

SREBRENICA

RAPPORTEN

+

COMMENTAAREN

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SREBRENICA

RAPPORTEN +

COMMENTAREN

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# SREBRENICA IN DE VOLKSKRANT 1991-1995



de Volkskrant

JOS KLAASSEN  
THEO KLEIN

SREBRENICA  
IN DE VOLKSKRANT  
1991-1995

**de Volkskrant**  
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### COLOFON

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## VERANTWOORDING

Het onderzoek van het Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (NIOD) naar het drama van Srebrenica heeft niet alleen de feiten van de politiek en de militaire leiding blootgelegd, maar plaatste ook vraagtekens bij het functioneren van de media. Na de verschijning van het NIOD-rapport *Srebrenica, een veilig gebied* barstte een discussie los over de vraag of de kranten, radio en televisie zich goed van hun maatschappelijke taak hebben gekweten.

De kritiek richtte zich vooral op vermeende vooringenomenheid van de Nederlandse media in het voordeel van de Bosnische Moslims en ten nadele van de Bosnische Serviërs. Mede door deze versimpelde voorstelling van zaken, vooral gestoeld op emotionele overwegingen, kon een situatie ontstaan waarin het Nederlandse Dutchbat met een onmogelijke opdracht het Joegoslavische wespennest in werd gestuurd. Toen achteraf bleek dat de Nederlandse militairen weinig hadden kunnen doen om een massamoord op de weerbare Moslimmannen te voorkomen, keerden media en publieke opinie zich tegen de Nederlandse blauwhelmen.

De tekortkomingen van de Nederlandse media zouden voortkomen uit gemakzucht en provincialisme. Er werd te vaak gekozen voor meningen boven feiten, voor standpunten boven analyse. Voldoende aanleiding voor de media, aldus de critici, om in navolging van de politiek (een parlementaire enquête) het eigen functioneren tegen het licht te houden. Het zou de pers sieren, betoogde Pieter Broertjes, hoofdredacteur van *de Volkskrant* en voorzitter van het Genootschap van Hoofdredacteurs, in zijn jaarrede op 19 april van dit jaar, als zij hun eigen rol aan een openlijke en kritische zelfreflectie onderwierpen. 'Lezers en kijkers verwachten niet anders meer van ons.'

Op 13 juni voegde Broertjes op zijn eigen redactie de daad bij het woord en verleende ons, Jos Klaassen, ombudsman van *de Volkskrant*, en Theo Klein, zijn voorganger in deze functie, opdracht na te gaan hoe *de Volkskrant* het dossier-Srebrenica in 1993 (*safe areas*

en de uitzending van Dutchbat) en 1995 (de val van Srebrenica) heeft behandeld. Het initiatief van Broertjes kreeg de instemming van de redactieraad. Het onderzoek is geheel onafhankelijk van hoofdredactie en redactie uitgevoerd. Bij de reconstructie van de feiten hebben wij geen enkele belemmering ondervonden. Het concept-rapport is getoetst door een Commissie van Toezicht, bestaande uit P. Koedijk (co-auteur van het NIOD-rapport), F. van Vree (hoogleraar perswetenschappen, Universiteit van Amsterdam) en H.J. Schoo (uitgever en publicist).

Dit onderzoek is niet de eerste poging tot zelfonderzoek bij *de Volkskrant* naar de verslaggeving over Srebrenica. Als een van de eersten leverde Bart Rijs, in de jaren negentig correspondent van *de Volkskrant* in voormalig Joegoslavië, in zijn krant forse kritiek op de manier waarop de krant met dit onderwerp was omgesprongen. Hij verweet ook *de Volkskrant* bewustzijnsvernaauwing en gemakzucht. Er wordt volgens hem meer waarde gehecht aan een uitspraak van een Haagse politicus, dan aan waarnemingen ter plaatse. Columnisten lieten zich kritisch uit over de rol van hun krant en de ombudsman sprak zich tweemaal uit over dit gevoelige onderwerp.

In december 1995 produceerde de nieuwsdienst van *de Volkskrant* een interne analyse over de manier waarop de krant de kwestie-Srebrenica had behandeld. Daarin werd onder meer geconcludeerd dat de krant te veel gericht was op meningen in plaats van feiten, dat de redactie zich te volgend had opgesteld en op cruciale momenten verzuimde zelf onderzoek te doen. Deze analyse beperkte zich tot de verslaggeving. Er werd niet ingegaan op de meningsvorming op de redactie en de invloed daarvan op het feitenonderzoek en de weergave daarvan in de krant.

Dit rapport is een poging tot een diepgaander reconstructie van de gang van zaken met betrekking tot Srebrenica. Als uitgangspunt diende het NIOD-rapport. Daartoe werden we enerzijds genooddaakt wegens tijdsbrek. Maar ook bleek een groot deel van het feiten-

materiaal uit het NIOD-rapport voor ons zeer bruikbaar. Wij maakten met name dankbaar gebruik van de chronologische overzichten van The Amsterdam School of Communications and Research (*In Sarajevo wordt geschoten, in Genève wordt gepraat en Good guys, bad guys in woord en beeld*) over de berichtgeving in de landelijke dagbladen en op televisie. Vooral de vergelijking van de vier landelijke dagbladen (*NRC Handelsblad, de Volkskrant, Trouw en De Telegraaf*) bood ons houvast, evenals de analyse van onderzoeker J. Wieten: *Srebrenica en de journalistiek. Achtergronden en invloed van de berichtgeving over het conflict in voormalig Joegoslavië*.

Op basis van deze gegevens en de kritiek op de pers die na verschijning van het NIOD-rapport werd geleverd, hebben we aanvullende gesprekken gevoerd met de direct betrokkenen op de redactie van *de Volkskrant* en aanvullend onderzoek gedaan naar de publicaties over Srebrenica in *de Volkskrant*. Leidraad hierbij was de vraag of *de Volkskrant* zich heeft gekweten van haar taak als betrouwbaar intermediair. Is bij de verslaggeving en opinievorming de vereiste zorgvuldigheid in acht genomen.

We hebben de publicaties in *de Volkskrant* getoetst aan de algemeen geldende journalistieke regels als onpartijdigheid, onafhankelijkheid, het plegen van hoor- en wederhoor en het natrekken van informatie uit een bron en de eigen regels van *de Volkskrant* (*Het nieuwe Stijlboek*). Daarbij zijn we ervan uitgegaan dat een ideale situatie binnen de beperkingen van een dagblad (tijdsdruk) zelden wordt bereikt, en zeker niet in een oorlogssituatie waarin de pers extra beperkingen worden opgelegd.

Waar het niet gaat om feitelijke weergaven, maar om opinies van eigen redacteuren, gastschrijvers, de hoofdredactie of columnisten, hebben we vooral nagetrokken of standpunten stoelden op juiste feiten, of uitsluitend op vooronderstellingen en emoties. We controleerden ook of voor- en tegenstanders in het Bosnische conflict voldoende aan bod kwamen.

Wij zijn van mening dat, zeker waar het om opiniërende artikelen gaat, niet in elk publicatie een balans tussen voors en tegens verwacht mag worden, maar in het totaalbeeld dat *de Volkskrant* bood van de aanloop naar en de val van Srebrenica, moet wel sprake zijn van evenwicht. De lezer moet voldoende, breed geschakeerde informatie krijgen om zich een realistisch beeld van het conflict te kunnen vormen.

In de eerste twee hoofdstukken proberen we inzicht te geven in de werkwijze van *de Volkskrant*-redactie. In hoofdstuk drie volgt een vergelijking met de buitenlandse media. De hoofdstukken 4 en 5 bevatten overzichten van publicaties in *de Volkskrant* over de Balkan-oorlog en vergelijkingen met de andere landelijke dagbladen in Nederland.

Tot slot: de hoofdredactie van *de Volkskrant* heeft niet gekozen voor een onderzoek door onpartijdige buitenstaanders, maar door twee redacteuren van de krant, die indertijd zelf zijdelings betrokken waren bij het Srebrenica-dossier. Jos Klaassen schreef over dit onderwerp als correspondent in Brussel en Theo Klein was als chef nieuwsdienst mede verantwoordelijk voor de organisatie van de verslaggeving over Dutchbat. Dat verplichtte ons tot extra waakzaamheid in het streven naar een onpartijdige opstelling.

## HOOFDSTUK 1: SNEL OORDEEL?

Het is de normaalste zaak van de wereld: er gebeurt iets buiten Nederland, en *de Volkskrant* probeert verslag te doen van de gebeurtenis en met een *Ten Geleide*, het commentaar, te duiden. De lezer krijgt van de redactie van de krant uitleg over gebeurtenissen en over de mogelijke consequenties ervan. De krant bekent meestal kleur, laat haar voorkeuren duidelijk blijken in bepaalde situaties, zeker als het gaat om oorlog en geweld, maar de realiteit laat zich niet in meningen dwingen.

