

# LIFE UNDER SANCTIONS

by ALEKSANDAR ZOGRAF

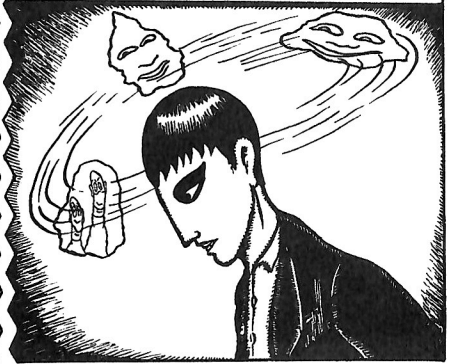


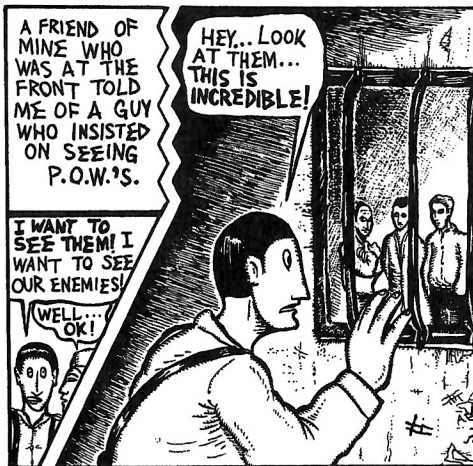
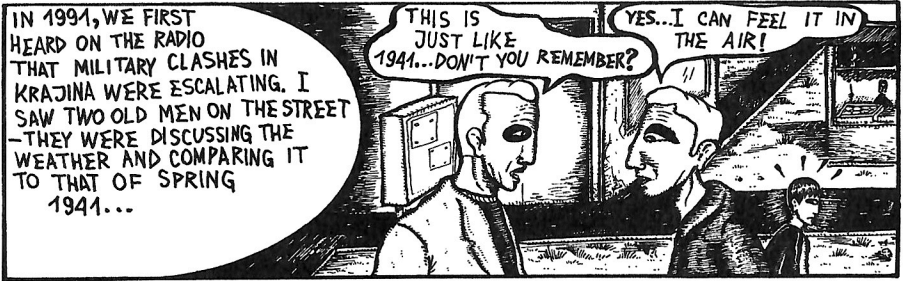
AND SO, THEY TORE DOWN THE BERLIN WALL...  
BUT THEY PUT UP NEW, INVISIBLE WALLS...

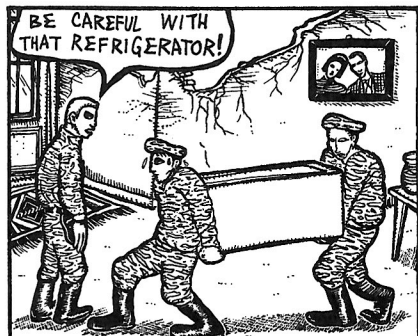
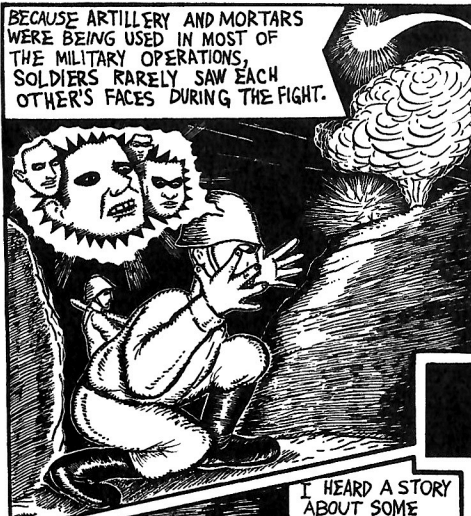
I STILL REMEMBER THE DAY WHEN I FIRST REALIZED WE WERE FACING A CIVIL WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA...THE IMAGES OF THE PAST RAN THROUGH MY HEAD— SOMETHING CLOSE TO THE SENSATION DESCRIBED BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED DROWNING.



IT WAS A STRANGE KIND OF RECAPITULATION. I REALIZED THAT I AND PEOPLE AROUND ME LIVED SIMPLE LIVES; WE WERE USUALLY PENNILESS, BUT SOMEHOW HAPPY.



