

Ukrainian literature and the famine evaluates how writers have struggled with the emotional difficulty of presenting the famine and people's memory of it with references to relevant literature outside Ukraine.

This book is very uneven; it has a few genuinely scholarly chapters or sections, but most of the chapters make misleading, inconsistent, and often bizarre claims based on a narrow source base that excludes important contrary evidence. The book is an illustration of the inadequacies of research intended to support the "Ukrainian genocide" interpretation of the famine rather than a contribution to research on the famine itself and its effects.

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Genocide on the Drina River, by Edina Bećirević, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2014, 237 pp., \$58.50 (HC), ISBN 978-0300192582

Since its inception in 1943 the concept of genocide has generated more debate than most other terms associated with organized violence. This particularly intensified after 1948 when genocide was institutionalized in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as the ultimate form of crime. Hence Article 2 of the Convention defines this crime as an act "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." What is interesting in this very broad definition is that the term "in part" is rather ambiguous, allowing for a great variation in the scale of destruction. While it is very clear that the mass extermination of groups such as what occurred in Nazi Germany, in 1994 Rwanda, or in 1904–1907 South West Africa easily fit this definition, many other instances of mass murder are generally contested. What exactly would count as "destruction in part?" Does this refer to the clear intention to annihilate an entire group which was not achieved because of the group's resistance or external intervention? Or perhaps this implies that the aim always was partial destruction in order to frighten the group or to force them to leave a particular territory? More importantly, this definition does not tell us how substantive the "part" has to be. Is it enough to kill a few hundred individuals or must it be thousands or hundreds of thousands? Furthermore, Article 2 of the UN Convention does not include mass murder for ideological, political, or class reasons. This legal formulation leaves no room either for Stalin's 1938/1939

great purge of “kulaks,” intellectuals, and “Western spies,” which amounted to about one million deaths, nor for the ideological killing fields of the Khmer Rouge, resulting in at least 1.5 million direct casualties. These glaring definitional omissions were not accidental; they were the legacy of the post-World War II geopolitical arrangements where both Soviet and, later, Chinese authorities deliberately and successfully resisted a more inclusive and precise legal definition of genocide.

The direct consequence of such an arbitrary wording of Article 2 is a never-ending debate on which historical cases count as genocide and which ones fall short of this category. There are thousands of books written to make a case that “our tragedy” clearly constitutes genocide while “your” claim does not merit such designation. The word genocide has, unfortunately, become an object of political ping-pong. Since southeastern Europe has experienced many waves of mass-scale civilian bloodshed throughout history such debates about genocide are particularly fierce in this region. The fact that, even one hundred years after its occurrence, Turkish authorities still reject the idea of “Armenian genocide” demonstrates how contested and politicized this designation is.

The similar pattern of accusations and denials is just as present in the context of mass killings committed during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995). While most Serbian public opinion, together with the government officials in both Serbia and Republika Srpska, refuses to recognize that the Srebrenica massacres constitute a case of genocide, Bosniak public opinion and the government representatives are adamant that Srebrenica is a clear instance of it. Nevertheless as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavias (ICTY’s) ruling of 2004 (in the case of Prosecutor v. Krstić) unanimously declared that the killing of 8000 men and boys and the forcible transfer of up to 30,000 Bosniak women and children in Srebrenica constituted genocide, any attempt at denial is unlikely to be taken seriously by the international community.

This book shifts the attention from Srebrenica to the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina. More specifically, Edina Bećirević argues that Srebrenica was not an isolated incident at the end of the war, but was a culmination of genocide that started in the spring of 1992 and took place throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. To corroborate this argument, Bećirević provides an in-depth analysis of the seven eastern Bosnian municipalities (Zvornik, Vlasenica, Bratunac, Rogatica, Foča, Višegrad, and Srebrenica) that were overrun by the Serbian forces during 1992 and 1993. Much of her evidence comes from the official documentation collected by the ICTY for the various court cases in the Hague (i.e. recorded parliamentary transcripts, taped conversations of the high-level meetings, and the tapped phone conversations of main perpetrators). What comes across from her analysis are relatively standardized patterns of occupation, repossession of property, massacres, and mass rapes of the Bosniak populations in each municipality. The author emphasizes how in all of these cases one could witness co-ordination of activities by the local leadership of the Serbian Democratic Party (the SDS municipal committee), the Yugoslav People’s Army, paramilitary formations, police, and the local bureaucracy. The ethnic cleansing policies were largely managed through so-called crisis committees (*krizni štabovi*) which were directly involved in “exchange of population” and acquisition of Bosniak property (through the Agency for Real Estate Exchange). Bećirević attempts to show that this relatively smooth, highly co-ordinated, centralized, and quite standardized pattern of action suggests that the genocide was well planned in advance with the intent “to wipe out the population of Bosnian Muslims from the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina” (xv). To illustrate this point Bećirević provides representative statements from conversations and speeches of Bosnian Serb politicians and high ranking officers. So, for example, one can read clear self-indicting proclamations such as general

Mladić's comment in May 1992 that since his army does not possess "a sieve to sift so that only Serbs would stay ... and the rest [would] leave, this can only be achieved 'through genocide'" (82) or Karadžić's 1992 private conversations where he threatens that Bosniaks "will disappear ... from the face of the earth" (55).

