

On the Record: Refugee Returns to Srebrenica

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“I Shook Hands with my Father”

General Mladić's final offensive on Srebrenica began in early July 1995 with a troop build-up around the enclave and the heaviest bombing in two years. By July 7 the Serbs were disarming Dutch observation posts and forcing them to withdraw, giving them the choice of going into Srebrenica, or leaving the area altogether via nearby Serb-controlled Bratunac. The Serbs then took around 30 Dutch soldiers from one outpost and held them hostage.

The gradual capitulation of the Dutch angered the local Muslims who counted on their protection. In one incident Muslims attacked a Dutch tank retreating from an outpost, killing a Dutch soldier.

In spite of these developments, the local Dutch officers and high UNPROFOR commanders alike interpreted the Serb offensive as a partial one, not life-threatening to the entire population of Srebrenica. They set up a new defense line closer to Srebrenica and gave the Serbs a vague warning of retaliation. On July 10, Mladić's forces attacked the new line of defense and the local Dutch commander, Lieutenant Colonel Ton Karremans, requested air strikes. These were blocked by Janvier, who deemed them unnecessary. In fact, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) airplanes circled the area for several hours as a warning, but then left without attacking.

The next morning, the local Dutch commanders promised the people of Srebrenica that NATO airplanes would finally strike at the oncoming Serbs. Karremans sent multiple requests for air attacks; one of his requests was turned down for being filed on the wrong form. Janvier did not send out an attack order to NATO all morning, and General Mladić's final assault began. With the entrance of Serb forces at the south end of Srebrenica, tens of thousands of Muslims fled north to the industrial suburb of Potočari, the location of the U.N. headquarters. There, they expected to be protected by the UNPROFOR (U.N. Protection Force) troops.

In Potočari, thousands of refugees who had fled Srebrenica entered the U.N. base. When approximately 5,000 had entered, the Dutch declared the base full and halted entrance of the rest of the refugees. About 20,000 more people gathered outside the base, sitting down in street and nearby fields. Soon Serb soldiers commanded by Ratko Mladić arrived, already having taken over Srebrenica. General Mladić made a show of handing out chocolate bars to the children in front of a Serb television camera. He told the refugees, 'You have no reason to be afraid. Anyone who wants to stay here can stay. If you want to go, you can go. First we will evacuate the women, children, and elderly people, and all those who want to leave this combat area, without forcing them.'

The next day Serb soldiers began the evacuation of Potočari. The Dutch forces did not intervene. In some cases they even helped the Serbs load people onto the buses in an orderly way. They had the power to protect a small number of Muslim U.N. employees. The young translator Hasan Nuhanović tried to save his family. His father Ibro had been a member of the U.N. team negotiating with the Serbs. The Dutch were willing to take care of the two men but refused to guarantee the safety of Hasan Nuhanović's mother or younger brother.

The Serb soldiers separated out the women, children, and men above military age and put them on buses to be driven to the edge of Muslim-controlled territory. They explained to the Dutch that the military-age men were to be interrogated, and, once it was determined that they had not 'participated in war crimes,' they would be released. But the refugees knew better than to believe this.

Nuhanović said, 'All who were in Potočari then, the Dutch and us, knew that whoever set foot outside the U.N. compound was dead. We made a plan, my father, Mandžić [another member of the negotiating team] and I, although I was only an interpreter. Our conditions were that there would be no evacuations until the world media were informed of the current situation in Potočari, until a military negotiating team and journalists arrived, and people would be moved to safety in the presence of UNPROFOR soldiers...I looked through the gate, and there were already 15-20 military vehicles ready, and women and children were getting on board. There were no men. The deportation had begun.

'For the next two hours people were driven out of the U.N. camp, and my family went out around 6:00 p.m., among the last people. I begged U.N. observers to hide my brother in their jeep. They said that they had too much equipment. Our people were being treated like cattle. No one even bothered to take a look at the people who were going to their death. For the Dutch, 6,000 people [inside the U.N. base] were a burden and their only goal was to leave Srebrenica as soon as possible, so they were hurrying to release themselves of the burden that was slowing them down.'