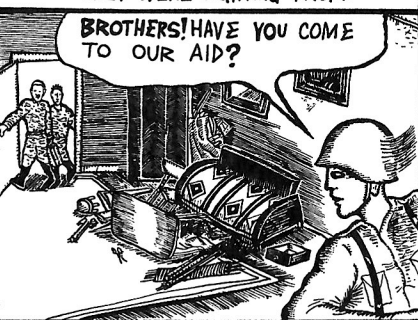




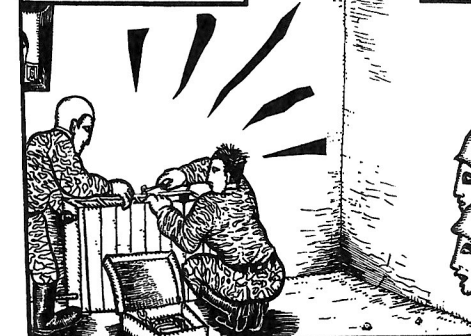
BEHIND THE MASK OF PATRIOTISM, BOTH SIDES WERE FORMING PARAMILITARY GROUPS—THEIR REAL MOTIVE WAS PLUNDERING THE DESERTED HOUSES AND SMUGGLING.



IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIGHT, SOME MEN IN UNIFORMS ENTERED THE ROOM THEY WERE FIGHTING FROM.



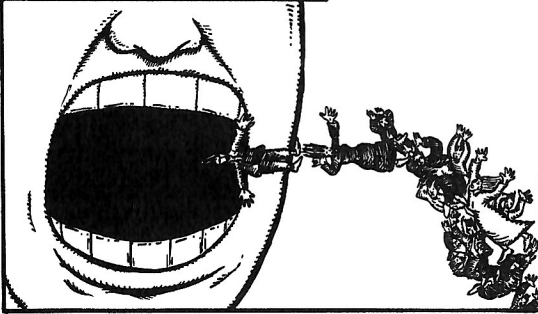
BUT THE MEN DIDN'T SAY A SINGLE WORD —THEY JUST STARTED TO DISMANTLE THE CENTRAL HEATING.



RUMOURS HAVE IT THAT SMUGGLERS FROM BOTH SIDES WERE TRADING THEIR SPOILS.



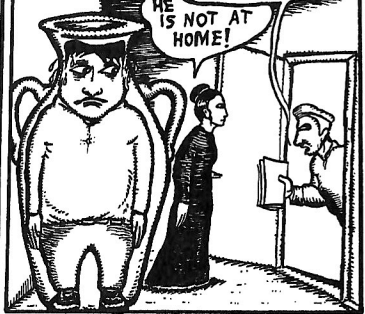
COMMON PEOPLE GOT CAUGHT UP IN A GAME CREATED BY POLITICIANS, THE MEDIA AND THEIR OWN FEARS AND PREJUDICES.



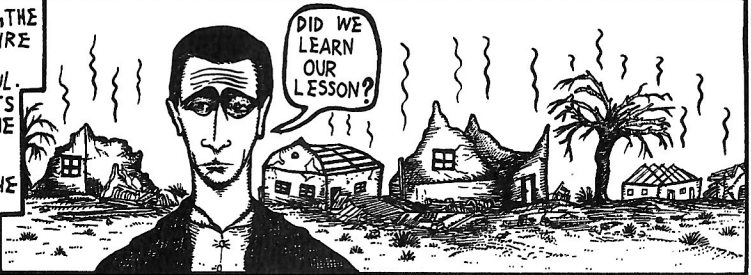
MANY OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD IT IS NOT THEIR GAME. THEY REFUSED TO BE DRAFTED.

WHERE IS HE?

HE IS NOT AT HOME!



IN JANUARY '92, THE 15<sup>TH</sup> CEASE-FIRE PROCLAMATION WAS SUCCESSFUL. THE BLUE HELMETS ARRIVED INTO THE DISPUTED TERRITORY. IT SEEMED THAT THE BLOODY WAR WAS FINALLY OVER.



DID WE LEARN OUR LESSON?

BUT SOON ANOTHER WAR FLARED UP—THIS TIME IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF BOSNIA. CONFUSED, ANGRY, AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE, THE THREE NATIONS FOUGHT EACH OTHER.



