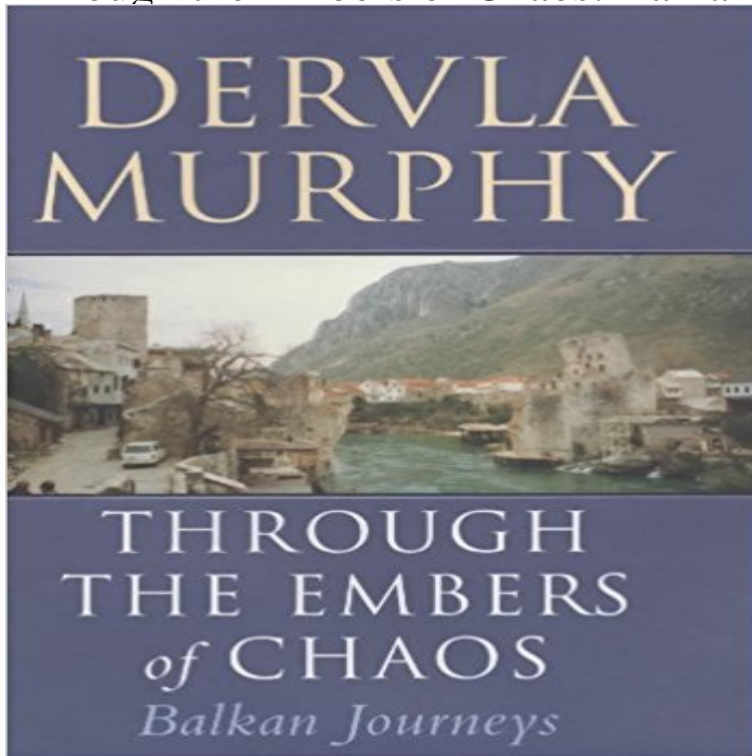


Through the Embers of Chaos: Balkan Journeys



While bicycling hundreds of miles through beautiful yet tragically depopulated regions, Dervla Murphy stayed with families whose lives had been devastated by murder, pillage and forcible uprooting. Many conversations revealed griefs and confusions of ordinary people, some of whom have shown extraordinary courage and resilience during the decade of decay. Throughout Serbia, a few months of NATO bombing had inflicted immense suffering on the whole population - apart from Slobodan Milosevic's coterie - yet remarkably traditional Balkan hospitality had survived. Friends made in one place passed Dervla to friends elsewhere - from town to town and city to city. In the spring of 2000 she found the uneasy new states of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina struggling to cope with their different problems. Tiny Montenegro - dramatically beautiful - was politically and economically in chaos. Kosovo, being ruled by the UN/Nato/OSCE triumvirate, was constitutionally in a state of suspended animation. A detour into individualistic Albania led to Dervla being attacked and robbed three times. Throughout her travels, Dervla tries to make sense of the confusing history and politics of this area. The acceptance of Yugoslavia's disintegration by so many Western commentators exasperates her. She contends that had the Great Powers behaved otherwise, Yugoslavia would have survived. She sees at first hand the results of war crimes committed by various Balkan

forces in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, and she also forcibly indicts the Nato air war. The Yugoslav essayist, Dubravka Ugresic, wrote in 1996, Over the last five years, numerous books have been published [about Yugoslavia]. In this heap of spoken and written words, few have mentioned the ordinary people. This book aims to focus on these ordinary people.

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