18 months old and Martina two and a half years.

Croatia, June 1998
OSIJEK, CROATIA. JUNE 1999.
RAMIZ ILIJAŽAGIĆ. Family killed during ethnic cleansing. Hospital workers claimed that Ilijazagić’s eight-year-old daughter was raped before being mutilated. Information unconfirmed. Psychological disturbances.
BOSNIA
MIRSDA DRAOLOJ. Wounded in Gorazde, 30.10.1993. Piece of shrapnel entered by way of left ear, exiting through mouth. Difficulties in balance and continuous pain. 100% invalidity.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, October 1998
Bosnia-Herzegovina, December 1999

ZEJNA SABANOVIC. Shrapnel in hand and leg in Gorazde, August 1994. Now lives in a part of the village of Pazaric previously inhabited by Serbs.
JEJNA GLUHO. 13.8.1993, Zuc/Sarajevo. Three shells exploded near a water point. Six people died, 12 were wounded. The picture shows Zejna's upper left thigh after 13 operations.
Amira Mekić. Wounded in the Novi Grad district of Sarajevo, 10.10.1993. Three shells fell nearby killing a number of people. At the time of the incident Amira was one month pregnant. She later gave normal birth to a daughter. Before the war she had worked in a shell factory with her husband.
During a battle in Nisicka Visoravan, 24.9.1994, a bullet passed through his left temple, exiting from the region of the chin. One eye replaced with prosthesis.
MIROSLAV LEGIN. Lost both legs when a booby-trap he had found exploded in the Vrbanja district in the centre of Sarajevo after the war, 3.6.1996.
EDIN DIZDAREVIĆ. The school named “21. November” that Edin attended had been moved to business premises in a multi-storey building a long distance from the front line dividing the town. A shell falling in the yard of the building in the middle of the school day on 9.11.1993 killed his teacher and four pupils. 29 pupils were seriously wounded. A piece of shrapnel penetrated Edin’s right cheek and tore out his left eye. Eye prosthesis.
Asija Kamber. Lost both legs and one arm when she stepped on a land mine in Brajkovac, Sarajevo, 5.5.1996.
SANELA RAČIĆ. Born mentally handicapped. Wounded, May, 1992 in Visegrad when a shell fell on her hiding place. Specific date not known because her family had been taking refuge in a forest for a month. Blinded in left eye, injuries to all limbs. Seriously traumatised. One of the family’s sons killed at war.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, October 1998
SARAJEVO, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA. DECEMBER 1999.
SERBIA
AND SERB REPUBLIC

Serbia, June 1998
RATKO BULATOVIC led the City of Belgrade's civil defence during the period of Nato bombing. While inspecting the damage caused by the bombing of army head-quarters in Belgrade, the building was targeted again by Nato. Bulatovic lost his legs in the explosion. 15 people were killed in the attack.

Serbia, October 1999
SAVO POLJČIĆ. Two exploding mines took off his entire left foot and the toes of his right foot. The Hadzici district of Sarajevo, 17.6.1994.
BELGRADE, SERBIA. OCTOBER 1999.
NADA MATANOVIĆ. Like many Serbs moved from Skadar in Albania to Kosovo in 1991. Was fleeing Kosovo to Montenegro, 3.5.1999. A Nato bomb hit a bus full of passengers at 12.30 p.m. at Savine Vode. 17 passengers died, 44 were wounded. Matanovic was hit by a piece of shrapnel in the back and by eight in the legs. Lower limbs paralysed.
Zivko Alavanja was hit by shrapnel in the left arm when a Nato bomb fell close to a refugee camp in Palic, 27.5.1999. His mother died of injuries sustained in the explosion. Zivko had already lost his left hand when an Italian missile, dating from World War II, exploded in his hand in Karin on the coast of Dalmatia in 1973.

Serbia, October 1999
DANIEL IVIĆ, 11 years. Nato’s bombing of Kosovski Vitin, 17.5.1999. Two wounded, one of which was Daniel. Both legs amputated, the right from the knee and the left from the upper thigh. Also shrapnel wounds to the back. Completely blind in right eye, 30% vision in left.
According to DUSAN VUKOJEVIĆ he made three mistakes in Kistanje, 23.3.1995: he didn't shave, he didn't take a drink and he didn't order any of his subordinates to render harmless the last three mines of an almost cleared minefield. Two of them had been found but hadn't been rendered harmless. The third, and last, had not been found, but it found him and when it exploded it threw him onto the other two mines which then exploded. In the blast, Dusan Vukojević lost the sight of his left eye, both his lower limbs and his right arm below the elbow.
Some kind of explosion in the night of 22.1.1993 in Vlasenica – possibly a bomb. Following the explosion he spent one month in a coma. Completely blind, lost entire left leg. Lives alone and suffers mostly from loneliness.