CROATS - OF CATHOLIC FAITH, DESPERATELY DROWNING IN NATIONAL ROMANTICISM

SERBS - OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAITH, LOST IN THEIR HISTORICAL FRUSTRATIONS.

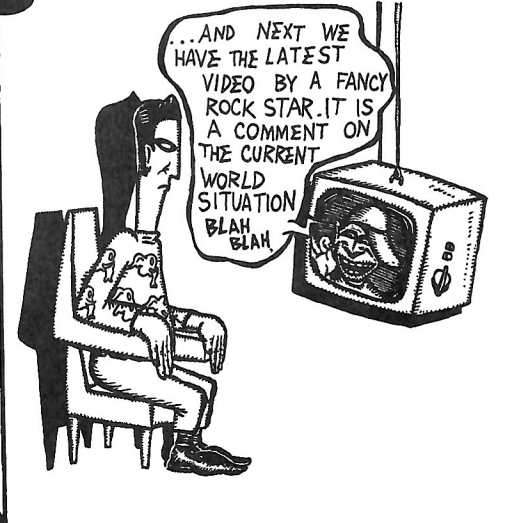
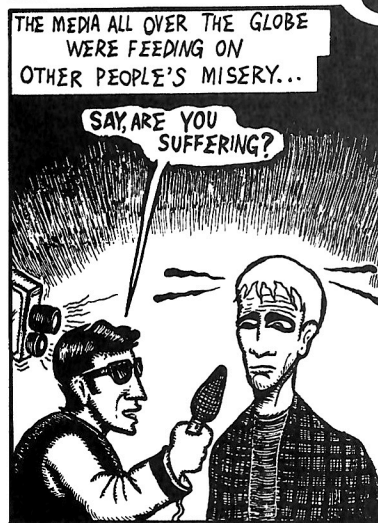
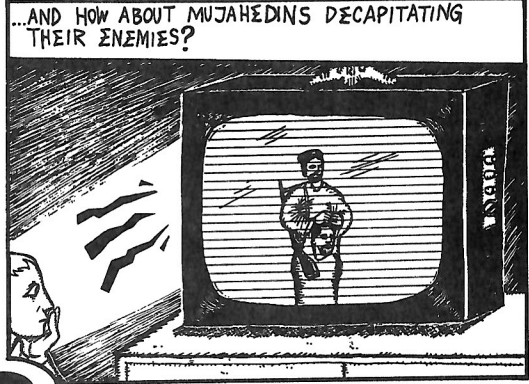
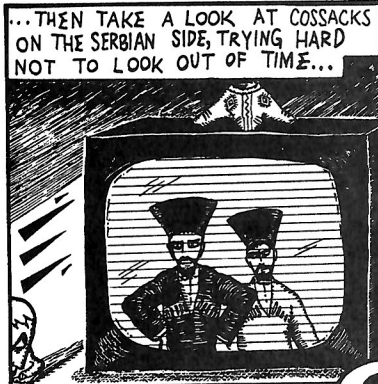
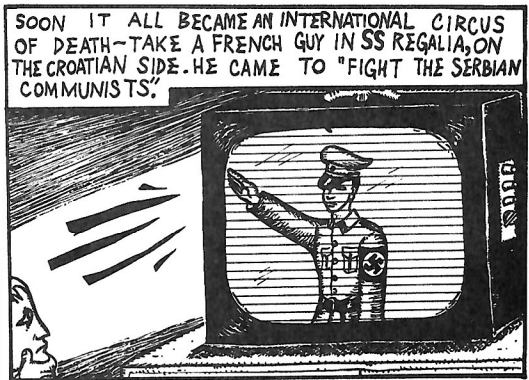
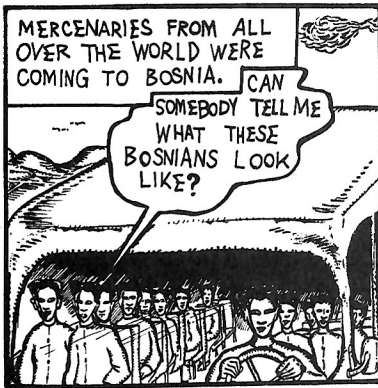
MUSLIMS - OF SAME ETHNIC ORIGIN AS CROATS AND SERBS, AND WITH SIMILAR CRAZED FIXATIONS.