Het conflict in Joegoslavië in de jaren negentig was geen gebeurtenis uit 'Verwegistan', maar – integendeel – een bedreiging van ons continent op een plek waar al vaker onheil over Europa was losgebroken: de Balkan. Het was een gebied dat vele Nederlanders kenden als een prachtig vakantieoord, maar waarvan ze zich wellicht vaak niet realiseerden wat er broeide. Sarajevo staat in het Europese geheugen gegrift vanwege de Oostenrijkse aartshertog Franz Ferdinand – de 'eenzaamste man van Wenen' – die er samen met zijn echtgenote Sophie op 28 juni 1914 door de Servische nationalist Gavrilo Princip werd doodgeschoten. *Kanzler Bismarck* had reeds het drama voorspeld, waarmee wij zo bitter zijn geconfronteerd: de Balkan van 1914 was een broeiplaats van nationalistische intriges. En daarna ook, kunnen we zeggen.

Na de Tweede Wereldoorlog hield maarschalk Tito de veelvolkerenstaat bij elkaar door zich onder andere te engageren in de Beweging van Niet-gebonden Landen, die daarmee buiten de Koude Oorlog tussen Oost en West trachtte te blijven. Tijdens een topconferentie van die organisatie eind jaren zeventig in Belgrado bleek een hechte samenhang van Joegoslavië al schijn. Joegoslavië-kenners konden toen al aanwijzen welke kopstukken de in onberispelijk wit uniform geklede Tito nog wel dulden, maar reeds zonnen op een andere toekomst voor hun eigen staat. Begin jaren tachtig maakte de Oost-Europa-expert van *de Volkskrant*, de historicus wijlen Hendrik de Jong, een reis door Joegoslavië en keerde terug met dramatische indrukken: 'Daar gaat het



Stapels NIOD-rapporten op 9 april 2002 in het perscentrum Nieuwspoor in Den Haag. (Foto ANP/Jeroen de Jong)

binnenkort helemaal mis.' En dat ging het ook, zij het pas begin jaren negentig.

Toen het dan daadwerkelijk misging in de jaren 1990-1991 in Joegoslavië, had *de Volkskrant* volgens het rapport van het Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (NIOD) haar mening klaar wat betreft de vraag 'Who dunnit?' Het NIOD constateerde in zijn rapportage over Srebrenica namelijk dat voor de meeste Nederlandse media al vanaf medio 1992 vaststond wie in de Joegoslavische crisis de *good guys* waren en wie de *bad guys*. Dus ook kranten als *NRC Handelsblad*, *Trouw* en *De Telegraaf* legden grote schuld bij de Serviërs, de *bad guys*. Maar gemeten naar het gebruik van sleutelwoorden als 'etnische zuiveringen', 'massamoorden', 'kampen', 'genocide' en 'oorlogsmisdaden' in haar berichtgeving was *de Volkskrant* stelliger in het aanwijzen van Servië als de boosdoener. De andere oorlogspartijen – de Kroaten en de Moslims – zouden in meer of mindere mate in *de Volkskrant* als 'slachtoffers' zijn gekenschetst. Heeft *de Volkskrant* zich indertijd inderdaad laten leiden door te veel moraal, te weinig analyse en te veel emotie? Als het NIOD gelijk zou hebben, is de vraag belangrijk hoe zo'n snel en partijdig oordeel over de situatie in

Joegoslavië bij de *Volkskrant*-redactie tot stand kwam, of die opinie in het verdere verloop van de oorlog de berichtgeving bepaalde en dus ook de journalistieke keuzen die in die tijd werden gemaakt. Op 28 juni 2002 oordeelde Huub Wijffjes van de afdeling Journalistiek/Geschiedenis van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen tijdens een congres dat 'van opiniestukken en hoofdredactionele commentaren slechts beperkte invloed uitgaat' op het gros van de lezers en dat dit soort artikelen vooral de mappen van beleidsmakers vullen. Maar als het waar is dat de opinievorming bij krantenredacties de strekking van de overige berichtgeving in de krant in hoge mate bepaalt, dan zouden de opiniemakers wel degelijk invloed hebben op de lezers. Maar hadden de commentatoren van de *Volkskrant* die de schuld van de oorlog in Joegoslavië – én van de onmenselijkheden die ermee gepaard gingen – grotendeels bij de Serviërs legden, ook invloed op de rest van de berichtgeving? Speelde het kennelijk al vroeg geboren schema 'bad guys - good guys' daarbij inderdaad zo'n rol? Als dat waar was, zou de *Volkskrant* haar plicht verzaakt hebben om objectief te berichten, en dat is een journalistieke hoofdzonde.

Welk gewicht had de toenmalige 'opiniësector' van de *Volkskrant* op de gang van zaken?

Over de commentaren van de *Volkskrant* wordt sinds jaar en dag besloten in een selecte commentaargroep. Die groep bespreekt dagelijks onder leiding van de hoofdredactie over welke gebeurtenissen de krant haar mening moet geven. De verschillende commentatoren peilen meestal vooraf al ideeën die bij hun eigen deelredacties leven: de Haagse redactie bijvoorbeeld, de economische redactie en de buitenlandredactie. In de kwestie van de oorlog in Bosnië-Herzegovina en Kroatië speelde uiteraard de buitenlandredactie een uiterst belangrijke, zometertijd bepalende rol. De opinies van de krant werden indertijd voornamelijk beslist door de chef van de buitenlandredactie, Jan Luijten. Hij werd soms vervangen door buitenlandredacteur André Roelofs. Naderhand, toen André Roelofs, voormalig correspondent van de *Volkskrant* in Moskou, overstapte naar de *Forum*-redactie, werd redacteur buitenland

Anet Bleich naast Luijten buitenlandcommentator en ook lid van de commentaargroep. Volgens Ewoud Nysingh, oud-buitenlandredacteur en verslaggever in Den Haag, verwierf Anet Bleich daarmee een grote machtspositie. Zij beheerste voortaan niet alleen de commentaarsector inzake de oorlog in Joegoslavië, maar kon daarnaast uitwijken naar de buitenlandcolumns om haar visie op de ontwikkelingen op de Balkan te ontvouwen, en zij had desnoods nog de keuze om een politieke analyse aan dat thema te wijden. Voor de lezer van de *Volkskrant* was Anet Bleich daarmee degene die sterk bepaalde wat hij moest denken van de ontwikkelingen in de achtertuin van West-Europa. Arnold Koper, ten tijde van de Balkancrisis chef van de redactie *Forum*, is eveneens ervan overtuigd dat Bleich en Roelofs een grote invloed hadden op de commentaarsector. 'Maar zij waren ook degenen die goed in staat waren analyses en commentaren te schrijven', oordeelt hij. De grote nadruk op de meningsvorming bij de *Volkskrant* in de jaren negentig schrijft hij toe aan een noodzaak van heroriëntatie van de krant ten gevolge van de ingrijpende grote internationale veranderingen die sinds het einde van de Koude Oorlog hadden plaatsgevonden. 'De vroeger pacifistische *Volkskrant* moest zich bezinnen op haar positie tegenover bijvoorbeeld de Golfoorlog en vervolgens tegenover het geweld op de Balkan.' 'Op de *Volkskrant* ging het meestal over de meningsvorming, dat klopt', beaamt Jan Luijten, voormalig chef buitenland en commentator. En met de *Volkskrant* bedoelt hij eigenlijk alleen de redactie buitenland. Daar was de oorlog in Joegoslavië elke dag onderwerp van discussie. In eerste instantie ging het om de vraag of alle deelstaten een recht op zelfbeschikking hadden, in een later stadium ging het over de inzet van VN-troepen en het instellen van *safe havens*. In hoeverre had de rest van de redactie buitenland, die dagelijks vóór de samenkomst van de commentaargroep vergaderde, invloed op de meningsvorming van de krant? Over de gang van zaken bij de dagelijkse werkbespreking van deze redactie wordt verschillende geoordeeld. De standpunten over Joegoslavië op de redactie buitenland werden, volgens verschillende buitenland-

