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## The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War

*Slavenka Drakulic*

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#2199354 in Books 1994-05Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.00 x 5.25 x .251, #File Name: 006097608X  
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**Slavenka Drakulic : The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent essays about war time in CroatiaBy DominiqueExcellent essays about war time in Croatia. The author revealed the impact on the individuals and the country as a whole with a new concept of nationhood and citizenship.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent collection of short storiesBy Elaine KleinExcellent collection of short stories. Slavenka Drakulic has a way of writing which is both crisp and compassionate at the same time. I enjoyed reading it much like watching a cardinal alighting on our Victorian rose bush when it's in bloom.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great analysis of war. Could be applied to all wars. Personal, emotional, heart wrenchingBy skyscannerI am from Balkans, and fortunately for me I left it before the war. It still blows my mind that this war happened, it still hurt to think about violent, blood-curling things that friends, neighbors, brothers did to each other. Whenever I have questions about the war, I read Slavenka's books. She manages to achieve balance and objectivity, very rare to find in situations where you are expected to take sides or you will be considered traitor. She also, almost poetically, explains the human side of the war, the price on all sides that has to be paid by all for long time . She is very personal in her writing, and I find myself agreeing with almost everything she writes and feels. She doesn't take sides, she doesn't judge, she reports and experience it. The only people she judge are those on the top who manage to brainwash regular citizens and throw them into the abyss , that they themselves will never dare to experience. I recommend all of her books.

In a series of beautiful, impassioned essays, Croatian journalist and feminist Drakulic provides a very real and human side to the Balkans war and shows how the conflict has affected her closest friends, colleagues, and fellow countrymen--both Serbian and Croatian. Includes five new essays not in the hardcover edition.

From Publishers Weekly  
In 18 short, spontaneous, lyrical dispatches from the former Yugoslavia, Croatian journalist Drakulic ( *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* ) conveys the horror of war and its shattering impact on the lives of ordinary people. Written between April 1991 and May 1992, the selections include an interview with a youth who joins the Croatian Guards for "mop up" operations, a report from the battle front, the author's visit with her nervous, widowed mother and an account of her train ride on the Balkan Express from Vienna, where she consoles her own exiled daughter, back into the heart of the war. Drakulic proposes a number of reasons for the ongoing bloodbath: Yugoslavs under Tito failed to build a political underground, and the country never had a chance to become a civil society as a foundation for democratic institutions. "We traded our freedom for Italian shoes," she remarks, meaning that under communist rule people made "a kind of contract with the regime," forgoing resistance in exchange for travel privileges and shopping excursions abroad. First serial to the *New York Times Magazine*. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Library Journal  
Drakulic has produced yet another remarkable book. Her collection of 18 essays, named for the train between Vienna and Rijeka, moves from the comfortable distance of Cambridge's Harvard Club through the consequences of war for former Yugoslavia. As in *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* ( LJ 3/15/92; "Best Books of 1992," LJ 1/93), Drakulic offers the personal account of a keen observer unsullied by nationalism. Indeed, her humanism permits both judgment of events in Croatia and the metaphor of this war's graphic horror. We still wonder how peaceful neighbors become capable of brutal murder, a process that is at once a "return to the past" and the experience of a society denied a "proper chance" to transform itself from "oppressed peoples... to citizens." It is also a society which lacked the "political underground," that took power elsewhere in Eastern Europe. This short, powerful book is recommended for all libraries. Previewed in *Prepub Alert*, LJ 1/93.- Zachary T. Irwin, Pennsylvania State Univ.-Erie  
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From *Kirkus*  
Drakuli (*How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*; *Holograms of Fear*--both 1992) writes, in these terse, focused pieces, about how she--and every other former Yugoslav--became a Croat (or Serb or Muslim)--and how dizzyingly fast it happened. Communism was barely two years dead when a population utterly unused to politics became its pawn--and Drakuli gives over a fine sense of how the resulting ethnic identification has stripped her of her individuality--"the most precious property I had accumulated during the forty years of my life." Forced to flee bombed-out Zagreb for Ljubljana in Slovenia, she discovered the meaning of exile--owning nothing, not even familiar sensations. And, however unwillingly, she became a Croat not just by birth but- "overcome by nationhood"--by force of historical demand. Filling out the text are interviews with young gunmen ("What Ivan Said") and an analytical letter to the author's daughter ("We didn't build a political underground of people with liberal, democratic values ready to take over the government; not because it was impossible, but on the contrary, because the repression was not hard enough to produce the need for it. If there is any excuse it is in the fact that we were deprived of the sense of the future. This was the worse thing communism did to people"). An admirable, deeply felt, mosaic-like portrait of one of the most appalling grotesqueries of modern history. -- Copyright 1993, *Kirkus Associates, LP*. All rights reserved.