Serbia, June 1998
SLOBODAN DUVNJAK was with his mother in their yard in Kupres, 22.10.1994, preparing to leave with a refugee convoy when a shell exploded killing two people. One of them was the then four-year-old Slobodan's mother. The boy was hit by shrapnel in the hip. He lives with his relatives as a group of refugees in the Serb Republic of Bosnia.

The Serb Republic of Bosnia, September 1998
SLAVOLJUB SIMIĆ. Wounded by a Nato bomb falling on the Krusik munitions factory in Valjevo, 18.5.1999. Left arm severed by shrapnel.
A bomb triggered by the hand-brake was placed in MIOLJKA SIMIČ’S car. When she stopped in her yard he could smell smoke and managed to throw her five-year-old daughter from the car before it exploded. Prniavor, 5.8.1994.
KOVAČICA, SERBIA. OCTOBER 1999.
KOSOVO
Kosovo, August 1998
IBADITE THAQI, 13 years. While she was returning home, two mines hidden in the building exploded. She lost both legs. Lapushnik, 16.6.1999.
Mine explosion in Shtime, 12.6.1999, occurred during Nato’s presence in Kosovo. Mihrie was trying to prevent her brother from playing with mines he had found in the garden.
XHEVDET STULJAKU. Hit by sniper’s bullet. Sibovc, 11.7.1998. Was a Mother Theresa organisation relief worker.
JETON SHABANI. Wounded under shellfire. Leletiq, 24.7.1998. Is being treated at home. Most Albanians were unable to gain admittance to hospital in Kosovo.
DRAGAN PETROVIĆ. A rifle bullet in the chin. A member of the militia, wounded in battle against the UCK (KLA). August 1998.
ATIFETE GASHI, 8 years old. Wounded in the back by shell fire. Terdefc, 24.7.1998. Paralysed below the waist.

Kosovo, June 1999
BESART AHMETAJK, 13 years. Lost his right eye, nose and part of left cheek during a Nato bombing raid on refugee column in Korish at 11:50 p.m., 13.5.1999. 48 people died during the bombing and over 60 were seriously wounded.
Serb
 Ratko Mladić led Belgrade's civil defence during Nato bombing. He lost his legs on 30 April 1999 while inspecting the damage of the army headquarters when they were hit the second time.

Bosnian
 Altin Fašiavić, during a battle in Vitez, Visoko, 24 September, 1994, a bullet passed through his left temple, exiting from the region of the chin. One eye was replaced with prosthesis.
Bosnian
Archbishop Karlo Dzajic, during a service in Medica Hayesa, 1992. A bullet passed through his temple, exiting from the bottom of the chin. One year later, with probecase.

Tutsi
Aline Mugwaneza. Foot cut by a machete in April 1994 in Murama, Rwanda.
We live at a time when most of the people of Europe have no first-hand experience of war. When the Balkans exploded into violence we were confronted with war as something new. Organised hostility is difficult to comprehend. While the events associated with wars are complex in respect to their background they are simple in terms of their violence. In a state of war, society fights against the morals it has itself produced. We should, then, be able to oppose war and simultaneously accept its aggressive nature.

The seeds of war are hidden in peace. We are taught that the presence of armies is quite natural. Every state seeks to maintain its military power. It is the state's way of making itself heard on the international stage. While ideologies are spiritual by nature, setbacks turn them into corpses.

As the millennium was drawing to a close the European idyll was shattered when the federal state of Yugoslavia erupted into violence. The structure of the Iron Curtain had not been fully understood. The former “partisan state” had been divided into spheres of interest which initially aimed to increase their power vis-à-vis the central government. Negotiations between them were unsuccessful and a group of states, all declaring independence in a manner of their own, began to define their mutual relations by means of force.

