

do dju

everybody kept quiet
so I did too



tales of a reluctant soldier



To our parents
Milena, Aca,
Caka and Duja

do•dju

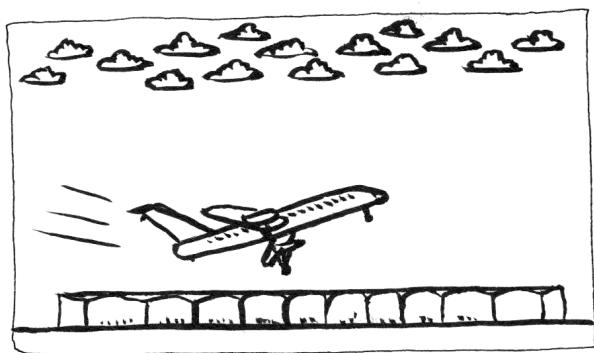
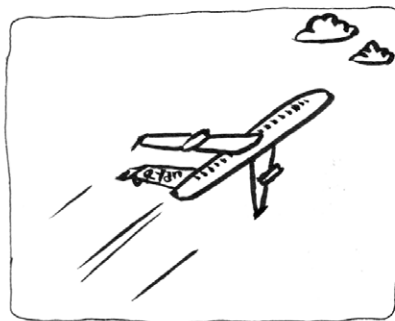
everybody kept quiet
so I did too

TALES OF A RELUCTANT SOLDIER



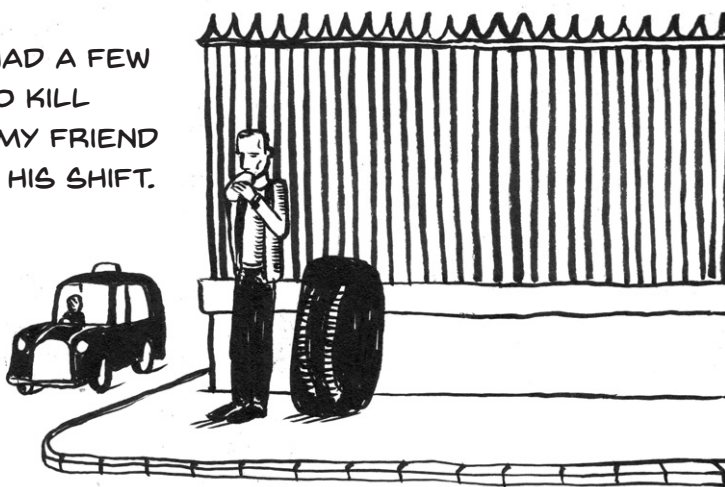
May 2007

ON 31ST OF MAY,
I LEFT PULA, ISTRIA...



...AND ARRIVED IN
LONDON, ENGLAND.

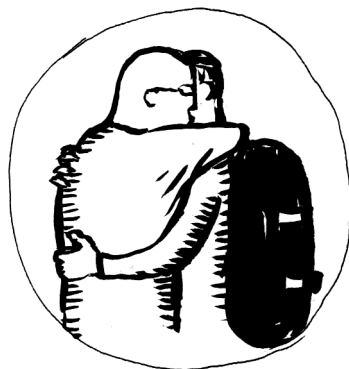
I STILL HAD A FEW
HOURS TO KILL
BEFORE MY FRIEND
FINISHED HIS SHIFT.



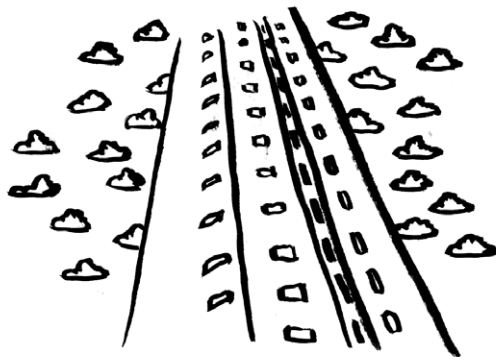
I ATE THE SANDWICH I'D CARRIED
WITH ME FROM PULA.



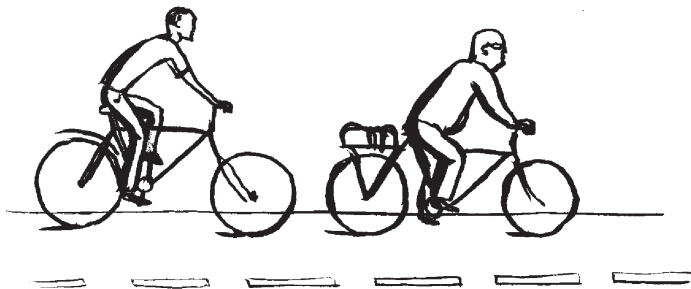
FINALLY I MADE IT
TO HIS FRONT DOOR.



I HADN'T SEEN HIM IN YEARS.
SASHA WAS JUST AS WARM
AND WELCOMING AS
I'D REMEMBERED.



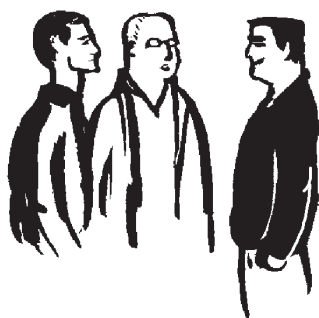
AND MY LIFE IN LONDON ON THE 18TH FLOOR BEGAN.



ON THE SUNDAY WE CYCLED TO A CAR BOOT SALE.



AT THE CAR BOOT SALE WE MET UP WITH MICHEL, SASHA'S FRIEND OF MANY YEARS. HE WAS FROM MONTENEGRO AND WORKED AS A TAXI DRIVER. HE WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR HIS FRIENDS.



MICHEL INVITED US OVER TO HIS PLACE. HE LIVED NEARBY.



AT HIS HOUSE WE STARTED THE FIRST OF MANY LONG CONVERSATIONS.



MICHEL OFFERED US A
BAR OF CHOCOLATE. I
ATE THE WHOLE THING.



AT SOME POINT
SOMEONE SUGGESTED
GOING TO THE PUB.

IN THE PUB WE WERE
CHATting AWAY, TALKING
ABOUT TENNIS, POLITICS,
CAPITALISM, ECONOMICS...



...THE USUAL STUFF...

LET'S GO TO MY
PLACE





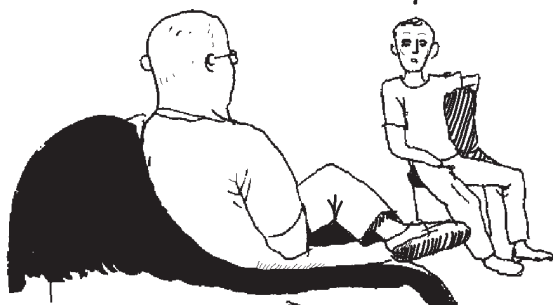
IN SASHA'S LIVING ROOM WITH SOME CHEAP RED WINE...

...SOME MOVIE DIRECTOR FROM BELGRADE I MET IN ZURICH ON MY WAY TO LONDON...



AS WE TALKED, A RECORD WAS PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND.

WHAT ARE WE LISTENING TO?



MILES DAVIS, KIND OF BLUE

MILES DAVIS DIED,
DIDN'T HE?



YES, IN 1991



ARE YOU
SURE?



YES, I AM



AUTUMN 1991 IN
FACT. I WAS A
SOLDIER AT THE
TIME... YOU KNOW...



Sasha's story



WE WERE IN THE TRANSPORTER,
LISTENING TO THE RADIO...

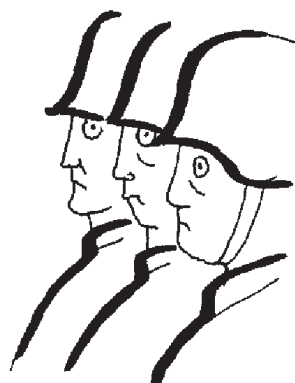


MILES DAVIS, ONE OF THE
JAZZ GREATS, DIED TODAY....



SUDDENLY THE TRANSPORTER
JUMPED AND WE BUMPED OUR
HEADS AGAINST THE ROOF.

AROUND THE SAME TIME,
TOMA ZDRAVKOVIC, A
FAMOUS LOCAL FOLK
MUSICIAN, HAD DIED TOO.

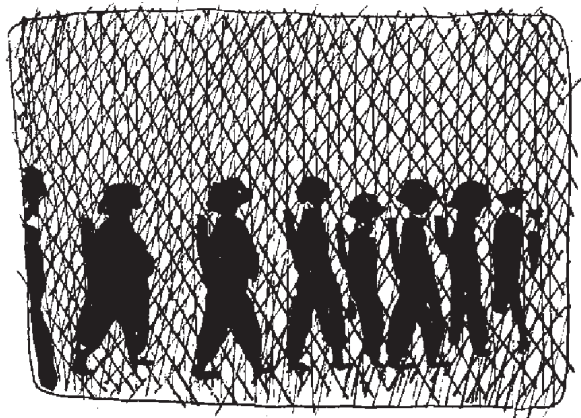


BUT SOON WE HAD OTHER THINGS
TO WORRY ABOUT.

THE ALARM SOUNDED...

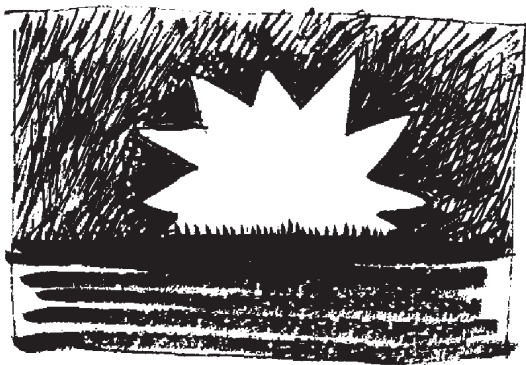


...AND WE WERE
LED INTO...



...THE DARKNESS.

WE COULD SEE AND
HEAR EXPLOSIONS
IN THE DISTANCE.

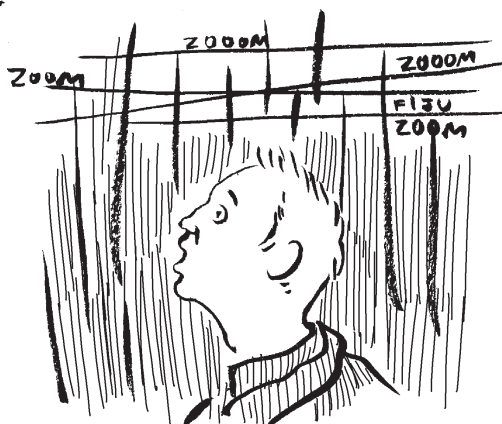


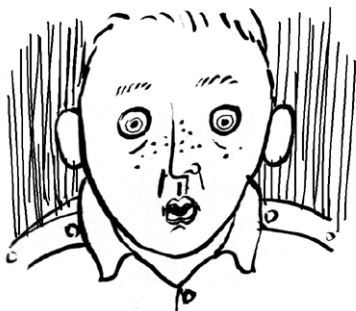


LATER ON I NEEDED TO GO TO THE TOILET, SO I MADE MY WAY INTO THE CORNFIELD NEARBY.

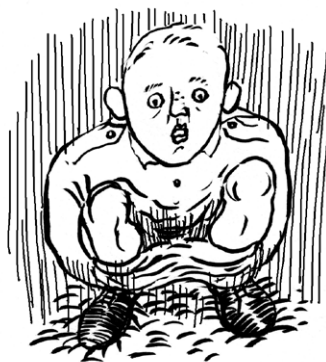


JUST AS I WAS ABOUT TO START, A MACHINE GUN STARTED FIRING. I COULD HEAR THE BULLETS FLYING THROUGH THE FIELD.





STRANGELY THE FIRST
THOUGHT THAT WENT THROUGH
MY MIND WAS NOT FEAR...

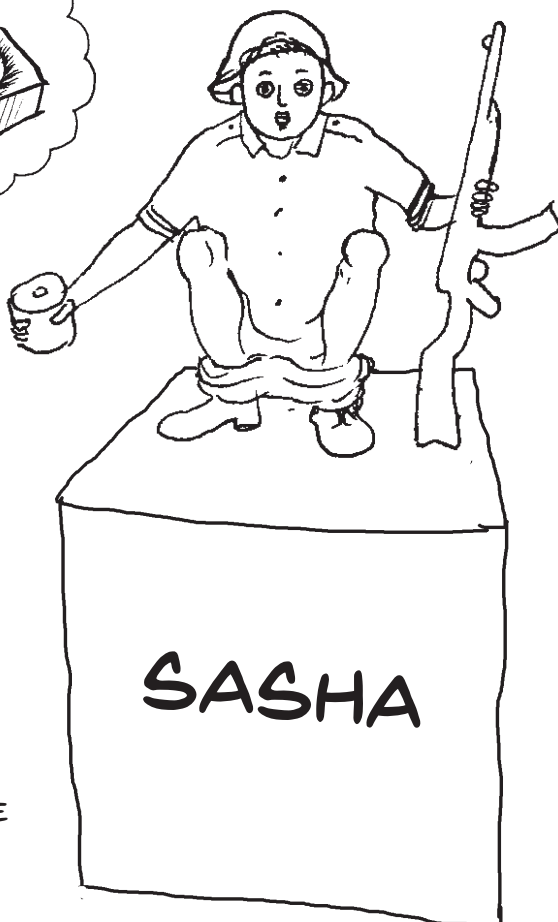


...BUT THE FEELING OF
EMBARRASSMENT OF
DYING WITH MY TROUSERS
ROUND MY ANKLES.



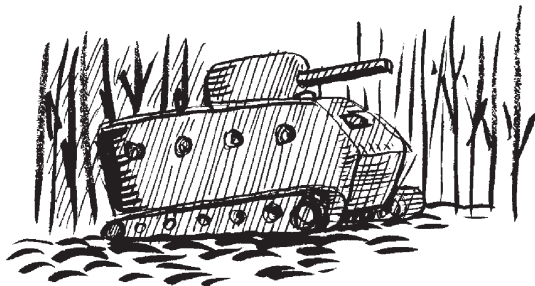
NOT EXACTLY A
HEROIC DEATH.

I PICTURED A MONUMENT
IN OUR HOME TOWN... THAT
IMAGE RATHER AMUSED ME.
NOT THE MOST APPROPRIATE
REACTION, I GUESS...

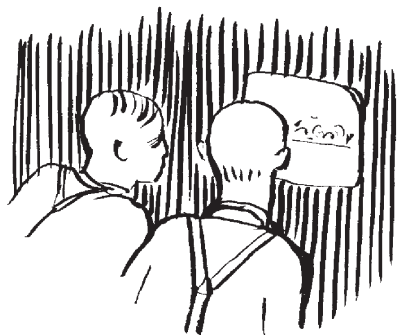




BUT I MANAGED TO PULL MY TROUSERS BACK ON, AND MADE IT BACK TO SAFETY.



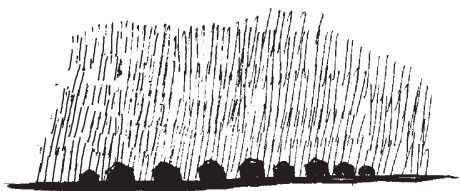
FROM THE TRANSPORTER WE COULD SEE THE ENEMY LINES USING THE INFRARED VIEWER.



THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I SAW THE ENEMY.



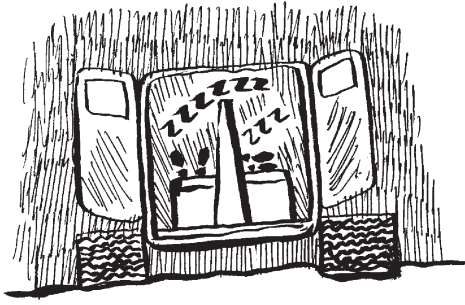
THEY WERE JUST SILHOUETTES IN THE WINDOWS OF A BRICK BUILDING THAT WAS ON FIRE.



WE SPENT THE NIGHT THERE, ON THE EDGE OF VILLAGE CALLED SARVAS.



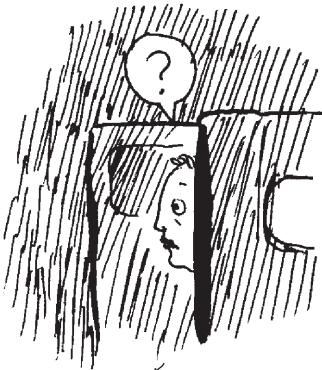
THE TRANSPORTER FELT LIKE THE ONLY SAFE PLACE TO SLEEP



BUT OCCASIONALLY...



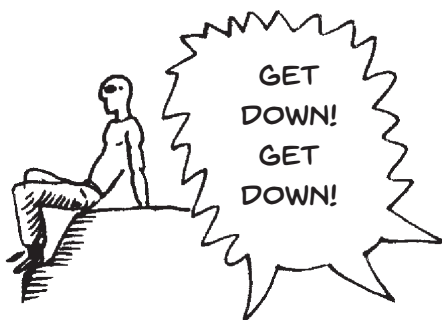
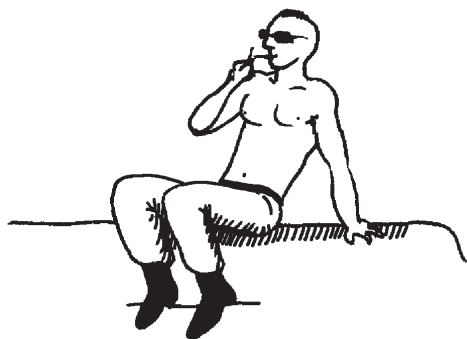
BOOOOM!!



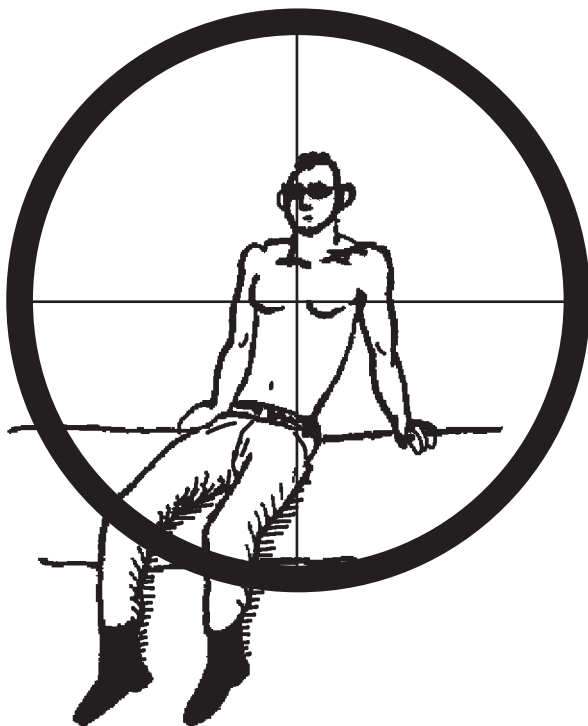
WHAT WAS THAT?
CAN'T SEE ANYTHING...
NEVER MIND...