THEY ALL HAD THEIR REASONS - EVERY SIDE WAS WRONG AND RIGHT AT THE SAME TIME. BUT AS THE VIOLENCE SPREAD UP, THE REASONS WERE NO LONGER IMPORTANT. IT ALL ENDED IN A MINDLESS ORGY OF DESTRUCTION.



ALAS, MY DEAR READER, ALAS!





THERE WERE  
CRIMES, AND THERE  
WERE LIES ABOUT  
CRIMES. EVERYBODY  
WHO TOOK WEAPON  
IN THEIR HANDS  
HAD A CHANCE  
TO BE BOTH CULPRIT  
AND VICTIM.

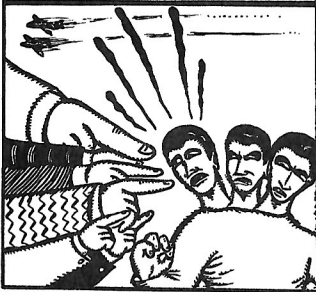
THE SITUATION WAS TOO COMPLICATED, AND THERE  
WAS NO EASY EXPLANATION OF WHAT WAS  
HAPPENING. BUT THE MEDIA NEEDED EASY ANSWERS: THEY  
NEEDED GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS.



FINALLY, MOST OF THE BLAME  
WAS PUT ON THE SERBIAN SIDE.  
WHEN THINGS WERE SHOWN  
IN "BLACK AND WHITE"  
ALL THE MESS BECAME  
MORE UNDERSTANDABLE.

SERBS FROM BOSNIA WERE  
PORTRAYED AS CRUEL  
SAVAGES. SOME OF THEM  
REALLY WERE. BUT THERE  
ARE MILLIONS OF SERBS  
WHO ARE VICTIMS,  
REFUGEES, OR ACTUALLY  
AGAINST THEIR  
LEADER'S POLICY.

ANYWAY, SINCE THE  
SUMMER OF 1992, SERBIA  
AND MONTENEGRO WERE  
PUT UNDER ECONOMIC  
SANCTIONS BY THE  
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.  
SANCTIONS COVERED THE  
FIELDS OF SPORT AND  
CULTURE.



THE SANCTIONS DIDN'T DO  
MUCH HARM TO THE  
REGIME IN SERBIA. IN  
FACT, THEY MADE IT  
STRONGER THEN EVER.

LOOK WHAT THEY  
DO TO US! IT IS  
AN INTERNATIONAL  
CONSPIRACY!




THE OPPOSITION DIDN'T WANT TO COMPLAIN ABOUT SANCTIONS, BECAUSE BY DOING SO THEY MIGHT HAVE HELPED THE REGIME.

THIS IS JUST WHAT WE DESERVE!



THOSE WHO ARE WEALTHY OR CLOSE TO THE REGIME DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THE SHORTAGE OF COMMON GOODS...



REAL VICTIMS WERE THE COMMON PEOPLE, AND THOSE FROM THE MARGINS OF THE SOCIETY.

WHERE IS THIS LEADING TO?




STILL, VISIONS HAVE TO BE MATERIALIZED!



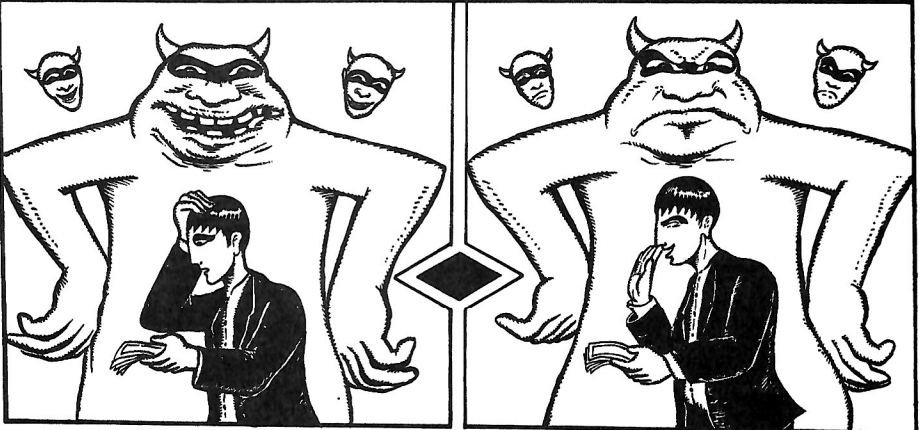
LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN DO IN A "REAL" WORLD!