Slovenia succeeded in detaching itself from Yugoslavia with relative ease. The dispute between Croatia and Serbia degenerated into a fully blown war over rights to areas which had been settled by both ethnic groups. In Bosnia-Herzegovina a similar division was taking place involving Muslims, Croatians and Serbs. In Kosovo, the Albanian and Serbian population had nothing more in common than a shared geographical location. Politically the situation erupted into a theatre of war the last act of which, for the time being at least, was a bombing campaign by an American controlled Nato against the mother state, Yugoslavia, the purpose of which was to put an end to the violence that had been going on for too long.

The Balkan tragedy of the final decade could have been avoided. The decisions were made by people. Bad political judgements were made both in the Balkans and in places with influence in the region. The wall between what happened and what did not is thin. One tragedy followed another and snowballed as if no intervention were possible. Ethnic differences gained importance initially as a means to gain or maintain power, but subsequently their significance changed in such a way as to define the entire picture of the conflict.

Many see the problems of a shattered Yugoslavia as local issues. The Balkans are a reflection of their past. They have brought upon
themselves the myth according to which every second generation must have its war. The violence seems distant until it is close at hand as it did in Sarajevo as long as the war was raging in Croatia. Later the war came to Sarajevo too, as it did to so many of the regions in the collapsing federal state.

Many years of war have brought unspeakable misery to the Balkans: a quarter of a million dead, a countless number of wounded, industry and infrastructure destroyed and a population driven into exile. Impoverished economies and the unbridled corruption which govern them build visions of the future that are just as bleak as those economies which define them.

No nation is a singularity even if, by way of generalisation, it achieves a certain reputation. Every nation encompasses a whole spectrum of values. But wars affect international relations nevertheless. Over the past ten years, the Serbs have gained the same kind of reputation for aggression as did the Germans during the second World War. A stigma which will only slowly fade.

A society wounded by war does not easily rid itself of the blemish of war. I have examined all sides involved in the conflicts in the area previously known as Yugoslavia from the Croatia of 1992 until the Kosovo and Serbia of the present day. My subjects have been those injured both during the period of war and the time that followed.

My view is simple. I have depicted the seriously wounded on all sides of the conflict, one of the inevitable results of war in which everyone is a loser; in these wars Serbs, Croatians, Bosnian Muslims and Kosova Albanians alike. The purpose of these pictures is to break through the thin shell which the words hide. Rather than seeking reasons I am trying to reveal the consequences of war.

My pictures only give a slight indication of the horror story behind the politics of violence in the Balkans, the sum total of which is impossible to define. While attempts are made to translate the destruction wreaked on society into the language of economics, the suffering of the individual cannot be measured. These wounds were inflicted deliberately. They did not come about by accident but were premeditated.

We have become accustomed to commemorating history and its gravestones, at the same time forgetting the silent moments surrounding the stones. History has traditionally been the story of social revolution and violence. War and peace, each giving birth to the other, each following the other, each in turn making room for change, a change which could lead in either direction.

The end of the millennium does not mean the inevitable end of anything. Peace is not a permanent state even though it is championed as an aim when people speak. Only that history that has already been made is unchangeable. If good is passive and powerless, evil is the victor.

Perpetuity exists now. It is the only moment we can affect.

Helsinki, 29.3.2000 Jukka Male • jukka@jukkamale.fi
ZAGREB, CROATIA. JULY 1992
Lili Marlene is playing on the café terrace. First in German, then in Croatian. Then a dull hit, 'Peace, Yugoslavia, peace'. It must be an old piece. Sulc wants some other music and at the same time asks for the volume to be turned up. He is a discontented mercenary. 'How can you get a woman on a hundred marks a month? Nohow!'

The Killer points at a pigeon. 'Bang!' His arms leave stripes in the air and the pigeon would be history if Sulc had a gun. He says he is buying a new pistol, and then that he killed children in Vukovar. 'Look at that! Sex bomb! Oooh, fucky!' Sulc gestures at a woman. Another woman goes by and gets a thumbs-down. 'No good!'

Sulc has a woman in Sisak. I wonder what she's like. Who could love a troll? He has an animal's reflexes. Whenever something rustles, Sulc starts and is ready for battle. No sleep for the past four days. 'Doesn't matter! Oh... look, that's a Chechnik, they've got beards!' Sulc is from Kosovo, and bitter toward the Serbs. More than for the Croats, he's fighting against the Serbs. He won't tell me his real name.

