

# Reader describes impact of NATO bombing on Yugoslavia

11 May 1999

Dear Editor,

I am Serbian and my husband is Croatian. Our family has been cut down by war from both sides.

My husband's parents and family were driven out of their home and land by the war over Bosnia. Although they have been able to return, everything has been destroyed, they lost virtually everything. When they went back, their vineyard was completely ruined, all the vines were cut down and years of work gone.

Another group of our relatives consists of Krajina Serbs, who have been ethnically cleansed and scattered. Some of them are living in a refugee camp near the Hungarian border, after they were first sent to Kosova. They are living 50 in a room, they've tried to put up a few partitions. If they need soldiers, they'll be the first ones to be picked on.

After they were driven out, a baby was born to one of them in a Serbian hospital. The Serbian authorities refused to register the baby's birth, because the parents came from Croatia, and therefore had no status. They said "Go and register it there." Neither would the Croatian authorities register the baby, because the father is a Serb. So the child is stateless.

Now we are being destroyed on my side of the family as well. Every night they are being bombed in Belgrade. My brother lost his job in a factory, he was a fitter and turner. Now the factory has been bombed. There is a disused army camp a few streets away from their house, so that has been bombed as well. My sister-in-law and niece work in the city, near big government buildings. They try to go to work to keep going, but they could get killed there too. My 14-year-old nephew is really terrified because of the bombing. Now everybody from 14 has to register their identity in case of military call up.

Every night they all huddle down in a cellar. My sister told me they hide there with Albanian women,

who live in the same street. "We are holding each other and crying for fear of the bombs. No matter our nationality, we are all being bombed."

There is almost no food to buy, the shops are increasingly empty. They go kilometres looking for cooking oil, and still they don't get it. My family would starve, if people did not bring them a few pieces of food. There are good people. They come and give food from their farms outside Belgrade, to the people who are hiding in the shelters.

My sister could not open her eyes for four days, because of the pollution from the bombing. My brother said that every time you go out after the bombs, you nearly choke from the chemicals, and the burning fuel.

The water has been cut off for long periods, and the people don't trust the water any more, they don't know what has been dropped in it.

They have no electricity, not just for six or seven hours, but for whole days at a time. US-NATO boasted that they can turn the switch off "whenever we need to and whenever we want to." It virtually means "Do what we say, or we will kill everybody." They might as well say: "We can kill them whenever we want."

The schools are not working, they were supposed to go back on May 5, that is, the ones that have not been destroyed. Anyhow, the US-NATO is likely to declare that schools are like military targets.

When they bombed the bus, they claimed "the soldiers are constantly using public transport." They want to make an excuse, that's all it is.

They decided the TV station is a military target. They can decide anything is. I don't believe that is international law. They just made up that decision. The real reason is that they don't want anybody to see what is really happening to the whole population.

Where is it all leading to? They can decide to destroy everything.

Even some Croatian people who would not even talk to Serbians during the war in Croatia cannot agree with what the US-NATO is doing in Serbia now, and tell me so.

If this continues, if anybody stays alive, the people in Belgrade are no better off than the refugees in Kosova. Already they are without food. Where will everybody go, who will take them?

Yours sincerely,  
MO, Australia



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