CHAPTER ONE

FIRE IN THE PAGES

RAIN OF ASH

"It was the most apocalyptic thing I'd ever seen," said Aida Mušanović, an artist from Sarajevo, describing the burning of the National Library in Sarajevo.[1] For days, a thick black cloud of ash hung over the city and residents would find pieces of charred paper or ashes of burned books and manuscripts in their hair and on their clothes.

On August 25, 1992, the Serb army began shelling the National Library of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo from positions on the mountainside directly in front of it. In the next few days, in the largest book-burning in modern human history, over a million books, more than a hundred thousand manuscripts and rare books, and centuries of historical records of Bosnia-Herzegovina went up in flames. Volunteers formed a human chain to rescue what they could. One of them, a graduate student at the University of Sarajevo, never made it home.

What was in the pages of those manuscripts and rare books, survivors of centuries of peace and war, that the Serb army was determined to destroy? What was there in those burning pages that many Sarajevans—Croats, Serbs, Muslims, and Jews—were willing to risk their lives to save?

The destruction of the National Library was one component of a systematic campaign of cultural eradication. Three months earlier, on May 17, 1992, the Serb army had targeted the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, which housed the largest collection of Islamic and Jewish manuscripts in the Balkans. More than five thousand manuscripts in Persian, Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Adžamijski (Slavic in Arabic script) were incinerated.

The Serb army then turned its fire on the National Museum, hitting it repeatedly and destroying much of its contents. One special item was saved: an ancient Jewish prayer book used for celebration of the *seder* or Passover feast. The *Sarajevo Haggadah*, with its exquisite Hebrew calligraphy and colored illustration, had been created in fourteenth-century Spain. Jewish refugees from the Inquisition in Spain had brought it to Bosnia. During World War II the *Sarajevo Haggadah* had been preserved by a Muslim curator who hid it from Nazi soldiers. In 1992, it was saved at great personal risk by a team of Bosnian museum workers that included a Muslim, an Orthodox Serb, and a Catholic. The *Haggadah* has thus survived three historic persecutions: the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, the Holocaust, and what has been called "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia.[2]

The shelling of these cultural institutions was purposeful. They were chosen for destruction and shelled in a precise manner. Areas around them were left untouched. During one particular shelling of the National Museum, the Serb gunners missed

and struck the Holiday Inn directly in front of it. Kate Adie, a BBC reporter, interviewed the Serb officer afterward. When she asked him why he had been shelling the Holiday Inn, the major hotel for journalists in Sarajevo, the officer apologized, explaining that he had been aiming at the museum and had struck the Holiday Inn by mistake.[3]

Since April 1992 the Serb army has targeted for destruction the major libraries, manuscript collections, museums, and other cultural institutions in Sarajevo, Mostar, and other besieged cities. What the Serb artillery missed, the Croat nationalist militia known as the "Croatian Defense Council" (HVO) took care of.

Where the Serb and Croat armies have been able to get closer than shelling range, the destruction has been even greater. The Croatian Defense Council dynamited mosques and Orthodox churches throughout the regions controlled by the Croat military. Serb militias have dynamited all the mosques (over six hundred) in areas they have occupied, some of them masterworks of European architecture such as the sixteenth-century Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka and the Colored Mosque in Foča built in 1551. Between them, the Croat and Serb nationalists have destroyed an estimated fourteen hundred mosques. In many cases the mosques have been ploughed over and turned into parking lots or parks; every evidence of their existence has been effaced. Graveyards, birth records, work records, and other traces of the Bosnian Muslim people have been eradicated.[4]

Western political leaders have spoken of "ancient animosities," portraying Bosnians as a group of Balkan tribal killers who have hated one another for centuries and who are incapable of living in peace. In the fires of the National Library, the irony

of that portrayal becomes apparent. What the Serb and Croat armies were destroying, there and elsewhere, was the graphic and palpable evidence of over five hundred years of interreligious life in Bosnia. Despite the wars and strife of the past, religious monuments and houses of worship in Mostar and Sarajevo had been built next to one another and shared the same skyline. It is this architectural, literary, and human evidence—the monuments, the books, and the people who treasured them—of a flourishing multiconfessional culture that ethnoreligious militants have sought to efface.[5]

