

Feb. 8, 1994

Present situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

I arrived in the former Yugoslavia on 31st of January 1994. On 5th February the dramatic event of Sarajevo happened. One grenade struck on a market killing 66 people and injuring 115.

Since then the tension is very high in the area. In Croatia, most of the refugees have left to neighbouring countries like Germany, Switzerland, and England. Those who are left behind want to go but they have no relatives or friends who can help them in going out.

Situation in Bosnia remains tense. It is getting worse with each of food and fierce winter. One convoy carrying food and medicine reached in to the city of Bosnia called Visoko last week, the hungry people rushed towards the trucks and snatched all the food before the truck can make to the storage.

Children without parents, burned houses and fear is the story of Bosnia now. I met one boy in a refugee camp in Croatia. His name was Halil Kozic. He is 17 years old. Born in a Bosnian City of Visegrad. His town was raided by the Serbian soldiers in 1992. The Serbians slaughtered his father, mother, and sister (20 years old) in front of his eyes. The Serbians took him to a concentration camp where he stayed for 6 months. Torture and hardships was the daily scene in Bosnia. For every Serb, 20-30 Muslims are released. Halil was then brought to Split Croatia by U.N. Forces in a helicopter in 1993 now he stays in a refugee camp in Split Croatia alone. He is on the mercy of other people. He is still in a shock. Without any future Halil Kozic wonders around the streets. One day the war will be over. All the refugees will go back to their houses. But for Halil no body is waiting in Bosnia. No family No cousins, no house nothing.

But Halil is not alone. There are so many Halil in Bosnia that one can't count. Halil is a light for humanity. His silence has numerous stories. His smile is an act of bravery. These Halils will show the world, the path of peace and prosperity. I asked Halil if he has any message for the world, He said "Parents are a blessing. Peace is a Blessing. I wish that no body will see what I have seen. Don't worry about me I will live. Please help those who cannot."

From, ABBAS ALI Reporting from ex-Yugoslavia 8th Feb. 1994

A letter to the Daily Nebraskan from Abbas Ali, a Bosnian relief worker. The text has not been edited.

A Note from the Editor

In October 1992, two University of Nebraska-Lincoln students, Abbas Ali and Suleman Ahmer, began transporting food, medicine and humanitarian relief in the war-torn region of the former Yugoslavia.

On June 30, 1993, Ali, a chemical engineering major, and Ahmer, a graduate student, were stopped at a military checkpoint inside the Bosnia-Croatia border. They were searched, beaten and taken to jail.

Ali and Ahmer, both of Pakistan, were accused of being spies.

After 18 days of starvation and being threatened with death, the two students were released.

Ali promised his fellow prisoners he would never forget them.

Upon his return to Lincoln, Ali told the Daily Nebraskan:

"Those 25,000 people don't have food. How can I just clean my hands and go away?"

In December, Ali returned to his relief efforts in the former Yugoslavia, but he has maintained contact with the Daily Nebraskan.

In addition to regular faxes about travel conditions of various roads and areas, an envelope from Ali arrived Thursday covered with seals and stamps. The envelope contained a personal letter, a short feature story and pictures.

The letter was written Feb. 8.

The Daily Nebraskan understands Ali's comments present only one perspective in a complicated, multisided story, but the value of a firsthand look at the suffering in Sarajevo far outweighs the balance of sides on which the suffering occurs.

In order to share other perspectives, the Daily Nebraskan on Thursday contacted members of the university community who had Serbian and Croatian ties.

Student witnesses tragedy as war devastates Bosnia



By Abbas Ali For the Daily Nebraskan

SPLIT, Bosnia-Herzegovina—Words won't do justice. I don't know what to write. Struggle for survival is going on in Bosnia.

I spoke to a 17-year-old girl in August of 1993. Her name is Ediba Kapic; her father, a medical doctor, is in a concentration camp in Ljubuski, Bosnia-Herzegovina. With her wet eyes she uttered the words, "No one will help us but God."

That is true. Bosnia is a slap on the face of humanity. The brutality by the Serbs and Croats has never been seen in history.

Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, hosted the Winter Olympics. All the world gathered to enjoy the scenic and beautiful sites of this city. Residents opened their houses and hearts for the sports fans, but when Sarajevo called for help against the Serb oppression, the world closed its doors. Bitter cold, lack of food and electricity, and human blood all over is the life of Sarajevo.

The famous city of Mostar, which was once a tourist attraction, is now a picture of smoke and ashes. The famous bridge of Mostar, Stari Most (meaning old bridge), made by the Ottoman rulers, has been destroyed in the fight between Muslims and Croats.

I still remember the time I was passing by the Stari Most, when a weak, old man approached

me and asked, "What has happened to the world?"

I had no answer.

The U.N. storage at Metkovic, the border town of Croatia, is full of food and emergency supplies, but the poor people of Mostar, just 70 miles away, are suffering from fierce cold and hunger. Surrounded by the Serbs from one side and by the Croats from the other, the residents of Mostar are waiting for their fate.