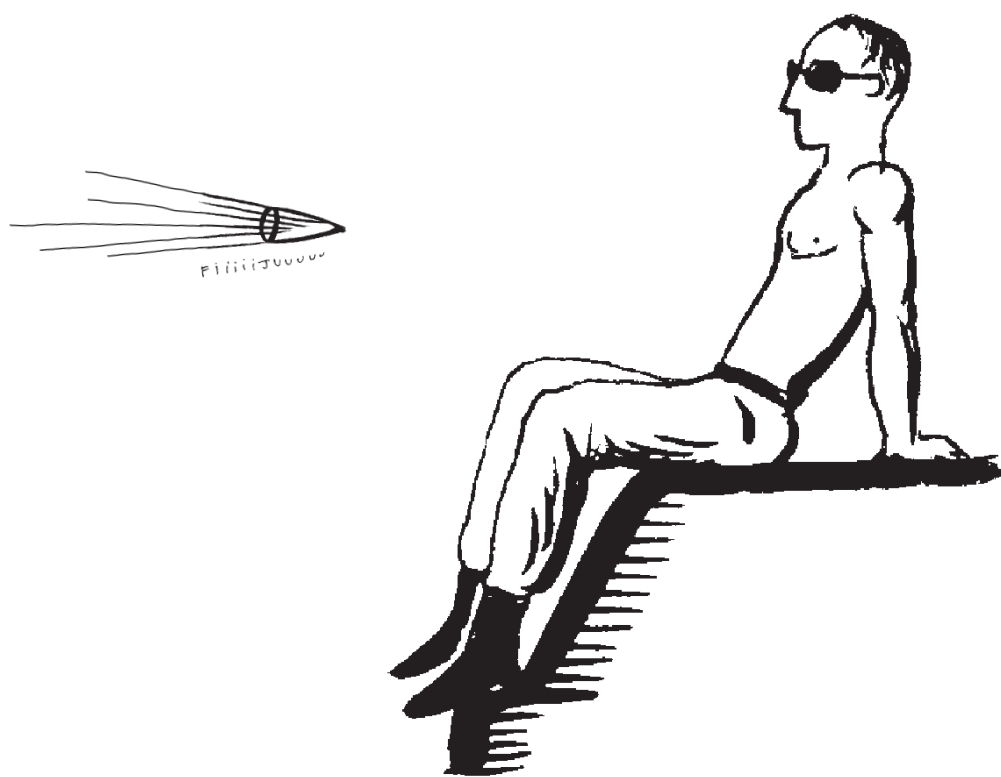


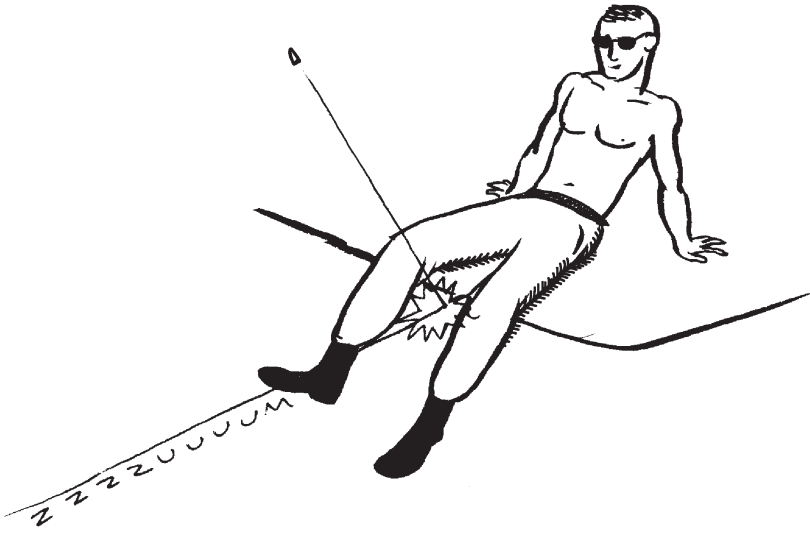
ONE DAY...



...A YOUNG SOLDIER
WAS SUNBATHING ON
THE TRANSPORTER.







HE DIDN'T SIT
THERE MUCH
LONGER THOUGH.



Attack on Sarvaś

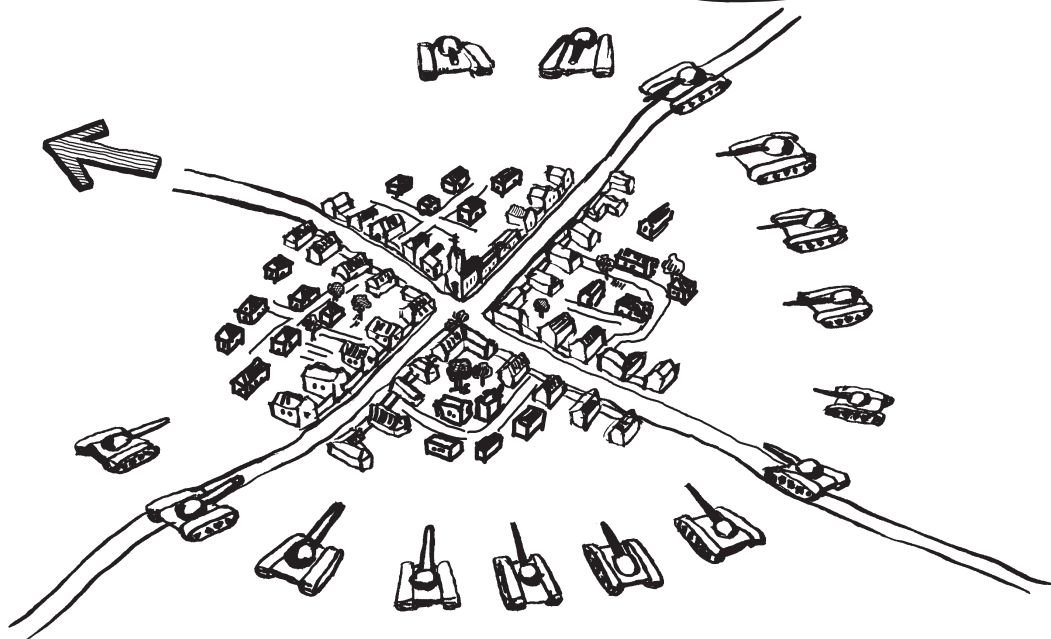
WAS ANYONE
KILLED?



I DON'T THINK
ANYONE DIED
BEFORE THE
ATTACK



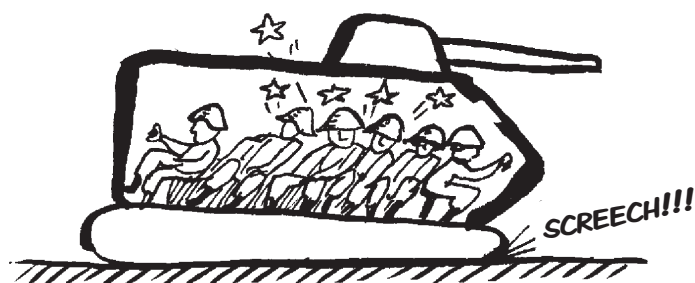
BUT WHILE WE
WERE 'LIBERATING'
SARVAŚ THERE
WERE SOME
CASUALTIES



MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT ONE SIDE WAS
LEFT OPEN TO ALLOW CROATS TO RETREAT.
OTHERWISE THE BATTLE WOULD HAVE BEEN
MUCH MORE FEROCIOUS.

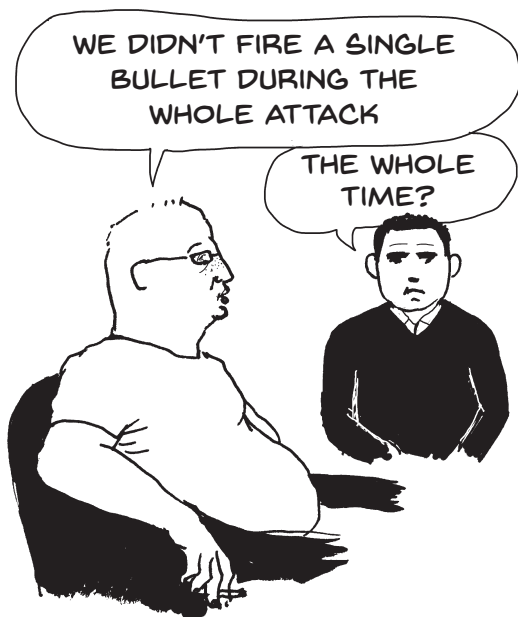


WE SPENT THE ENTIRE DURATION OF
THE BATTLE INSIDE THE TRANSPORTER.

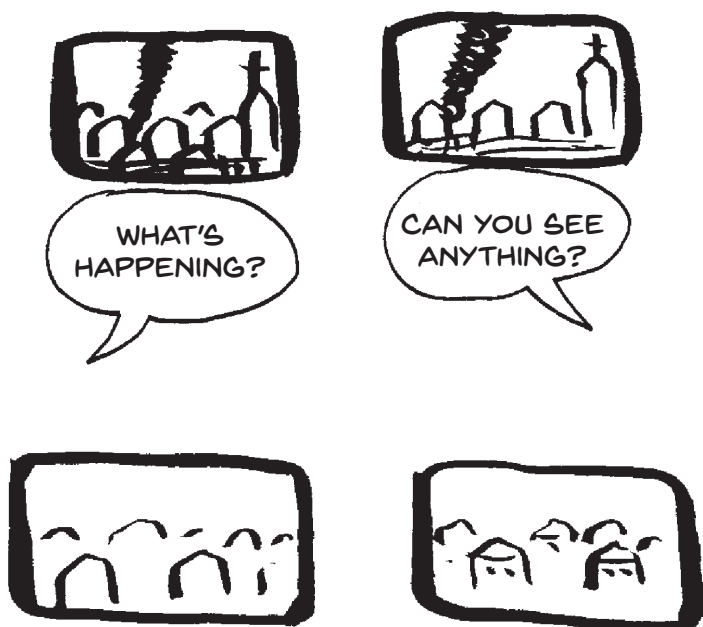


EACH TIME THE DRIVER HIT THE BRAKES,
WE'D FLY FORWARDS AND BANG OUR
HELMETS AGAINST ONE ANOTHER.





YES, MOST OF THE TIME WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON OUTSIDE. I FELT AS THOUGH I WAS WATCHING THE WAR THROUGH A KEYHOLE.



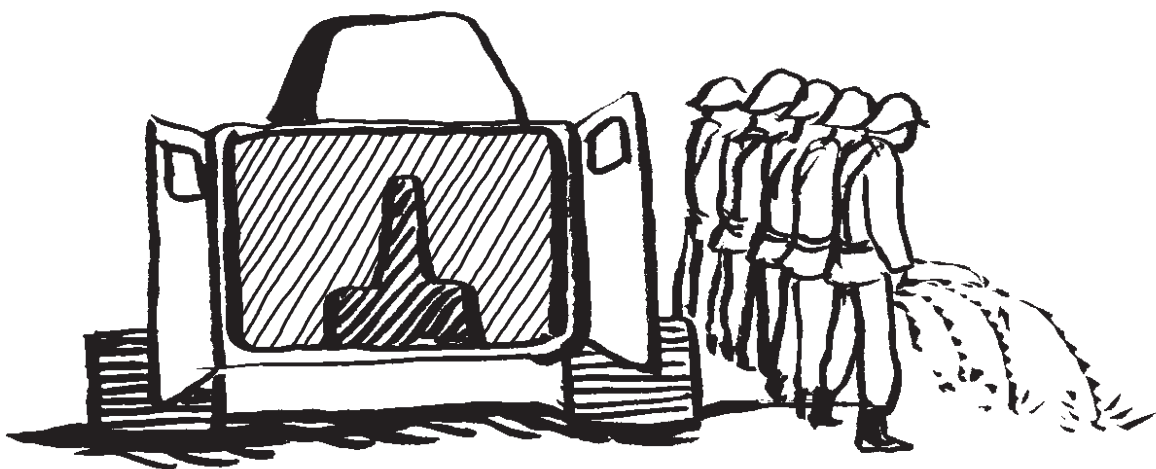
I FELT COMPLETELY POWERLESS, LIKE NOTHING WAS IN OUR CONTROL.



THE WHOLE BATTLE PROBABLY LASTED ONLY
A FEW HOURS, BUT IT FELT LIKE AN ETERNITY.

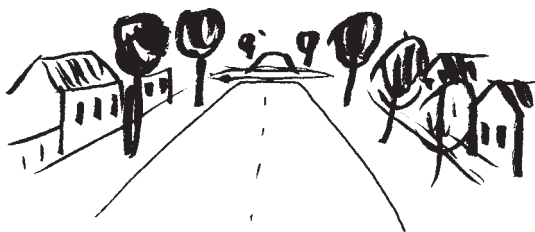


IT'S OVER!
WE'VE
LIBERATED
SARVAS!



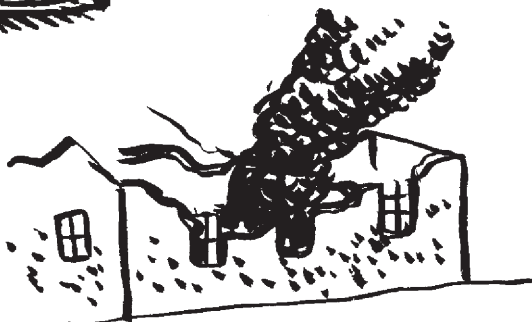
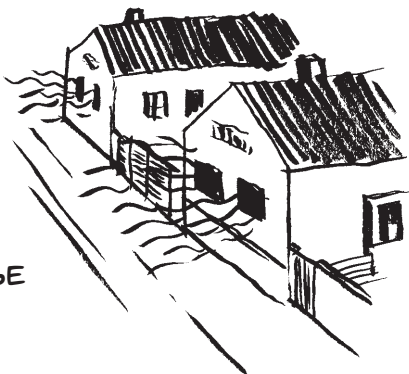
FINALLY!!!

THE STREETS
WERE DESERTED.



THERE WAS THE STENCH
OF DEAD ANIMALS...

...AND OF FOOD ROTTING IN
FRIDGES. THERE HADN'T BEEN
ANY ELECTRICITY IN THE VILLAGE
FOR A WHILE.

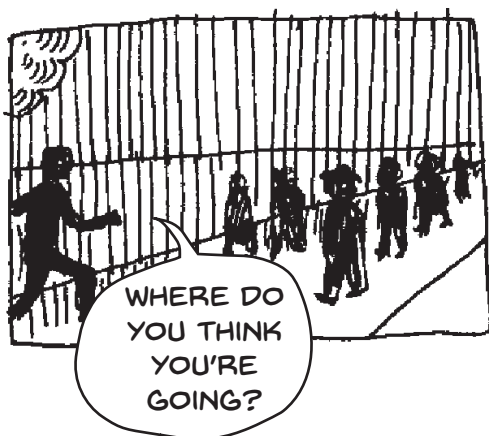


That Evening



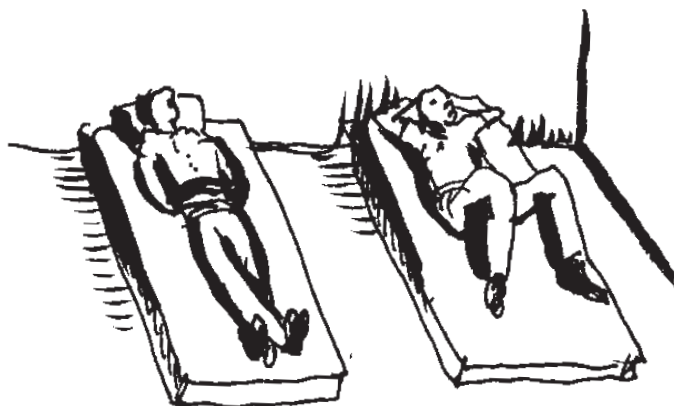
IN THE DISTANCE WE COULD SEE A HUGE FIRE.
APPARENTLY IT WAS A BIG CHEMICAL FACTORY BURNING.

SOME LOCAL
FARMERS WITH GUNS
TOOK PART IN THE
BATTLE. BUT IN
THE EVENING THEY
DECIDED TO LEAVE
THEIR POSITIONS.

