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RADOVAN KARADŽIĆ

Radovan Karadžić, leader of the Bosnian Serb nationalists during the Bosnian War (1992–1995), stands accused of genocide and crimes against humanity before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. This book traces the origins of the war's extreme violence against civilians to the utopian national aspirations of the Serb Democratic Party and Karadžić's personal transformation from an unremarkable family man to the powerful leader of the Bosnian Serb nationalists. Based on previously unused documents from the tribunal's archives and many hours of Karadžić's cross-examination at his trial, the author shows why and how the Bosnian Serb leader planned and directed the worst atrocities in Europe since the Second World War. This book provocatively argues that postcommunist democracy was a primary enabler of mass atrocities because it provided the means to mobilize large numbers of Bosnian Serbs for the campaign to eliminate non-Serbs from conquered land.

Robert J. Donia, an historian specializing in modern Southeast Europe, is the author or editor of six books on the history of the region, most recently *Sarajevo: A Biography*, a study of the city from its founding to the present day. He has testified as an historical expert witness at fifteen war crimes trials in The Hague, including those of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić, the subject of this biography. He holds a courtesy appointment as an Associate Professor of History at the University of Sarajevo, is a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences and the Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and has been a Visiting Professor of History at the University of Michigan. He lives in San Diego, California, with his wife Jane.

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Radovan Karadžić

ARCHITECT OF THE BOSNIAN GENOCIDE

ROBERT J. DONIA

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For Jane,

in deep appreciation for our life together

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Preface

Looking gaunt and downcast, Radovan Karadžić stood for the first time in the dock of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on July 31, 2008, to face charges of genocide, crimes against humanity, and crimes of war. Millions of residents of the former Yugoslavia had longed for that moment to come; he himself had fervently hoped it never would. His initial appearance at the Tribunal came more than a dozen years after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995) and thirteen years after he was first indicted by the ICTY. He had spent the intervening years as one of the world's most successful fugitives, making dramatic escapes, devising elaborate disguises, and taunting his accusers. A week before his first appearance in court, he had been arrested in Belgrade by police of the Republic of Serbia and flown to the Scheveningen Prison in The Hague, Netherlands.

To many outside the former Yugoslavia, Radovan Karadžić is better known by his deeds and appearance than by name. Few outside his native land can pronounce, let alone remember, his name, with its two diacriticals and unfamiliar combination of two consonants (Karadžić – CAR-ahd-jich, to a speaker of English). With his craggy facial features, roughly dimpled chin, and wavy, drooping hair, he epitomizes in physical appearance the image of the archetypal Balkan atavist: coarse, volatile, and weathered by life's vicissitudes. To his circle of family, friends, and some fellow Serbs, he is a hero of mythical proportions, a valiant but persecuted champion of the Serb people against many adversaries. But to most of the global public, he is the "Butcher of Bosnia," the architect and perpetrator of genocide and other atrocities that have been the worst and most destructive in Europe since the Second World War.

Despite these divergent views of him, much about Karadžić's life is undisputed. Born in the Yugoslav Republic of Montenegro in 1945, he moved in 1960 to Sarajevo, capital of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (shortened to "Bosnia" in these pages) to attend university. While in medical school

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he married a fellow student, Ljiljana Zelena, with whom he had two children. After graduating from medical school in 1971, he practiced psychiatry, became a published poet, and worked as an advisor to two soccer teams, one in Sarajevo and the other in Belgrade. In November 1984 he was imprisoned (but never convicted) for almost a year on suspicion of misappropriating funds. Upon release he returned to his staid family life and psychiatric practice, with no profile as an ardent nationalist and no apparent predisposition for becoming a major nationalist figure in Bosnia as Yugoslavia collapsed.

His life changed abruptly in 1990, the year the ruling communists of Yugoslavia scheduled multiparty elections and allowed rival political parties to organize and compete for votes. In July of that year he helped found the nationalist Serb Democratic Party (*Srpska demokratska stranka*, SDS) and was chosen its first president. In that capacity, he led the SDS during the first half of 1992 in seizing a large part of Bosnia by armed force and establishing a separate Bosnian Serb polity, the Republika Srpska (RS). As president of the RS and the undisputed civilian leader of the Bosnian Serb nationalists until July 1996, he led them throughout the Bosnian war of 1992–1995 in which more than 100,000 soldiers and civilians were killed and many mass atrocities were committed against civilians. He was indicted by the ICTY in July 1995 and resigned in July 1996 from his posts as president of the SDS and the RS. He spent the next dozen years in Bosnia and Serbia as a fugitive before Serbian police located and arrested him in Belgrade in July 2008.

I did not at first set out to write a biography of Karadžić; rather, I wanted to understand how monstrous acts of violence could have been committed in the Bosnian society I had come to know since 1965 from many visits and personal acquaintances. But as I investigated and contemplated that question, it became apparent that the answers to my inquiry lay, if anywhere, in the ideas, plans, and deeds of Radovan Karadžić. His life was a prism through which to view the collective behavior of himself and his followers. This book is therefore a study both of Karadžić's life and of the internal dynamics that led Bosnian Serb nationalists to engage collectively in mass atrocities, including genocide.

The assessment of Radovan Karadžić that I offer in the following pages differs both from the laudatory descriptions offered by his admirers and the evil-from-birth portraits drawn by his detractors. I have come to see him as a complex human being, possessed of a keen and adaptable intellect, a fertile imagination, and a theatrical sense of human drama. He thought creatively and acted ruthlessly in realizing, at any cost, a utopian vision of a separate state controlled and inhabited only by Serbs. Unfortunately for his many victims, he crossed along the way several thresholds – intellectual, emotional,

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and imaginative – on his way to becoming a calculating perpetrator of mass atrocities.

My view of the Bosnian Serb nationalist movement likewise departs from those who either valorize or deplore it. The movement began as a conventional political party as Yugoslavia collapsed, but it soon became a Serb national awakening with expanding ambitions and goals that could only be realized at the expense of millions of other human beings that stood in its way. In the first half of 1992, Serb nationalist ambitions shifted from claiming lands where Serbs lived to meeting the broader strategic needs of the RS. With those strategic objectives, Karadžić and his Bosnian Serb associates and followers fought the war of 1992–1995 and initiated mass atrocities to secure exclusive Serb habitation and control in the Republika Srpska.

Neither the Bosnian Serb movement nor Karadžić himself began their existence with the intent of murdering thousands of people or engaging in other mass atrocities, but both became planners and practitioners of such deeds. I have focused in this volume on their development from the relatively benign and banal to resolute perpetrators of many atrocities, in the conviction that studying them is an instructive, if deeply dismaying, undertaking. I do so in the hope that the paths they pursued may be followed by none, or at least fewer, in the future.

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eye and remarkably remained married to me throughout. I have dedicated this book to her, but that is but one reason for doing so.

Despite my arduous efforts in the preceding paragraphs to spread the blame around, I must reluctantly acknowledge that any remaining errors and faults are my own.

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