

A sinister legacy. A mass grave of the victims of ethnic cleansing.

complicated structure of the Dayton agreement - continues to keep the different groups largely separated from each other. Lasting peace is far from assured, and Karadjic's trial will be only the first step in obtaining anything approaching justice for the nearly hundred thousand (mostly non-Serb) people who died as a result of the conflict.

In a statement issued by the war crimes tribunal in The Hague, the arrest has been hailed as "another milestone in the development of international law". It is certainly a stroke of unusual luck (finally!) that Karadjic's capture comes when it does. In his own words, he was sorry that he did not "last until the end of the year... The Hague tribunal would have been closed by then and I'd be at peace for the rest of my life" he said, referring to the fact that the mandate of the court expires in the near future.

But as earlier experiences show, the capture and extradition of a war criminal does not by any means ensure that justice will be done. Karadjic's one-time cohort, Slobodan Milosevic, managed to drag out court proceedings at his own trial for four long years. So successfully did he do this that he ultimately met his death (two years ago), *before* the trial was completed - thereby denying his victims the justice and closure that they so desperately need.

Karadjic has decided to conduct his own defence against genocide charges at the Hague tribunal, and according to his Serbian lawyer, he is convinced that he will win his case. "He's going to have a legal team in Serbia but will defend himself during his trial at The Hague... He is convinced that, with the help of God, he will win". While evil men of every religious denomination are heard to claim that God is with them, one must devoutly hope that this is one religious fascist who will be proved resoundingly wrong in his assertion.

There is reason to believe that that it will not be so easy for Karadjic to avoid the charges of war crimes and genocide contained in his indictment. For one thing, the Bosnian Serb leaders, arrogant in their conviction that they would win, left a mass of evidence that now links Karadjic and his henchmen to many of the gruesome events that took place in Bosnia in the early to mid 1990s. One of his cronies, Nikola Koljevic, told a British reporter in the early stages of the war that the reason the Bosnian Serbs were determined to herd the Muslims out of their towns and into tiny, crowded enclaves was because "They are basically Orientals, so they like living on top of each other"!

Nor was Koljevic the only Bosnian Serb leader to be so indiscreet. At a session of the Sarajevo parliament in 1991, Karadjic himself publicly shouted at the Bosnian Muslim deputies, warning them that if they went for independence, their people would "face extinction". As he boasted elsewhere, at around the same time, "Don't forget the Serbs always have the extra bullet." The next few years would reveal that this was no idle threat.

While the saga of Radovan Karadjic's life as a fugitive and his eventual arrest has captured imaginations and headlines worldwide, it also provides a degree of proof that the European Union can indeed act as a benign influence on the surrounding region. There is little doubt that without EU pressure, Karadjic (like Slobodan Milosevic before him) would still be a free man today. Now, given the less than stellar performance of the Hague tribunal in the past, it must be hoped that justice for the victims of the Balkan bloodbath, delayed time and time again, will not be further delayed - or ultimately denied.

All facts and figures taken from the UK independent and the BBC.