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KAPIJA

A case study of a Bosnian community's initiative for re-building peace

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ABSTRACT

During 1992-95 the Serbian establishment in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina executed a policy of ethnic-cleansing against the Muslim and Croat population in Bosnia-Herzegovina. On 25 May 1995 the town square in Tuzla was shelled by a Bosnian Serb artillery unit killing seventy-one people and injuring many others. The aim was to divide the Muslim, Croat and Serb community of Tuzla into taking sides in a conflict that saw atrocities committed on a scale not seen in Europe since the Second World War. This study is about peace and conflict and gives some insight into how this community dealt with violence. The decision to bury those killed together in a common burial site irrespective of ethnic background was made in the face of external religious and political opposition. In taking this action, these families reinforced the long-held tradition in Tuzla of being a tolerant multi-ethnic community. Those buried together were buried as friends not divided by religion and nationalism. As such, the burial site is the single most important symbol of peace in this community.

Other key findings from this study show the enormity of personal loss and grief for the families of those killed; the impact of this incident on the whole community; questions about justice; trans-generational trauma; ethnic identity; mixed-marriages; and a changed demographic make-up of the town's population due to an increase of displaced persons.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study could not have been undertaken without the agreement and co-operation of those people I interviewed during my periods of fieldwork in Tuzla during 2004 and 2005. For the families, community and religious leaders, and others who recalled what happened in Kapija Square on 25 May 1995 it was a painful memory. Often the interviews were very emotional and upsetting and I was mindful of this at all times. Therefore I am grateful to these people for giving me their time and stories which I hope in some small way may have served some cathartic value for them. They seemed to be appreciative of me talking to them about what had happened and the value of the research. I was mindful, too, of the stress that this could put on the two interpreters I used, Eldin Omerović and Amira Kovčić, without whom I could not have conducted the interviews. In addition, valuable assistance was provided by Jasmina Redžepagić at Peace Flame House and Maida Berbić from the local radio station, Kameleon Radio. Their local contacts and networks made my task a lot easier. Other valuable information within the national context was provided by Mirsad Tokača, the President of the Research and Documentation Centre, in Sarajevo.

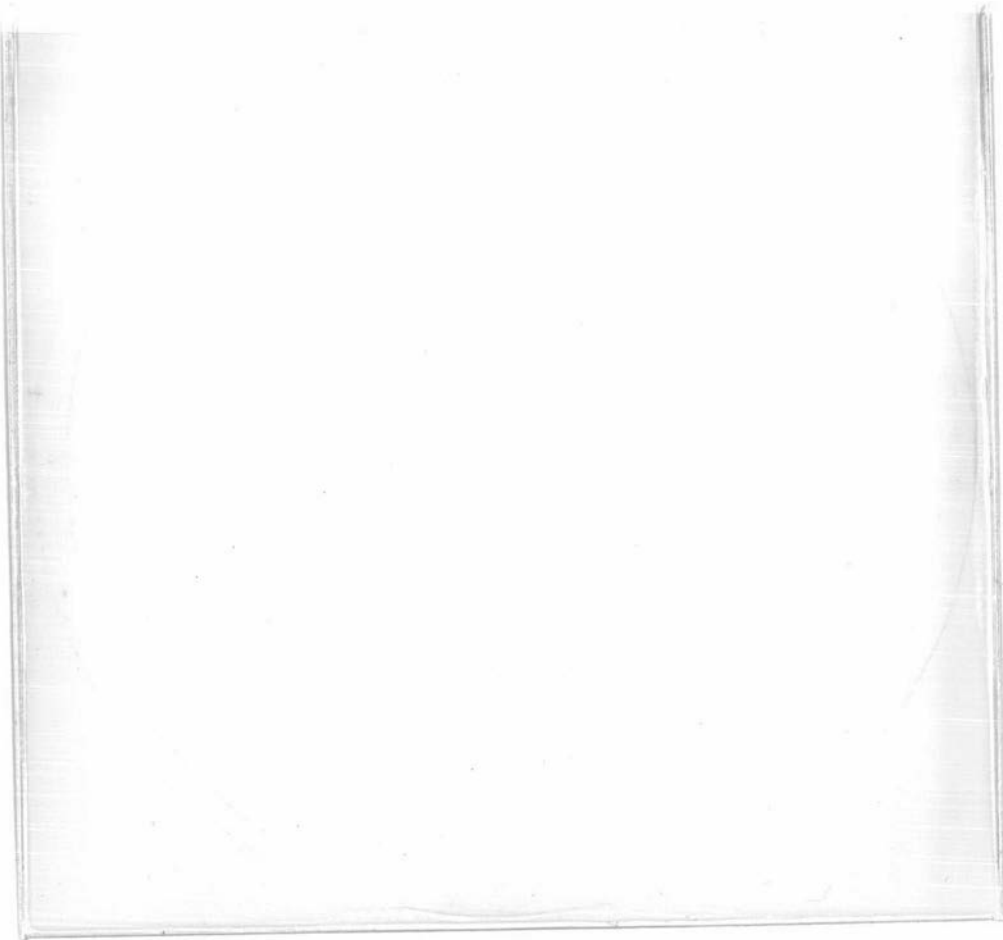
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KAPIJA

Composed by Asim Horozić

Dedicated to those killed and injured in
Kapija Square, Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina
on 25 May 1995



