

ALL
RISE!

And we all rise in Courtroom One at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, the Netherlands, for the solemn moment and majesty of...

the WAR CRIMES TRIALS

This is History, baby, with a capital H, the first international war crimes trials since the Nuremberg court put the likes of Goering and Hess in the dock...

Written and drawn by
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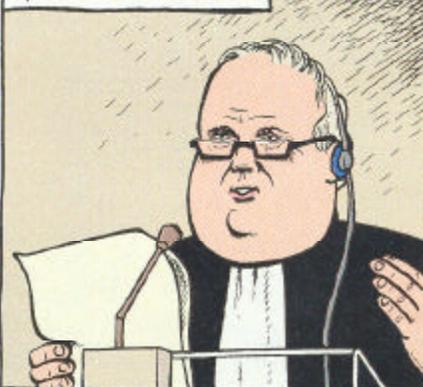
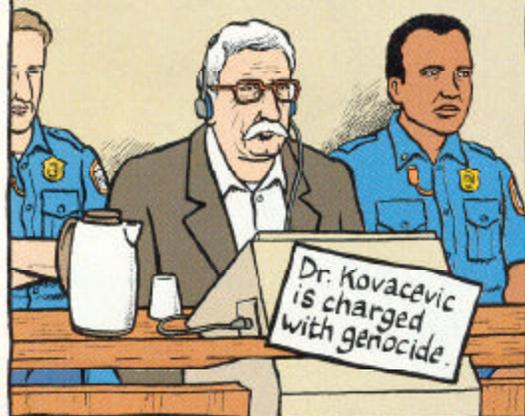
But the judges striding in today haven't brought the victor's mighty gavel to crack down on a vanquished foe...

They've come with a United Nations mandate to sort through the crimes and atrocities committed by all sides in the recent Balkan wars

The only other time I've been to court was to watch a friend argue down a traffic fine. But the accused at today's pre-trial motions, Dr. Milan Kovacevic, a Bosnian Serb hospital director, is in considerably hotter water...

Genocide: Acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, or religious group...

The prosecution says Kovacevic played a key role in setting up notorious camps—"transit centers," he once called them—as Serbs expelled Muslims and Croats from the Prijedor area at the beginning of the Bosnian War...



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The tribunal has already heard what went on in those camps at the trial of Dusko Tadic, a Bosnian Serb and former karate instructor...



Witness after witness described the living conditions...



the interrogations, the killings...

and the cases of sexual assault...



Q: WERE YOU ORDERED TO LICK HIS ARSE, MR. H?

"YES"

Q: WAS MR. G ORDERED TO SUCK HIS PENISE?

"YES"

Q: WAS THE NEXT ORDER FOR MR. G TO BITE HIS TESTICLES?

"YES"

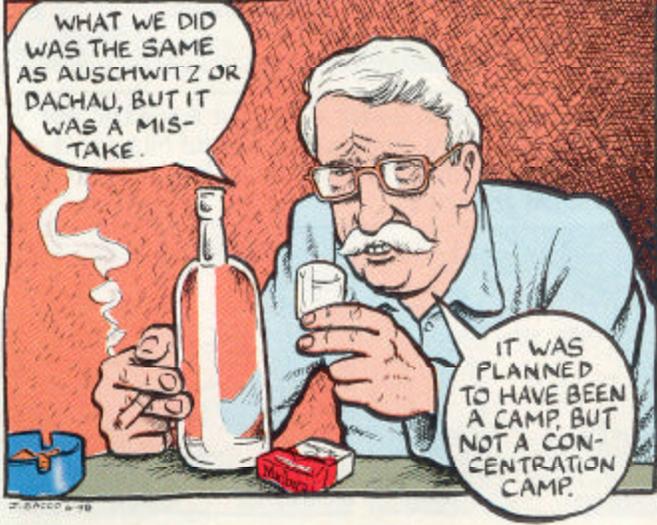
**BITE!
HARDER!
HARDER!**

And Mr. G bit off the man's testicle.



