

Chapter 1

BEFORE THE YEAR 1991, WHICH MARKED THE START OF THE DECOMPOSITION OF THE COUNTRY FORMERLY CALLED YUGOSLAVIA, I PUBLISHED MY COMICS IN DIFFERENT MAGAZINES OVER THERE AND JUST STARTED TO DISCOVER THE COMICS SCENE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. DURING THE 80s, MY COMICS WERE RANGING FROM HUMOROUS TO AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL, WITH A DREAMY ATMOSPHERE PREVAILING... WHEN THE SERIES OF CONFLICTS STARTED I WAS OVERWHELMED BY THE DARK OVERTONES OF THE REALITY THAT SURROUNDED ME... SUDDENLY THE WORLD AROUND ME BECAME SOURCE OF NIGHTMARISH AND INTENSE IMAGES AND EXPERIENCES. AS I WAS ALREADY IN THE PROCESS OF CONTACTING MANY AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE CARTOONISTS AND EDITORS, I ASKED SOME OF THEM IF ANYONE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN MY STORIES BASED ON LIFE DURING THE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS IMPOSED ON SERBIA. JIM WOODRING HELPED WHOLEHEARTEDLY IN THE PRODUCTION OF LIFE UNDER SANCTIONS, A BOOK PUBLISHED BY FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS. I COMPOSED A SERIES CALLED PSYCHONAUT FOR THE SAME COMPANY, AND CONTINUED CONTRIBUTING TO DOZENS OF MAGAZINES AND ANTHOLOGIES, IN THE US AND EUROPE. THE MATERIAL REFLECTING THE TURBULENT 90s WAS MOSTLY QUITE BLEAK - SOME OF THE DRAWINGS SEEMED SOMEHOW DISTORTED BY MY OWN RAGE AND MISERY...



A DAY IN SERBIA

BY ALEKSANDAR ZOGRAF

I wake up with the memory of a frog-like image I saw while in a half-dream state.



I immediately make a sketch of this hypnagogic vision.



Look at that Tex Avery cartoon, made during the Second World War. Great humor, despite being created during such troubled times...



There are almost no cars on the street... Another day in Serbia under economic sanctions, as that bloody war continues...



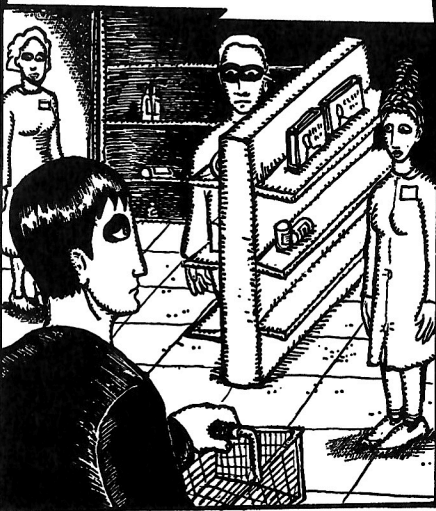
I look down at the pavement in surprise.



A dead frog is lying there -- a giant dead frog! Such a creature has never been seen around here -- in the suburbs, yet!



In the near-empty shop, I feel curious gazes.



All I can afford is a loaf of bread. I come across a young boy dressed in military garb. It sickens me: How could anyone dress their child like that?



Back to the drawing board --
it's a pleasure to return
to my inner world.



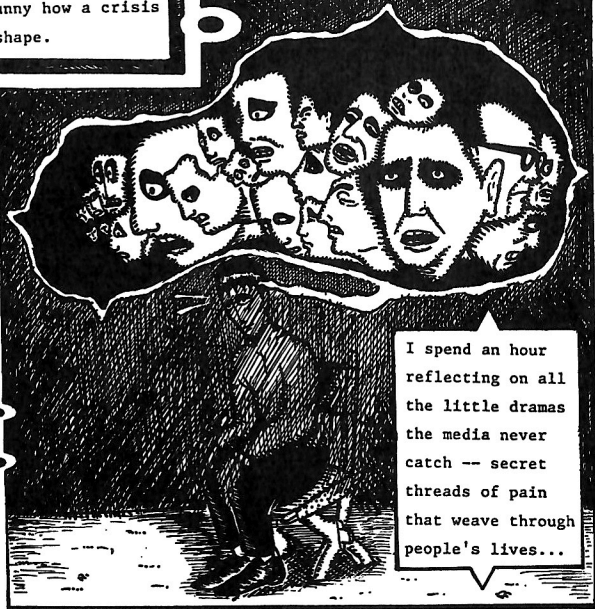
On the radio, suppor-
ters of the regime and
their opponents are
arguing vociferously.



Someone is shooting
outside my window
-- probably a drunken
war veteran.



I've been losing weight. Funny how a crisis
like this can keep you in shape.



I spend an hour
reflecting on all
the little dramas
the media never
catch -- secret
threads of pain
that weave through
people's lives...

Later I go to see some friends. Their flat is on the other side of town, so I have to walk a few miles.



The lighting is poor, but there is beauty to be found in the streets at night. I observe the shadows.



All my life, I've been fascinated by the way shadows move. It thrills me just to look at them.



I begin to laugh -- I have no idea why.



Poor guy -- I told you we'd all go crazy someday.