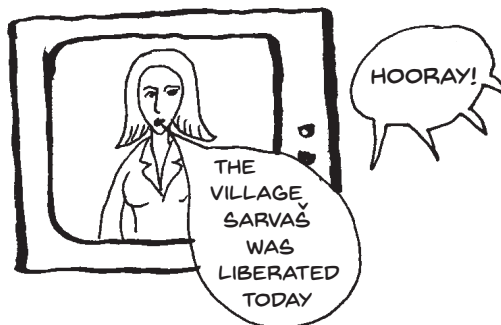
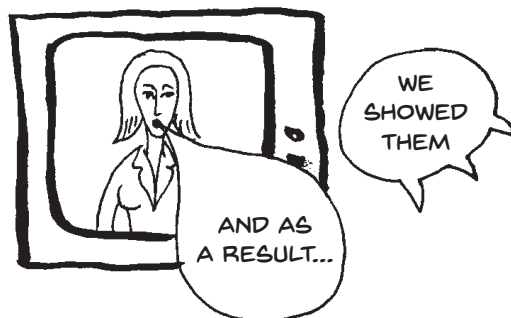
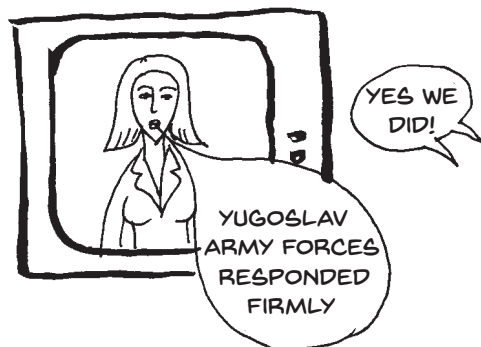
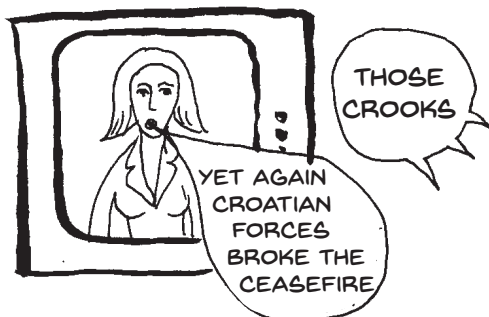




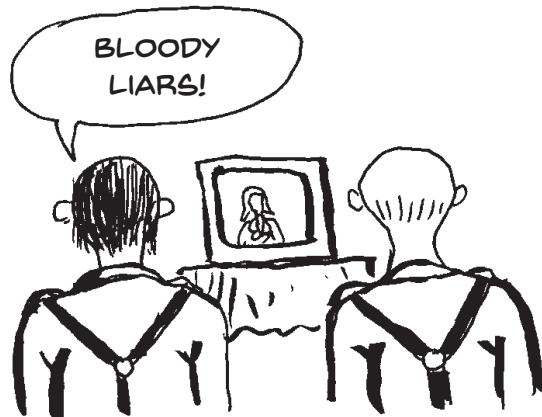
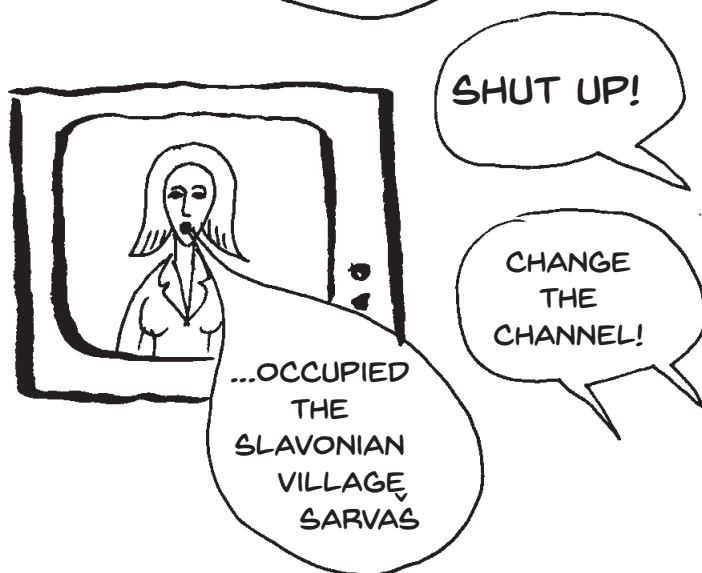
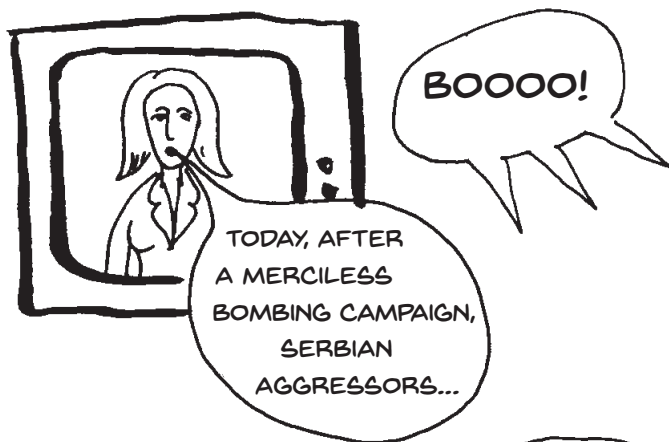
THAT WAS THE FIRST
NIGHT IN A LONG
WHILE WHERE WE
SLEPT UNDER A
PROPER ROOF.

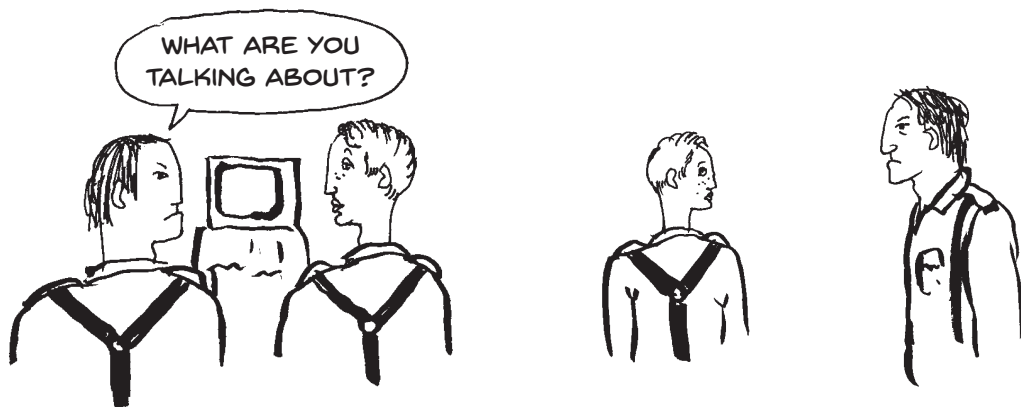


THE ELECTRICITY GOT RECONNECTED AND WE TOOK
THE CHANCE TO WATCH SOME SERBIAN TV

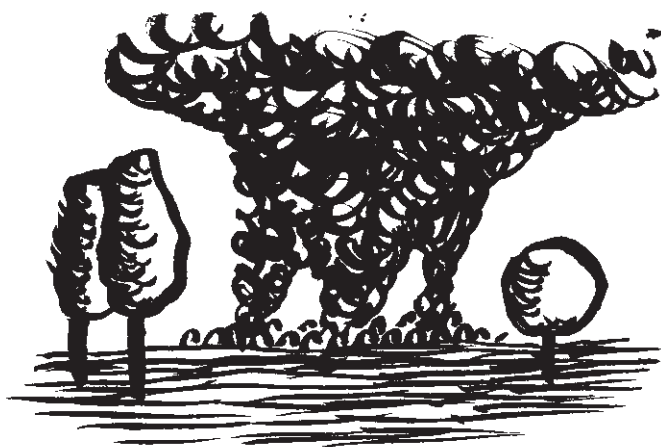


THEN CROATION TV:









IN THE MORNING THE CHEMICAL FACTORY
WAS STILL BURNING...



... AND WE FINALLY GOT SOME REST.



WHY ON
EARTH DID
YOU GO TO
THE WAR?



PARTLY OUT OF SOME
ABSTRACT FEELING OF DUTY
OR OBLIGATION TOWARDS THE
COUNTRY, EVEN THOUGH I'VE
NEVER BEEN PATRIOTIC AT ALL



BUT THERE WAS ALSO
THE FEAR THAT SOME OF
MY FRIENDS MIGHT GO
TO WAR AND GET KILLED,
AND THE FEELING OF GUILT
AFTERWARDS WOULD
BE UNBEARABLE. JUST
IMAGINE IF ME OR MY
MUM MET THEIR PARENTS
ON THE STREET...

YOUR MUM SAID A SIMILAR
THING TO ME WHEN I GOT BACK.
SHE SAID SHE'D BEEN WORRIED
ABOUT HOW I'D REACT TO THE
FACT THAT YOU DIDN'T GO TO
WAR AFTER YOU
GOT DRAFTED .



"COWARD"

DIDN'T GO TO WAR AFTER
HE GOT DRAFTED



"HERO"

DID GO TO WAR

YOUR DECISION WAS A BIT
EASIER THAN MINE. BY THE
TIME YOU WERE DRAFTED, LOTS
OF PEOPLE HAD ALREADY
REFUSED TO GO. BUT FOR ME
IT WAS LESS CLEAR WHAT THE
CONSEQUENCES WOULD BE FOR
NOT GOING



IN MY MIND, IT FELT A BIT LIKE
CHOOSING BETWEEN GOING TO
PRISON OR GOING TO WAR, AND
PRISON SEEMED LIKE THE WORSE
OPTION. THAT DEFINITELY PLAYED
PART IN MY DECISION



SO IN A WAY ME
GOING TO WAR WAS
A COWARDLY ACT



"COWARD"
(WAS AFRAID
OF WAR)



"COWARD"
(WAS AFRAID
OF PRISON)





I'D BEEN AFRAID OF WAR
SINCE THE LATE 1980S, FROM
WHEN MILOŠEVIĆ STARTED
INFLAMING SERBIAN NATIONALISM
AND PUSHING THE COUNTRY
TOWARDS CIVIL WAR. HE IS THE
MAN MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE BREAK UP OF YUGOSLAVIA

MY FATHER WAS
OPPOSING MILOŠEVIĆ ON
THE LOCAL LEVEL, SO I
WAS WORRIED I'D BE ONE
OF THE FIRST TO BE SENT
TO THE FRONTLINE



WHICH IS
EXACTLY WHAT
HAPPENED

*SLOBODAN MILOŠEVIĆ, AUTHORITARIAN POLITICIAN, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA, 1989-1997, AND OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA, 1997-2000

THE LETTER ARRIVED WHEN I WAS AWAY AT UNIVERSITY. THE PEOPLE WHO DELIVERED IT TO MY MUM WERE LAUGHING AND COULD BARELY HIDE THEIR SATISFACTION.



AT THAT MOMENT I WAS DRIVING BACK HOME, BLISSFULLY UNAWARE OF WHAT WAS IN STORE FOR ME.

MEANWHILE MY FATHER WAS ON HIS WAY BACK FROM HUNGARY, WHERE HE'D GONE TO COLLECT HIS REDUNDANCY PAY. THE CROATIAN COMPANY HE WORKED FOR HAD LAID HIM OFF, AS THE WAR HAD ALREADY STARTED IN CROATIA.





WHEN I GOT HOME MY
MUM WAS CRYING.



I STARTED CALLING
MY FRIENDS.



I SPOKE TO A FEW OF THEM.



EVERYONE WAS TELLING
ME THE SAME THING.



MY MOTHER WAS
TALKING TO HER
FRIENDS TOO.



BUT I HAD
ALREADY MADE
UP MY MIND.



THAT EVENING I SAID MY GOODBYES TO MY FRIENDS.

I SAID GOODBYE
TO MY GIRLFRIEND.



I ALSO PACKED MY
CAMERA, ENTERTAINING
SOME PHOTOJOURNALISM
DREAM. BUT ONCE THE
BULLETS STARTED FLYING
AROUND ME, THE CAMERA
WAS THE LAST THING
I THOUGHT OF.

that night



*I had terrible
nightmares and
didn't get much
sleep*











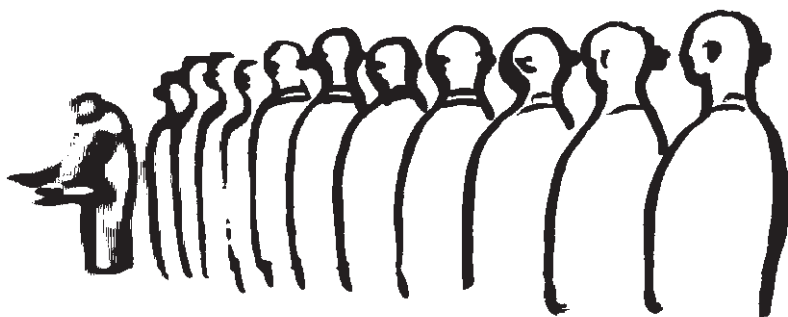
THE NEXT MORNING



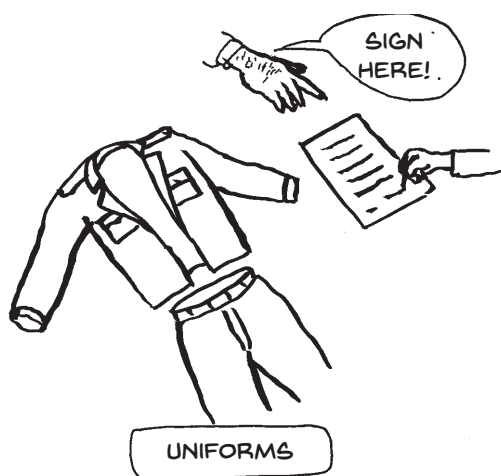
I LEFT. MY MUM CRIED.

The Barracks

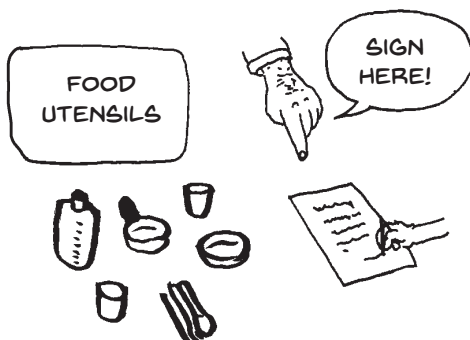




THAT FIRST AFTERNOON WE WERE GIVEN...



A RUCKSACK,
A BELT, AND
A SHOVEL....



THE PILE WAS
GROWING...



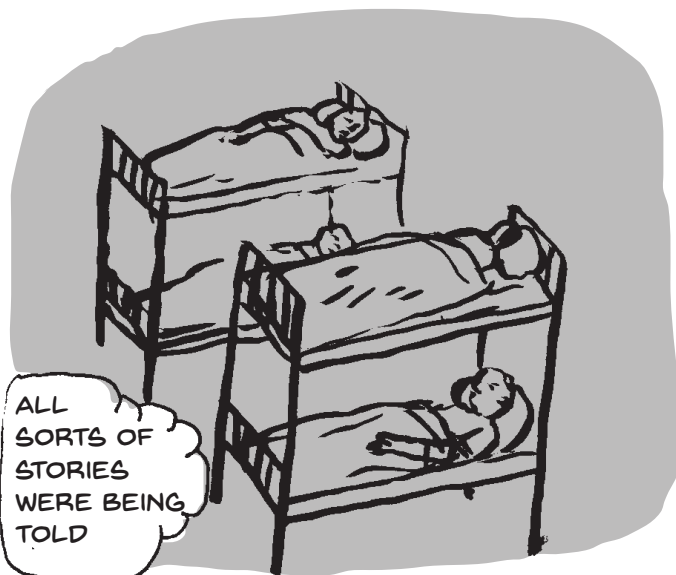
NEXT THE
HELMETS
ARRIVED.



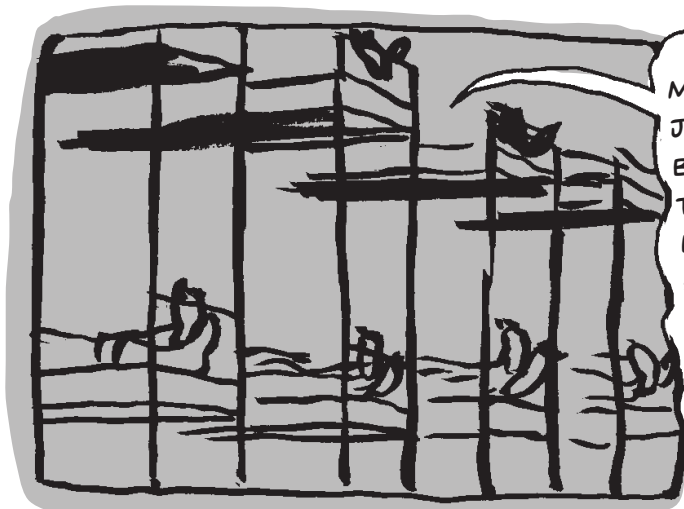
AND FINALLY,
THE AK-47.



Night Stories



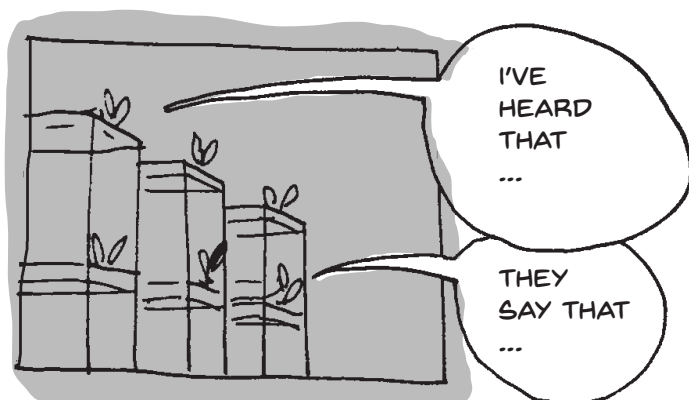
ALL
SORTS OF
STORIES
WERE BEING
TOLD



MY FRIEND
JUST CAME
BACK FROM
THE FRONT
LINE, HE
SAYS HE
SAW MANY
BLOWN-UP
TANKS...

SOME GUY FROM
MY VILLAGE
SAYS THAT
CROATS ARE
BURNING
SLAUGHTERED
SERBS' BODIES
IN THEIR LOCAL
BRICK PLANT...





WE HAD THIS IDEA THAT THE CROATIAN
SOLDIERS WERE ...





... VICIOUS AND MERCILESS

EVERYONE HAD THEIR OWN WORRIES

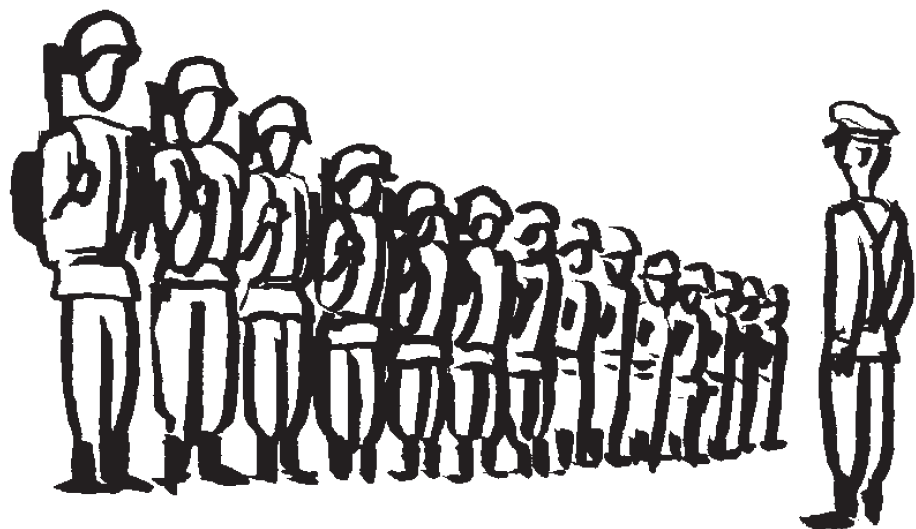
THE TANK CREWS...

I'VE
BEEN
READING
ABOUT
SOME

NEW KIND OF ANTI-TANK MINES THAT

EXPLODE...

The Line-up



The Speech

THE LIEUTENANT COLONEL ADDRESSED US



BUT SO
FAR I
HAVEN'T
LOST A
SINGLE
SOLDIER



AND AS
LONG AS
YOU DO
WHAT I
TELL YOU
TO DO...