Sarajevo Philharmonia
Playing time: 10.24 minutes

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CHRONOLOGY

BOSNIA AND SERBIA

6 th -7 th Centuries	Ancestors of South Slavs enter the Balkans (from Poland and the Ukraine)
869	Death of Saint Cyril, symbol of the Christianizing of the South Slavs: [a] Dalmatia and Croatia came within the domain of Charlemagne's Roman Catholic Frankish Empire [b] Serbia and Macedonia came within the Byzantine Empire and Orthodox Christianity
10 th Century	<i>De Administrando Imperio</i> first mention of Bosnae, as part of Serbia
1159	Stefan Nemanja founds Serbia as an independent kingdom
Late 12 th Century	Independent state of Bosnia
1219	Saint Sava becomes the first Archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church
1235-1265	War with Hungary. Bosnia defeated.
1346	Founding of the Patriarchate of Serbian Orthodoxy
1353	Trvtko is crowned King of Bosnia, Serbia and the Western Lands (extended to Serbia and the Dalmatian coast)
1389	Death of Lazar at the battle of Kosovo (Serbia defeated by Turkey)
1453	Ottomans take Constantinople and change its name to Istanbul
1459	Last Serb stronghold at Smederevo falls to the Ottomans (Serbia now part of the Ottoman Empire)
1483	Ottomans take control of all Bosnia and Herzegovina

- 1531 Gazi Husrev Beg Mosque constructed in Sarajevo, the major mosque in Bosnia
- 1551 Coloured Mosque of Foca is constructed
- 1556 Construction of the great Mostar bridge
- 1557 Construction of the Drina River bridge at Visegrad
- 1804 Karadjordje's revolt against Ottoman rule
- 1818 Assassination of Karadjordje by rival Miloš Obrenović, founder of the first modern Serbian dynasty
- 1829 Treaty of Adrianople: Serbia gains autonomy under Miloš Obrenović
- 1847 Njegos publishes *The Mountain Wreath*
- 1864 Death of Vuk Karadžić, collector of Serb poetry and lore
- 1878 Treaty of San Stefano: Ottomans cede Bosnia to Austro-Hungarian Empire
- 1903 Descendants of Karadjordje establish a new dynasty in Serbia
- 1914 First World War commenced following the assassination of the Grand Duke of Austro-Hungary by a Serb nationalist in Sarajevo. Serbia joined Great Britain, France and Russia against Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire of which Bosnia was a part, and Turkey
- 1917 Union of South Slavs is declared
- 1918 End of First World War: Germany, Austro-Hungarian Empire and Turkish Ottoman Empire defeated
- 1918 Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later to be called Yugoslavia) is established under the authority of King Peter I of Serbia
- 1939 Yugoslavia reorganized: Bosnia divided between Croatia and Serbia
- 1939 Second World War commenced: Great Britain, France and Soviet Union (formerly Russia) against Germany, Japan and Italy

1940	Yugoslavia occupied by Germany
1940	Independent Croatian state declared with German 'puppet' government established
1945	End of Second World War: Germany, Japan and Italy defeated
1945	Tito declares a federation of Yugoslavia with 6 republics and 2 autonomous regions within a socialist ideology (Communism)
1981	Marshal Tito dies
1990	Slovenia breaks away from Yugoslavia
1991	Croatia-Serbia war
1992	Secret agreement between Serbia and Croatia to attack Bosnia and divide the country between them within a policy of ethnic-cleansing
1995	Dayton Peace Agreement brokered by the United States ends the war in Bosnia. The country is partitioned into two entities determined by majority ethnic identity (i.e. Federation of Muslims and Croats, and the Republika Srpska)
1999	Death of President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia
2003	Bosnia applies for membership of the European Union
2003	Death of President Alija Izetbegović of Bosnia-Herzegovina
2006	Death of Slobodan Milošević, former President of Serbia from a heart attack while in custody at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at The Hague on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity
2006	Referendum in Montenegro votes for independence from union with Serbia
2006	Serbia's application for membership to the European Union is presently suspended

Source: Michael A. Sells (1996), *The Bridge Betrayed (Religion and Genocide in Bosnia)*, University of California Press.

Additional material from 1992-95 onwards: Bernard Jervis.

ILLUSTRATIONS

KAPIJA SQUARE IMMEDIATELY AFTER 25 MAY 1995. Photo: ZLOČIN published by BiH War Crimes Commission, 1995

KAPIJA SQUARE 2004. Photo: Bernard Jervis

MEMORIAL IN KAPIJA SQUARE.¹ Photo: Bernard Jervis

PLAQUE MARKING WHERE THE SHELL EXPLODED. Photo: Bernard Jervis

BURYING THE DEAD AFTER 25 MAY 1995. Photo: ZLOČIN published by BiH War Crimes Commission, 1995

INDIVIDUAL GRAVE IN ALEJA MLADOSTI CEMETERY. Photo: Bernard Jervis

THE GRAVES. Photo: Bernard Jervis

ALEJA MLADOSTI CEMETERY. Photo: Bernard Jervis

10TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIONS 2005. Photo: Bernard Jervis

REMEMBRANCE WALL FOR ALL 800 PEOPLE KILLED IN TUZLA DURING 1992-95. Photo: Bernard Jervis

¹ Translation of poem on Memorial:

‘One does not live here only in order to live
One does not live here only in order to die
One dies here in order to live.’