redacteuren, onder wie Joris Cammelbeeck, grotendeels bepaald door André Roelofs en Anet Bleich. 'In elk geval hadden zij', aldus Cammelbeeck, 'in de discussies grote invloed op Jan Luijten'. Toenmalig buitenlandredacteur Ewoud Nysingh oordeelt: 'Roelofs was zeer dominant en Bleich op haar manier, eveneens. Luijten zat er als een brave D66'er tussenin.' Het debat op de buitenlandredactie, waarin de verschillende opvattingen de revue passeerden, werd volgens Nysingh overheerst 'door het gedram van Bleich en Roelofs'. Andere buitenlandredacteuren haakten allengs af en namen niet of nauwelijks meer deel aan de discussies. Volgens Cammelbeeck concentreerde het debat op de buitenlandredactie zich voornamelijk op de vraag: 'Hoe staan wij moreel in de kwestie-Joegoslavië?' Hij vond dat de redactie zich veel beter had kunnen bezighouden met de vraag hoe de *Volkskrant* 'journalistiek staat tegenover de oorlog in Joegoslavië'. Maar, stelt hij vast, dat soort dissidente opmerkingen vonden niet of nauwelijks gehoor. Cammelbeeck: 'Roelofs schoot in de debatten andere meningen *rücksichtslos* af – tot niemand meer zijn mond opendeed. Zelfs Jan Luijten haakte op gegeven ogenblik af.' Volgens Nysingh verwierven Bleich en Roelofs zo 'het monopolie op de meningsvorming bij de *Volkskrant*'. Maar voor Bleich is het idee dat zij en Roelofs een monopolie op de meningsvorming hadden 'belachelijk'. Bleich: 'Wij hadden een duidelijke, soms dominante rol in het debat, maar van een monopolie was geen sprake.' Wat haar betreft was 'nooit geprobeerd dissidente meningen op de redactie te onderdrukken'. Bovendien waren Roelofs en Bleich het zeer geregeld met elkaar oneens, bijvoorbeeld over het al dan niet opdelen van Joegoslavië en over de rol van de internationale gemeenschap. 'Roelofs was voor opheffing van het wapenembargo en voor bombardementen, ik meer voor een krachtig VN-optreden', zegt Bleich. Ook zaten ze niet op één lijn waar het om de perspectieven van Joegoslavië ging. Vanaf 1991 huldigden zij in elk geval over de toekomst van Joegoslavië verschillende opvattingen. Een belangrijke rol daarbij speelde de vraag of Joegoslavië als federale staat wel bijeengehouden moest worden? De ene partij op de buitenlandredactie voerde zo een 'moreel debat' tegen de 'realistisch poli-

tieke visie' van de andere partij, waartoe onder anderen Joris Cammelbeeck behoorde. Anet Bleich en buitenlandredacteur Marianne Boissevain, die Joegoslavië in haar portefeuille had, waren vóór het behoud van de Joegoslavische staat, de erfenis van Tito. Bleich weerde zich heftig tegen de opvattingen van de 'realistische stroming' die juist een opdeling bepleitte van de federale staat. Elk initiatief van de Verenigde Staten en de Europese Unie met zo'n strekking – de opdeling – wees Bleich resoluut af. En het Owen/Stoltenbergplan, dat daarna zelfs een opsplitsing beoogde van Bosnië-Herzegovina in een Servische, een Kroatische en een Moslimstaat, was voor Bleich per definitie fout. De *Volkskrant*, luidde haar argument, moest zich niet medeplichtig maken aan 'etnische zuiveringen', herinnert buitenlandredacteur Joris Cammelbeeck zich deze discussie. Bleich herinnert zich dat anders: Cammelbeeck vertegenwoordigde een minderheidsstandpunt bij de buitenlandredactie, want volgens haar was de rest unaniem tégen opdeling van Bosnië. André Roelofs had geen problemen met de desintegratie van het oude Joegoslavië. Hij had als correspondent in Moskou de Sovjet-Unie zien uiteenvallen. Zijn ervaringen hadden hem tot het inzicht gebracht dat het een proces was dat niemand kon tegenhouden en dat je ook niet moest tegenhouden, als je niet nóg grotere problemen wenste.' Jan Luijten baseerde zijn oordeel weer meer op een moreel argument. Hij was een groot voorstander van de opdeling van Tito's Joegoslavische veelvolkerenstaat, omdat de *Volkskrant* naar zijn mening het zelfbeschikingsrecht van volkeren moet eerbiedigen, zoals dat in het internationale recht is erkend. Dat betekende volgens Luijten dat de diverse volkeren in Joegoslavië – de Serviërs, Kroaten, Moslims en Slovenen – hun eigen lot moesten kunnen kiezen in de gegeven situatie. Maar bij de taxatie van het conflict in Joegoslavië verschilden de commentatoren nauwelijks van mening. Voor Roelofs was de oorlog in Joegoslavië een oorlog 'dicht bij huis'. Natuurlijk herinnerde de Balkan ook aan Gavrilo Prinzip, maar in Roelofs' geheugen – en dat van Anet Bleich – stond de Balkan meer symbool voor de Tweede Wereldoorlog met zijn 'etnische zuiveringen' en

'racisme'. Anet Bleich: 'Joegoslavië was de eerste oorlog in Europa sedert 1945. Bovendien hadden in Europa sindsdien geen vervolgingen plaatsgevonden van bevolkingsgroepen op grond van religie of etnische achtergrond.'

Roelofs: 'Servië riep herinneringen wakker aan veel onheil voor Europa, en dat moesten we niet meer toestaan, want wat het propageerde, herinnerde ons pijnlijk aan concentratiekampen en etnische zuiveringen. Racistische regimens en dit soort wandaden moesten we niet dulden op dit continent.' Roelofs was, terwijl het conflict in Bosnië al smeulde, een weekje in Zagreb geweest en had daar uit de mond van de rechterhand van de Kroatische president Tudjman opgetekend dat Bosnië door middel van een akkoord met Milosevic moest worden opgedeeld tussen Servië en Kroatië.

Roelofs: 'Dat was een primeur van *de Volkskrant*, die laat zien dat de krant niet blind was voor de bedoelingen van Tudjman.'

Ook was de opiniesector van de krant het roerend eens over Servië als de grootste boosdoener. Voor Lijten en Bleich was doorslaggevend dat Servië de sterkste kracht in het explosieve Joegoslavië was: 'Een groot deel van het officierskorps van het leger was Servisch en bovendien beschikte Belgrado ook over de meeste wapenfabrieken en zware wapens.' Voor Roelofs was de Servische president Slobodan Milosevic de hoofdschuldige, omdat hij met een 'ultra-nationalistische en opportunistische machtspolitiek' de greep van Servië op Joegoslavië wilde verstevigen. Ook de Kroatische president Franjo Tudjman was in Roelofs' visie niet brandschoon, maar Tudjman was volgens hem 'minder erg', omdat Tudjman in de Tweede Wereldoorlog generaal was geweest van de partizanen die onder de (Kroaat) Tito, tegen de *ustashi* (de Kroatische fascist) hadden gevochten.

Maar waarom haakte een groot deel van de buitenlandredactie, waar al deze kwesties openlijk werden besproken, af? Daarvoor is enige uitleg noodzakelijk over de werkwijze van de buitenlandredactie.

De redactie buitenland bestaat uit drie ploegen die om beurten een week nachtdienst draaien. Alleen chef Lijten, coördinator Toine Berbers, André Roelofs en Anet Bleich waren toentertijd vrijgesteld van nacht-

diensten en werkten vrijwel uitsluitend overdag. Zij konden zich dus vrij intensief en gepassioneerd bezighouden met dat ene enorme nieuwsitem: de oorlog in Joegoslavië, waarin zich regelmatig nieuwe, dramatische ontwikkelingen afspeelden.

Maar iedere redacteur buitenland had en heeft zijn eigen gebied: Azië, Afrika, Midden-Oosten, Zuid-Amerika, China, Oost-Europa, Rusland, et cetera. In de weken dat geen nachtdienst hoeft te worden gedaan, wordt er bijgelezen, of een interessant artikel vertaald uit *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* of van de internationale persbureaus, worden persoonlijke archieven bijgewerkt, eventuele reizen uitgestippeld. Verder schrijven de redacteurs artikelen en columns over het 'eigen' gebied. De prioriteit van de overige buitenlandredacteurs lag in de dagelijkse routine dus vaak elders, niet bij Joegoslavië.

Anet Bleich erkent dat zij en André Roelofs 'erg gesteld waren op discussiëren'. In haar herinnering vonden de meeste collega's van de buitenlandredactie dat ook 'inspirerend en verfrissend', maar ze sluit niet uit dat 'sommigen er misschien af en toe wat moe van werden.' De consequentie van het 'afhaken' of misschien wel een gebrek aan interesse van buitenlandredacteurs in de discussies over de oorlog in Joegoslavië, was uiteraard wel dat een mogelijk tegenwicht tegen de meer dominante opinieleiders wegviel, waardoor vanzelfsprekend een 'monopolie' ontstond van de meer gedreven redacteurs.

De opinies van *de Volkskrant* over buitenlandse kwesties werden in hoge mate bepaald door de buitenlandredactie. Maar de besluitvorming over de commentaren gebeurde in de commentaargroep die dagelijks vergaderde onder voorzitterschap van de hoofdredactie. Consensus was niet altijd noodzakelijk. De commentaarschrijver genoot een zekere vrijheid en hoefde zich geen geweld aan te doen. Volgens Anet Bleich liet de hoofdredactie de commentatoren de vrije hand.