The northeast Bosnian town of Zvornik was known for its heritage of Bosnian Muslim poets, saints, rebels, and mystics. From April through July of 1992 the Serb military killed or expelled the entire Muslim population. After all the mosques in the primarily Muslim town were dynamited and ploughed over, the new Serb nationalist mayor declared: "There never were any mosques in Zvornik." Destroyed with those mosques was the evidence not only of the Muslim heritage of Zvornik but also of five hundred years of shared living between Christians and Muslims. History could now be rewritten according to the desires of those who wished to claim that this land was always and purely Christian Serb. In May 1993 to celebrate Zvornik's new status as 100 percent "pure" and cleansed of all Muslims, the mayor dedicated a new church, renamed a local, formerly Muslim village "Saint Stephen," and kissed a crucifix.[6]

Aida Mušanović, the artist who described the burning of the National Library, had visited the hospital in Sarajevo and seen the carnage brought by the war. Yet the burning of the library struck her with a special horror. In the fire of the National Library, she realized that what she was experiencing was not only

war but also something else. The centuries of culture that fell back in ash onto the besieged city revealed a secret. The gunners on the hills above Sarajevo did not seek to defeat an enemy army; at that time, there was no organized, opposing army. They sought to take territory, but not only territory. They sought political concessions, but also something more. Their goal was the eradication of a people and all evidence of that people's culture and existence.

WHO ARE BOSNIANS?

In 1945, communist guerrilla fighter Josip Broz Tito, better known as Marshal Tito, reestablished the Yugoslav federation, which had existed from 1918 to 1941 and then had been dismembered by Nazi Germany. The constituent nations of the reconstituted Yugoslavian republic were Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia (see Map 1).

The word "Yugoslavia" means "land of the South (Yugo) Slavs." The central part of Yugoslavia was populated by three major groups (Serbs, Slavic Muslims, and Croats), all of whom spoke dialects of the South Slavic language until recently called Serbo-Croatian. The vast majority of Croats were Roman Catholic and lived in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and some parts of Serbia. The vast majority of Serbs were Orthodox Christians and lived in Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and parts of Croatia and Bosnia known as the Krajina. Slavic Muslims were concentrated in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the adjacent areas in Serbia and Montenegro, and in Macedonia. Croatians used a Latin-based script, while Serbs preferred a Cyrillic script (based on Greek characters), but despite dialectical differences, Serbs,

Croats, and Bosnian Muslims spoke the same language. Many Serbs and Croats were devoted to the ideal of a multireligious and multiethnic Yugoslavia. Religious nationalists, however, desired religiously homogeneous national states, a greater Catholic Croatia and a greater Orthodox Christian Serbia. Slovenes and Macedonians spoke South Slavic languages distinct from but belonging to the same language family as Serbo-Croatian. The non-Slavic Albanians were primarily Muslim and resided in Macedonia and a region in Serbia known as Kosovo, adjacent to the independent nation of Albania. A large Hungarian population lived in another province of Serbia, Vojvodina.

Like the rest of Europe, Yugoslavia had been torn apart in World War II. Slovenia had been made part of the Greater German Reich. Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina had been incorporated into a puppet state of Nazi Germany. Italy had occupied parts of the coastline. Germany had occupied and ruled Serbia through a collaborationist Serbian regime. The "independent" Croatian state under German and Italian occupation was controlled by a fascist militia known as the Ustashe, dedicated to an independent "Greater Croatia." In 1941 the Ustaše began to "cleanse" Croatia of Serbs either by forcing them to convert to Roman Catholicism or by killing and expelling them. Various groups of Serb fighters organized themselves as a nationalist guerrilla force, called the "Chetniks," loyal to the Serb royal dynasty. Some Chetniks espoused the idea of a "Greater Serbia" and carried out atrocities against non-Serbs. Tito's army of Partisans, on the other hand, was made up of people from all the major Yugoslav religious and ethnic groups and fought for a unified Yugoslavia under communist rule. At the end of the war,

the Partisans carried out mass executions against both their Ustashe and Chetnik enemies.

After the war Tito set out to reestablish Yugoslavia and to balance the various nationalities. "Brotherhood and Unity" was the slogan meant to replace calls for independent and greater Croatia and Serbia. By the 1970s Tito had positioned Yugoslavia as a communist state independent of the Kremlin and a leader of the nonaligned movement—finding a strategic niche between Soviet and Western spheres. Yugoslavia was relatively robust economically. The hatreds and tragedies of World War II began to fade, particularly in the new generations, and intermarriage increased. The 1984 Winter Olympic Games brought thousands of visitors to Sarajevo; many came away enchanted by the culture they found.

