

EXPOSURE

Unseen horrors

MELANIE FRIEND'S new book, *No Place Like Home: Echoes From Kosovo*, is a uniquely intelligent view of the effect of the war in Kosovo. We often see in newspapers the bloody aftermath, or the riots that occur before and during wars, but very rarely do we see the calm that the war leaves behind.

The pictures in this book are very clever. At first sight the portraits look like people who have lost relatives in the war, but the accompanying text reveals a more sinister story to the images. The front cover (shown here) is a photograph of Lutfije Pilana, aged 26, and her niece, aged 4. Both are now homeless because of the war.

As well as the people of Kosovo, the book also includes pictures of landscapes and buildings, all shown in colour. Some of its images fool the reader. There are photographs of beautiful gardens and landscapes that are undermined by the text: their beauty is ruined by the truth that the scenes either no longer exist or were the sites of atrocities. The people in the chapters have their own stories to tell; they are grandmothers, fathers, children, young and old. All have been affected. There are no discriminations. All suffer.

The book is divided in chapters, and the stories that are told are sometimes heart-breaking; stories of camps and torture, and loss of family members – some only children. The effect is to make the reader question how mankind can still make the same mistakes as were made in WWII?

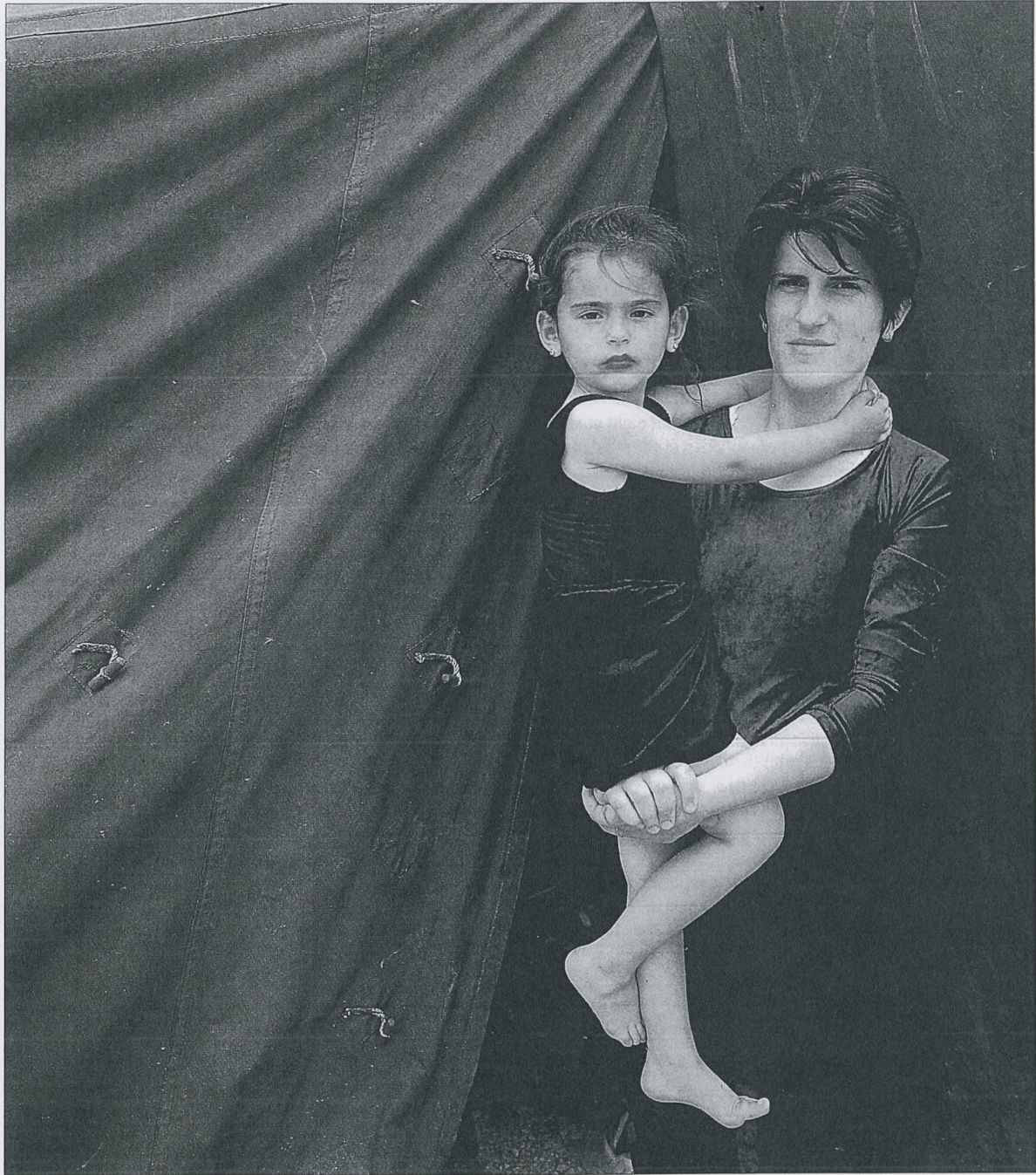
In the news currently, Slobodan Milosovic is being tried for crimes against humanity, and this book reinforces the horror of what has happened. It tells the story to Western society, and forces itself in to the reader's mind to compel the thought that what we have in the West should never be taken for granted. Is it right that here in Britain we often turn a blind eye to the agonies that are endured across Europe?

Melanie Friend's book makes the reader think a lot about Western society, as rich as it is, and how it treats its fellow man. Is it time for change?

No Place Like Home: Echoes From Kosovo, by Melanie Friend, is published by Cleis Press, priced £29.95.

↑ Shown here is Lutfije Pilana and her four-year-old niece Luarda Pilana at Neprosteno Camp in Macedonia, 05 May 1999. Photograph © Melanie Friend.

Helen Murphy



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