

Bridge cannot span the divide

Level 3 | Advanced

Croat and Muslim politicians in Mostar continue scheming to ruin the dream of a reunified Bosnia.

1 What do you know?

Decide whether these statements are True or False:

1. The Bosnian war ended in 1995.
2. The famous old bridge in Mostar was built by the Italians.
3. Temperatures in Mostar in the summer can be higher than 40 degrees Celsius.
4. The old bridge was destroyed by the Serbs.
5. The Croats of Mostar are Roman Catholics.
6. The bridge will never be rebuilt.

Now look in the text below and check your answers.

2 Find the verb

Fill the gaps using an appropriate form of these verbs. There is one sentence for each paragraph of the text.

erase *merge* *erect* *respond* *overlook*
undo *deliver* *confound* *make up*

1. Recently a Croatian ambulance driver crossed the river Neretva in Mostar to _____ to an emergency call on the Muslim side.
2. The local takeaway pizza restaurant will not _____ to customers on the other side of the river.
3. Croatian and Serbian nationalists wanted to _____ Bosnia-Herzegovina from the map of Europe.
4. The famous old bridge in Mostar was _____ in 1566.
5. Extremists on both sides continue to _____ all international attempts at reunion.
6. Recently the Muslim and Croat emergency medical services were _____.
7. There have been many international attempts to _____ the ethnic division of Mostar.

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8. Croats now _____ 60% of the voters in the city of Mostar.
9. Hum hill _____ the old Muslim sector of Mostar.

Now look in the text and check your answers:

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Ian Traynor in Mostar

In a city which has long been an emblem for the bigotry in Bosnia, Milan Miletovic struck a small blow for decency and common sense this month. Two weeks ago the ambulance driver from the Croat west side of a city divided ethnically for 10 years switched on his flashing blue lights and raced across the bridges over the Neretva river to respond to the emergency call of a sick Muslim on the other side. "I am just doing my job. It's normal," Mr Miletovic said.

But in a town where the takeaway pizza joint will not deliver to the Muslims across the river, where Croats and Muslims can be identified by their different mobile phone numbers and servers, where education from kindergarten to university is strictly segregated, and where you still cannot take a city bus across the old front line from the Bosnian war, the ambulance driver's mission of mercy was anything but normal.

Until the Bosnian war of 1992-95, Mostar was probably the most ethnically integrated city in all of former Yugoslavia. But the city became a laboratory for experiments in extreme ethnic engineering. The result is that Mostar mutated into the most divided town in Bosnia, a triumph for the Croatian nationalists who, with their Serbian counterparts, sought to destroy the city and to erase Bosnia-Herzegovina from the map of Europe.

The most vivid symbol of that Croatian triumph came just over 10 years ago, when a couple of well-aimed Croatian artillery shells brought the city's world-famous Old Bridge, a masterpiece of Ottoman Turk architecture erected in 1566, tumbling into the fast green waters of the Neretva.

The bridge defined Mostar. Its destruction seemed to augur the city's death. But last week, after years of painstaking work and at a cost of \$9m, the Old Bridge stands again, a perfect replica built of the same creamy local limestone. In searing heat of more than 40C, princes, presidents and prime ministers from all over Europe and the Middle East attended the opening of the "new Old Bridge" whose restoration is being hailed as the start of a happier new era for Mostar. Perhaps. But ever since the war the Croatian extremists of west Mostar and the ruling Bosnian Muslim party on the east bank have connived in the city's partition, dividing the spoils between them and confounding all international attempts at reunion.

In March Paddy Ashdown, international governor of Bosnia, acted to reverse a process that has left Mostar as a Balkan Beirut or Nicosia. He ordered the dissolution of the ethnically divided municipalities and imposed a new statute defining Mostar as a single unified city. Mr Miletovic's ambulance crossing the divide is a first fruit of the Ashdown diktat. This month the Muslim and Croat emergency medical services were merged. That was preceded by a merger of the twin firefighting services. And the rival city authorities agreed a single city budget for the first time since the war.