After Tito's death in 1980, Yugoslavia was ruled by a rotating presidency; each term would be filled by a representative of a different Yugoslav republic. In the late 1980s Serbs became involved in a bitter struggle with Albanians in the region of Kosovo. As Serb nationalists demanded a Greater Serbia in ways that would never have been tolerated under Tito, the other republics, especially Slovenia and Croatia, became fearful. By 1987 a Serbian communist party official, Slobodan Milošević, used the Serb nationalism to dominate Yugoslavia. The Slovenes and Croats declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and Yugoslavia disintegrated.[7]

The Yugoslav army invaded Slovenia but retreated; there were few Serbs in Slovenia and Serbia had no territorial ambitions in it. Croatia was different. The new Croatian president, Franjo Tudjman, countered Milošević's aggressive Serb nation-

alism with an aggressive Croat nationalism. Tudjman refused to acknowledge the full extent of Ustashe persecution of Serbs during World War II. While moderate Croats and Serbs tried to prevent war, the nationalists associated with Tudjman and Milošević stoked it. The result was a brutal conflict between the Yugoslav army with its allied Serb militias on one side and the new Croat army on the other.

The people of Bosnia, especially the Muslims, were caught in the middle. Croat and Serb nationalism is based upon an identification of nationhood with a particular branch of the Christian religion. In such religious nationalism, a Muslim is treated as a second-class citizen at best. The majority of Bosnian Muslims and many of the other Bosnians—Serb, Croat, Jew, Gypsy, and others—rejected the identification of religion and nationhood. These people considered themselves Bosnian. Many people in Bosnia-Herzegovina sought a nation based not on exclusive religious affiliation but on constitutional rule and respect for differing religions.

If Bosnians refused to fight in the Yugoslav army against Croatia, they were labeled as traitors by Serb militants. If they fought in the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army, they were considered enemies by Croat nationalists. The president of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegović, had seen this trap and had opposed the independence of Croatia until these explosive issues could be resolved.[8] When war in neighboring Croatia broke out, the Bosnian government was faced with a further trap. If it tried to procure arms, the Yugoslav army and the Serb nationalist militias would interpret the effort as aggression and would attack. If Bosnia refrained from arming itself, Croat nationalists would set up their own militias in Bosnia and any attack by the Serb army

would be justified by blaming the Bosnians for not being better prepared. The final trap was the issue of independence. If Bosnia remained in Yugoslavia, Serb nationalists could persecute non-Serbs in Bosnia and say to the world that the persecution was an "internal affair." If Bosnia declared independence, it would face assault by the heavily armed Yugoslav army and the Serb militias.[9] In a chilling speech before the Bosnian Assembly, a Serb religious nationalist by the name of Radovan Karadžić pointed out the vulnerability of the Muslim population and what lay in store for them if they opposed him: "Do not think that you will not lead Bosnia-Herzegovina into hell, and do not think that you will not perhaps make the Muslim people disappear, because Muslims cannot defend themselves if there is war."[10]

On April 6–7, 1992, after Bosnians had voted for independence in a referendum, the European Community and the United States recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina as a sovereign state. Meanwhile, Bosnian Serb nationalists had declared their own independent "Republika Srpska" (Serbian Republic) and set up their headquarters in the town of Pale, not far from Sarajevo, with Karadžić as their president and backed by Serbia. The Yugoslav army and the Serb militias invaded the new nation from all sides: from the Serb-controlled areas of Croatia known as Krajina, from Serbia, and from Montenegro. Units of the Yugoslav army stationed in Bosnia had ringed the hills around Sarajevo with massive artillery, ostensibly as a "training exercise." And local Bosnian Serb extremists had been armed in advance by agents of Serbian militias and the Yugoslav army. By the fall of 1992, the Serb military had occupied 70 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina, after rolling over towns and villages that were lacking in basic defense capability. Bosnians had expected an at-

tack by the Serb military; what occurred after Serb nationalists gained military control over most of the country was not expected, however, and to many, inconceivable.

WHAT CANNOT BE SAID

The careful use of the term "genocide" represents a fragile yet critical strand in the fabric of internationally shared and legally recognized values. Genocide is a term that can be manipulated and misused. It is also a name for something that seems to elude naming. It is embodied in the Geneva Convention of 1948 outlawing genocide. That convention also requires signatories not only to prevent genocide when it occurs but to punish it, a provision that can provide a disincentive to speak out and name genocide when it does occur.

The problem of language is illustrated by the case of the invisible mass killings. On October 18, 1995, a front-page headline in the *New York Times* indicated that there had been new "mass killings" of civilians in the Banja Luka region of northern Bosnia. The story described the last phase of the four-year "cleansing" of the Banja Luka region, during which some 500,000 non-Serbs were killed or expelled. The final phase involved the last 20,000 non-Serbs, mostly Bosnian Muslims. They had survived over three years of atrocities and use as slave laborers by Serb nationalists.