The book also focuses on the origins of the Yugoslav breakup and the role Serbian state propaganda played in this process (Chapter 2). It attempts to offer an explanation for how genocide was possible, as well as why large sectors of the Bosnian Serb population were involved in this, either as perpetrators or passive bystanders (Chapters 1 and 3). Finally, Bećirević also explores the post-war context of the pervasive denial of genocide in both Serbia and Republika Srpska.

This is a valuable, although quite uneven contribution. As the author recognizes, this book is very personal, written by somebody who survived the siege of Sarajevo. Bećirević also worked as a journalist reporting on the Hague Tribunal and in this role was in a unique position to directly observe the discrepancy between the language of the genocide perpetrators and their victims. This context is important as it is reflected in the book: it is often difficult to distinguish when a cool-headed scholarly analysis ends and passionate activism begins. For example, the book is very good in providing detailed evidence of micro-dynamics of genocide as practiced in the seven municipalities on the river Drina. The longest and by far the most scholarly chapter in this book is Chapter 4 ("Genocide in Eastern Bosnia") where Bećirević persuasively argues and documents well that the genocide started not in 1995 but 1992. We also learn a great deal about the organizational mechanics of genocide in practice, and her findings on Eastern Bosnia complement the results of other similar studies (i.e. Oberschall 2000 and Ron 2003 on the dynamics of murderous ethnic cleansing in northwest city of Prijedor). Similarly her argument about the widespread denial of genocide in Serbia and Republika Srpska is poignant, convincing, and well made. In addition the last chapter of the book (a vignette on the legacies of Višegrad's tragedy) is both powerful and beautifully written. However, the rest of the book is not at the same analytical level. The historical analysis of the Yugoslav collapse is quite superficial, full of journalistic clichés and simplifications reminiscent of the highly partisan books published in 1990s. There is no effort to engage with the serious scholarship that has been published on this topic in the past 20 years. In a similar vein, the attempt to provide an explanation of the Bosnian genocide is at best amateurish and at worst deeply grounded in rigid ethnicist discourse. Bećirević links genocide to Serbian propaganda where the Kosovo myth and poetry of prince-bishop Petar II Petrović Njegoš were seen as the cornerstone of genocidal ideology and practice. Instead of working with the subtle contemporary sociological theories of organized violence (i.e. Collins, Bauman, Mann, Shaw, Levene, etc.). Bećirević relies on rather crude essentialist generalizations that treat millions of individuals as if they are a homogenous unified agent. There is a strong emphasis on the collective responsibility of the entire ethnic group (Serbs) in a manner of the highly problematic and largely discredited Goldhagen thesis. Hence one can read about the "collective psychology of Serbs" (48), about Serbian violence as "a family tradition" (155–156), and about how romanticized violence was "fostered by certain elements of Serb national culture" (158). The ultimate explanation of genocide rests on the argument that bears striking resemblance to the nineteenth-century crowd-psychology of Gustave Le Bon: "The extremist religious ideology of the Kosovo myth and Njegoš's poetry, which has trained Serbs for centuries to react violently against Bosniaks and everything Islamic, prepared emotionally underdeveloped Serb individuals to carry out genocide" (161). Leaving to one side the fact that no causal relationship between reading of Njegoš and Kosovo mythology and engaging in genocide is ever established

in the book, such an unreflective argument is unlikely to appeal to social scientists. Perhaps Bećirević has tried to do too much in what is essentially a short book. This is a pity, as the general argument that locates the start of genocide in 1992 rather than 1995 is persuasive and the data she collected on genocide in Eastern Bosnia are very valuable.

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Narrating victimhood. Gender, religion and the making of place in post-war Croatia, by Michaela Schäuble, New York, Berghahn Books, 2014, 374 pp., US\$120 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-78238-260-7

The mechanism of narrating victimhood in the poor Dalmatian hinterland – repeatedly revealed by the saying “small nation, great injustice” – is scrutinized in the first chapters of the book by Michaela Schäuble. She does not explain in detail why she has chosen the region around Sinj, the “marginal within the marginal,” at the “margins of the nation-state as well of those of Europe” for her field research. But the electrifying analysis of several mass events that take place in Sinj and its surroundings every year from July to September soon makes the choice clear: the famous Sinjska Alka, a local historic “knight’s tournament that dates back to the year 1715 when local defense forces successfully defended the ancient fortress of Sinj against the Ottoman troops;” a commemoration of the “alleged Marian apparition in 1715 that has turned the Marian shrine in Sinj into a national pilgrimage site;” and the “commemoration of ‘victims of communist atrocities’ at a natural pit [*jama*] in the limestone karst mountains that surround Sinj.” Politics of (self-)victimization aims at “highlighting recurrent suffering in order to divert suspicion from one’s own people’s wrongs and, in the case of commemoration ceremonies at massacre sites, at underlining the physical and hence tangible reminders of crimes endured at the hands of others” (139).

In the broader context of post-war Croatia, Schäuble shows in a remarkable way what key role the interpretation of the “Homeland War” of the 1990s plays in the identity-building processes around those mass events. For many years the most prominent issue during all these ongoing was support for two “heroic” generals both originating from and now living in Dalmatia: Ante Gotovina, who commanded “Operation Storm,” the reconquest of the Serbian-held parts of Croatia, in 1995 and was acquitted by the appeals chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 2012, and Mirko Norac, the first Croatian Army General to be found guilty of