'I begged the same people again. No one wanted to help. The soldiers came with the order to take my family out of the camp. I cried. My brother jumped up and told me, 'Don't beg them anymore, I'm going with the rest of them!' He was 18. At the last minute Major Franken told me that my father could stay, since he had been in the negotiating team. Those are moments that only happen once in a lifetime. I thought, He'll say the same thing for my mother and brother. 'No,' Franken said, 'If he wants to let him go out with them too.' I think I will never be free of that moment as long as I live. There was still a shred of hope, but it was all in vain. I shook hands with my father and told him to kiss my brother for me...Now sometimes, when I feel fear, I tell myself, 'Do you know that your brother stood in front of a firing squad, and how was it for him to look at the Chetnik muzzles that were firing bullets at him?' I think that he was braver than me.' (Ljiljan, July 17, 2000)

Whenever Anyone Showed Any Sign of Life he was Killed

During the evacuation, Serbs were taking away men and shooting them in the woods near the U.N. base. Refugees were crazed with fear; they knew what could happen to them. Several people found ways to commit suicide. The rest of the draft-age men, over the next couple of days, were taken away to be killed.

Ibro Jašić was from Zvornik, born in 1960. He had fled Zvornik when it was attacked at the beginning of the war, in April 1992. He fought in the villages nearby, while his wife and four daughters were evacuated to Tuzla. In July of that year he was wounded in the legs; one was amputated below the knee, and the other foot was removed. Ibro was evacuated to Srebrenica, at

the time thought to be a safe place. He lost 35 kilos due to hunger there.

During the evacuations from Srebrenica Ibro was allowed onto a truck as a disabled man, together with other non-combatants. He told me, 'There were over 2,000 people on six trucks and buses. Two children suffocated on a truck. We were stoned by Serb civilians at Sapotnik, stopped and harassed by Serb police at a couple of checkpoints, and stoned again at Graška Kapija and Grbavica. They stopped us again for 2 1/2 hours at Saporde, where another child suffocated. Some men were in the trucks dressed as women. A couple of times young women were taken off the trucks, raped, and brought back.'

Hundreds of Serbs were involved in the final 'cleansing' of Srebrenica. Many of these men were from neighboring towns between Višegrad and Zvornik, but others were from deep within Serbia. They trucked and bused thousands of men to a half-dozen locations -- fields and warehouses as far away as Zvornik and beyond -- where they shot them over the next few days. The massacres were systematic and planned so as to make identification of the bodies impossible. The victims' shoes and other identifying items were removed, and in many cases their hands were bound behind their backs with wire before execution. Bus drivers were forced to participate in the shooting so as to have a reason not to implicate the other culprits.

Some people survived the massacres and lived to tell the grisly story. When I was working in Tuzla, a young man came in who had literally survived a massacre. He was around 12 years old at the time and had been taken to one of the execution fields with the older men. When the shooting began, he was hit by several bullets. Men fell all around him and on top of him, but he was still alive. Miraculously, there was another boy in the pile of bodies, a little older, who had not been hit at all. This boy helped the wounded one escape to safety.

Two men who similarly survived a massacre by being buried under corpses gave the following information:

Mevludin Orić said whenever anyone showed signs of life, he was killed. At one point, he heard an old man plead: 'Please don't do this to us, children. We haven't done anything to you.' He, too, was killed.

Hurem Suljić said a backhoe was digging a hole about 30 feet away. At one point, he said, Mladić appeared about 15 yards away. 'He took a look and left quickly.'

'Group by group, trucks brought prisoners, who were gunned down in turn. When it became too dark to see, the soldiers used the headlights of two backhoes,' Suljić said. (Associated Press, October 4, 1995)

“Some Muslims Killed Each Other Out of Fear”

As thousands of Srebrenicans fled to Potočari, another column of people was heading for the woods. Between 10,000 and 15,000 military-age men, fearful of being killed by Mladić's soldiers, headed westward on foot through the forests, in an attempt to break through to Muslim-held territory 40 miles away.

At this point a request for attack finally went through to NATO, which responded by sending three pairs of airplanes over Srebrenica. A few pinprick bombings resulted in threats by Mladić to execute the Dutch hostages and attack the thousands of refugees massing in Potočari, and the attack was called off.