As the Bosnian and Croat armies closed in to within a few miles of the Banja Luka area, the final killings were launched. In late October 1995, women and children were brutally expelled. Serb militias selected out men and boys (twelve years and older) and led them away. Refugee workers on the scene warned of a

mass killing similar to that carried out earlier by Serb army forces at the UN "safe area" of Srebrenica.

Despite its placement on the front page of a leading American newspaper, the story did not register. In the aftermath of the NATO air strikes of September 1995, which broke the siege of Sarajevo, a statement by NATO that mass atrocities were a cause for resumption of air strikes would have been enough to forestall any killings and probably secure release of the captives. No such statement was given.[11] The last surviving non-Serb population of the Banja Luka region was being taken away, before the eyes of the world, yet unnoticed. For three years the phrases "civil war," "age-old antagonisms," "blame on all sides," and a coded set of stereotypes about Muslims had helped make the killing of Bosnian Muslims appear natural and helped naturalize the refusal to stop it.

What has been called "ethnic cleansing" is not only invisible but also unspeakable. To describe it is to be forced to use a language from which any compassionate human being recoils. Herein lies the irony: the more obscene the crime, the less visible it is. The human capacity for acknowledging religiously based evil is particularly tenuous. The crime is committed by those who appeal to religiously sanctioned absolutes to justify their behavior. Then it is condoned by those who base their response, in part, on religious stereotypes.

For a moment what was being committed in Bosnia became visible. On August 6, 1992, the camps of Omarska and Trnopolje, near Banja Luka, appeared on television screens around the world. We saw those skeletal figures, eyes riveted to the ground, too terrorized to lift their gaze. We knew what had happened there. And when the television crew persisted in demand-

ing access to the camp and the manager of the camp patiently insisted that it was not a camp, but a center, we knew of what kind of realm Omarska was the center. Subsequent reports indicated that those who perished at Omarska would have been saved if the United Nations and the NATO nations, which had had information on the camps for months, had revealed them. We knew what the repression of the reports entailed.[12]

That moment of visibility at Omarska was made possible, in part, by recent meditations on the Holocaust, the extermination of six million Jews by Nazis and their collaborators in World War II. It was not in a house of worship, then, that the truth was most effectively spoken. It was during the dedication to the Holocaust Museum on April 22, 1993, that Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel could turn to President Clinton and demand that the killing be stopped. What was happening in Bosnia was not the Holocaust or Shoah. Yet much of the response to the atrocities exemplified by Omarska has appealed to categories of value shaped in response to that event, which entered its final phase fifty years earlier. To be faithful both to those who perished in the Holocaust and to those who perished in Bosnia, however, we need to deepen our understanding of all acts of genocide. Then the phrase "Never again" might be retrieved as meaningful.

THE EUPHEMISM

What do we call Omarska and the network of other such places throughout Serb army–occupied (and, for a time, Croat army–occupied) Bosnia-Herzegovina? The evidence gathered by human rights reports and war crimes investigators shows that most of those taken to Omarska were not expected to emerge alive.

Detention was not the object of such places.[13] The existence of Omarska came to light as a result of a series of articles for *New York Newsday* written by the reporter Roy Gutman. It was both the use of the term "death camp" and the content of the articles that finally forced Bosnian Serb leaders to allow a television crew into Omarska, but not until after they had spent time cleaning up and disposing of the most mutilated prisoners.[14]

Unlike Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, Chelmno, or Belzec, Omarska had no gas chambers and lacked the mechanized mass-killing and disposal methods associated with Nazi death camps. The killings at Omarska were personalized, entailing prolonged beating and torture, frequently by former associates of the victim. How can we grasp the meaning of Omarska and the realm of which it is the center?

The word "ethnic" in "ethnic cleansing" is a euphemism. Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Muslims all speak the same language, despite the fact that for political reasons they each call it now by a different name.[15] They all trace their descent to tribes that migrated to the area around the sixth century and were Slavic in language and culture by the time they settled in the area.[16] Those who have been singled out for persecution have fallen on the wrong side of a dividing line based solely on religious identity.

