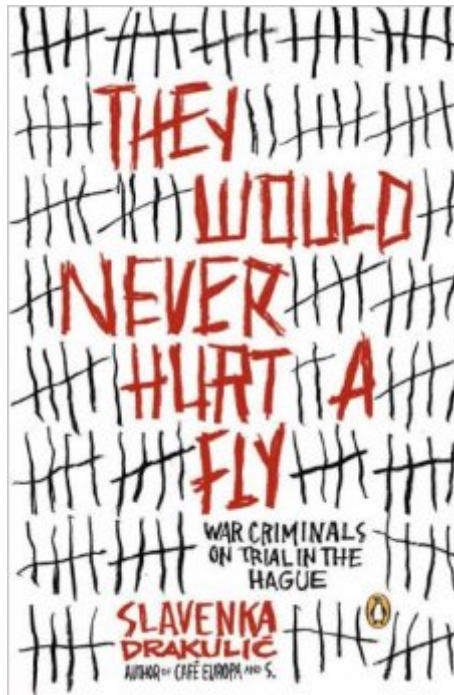


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They Would Never Hurt A Fly: War Criminals On Trial In The Hague



Synopsis

"Who were they? Ordinary people like you or me" or monsters? asks internationally acclaimed author Slavenka Drakulic as she sets out to understand the people behind the horrific crimes committed during the war that tore apart Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Drawing on firsthand observations of the trials, as well as on other sources, Drakulic portrays some of the individuals accused of murder, rape, torture, ordering executions, and more during one of the most brutal conflicts in Europe in the twentieth century, including former Serbian president Slobodan Milošević; Radislav Krstic, the first to be sentenced for genocide; Biljana Plavšić, the only woman accused of war crimes; and Ratko Mladic, now in hiding. With clarity and emotion, Drakulic paints a wrenching portrait of a country needlessly torn apart.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reprint edition (July 26, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143035428

ISBN-13: 978-0143035428

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.6 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars See all reviews (15 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

THEY WOULD NEVER HURT A FLY: WAR CRIMINALS ON TRIAL IN THE HAGUE by Slavenka Drakulic is a nonfiction work to follow her fictional piece about the war in the Balkans: S: A Novel about the Balkans. In this book, Drakulic writes chapters on various accused war criminals from the war in the former Yugoslavia. To write the book, she traveled to the Hague and observed the trials. She is a native Croatian, and now lives most of the time in Sweden. Drakulic's writing is clear and strong. At times she imagines the homelife of the various accused individuals or what their thoughts or surroundings might have been as they proceeded through the war, doing what would eventually land them in The Hague, but her imaginations aren't unethical or posed in a way that is difficult to separate from the facts at hand. Drakulic is really an "everyman" trying to understand

crimes which seem incomprehensible to others. She struggles throughout the book to do so by examining individual cases in depth. The various chapters deal with different crimes and individuals in the various regions of the war in Yugoslavia. For example, in chapter 3, "A Suicide Scenario," her first chapter about an individual, she writes about a Croatian man who testified for the authorities against other people in his village, and who was eventually killed by a bomb in his backyard after the war was over. She writes about the "You took a television" defense among townspeople in small villages after the war (and the war crimes) ended.

Subtitled "War Criminals on Trial in the Hague", this 2004 book is the third that I've read by Croatian journalist Slavenka Drakulic. Born in 1949 and growing up under communism in the former Yugoslavia, she never expected that Communism would collapse and she'd be thrust into a war where formerly friendly neighbors started murdering each other. More than 200,000 people were killed during the Balkan wars in the early 1990s and there are over 80 people now in The Hague on trial for war crimes. Ms. Drakulic recently spent a full five months observing her trials. And this book is the result of her observations. The trials are poorly attended. Sometimes she was the only observer there. The people on trial come from various backgrounds and from different countries. Each has been accused of mass murder. And they all were surprised to be arrested, thinking themselves as heroes, not as criminals. Thus is the way of war. The book is short, a mere 206 pages, broken into 13 different chapters, each chapter dealing with a different person. Of course there is a chapter on Slobodan Milosevic as well as his wife Mira, who was the most feared woman in Serbia, writing a column that could end someone's political career or sending a person to prison. But there are also chapters on lesser known war criminals. What about the soldier who was assigned to the killer squad which did nothing but shoot bound and blindfolded prisoners who were delivered to their place of murder by bus? And what about the soldier who made sport of going into the prisoner's barracks and selecting out a few each night for torture and murder? There are people on trial who gave the command to murder thousands. And lesser known criminals who do not have anyone willing to step forward and accuse them.

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