It's eight in the morning. I go back to the hotel. The city fills up with people going to work. I wonder how the children felt in the hands of the Killer. Or in the hands of the Killers. The circular letter of murder has crossed borders and demands a terrible revenge which is difficult for us to grasp, but more human than we want to understand. Deep into war, everything happens. Can the causes of war be erased just by killing everyone.

I lie down in my hotel room covered only by a sheet. I imagine I am a corpse. Hatred. War. Rage. Revenge. Compensation. The three coffees I have been bought burn my stomach. The air-conditioning hums more evenly now, and doesn't sound like bombing any more. A morgue must be kept cool. Do not disturb. Do not change the bedclothes until tomorrow, room 221.

ZAGREB, CROATIA. JULY 1992
Saturday night, and I am walking in the centre of town, amazed at what I see. Is this country at war? It doesn't look like it. It is like falling out of the black-and-white film of one's prejudices into a colour film. Murderous battles on the front nearby and the passionate night-life of the city do not fit with my preformed image of war.

The terrace cafés are full; happy people wander the streets. The pavements are opera, dance, ballet and story-telling. The front is far away from here. The celebrations are a war against war. What seems controversial to the visitor is perhaps a compensation for anxiety. But isn't this going too far? No. This city life, which seems extremely paradoxical to the outside, must be accepted and defended. Yes, exactly: defended. Because this is what they want.

ZAGREB, CROATIA. JULY 1992
How can war have rules? How can people feel insulted because war does not follow its rules. How can it be allowed rules. Is it possible for the rules of war to contain something which is right? Why does no one feel insulted because it is possible for war to be intellectually organised activity, because it is in practice accepted, although in theory it is not wanted.

On the other hand, there is a desire to escape even the weak rules of war. If it is possible to call war anti-terrorist activity, then let's do so. Then there are no rules to govern cruelty that is committed in the name of societal self-defence. How many victims are needed before it can be called a war. The yardstick of understanding turns grey; hatred turns into a way of seeing another person.

In wars, someone is always the last to die. Could not even one be spared? Where is the line between self and other. Is a nation a measure for sharing responsibility. To what extent is humanity solidarity. Community spirit is not a shared spirit, but everyone’s spirit separately. All rules hold in war and love. You hate and I love. War legitimates crimes against the person. People who would not otherwise commit suicide have themselves killed. A military uniform has a civilian body.
NOVSKA, CROATIA. JULY 1992
As well as lives, war destroys objects. Buildings, roads, bridges, towns and villages. War makes the beautiful and the ugly the same. A thousand raped women are the same as one. These borders begotten by war function as they survive like time bombs. Kosovo and Macedonia wait their turn. The long systematic superpower policy of a nation has come to the end of its road. The nation chooses its leaders; the leaders choose the enemy.

HELLAS-EXPRESS, 20 MAY 1998, BETWEEN BUDAPEST AND BELGRADE
The train is short and empty for an international express, a vehicle between two capitals. Warfare leaves its mark on relations between countries. I think about the influence of cultures on the cultivation of hatred on the part of different nations and the justification of cultures which in one way or another raise themselves above the rest. Are there any cultures in existence which mean well to everyone.

... IN THE SAME TRAIN NEAR SUBOTICA, ON THE YUGOSLAV BORDER
A middle-aged woman rushes out of the forest toward the train, gesturing with her hands as if she were waving at the passengers. At the same time three man-sized plastic bags fly out of the last carriage. Now I understand the sounds of sellotaping I heard earlier. Smugglers. They were wrapping sacks together. Two of the sacks burst as they hit the ground at high speed. They hurl their contents like slowly exploding stars. Small objects fly, each its own celestial body, along the railway embankment. Strange that the border officials do not intervene. Perhaps they take their cut. Taxed by economic sanctions, Yugoslavia accepts everything it can get.

ANOTHER FRONTIER, THE SKOPJE-PRISTINA ROAD, AUGUST 1998
The clock on the bus has stopped. The conductor moves its hands to the right time every twenty minutes. More luggage is lifted into the coach before the border. A child's plastic tricycle in the corridor, and taped-up packages between the seats. There are already bulky packages on the seats; visible through the plastic are shoes and clothes and other easily saleable things: household tools, fruit baskets and cleaning materials.

Frontiers give a direction to poverty. Poverty runs upstream. It does not obey the laws of physics. The Macedonian border police officer, a smiling woman, calls the frontier the Serbian frontier. Not the frontier of Kosovo or Yugoslavia. So Kosovo is in Serbia.