As in most wars, innocent civilians from all sides have suffered in the war, the quest for territory, and population expulsions. But Bosnian Muslims—and those who would share a body-politic with them—have been the victims of a consistently more brutal and more methodical violence. Even in the context of the conflict between Croatian and Serb nationalists, who engage in expulsions and atrocities against each other's population as a

continuation of the conflict of World War II, the Muslim population has been separated out and treated (by both Croat and Serb nationalists) with particular cruelty. Most victims were Bosnian Muslim noncombatants in areas taken by Serb and Croat militias without significant combat.[17]

In such cases, Muslim religious identity was determined by strictly extrinsic criteria. A Bosnian Muslim in a Serb or Croat camp was there not because of any particular act, expression, or thought. Some in the targeted population defined themselves as Muslims according to the Islamic testimony of belief in one deity and in Muhammad as the messenger of the one deity. Some were observant, for example, keeping the required fast during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan or the prohibition against pork and alcohol. Some were unobservant. Many Bosnian Muslims were atheists. Many were observant of some of the Islamic practices such as the Ramadan fast but considered themselves religious skeptics and their observances cultural. Some supported the political leaders of the Bosnian government; some did not. Some were indifferent to politics.[18]

In the 1971 census a new national category of "Muslims" in Bosnia was recognized by the Yugoslav government. This nationality label led to numerous contradictions within Yugoslavia: an Albanian Muslim was not considered to be a "Muslim" in the Yugoslav census of nationalities, but many Bosnians of Muslim background who considered themselves atheists or skeptics declared themselves "Muslim" in the census to avoid the categories of "Serb" and "Croat," both of which had religious implications. For those who wanted a Bosnian nationality to be affirmed, alongside those of Croat, Slovene, Macedonian, Serbian, and Albanian, this classification of "Muslim" was problematic; it finally

gave Bosnian Muslims a political voice alongside Catholics and Orthodox Serbs, but it did so at the cost of further reinforcing the identity between religion and nationality.[19]

In the world of Omarska, if an inhabitant of Bosnia had a name identifiable as Muslim or parents with names identifiable as Muslim, that was considered guilt enough, whatever the beliefs or practices of that individual and whether or not that person was categorized as "Muslim" in the nationalities census. Those organizing the persecution, on the other hand, identified themselves and their cause through explicit religious symbols. The symbols appeared in the three-fingered hand gestures representing the Christian trinity, in the images of sacred figures of Serbian religious mythology on their uniform insignia, in the songs they memorized and forced their victims to sing, on the priest's ring they kissed before and after their acts of persecution, and in the formal religious ceremonies that marked the purification of a town of its Muslim population. The term "ethnic" in the expression "ethnic cleansing," then, is a euphemism for "religious." It entails a purely extrinsic yet deadly definition of the victim in terms of religious identity; the intrinsic aspect—in the form of religious mythology—becomes the motivation and justification for atrocities on the part of the perpetrator.

THE REALM OF OMARSKA

Vladimir Srebrov was one of the founders, along with Radovan Karadžić, of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) in Bosnia. In early 1992 Srebrov became aware of a plan within the Yugoslav army, supported by his colleagues in the party, to destroy the Muslim population of Bosnia as part of a partition of the coun-

try between Serbia and Croatia. When he attempted to leave Sarajevo to plead with Serb nationalists to abandon the planned killings, he was arrested by Serb militiamen, placed in the Kula prison, and tortured.[20] Srebrov is one of many Serbs who have refused the nationalist program of the Serb governments. He is also one of a number of Serbs who have risked their lives and the lives of their families to protect non-Serbs, to denounce the "ethnic cleansing," and to call for a civil society that is not confined to one particular religious group.

Osman and Sabiha Botonjić were a middle-class Muslim couple in the town of Sanski Most, not far from Banja Luka. In the spring of 1992 the Serb army had occupied their town with little military resistance. Osman was met at work by a former colleague and told to come to the police station for a few questions. He was first held in a small cell jammed with prisoners, without food or water. Beatings were continual. After several days the prisoners were taken out and thrown onto a truck to be driven to a concentration camp at Manjača. Of the sixty-five prisoners in the truck, forty-seven survived the journey. Others, weakened by beatings, died of suffocation, thirst, trauma, or blood loss. Osman was held at Manjača, where prisoners slept on bare ground coated with sheep dung washed in by each new rain. Osman said that many survivors of Manjača had lost feeling in parts of their body because of prolonged exposure to the cold. A special room in Manjača was used for torture.

For most of this period, Sabiha and her daughters had no idea where Osman was and whether or not he was alive. As the terror increased, Sabiha was more and more reluctant to leave the house. Yet she had to go out to find food for her children. Sabiha was further burdened with the knowledge of what happened

to Muslim girls if they were picked up by Serb militias. Muslims were required to display identification marks: white armbands or white marks on their homes. When standing in line for food, Muslims were required to give up their place to Serbs. Sabiha spent one whole morning in line as one after another of her Serb neighbors took places in front of her, until all the stocks were gone.

