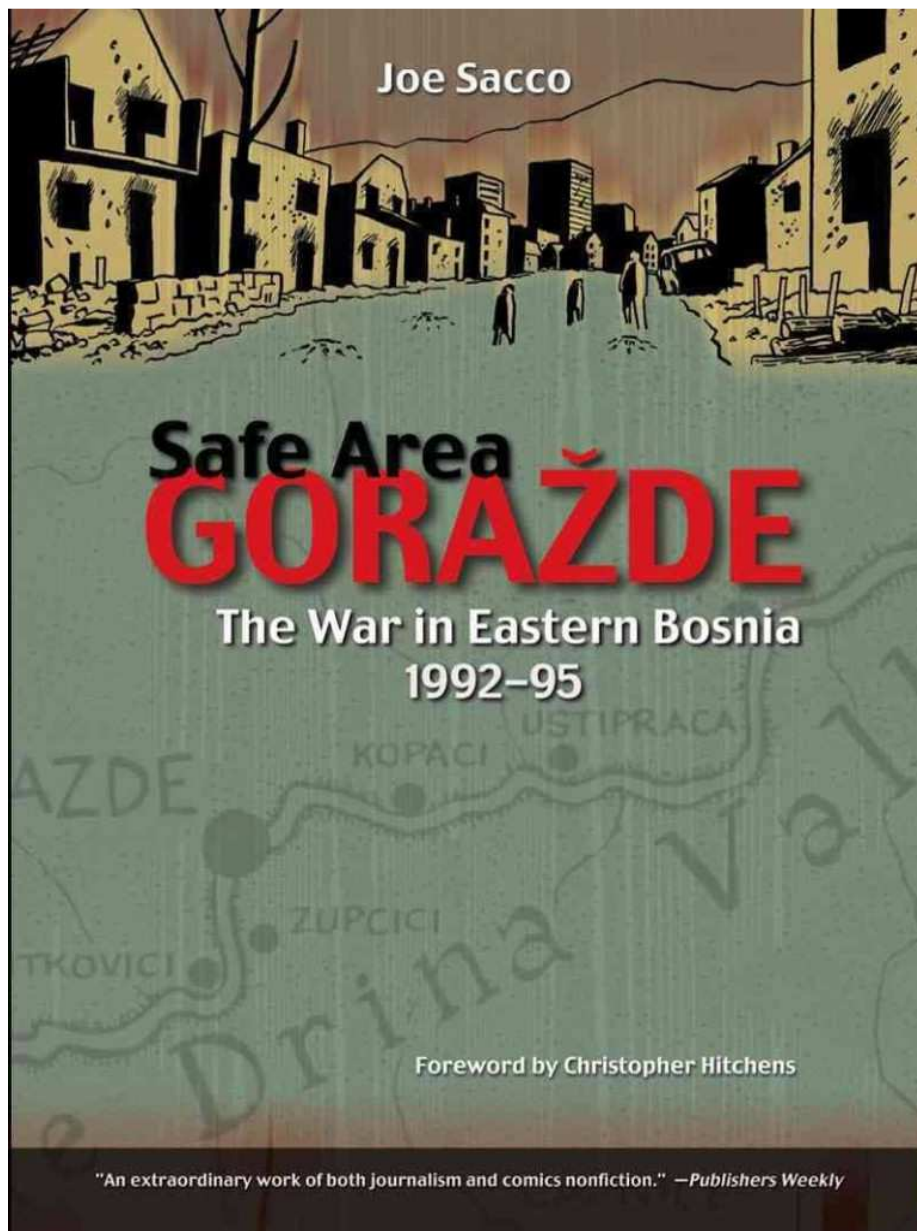


## Marshal Tito Was Half-Serbian ... in a Bosnian Joe Sacco Translation

Posted on [20 april 2020](#) by [Michel De Dobbeleer](#)

Like so many Belgians I have read hundreds and hundreds of comic books and, at a later age, also graphic novels. (Okay, actually the latter are comics too, but that's another discussion.) Impossible to say which one I like most – such things change over time. However, I don't have to think long about the one that shook and unsettled me most: the now twenty-year-old *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia, 1992-95* by Maltese-American comics journalist Joe Sacco.