De discussies in de commentaargroep over Joegoslavië werden verscheidene malen gehouden aan de hand van enkele interne notities, die meestal door Anet Bleich of Jan Lijten of beiden gezamenlijk werden geschreven. Over één notitie - 'Europa & nationalisme' - werd een plenaire redactievergadering gehouden. Gezien de

commentaarpraktijk bij *de Volkskrant*, die de commentatoren immers een grote autonomie gaf, waren deze notities niet per se voorstellen om een vaste lijn voor de krant te bepalen. Ze vatten eerder de aspecten samen die de buitenlandcommentatoren ieder voor zich al hanteerden bij het schrijven van hun hoofdartikelen over Joegoslavië. Er was dus eerder sprake van een bekrachtiging achteraf van lijnen die de commentatoren in de krant al uitgezet hadden.

De eerste notitie over Joegoslavië dateert van 7 oktober 1991 en richtte zich op het thema 'Europa & nationalisme'. Daarin weerspiegelde zich de al eerder genoemde tweedeling die zich op de redactie buitenland aftekende omtrent de toekomst van Joegoslavië. De ene stroming (Bleich en Boissevain) stond het behoud voor van de Joegoslavische eenheidsstaat. Immers, zo redeneerden zij, als de grenzen eenmaal ergens gaan schuiven, is het einde zoek. Overigens gingen de Akkoorden van Helsinki nog uit van de bestaande grenzen in Europa. In elk geval, meende deze stroming, zou zoveel mogelijk aan de bestaande grenzen moeten worden vastgehouden. Veranderingen zouden slechts langs vreedzame weg en met onderling goedvinden mogen gebeuren.

De tweede stroming, verpersoonlijkt door onder anderen Jan Lijten, ging uit van het beginsel van zelfbeschikkingsrecht der volkeren. We zouden bereid moeten zijn naties en nationale minderheden die zich willen afscheiden uit grotere staatsverbanden positief tegemoet te treden.

Beide stromingen vonden elkaar min of meer in een 'beredeneerde tussenweg'. Het recht van naties, ook kleine naties, op een soeverein bestaan moet in principe worden gerespecteerd, maar erkenning ervan zou aan strikte condities gebonden moeten zijn: een democratisch politiek bestel en naleving van de mensenrechten, met name ook respect voor de burgerlijke, politieke en culturele rechten van minderheden. Zonder vervulling van deze voorwaarden géén erkenning. Om het praktisch te houden: erkenning van Kroatië en Servië kon onder de bestaande omstandigheden niet. Door democratieën te bevorderen waarin meerderheden de rechten van minderheden eerbiedigen, zou op termijn een 'al te volks nationalisme' getemperd kunnen worden.

*De Volkskrant* meende dat als West-Europa eendrachtig dit soort uitgangspunten zou onderschrijven, het Westen minder machteloos zou zijn bij haar bemoeienissen in de Joegoslavische crisis. De aanvankelijk inzet van de Europese Unie dat Joegoslavië op een of andere manier moest blijven voortbestaan, kon door de Serviërs en het federale leger worden misverstaan als steun voor hun positie. De Duitse steun voor Kroatië daarentegen wekte bij de Serviërs wantrouwen en bij de Kroaten (valse) verwachtingen. Weliswaar hebben minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Van den Broek en zijn Britse collega Lord Carrington als 'eerlijke makelaar' geprobeerd het evenwicht te bewaren, maar het Servische wantrouwen en de Kroatische hoop ondergroeven hun opzet.

In theorie zou volgens de krant militair optreden mogelijk zijn, mits dat de instemming van de strijdende partijen zou hebben. Een heuse interventie wees *de Volkskrant* categorisch af, tenzij er een situatie zou ontstaan waarin op grote schaal burgers zouden worden afgeslacht, in geval van genocide dus. Echte machtsmiddelen lagen volgens Bleich en Lijten niet in het verschiet. Het Westen restte slechts de oproep tot wapenstilstand, aanbieden om te bemiddelen, dreigen met het stoppen van economische hulp.

In een tweede notitie, gedateerd 28 juni 1993, woog Lijten de voors en tegens af van de opheffing van het wapenembargo voor de Moslims in Bosnië. In de commentaren was *de Volkskrant* toen al bezig een militair ingrijpen van de Verenigde Naties in Bosnië te bepleiten om een einde te maken aan het geweld en de etnische zuiveringen. Aan de ene kant, zo betoogde Lijten, zal de opheffing van het wapenembargo leiden tot een verdere escalatie van het geweld. Bovendien, zo voorzag hij toen reeds, zou die escalatie de gevaren voor de VN-vredesmacht vergroten. 'Het zal zo onveilig worden dat de VN-troepen zullen worden teruggetrokken. Dat zou ook consequenties hebben voor de humanitaire hulpverlening. Voorts betekende wapens leveren aan de Moslims, ook partij kiezen in de oorlog, waardoor bemiddelingspogingen bemoeilijkt werden. En ook het idee van de *safe areas* voor de bedreigde Moslims zou dan zinloos worden. Ten slotte was het opheffen van het wapenembargo de finale bevestiging van de onmacht van de VN en de Europese Unie.

Maar Lijten zag ook voordelen in de opheffing van het embargo: 'In de oorlog in Bosnië vormt Servië de agressor – in veel VN-resoluties en Europese verklaringen wordt Servië als de hoofdverantwoordelijke aangewezen – en elk land heeft recht op collectieve zelfverdediging. Dat recht kan Bosnië helaas niet uitoefenen vanwege het wapenembargo. Bovendien werkt zo'n embargo ten gunste van de agressor. Immers: Servië is de erfgenaam van het oude Joegoslavische Volksteger en in Servië liggen de meeste wapenfabrieken. De Moslims hebben dan wel voldoende manschappen, maar geen zware wapens en dus zitten zij in een zeer ongelijke positie.'

Lijten vroeg zich af of niet met voorrang het wapenembargo moet worden afgeschaft teneinde het recht op zelfverdediging voor de Moslims mogelijk te maken. Dat embargo, zo redeneerde hij, is gerechtvaardigd zolang de internationale gemeenschap serieus werkt aan een vredesplan en zolang de mogelijkheid bestaat dat de VN zal ingrijpen. Het Vance/Owenplan is evenwel dood en er is geen bereidheid om voor Sarajevo te sterven. Bovendien lijkt de realisering van de zes *safe areas* onuitvoerbaar. 'Ze zijn niet levensvatbaar, ze zijn te klein en ze worden onvoldoende beschermd door de VN.' Hij concludeerde dat er geen reden meer is het wapenembargo te handhaven. Opheffing dient twee doelen: de Moslims kunnen zichzelf verdedigen en door de verbetering van hun positie op het slagveld kunnen zij bij eventuele vredesbesprekingen een levensvatbare eigen staat opeisen.

Een derde notitie, van 19 juni 1995, voor het commentaarberaad over Bosnië ging over de vraag wat gedaan moest worden nu de VN in Bosnië in de val zitten en de oorlog dreigt op te laaien. 'Bij alle terechte kritiek op het feit dat de EU, VN, NAVO en diverse bemiddelaars er in drie jaar niet in zijn geslaagd de (Bosnische) Serviërs tot rede te brengen, moeten we ons hoeden de resultaten van de VN-aanwezigheid in Bosnië als volkomen onbetekend af te schilderen.' Lijten en Bleich stemden in met het betoog van Joris Voorhoeve: 'Voorhoeve had gelijk toen hij in het Tweede-Kamerdebat betoogde dat veruit de meeste slachtoffers in het eerste oorlogsjaar gevallen zijn (meer dan 150 duizend doden), in het tweede jaar 12 duizend (met name in de strijd tussen

Moslims en Kroaten die door internationale bemiddeling is beëindigd) en in 1994 ongeveer drieduizend.'

Voedselhulp en de aanwezigheid van de VN-vredesmacht, hoe zwakjes ook, in de Moslimenclaves in het oosten hebben met zekerheid massamoord en verdrijving van de Moslimbevolking voorkomen, stelden zij. Dat is 'ondanks het gemodder' bereikt. Maar de politieke en militaire zwakte van de VN heeft de crisis aangewakkerd. 'Het ondoordachte NAVO-bombardement, gevolgd door de gijzelaarscrisis, vormde hiervan een dramatische illustratie.'

Lijten en Bleich vroegen zich af welke opties er nog zijn. Hun conclusies: een terugtrekken van de VN-vredesmacht zal leiden tot een militaire nederlaag van de nog altijd zwakker bewapende Bosnische regeringstroepen. Karadzic' positie wordt versterkt en erger: duizenden of zelfs tien- of honderdduizenden Bosnische burgers worden het slachtoffer van de Servische repressailles. Opnieuw loont de agressie van de Bosnische Serviërs. Het enige voordeel van dit scenario is volgens beiden dat de strijd tot Bosnië beperkt blijft en zich daar nog jaren gaat voortslepen.