In 1993 Osman, Sabiha, and their daughters started a new life in the United States as refugees. In the fall of 1995 they heard that the last surviving Muslims in Sanski Most had been expelled or killed just before the town was retaken in the final Bosnian army offensive. The Botonjić family's experience illustrates what has been endured by a great many Bosnian Muslims except that they were fortunate enough to have survived intact as a family.[21]

What happened to Vladimir Srebrov and the Botonjić family exemplifies twin policies of religious-based violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina: elimination of all dissent within a particular religious group and destruction of the people outside of it. While the media focused global attention upon the shelling of Sarajevo, major events were occurring in the countryside, away from television cameras. Evidence and testimonies collected by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Former Yugoslavia, the UN Commission of Experts on War Crimes in the Former Yugoslavia, human rights groups such as Helsinki Watch, Doctors without Borders, and Amnesty International, and the International Criminal Tribunal on War Crimes in the Former Yugoslavia indicate systematic, widespread, and methodical persecution beyond anything the popular media has shown.[22]

These sources report that in each area occupied by the Serb army, killing camps and killing centers were established

Map 2. Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992–1995

and individual massacres were carried out.[23] The term "killing camps" indicates those camps (such as Omarska, Brčko-Luka, Sušica, and the industrial site of the Keraterm company in Prijedor) where the primary object of detention was killing. Many of the prisoners appear to have been beaten to death over a period of hours or days. The killing went on daily and nightly. The term "killing camp" is meant to avoid false identification with the death camps of the Holocaust, while at the same time avoiding falsifications and euphemisms such as "detention camp." Manjača (the camp in which Osman was held), Trnopolje, Batković, and other smaller areas were concentration camps; killings and torture were common, but the majority of detainees did survive.[24]

"Killing centers" were places where the victims were brought for immediate or nearly immediate execution. Thus the famous Drina River bridge in the eastern Bosnian town of Višegrad was used for nightly executions and "sport atrocities" against Bosnian Muslims by Serb militiamen; the victims would be tortured and then thrown off the bridge and shot as they fell down into the Drina River.[25] Similar centers were found in Zvornik, Foča, and most other centers of Bosnian Muslim population occupied by the Serb army.[26]

Massacres, one-time acts of mass killing at discreet locales, occurred in every area occupied by the Serb army. There were various basic forms of massacre: those that took place as Serb militias entered a village or town; those that took place against unarmed civilians behind Serb lines during the time an area was already occupied and fully under the control of Serb forces; those committed against Bosnian villagers in deportation transit; and those committed against Bosnian prisoners of war. Even when

captives thought they were being released, they were often disabused of their hope. In the Vlašić mountain massacre, busloads of Bosnians who had been released from the Trnopolje camp were stopped by Serb soldiers and killed.[27]

In late 1992, after the Serb army had consolidated the 70 percent of Bosnian territory it controlled, the mass killings changed into steady, individualized killings and rapes. In the fall of 1994, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) made an extraordinary appeal to world leaders to stop the atrocities. The appeal was ignored.[28]

When a town fell to the Serb army, the first inhabitants to be targeted were intellectual and cultural leaders: religious authorities, teachers, lawyers, doctors, business people, artists, poets, and musicians. The object of such "elite-cide" was to destroy the cultural memory of the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnians who would live with them. Gradually, acts of cruelty and massacre took on an interior momentum and logic of their own. In many cases, the Serb population was alerted to leave a village before the killing began.

Because the Serb governments have refused UN war crimes investigators access to alleged killing sites and have tampered with mass graves, it is impossible to calculate the number of dead. Whatever the final number, given the small size and population of Bosnia (only four million total population), the primitive methods used for the killings, and the interference by reporters and refugee workers, the killing was methodical, systematic, and of a tragic enormity.

In 1993, when Croat religious nationalists saw that Serb army aggression and atrocities were not being punished but were be-

ing rewarded by international peace negotiators with territorial concessions, they began their own persecution of Bosnian Muslims, modeled on the actions of the Serb militias.

