

On the Margin of the Sky

# *On the Margin of the Sky*

*A Shocking True Crime Story*



*On the Margin of the Sky, I see a New Apocalypse  
over Europe riding on Russian and Arabian horses.*

## *Dee Plecic*

On the Margin of the Sky

# **On the Margin Of the Sky**

**DEE PLECIC**

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## **DEDICATION**

There is no New Homeland as it is true Homeland that was lost for all refugees in the world. I lost my beautiful homeland Yugoslavia. Wherever I go, I miss the peace and happiness that I had in my homeland. My lost homeland is deep in my heart and my mind. It will remain there to the end of my life.

This book is dedicated to all refugees in the world. It is a wakeup call for all of us.

“Who am I, what am I?

I am just a dreamer,

Whose view is fading into

mist and mold,

I lived the way as I dreamed,

As many others on this Earth”.

(Sergey Yesenin)

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## **FOREWORD**

**By Jean Charney**

Dee Plecic uses her experiences as a survivor of the siege of Sarajevo and a refugee from that war-torn area to vividly describe the traumas of war and how a peaceful, tolerant community was destroyed by political games and mass media propaganda that led to the largest genocide in Europe since Hitler.

Her description of how radical Islam was involved in the conflict and how Islam has changed Sarajevo beyond all recognition is a sobering look at that problem. Her personal story and her triumph over hatred and the ugliness she survived is an inspiration.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Writing this book was an incredible journey for me. From the beginning of my writing, I was in deep struggle with my emotions that were coming as a hidden volcano, drawing the tears from my eyes, killing me slowly, pushing me to deep depression many times. I started and left the writing many times. I am happy that I had enough courage to be a winner over all my emotions and to complete my book.

I am deeply grateful to my teacher from DePaul University, Chicago Michele Moore, who pushed me to start writing this book. I promised her that a long time ago but could not do it for many years. Now, I am strong and not any more in depression that I have been. The new energy inside of me and support from my family and great friends helped me to overcome all my struggles with memories and emotions from the wartime.

Special thanks to my editor Jean Charney, who supported me and helped me with my English as a second language. She did great job as editor.

I will be thankful and grateful to the end of my life to God for all my lovely friends that supported me in this journey.

Deeply thank you to my dear friend Dr. Iva Vurdelja for enormous support in overcoming all the obstacles on my journey.

Special thanks to my lovely family and all my lovely friends on their donations that supported my Fund raising for publishing this book.

Without all their help, I do not know how I will be able to accomplish this project.

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Thank you to all of you who want to read my story. I am happy and strong now. No depression inside of me. I am smiling face, sitting by the ocean of Florida coast, praying for a better tomorrow and praying for all of you.



## **INTRODUCTION**

This book describes how political games and multimedia propaganda can melt innocent people's brains. It reveals secrets of survival I have gathered through a stormy period of recent European history. The book describes political and social changes and their effects on the peaceful people of former Yugoslavia. Its focus, though, is on the political games that reshaped the borders and lives of people who suffered because they were of mixed nationalities and religions. Our only fault was that we were born and raised in a cosmopolitan spirit in a time and place of brutal and primitive nationalism and "ethnic cleansing" in the Balkans and eastern and southeastern Europe.

This is a story about reigniting the volcano of nationalism in the Balkans, an awakening that generated the chaos of ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing is genocide committed against different ethnic groups to make a territory "ethnically clean" for one ethnic group only. In the Balkans, all other ethnicities were hunted down and exterminated to accomplish that ideal. The shadow of that volcano is still present in Bosnia and the guns are not silent yet. Nobody knows when it will end.

This brutal process is not exclusive to the Balkans. It is all too common in many other parts of modern and civilized societies. People should know that even in Europe, the continent of old civilization and culture, there are millions of people still suffering and struggling through the nightmares of almost forgotten demons of hatred in many forms and dimensions. Fascism, nationalism, and newborn terrorist movements have become the weapons of choice for corrupt and evil ideologies and politicians.

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As an American woman who is a survivor of ethnic cleansing, still dreaming an American dream and struggling for a better tomorrow, I wish to open your eyes to some of these dangers.