LLAUSHA, KOSOVO. AUGUST 1998
In the ravine is a bus which has burnt to a rusty skeleton. It was rammed there. From the sturdy cartridge cases you can see how the tanks have stopped here to fire for a long time. The militia gesture to us angrily from the shelter of sandbags to drive on. We may not stop. The battles continue. I remember Llausha in May, when the first grenades exploded there. Then the situation was different. We avoided the army's road closures by using the forest road that descends to the village from behind. Now Llausha is tightly surrounded, and no one is allowed in.

RAUSIC, KOSOVO. AUGUST 1998
Two fire-engine-red tractors dash out in front of us from side roads, driven by Serb militiamen. Behind them, through the woods, we can see a house which has just been set on fire. On each tractor is a blue-uniformed man, his back to the engine, legs dangling. The real owners of the vehicles and the houses are Albanians who have been expelled.

The militiamen are cheerful and carefree. The life's work of the people they hate burn in a couple of hours to hollow cores; courtyards fall silent and become soundlessly smouldering smoke. Around the empty villages, loose cattle feed in the maize fields. It is the only thing which happens here without evil intentions, with a good conscience.

PRISTINA, KOSOVO. AUGUST 1998
You have to choose your side. Every slightly more serious conversation leads to the question: whose side are you on? My friend, whose mother is a Serb, is suspect. It is not enough that she is against injustice; her mother should become an Albanian.

‘We came here five hundred years before the apes and another five hundred years before the devil,’ says Veton, a full Albanian. The Serbs are the Albanians' devils. Veton talks a lot. Each sentence seeks some difference between the Albanians and the Serbs. The occupation must be removed, even if it takes a thousand years.
JUNIK, KOSOVO. AUGUST 1998
A horse walks toward me on a deserted village street. No villagers are visible. Four cows are on the loose in the nearby byre, and at their feet is a hen and her chicks. Two militiamen sit on guard in a café that has been shot to shreds. The militia forces have just taken Junik after heavy fighting. The village is important to both sides. To the Albanians, it is a web-page icon. Behind the bar, beside some postcards, hangs a 50 billion dinar note from 1993. Its value lies in its valuelessness. 'Take it as a souvenir!' say the militiamen. I do.

ORAHOVAC, KOSOVO. AUGUST 1998
The style of the guards at the check-point is aggression. The group displays the fashion-consciousness of the paramilitary: scarves on heads or wound round necks, a few earrings and Rayban glasses. Everyone has an assault rifle in his hand and on his feet boots fit for kicking. The armour-covered bodies are strongly built. The men’s movements are restless and impressive; like copies of violent American films that have been seen many times. Around are stolen cars with doors sprayed with Orthodox symbols and the text: Serbia belongs to the Serbs. The heat sends the men crazy. Self-esteem is fragile, and always on the trigger.

BELGRADE, SERBIA. SEPTEMBER 1998
Sasha draws the sign of a cross on a piece of paper and shows Serbia defending Christianity. Then he draws a half-moon and scribbles on it quickly so that finally there is a thick cross on top of the half-moon. 'The Muslims must be destroyed!' Sasha says. 'No one can be neutral!' he says, meaning me, so sharply that it sounds like science.

BELGRADE-BANJA LUKA ROAD, SEPTEMBER 1998
The division of Yugoslavia is traumatic in many ways. We drive along the Sava river on the Serb Republic side. 'That’s Croatia. So near, and yet so far,' says the bus-driver’s assistant, pointing to the other side of the river. Empty villages as far as the eye can see as we approach Derventa. Shot-out houses, uninhabited. Sometimes, evenly, every building is a ruin, sometimes there is an occasional undamaged one, as if by accident in the midst of this otherwise fragmented settlement. Just before the town there is an apartment block that has remained a building site, beside it a crane stopped by the explosion, distorted but still ready to complete its task.

BANJA LUKA, THE SERB REPUBLIC OF BOSNIA. SEPTEMBER 1998
Savo, who is wounded in his feet, curses the mines. A bullet makes a soldier inactive for a moment, a mine for the rest of his life. More than his own wounds, he is depressed on behalf of his son: as they exploded, the grenade-detonators he had found took almost all of the sight of both his eyes.