YOU TOO
WILL ALL
COME
BACK
ALIVE



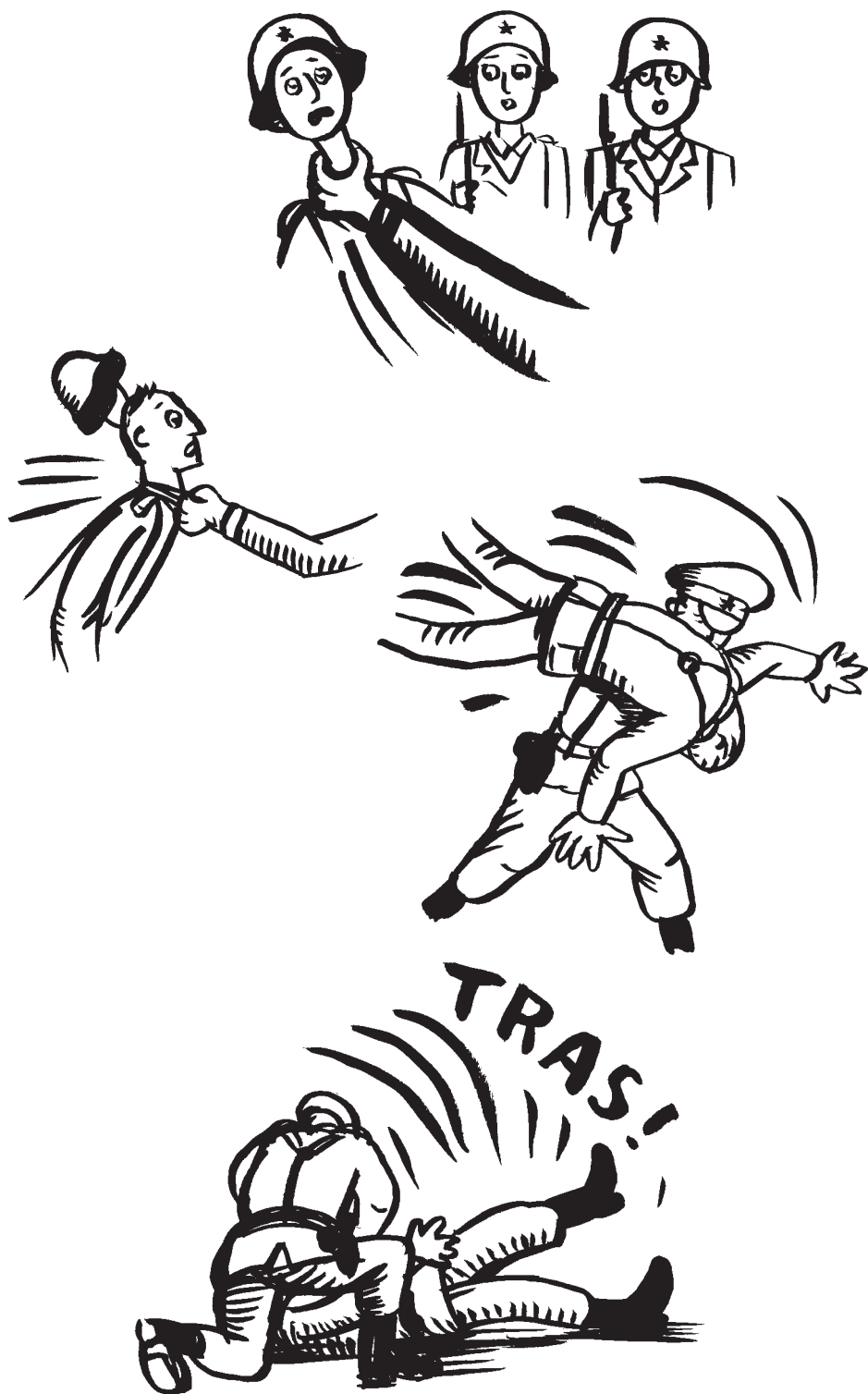
OR, AT
WORST...

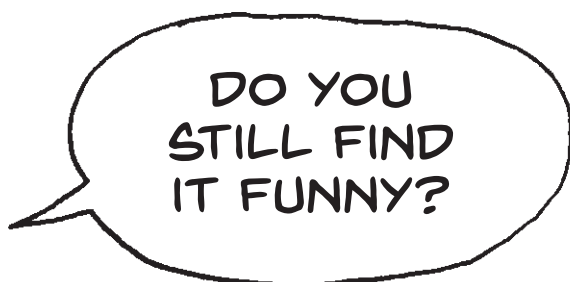
SOME OF
YOU



MIGHT GET
LIGHTLY
WOUNDED



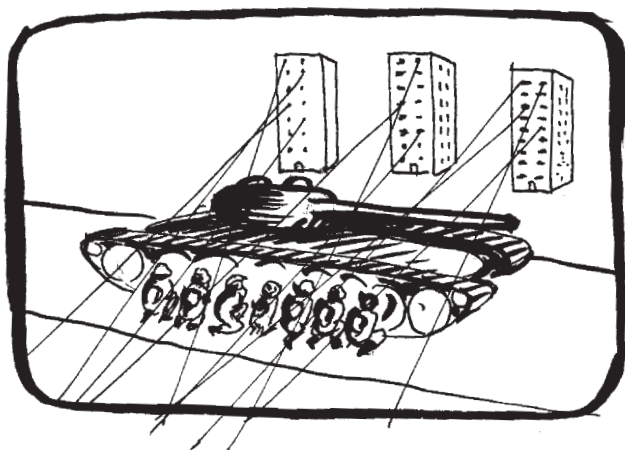




UH, WHAT AN IDIOT!



PERHAPS, BUT HE WAS
ALSO A VERY BRAVE
OFFICER



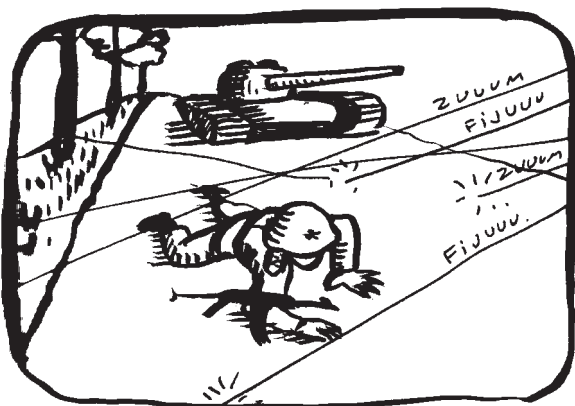
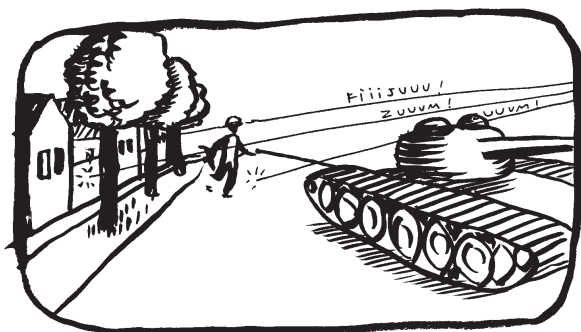
WHEN WE WERE IN VUKOVAR* HIDING BEHIND
THE TANKS, UNDER HEAVY FIRE...

* VUKOVAR IS A CITY IN CROATIA, THE SITE OF SOME FIERCE COMBAT IN 1991



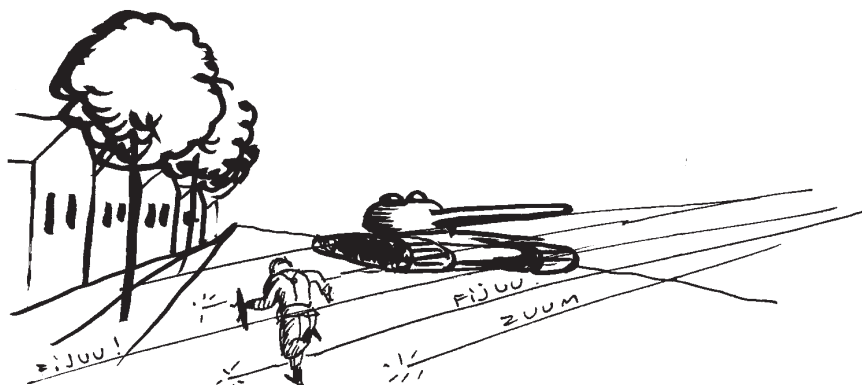
AT ONE POINT THEY STOPPED SHOOTING AT US...

AND STARTED
SHOOTING AT
SOMEONE RUNNING
TOWARDS US.

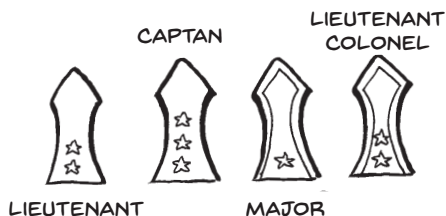


HE WAS
CRAWLING,
RUNNING,
JUMPING...

WHEN HE
REACHED US
WE REALISED
IT WAS THE
LIEUTENANT
COLONEL.
HE WAS JUST
CHECKING ON US.



THEN HE LEFT THE SAME WAY HE ARRIVED.



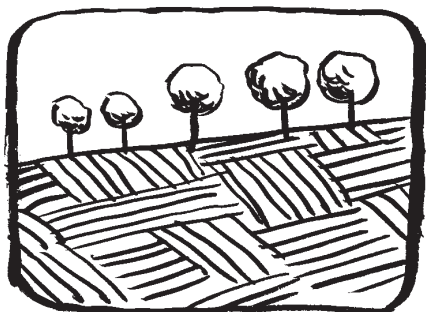
TO CROATIAN SOLDIERS IT WAS MUCH MORE
VALUABLE TO TAKE OUT AN OFFICER THAN ANY OF
US NORMAL SOLDIERS. MOST OFFICERS HID THEIR
EPAULETS AS A RESULT, BUT HE DIDN'T.

MY PLATOON
COMMANDER GOT
WOUNDED WITHIN THE
FIRST THIRTY SECONDS
OF FIGHTING.

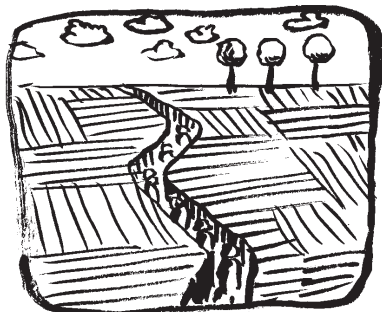


ONE OF THE SOLDIERS
CARRIED HIM AWAY.
LATER I WOULD MEET
HIM AGAIN IN THE
HOSPITAL.





NO, WE WERE STATIONED IN SOME FIELDS. WE MOSTLY SPENT OUR TIME DIGGING.



THE FINAL RESULT WAS AN ALMIGHTY TRENCH IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. WE DIDN'T MIND TOO MUCH THOUGH, SINCE WE EXPECTED TO BE SENT HOME ANY DAY.



WE WERE TOLD THAT FORTY-FIVE DAYS WAS THE LONGEST THEY COULD KEEP US UNLESS WAR WAS DECLARED, AND OUR FORTY-FIFTH DAY WAS NEARING

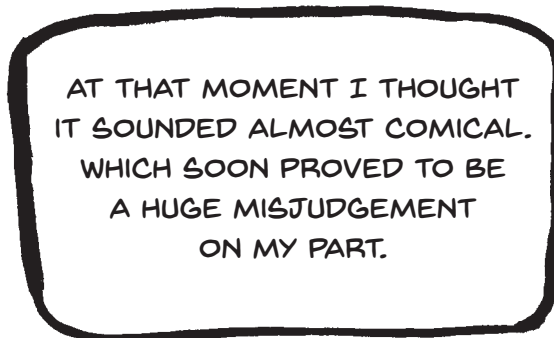
AND THEN...



...BORISLAV JOVIC* MADE AN ANNOUNCEMENT



CONSIDERING WHAT WAS GOING ON AROUND US, THIS SEEMED LIKE THE MOTHER OF ALL UNDERSTATEMENTS. I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST ANOTHER IRRELEVANT POLITICIAN MAKING ANOTHER IRRELEVANT ANNOUNCEMENT.



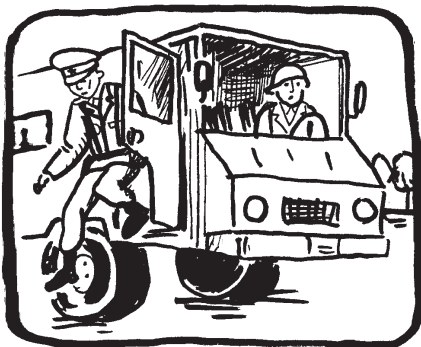
AT THAT MOMENT I THOUGHT IT SOUNDED ALMOST COMICAL. WHICH SOON PROVED TO BE A HUGE MISJUDGEMENT ON MY PART.

* ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA AT THE TIME



NOT EVEN AN HOUR HAD
PASSED BEFORE A MILITARY
VEHICLE ARRIVED...

...OUR LIEUTENANT
COLONEL JUMPED
OUT OF IT...

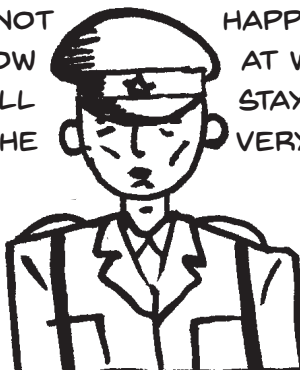


...LINED US
ALL UP...



...AND ANNOUNCED:

I ASSUME YOU EXPECTED TO GO
BACK HOME SOON. I'M AFRAID THAT
WILL NOT HAPPEN. WE
ARE NOW AT WAR AND
YOU WILL STAY HERE
UNTIL THE VERY END



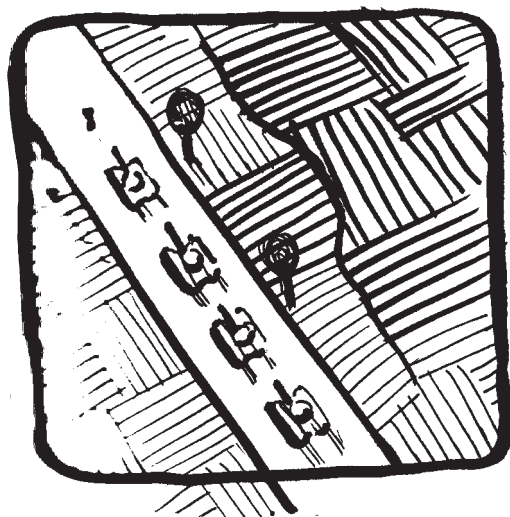


YOUR NEXT DESTINATION IS...

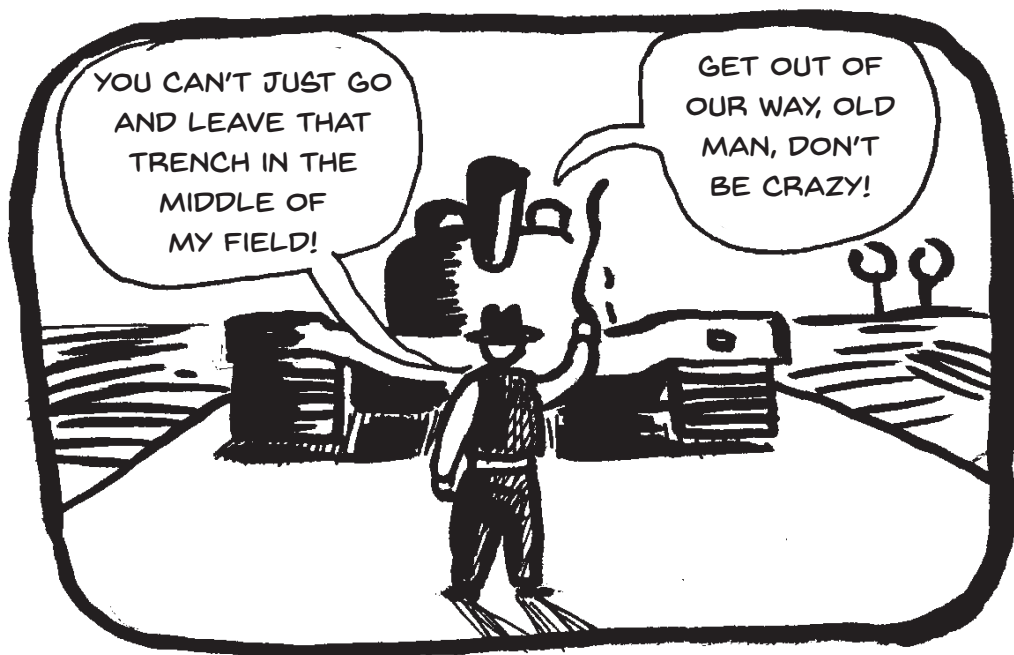


VUKOVAR

SOON WE WERE ON OUR WAY TO VUKOVAR...



BUT WE FACED AN UNEXPECTED OBSTACLE IN OUR PATH.

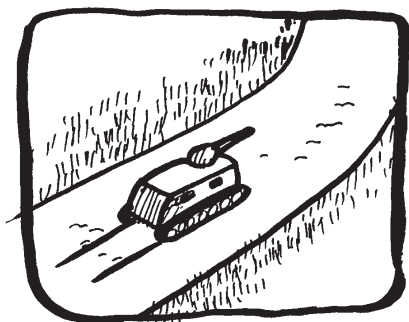




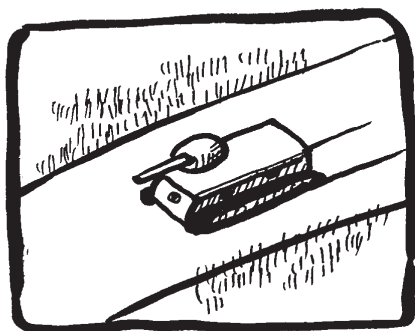
WE HAD TO MOVE HIM OUT OF OUR WAY.

WE ARRIVED IN A VILLAGE CALLED TRPINJA,
AND STAYED THERE FOR A FEW DAYS.





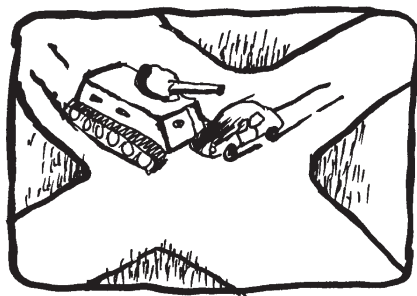
WHILE WE WERE THERE, THE
TRANSPORTER DRIVERS WENT
FOR SOME ADDITIONAL TRAINING.



BUT RETURNED MUCH
EARLIER THAN EXPECTED.



WE ASKED OUR DRIVER
WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

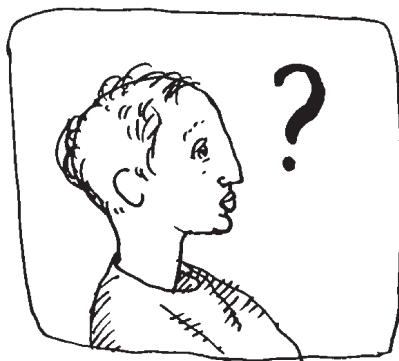


"WE HAD A TRAFFIC
ACCIDENT WITH A FICA*",
HE REPLIED.



WE ALL FOUND
THAT HILARIOUS.

* FICA WAS A LOCALLY-PRODUCED CAR, MANUFACTURED UNDER A FIAT
LICENCE, IT WAS A SYNONYM FOR A TINY AND CHEAP VEHICLE



ONE DAY, WHILE
PASSING THE TIME...

IT WAS MY FATHER!



I WAS STUNNED. HOW DID HE
FIND OUT WHERE I WAS?