### **1 LIFE BEFORE THE WAR**

#### **A Sleepy Volcano of Nationalism Wakes up on the Balkan Peninsula.**

As a dreamer, I am always on the margin of the sky, connected with the ocean and the sky where my wings can fly. Today, I am seated by the ocean, flying on the orange and red colors of Florida's sunset sky. In my mind, I am also back in the red Balkan sky that I will never forget, a sky full of fire and smoke from the missiles, bombshells, and terrifying explosions falling on my lovely city, Sarajevo, in a twentieth-century apocalypse.

Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is placed on the Balkan Peninsula, which has been a hot spot for many centuries. The Balkan Peninsula has been a crossroad of different national, cultural, and religious influences from the Ottoman Empire to the present.

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The special mixture in this place gave a very special flavor and aroma to the former Yugoslavia. After World War I, Yugoslavia was known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians. But more than four years of a war of nationalism have turned once-beautiful Yugoslavia into a living nightmare and into one of the bloodiest battlefields in Europe's recent history. We see images of refugees bearing children and suitcases, war-wearied elderly women, crying soldiers. But most of us do not understand how the turmoil began.

According to articles written by Pula Pickering, Noel R. Malcolm and John R. Lampe in the Encyclopedia Britannica, the volcano of nationalism in Bosnia started with World War II.

“At that time, Croats joined the Nazis in exterminating Serbs and others. The Serbs joined the Nazis too, and hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians were killed on both sides. The killing that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1941 and 1945 was terrible in both scale and complexity. The Ustaša, the fascist movement that ruled Croatia during the war, exterminated most of Bosnia and Herzegovina's 14,000 Jews and massacred Serbs on a large scale; tens of thousands of Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina died in death camps. Two organized resistance movements emerged—a Serbian royalist force known as the Chetniks, led by Draža Mihailović, and the communist Partisan force (including at first Serbs and then also Croats and Muslims) led by Josip Broz Tito. The sharply divergent aims of the two movements resulted in a civil war. Royalist forces turned increasingly to German and Italian forces for assistance and committed atrocities against Bosnian Muslims. At the same time, some Bosnian Muslims joined an SS division that operated in northern and eastern

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Bosnia and Herzegovina for six months during 1944, exacting reprisals against the local Serb population. The Partisans liberated Sarajevo in April 1945 and declared a communist 'people's government' for Bosnia and Herzegovina later that month. It is estimated that, when considering only the three largest ethnic groups, 164,000 Serbs, 75,000 Muslims, and 64,000 Croats died in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war.

“Josip Broz Tito, a partisan leader, led the resistance against the Nazis, ultimately driving them from Yugoslavia. Subsequent to the war, Tito was elected to lead the newly created Yugoslav Federation. Tito ruled with an iron fist, keeping ethnic rivalries in check” (Pickering et al. 2017).

## **2 WAR TIME**

### **Attack on Sarajevo**

Before the attack on Bosnia, there was a rumor about a secret meeting between the Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian presidents on how to share Yugoslavia among themselves. In 1991, at a secret meeting in Karadjordjevo, Serbia and Croatian presidents Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman agreed on the division of Bosnia

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and Herzegovina and about the demolition of the reforms of the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Markovic. The meeting and agreement have never been officially confirmed, but numerous sources have solid evidence that this happened.

One of those sources is Stjepan Mesic, a member of the presidency. In a report to Radio TV Sarajevo. He said, “We were all waiting for Tudjman in Visoko, where the Office of the President was and he returned with Hrvoje Sarinic, adding, ‘He was carrying maps under his arm,’ and Tudjman told us then: ‘This is what Milosevic suggests to Cazin, plus Kladusa, Bihac and us—the Banovina borders from 1939 ...’ I asked Tudjman: ‘Alija? I see here Bosnia is divided, and no one asks the Bosnian side.’ Tudjman replied, ‘When the Serbs and the Croats agree completely—everyone else is less important than’”. (“Secret Plan Tudjman and Milosevic”, March 25, 2015)

According to a CNN news report on the Balkan Tragedy, the plan to divide Bosnia into 10 provinces along ethnic lines was accepted by the Muslims and Croats but rejected by the Serbs. The fighting resumed, with Serbian aggression toward Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia. The United Nations attempted to mediate between the warring parties and placed more than 45,000 peacekeepers in the former Yugoslavia. (The Balkan tragedy).