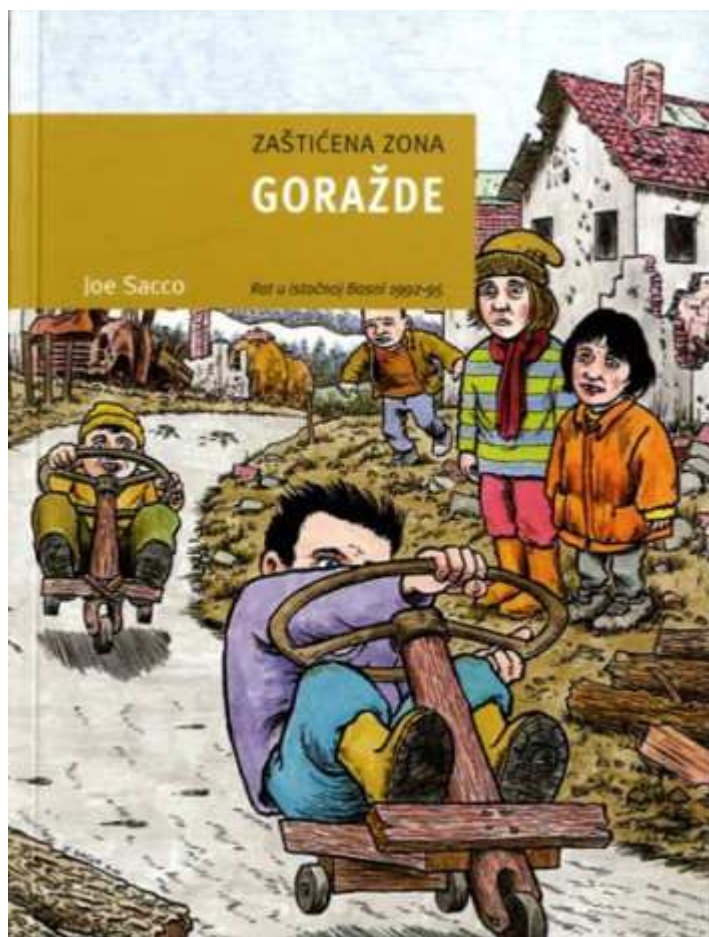


This classic of comics journalism appeared in 2000 (Seattle: Fantagraphics)

In this 229-page classic in its genre, the I-narrator – who straightforwardly represents Sacco himself (it *is* journalism!) – tells and shows us some of the events during the 1990s Yugoslav Wars. Sacco does this mostly through the lens of – and flashbacks by – the interviewed inhabitants of Goražde.

This Bosnian city (on Ivo Andrić's Drina) near the Serbian border gave its name to one of the 'United Nations Safe Areas' in the region (Srebrenica was another such UN Safe Area). Read *Safe Area Goražde* to grasp how ironic this title is, and how human and inhuman people like you and me can be in times of war.

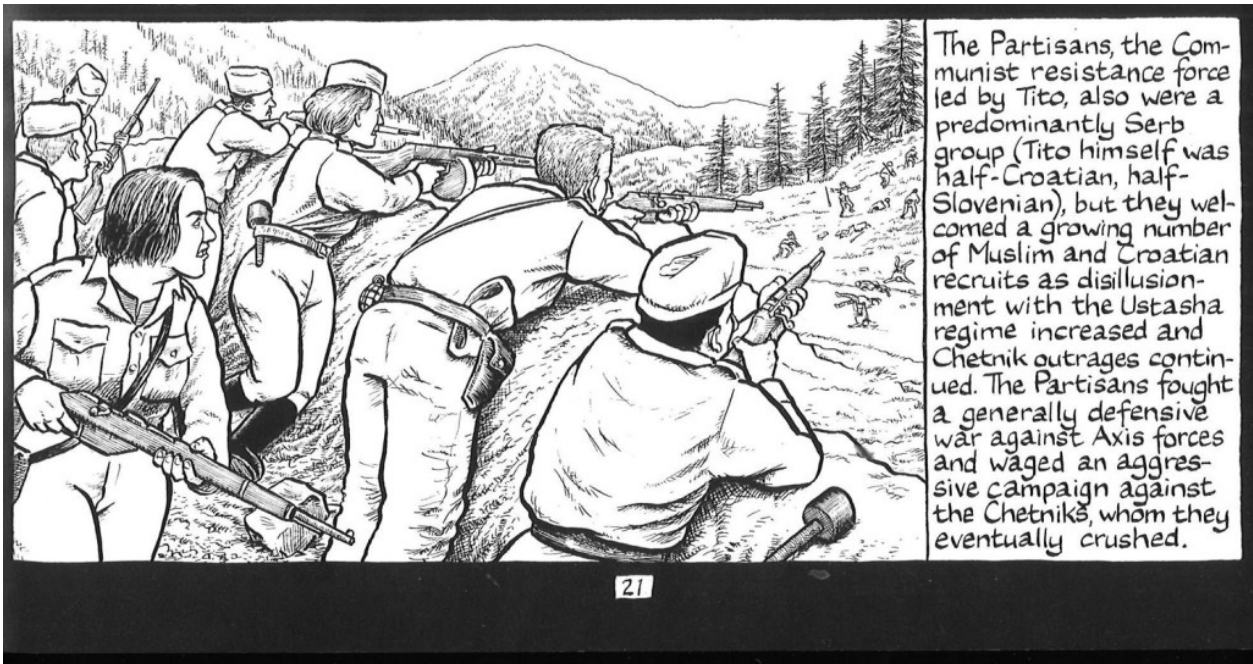
I won't dwell here on why it disturbed me (because the events are so recent; because most of the interviewees are kind and unheroic; because Sacco also allows us to laugh?). I just want to exploit *Kibik* to point to a curiosity in the generally faithful Bosnian(-Croatian-Serbian) translation of the book.