Mehrudin Mešanović, a Srebrenica survivor, described the moment when he left for the woods. 'Everything happened extremely quickly. While the Serbs penetrated towards Srebrenica, it was decided that women and children should go toward Potočari, while the men started over the mountains towards Tuzla. The men formed ranks in Buljun and the brigade started towards Tuzla, platoon by platoon.'

'The children were crying, trying to get away from my wife; they wanted to go with me. Of course I couldn't take them with me. They left, and my father, brothers, and I set off towards the forest,' he continued. 'We had no choice. We had to leave women and children behind. We knew that men had no chance to survive if they surrendered. We believed that UNPROFOR would at least protect women and children. Unfortunately, except for saving themselves, they didn't help anyone.' ('Svijet,' February 22, 1998)

The thousands of men were trying to make their way through the woods to safety in Muslim-controlled territory. The best-armed, the wounded, and the most influential Srebrenicans were at the front of the column. Those at the rear were in the greatest danger, as Serb forces would have the most time to pick them off. What these fleeing men lived through had to be one of the most hellish experiences of the war. In the coming days ambushes took hundreds of lives. Some were killed by mines. Serbs called into the woods for the Muslims to surrender, and those who did were killed -- some immediately, and others were taken off to collection centers where they were subsequently massacred.

Journalist Roy Gutman reported, 'That evening the Serbs achieved their biggest ambush of all. At 8:35 p.m. a Major Obrenović of the Bosnian Serb's first Zvornik brigade reported that his forces had surrounded a column of two miles long near the village of Glodžanje. 'You must kill everyone. We don't need anyone alive,' said Drina Corps commander Radislav Krstić.' ('Newsday,' Wednesday, May 29, 1996)

Mehrudin Mešanović described the travails of the flight: 'We encountered first ambush above the town of Kravice. There was shooting from all sides. You couldn't tell who was where. In that chaos I lost my father and brothers, and remained alone. Once it quieted down a bit, a group of us got together and decided to head towards Konjević Polje.'

To reach a safe corridor leading to Konjević Polje, the group had to cross a road that was monitored by Serb forces. 'We tried to cross several times, but no one succeeded. So we headed back. Near Kravice there was a horrible scene. There were many dead, perhaps 500 to 600 people.'

'The Drina Wolves [a Serb paramilitary formation] were constantly searching that region. They knew that we were there, but they couldn't find us. For days they called on us to surrender;

however, we were aware what would happen to us if we did. We would later find those who had surrendered dead, massacred. From the forest, I watched how they were taking people away; they would kill some of them, while they took others towards Bratunac.'

At times Serbs would show up in the column pretending to be Muslim guides and would lead the refugees into a trap. Some of these Serb soldiers were wearing stolen U.N. uniforms. Suspicion and paranoia grew, and some Muslims killed each other out of fear. Some lost their reason. There are reports of people hallucinating due to nerve gas used by the Serb forces. In the end, the armed people at the front of the column, with assistance from Muslim forces coming from Tuzla, briefly opened a gap in the Serb line, and survivors of the column were able to break through. Fewer than half of the original column made it.

Several thousand people were thus killed while trying to escape. The number of missing Srebrenicans reported by the Red Cross is approximately 7,500. The total number of those killed in the escaping column and at the killing fields is probably higher, as whole families and villages were left with no one to report their disappearance.

Many people lost their way, and some did not show up in safe territory for a month or more. There were also those who fled south to Žepa, another enclave that fell soon after Srebrenica. Muhamed Tahirović, now of Kalesija, escaped by swimming across the Drina to Serbia. There, a policeman with whom he had gone to school found him. The policeman asked him, 'What are you doing here?' He then bought Tahirović some cigarettes and food and took him to the jail at Šljivovica. Here, other Muslims who had escaped into Serbia were being held. The Serb registered him with the Red Cross. In this way, he saved Tahirović's life. Tahirović told me, 'I was released in six months. I was lucky. Many people were brought back to Bratunac and shot.'

Nezir Dozić, from the village of Sućeska, had set off through the woods to escape. He wandered in the woods for three months, until he was picked up by Serb policemen and put in a prison camp near Foča. His wife had escaped Srebrenica earlier and did not know whether he was alive or dead until he was released from the camp at the end of the war, five months later. In this way, survivors were straggling into Muslim-controlled territory for many months after the fall of Srebrenica.