According to a US State Department report about Bosnia and Herzegovina human rights, “Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of six constituent republics of the former Yugoslavia, became a sovereign state in April 1992 when 63 percent of its voters endorsed independence in a free and fair referendum. Pan-Serbian nationalists loyal to Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) leader Radovan Karadzic boycotted the referendum, and former Yugoslav National Army units which had organized themselves into a

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Bosnian Serb armed militia (BSA) declared their support for Karadzic. Supported by the Serbian authorities in Belgrade, the BSA began a brutal campaign of terror—in which acts of genocide took place—to establish an ethnically pure state linking Serb-occupied territory in Croatia with Serbia/Montenegro to form ‘greater Serbia.’

About twelve years after Tito's death, "There is no Bosnia anymore," said Radovan Karadzic over the Serbian radio station in Bosnia. He was a leader of the Serbian Democracy Party (SDS), which was formed in July 1990.

According to the article on the Encyclopedia Britannica website written by Pickering, Malcolm, and John R. Lampe, in December 1991, “Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) declared independence and asked for recognition by the European Union (EU). In a March 1992 referendum, Bosnian voters chose independence, and President Alija Izetbegovic declared the nation an independent state. Unlike the other former Yugoslav states, which were composed of a dominant ethnic group, Bosnia was an ethnic tangle of Muslims (44%), Serbs (31%), and Croats (17%), and this mix contributed to the duration and savagery of its fight for independence” (Pickering et al. 2017).

Soon after Bosnia declared independence from Yugoslavia, the political game called "brain wash" created by Bosnian Radio Television Sarajevo and Serbian Radio Television Pale started above the heads of the innocent citizens of Bosnia. We saw a large movement of the Yugoslav National Army, with heavy weapons coming from Serbia, surrounding Sarajevo. On the Bosnian TV news (RTV BiH), in March 1992 we listened to the speech of the president of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic: “There is no war in Bosnia from reliable sources,” he spoke. We trusted our president. Nobody had reserved

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food or water in case of war. He knew very well what was going on, but he lied to us. At the same time, from the Serbian Radio TV Station (RTTS), located in the village called Pale in the mountains above Sarajevo, we had been listening to Radovan Karadzic:

“Sarajevo has always been Serbian Sarajevo. Wherever the Serbian head is located, there is the Serbian Territory,” he said. The new presidents of the national parties in Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia had already created the new map of Bosnia in Karadjordjevo. Each one was looking for a new kingdom. The price for that was genocide. They did not care what price innocent people would pay. Here is a map of Sarajevo surrounded by the Yugoslav National Army.



In March 1992, led

by the crazy ideas of Radovan Karadzic, Serbian paramilitary forces began a campaign of terror in Eastern and Northern Bosnia. They were supported by Slobodan Milosevic's regime in Belgrade, which used all the power of the Yugoslav National Army. He had a global idea about creating a "Greater Serbia." The Yugoslavian National Army, with Serbian paramilitary forces, started their aggression and ethnic cleansing. A volcano of bloody war erupted. After Serbia stopped the war in Croatia, about 200,000 military forces moved from Croatia to Bosnia with an all-powerful arsenal including tanks and

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an air force, and they continued the prosecution and genocide. Their "mission" in Bosnia resulted in concentration camps, systematic rape, and the mass killing of civilians. This mission created the largest flow of refugees in Europe since World War II and the biggest genocide since Nazi Germany.

According to an article by Michele Lent Hirsch on WMC, Women's Media Center, "reports of raped woman in the Bosnian war range from 20,000 to 60,000 rapes; unfortunately, most sources state that the numbers are too hard to determine. According to one source, the U.N. Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, estimates there to be 50,000 to 60,000 cases. An Amnesty International report states: 'There are no reliable statistics on the number of women and men who were raped or were subjected to other forms of sexual violence. Early estimates by the BiH [Bosnia and Herzegovina] government suggested the number of 50,000 victims although this estimate was questioned as unreliable and politicized. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe estimated that 20,000 women were subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence. The real number of those who were raped during the 1992–1995-armed conflict will probably never be established.'

### **Volcano of Nationalism**

The residents of the building where I had my apartment were mostly of mixed religions and nationalities; as I have said, Sarajevo was a cosmopolitan city. We had been living with love and respect for all nationalities and religions. Many of us had different religions in one family, just as I had three religions in my family.