HYPERINFLATION TOOK PLACE; WHEN YOU FINALLY EARN SOME MONEY, YOU JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO BUY FIRST.

I MUST SPEND IT REAL FAST!



YOUR MONEY IS WORTHLESS THE VERY NEXT DAY.



SANCTIONS CUT OUR SUPPLIES OF FUEL. DURING THE WINTER OF '93, OUR APARTMENTS WENT UNHEATED MOST OF THE TIME.



LOCAL TRANSPORT WAS GREATLY REDUCED AND VERY EXPENSIVE. I WALKED FOR MILES EVERY DAY.



EVERYBODY IS ADAPTING TO THE NEW WAY OF LIFE. A RADIO COMMERCIAL FOR A WOMEN'S MAGAZINE SAID: 'WE WILL TEACH EVERY HOUSEWIFE HOW TO SURVIVE AND STAY HEALTHY AND SAVE UNTIL OUR NEXT ISSUE!'

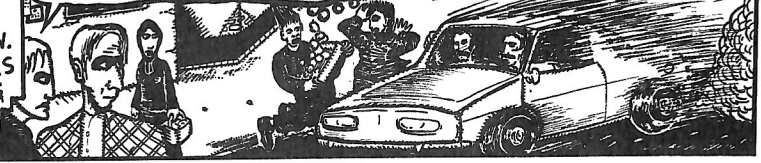






FOR SOME PEOPLE SANCTIONS WERE A GIFT FROM HEAVEN. THE PROFITEERS WERE GETTING RICH...

LOOK AT THOSE SMUGGLERS...THEY ARE SO ARROGANT!



SO MANY ARMS AND BOMBS WERE SMUGGLED FROM THE FRONT. ALMOST EVERY NIGHT, I CAN HEAR DISTANT SHOTS-SOMEBODY SHOOTING JUST FOR FUN.



IN BELGRADE, SCHOOL KIDS FOUND A HAND-GRENADE IN THE CARDBOARD BOX THEY WERE KICKING. TWO MORE BOMBS WERE FOUND IN THE SAME SCHOOLYARD.



AN OLD WOMAN DIED OF A HEART ATTACK WHEN SHE SAW A MORTAR IN HER SON'S ROOM.



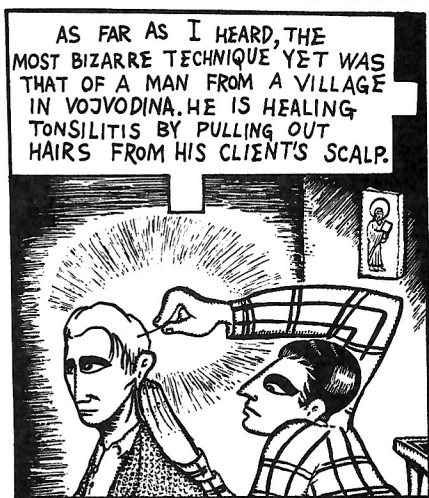
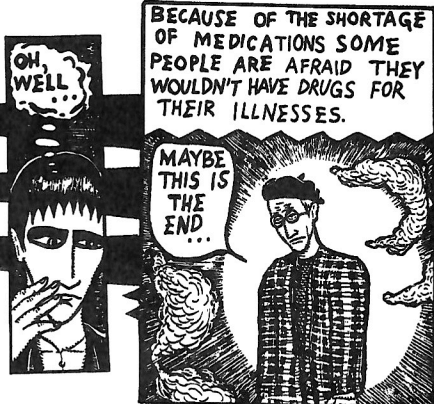
AT THE LOCAL PASTRY SHOP THEY WERE SWAPPING PASTRIES FOR BULLETS.