GYNOCIDE

The following testimony was offered by a survivor of the Sušica camp in eastern Bosnia, whose commandant, Dragan Nikolić, has been charged by the International Criminal Tribunal with crimes against humanity. The witness was testifying about several young women who had been "selected" from other refugees: "They started selecting young women. The first was only 14, the second could have been 16 or 17. . . . I knew them all, they were from Vlasenica. . . . Then they started yelling: 'We want the Muslims to see what our seed is.' The women were never seen again. . . . We know that Dragan Nikolić knows about it very well. That's what he did. . . . He told us himself: 'I'm the commander of the camp. I'm your God and you have no other God but me.'"[29]

In one sense, the rapes in Bosnia are a manifestation of the toleration for and condoning of rape throughout history. Rape is also a feature of warfare, and some have argued that it is a rationale for war—that a purpose of war is the free rein it gives to rape.[30] But the use of rape against Muslim women in Bosnia has been overwhelming even by the bleak standards of war. In one town, Foča, a rape center was set up in the former Partizan Sports Hall in May 1992. Muslim girls and women were held there, underwent continual rape and other physical violence, and also were sent out to apartments where they were held for

several days and then returned to the Partizan Hall.[31] The organized rape of Muslim women took place throughout the portions of Bosnia occupied by the Serb military, as well as in areas controlled by Croat nationalist forces.[32] Militiamen boasted about their gang rapes of Muslim women.[33] Human rights reports also show rapes of Christian women, but to a lesser extent and apparently without organization and planning.

The organized rape of Bosnian women was gynocidal—a deliberate attack on women as childbearers. In this connection, Serb and Croat nationalists were aware of two facts. The first fact was that the birthrate for Muslims in Yugoslavia was higher than that of Christians, and in some rural places, such as Kosovo province, this birthrate differential was dramatic. Birthrate became so heated an issue that Serb nationalists charged Muslims with a premeditated plot to use their higher birthrates to overwhelm and ultimately destroy the Christian Serbs.[34]

The second fact was that in traditional, Mediterranean societies women who have been raped are often unable to find a husband and have a family. Patriarchal traditions of shame and honor make it difficult—and in some cases, impossible—for women who have been raped to be accepted as wives and mothers. The organized rapes were meant to destroy the potential of the women as mothers. The statements attributed to many rapists—that the victim would bear "Serb seed"—are the flip side of this ideology: forced impregnation of Serb nationhood, a bizarre mixture of religion and biology that can only be understood against the underlying religious mythology.

The rapes were a form of desecration, closely related to the desecration of the sacred spaces symbolized by mosques. The

term for sacred space in Islam is *ḥaram*, originally an Arabic term that Serb nationalists associate with one small aspect of Islamic sacred spaces, the women's quarters. Fantasies of "the harem" were commonplace among Serb nationalist clergy, academics, and soldiers. The commander of the Manjača camp, for example, justified the attack on Muslims on the grounds that the Bosnian Muslims had a plan to seize Serb women and put them in harems.[35] Serb religious nationalists used radio broadcasts to spread the charge that Bosnian Muslims were plotting to put Serb women in harems. Many Bosnian Serbs believed, or claimed to believe, these charges despite their being wildly, even ludicrously, inconsistent with the marriage practices of their Bosnian Muslim neighbors.[36] The harem fantasy involves a particularly cruel version of the use of women's bodies as a battlefield. The phrase allegedly used by Dragan Nikolić, "I am your God and you have no other God but me," appears to be a play upon the Islamic declaration of faith, "There is no god but God."[37]

A final dispossession awaited Bosnian Muslim women. Buses of refugees expelled from Serb army territory were stopped by militias and army units. From these refugees, who had already lost their communities, homes, and household possessions, everything else of possible value was now taken, from hard currency to jewelry of little value and sometimes even shoes. Stolen wedding rings—of little monetary value in relation to the enormous booty taken by the militias—represented the last symbol of group identity as well as a symbol of a future procreative possibility. The symbolism of a procreative future seems to be behind the curious obsession of some Serb religious nationalists

with stealing wedding rings from Muslim women and giving them to their own girlfriends.[38]

GENOCIDE

The term "genocide" was coined by the jurist Rafael Lemkin as part of an effort to learn from the experience of the Holocaust and to develop an international legal consensus about certain kinds of systematic atrocities.[39] In 1948 the term was formally adopted in the Geneva conventions, and the act of genocide was prohibited. All contracting parties, which included the NATO nations, agreed that "it is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish." Genocide was specifically defined as acts committed to "destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such." Such acts include killing, torture, and efforts to prevent the procreation and regeneration of the targeted people.