I MADE SOME CALLS, AND EVENTUALLY I WAS PUT IN TOUCH WITH SOME LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. HE TRAVELLED WITH ME, WE VISITED A FEW VILLAGES

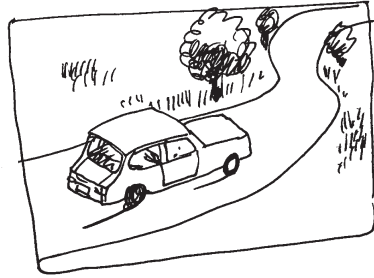
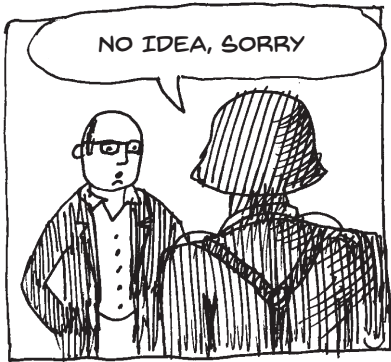


THEY LEFT YESTERDAY



THEY'VE LEFT,
DON'T KNOW
WHERE TO, SORRY

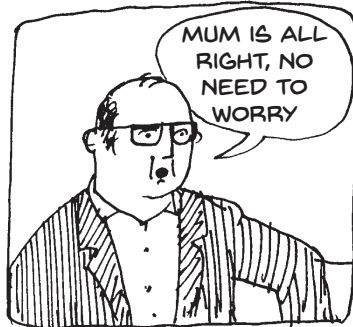


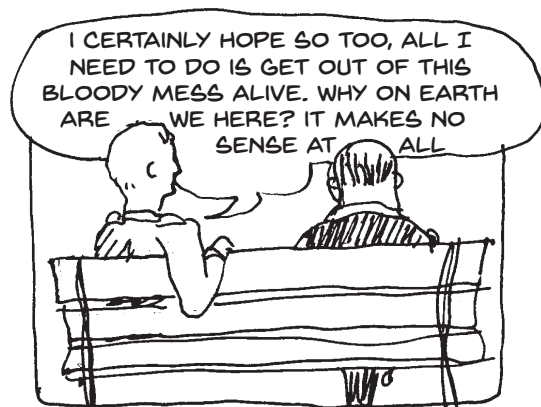


ONE EVENING
MY FATHER
HAD A FRANK
CONVERSATION
WITH THE
GOVERNMENT
OFFICIAL



THEY CONTINUED THEIR SEARCH, AND FINALLY...

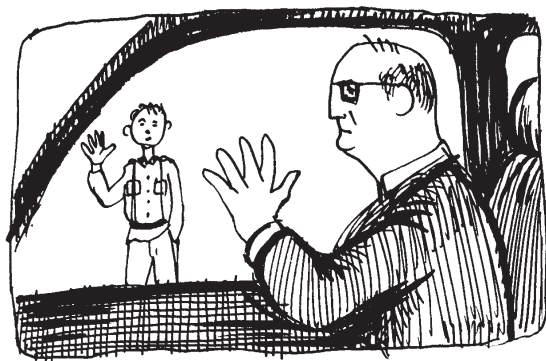




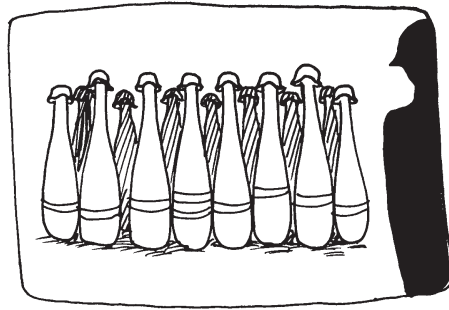
SON, IF YOU HAVE TO
CHOOSE WHOSE HEAD
TO SAVE, CHOOSE
YOURS



THEN HE LEFT.

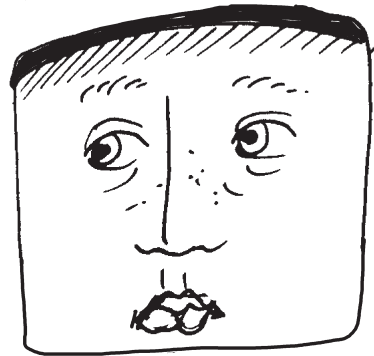
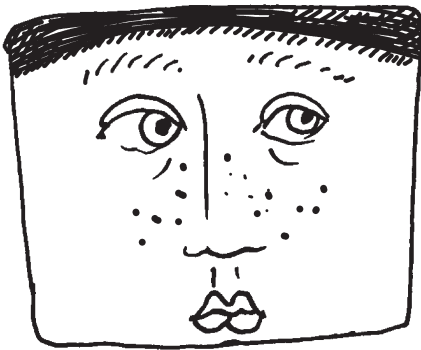
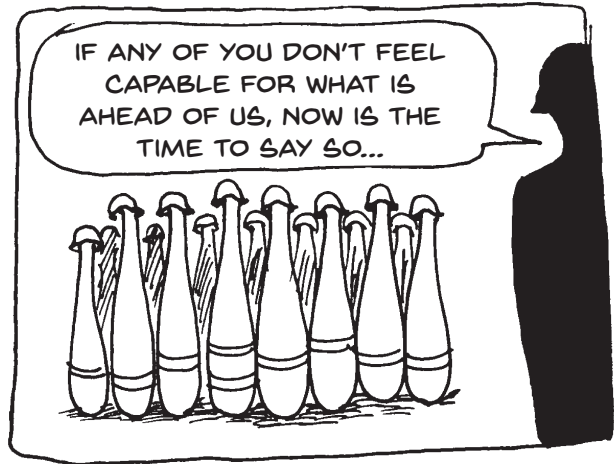


WE BOTH KNEW THAT I WAS GOING TO
VUKOVAR, A CITY UNDER SIEGE, WHERE THE
HEAVIEST BATTLES WERE BEING FOUGHT.

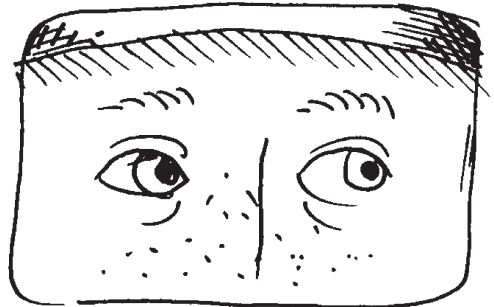


A FEW DAYS AFTER MY FATHER LEFT, WE WERE ALL LINED UP...

...AND ASKED

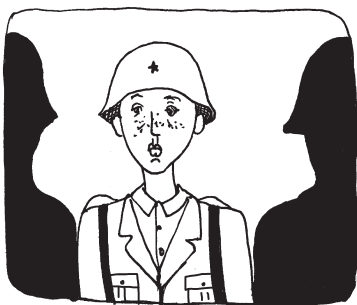


I LOOKED AROUND, BUT
NOBODY CAME FORWARD.
IF JUST ONE PERSON HAD,
I'M SURE A FEW OF US
WOULD HAVE FOLLOWED...



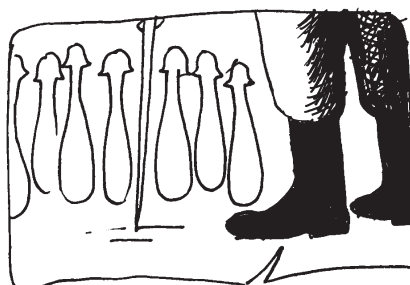


BUT EVERYONE KEPT QUIET.
SO I DID TOO.



YET ANOTHER
COWARDLY ACT
ON MY PART.

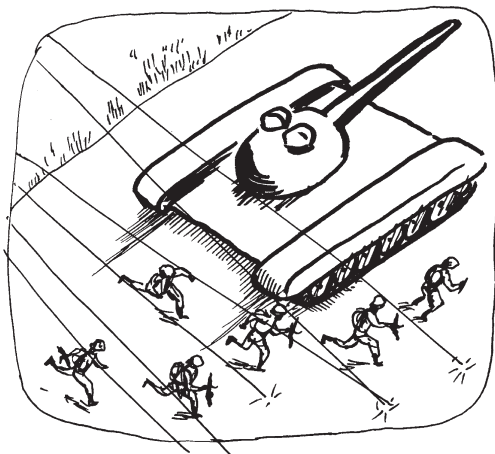
THE OFFICER WENT ON TO
EXPLAIN TO US WHAT WAS
TO FOLLOW, BY SCRATCHING
THINGS IN THE DUST ON THE
GROUND WITH A STICK.



THIS IS THE PLAN...
TOMORROW, VUKOVAR WILL BE
LIBERATED!

The next day
things started
happening
way too fast

WE ENTERED
THE BATTLEFIELD
BEHIND A TANK.

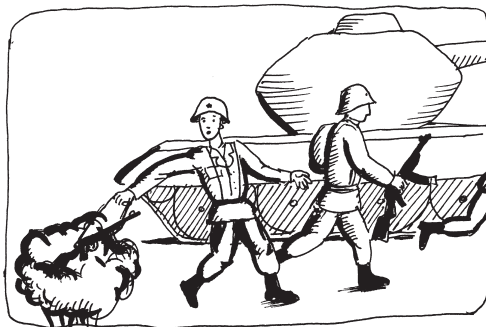


BUT TO OUR SURPRISE,
THEY OPENED FIRE ON
US FROM THE SIDE,
NOT FROM THE FRONT.

THAT WAS THE
MOMENT THE PLATOON
COMMANDER GOT
WOUNDED



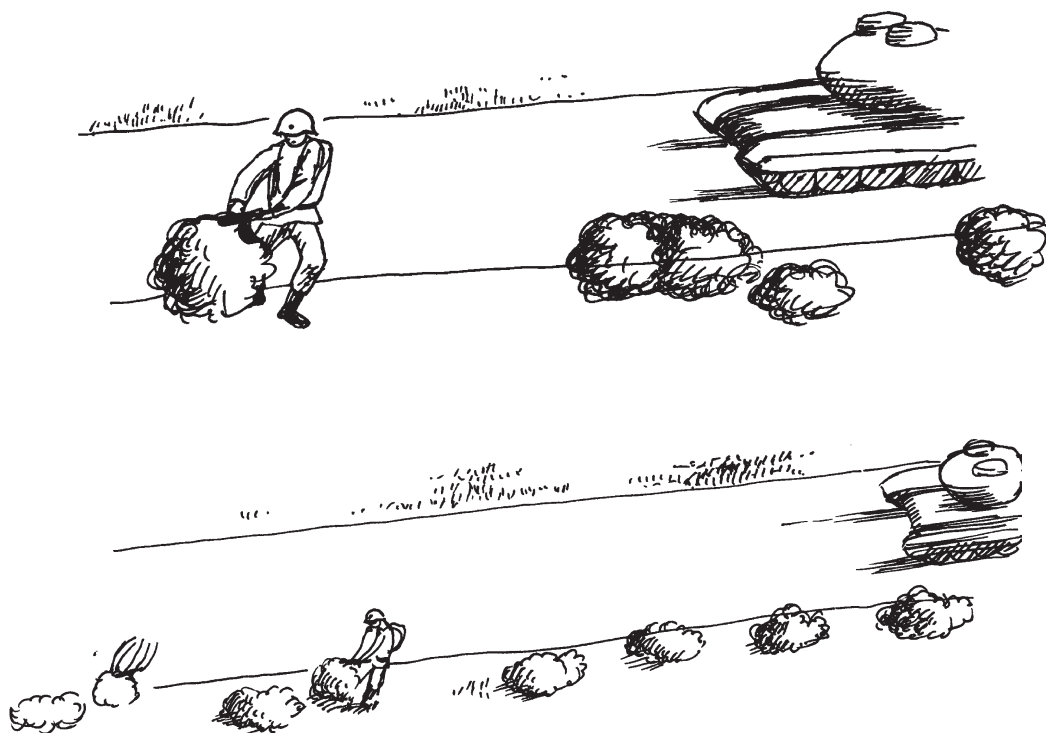
FROM THEN ON, WE POSITIONED
OURSELVES TO THE SIDE OF THE TANK

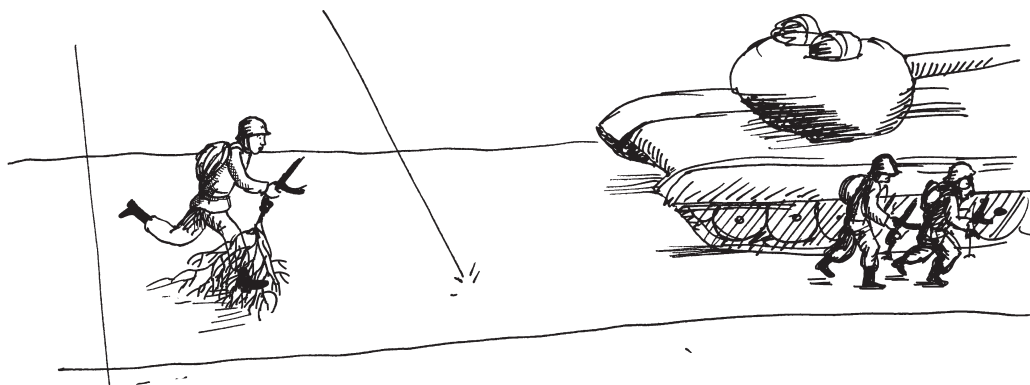


AT SOME POINT MY RIFLE GOT
CAUGHT IN A BUSH...



...AND MY TANK WAS GETTING AWAY...





I MANAGED TO RIP OUT THE WHOLE BUSH, AND MADE IT BACK TO THE TANK JUST AS THE BULLETS STARTED FLYING.



EXPLOSIONS WERE ROARING ALL AROUND US.
THE NOISE WAS CONFUSING, AND TERRIFYING.

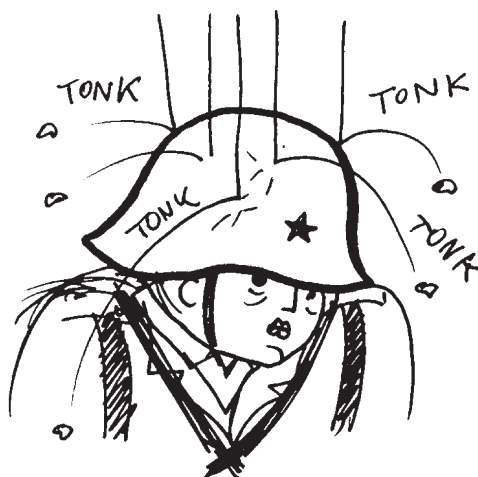
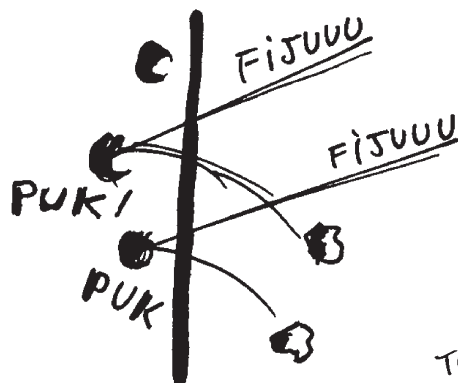


FITUUUU

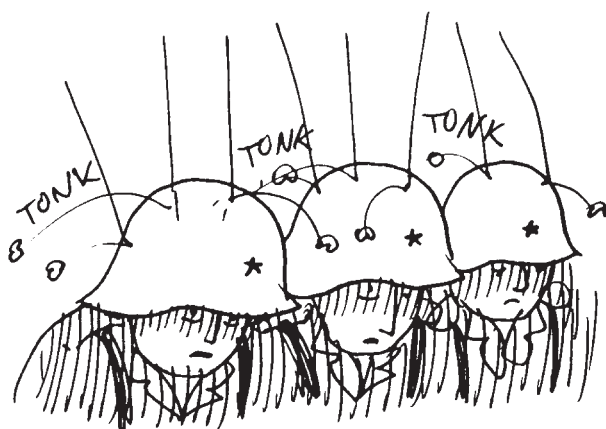
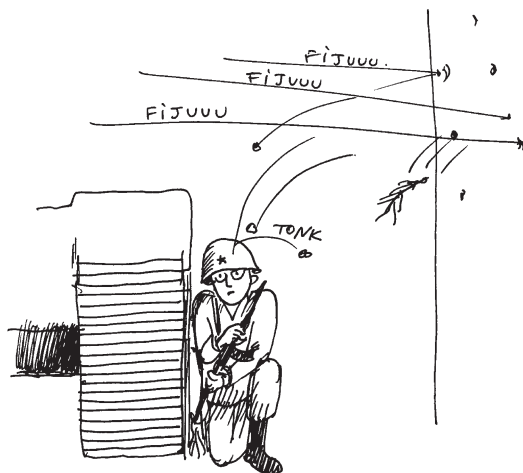
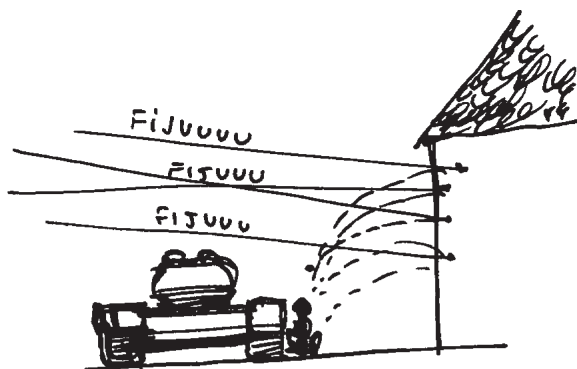
FITUUUU

FITUUU

FITUUU



SURROUNDED BY THIS CONTINUOUS NOISE, THE ONLY CLUE WE HAD THAT ENEMY FIRE WAS COMING OUR WAY WAS WHEN ROCKS, DUST, AND BITS OF WALLS AND TREES WERE FALLING AROUND US.



ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE, I WAS STARVING.

THAT DAY I DIDN'T EAT
ANYTHING. SOMEONE
HAD TOLD ME THAT
IF YOU EAT AND GET
SHOT IN THE STOMACH
IT CAN BE FATAL.



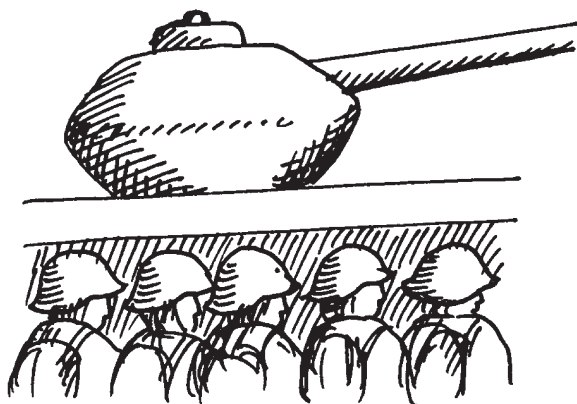
AS MY ADRENALIN
LEVELS WERE
DROPPING, I WAS
FEELING THE
HUNGER MORE AND
MORE STRONGLY.



ADRENALIN IS A STRANGE
THING THOUGH. WHEN
WE ENTERED THE
BATTLEFIELD I WASN'T
SCARED AT ALL. I FELT
PLEASANTLY EXCITED,
ALMOST EUPHORIC.