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Since the electric power, water, and gas were off for a time, all the food that we had in our refrigerators and freezers melted in two days. We shared with our neighbors everything that we had to eat. One man, a smart engineer, created an electric generator using the motor from his car and provided electricity for our building every day for two hours in the afternoon. That was a big help to us. We were able to watch news from the Bosnian and Serbian TV stations. The news was filled with political propaganda and lies about the real situation that was happening in Bosnia. That was part of the brainwashing game prepared in advance to make us confused and angry with each other. I still remember the speech of Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic on Sarajevo TV in 1991. He was repeating the lie to us: "From reliable sources, there is no war in Bosnia."

From the Serbian TV station, we watched a speech by Radovan Karadzic. He said, "Sarajevo was always Serbian territory. Wherever is a Serbian head that is Serbian territory." He was very good in his multimedia propaganda, washing the brains of the Serbian population in Bosnia, producing hate and confusion.

Both sides' powerful propaganda was melting our brains, producing fear, insecurity, and hatred among the people of Sarajevo. Many of my neighbors did not communicate with me anymore, seeing me as an enemy because of my name. Suspicion and political propaganda clouded their brains and souls, producing fear and uncertainty. I had the same feeling in my heart, but I blocked my brain: "There is no enemy in the mountains, there is no enemy around me, and it is a normal day." In my brain, I imagined the picture of a normal life around me that I believed, blocking my brain to not think about the reality around me. With this imagination in my blocked

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brain, I had much more energy and the courage to run between snipers and bombs. To be honest, I was very scared in my heart but very proud to walk on the street with makeup on my face and expensive perfume in my hair and wearing elegant clothes. In my mind, on the margin of the sky where I was communicating with God, I was saying, “God, if I die today, I want to die beautiful, as I have always been in my life.” Every day I ran to my workplace, praying to the sky, calling God to be with me today. I always believed that “I will be saved this day.”

During the war, about 10,000 children were killed on the streets of Sarajevo. Here are photos of children who were shot by snipers there. People on the street were frightened to go the hospital with an injured child.



A man carries a wounded girl into Kosevo hospital in Sarajevo following a mortar blast in a playground, June 25, 1995. REUTERS/FILE.

## **Facing Massacres**

Under those terrible wartime conditions, we tried to have as normal a life as possible. Ignoring the catastrophic situations around us, we created, as much as possible, normal conditions. To get any food in the marketplace, we had to have money. All our money in the banks was stolen and many bank buildings were destroyed. Therefore, no money, no honey; but we had to figure out how to get some food from the marketplace. The only way to get some money was by selling things like jewelry, wardrobes, and art works like paintings for very little return. The biggest war profiteers were in the marketplace robbing us by paying so little for our merchandise. My husband was able to sell many of the paintings that we had in our apartment for a very low price. The real prices for those paintings before the war were much higher because they were original paintings done by very popular painters such as Mersad Berber, a well-known European artist.

The city market was very dangerous. It was always under heavy artillery attack from the enemy in the mountains. On February 5, 1994, I was going to my workplace. I used to pass the marketplace every day. This day could have been deadly for me, but I was lucky. Five minutes after I passed the city marketplace a catastrophic attack started there. Frightened by the sound of shells, I ran to the courtyard below the cinema called Romanija. When the explosions stopped, I went out to the street to see what was going on.

I will never forget the horrible scene on the street. People were running in different directions, screaming and crazy with fear. In front of me, I saw cars with injured citizens

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racing to the hospital to rescue the wounded. Blood was running from the cars on the streets. I felt that I would pass out. I sat down on the pavement to recover from the shock. One woman came to me with water. “Are you okay? Would you come into my apartment for a moment?” She helped me go to her apartment for a short break. After that, I continued to walk to my workplace, frozen by the shock that I had survived.

In this massacre, 68 people were killed and 144 more were wounded. (*BBC News: Sarajevo massacre survivor speaks*)

Here are the photos of Markale Massacre.





This book is my true story. I am the survivor of  
3.5 years siege of Sarajevo.

The primary emphases are focused on Political  
games and mass media propoganda that has  
produced the biggest genocide in Europe  
after Hitler.

The genocide called "Ethnic Cleansing" during the  
war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Wow, this is a wonderful story of strength and perseverance  
in unimaginable hardship. I thought I knew a little bit about  
the Bosnian War. Upon reading this book I discovered I had  
the version the media told the American public. Much more  
complex than I had imagined. The human story intertwined  
with the actual facts of the event kept my interest throughout  
the whole book, I do not remember any part that I was bored  
or needed to scan read. That's very unusual for me.

Highly recommended.

Amazon customer review.

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