Lemkin emphasizes that the term does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of an entire nation. Rather, it entails "a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups." Among the targets for destruction in such a plan, Lemkin lists institutions of culture, language, and national feelings, and the security of property, liberty, health, dignity, and human life. The key criterion for genocide, according to Lemkin, is that it be "directed against the national group as an entity"; violence against individuals is directed against them "not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group."[40]

The organized persecution in Bosnia from 1992 to 1995 was

an effort to destroy both Bosnian Muslim culture and Bosnian multireligious culture and to destroy the Bosnian Muslims as a people. The campaign was made up of interlocking elements: cultural annihilation, mass killings, organized rape, and a code of euphemisms. Although Bosnian Muslims may have survived as individuals within refugee camps, they would be destroyed as a people and culture, and Bosnia could be partitioned between the religiously purified Christian states of Serbia and Croatia.

For the NATO powers to acknowledge genocide in Bosnia would have been to acknowledge that not only were they breaking the Genocide Convention of 1948 by refusing to prevent and punish genocide, but also that they were rewarding genocide by ceding territory to forces that carried it out. The UN-imposed arms embargo had locked into place the vast Serb-army advantage in heavy weapons, violating Article 51 of the UN Charter, which guarantees every recognized nation the right to defend itself; the embargo reinforced the power imbalance that allowed genocide to be carried out with impunity.

Many have denied, without reference to the history and definition of the term, that genocide has occurred in Bosnia.[41] These denials have done harm. No one wants to believe that a people are being exterminated because of race, religion, or ethnic identity and that governments who have the power to stop it refuse to do so. If an entire people are being killed, then on some level we may wish to believe, as we are constantly being told about Bosnia, that "there are no innocents in this war," that the people suffering deserve what they get. To acknowledge even the possibility of genocide, the mass killing of people simply because of who they are, calls into question fundamental beliefs about the

possibility of a just foundation to our existence. Denial, however thinly argued, can be effective in lessening public appetite for the difficult process of enforcing the Geneva Genocide Convention.

At the time of this writing, eight major nationalist Serb and Croat military and civil leaders and numerous lower-level soldiers and civilians have been indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal on multiple charges of crimes against humanity. Five have been indicted on the charge of genocide by the tribunal, made up of distinguished jurists from around the world. In all the indictments for genocide, the vast majority of victims were Muslims. The indictments are based upon meticulous investigations. Much of the vast collections of evidence and testimony have been available to the public since the summer of 1992.[42] In this sense, the genocide was committed in full view of the world.

Srebrenica has become the symbol of the failure to enforce the Geneva Convention on Genocide. Srebrenica, a Muslim-majority town on the Drina River, was an ancient center of civilization in Bosnia. In 1992, as the Serb army burned its way through eastern Bosnia, thousands of refugees fled to the Srebrenica area. On April 16, 1993, as the Serb army entered the Srebrenica enclave, the United Nations declared Srebrenica a "safe area" and empowered the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia (UNPROFOR) to supply humanitarian aid and to use the power of NATO to protect it. Less than a month later, five other besieged cities were declared safe areas.[43]

For more than a year, the Muslims in Srebrenica lived in hunger and fear as the Serb army blocked most UN convoys into the besieged enclave, and the UN commanders refused to

use their authorized "necessary means" to break the blockade. A UN report suggesting the enclaves should be abandoned—despite the solemn UN resolutions—served as a green light to Serb army commanders. In the summer of 1995, the Serb army entered Srebrenica and another safe area, Žepa, as UN officials turned down requests for NATO air support. After the safe areas were overrun, Serb general Ratko Mladić drank a toast with the Dutch commander of the Srebrenica UN contingent, at the same time that Mladić's men were selecting out thousands of boys as young as twelve years of age, men, and some young women for torture, rape, and mass killings. Mass graves have been identified, but Serb nationalist authorities have refused war crimes investigators access to the graves. An estimated 8,000 people are missing, but after serious grave tampering, it is impossible to determine how many were killed.[44]

RELIGION AND THE IDEOLOGY OF GENOCIDE

Many deny a religious motive in the assault on Bosnia and upon Bosnian Muslims in particular and in the three-year refusal by the major powers of the Christian world (Britain, France, the U.S., Canada, Germany, and Russia) to authorize NATO power to stop it or allow Bosnians to defend themselves. This book explores religious dimensions of the genocide. The focal point is a national mythology that portrays Slavic Muslims as Christ killers and race traitors. When that national mythology was appropriated by political leaders, backed with massive military power, and protected by NATO nations, it became an ideology of genocide.

"Ideology of genocide" means a set of symbols, rituals, stereotypes, and partially concealed assumptions that dehumanize a people as a whole, justify the use of military power to destroy them, and are in turn reinforced by the economic, political, and military beneficiaries of that destruction. It is the development and function of this ideology of genocide that the succeeding chapters will explore.