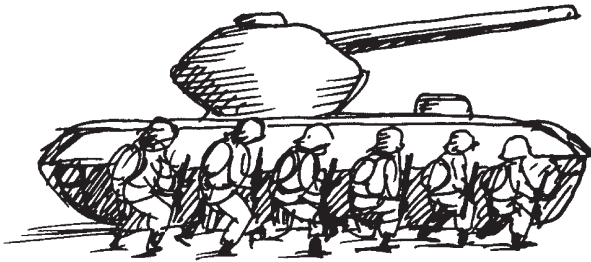
BUT AS TIME PASSED,
FEAR WAS FINDING ITS
WAY BACK TOO, ALONG
WITH THE HUNGER.



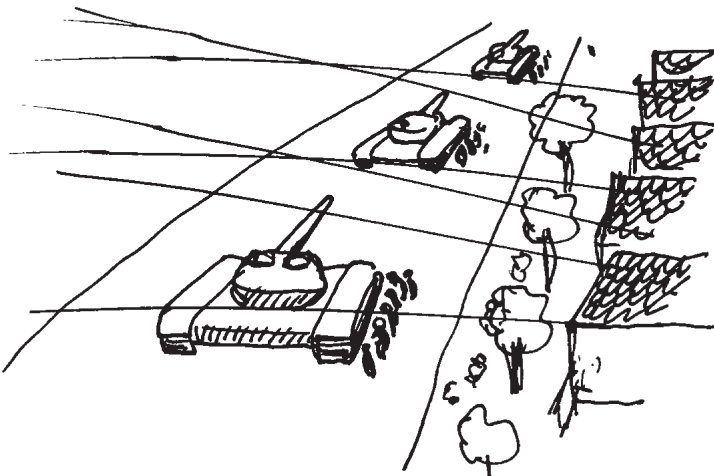
THE TANK GIVING US COVER WOULD GO
FORWARD FOR A WHILE, THEN STOP...

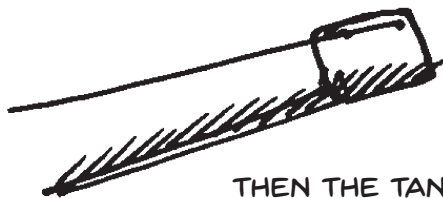


GO, STOP, CONTINUE GOING FORWARD...

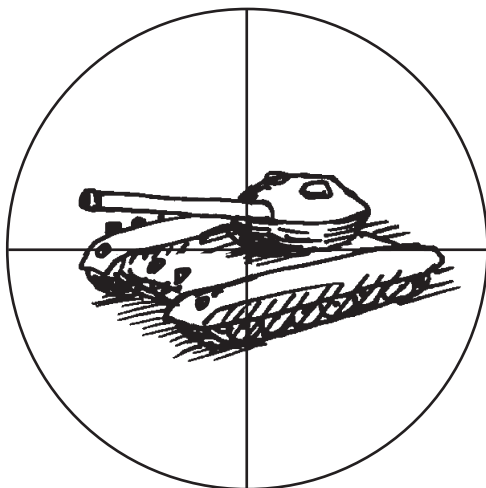


AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN.

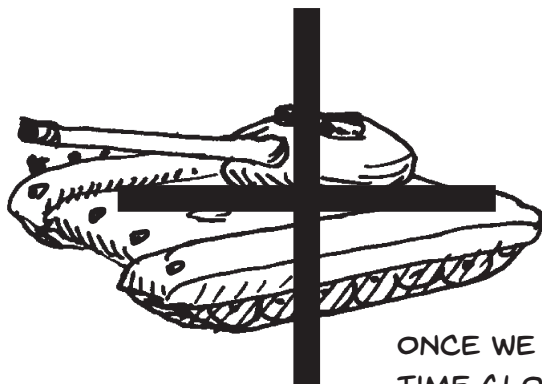




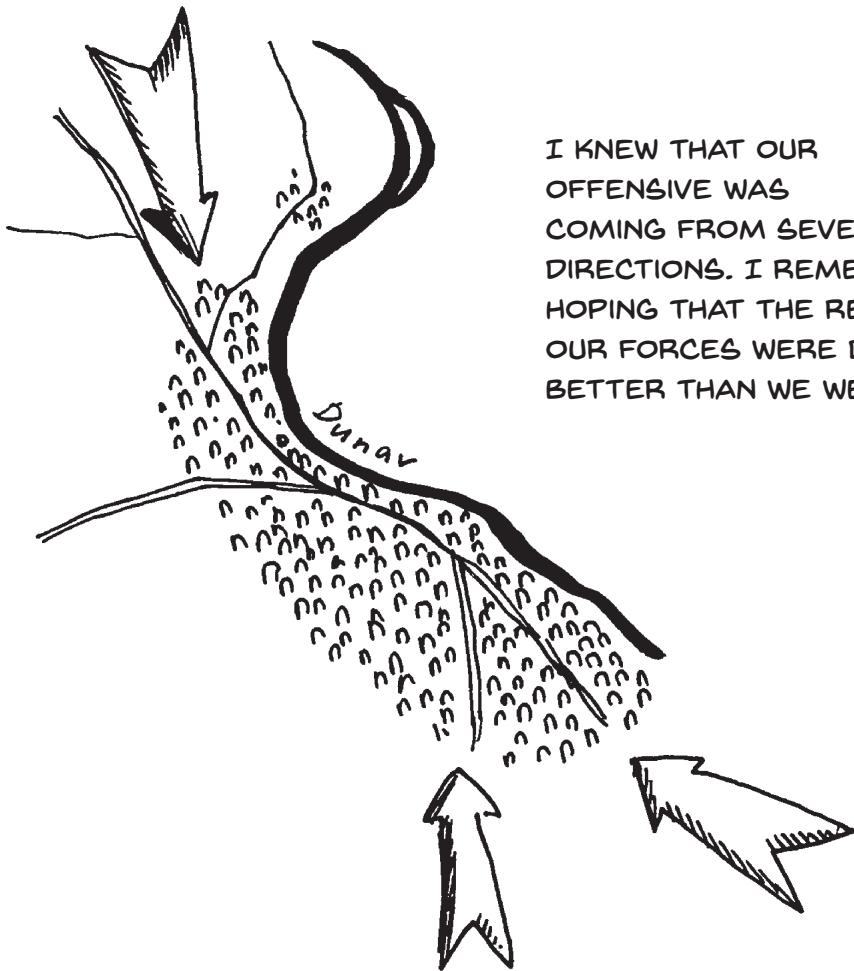
THEN THE TANK STOPPED,
AND DIDN'T MOVE FORWARD
ANY MORE.



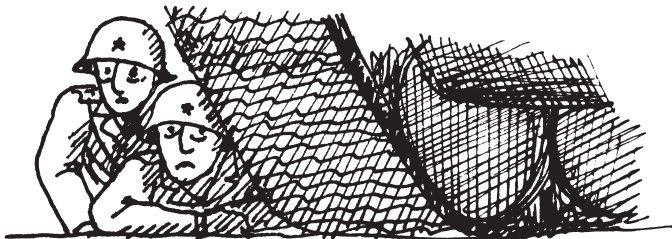
IT FELT MUCH SAFER TO BE ALONGSIDE A MOVING TANK.
A STATIONARY TANK IS AN EASY TARGET.

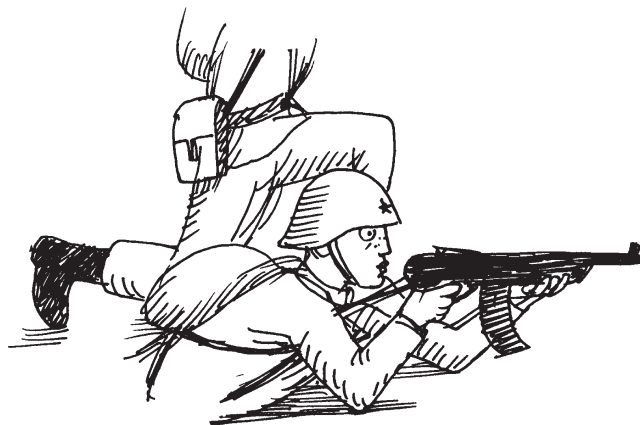
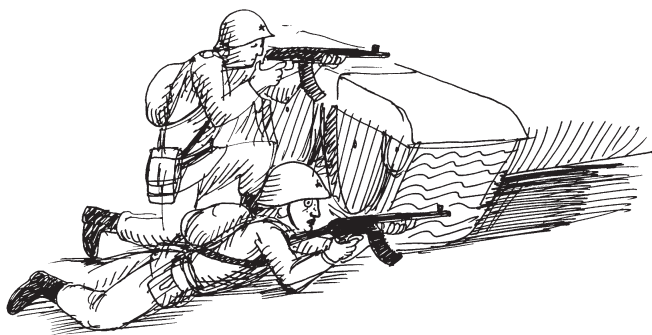


ONCE WE HAD STOPPED,
TIME SLOWED DOWN. IT
FELT LIKE WE WERE STUCK
THERE FOR HOURS.



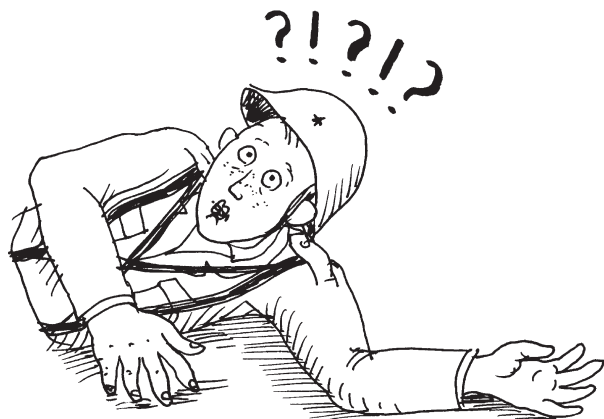
I KNEW THAT OUR
OFFENSIVE WAS
COMING FROM SEVERAL
DIRECTIONS. I REMEMBER
HOPING THAT THE REST OF
OUR FORCES WERE DOING
BETTER THAN WE WERE...



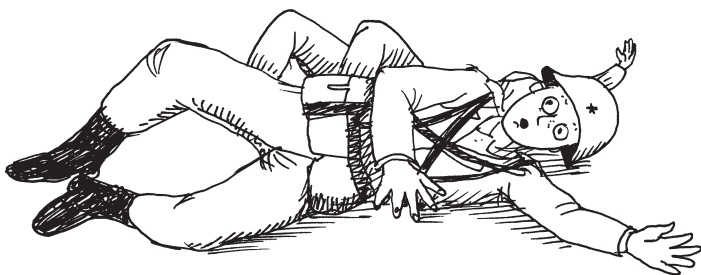


THEN, SUDDENLY...





ONE MOMENT I WAS LYING ON MY STOMACH, AND THE NEXT
I WAS ON MY BACK. I HAD NO IDEA WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

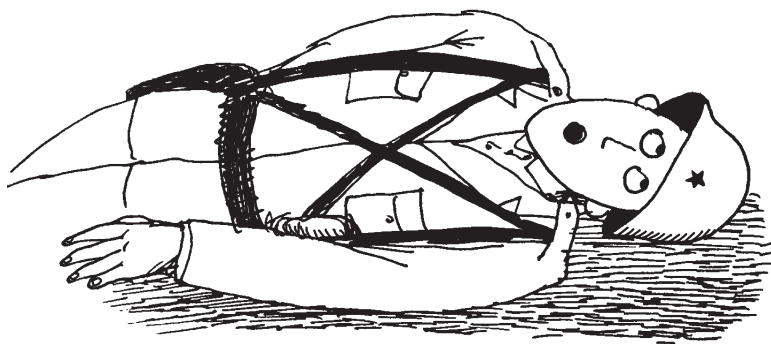


I SAW A SOLDIER
BEHIND ME.





HE WAS STARING AT ME IN WHAT
LOOKED LIKE COMPLETE SHOCK.



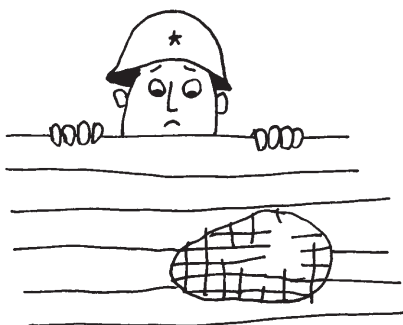
THEN HE ROLLED HIS EYES
AND FELL ON HIS BACK.

THEN I NOTICED A SHALLOW HOLE IN THE ROAD. A MORTAR GRENADE MUST HAVE LANDED THERE.



WE HAD HEARD MORTAR GRENADES FLYING MANY TIMES, THEY MADE A TERRIFYING AND OMINOUS WHOOSHING SOUND BEFORE EXPLODING.

WE HAD BEEN TOLD NOT TO WORRY ABOUT THEM, BECAUSE YOU DON'T HEAR THE ONE COMING YOUR WAY. IT TURNS OUT THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN RIGHT.



ONE OF THE SOLDIERS WAS PEERING OVER A WALL, LOOKING AS CONFUSED AS I WAS. IN THAT MOMENT I FOUND THE PECULIAR EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE HIGHLY AMUSING.

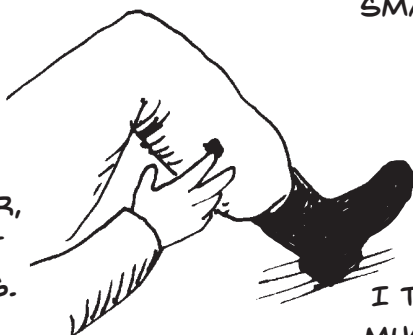


AT FIRST I COULD
FEEL THE PAIN IN MY
NECK AND BACK.

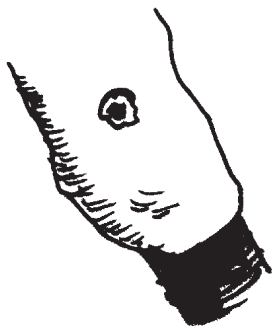


THEN I NOTICED A
SMALL SPECK OF BLOOD
ON MY TROUSERS.

I TOUCHED IT
WITH MY FINGER,
BUT COULDN'T
FEEL ANYTHING.



I THOUGHT THE BLOOD
MUST HAVE COME FROM
THE WOUNDED SOLDIER
NEXT TO ME.



ON CLOSER INSPECTION,
I NOTICED A SMALL
ROUND HOLE IN MY
TROUSERS. MAYBE
I WAS WOUNDED
AFTER ALL.

THAT SEEMED TO BE
THE CASE...



MY LEG STARTED FEELING
NUMB, AND I COULD SENSE
THAT MY BOOT WAS FILLING
UP WITH BLOOD.



STILL IN
SHOCK, I
DECIDED
THAT IT WAS
TIME FOR
ME TO GO
HOME.

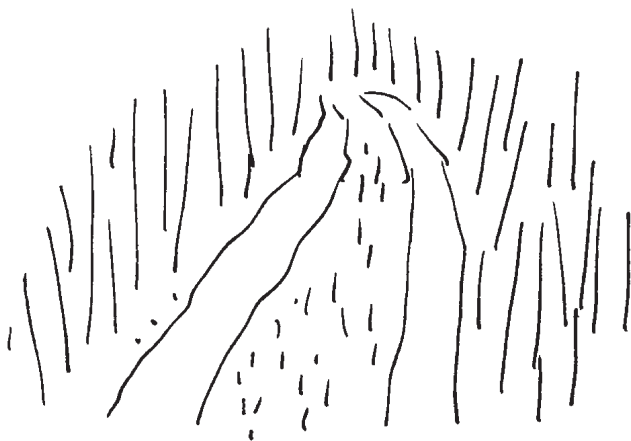


I JUST STOOD UP AND STARTED
WALKING AWAY, COMPLETELY
OBLIVIOUS TO WHAT WAS
GOING ON AROUND ME.



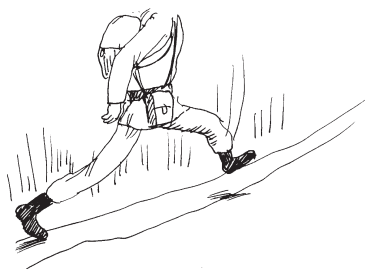


I WALKED AND WALKED. BUT EVENTUALLY I STARTED TO REALISE I WAS JUST WALKING IN A WIDE OPEN SPACE, IN THE MIDDLE OF A BATTLEFIELD, WITHOUT HAVING THE SLIGHTEST IDEA WHERE I WAS GOING.



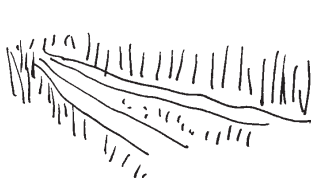
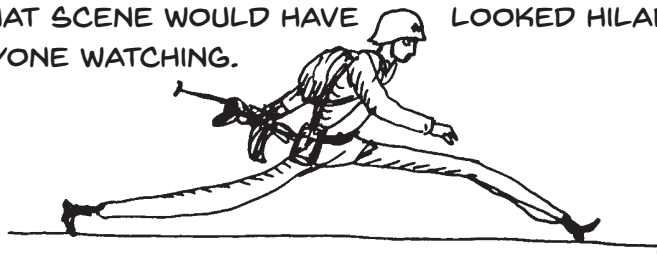
I GOT BACK TO REALITY A LITTLE WHEN I SAW TRACK MARKS FROM A TANK IN THE GROUND NEARBY.

HOPING THAT THE TANK
WAS NOT THE ENEMY,
I DECIDED TO FOLLOW IT.

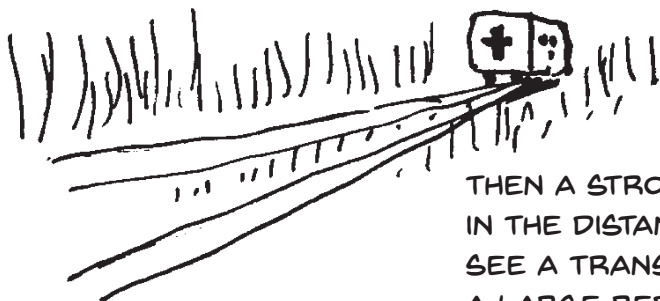


THEN I REMEMBERED THAT
THE AREA MIGHT BE MINED...

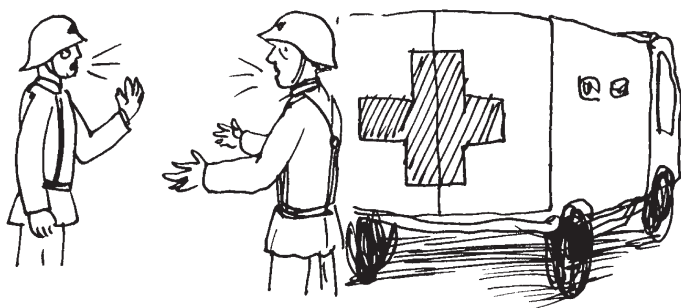
FRIGHTENED THAT I MIGHT STEP ON A MINE, I CALCULATED
THAT THE FEWER STEPS I MADE, THE LESS CHANCE THERE WAS
OF THAT HAPPENING. SO I STARTED MAKING RIDICULOUSLY LONG
STEPS. THAT SCENE WOULD HAVE LOOKED HILARIOUS TO
ANYONE WATCHING.