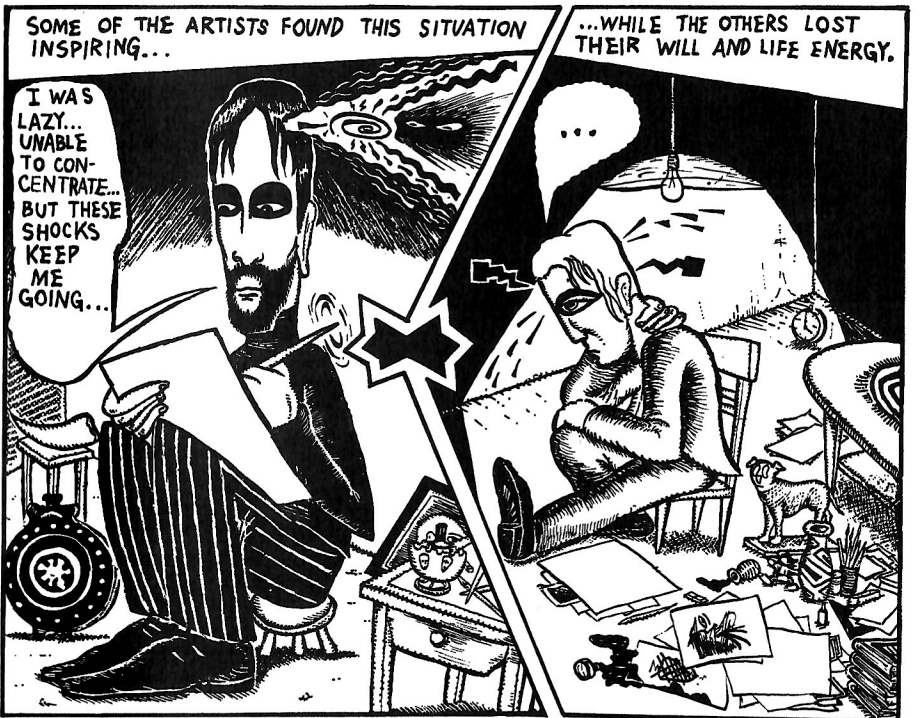


VERY GOOD!

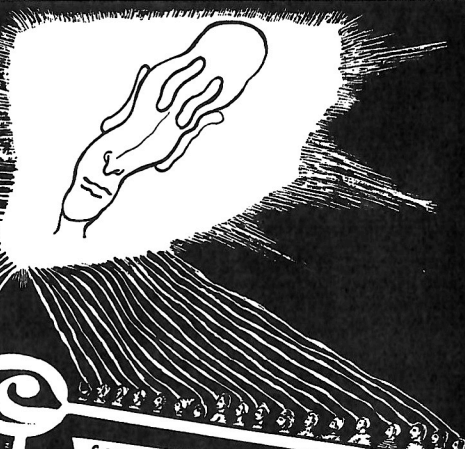
IN A TOWN OF PANCHEVO, WHERE I LIVE, THE BLUE BERETS' LOGISTIC BASE IS STATIONED. WELL-PAID SOLDIERS ATTRACTED PROSTITUTES FROM ALL OVER THE EX-EASTERN BLOCK.







LEGENDS WERE SPREADING LIKE A FOREST FIRE. THE COLLECTIVE SUB-CONSCIOUSNESS PRODUCED SOME BIZARRE STORIES.



SOME PEASANTS FOUND THE BODY OF A DEAD ANIMAL.



SOON THERE WAS A RUMOUR THAT IT WAS A LEGENDARY CREATURE CALLED 'DREKAVATS', A STRANGE LOOKING CREATURE WHICH HOWLS EERILY.



SOME OF THE PEASANTS THOUGHT IT WAS IN FACT A MONSTER CREATED IN NATO LABORATORIES, SENT TO SERBIA TO SPREAD PANIC AND FEAR.



WHEN THE EXPERTS CAME, THEY FOUND IT WAS THE CARCASS OF A SKINNED FOX.

SKINNED FOX MY FOOT!



A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THIS EVENT, GORDANA AND I WITNESSED THE SOUND OF UNEARTHLY SCREECHING COMING FROM A NEARBY TREE.



WE LOOKED AROUND EXPECTING TO SEE A BIRD, OR A BAT, OR SOMETHING ALONG THOSE LINES. BUT THERE WAS JUST THIS HORRIFYING SCREECH.