The victim, Fikret Harambasic, wasn't the only Muslim savaged that day. Witnesses saw bloody bodies, a man being cut as "one slices chops" but the court said no deaths had been proven. It noted, though, that four of these assaulted, including Harambasic, were never seen again.

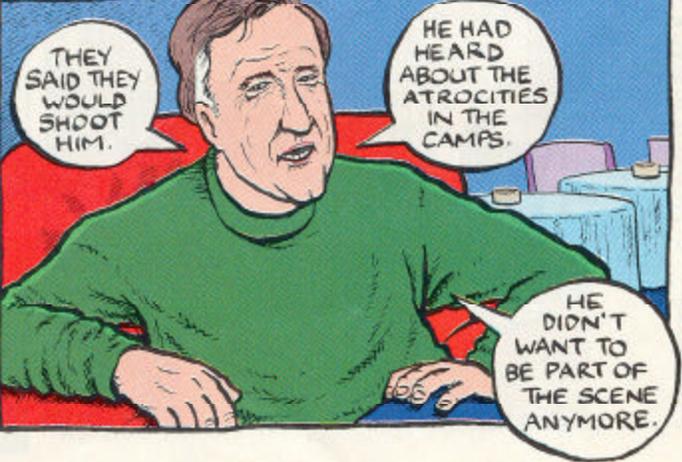
After the war, before he was nabbed by British soldiers, Dr Kovacevic told a reporter—



WHAT WE DID WAS THE SAME AS AUSCHWITZ OR DACHAU, BUT IT WAS A MISTAKE.

IT WAS PLANNED TO HAVE BEEN A CAMP, BUT NOT A CONCENTRATION CAMP.