Een tweede optie is terugtrekking van de VN, opheffing van het wapenembargo en eventuele NAVO-luchtsteun voor de Bosnische regeringstroepen. Uitvoering van dit scenario zal, voorspelden zij, met zware strijd gepaard gaan, want de Bosnische Serviërs zullen bang zijn voor een opheffing van het wapenembargo. Als de Bosnische regeringstroepen dankzij westerse wapenleveranties en NAVO-luchtsteun successen boeken, is de kans groot dat het leger van klein-Joegoslavië zich alsnog aan de kant van de Bosnische Serviërs in de oorlog zal mengen. Een forse escalatie dus. Rusland zal de Serviërs mogelijk wapens leveren.

De derde optie is 'doormodderen'. Het blijft de minste van alle kwaden. Wil zij een kans van slagen hebben, dan is druk van de Russen op Milosevic noodzakelijk en druk van de Amerikanen op de Bosnische regering om haar offensief te staken. Volgens Bleich en Lijten is de politiek nooit erop uit geweest om een oplossing in Joegoslavië militair af te dwingen. Daarom gaat het in het VN-mandaat ook om *peace keeping* en nooit over *peace enforcing*, het afdwingen van de vrede. Lijten: 'Dat is een van de kernfouten die in dit conflict zijn gemaakt.

Er werd een troepenmacht gestuurd om de vrede te bewaren, terwijl er geen sprake van vrede kon zijn.' Deze documenten geven een goed inzicht in de manier waarop de buitenlandredactie van *de Volkskrant* – in elk geval haar commentatoren – met haar meningsvorming worstelde. Maar duidelijk blijkt ook dat – in tegenstelling tot de documenten van latere datum – in oktober 1991 de redactie weliswaar Servische aspiraties signaleerde, maar dat de tekst geenszins al een uitgesproken opvatting bevatte dat de Serviërs de *bad guys* waren.

Haaks op de terughoudende toon van de bewuste notitie van Bleich en Lijten in oktober 1991 leek de oproep in *de Volkskrant* van 31 december 1991 van Anet Bleich en buitenlandcollega Ewoud Nysingh onder de kop: 'Joegoslavische oorlog schreeuwt om actie van Europese burgers'. Het was een opmerkelijk initiatief, omdat *Volkskrant*-journalisten in wier portefeuille het Joegoslavische conflict zat, een erg persoonlijk engagement aan de dag legden. Jan Wieten beschouwde in de studie *Srebrenica en de journalistiek* deze actie, die ook door journalisten van *NRC Handelsblad* in de eigen krant werd ondernomen, als een bewijs dat Nederlandse journalisten al hadden uitgemaakt wie moreel goed en fout was in Joegoslavië.

Nysingh betreurt zijn actie van destijds, maar vindt het overigens 'een braaf stuk, opgesteld door ideologen die nooit een stap in het gebied hadden gezet.' Bleich moet erom lachen. 'Ach, het was toch schattig en een beetje donquichotterie. Het was een ludieke actie, meer niet. De krant is ermee akkoord gegaan. Wieten heeft de kwestie overtrokken. Onze bedoeling was het om oorlog te voorkomen, wij dachten niet in termen van *good guys* of *bad guys*.' Chef Buitenland Lijten had geen problemen met de actie van Bleich en Nysingh:

'Redacteuren moeten weliswaar geen partij kiezen, maar ik vind het geen ramp dat hun oproep in de krant is gekomen.'

Het artikel dat op de *Forum*-pagina van de krant verscheen, kiest geen partij. De auteurs schrijven onder andere: 'Er is geen identificatie mogelijk met een bepaalde kant in het conflict.'

In de aanloop naar de burgeroorlog in Joegoslavië stond bij de opinieleiders van *de Volkskrant* aanvankelijk nog

niet vast wie de grote boosdoener was die de oorlog willens en wetens ontketende en met alle mogelijke middelen zijn doel pogde te bereiken. Alleen voormalig buitenlandredacteur Joris Cammelbeeck was de overtuiging toegedaan dat *de Volkskrant* al heel snel de Serviërs als de grootste boosdoeners beschouwde: 'Het was een vooropgezet idee – ook bij de *Volkskrant*. De Serviërs kregen de schuld dat zij het evenwicht in Joegoslavië hadden verstoord. Zij waren het grote geboefte.'

Pas omstreeks augustus 1992 bereikte de krant haar standpunt dat de Serviërs de grootste schuld trof, omdat zij de sterkste partij waren en militair een groot overwicht hadden op de andere partijen in het conflict. Dat had te maken met de eerste berichten in de buitenlandse pers over het bestaan van kampen voor gevangenen. Begrippen die herinnerden aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog zoals 'gevangenkampen', 'concentratiekampen', 'etnische zuivering', 'deportatie' en 'marteling' maakten hun rentree in de Nederlandse pers, waaronder *de Volkskrant*. De krant pleitte, in tegenstelling tot andere Nederlandse dagbladen, al heel snel voor een militair ingrijpen in Bosnië. Dat gebeurde in commentaren én op de *Forum*-pagina, waar de Servische wreedheden in Bosnië door sommigen werden vergeleken met de wreedheden van de nazi's. Maar de *Forum*-pagina, die in de jaren 1990-1991 onder leiding van Arnold Koper was 'opengebroken' om niet alleen artikelen te publiceren die *de Volkskrant* welgevallig waren, maar tevens dissidente, casu quo rechtse meningen, plaatste in augustus 1992 ook een artikel van cultureel antropoloog Gremaux. Hij betoogde dat de berichtgeving over de oorlog in Bosnië sterk vertekend was ten nadele van de Serviërs.

Leidde de opinievorming bij *de Volkskrant* en het morele debat dat op de krant werd gevoerd op den duur tot vooringenomen of zelfs gekleurde berichtgeving over de oorlog in Bosnië-Herzegovina en Kroatië?

De neutraliteit die het artikel van Bleich en Nysingh ademde, maakte bij *de Volkskrant* in de loop van 1992 pas geleidelijk plaats voor het standpunt dat Servië de grootste boosdoener was. Dat klopt trouwens met de

conclusie van het NIOD dat 'de berichtgeving in augustus 1992 de toon zette voor de stemming die in Nederland ging heersen: de Serviërs waren de *bad guys*, de Moslims de slachtoffers.'

Chef buitenland Jan Luijten bestrijdt dat de krant snelle conclusies heeft getrokken, laat staan vooringenomen zou zijn geweest. 'We waren beslist niet op voorhand tegen Servië. Tijdens de oorlog schreven we ook kritisch over de Kroaten, onder meer toen de Kroaten de Krajina etnisch zuiverden', waarbij de Servische bevolking van huis en haard verdreven werd. Luijten snapt dus 'helemaal niets' van de NIOD-conclusie dat onder andere de *Volkskrant* de Serviërs al vroegtijdig als de *bad guys* beschouwde.

Het beeld dat krant later ontvouwde van de Serviërs als de slechteriken, was volgens Luijten gebaseerd op feiten. 'De Serviërs hadden zich meester gemaakt van grote wapenvoorraden en zij beschikten tevens over het grootste deel van het JNA, het Joegoslavische leger. De Serviërs begonnen de oorlog met Slovenië, Kroatië en Bosnië in een poging het land bijeen te houden. Zij waren de uitvinders van de etnische zuivering. Vergeet niet dat de Serviërs, die zelf slechts eenderde van de bevolking van Bosnië uitmaakten, 70 procent van het land claimden.'

Luijten wijst op het plan van de Amerikaanse ex-minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Cyrus Vance en de Britse Lord David Owen, dat uitging van een vermindering van die 70 procent. 'Met grof geweld slaagden de Serviërs er in die claim ook waar te maken. Daarbij werden tienduizenden mensen vermoord. Vukovar werd door hen vernietigd. Die gegevens waren geen verzinsels van de pers. Ook voor de Verenigde Naties en de Europese Unie waren de Serviërs de agressors. Niet voor niets werd juist tegen hen een boycot afgeroepen.' Dat de krant niet 'vooringenomen' was, blijkt volgens Luijten ook uit 'onze kritische reacties op de wreedheden van de Kroaten in Mostar, die deze stad in puin hebben geschoten, en op het Kroatische optreden in de Krajina, waar tweehonderdduizend Serviërs werden verdreven - een gebeurtenis waarover verslaggever Hans Moleman heeft bericht. Maar Sarajevo werd toch echt door de Serviërs beschoten en door niemand anders.' (Van de beschieting met een mortiergranaat op

maandag 31 augustus 1992 van een drukke markt in Sarajevo staat overigens niet vast dat Serviërs de daders waren. De Serviërs beschuldigden de Moslims.) In de journalistieke discussie die internationaal over de verslaggeving in Bosnië werd gevoerd, werd onder andere de vraag opgeworpen of - achteraf gezien - de media zich niet te veel vereenzelvigd hebben met het lot van Sarajevo, dat speerpunt was in de Bosnische propaganda. Buitenlandredacteur, columnist en commentator Anet Bleich kan zich niet vinden in de opvatting van het NIOD dat de Nederlandse media, of in elk geval de *Volkskrant*, de Serviërs veel te snel afschilderden als de *bad guys*. 'Dat herken ik helemaal niet. Dat is een veel te simpel beeld.' Zij zag niet de Serviërs als de boosdoener, 'maar het door de Servische en Kroatische leiders gemanipuleerde ultra-nationalisme. In de loop van de oorlog werd dit destructieve nationalisme ook aan de Bosnische kant een steeds sterkere factor.'