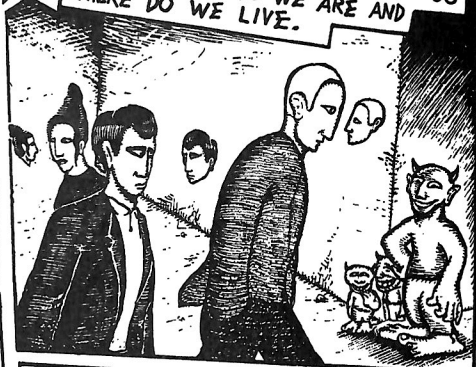


IT SOUNDED LIKE THERE WERE TWO CREATURES FAR APART, CALLING EACH OTHER...

WHEN IT ALL STOPPED, WE FELT SOME KIND OF OVERWHELMING HORROR.



ALL THIS FEAR AND PARANOIA MADE US THINK ABOUT WHO WE ARE AND WHERE DO WE LIVE.



THE STREETS IN THE OLD PART OF THE TOWN... I USED TO FIND SOME KIND OF MYSTERY AND CHARM IN THE TORN FACADES...



...BUT NOW IT ALL REMINDS ME THAT WE ARE LIVING IN A DYING WORLD!

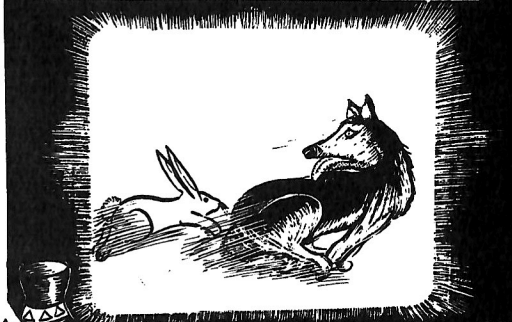


STILL, THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO THINK THAT SERBS SHOULD FIGHT AGAINST THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD.

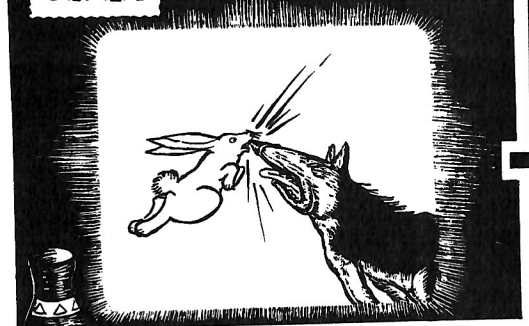
THEY ARE UNJUST... BUT WE WILL NOT GIVE IN!



THEY SHOWED A HOME VIDEO ON TV. IT WAS MADE BY A MAN WHO OWNS A STRANGE BEHAVING PET—HIS RABBIT IS CHASING A LARGE DOG.



THE COMMENT WAS: THESE ARE THE SERBIAN RABBIT AND GERMAN SHEPHERD.



SOME OF THE SERBS HAD TROUBLES IN WESTERN COUNTRIES. NEW PREJUDICES HAVE SPRUNG UP.

YOU ARE FROM... SERBIA ?!



I REMEMBER A TRIP BACK FROM BUDAPEST IN 1990. I MET AN IRAQI FAMILY IN A TRAIN... THEY WERE AMONG THE FINEST PEOPLE I'D EVER HOPED TO MEET. NEEDLESS TO SAY THEY WEREN'T FAMILIAR WITH THEIR LEADERS POLICY...



AFTER SOME SMALL TALK, ALL OUR PREJUDICES HAD DISAPPEARED. WE REALLY FELT LIKE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD...

I WAS SAD BECAUSE THESE PEOPLE WERE GOING BACK TO THEIR HOMETLAND, WHICH WAS ON THE BRINK OF A WAR AT THE TIME... I WANDERED WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM DURING THE GULF WAR... AND IT WAS HARD TO GUESS THAT I WOULD BE IN THE SIMILAR POSITION WITHIN FEW YEARS...



DESPITE THE WAR AND THE MOST RIGOROUS SANCTIONS IN MODERN HISTORY, SOMETIMES EVERYTHING WAS SO USUAL, AND SO EVERYDAY.



CHILDREN WERE PLAYING... WAR WAS JUST ANOTHER GAME FOR THEM. THEY HAVE THEIR OWN LOGIC.