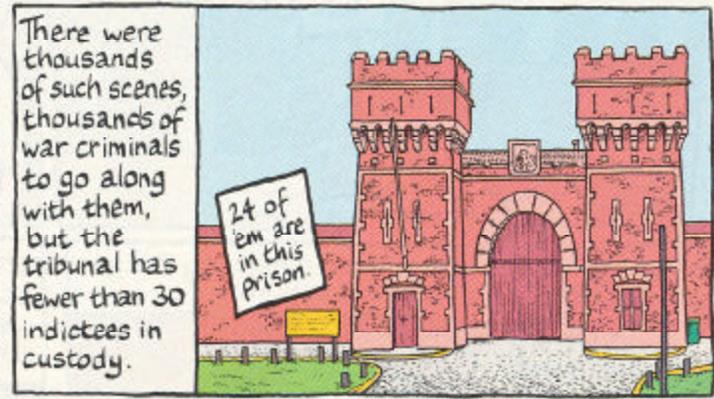
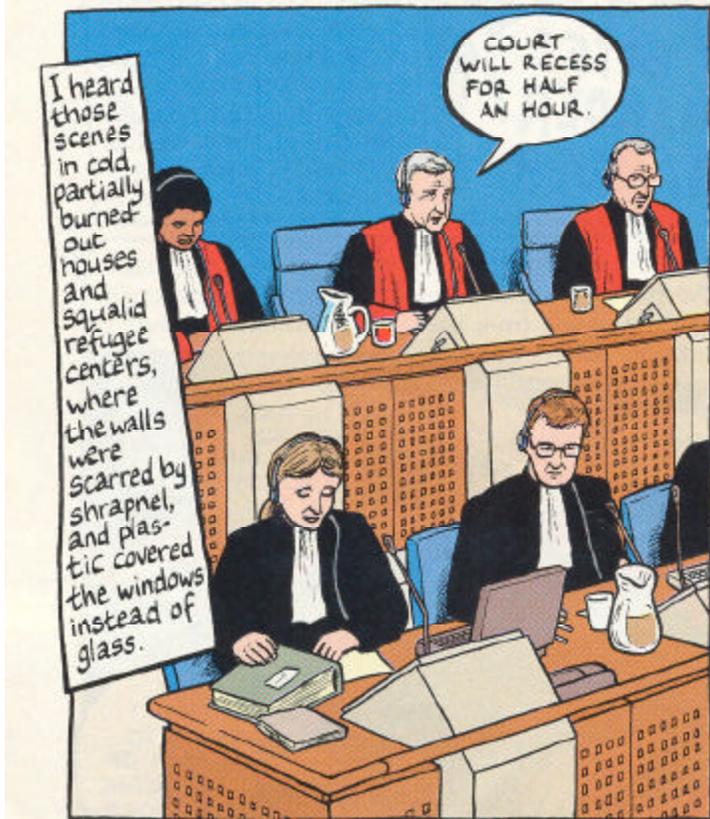
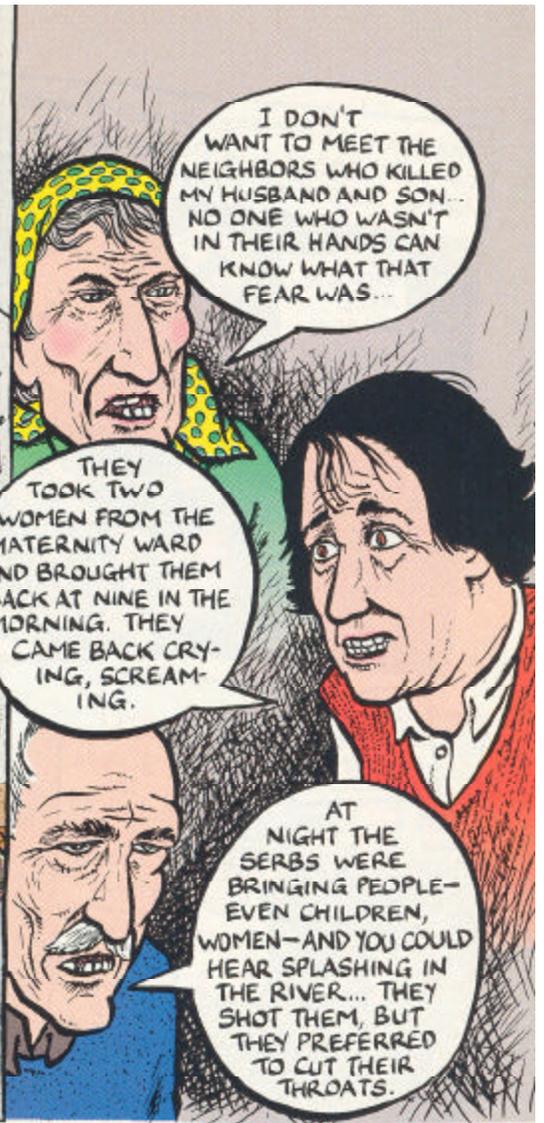
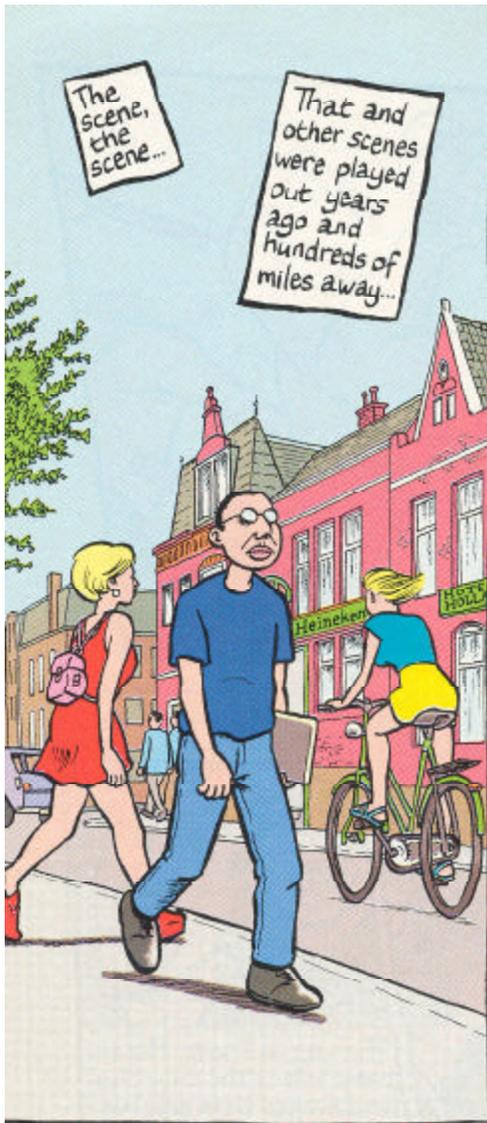
One of his attorneys, Anthony D'Amato, a professor at Northwestern Law School, tells me that Kovacevic wanted to resign from the council overseeing the operation, but—