As Laila Jasar, a 13-year-old girl from Sarajevo, told me during a brief conversation, "Once I used to go to school. I had so many friends and life was very good and rich, but suddenly, one night, Sarajevo was attacked by the Serbs.

"Everyone was crying. So many of my friends were killed. My house was shelled, and I, with my mother and sister, managed to escape. I had not seen so much blood flowing into the street in my life."

With her dry eyes she said, "Please stop the war; I want to go home."

One high school teacher from Sarajevo, a 35-year-old, Pasha, told her story.

"In the summer of 1991, the Serbs came in my house in Sarajevo. They kept me and my two children on one side of the house and beat my husband, a 36-year-old engineer. They shot him in the head in front of us and left us weeping at the dead body."

As the nightmare continues, there is very little hope that the world community will try to do anything. But, as the Bosnians say, "God will help and everything will be OK." These words from crying mothers, raped women and small, orphaned children show a light to the sleepy world.



Victims of shelling in Central Bosnia.

UNL Serb criticizes media

Editor's note: The following excerpt is from a column published in the Daily Nebraskan one year ago today. Biljana Obradovic, a graduate student in creative writing and poetry, is Serbian.

I just received a letter from my childhood friend in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, telling me that Serbs there were "celebrating" the ninth month of the blockade. Three more months and it will have been a year since the sanctions were imposed on my country, even though it is not involved in the war and doesn't have its soldiers on Bosnian soil.

Yet, the sanctions are still there. The people are suffering, and many are dying because there is not enough money to import medication. Many people have been laid off, including my friend, because the economy has practically collapsed. The West has succeeded in that, but Serbian pride remains intact.

The media are representing us in an incredibly untruthful manner, constantly favoring the Muslim Bosnians and never mentioning the deeds of the Croats, who are grabbing more land than anyone in this conflict and portraying the Serbs as people-eating monsters. All this, even though Serbians owned 70 percent of the land in Bosnia-Herzegovina before this and are sim-

ply trying to retain it. Yes, simply keep it; call it what you will, but Serbs did not vote for secession from Yugoslavia—they were forced to remain in the Republic. We have Tito, our late leader, to thank; he drew borders of republics artificially. Why the world community feels so strongly about them is beyond my understanding. They were internal borders within a larger country—which didn't count for much.

And then the crime tribunal... Comparing it to those of the Nazi Germany Nuremberg trials is so ridiculous. Again the world has turned on the Serbs, as if the Muslims who killed all those people waiting in the break line didn't "commit a crime," or as if the Muslims who shot the people at the Muslim funeral—all staged to look as if Serbs were killing Muslims—didn't commit a crime. And so on and so on. The endless misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the media never seem to stop.

The years of ethnic cleansing of the Serbs from the province of Kosovo, which I have personally observed, now show that it has been cleansed and is 90 percent Albanian Muslim. Most Serbian and Montenegrin people who lived there moved to other parts of Serbia. My own grandfather's village in Serbia has grown from a mere 1,500 citizens to more than 4,000 with the refugees who have been fleeing Kosovo in the last decade. And now Serbs are the aggressors—the cleansers!

Croatians, Muslims have own reasons

From Staff Reports

While political science professor Ivan Volgyes is unable to speak from a first-hand Croatian perspective, he does have the point of view of a scholar who knows both sides of the story.

"Clearly the Croatian side is that they are trying to establish a Croatian homeland," Volgyes said, part of which includes habitations of Croatian people in what is now known as Bosnia.

Volgyes said Croats felt they had a historic justice to recapture their homeland. Many of the states in that area were artificially carved up by world powers after World War I.

Many of the lines drawn, Volgyes said, are no longer justifiable.

Conflict also arises because a large chunk of what Serbs claim is historically part of Serbia, lies inside of Croatia.

Besides territorial claims, lines are drawn on ethnic and religious barriers.

"Croats are fighting against Muslims to unite Croats under one Croatian state, only at the expense of Muslims," Volgyes said.

"On the other hand, the Muslims are fighting for survival. If the Muslims give up the territory, they will not have a viable state."

The Daily Nebraskan made an effort to contact people with personal ties to Croatia, but was unable to obtain comments on the record.

Bosnia update

- Bosnian Presidency (mostly Muslim)
- Bosnian Serb
- Bosnian Croat
- Areas of population most endangered by continued fighting.
- Frontline

Within Bosnia:

- Artillery fire wounds five U.N. peacekeepers near the besieged city of Tuzla, 50 miles north of Sarajevo. It is not known who fired the shells.
- Thousands of Sarajevoans take to the streets while NATO warplanes fly overhead to enforce NATO's threat to bomb any artillery positions that shelled the Bosnian capital.
- Relief convoys and flights resume in Bosnia. Thirteen planes drop 99 tons of food into Gorazde, a besieged Muslim town in eastern Bosnia.