Ascribing Responsibility: "I Condemn the Whole World"

In late 1999 the association of Srebrenica survivors Mothers of Srebrenica and Podrinje announced that it would take legal action against U.N. officials for failing to prevent the atrocities that happened on the fall of Srebrenica. On that occasion member Munevera Gabeljić, who had lost a husband, two sons, and nearly 30 other relatives said, 'I condemn all of them. They are all guilty. I condemn the whole world.'

It truly seems that there is enough blame to be spread widely. The details of responsibility for the massacres are still being sorted out. History will eventually reveal where the guilt lies. But some preliminary conclusions can be drawn.

The perpetrators of the crime are obviously most directly culpable. In November 1995, the

International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) indicted General Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić, president of the wartime Republika Srpska, for directing the Srebrenica massacres. The charges include genocide, crimes against humanity, and 'violations of the laws or customs of war.' The 20-count indictment lists violations of the U.N.-established safe area, looting and burning of houses, mistreatment of prisoners of war, arbitrary killings, summary execution, and massacre.

But Mladić and Karadžić represent only the tip of the iceberg. Justice received a boost when Radislav Krstić, promoted to the rank of General after the fall of Srebrenica, was arrested in late 1998. Krstić is accused of the same crimes as Mladić and is considered to be one of the main organizers of the massacres. During his trial, which began in March 2000, Krstić testified that Mladić personally oversaw the loading of the buses that took Srebrenicans to their death.

As with many other Serb military operations in the Bosnian war, much of the planning for the takeover of Srebrenica was conducted in Serbia, with the collusion of Yugoslav officers. Roy Gutman wrote, 'In the month before the offensive, Mladić traveled frequently to Belgrade for consultations with his patron in the Yugoslav army, General Momčilo Perišić, the chief of staff, even though Yugoslavia officially had suspended military aid to the Serbs. And Perišić or one of his top generals traveled to Bosnia 'all the time,' the NATO intelligence officer on Smith's staff [Rupert Smith, U.N. commander in Bosnia] said. 'To them, there was no border.' The planning took place in Belgrade, according to a Smith aide and a western intelligence official.' ('Newsday,' May 29, 1996)

A full reckoning of the responsibility of the highest authorities in Serbia has not yet taken place. A step in that direction was taken in 1999, however, when Slobodan Milošević was indicted for war crimes. The story of Srebrenica will not be complete until the full collaboration of Serbian forces is uncovered.

In tending to their own security and allowing the Serbs to take control over thousands of defenseless Muslims, the Dutch made themselves an easy target for later criticism. How much of this criticism is justified is open to debate, as it is clear that the Netherlands volunteered, with good intentions, to go into a situation where most other countries were unwilling to go. Furthermore, the dynamics of that situation were for the most part beyond the control of the local actors.

It is clear that the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica were not able to handle the predicament they found themselves in as the Serbs were taking over the enclave. Dutch troops numbering approximately 200 were not going to be able to fend off several thousand Serbs. One question is whether the Serbs were going to be willing to carry through with their threats to kill Dutch hostages, risking a real retaliation from NATO. In the end the Serbs did not have to kill foreign troops, because the United Nations prevented NATO from intervening. They thus made it easy for the Serbs to complete their agenda. This decision was made over the heads of the Dutch commanders in Srebrenica.

However, the Dutch cooperated with the Serbs on the ground. To assist in an orderly removal of the Muslims, Dutchbat gave 30,000 liters of fuel to the Serb forces. It seems that the Dutch were

ready to do anything to make their own departure go more smoothly. Photographs show Lieutenant Karremans and other officers drinking a toast together with General Mladić at a negotiation.

There are also grounds to suspect a cover-up on the part of higher Dutch authorities after the fall of Srebrenica. Photographs that Dutch soldiers took of people murdered near the U.N. base at Potočari, and video footage of Dutch personnel helping the Serbs load the buses were 'lost' after the Dutch troops returned to the Netherlands.

Dutch authorities have expressed a sense of betrayal by the international community for its failure to protect Srebrenica. Defense Minister Joris Voorhoeve, said, 'The international community has failed to prevent these tragic massacres. The United Nations should have acted much earlier and with much more force. The Dutch military have tried to do their share in this, but they stood alone.' (Dutch television program, October 20, 1995) However, Voorhoeve had personally called NATO and demanded that they cease the air strikes on July 11, 1995.