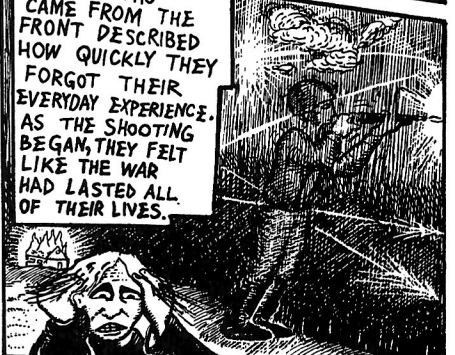


I MUST SURVIVE!

SOME STRANGE INSTINCT MAKES YOU ADJUST TO JUST ANY SITUATION.



THOSE WHO CAME FROM THE FRONT DESCRIBED HOW QUICKLY THEY FORGOT THEIR EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE. AS THE SHOOTING BEGAN, THEY FELT LIKE THE WAR HAD LASTED ALL OF THEIR LIVES.



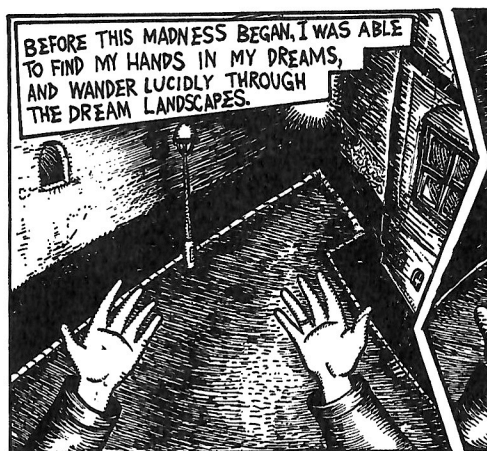
IN THE CITY OF NOVI SAD, ONE OF THE SOLDIERS SET HIMSELF ON FIRE WHEN HE CAME BACK FROM WAR.



STILL, LIFE GOES ON..







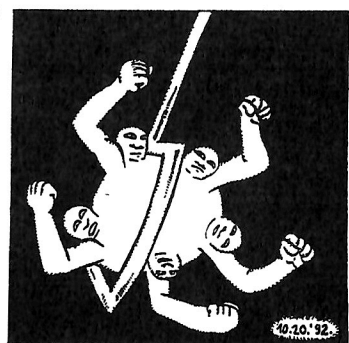
BEFORE THIS MADNESS BEGAN, I WAS ABLE TO FIND MY HANDS IN MY DREAMS, AND WANDER LUCIDLY THROUGH THE DREAM LANDSCAPES.



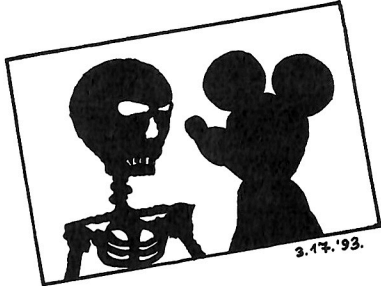
BUT AS THE CRISIS ESCALATED, I BECAME TOO NERVOUS AND TOO UPSET. LUCID DREAMING HAPPENED TO ME SPORADICALLY.



VERY OFTEN I JUST WANTED TO FIND MY PEACE IN DREAMLESS SLEEP.

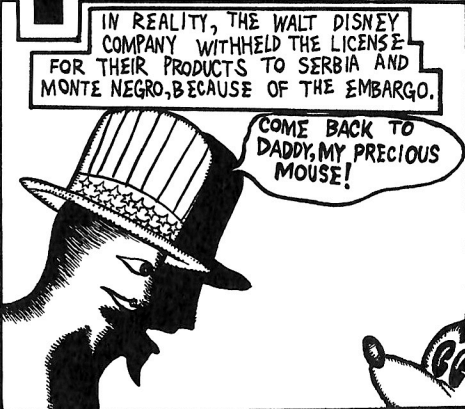


BUT MY HALF-DREAM HALLUCINATIONS WERE STILL VIVID. I COLLECTED HUNDREDS OF THESE IMAGES...



3.47. '93.

FOR SOME REASON, I FREQUENTLY SEE IMAGES OF POPULAR CHARACTERS WHILE IN A HYPNAGOGIC STATE.



IN REALITY, THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY WITHHELD THE LICENSE FOR THEIR PRODUCTS TO SERBIA AND MONTE NEGRO, BECAUSE OF THE EMBARGO.

COME BACK TO DADDY, MY PRECIOUS MOUSE!