SARAJEVO, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA. OCTOBER 1998
The consequences of war become everyday life. Life before the war seems unreal and distant. Life now is a pile of difficulties, poverty and incapacity. Even the well have their difficulties, but there is no demand for defective body. The burden is multiplied since the troubles are almost always both physical and economic.

Korde’s life was good before the war, but now he feels as if there was no life before the war. A grenade fell on Vase Miskina street and killed 17 people. It put Korde into a coma, and of the year that followed he remembered nothing. A year later, a grenade that hit the courtyard of his home knocked him unconscious again. It restored his memory. When he came to, he realised that this was war.

SARAJEVO, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA. OCTOBER 1998
On Lepir’s hands are two eternally tattooed loves: the initials of the Yugoslav People’s Army, JNA, and the woman of his youth who never became his wife. Also his relationship with the People’s Army changed with time. He moved from behind the gun to in front of the gun.

Sarajevo became a city on which 1,000,000 grenades were fired in three and a half years. As a target, it was easy. Sarajevo lies at the bottom of a deep valley. The Serbs surrounded the city with their artillery and their sharp-shooters, and transformed it into a hell on earth. The kilometres which, now I have walked them, have raised a
blist er on the sole of my foot, would during the siege probably have taken my whole foot, if they had not perhaps killed me.

**SARAJEVO, BOSNIA–HERZEGOVINA. OCTOBER 1998**

Ajla lives in a short stretch of street in the centre of town. She points to her window, next to which is an empty, blown-up apartment. It was hit by a rocket. Everyone died. The marks left in the streets by the shells are called roses after the patterns they make. The senders of those flowers were known, but anonymous.

**BETWEEN OSIJEK AND VINKOVCI, CROATIA. JUNE 1999**

Many fields on the old battlefronts have grown wild. They are unpredictably mined. That is why no one dares enter them. Liberated from people, plant species behave like people conquering land: first come the greediest, then it is the toughest that settle.

**OSIJEK, CROATIA. JUNE 1999**

‘Of soldiers who served at the front, 268 have committed suicide this year,’ says Tomislav. ‘They should take better care of people. They take even less notice of civilian victims.’ The grenade that hit him had his name written on it. That is what he says. As if the inevitable must always happen. It is worth believing, so that life is not unjust.

Tomislav finds it difficult to bear the numbing Croatian chauvinism of the radio and television. He knows he is a Croat, and that should be enough. Extreme nationalist movements are at the height of their popularity throughout the Balkans. It is understandable. Each group has deep suffering fresh in its memory. It seems compulsory to belong to the nationalist parties, otherwise all the suffering would have been in vain. If the end result of the war were the same as where it started, the war would have been in vain.

**FERIZAJ, KOSOVO. TOWN HOSPITAL MORGUE, JUNE 1999**

Serbs or Albanians. The unidentified bodies all look the same. The speechlessness of the dead conceals their ethnic origin. Unbreathing, they lie in peace, side by side. The American soldier said they were Serbs, but the Albanian doctor claims he does not know the victims’ identity. Whether or not they are Albanians, none of them have papers. The doctor is waiting for relatives to fetch the bodies. I don’t understand. Who are the relatives, if no one knows who the bodies are.

**PRIŠTINA, KOSOVO. JUNE 1999**

Lulzim has just returned home from the refugee camp. At home the clock is still on wintertime. His family is coming after him. They had to leave Kosovo on the last day of March. They didn’t suffer the worst. Many people died or were mugged. The war, as it progresses, is evolutionary: cruel becomes crueler. Progress is human nature, both as a psychological property and in technical solutions. There would be no weapons, either, if they were not capable of killing.

**PRIŠTINA, KOSOVO. JUNE 1999**

Despite the presence of Nato, there are weapons everywhere. Today there was a shooting incident in the hospital. A Serb man threatened a doctor and then shot the medications officer. A black American soldier came toward me, carrying the wounded prisoner. ‘Stand back!’ he shouted at me, and disappeared past me through the door.
BELGRADE, SERBIA. OCTOBER 1999
From the street scene, it is impossible to infer the state of the nation. People are well-dressed, generally according to the weather and their own inclinations. The lack of heating in the apartments does not affect life outdoors. If there is a shortage of fuel, people walk more. Since they cannot afford to travel, people spend less time away from the city. Some people, in difficulties with their livelihood, sell their possessions in the street. In addition, countless refugees walk the streets. Distress enlivens the street scene, deceiving the outsider into optimism.