Zij verwijst naar een interview dat zij op 5 april 1995 in de *Volkskrant* publiceerde met de Bosnisch-Servische journalist Igor Rajner, waarin zij schreef: 'Onafhankelijke media zijn in Bosnië uitsluitend te vinden in het gebied dat door de regering in Sarajevo wordt beheerst, vertelt Rajner, niet bij de Serviërs en Kroaten. Maar ook in mini-Bosnië wordt hun geluid tegenwoordig overstemd door dat van de (Moslim-)journalisten.' En voorts werd in dit artikel erop gewezen dat de rechtervleugel van de in Sarajevo regerende Partij van Democratische Actie van president Izetbegovic 'zich niet afkerig toonde van een etnisch zuiver Moslim-staatje'. De Kroaten deugden eigenlijk ook niet, vindt Bleich. Maar voor haar stond vast dat de Serviërs verschrikkelijk huisgehouden hebben in Bosnië. 'De Serviërs zijn begonnen met etnisch zuiveren en vervolgens ook de Kroaten en de Moslims in aanzienlijk mindere mate.'

Voor Bleich waren Slobodan Milosevic en Radovan Karadzic de aanwijsbare booswichten die de oorlog waren begonnen, 'en Tudjman was al niet veel beter'. In elk geval, zo constateert zij, was de opkomst van het fervente nationalisme het minste te bespeuren bij de Bosnische Moslims. De Serviërs waren de *bad guys*, 'want zij waren verreweg het machtigst'. En zij hadden de wapens, zij introduceerden de etnische zuivering in

Srpska, hoewel ook de Kroaten dat deden door de Serviërs te discrimineren.

Anet Bleich gelooft ook niet dat de kranten het beeld van de *bad guys* en de *good guys* bepaalden. Eerder bespeelden televisiebeelden de publieke opinie, 'want televisiebeelden hebben veel meer de psychologische neiging tot vereenvoudiging.' De krant voedde die simplificatie nog eens, vindt zij. Maar hoezo geen *good guys*, *bad guys*? 'In Srebrenica zijn zeventienduizend mannen vermoord. We kunnen niet doen alsof dat door de opiniemakers is verzonnen en alsof er geen verschrikkelijke dingen zijn gebeurd'. Volgens haar had Nederland politiek en moreel alle reden om ook militair mee te helpen het Joegoslavische drama tot een goed eind te brengen. 'In de enclaves was alle reden om iets te ondernemen.' Bleich realiseerde zich achteraf dat de krant 'toen ook beter had moeten zien dat er een goed mandaat moest zijn en dat Unprofor onvoldoende steun kon bieden in Srebrenica. De risico's die het Nederlandse engagement in Srebrenica inhielden, werden journalistiek veronachtzaamd.'

Voor de berichtgeving over het drama in voormalig Joegoslavië gebruikte de buitenlandredactie de internationale persbureaus en de nieuwsdiensten van het Britse dagblad *The Guardian* en van de Amerikaanse krant *The New York Times*. Lezing van ruim driehonderd nieuwsberichten over de oorlog die voornamelijk gecomponeerd waren uit de internationale persbureaus, vertonen een vertrouwd beeld. De 'feiten' werden opvallend vaak opgetekend uit de mond van zegslieden van de Verenigde Naties, hulporganisaties zoals het Rode Kruis en - voorzover mogelijk - van de plaatselijke bevolking. Als er slachtoffers gevallen waren, werden dikwijls hoge aantallen genoemd. In oorlogsgebieden vallen gegevens vaak niet te controleren, en daarom plegen persbureaus in voorkomende gevallen een regeltje toe te voegen dat 'de berichten niet door onafhankelijke bronnen bevestigd worden'.

Op 7 april 1994 publiceerde de *Volkskrant* het verhaal 'Ze strijkt met de hand langs haar keel' waarvoor de gegevens waren geput uit een reportage van *The Guardian* en van het Franse persbureau AFP over de toestand in het stadje Prijedor, waar 'stille getuigen' duiden op

'etnische zuiveringen. Van de 350 duizend Moslims die in de regio van Banja Luka leefden, meldt het verhaal, zijn er nog circa vijftigduizend over, de rest is verdreven en er zijn zeker 'enkele tienduizenden' vermoord. De medewerkers van de vluchtelingenorganisatie van de VN kregen elke dag meldingen van 'excessen tegen Moslims'. Het onderschrift bij de bijgaande foto's meldt: 'Door Servische nationalistische verwoeste huizen van Moslims in het Bosnische Prijedor. Duizenden Moslims en Kroaten in het gebied zijn in gevaar'. Zo'n verhaal beschrijft de verschrikkingen van een (burger)oorlog, maar of alle informatie juist is, is grotendeels oncontroleerbaar. De krant die zo'n artikel publiceert, meldt niet voor niets de bron van het verhaal, namelijk *The Guardian* en het persbureau AFP, maar geeft door publicatie natuurlijk tevens aan dat zij de informatie ook betrouwbaar acht.

Volgens buitenlandredacteur Marianne Boissevain was het niettemin zaak om kopij steeds met een gezonde dosis scepsis te beoordelen: 'Menigmaal heb ik uit dat soort kopij teksten moeten schrappen dat bijvoorbeeld de rivier de Sava "rood van het bloed zag", maar het gebeurde ook dat een ander deze klinkklare nonsens gewoon liet staan.'

De eenmaal gekozen en door niemand ter redactie op den duur aangevochten standpunten van de *Volkskrant* waren de oorzaak ervan dat het schema van de *good guys* - *bad guys* zo toch ook naar de berichtgeving doorsijpelde, of in elk geval de selectie van berichten beïnvloedde. Zo schrok *Volkskrant*-correspondent Frank Westerman in Servië van het verhaal dat onder de kop 'Artsen Servië doen proeven op Moslimvrouwen' op 4 januari 1993 in de *Volkskrant* verscheen. Het was naar Westermans mening 'van de pot gerukt'. De Serviërs, zo was de kern van het verhaal, deden experimenten met het implanteren van hondenfoetussen in deze vrouwen. Bron voor dat artikel was Stefan Schwarz, lid van de Duitse Bondsdag voor de christen-democratische CDU, die dit verhaal aan het Duitse boulevardblad *Bild Zeitung* had verteld. Toenmalig correspondent Willem Beusekamp in Bonn had dat verhaal overgenomen.

Buitenlandredacteurs van toen herinneren zich dat ter redactie weliswaar twijfels over de waarheid van het verhaal leefden, maar zij hadden van de correspondent



Een van de beelden uit het Omarska-kamp, augustus 1992. (Foto AP/Independent Television Network)

in Bonn de stellige verzekering gekregen dat Stefan Schwarz een 'degelijke en betrouwbare bron' was. En omdat op de redactie de Serviërs algemeen beschouwd werden als de 'kwaden', stond niets meer de publicatie van het artikel in de weg. In een interview van Beusekamp met Stefan Schwarz dat op 14 januari 1993 in *de Volkskrant* werd gepubliceerd - 'Duitse parlementariër Schwarz inventariseert misdaden Serviërs' - werd het omstreden artikel gecorrigeerd. *Het Algemeen Dagblad* was overigens wel zo zorgvuldig geweest om het verhaal van Schwarz eerst te onderzoeken. De krant kwam daarbij tot de ontstellende conclusie dat er niets van klopte. Westerman: 'De redactie heeft mij nooit benaderd om dat geval eerst uit te zoeken. En ik heb zelf evenmin iets ondernomen.'

'Ach', herinnert zich Boissevain uit die dagen, 'ons bereikten wel meer verhalen over Servische gruweldaden waarvan je met je gezonde verstand kon nagaan dat ze niet waar konden zijn, maar waaraan sommigen toch geloof hechtten'. Zo circuleerde een verhaal van een Servische vrouw die vertelde dat op een heel voetbalveld 'een laag van twintig centimeter bloed' stond, nadat er een groot aantal Moslims zou zijn begraven. Boissevain: 'Aan dat verhaal werd door sommigen hier geloof gehecht, omdat uitgerekend een Servische vrouw het verteld had, terwijl je met je nuchtere verstand kon begrijpen dat een bloedplas van twintig centimeter hoog op een voetbalveld volstrekte onzin moest zijn.' Het verhaal haalde de krant overigens niet.

