

Bridge cannot span the divide

Level 2 | Intermediate

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

1 Key vocabulary

Fill the gaps using one of these words from the text:

merge municipality segregated replica
masterpiece ethnic cleansing counterpart ravine

1. The use of violence to force people from a particular ethnic group is known as _____.
2. A _____ is someone who has the same job or purpose as another person but in a different country or organisation.
3. A _____ is an exceptional work of art.
4. A _____ is a narrow, deep valley.
5. If two companies or organisations _____, they combine to form a bigger company or organisation.
6. _____ means separated according to race, sex or religion.
7. A _____ is a town or area of a town with its own local government.
8. A _____ is an accurate copy of something.

2 Find the information

Look in the text and find this information as quickly as possible:

1. When was the Bosnian war?
2. What is the name of the river in Mostar?
3. When was the old Turkish bridge built?
4. How much did it cost to build a new bridge?
5. How high is the bridge above the river?
6. Who is the international governor of Bosnia?
7. When were the mosques of Mostar built?
8. How high is the Croat cross?

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Ian Traynor in Mostar

For many years the city of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been a symbol of the problems of the region. It is a city where the takeaway pizza restaurant will not deliver pizzas to the Muslims on the other side of the river. It is a city where you can identify who is a Croat and who is a Muslim by their different mobile telephone numbers and servers. It is a place where there is a separate education system for Croats and Muslims from kindergarten to university. It is also a place where you still cannot take a bus across the old front line from the Bosnian war. In short, it is still a divided city.

But last week something remarkable happened. Milan Milesovic, a Croat ambulance driver from the Croat west side of the city, drove his ambulance over one of the bridges over the Neretva River in response to an emergency call from a Muslim on the other side.

Until the Bosnian war of 1992-95, Mostar was probably the most ethnically integrated city in all of former Yugoslavia. But then the war came and ethnic cleansing began. The result is that Mostar became the most divided town in Bosnia, a victory for the Croatian nationalists who, with their Serbian counterparts, wanted to destroy the city and to remove Bosnia-Herzegovina from the map of Europe.

Just over 10 years ago, Croatian guns finally destroyed Mostar's world-famous Old Bridge, a masterpiece of Turkish architecture built in 1566. The beautiful bridge fell into the fast green waters of the Neretva. The bridge was a symbol of Mostar and its destruction seemed to symbolise the city's death.

Then last week, after years of careful work and at a cost of \$9m, the Old Bridge reopened again, a perfect replica built of the same local stone.

Ever since the end of the war, Croatian nationalists in west Mostar and the ruling Bosnian Muslim party on the east have worked together to keep the city divided. In March, however, Paddy Ashdown, the international governor of Bosnia, acted to reverse a process that has left Mostar looking like a Balkan Beirut or Nicosia. He issued an order removing the old municipalities from power and defining Mostar as a single unified city.

The first result of this order was Mr Milesovic's ambulance crossing the river. This month the Muslim and Croat emergency medical services were merged. Last month the two firefighting services merged. The city authorities also agreed a single city budget for the first time since the war.

A western official who has been in Bosnia for more than five years says, however, that the main Croat and Muslim parties are using Ashdown's plans for their own purposes. "They've pushed out the moderates and made the divisions within the city administration even greater. Things are getting better, but it's very hard with these nationalist parties in power. The Croats have got a majority now, and they think they can control the councils," he said.

"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 beautiful old grammar school in September, but only on a separate, segregated floor, and with separate educational programmes for Muslims and Croats. But many signs of the old conflict remain. The Croats have just built a new steeple on the cathedral that is much higher than the tallest minaret of the city's 16th-century mosques. And they have also built a 30m illuminated cross on Hum hill overlooking the old Muslim sector of Mostar.

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3 Comprehension check

Are these sentences True or False?

1. The Muslims of Mostar live on the west bank of the river.
2. The old bridge was destroyed by the Croats.
3. Croats and Muslims will soon be educated in the same building in Mostar.
4. The minarets are taller than the cathedral.
5. The new bridge doesn't really look like the old one.
6. Buses now cross the city regularly from the Croat side to the Muslim side.

4 Vocabulary 1 - Word Building

Complete the table. Use your dictionary to help you.

	Verb	Noun
1.	deliver	_____
2.	educate	_____
3.	divide	_____
4.	merge	_____
5.	restore	_____
6.	identify	_____
7.	destroy	_____
8.	remove	_____

5 Vocabulary 2 - Chunks

Rearrange these words to make short phrases or chunks. Check your answers in the text.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. integrated an city ethnically | 2. old beautiful the bridge |
| 3. careful after work of years | 4. medical services the emergency |
| 5. more years five than for | 6. system a education separate |
| 7. call in to an response emergency | 8. one to from the side other |

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6 Grammar Focus - Present perfect for recent events with present effect

Look at this example from the text:

The Croats have also built a 30m illuminated cross.

Find 5 other things, both good and bad, that have happened in Mostar recently and express them in the present perfect.

For example:

They have reopened the old bridge.

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.