Lord Ashdown's move is one of the most ambitious projects since he took on the running of Bosnia two years ago. It comes after the failure of several international attempts to undo Mostar's division. "This time it's

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different," said Sanela Tunovic from Lord Ashdown's office. "It's imposed. The political parties were not able to agree, but now it's being implemented." A western official who has been in Bosnia for more than five years warns, however, that the main Croat and Muslim parties are manipulating the Ashdown plan to their own ends. "They've pushed out the moderates and entrenched the divisions within the city administration. Things are getting better, but it's very hard with these nationalist parties in power."

Lord Ashdown's staff talk of reunifying and restructuring 70 city institutions - from rubbish collection to sewage works to the make-up of the city council in a town of just over 100,000, whose demographic composition was thoroughly altered by the war and ethnic cleansing. The Croats who partitioned and destroyed the city comprised a third of the population before the war. They drove almost all the Muslims across the river. Now they make up more than 60% of city voters, which helps to explain why their leadership is more open to the Ashdown scheme. "The Croats have got a majority now, and they think they can control the councils," said the western official.

"I'd drive to the other side if there was a need," said a driver of the No 10 bus service operating in the Muslim east. "But hardly anyone goes from one side to the other." The Croats have just agreed that Muslims can join the splendid old grammar school in September, but only on a separate, segregated floor still to be built, and with separate curriculums for both communities. The landmarks of Roman Catholic triumphalism remain. A new steeple on the cathedral has been built to dwarf the tallest minaret of the city's 16th-century mosques. And the Croats have erected a 30m illuminated cross on Hum hill overlooking the old Muslim sector of Mostar.

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3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer in each case:

- Which of these best describes the city of Mostar?
 - A mixture of Serbs and Croats.
 - A mixture of Serbs and Muslims.
 - A mixture of Croats and Muslims.
- How was the old bridge in Mostar destroyed?
 - It was burnt down.
 - It was destroyed by shells.
 - It was bombed.
- What action has the international governor of Bosnia taken?
 - He has ordered the two sides to live together in peace and harmony.
 - He has introduced a new law defining Mostar as a single unified city.
 - He has called for new municipal elections.

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4. What is the main obstacle to the reunification of Mostar?
- The old bridge.
 - The single city budget.
 - The nationalist Muslim and Croat political parties.
5. What is the significance of the new bridge?
- It allows ambulances and buses to cross the river.
 - It is a symbol of hopes for the future unification of the city.
 - It is a bridge between Europe and the Islamic world.

4 Vocabulary 1 - Find the Words

Find the words which mean:

- A noun meaning the practice of having very strong and unreasonable opinions about politics, race or religion. (paragraph 1)
- A verb meaning to separate groups of people because of race, sex or religion. (para 2)
- A verb meaning to become physically different. (para 3)
- A verb meaning to fall to the ground. (para 4)
- An adjective meaning 'careful and slow'. (para 5)
- A noun which means the process of officially ending the existence of an organisation. (para 6)
- A verb meaning to influence or control someone or something in a clever or dishonest way. (para 7)

5 Vocabulary 2 - Collocations

Match the words in the left-hand column with the ones they collocate with in the right-hand column.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. searing | a. collection |
| 2. ambitious | b. symbol |
| 3. flashing | c. divisions |
| 4. vivid | d. heat |
| 5. entrenched | e. line |
| 6. rubbish | f. light |
| 7. front | g. work |
| 8. painstaking | h. project |

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6 Grammar Focus - Different tenses in the passive voice

Look at this example from the text:

A new steeple on the cathedral has been built.

This is an example of a passive sentence in the present perfect tense.
Look in the text and find examples of the following:

1. An example of a passive with the modal verb 'can'. (paragraph 2)
2. An example of the present simple passive. (para 2)
3. An example of the present continuous passive. (para 5)
4. Two examples of the past simple passive. (para 6)
5. Another example of the present continuous passive. (para 7)
6. Another example of the past simple passive. (para 8)
7. An example of the passive infinitive. (para 9)

7 Discussion

Should people be allowed to live separately because of their ethnic background or religion? Make a list of points for and against ethnic separation.