ONCE I'D REACHED THE TANK MARKS I FELT SAFE
FROM THE MINES. BUT THEN I HAD TO MAKE A
DECISION ABOUT WHICH DIRECTION TO TAKE.

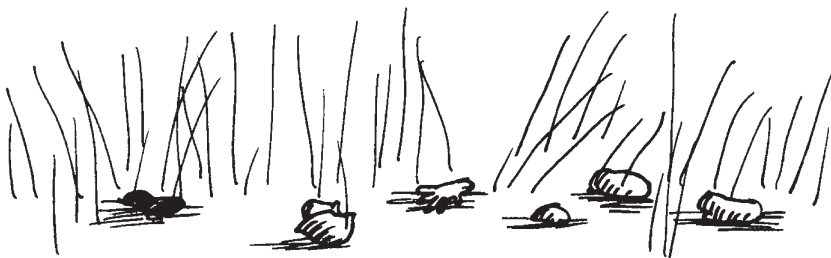


THEN A STROKE OF LUCK.
IN THE DISTANCE I COULD
SEE A TRANSPORTER WITH
A LARGE RED CROSS ON IT.



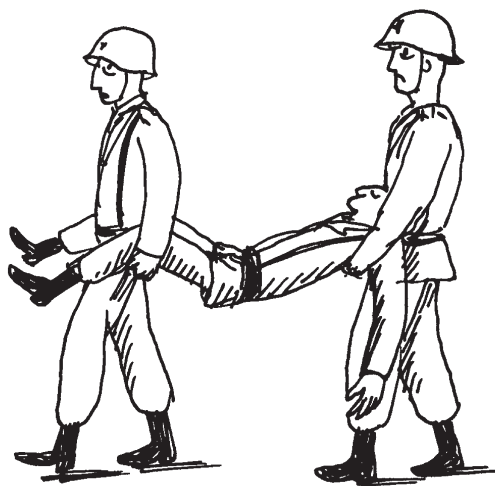
I MADE MY WAY THERE, AND
FOUND TWO SOLDIERS ARGUING.





NEARBY WERE THE DISMEMBERED BODIES OF SOME SOLDIERS WHO HAD BEEN HIT BY A GRENADE.

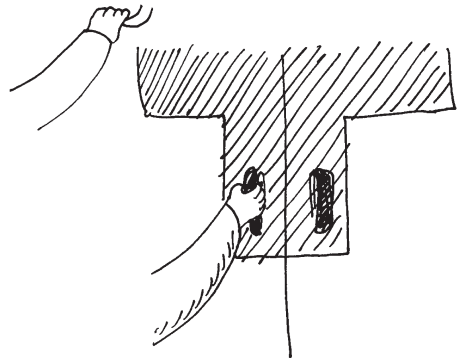
THEY WERE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO COLLECT THEM AND MOVE THEM TO THE TRANSPORTER.



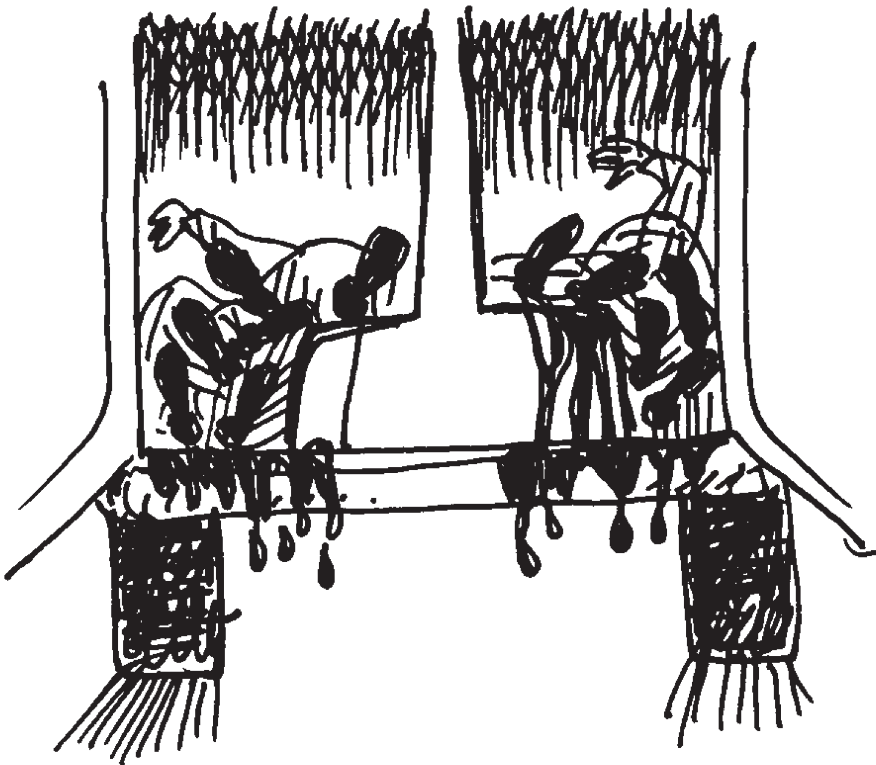
TWO SOLDIERS ARRIVED, CARRYING A BADLY WOUNDED SOLDIER. HE HAD BEEN RIGHT NEXT TO ME WHEN THE MORTAR EXPLODED.



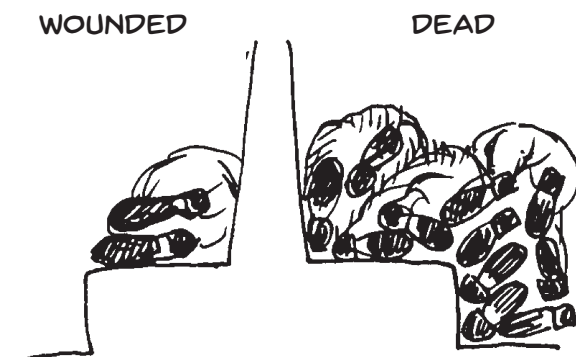
HE WASN'T CONSCIOUS.



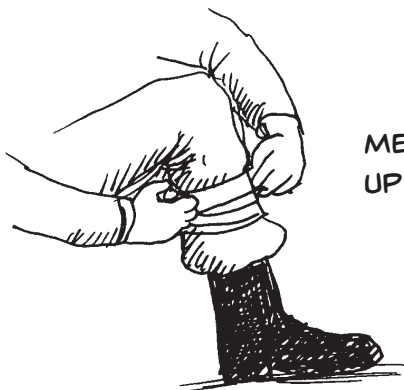
THE SOLDIERS OPENED THE BACK
DOOR OF THE TRANSPORTER.



A WAVE OF BLOOD SPLASHED OUT
FROM THE VEHICLE. NUMEROUS DEAD
BODIES WERE INSIDE.

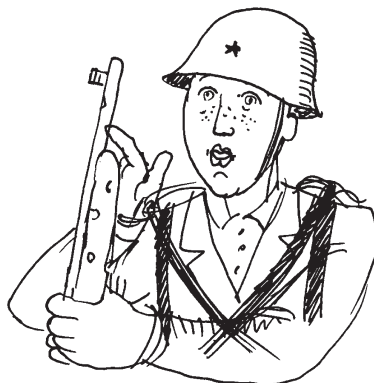


THE SOLDIERS MOVED SOME OF THE BODIES TO ONE SIDE TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE WOUNDED SOLDIERS.

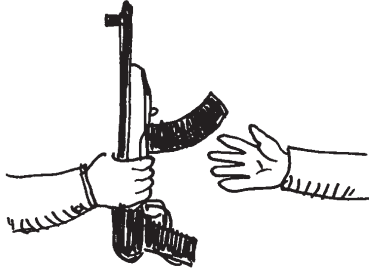


MEANWHILE, I BANDAGED UP MY WOUND.

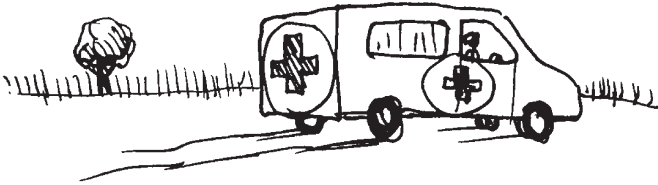
I FOUND A DEEP CUT ON MY RIFLE, WHICH MUST HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY SHRAPNEL. I FELT PARALYSED JUST THINKING HOW CLOSE THAT HAD BEEN TO MY HEAD.



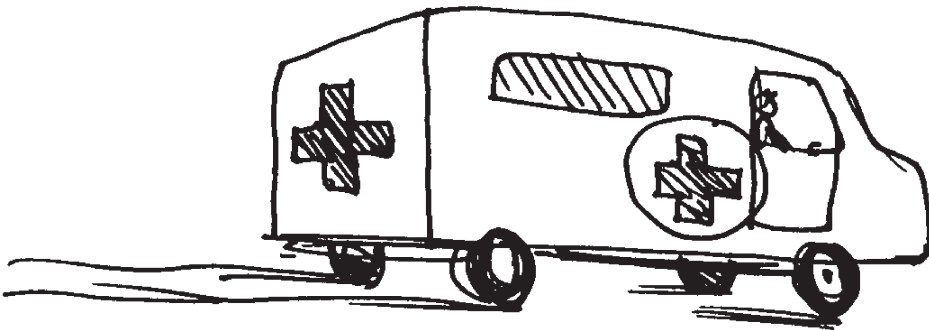
THE TRANSPORTER TOOK US BACK
TO THE VILLAGE WE'D STARTED
FROM THAT MORNING.



AFTER COMPLETING SOME PAPERWORK,
MY RIFLE WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM ME. SUDDENLY
I FELT MUCH LESS LIKE A SOLDIER.



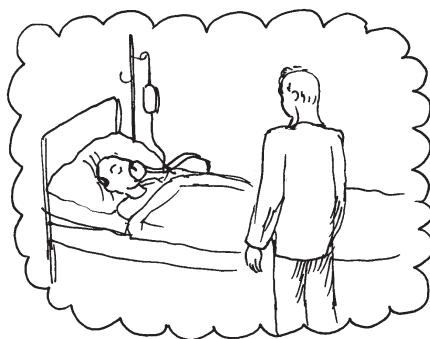
THEN WE WERE DRIVEN BY MILITARY AMBULANCE.



EVERYONE ELSE IN THE AMBULANCE HAD
MUCH MORE SERIOUS INJURIES THAN ME.
I FELT STRANGELY EMBARRASSED BY THAT.



I WAS HOPING THAT THE SOLDIER WHO HAD BEEN WOUNDED NEXT TO ME WOULD MAKE IT.



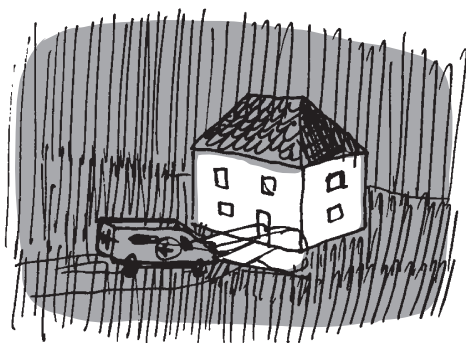
A FEW WEEKS LATER I VISITED HIM IN THE HOSPITAL. HE WAS IN A COMA.



THE NEXT I HEARD WAS THAT HE'D GOT BETTER, HAD LEFT THE HOSPITAL AND WAS RECOVERING WELL.

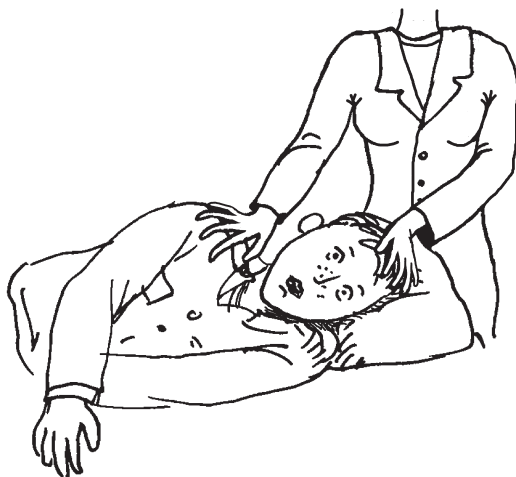


BUT A FEW MONTHS LATER HE DIED SUDDENLY.

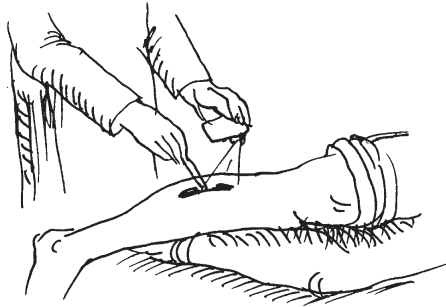


WHEN WE ARRIVED AT THE FIELD
HOSPITAL IT WAS ALREADY NIGHT-TIME.

THEY OPERATED ON ME STRAIGHT AWAY,
WITHOUT ANY ANAESTHETIC.



WHILE THAT WAS HAPPENING
A NURSE GENTLY CARESSED
MY HEAD AND SHOULDERS.
IT FELT GOOD.



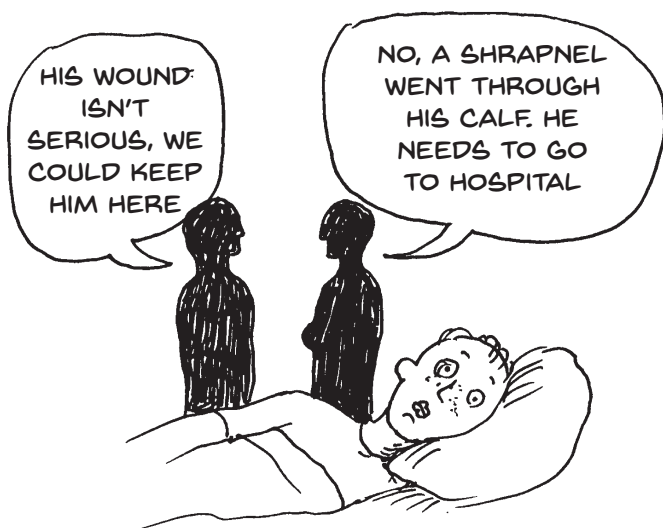
THE SURGEON WAS USING SOME
SHARP-SMELLING LIQUID TO MAKE THE
AREA HE WAS OPERATING ON COLD.

I DIDN'T FEEL MUCH PAIN.

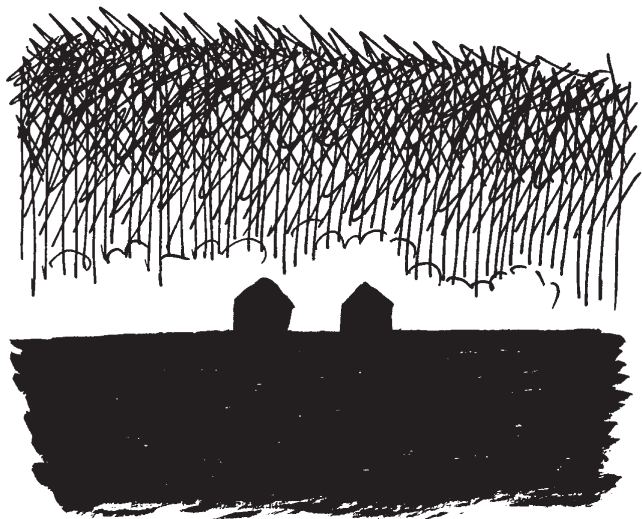
AFTER THE OPERATION I REALLY
NEEDED TO PEE, BUT COULDN'T.



I COULDN'T SLEEP EITHER.



I OVERHEARD SOME DOCTORS
DISCUSSING MY CASE.



DISTANT EXPLOSIONS WERE BEING
DROWNED OUT BY THE SOUND OF THE WIND.

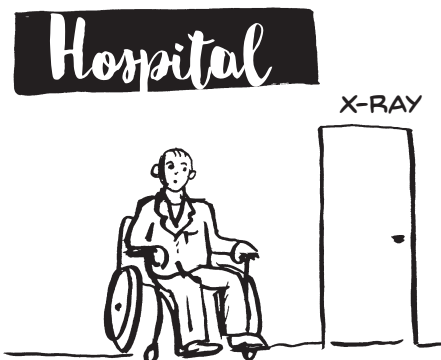




Afterwards



THE NEXT DAY, I WAS TAKEN
TO A MILITARY HOSPITAL IN THE
CITY OF NOVI SAD.



MY LEG NEEDED
TO BE X-RAYED.



WHILE I WAS WAITING, SOME
OLD MAN CAME ALONG...



...AND THOUGHT IT WOULD BE
A GOOD IDEA TO LECTURE ME
ABOUT PATRIOTISM.





HE WAS TALKING...



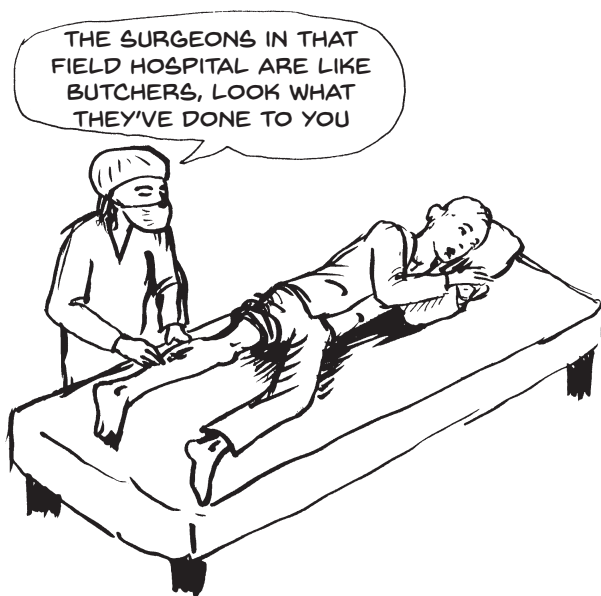
...AND TALKING.

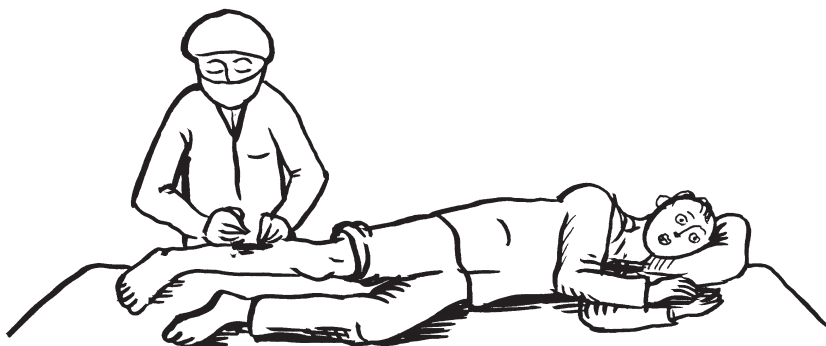


The Operating Theatre



THAT SAME DAY I
WAS TAKEN TO THE
OPERATING THEATRE.