During the same television program quoted here, anchorman Charles Groenhuizen commented, 'And so the pieces of the jigsaw gradually fall in place. For a while it looked like Dutchbat soldiers returned from Srebrenica as heroes. A short time later the image tilted: they were no heroes, they had handed over the Muslims to their murderers. And now, a completely different picture comes up: they were used as pawns in the world's great chess game...For a moment the Dutch played a role on the world's stage, but the country soon found out that the rules are much tougher out there than what we are used to in this country.'

The Dutch courts and several independent inquiries have ruled that there were no grounds for prosecuting the Dutch troops who were present at Srebrenica. But on the fifth anniversary of the massacres, a group of prominent Dutch writers addressed a letter to their government contesting that judgment and calling for a parliamentary inquiry.

Even the Bosnian government has not escaped blame. Indeed, several events combined to encourage the idea that the Muslim government (which was headed by the SDA-led party of Alija Izetbegović) 'sold' Srebrenica. These include:

--In 1993, the war-time Srebrenica police chief Hakija Meholjić and several other members of the political leadership of Srebrenica were flown to Sarajevo for a discussion of various peace plans afloat at that time. Meholjić recounts, 'President Izetbegović met us there and immediately after greetings asked, 'What do you think about an exchange of Srebrenica for Vogošća [Sarajevo suburb then occupied by Serb forces]?' We rejected that without discussion.' ('Dani,' September 1998)

--In spring 1995, as Serb attacks on the Srebrenica enclave were heating up, Naser Orić and 15 other top military leaders were removed for 'training' on orders from the military leadership of the Bosnian forces. Orić, the most popular and trusted military figure in Srebrenica and the only man capable of galvanizing defense of the enclave, was secretly relieved of his command. This has never been explained.

--On July 11, 1995, as Srebrenica was falling, the SDA was holding a meeting in Zenica. At this meeting various political affairs of the party were discussed, and Rasim Delić, commander-in-chief of the Bosnian Army, gave a long speech about the military situation throughout the country. Only a few minutes of this talk were devoted to Srebrenica. Delić's appraisal was that Srebrenica could still be defended, and that Srebrenica Mayor Osman Suljić's assessment of the Serb attack was exaggerated and demoralizing. David Rohde evaluated Delić's comments thus: 'The commander of the Bosnian Army either failed to grasp the gravity of the situation or was intentionally downplaying it.' (Rohde, p. 165)

It is a widespread feeling among Bosnian Muslims that their war-time leadership was prepared to trade the outlying enclaves for territory around Sarajevo. Although no documentary proof has come to light showing this to be the active intention of Izetbegović and his colleagues, this is what happened at the end of the war, in a de facto manner. It is equally possible that the Muslims' military leadership, to the extent that it had any power to save Srebrenica, lost the enclave due to carelessness and incompetence. The truth about this question may never be known.

Written Off by the International Community”

The harshest criticism for the fall of Srebrenica has been aimed at U.N. officials who were ostensibly responsible for the protection of the enclave. The U.N. forces literally neutralized themselves from the beginning by making a priority of protecting humanitarian aid over civilians, and by failing to protect themselves, let alone Bosnians. While the humanitarian aid they provided at times meant the difference between life and death, protection of civilians was never a primary goal of the UNPROFOR mission.

Given that the UNPROFOR's peacekeeping mandate called for 'neutrality,' and that by 1995 it was preoccupied with preventing the kidnapping of its own personnel, its military and civilian leadership consistently made decisions that led to the fall of Srebrenica. General Janvier had early on opposed the enclaves and he, together with Akashi, repeatedly opposed air strikes until it was too late to save Srebrenica.

There was an apparent apathy about the fate of Srebrenica at high levels throughout the international community. Roy Gutman wrote of the thinking behind this apathy: 'In Washington a new diplomatic approach, of which the Pentagon was a principal author, 'emphasized the need for defensibility of federal territory. It had to be compact, coherent, and defensible,' said [a] White House aide. Srebrenica had been written off. 'We knew that government forces were not capable of defending Srebrenica, and the U.N. troops there were very vulnerable.' ('Newsday,' Wednesday, May 29, 1996)

Official indifference was monumental as Srebrenica fell. According to Roy Gutman, "There have been no reports of physical mistreatment,' Akashi reported July 12. 'We have been... unable to ascertain if individuals are being moved with or against their will.' ... That day Akashi reported that some 4,000 draft-age males were being 'detained and screened' by the Bosnian Serb army. On July 17 Akashi referred to the unaccounted-for persons and possible detainees as 'a large gap in our database.'"