De publicatie over het Omarska-kamp - de Britse televisie had beelden laten zien van uitgemergelde mannen achter prikkeldraad - was eveneens een blijk dat voor de redactie de Serviërs de *bad guys* waren. De uitgemergelde mannen, zo bleek later, stonden niet achter het prikkeldraad, maar ervoor. Jan Luijten geeft toe dat er zich natuurlijk ook 'blinde vlekken' ontwikkelden in de visie van *de Volkskrant* op de krijgshandelingen in Joegoslavië. 'Achteraf moeten we toegeven dat de beelden van het concentratiekamp Omarska niet klopten. Daarmee was gemanipuleerd. Het verhaal, geschreven door Ed Vulliamy van *The Guardian*, kwam op 6 augustus 1992 pas 's avonds binnen. We hadden geen enkele reden om eraan te twifelen, want het ging om waarneming uit de eerste hand. Op dat moment was publicatie dus goed te verdedigen. Achteraf begrijp ik dat het ook voor ons zo logisch was dat de Serviërs concentratiekampen erop na zouden houden, dat we nauwelijks twijfelden aan Omarska.' Toch is het voor Luijten nu 'allemaal getheoretiseer achteraf'. Hij houdt over Omarska vol: 'Onder de omstandigheden van toen was de publicatie van dat verhaal in orde.' Correspondent Frank Westerman heeft, vertelt hij, ook nooit gemerkt dat zijn stukken over de Servische kant van de oorlog door de redactie in Amsterdam 'niet gewenst waren'. Zijn interviews met Milosevic en de patriarch van Belgrado, die vertelde dat 'blauwhelmen de engelen van de antichrist' waren, kwamen zonder meer in de krant. 'Ze gaven een beeld van hoe die mensen dachten. Die meningen moesten dus intact gelaten worden en dat heeft de redactie ook gedaan.' Wel merkte Westerman dat verhalen waarin de Serviërs als de 'boosdoeners' figureerden een goed onthaal kregen in Amsterdam. Zo herinnert hij zich dat in de trein van Belgrado naar Montenegro een keertje alle Moslims uit de trein werden gehaald en verdwenen, precies in de luttele kilometers waar de trein over Bosnisch terrein liep. Belgrado weigerde dit incident te onderzoeken. 'In mijn reportage hierover sprak ik met zoveel mogelijk betrokkenen. Dat stuk viel in Amsterdam in goede aarde. Dat was ook niet zo gek. Als je de feiten onderzocht, bleek vanzelf wel wie de boosdoeners waren.

Overigens verzweg *de Volkskrant* de wandaden van de

andere partijen niet. In augustus 1992 publiceerde de krant een reportage van Ewoud Nysingh over de wreedheden van de extreem-rechtse elementen in het Kroatische leger. En tevens schreef de krant in een later stadium dat ook Moslims en Kroaten zich schuldig maakten aan oorlogsmisdaden tegen de Serviërs. De voorbeelden duiden erop dat het 'morele debat' ook een zekere invloed heeft gehad op de nieuwskeuzes. Volgens chef Luijten heeft *de Volkskrant* een veel beter beeld gegeven over de werkelijke situatie in Bosnië dan de politici schetsten. 'Wij zagen welke gruwelijke dingen er gebeurden, de etnische zuiveringen, en wij vonden dat er iets moest worden gedaan. Daarom pleitten wij voor een humanitaire interventie in Bosnië en waren vervolgens verbaasd dat de politiek niet naar ons wilde luisteren. Politici zagen het dramatische van de ontwikkelingen niet in of zij wilden het niet zien.' Uiteindelijk reageerde de krant verheugd dat er zogenoemde *safe areas* kwamen, veilige gebieden waarin de Moslim-bevolking beschermd zou worden door VN-troepen. Achteraf vraagt Luijten zich af of *de Volkskrant* toen niet te optimistisch is geweest. 'Misschien waren we al zo blij dat er iets gebeurde om die mensen daar te beschermen, dat we ons onvoldoende hebben afgevraagd of de manier waarop het werd uitgevoerd, wel voldeed. Luijten, die blijft vinden dat het NIOD een veel te negatief beeld heeft geschetst over de manier waarop *de Volkskrant* de Joegoslavische oorlog heeft verslagen, houdt vol: 'Ik heb journalistiek geen slecht geweten. We hebben nergens enorm gefaald. We hebben geen grote dingen laten liggen. Er zijn natuurlijk zaken gebeurd die beter hadden gekund en er zullen ook wel fouten zijn gemaakt. Maar we hebben het redelijk gedaan, met het nodige geluk, zoals het inzetten van correspondent Frank Westerman.' Van de berichtgeving in *de Volkskrant* ten tijde van de oorlog in Bosnië en Kroatië kan gezegd worden dat zij patronen of sjablonen laat zien die vaak in oorlogstijd worden gebruikt. De verslaggeving in een dergelijke situatie is uiteraard moeilijk, omdat ooggetuigenverhalen niet per se waar hoeven te zijn. Berichten worden gekleurd naargelang de getuigen die er de bron van zijn. In een aantal gevallen, zoals ze hier beschreven zijn, heeft de krant keuzes gemaakt die duidelijk geïnspi-

reerd waren door haar opvatting dat de Serviërs de ware boosdoeners waren. Maar de totale berichtgeving over de oorlog bevat daarnaast te veel nuances om te kunnen beweren dat *de Volkskrant* stelselmatig bezig is geweest berichten te plooiën naar haar opvatting dat de Serviërs de *bad guys* waren.

Op het gebied van de nieuwsvoorziening met betrekking tot de oorlog in Joegoslavië, was de redactie buitenland net zo beleidsbepalend als op het terrein van de opinievorming. De organisatiestructuur van de redactie buitenland maakte een monopolisering van een thema als de Joegoslavische oorlog ook erg gemakkelijk, zeker zolang in Den Haag de Nederlandse regering nog geen concrete plannen had om in het kader van de Verenigde Naties militair te interveniëren in Bosnië. Invloed van andere deelredacties op het doen en laten van de redactie buitenland was er eigenlijk niet in deze situatie. De buitenlandredactie is overigens altijd een redactie geweest met weinig journalistieke contacten met de rest van de redactie. Dat was zo gegroeid in de loop der jaren, en nooit werden pogingen ondernomen om dat te veranderen.

De specialist Joegoslavië was dus normaliter de eerste gegadigde voor verslaggeving in dat land. Hij of zij had immers een gedegen kennis van het gebied. Als in een land een vaste of freelance correspondent zat, werd natuurlijk die correspondent ingeschakeld. In enkele gevallen werd een beroep gedaan op de afdeling verslaggeverij van de krant: als het een klus was waarvoor die specifieke kennis niet vereist was – gemengd nieuws, zoals een ongeluk in een tunnel of een overstroming. Een uitspraak van Anet Bleich over het werk van verslaggever Hans Moleman in Joegoslavië illustreert wellicht de kijk op collega's van buiten de eigen afdeling: 'Zijn activiteiten vielen hier niet altijd goed. Hij snapte maar weinig van de ontwikkelingen in Joegoslavië. Zijn verhalen waren te oppervlakkig. Hij volgde te zeer allerlei officiële verklaringen.' En verslaggever Hans Moleman klaagde dat hij zich door de buitenlandredactie als 'een rare snijboon' behandeld voelde, als een 'outsider'. Er was geen bewust beleid om dergelijke 'outsiders' te weren, maar de 'eigen man of vrouw' had voorrang. Het systeem werd ook vrijwel nooit uitgedaagd vanuit de

rest van de redactie. De buitenlandredactie hoefde nooit nee te verkopen, omdat haar door de andere 'eilanden' ook niets aangeboden of gevraagd werd. De freelance correspondenten Westerman en vervolgens Rijs werden door de buitenlandredactie geworven en vervolgens door de hoofdredactie benoemd. Dat was ook beleid.

De buitenlandredactie was dus een tot op zekere hoogte gefortificeerd eiland tussen andere eilandjes op de redactie. Dat geven alle buitenlandredacteuren ook toe. Een efficiënte overlegstructuur tussen die eilandjes, en in elk geval tussen de buitenlandredactie en de rest, ontbrak. Anet Bleich bevestigt deze bizarre situatie: 'De eilandstructuur op deze krant speelde ons parten. Van onderlinge samenwerking tussen die eilanden was niet of nauwelijks sprake. Dus voerden de redactie buitenland, de verslaggeverij en de Haagse redactie – zij hadden allemaal op een of andere manier met de oorlog in Joegoslavië te maken – los van elkaar hun eigen beleid.' Volgens Bleich was het 'in het begin van de oorlog wel snel goed gegaan met de bepaling van het standpunt van de krant: 'Wij waren snel kritisch over Unprofor, het Vance/Owenplan en zo, en wij vonden ingrijpen toen al wenselijk.' Volgens haar had de krant Dutchbat in de latere fase veel kritischer moeten volgen. 'Die jongens konden de situatie niet aan.' Door die eilandenstructuur behield de redactie buitenland het monopolie op alle journalistieke activiteit, ook toen de zaken in Joegoslavië echt uit de hand liepen. Zo reisde in eerste instantie buitenlandredacteur Marianne Boissevain, die Joegoslavië indertijd in haar portefeuille had, naar Slovenië. Maar toen de eerste schoten vielen, vertrok ze spoorlags via Triëst naar Amsterdam. Oorlogservaring hadden de buitenlandredacteuren namelijk niet, en de verslaggeverij evenmin of nauwelijks. (Boissevain was dus niet, zoals in Jan Wietens rapport *Srebrenica en de politiek* vermeld staat, de correspondent van *de Volkskrant* in Joegoslavië). Opmerkelijk was het solo-optreden van de redactie buitenland eigenlijk wel. Want ten tijde van de Golfoorlog had de redactie, op initiatief van de toenmalige adjunct-hoofdredacteur Bert Vuijsje, zonder problemen een *Golf-desk* georganiseerd, een groepje waarin vertegenwoordigers van de verschillende deelredacties zaten. Volgens de betrokkenen was die