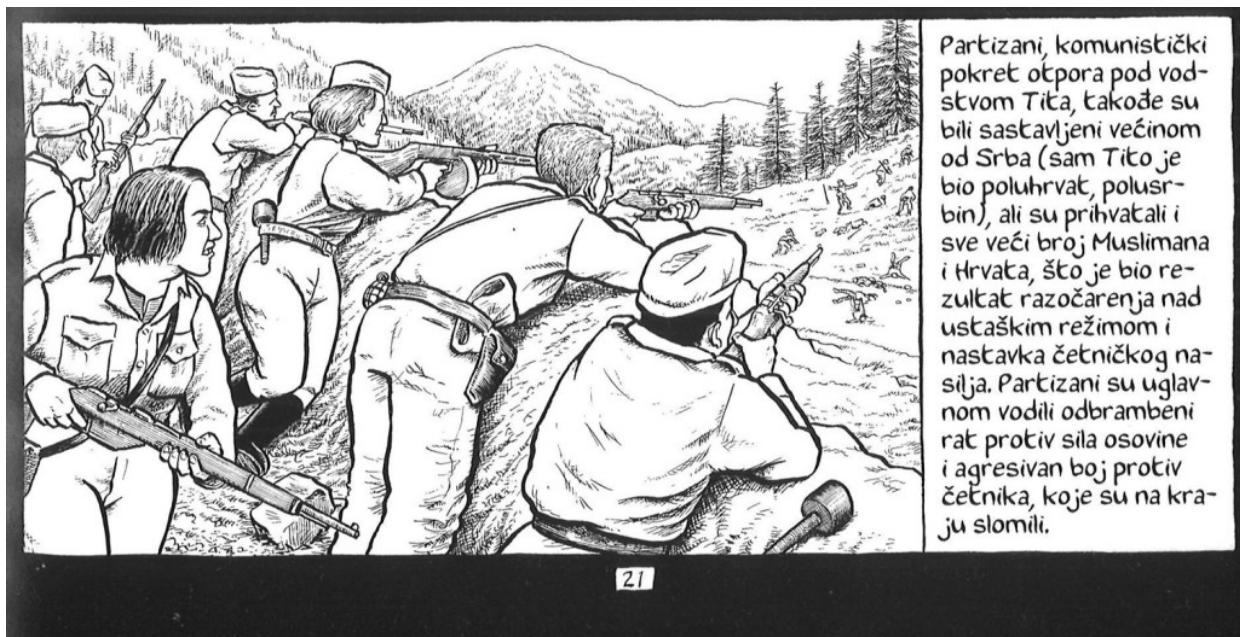
*Zaštićena zona Goražde: rat u istočnoj Bosni 1992-95* (Sarajevo: Buybook, 2007; trans. Hajrudin Hromadžić)

Three years ago my Yugoslavia-born colleague Beba Moravčević helped me (thank you, Beba!) [compare the English, Dutch](#) and Bosnian versions of *Safe Area Goražde*. To her and my surprise, on page 21 the roots of comrade Tito (1892-1980) have been 'half-changed':





As a good journalist, Sacco provides welcome historical context now and then



Tito, born as Josip Broz to a Slovenian mother and a Croatian father in the Croatian village of Kumrovec, very close to the Slovenian border, has become “half Croatian, half Serbian” (“poluhrvat, polusrb”) in the Bosnian translation. Disinformation, just a mistake, or sincerely brought into line with one of the [‘origin/identity legends’ circulating around the former locksmith and marshal](#)? I can think of several explanations, though none of them satisfactory.