THEY SAID THEY WOULD SHOOT HIM.

HE HAD HEARD ABOUT THE ATROCITIES IN THE CAMPS.

HE DIDN'T WANT TO BE PART OF THE SCENE ANYMORE.



Neither Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic nor Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic, the two "most wanted" suspects, are here. They, too, are charged with genocide...



The tribunal is pursuing more familiar war crimes, like torture and murder, but is breaking new ground in its aggressive investigation of sexual assaults.

Prosecutor Patricia Sellers-Visaur tells me that, prior to these proceedings, war and rape were seen as virtually inseparable...

LIKE MAY SUNSHINE AND FLOWERS, LIKE SALT AND PEPPER.

The longer I'm in The Hague, the more I'm sucked into the courts' orderly deconstruction of some of recent history's foulest moments. I'm fascinated and stupefied by the sheer scope of the arguments, the expert witnesses droning on and on...

BLAH BLAH BLAH FRENCH REVOLUTION BLAH BLAH BLAH REVOLUTIONS OF 1848...

I can't stand the fact that trials are going on simultaneously, that I might be missing something more compelling at the one I'm not at...

BLAH BLAH NATIONAL BLAH

CAN WE DISMISS THIS WITNESS ALREADY?

DISINTEGRATE BLAH BLAH

I'm silently cheering judges who are trying valiantly to prod their cases along...

DOES THE COURT NEED TO HEAR WHAT YOUR WITNESS DID FROM HIS BREAKFAST UPON ARRIVING IN BOSNIA TILL THE TIME THE FLAG CAME DOWN WHEN HE LEFT?

The tribunal is emphasizing pretrial management, has added courtrooms, and is petitioning the U.N. for more judges to help pick up the pace.

One of the tribunal's biggest problems, says Nikola Kostich, a former Milwaukee district attorney and a Serb-American defense lawyer, is the perception among some that its prosecution office is biased.

YOU HAVE LIMITED RESOURCES, BUT YOU HAVE TO SHOW RESULTS...

AND I THINK THEY TOOK THE EASY WAY OUT, AND THAT IS TO INVESTIGATE CERTAIN CRIMES AND CHARGE CERTAIN PEOPLE.

AND THE SERBS WERE THE ONES WHO ESSENTIALLY GOT HIT.

He ticks off the names of places where he says Croats and Muslims committed atrocities against Serbs.

Okay, but what about a certain U.N. report that pointed the finger squarely at the Bosnian Serbs?

YOU THINK ITS FINDING THAT SERBS COMMITTED GENOCIDE IN BOSNIA IS INCORRECT?

I THINK THE JURY IS STILL OUT ON WHO DID WHAT TO WHOM IN BOSNIA.

But around a place called Srebrenica, the evidence still being dug up by investigative teams is mounting.

What did Kostich think happened in Srebrenica? After all, he himself had represented one soldier who'd confessed to personally executing up to 70 Muslims there...

MAYBE SOMETHING WAS DOWN THERE THAT WAS NOT GOOD.

THERE ARE NO HARD FACTS YET.

I MAYBE DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT EITHER, RIGHT?

I WOULD FEEL VERY SAD IF THIS OCCURRED THAT WAY. THAT WOULD BOTHER ME.

I'M A HUMAN BEING IN ADDITION TO BEING A DEFENSE ATTORNEY.