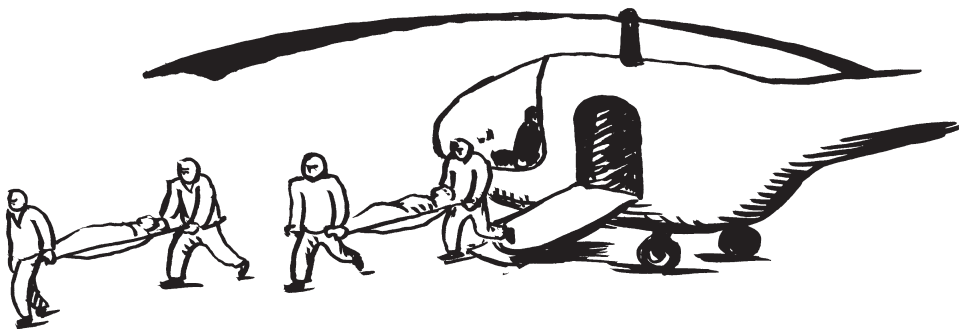


ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER OPERATION...



...WITH NO ANAESTHETIC.





A HELICOPTER WITH MORE WOUNDED SOLDIERS
HAD ARRIVED, SO SHE WAS TRYING TO FINISH MY
OPERATION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.



I COULD SEE ALL SORTS
OF MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS
COMING OUT OF MY LEG.



THEN SHE DID SOMETHING
AND IT HURT LIKE HELL.



I STARTED PULLING
MY LEG AWAY...



THE PAIN WAS
UNBEARABLE.

Catch-22

I WAS PUT IN A SMALL ROOM WITH A VERY KIND YOUNG SOLDIER. HE IMMEDIATELY WENT TO THE PHONE BOX AND CALLED MY PARENTS.



THEY ARRIVED AT THE HOSPITAL IN NO TIME.



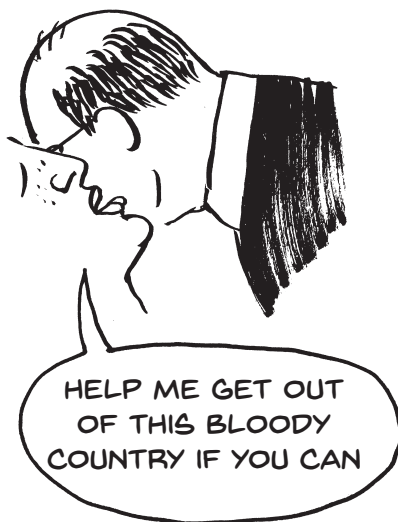


THEY STARTED TOUCHING MY
LEGS TO MAKE SURE BOTH
OF THEM WERE STILL THERE.



PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY SAW
THE CRUTCHES NEXT TO MY BED.

QUIETLY I
TOLD MY
FATHER



HELP ME GET OUT
OF THIS BLOODY
COUNTRY IF YOU CAN



THAT EVENING THE YOUNG
SOLDIER READ JOSEPH
HELLER'S 'CATCH-22' TO ME...



...WHILE I SLOWLY FELL ASLEEP.

morning



THE NEXT MORNING,
I LOOKED OUT OF
THE WINDOW.

PEOPLE WERE
WAITING FOR
BUSES, GOING TO
WORK, SHOPPING...
EVERYTHING
SEEMED 'NORMAL'.



IT FELT STRANGE AND IT FELT
WRONG, NOT EVEN 100KM FROM
WHERE PEOPLE WERE DYING.





IT SEEMS THAT IS WHAT
OFTEN HAPPENS. THE
SITUATION BECOMES
NORMALISED, ESPECIALLY
IN CIVIL WARS. PEOPLE GET
USED TO ALL KINDS
OF CRAZY THINGS

IT CREEPS UP ON YOU,
ALMOST UNNOTICED



MANY YEARS AGO, BEFORE
THE WAR STARTED, I READ
AN ARTICLE ABOUT NATO
PREPARING A PLAN ON WHAT
TO DO IF THERE WAS A CIVIL
WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA. IDIOTS,
I THOUGHT, WHAT ARE THEY
TALKING ABOUT? HOW ON
EARTH THERE CAN BE
A WAR HERE?

OH HOW WRONG I WAS!





PEOPLE IN THE WEST DON'T
REALISE THAT GIVEN THE
RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES, IT CAN
HAPPEN ANYWHERE, TO PRETTY
MUCH ANYONE

I AGREE, THEY SAY THAT
EVERY SOCIETY IS ONLY
THREE SQUARE MEALS AWAY
FROM ANARCHY. OR IS IT
REVOLUTION? SOMETHING
LIKE THAT...

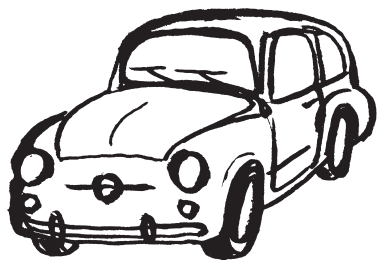


I THINK THE NUMBER
OF MEALS VARY IN
DIFFERENT QUOTES...

RIGHT, AND IT'S
EXAGGERATED TOO, BUT
WORRYINGLY THERE MIGHT
BE A LOT OF TRUTH IN IT

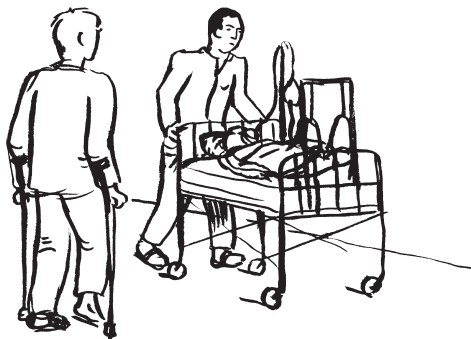


... AND AS WITH SO MANY OTHER
BAD THINGS, PEOPLE THINK IT CAN
ONLY HAPPEN TO SOMEONE ELSE,
FAR AWAY. OH WELL...



FICÁ

IN THE HOSPITAL I MET
THE DRIVER OF THE CAR
THAT HAD COLLIDED WITH
OUR TRANSPORTER.



HE WAS IN A TERRIBLE
STATE. HIS LEGS WERE BADLY
BROKEN IN MANY PLACES.



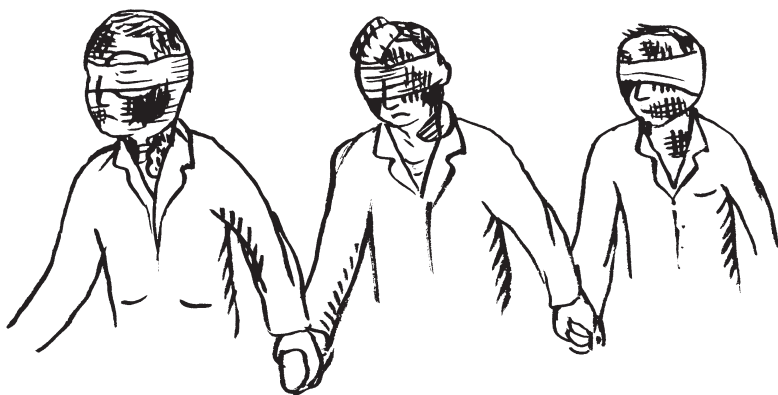
WITH A GREAT SENSE OF
SHAME I REMEMBERED
US ALL LAUGHING WHEN
WE WERE TOLD ABOUT
THE CRASH.

Tank Crew

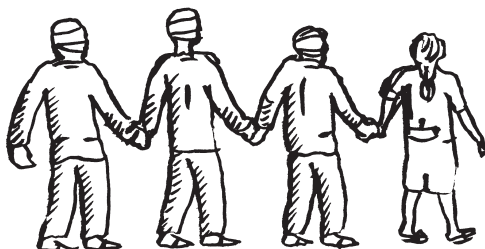


THE NEXT DAY I WAS MOVED TO
A BIGGER WARD.

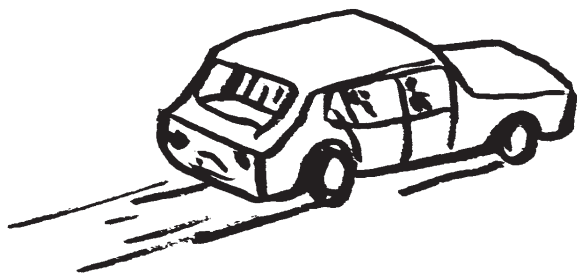
THERE WAS A TANK CREW THERE
THAT HAD BEEN HIT BY A ROCKET.



THEY WERE COVERED IN GAUZE AS THEY WERE BLINDED BY
THE EXPLOSION AND A NURSE HAD TO LEAD THEM BY THE
HAND TO GET TREATMENT. IT WAS AN INCREDIBLY SAD SCENE.

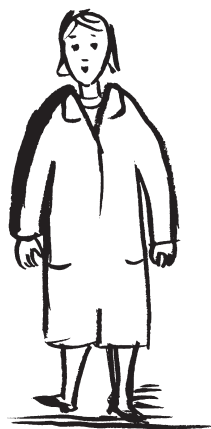


Leaving Hospital



ON THE WAY HOME WE STOPPED FOR
A SHORT BREAK.

A WOMAN CAME
TOWARDS ME.



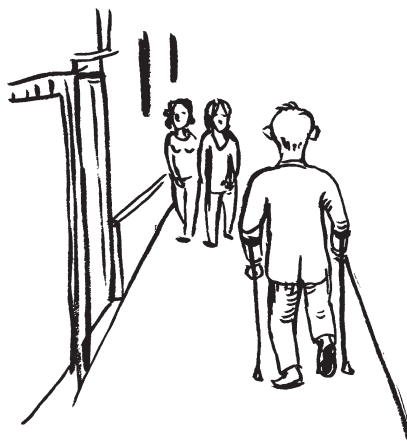


SHE HUGGED ME TIGHT
AND STARTED CRYING.



Back Home

ONCE I WAS BACK IN MY HOME TOWN, HUGS AND TEARS WERE A FREQUENT OCCURRENCE FOR A SHORT WHILE.



NOT EVERYONE KNEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

THE DAY I'D BEEN
WOUNDED, MY
WALLET HAD BEEN
IN MY BACK POCKET.
AT ONE POINT
SOME SHRAPNEL
STRUCK AND RIPPED
UP EVERYTHING IN
MY WALLET. ONLY
THE COINS I HAD
STOPPED IT FROM
INJURING ME.

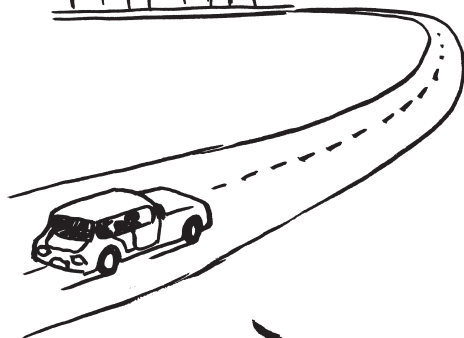


WHEN I WENT TO HAVE MY
ID AND DRIVING LICENCE
REPLACED...

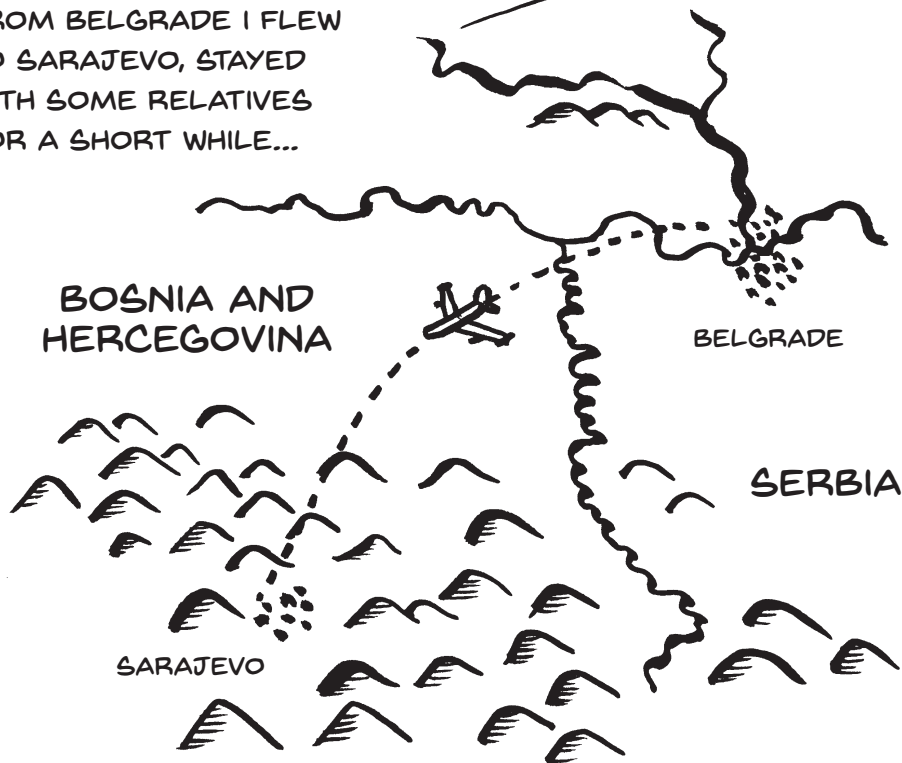
THE WOMAN WORKING
THERE SEEMED
COMPLETELY BAFFLED.



Leaving The Country



FROM BELGRADE I FLEW
TO SARAJEVO, STAYED
WITH SOME RELATIVES
FOR A SHORT WHILE...



... BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA WAS STILL OFFICIALLY
PART OF YUGOSLAVIA BUT THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES
WERE NOT ENFORCING THE RESTRICTIONS FOR MEN
OF MILITARY AGE TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY, AT LEAST
THAT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING.

SARAJEVO

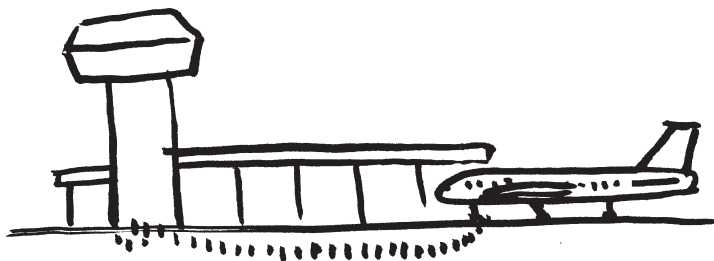
THE TAXI DRIVER
FROM THE
AIRPORT SEEMED
VERY WORRIED.



MY RELATIVES SAID THE SAME THING.



SOON AFTER THAT I WAS ON MY WAY TO LONDON.



LOTS OF DESPERATE PEOPLE
WERE LEAVING.



THE TENSION AT THE
AIRPORT WAS PALPABLE.

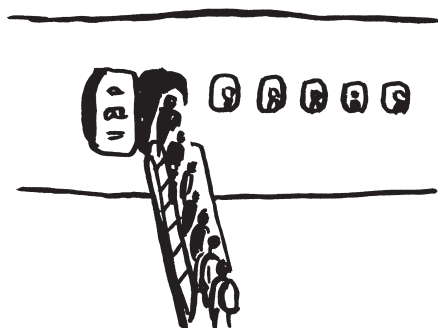


PEOPLE WERE CARRYING ALL THEIR VALUABLES.



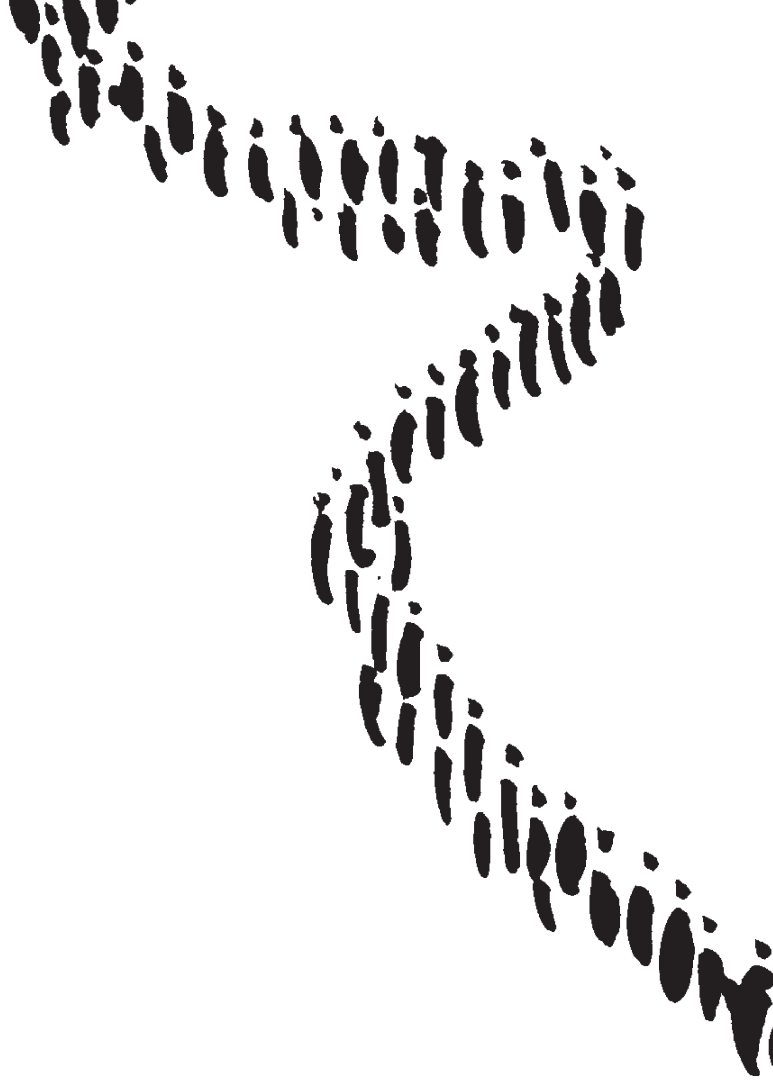
I REMEMBER SEEING SOMEONE WITH A
PAINTING BY MERSAD BERBER.*

* FAMOUS BOSNIAN AND YUGOSLAV PAINTER WHO PAINTED EPIC SCENES FROM
HISTORY. HIS PAINTINGS WERE RATHER VALUABLE AT THE TIME



THE PLANE WAS FULL. FULL
OF PEOPLE, FULL OF THINGS,
FULL OF UNCERTAINTY.













Don't
~~Flop!~~