BELGRADE, SERBIA. OCTOBER 1999
Wars have their internal political objectives. This country is privatised between the army, the secret police and the political elite. Built in to Serbia is its faithful nomenklatura, which repeats its leaders words with the accuracy of a microphone. But there are other people in the country. The sustenance of the internal order of the state is like a stationary war in which battle-lines are unknown because the enemies are contained within the community which is to be protected.

All that is left of the federation are Serbia and Montenegro. Kosovo is, in practice, lost. What then, is the position of Vojvodina, which the war has left almost untouched and which was stripped of its autonomy at almost the same time as Kosovo. Threat or victim. To people who live there, the Nato bombings seemed unjust. Among their own people, there is also understanding. 'The bridges of Novi Sad were not toppled into the river by American missiles, but as early as 1991 by the weight of flowers thrown on to JNA tanks as they made their way toward Vukovar,' was the writer Nenad Canak's comment after the Americans destroyed the bridges with rockets.

BELGRADE, SERBIA. OCTOBER 1999
During the Nato bombings, the German mark was a strong currency, international products were available and MacDonald's was open. The American, German and French cultural institutes in Kneza Mihaila suffered almost as sad a fate as the Nato-bombed Chinese embassy, although without human casualties. They still stand empty and dirtied, waiting for better times, which will come just as surely as they will be followed by worse ones.

'The time of the bombings was unreal. In the evenings, there were no street lamps or people in the streets, apart from dog-walkers. The city was empty. It was like something out of Bladerunner. Erase the street lights. Enter. Street lights erased. – Erase the people. Enter. People erased. All the trouble considered, it was a learning experience. There's no doubt that I see my life more clearly now. Everything is crystal clear,' says Milena.

BELGRADE, SERBIA. OCTOBER 1999
The waitress suddenly loses her temper. From behind me comes a bloodcurdling scream, followed by an angry outpouring of which I understand only the word 'Milosevic'. A man replies, and from his speech I understand the word 'police'. I also understand that within the coldness of Belgrade there broods a volcano which awaits eruption. People are anxious. It does not help that yesterday the radiators were tepid. Today they are cold.

GORAZDE, BOSNIA–HERZEGOVINA. NOVEMBER 1999
In the courtyards of the blocks are as many piles of logs as there are flats in the buildings. The vision is nostalgic, the life it contains arduous. Residents have to heat their own spaces themselves. The logs are piled up into stacks of different kinds. Most of them are covered with sheets of plastic; others are sheltered by the topmost logs. The situation is the same on the other side of the border, in the Serb Republic. I remember its capital Banja Luka preparing itself for the coming winter, the sound of logs being chopped everywhere and the horse-drawn diesel saw that tours the city.

MOSTAR, BOSNIA–HERZEGOVINA. DECEMBER 1999
History does not repeat itself. History is repeated by the present. Why do wars break out, if no one wants them. Are war and peace the same measurable time? Do wars end when they end, or is peace a lobby for war, an antechamber of conflict. The children of war will always find a wet-nurse in history.

The people of the same town shoot one another here, too. There are many estimations of the reasons for the Balkan conflicts. Much has been said about ethnic difference and the poor tolerance of religions for other religions, or that it was only in the Balkans that the Second World War was finally fought to the end. Perhaps none of these alone, but all of them together. Here, the east and west of Europe cast a joint shadow. The sky mixes the land. There are many gods; the devils are the people themselves.
SARAJEVO, BOSNIA–HERZEGOVINA.
DECEMBER 1999
Branislava has travelled from Belgrade to Sarajevo for a conference of cultural people. It would not be extraordinary, except that this is her first time since the war. She stammers her astonishment again and again. The city is not, in her opinion, as it was; in the streets one continually sees only scarf-headed girls, in other words Muslims. The moment is, however, exaggerated. A religious occasion has just finished nearby, and people returning from it fill the street.

FORMER FOČA, PRESENT–DAY SRBINJA,
THE SERB REPUBLIC OF BOSNIA.
DECEMBER 1999
Human beings are the only animals who make written agreements. The power of signatures is enormous, until they are overturned by someone with greater power. In war, the property to be divided is places with all their property. Rights are sought with wrongs. Missiles are used instead of money. The object of trade is easier to capture when the seller is absent. Borders between states show where the conflict last ended.

Translated by Hildi Hawkins