Ah, but a defense attorney is a defense attorney is a defense attorney. I ask Houston defense attorney Tom Moran about his Muslim client, who, among other things, is accused of killing an elderly Serb by nailing a political badge to his head. Is he innocent?

IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS...

WHAT I CARE ABOUT IS WHETHER THE PROSECUTOR CAN PROVE BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT WHAT'S IN THE INDICTMENT.

AND IF THE PROSECUTOR CAN'T DO IT, MY GUY IS NOT GUILTY.

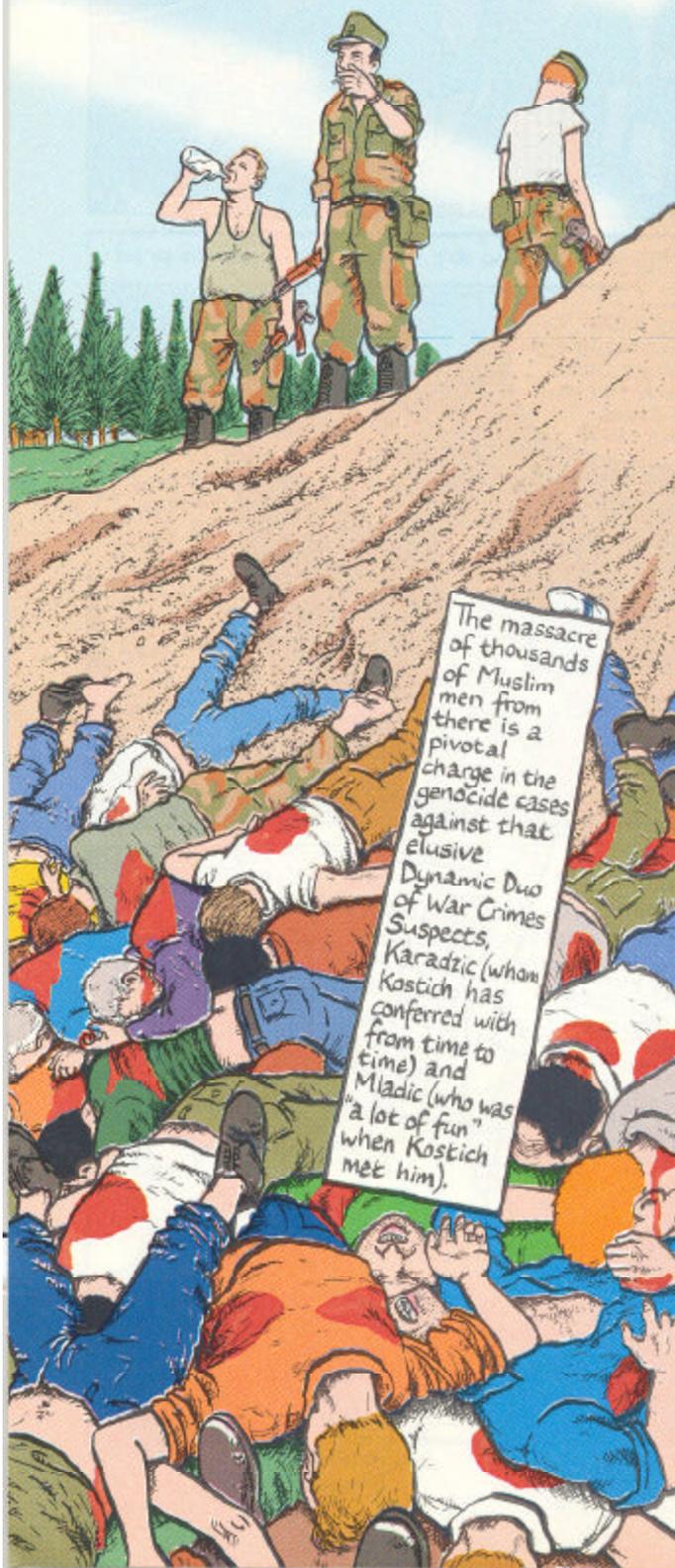
DOESN'T MEAN HE'S INNOCENT.