One of the justifications for the fall of Srebrenica offered by international officials was ignorance. Gutman addresses this: 'Akashi replied that he had no advance intelligence on the offensive. Kofi Annan of Ghana, then-U.N. Undersecretary for Peacekeeping, has referred publicly to the fall of Srebrenica and the ensuing bloodbath as the result of a 'failure of intelligence.' In fact, intelligence on Serb actions was there for the asking from the Bosnian government.'

Further, there were high officials in the UNPROFOR ranks, notably Rupert Smith, who predicted a Serb offensive against Srebrenica. Smith advocated early and forthright action against Serb forces threatening to take over the enclave, but he was overruled.

A month before the fall of Srebrenica, Serb forces were holding hundreds of U.N. personnel captive. The fate of these personnel was the main preoccupation of high U.N. authorities at that time. General Janvier met secretly with Generals Mladić and Perišić in Zvornik on June 4, and all the hostages were released over the next two weeks. On June 9 Yasushi Akashi announced that in the future U.N. troops would abide by 'strict peacekeeping principles,' meaning no use of force. Again, there is no documentary evidence that a deal was formally signed between Janvier and Mladić, but it is commonly accepted that high U.N. officials promised, in one fashion or another, not to attack the Serbs in return for the release of the hostages.

In the end, the events speak for themselves. The international community failed to protect Srebrenica, and the Serbs took it over. Dutch foreign affairs spokesman Jaap de Hoop Scheffer was asked what the purpose was of letting Srebrenica fall. He answered, 'Giving up the enclaves, which were considered to be not defensible, and getting closer to the moment, to say it quite clearly, where NATO could start bombing without the risk of having hostages in the enclaves. That is the story, I think.' (Dutch television program, October 20, 1995).

The events that subsequently unfolded after the fall of Srebrenica support de Hoop's premise. In September 1995, a combined Croat and Muslim offensive took back a large portion of Serb-controlled territory in the northwestern part of Bosnia. Subsequently, NATO unleashed a two-week long bombing campaign against the Serbs, forcing them to agree to go to the negotiating table at Dayton. They were ready; they had taken Srebrenica and Žepa and were on the verge of losing more territory in the west.

By all appearances Srebrenica was a pawn in the map-making process that led to the war's end. The cavalier attitude with regard to the fall of Srebrenica at the heights of the United Nations was expressed by then-Secretary General Boutros-Ghali: 'Let's live with it. In a couple of days it will be a thing of the past.' (Quoted during a Dutch television program, October 20, 1995)

In retrospect, some criticism has been offered by international officials. Speaking of disagreements between NATO and the United Nations over use of air power, former NATO commander George Joulwan said, 'We disagreed on the interpretation of their mandate. We advocated decisiveness in responding to any violation of U.N. resolutions, while they [the United Nations] said their role was just to escort humanitarian convoys. It was clear that they had no interest in protecting the safe havens. We were ready for action, but the problem was the 'double

key,' the fact that our actions had to be approved by both NATO and UNPROFOR. In most cases, the United Nations did not give an approval or they gave a limited one.' ('Dnevni Avaz,' July 8, 2000)

In November 1999, the United Nations released a 155-page report on the fall of Srebrenica. In announcing this report, Secretary-General Kofi Annan accepted some criticism of the United Nations for the atrocities. He cited 'errors of judgment,' principally the use of a peacekeeping force where there was no peace to keep. He further noted, 'There was neither the will to use decisive air power against Serb attacks on the safe areas, nor the means on the ground to repulse them.' Annan's comments focused on the U.N.'s lack of preparedness for the situation they found themselves in but did not assess the conscious decisions leading to the abandonment of the enclave to the Serbs.

“Where Is My Son?”

