



Girl of Kosovo

By Alice Mead

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A child's perspective on war.

In 1998 the Serb military intensifies its efforts to expel Albanians from Kosovo. Ethnic cleansing forces many families to seek safety in the surrounding hills and mountains. The Kosovo Liberation Army fights back guerrilla style, struggling for an independent Kosovo. Some Albanian villagers support the freedom fighters. Others fear that armed resistance, which they have successfully avoided through long years of Serb repression, will only increase the death toll. And always there is terrible tension between Serbian and Albanian neighbors who once were friends. Eleven-year-old Zana Dugolli, an Albanian Kosovar, isn't sure what to think. She does know not to speak her language to Serbs. And every day she worries about her mother and father, her brothers, the farm, the apple orchard. Already she has lost her best friend, a Serb. Then Zana's village is shelled, and her worst nightmare is realized. Her father and two brothers are killed in the attack, and her leg is shattered by shrapnel. Alone in a Serb hospital, she remembers her father's words: "Don't let them fill your heart with hate."

Based on a true story, Alice Mead's stark, affecting novel about a place and conflict she knows well will help young readers understand the war in Kosovo.

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Girl of Kosovo By Alice Mead Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1050453 in Books
- Published on: 2001-04-11
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.84" h x .67" w x 4.96" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 128 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"How was it that foreigners could come take pictures of us when we were dead, but couldn't come to help us stay alive?" Eleven-year-old Zana Dugolli doesn't understand how the rest of the world can send reporters to record the violence that is inflicted daily on Kosovo-born Albanians by the brutal Serbian military, yet do nothing to stop it. In the late 1990s, Zana's rural village is targeted when the Serbian ruling class steps up its efforts to completely wipe out ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Unbelievably, she watches as a bomb explodes right in front of her, killing her father and two brothers. Zana's own leg is shattered by the blast, and the physical pain added to the grief of losing half her family is almost more than she can bear. Sick with fear, Zana wonders how much longer she, her mother, and her remaining brother can face the demoralizing effects of so much hate. "All I knew was that I was slowly losing my life. I felt betrayed by everyone and everything. I couldn't trust the ground itself. If a bomb fell on it, it could swallow me whole."

Alice Mead, author of the much-lauded *Adem's Cross*, continues to draw attention to the horrific Serbian-Albanian conflict with *Girl of Kosovo*. Brutal and moving, this novel is sure to stir the activist that lives in the heart of every teen and propel young readers to a greater understanding of race, war, and politics. (Ages 10 and older) --*Jennifer Hubert*

From Publishers Weekly

As in her *Adem's Cross*, Mead places a human face on the Kosovo crisis by focusing on an Albanian family ravaged by war. Even after her father and brothers are killed and her leg is gravely injured in a Serb attack, 11-year-old Zana, the narrator, struggles to heed her father's advice: "Don't let them fill your heart with hate. Whatever happens." Zana's friendship with a Serbian girl, Lena, and her trip behind enemy lines to a hospital in Belgrade provide Zana with evidence of kindness to weigh against the brutality in the Serb faction, while her cowardly KLA uncle Vizar illuminates weaknesses among the Albanians. Mead puts the war into a context that young readers will understand. The family watches sports on ESPN and Zana's brother plays Nintendo; at the same time, they bury guns and food and sleep in their clothes, poised to retreat. Through Zana, the author stresses the random cruelty of the war in Kosovo, and her anger stretches to include foreign journalists: "How was it that foreigners could come take pictures of us when we were dead, but couldn't come to help us stay alive? I wanted to let the air out of their fancy tires so they would be stuck here, trapped the way we were." The ending is a little convenient (Zana helps save Lena's family from the vengeful hatred of their Albanian neighbors), but most readers will find the story powerful and hard-hitting. Ages 10-up.

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From School Library Journal

Gr 5-8-The power of childhood friendships and generous spirits to overcome ethnic hatred is the theme of this moving story of an 11-year-old Albanian victim of the civil war in Kosovo. As Zana Dugolli and her family attempt to escape an attack, her father and two brothers are killed, and Zana is severely wounded. Hospitalized in Belgrade for three months, the terrified child encounters kindness on the part of a Serbian surgeon and, helped by the Red Cross, returns home on crutches. Her recovery is complicated by recurring infections, but the attentions of a British doctor and the revival of a friendship with Lena, the Serbian girl next door, help the healing process. When infection flares up, her mother convinces Lena's father to take her back to a hospital where she waits out the NATO bombing. In the end, she is reunited with the family she

thought she had lost. When the villagers, including her older brother, want to take revenge on Lena's family, Zana saves their lives by standing with them. The contrasts in the protagonist's world are clear. Their television plays Venezuelan soap operas but food is cooked on a wood stove and water pumped by hand, outside. However, there is little to anchor this story in a specific setting or culture. Zana could be an American child, Lena is not developed at all, and readers never witness their former friendship. Mead's sympathy for children caught in adult conflicts is evident, and readers will likely come to share that sympathy but are unlikely to develop a better understanding of the complexities of the Balkan world.- Kathleen Isaacs, Edmund Burke School, Washington, DC

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mark Vandyke:

As people who live in the particular modest era should be change about what going on or details even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era and that is always change and move ahead. Some of you maybe may update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice in your case but the problems coming to you is you don't know what kind you should start with. This Girl of Kosovo is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and want in this era.

Graham Ayala:

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Cathy Lantz:

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