Anyway, he says his client was too small a player for an international court to be going after...

THE BOTTOM LINE IS, THIS TRIBUNAL WAS SET UP FOR TWO PEOPLE—RADOVAN KARADZIC AND RATKO MLADIC—AND THEY MAY VERY WELL BE INNOCENT...

AND UNLESS SOMEONE DOES SOMETHING TO GET THEM HERE, THIS TRIBUNAL MAY AS WELL PACK UP AND GO HOME.

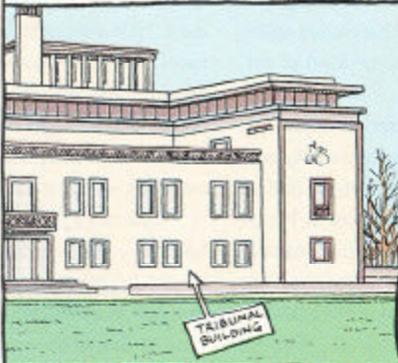
The massacre of thousands of Muslim men from there is a pivotal charge in the genocide cases against that elusive Dynamic Duo of War Crimes Suspects, Karadzic (whom Kostich has conferred with from time to time) and Mladic (who was "a lot of fun" when Kostich met him).



The prosecutor's office insists it's building a case against the big fish by frying the smaller fish first. And the tribunal bigwigs don't buy the argument that success should be pegged to any couple of war crimes suspects, no matter how notorious.

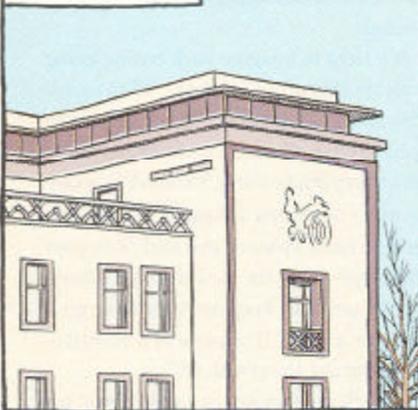


The tribunal is dependent on others to apprehend suspects, and so it can't possibly bring every war criminal to justice — and now, with Kosovo erupting, it might have even more war crimes suspects to indict. Still, justice is worth pursuing for its own sake...

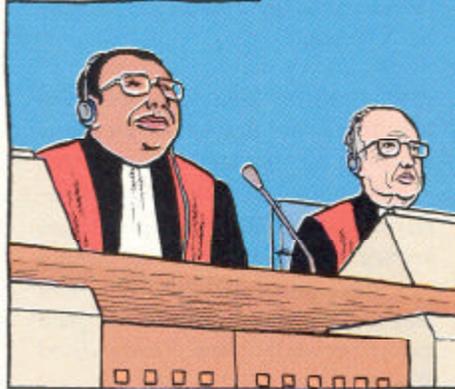


AND AT LEAST SOMEONE SOMEWHERE IS DRAWING THE LINE — IF ONLY A LEGAL LINE — ON CARNAGE AS WE STUMBLE OUT OF THIS CENTURY OF HORRORS.

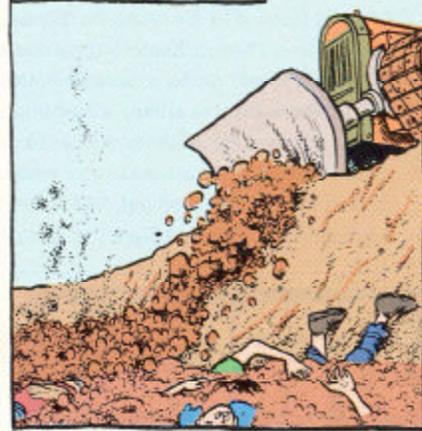
But some say this tribunal and the one dealing with Rwanda exist today because of collective Western guilt.