The complaint filed late last year in The Hague by the Mothers of Srebrenica and Podrinje against Annan, Janvier, Boutros-Ghali, and other U.N. officials was quickly rejected. But people of conscience continue to demand a full accounting of the responsibility for Srebrenica's fall. Alongside the Dutch writers' call for a renewed investigation, the French organization Medecins Sans Frontiers (Doctors without Borders) has called for a parliamentary inquiry into Bernard Janvier's refusal to permit timely air strikes against the Serbs.

The groups of Srebrenica widows that regularly demonstrate in Tuzla and Sarajevo on the 11th of each month carry signs that read, 'Where Is My Son?' and 'Srebrenica: The Shame of the World.' The shame of Srebrenica is a legacy that will last as long as the atrocity is called a 'tragedy,' as long as grandiose ceremonies are used as an opportunity for conscience-cleansing, and as long as the international community leaves homeless widows wondering where their sons are. The shame will probably last a very long time.

Glossary/Sources

ALIJA IZETBEGOVIĆ: Wartime president of Republic of Bosnia, Muslim president of SDA.

BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI: U.N. Secretary General during war in Bosnia.

David Rohde: Investigative reporter for the Christian Science Monitor discovered mass graves related to Srebrenica massacres.

DUTCHBAT: Dutch batallion stationed at Srebrenica.

GENERAL MOMČILO PERIŠIĆ: Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav Army during the Bosnian war. Gave logistical support to Bosnian Serb Army; participated in strategic planning.

GENERAL BERNARD JANVIER: Commander of U.N. troops in the former Yugoslavia.

GENERAL RATKO MLADIĆ: Commander of Army of Republika Srpska, closely involved in fall of Srebrenica and subsequent massacres, indicted for war crimes.

GENERAL RUPERT SMITH: Commander of UNPROFOR in Bosnia.

GEORGE JOULWAN: Commander of NATO during Bosnian war.

HAKIJA MEHOLJIĆ: Wartime police chief of Srebrenica.

HASAN NUHANOVIĆ: Young Srebrenican employed as interpreter for U.N. during war. The Dutch allowed his entire family to be taken away by the Serbs.

ICTY: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia Prosecuting dozens of accused war criminals at The Hague.

KOFI ANNAN: Ghanaian diplomat; U.N. undersecretary for peacekeeping during Bosnian war, now U.N. Secretary General.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL TON KARREMANS: Commander of Dutch troops at Srebrenica.

MOTHERS OF SREBRENICA AND PODRINJE: Sarajevo-based activist organization of displaced Srebrenicans.

NASER ORIĆ: Commander of Muslim forces protecting (and for a time, enlarging) Srebrenica enclave from 1992 to 1995).

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

OSMAN SULJIĆ: Mayor of Srebrenica.

RADISLAV KRSTIĆ: Commander of Drina Corps during the war, closely involved in massacres upon fall of Srebrenica. Later promoted to rank of General. Arrested for war crimes in late 1998; now on trial at The Hague.

RADOVAN KARADŽIĆ: President of Republika Srpska during the war; indicted for war crimes; now in hiding.

RASIM DELIĆ: Commander-in-chief of the Bosnia Army.

ROY GUTMAN: Investigative reporter for 'Newsday.'

SDA: Party of Democratic Action; Muslim nationalist party headed by Alija Izetbegović.

UNPROFOR: U.N. Protection Force, tasked with protecting civilians throughout Bosnia during the war.

YASUSHI AKASHI: U.N. special envoy to Bosnia.

Sources

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'Ljiljan': SDA-affiliated Sarajevo-based weekly newspaper.

'Newsday': Long Island-based daily newspaper.

'Svijet': Independent Sarajevo-based weekly magazine.

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'Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime,' by Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both (New York: Penguin, March 1997)

'Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II,' by David Rohde (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, October 1998).

'The Graves: Srebrenica and Vukovar,' by Eric Stover and Gilles Peress (Scalo Publishers, August 1998).

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Web sites: www.domovina.net (click on Srebrenica button for many links)

- www.haverford.edu/reIg/sells/cobhome3.html
- www.haverford.edu/reIg/sells/reports/Unsrebrenicareport.htm
- War Crimes Tribunal indictment of Karadžić and Mladić:
www.un.org/icty/indictment/english/kar-i951116e.htm
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