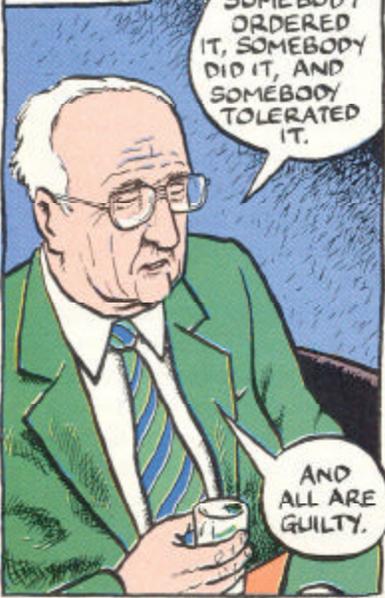
For years we watched the butchery from our living rooms, and now that it's over we've dressed ourselves in robes and decided to do something about it after all.



Pronouncing the word genocide after the fact is a lot safer than stopping it.

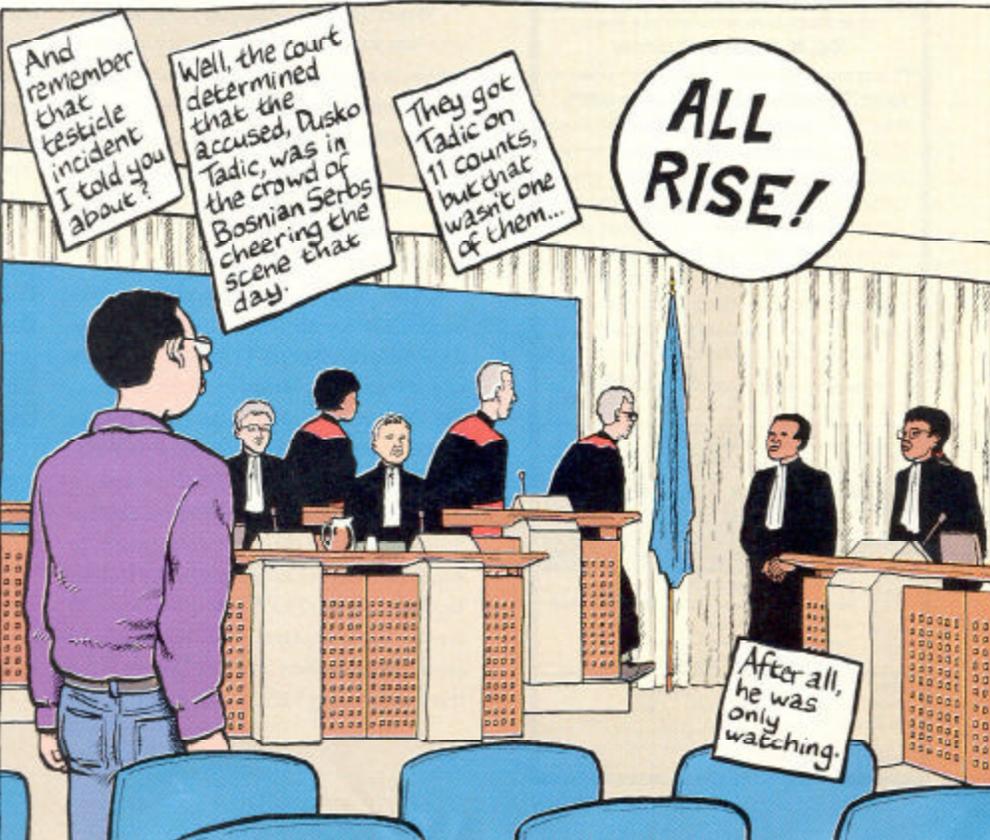


It's like Bosnian lawyer Salih Karabdic, who survived the siege of Sarajevo, tells me—



SOMEbody ORDERED IT, SOMEbody DID IT, AND SOMEbody TOLERATED IT.

AND ALL ARE GUILTY.



And remember that testicle incident I told you about?

Well, the court determined that the accused, Dusko Tadic, was in the crowd of Bosnian Serbs cheering the scene that day.

They got Tadic on 11 counts, but that wasn't one of them...

ALL RISE!

After all, he was only watching.