samenwerking voortreffelijk en efficiënt verlopen. Waarom besloot Luitjen tijdens de Joegoslavische oorlog niet ook tot een 'Joego-desk'? Hij meende – overigens achteraf pas – dat zo'n groep nooit vijf jaar lang had kunnen functioneren, omdat 'we met onze beperkte mankracht onherroepelijk in de problemen zouden zijn gekomen'. Maar alternatieven om de redactionele samenwerking te bevorderen, werden nimmer bedacht. In zo'n structuur was het bijna vanzelfsprekend dat niet alleen de opinie van de buitenlandredactie of die van 'de smaakmakende regionen', zoals verslaggever Hans Moleman de commentaarsector van de buitenlandredactie betitelde, in zekere zin onaantastbaar bleef, maar in hoge mate ook de verslaggeving. De instantie bij *de Volkskrant* die dat had kunnen veranderen, was de hoofdredactie. Ten tijde van de oorlog in Joegoslavië was de leiding van de krant in handen van Harry Lockefeer, tegen het einde van de oorlog bijgestaan door Pieter Broertjes als adjunct-hoofdredacteur. Sturing door de hoofdredactie ontbrak in de eerste plaats met betrekking tot de opiniesector en eveneens waar besluiten hadden moeten worden genomen om de redactionele aanpak van de oorlog in Joegoslavië net zo te verbreden als tijdens de Golfoorlog was gebeurd.

Door de hoofdredactie werden ook geen pogingen ondernomen het debat over de standpunten inzake Joegoslavië te verbreden om zo een door velen op de redactie gedeelde opinie te bewerkstelligen. In het logboek dat Pieter Broertjes, tegenwoordig hoofdredacteur, bijhield, bevinden zich geen sporen in die richting.

Wel hield de hoofdredactie één keer, op zaterdag 15 juli 1995, een commentaar van Anet Bleich tegen. Bleich had geschreven dat Nederland stilzwijgend zou moeten instemmen met het Franse plan om Srebrenica te heroveren, al zouden hierbij Nederlandse blauwhelmen in gevaar komen. Volgens Bleich hield adjunct-hoofdredacteur Jan Tromp haar commentaar tegen 'omdat hij het in zo'n moeilijk moment voor Nederland niet gepast vond om kritiek te leveren op minister Voorhoeve'. Tromp schreef op 14 juli 1995 een notitie waarin hij bestreed dat dit de reden was waarom hij het commentaar had 'opgehouden'. Zijn argument luidde: 'Hoe

ongebruikelijk en vervelend ook, meende ik dat publicatie van het commentaar moest wachten, omdat eerst de hele commentaargroep zich erachter moest stellen.' Hij waarschuwde dat *de Volkskrant* moest voorkomen dat 'we van het ene been op het andere gaan staan zoals ten tijde van de Golfoorlog'. Volgens Tromp veranderde *de Volkskrant*, in het begin van de Golfoorlog nogal eens van standpunt. 'De krant had toen moeite om te bepalen welke de goeie kant was. Dat was na de einde van de Koude Oorlog immers lastiger geworden. Onze standpunten wisselden naar de opportuniteit van het moment én de auteur van het commentaar.'

'Daarom', aldus Tromp in zijn notitie, 'is het nodig dat we ons vooraf rekenschap geven van de reikwijdte van ons standpunt en de consistentie ervan.' In de week voorafgaande aan zijn besluit had hij al het gevaar van inconsistenties bespeurd in de commentaren, maar de standpunten balanceerden toen nog 'op het randje'. Zo werd op 12 juli 1995 geconstateerd dat 'het hoofdstuk waarin het nog mogelijk was te geloven dat de huidige vorm van internationale bemoeienis met de oorlog in Bosnië-Herzegovina zinvol was, ten einde is'. Op 13 juli schreef *de Volkskrant*: 'Nog altijd (...) zijn honderdduizenden mensen in Bosnië afhankelijk van de humanitaire hulp en bescherming van de VN. Die opdracht mag alleen in geval van uiterste noodzaak worden opgegeven.' In datzelfde commentaar werd gezegd: '...eerste prioriteit [is] militairen en vluchtelingen uit hun benarde positie vrij te krijgen. Dat doel kan, het is pijnlijk maar waar, alleen via onderhandelingen met de Bosnische Serviërs worden bereikt.'

Op vrijdag 14 juli schreef de commentator naar aanleiding van de optie van bombardementen: 'Het is waar dat een dergelijke reactie extra risico's zou meebrengen voor de gegijzelde Nederlanders. Dit dilemma mag niet worden verzwegen (...) Het risico zou genomen moeten worden.' Op zaterdag 15 juli, de dag van het geweigerde commentaar, werd de noodzaak bepleit 'van een overtuigend militair gebaar, omdat anders diplomatie niets anders dan capitulatie betekent'.

Over het op de vorige dag gedemonstreerde dilemma werd op zaterdag geadviseerd: 'Het kabinet doet er het verstandigst aan officieel te zwijgen. Wie zwijgt stemt toe.' En terwijl op donderdag 13 juli de commentator

van de *Volkskrant* nog schreef dat 'de krijgshaftige taal van de Franse president Chirac (...) gemist kan worden als kiespijn', vond commentator Bleich in het geweigerde commentaar van zaterdag 15 juli: 'Frankrijk is allang de enige bij Bosnië betrokken mogendheid met een consistent concept.'

Het commentaar van 13 juli kwam overigens niet uit de pen van commentator Bleich. Achteraf verklaarde zij dat zij had betreurd dat in dat commentaar stond dat de krijgshaftige taal van Chirac gemist kon worden als kiespijn. Bleich: 'Voor de consistentie was het beter geweest als men die dag het commentaar had overgeslagen dan wel aan mij had voorgelegd.'

Maar behalve die keer bleek het geschetste monopolie

van de top van de buitenlandredactie voor de hoofdredactie nooit een onderwerp van zorg te zijn geweest. Op de werkvloer werd wel gemord, door Cammelbeeck en Nysingh, maar van een initiatief, van de redactie buitenland, de verslaggeverij of de Haagse redactie, om de hoofdredactie dit probleem voor te leggen, was evenmin sprake. André Roelofs beaamt: 'Alles bleef onder de regie van buitenland. De hoofdredactie had dat moeten doorbreken.' Dat gold volgens allen – achteraf – ook voor het verslaggeversmonopolie dat bij de buitenlandredactie beruiste. Het beleid van de hoofdredactie was volgens Roelofs een beleid van *laissez faire, laissez aller*. Nysingh: 'De hoofdredactie liet alles over aan Bleich en Roelofs.'

## HOOFDSTUK 2: KUNST EN VliegWERK

In de eerste maanden van 1995 leden de Nederlandse bevolking en de pers duidelijk onder Joegoslavië-moeheid. Er was sprake van een sluimerende aandacht, tot er begin mei VN-soldaten werden gegijzeld. Toen verveelvoudigde het aantal artikelen in de kranten, inclusief de *Volkskrant*. 'Een patroon dat voedsel geeft aan de veronderstelling dat Joegoslavië in 1995 pas echt nieuws wordt als de vijandelijkheden zich niet langer beperken tot de strijdende partijen onderling, maar ook VN-soldaten direct blootstaan aan levensbedreigende situaties', concluderen de onderzoekers van The Amsterdam School of Communications and Research (ASCoR).

De *Volkskrant* scoorde in deze periode hoog met achtergrondverhalen, maar bleef in vergelijking met *NRC Handelsblad* wat achter met nieuwsberichten.

De verslaggeving van de Balkanoorlog werd in die fase vooral verzorgd door Bart Rijs. Hij volgde in 1994 zijn vriend Frank Westerman op als freelance correspondent voor de *Volkskrant* in Belgrado. Westerman was in 1992 in de plaats gekomen van Ulrike Rudberg, de eerste correspondent van de krant in de Joegoslavische hoofdstad. Zij was de echtgenote van een redacteur van het Duitse perbureau DPA. Rudberg volgde het nieuws niet integraal, maar schreef af en toe een achtergrondverhaal in het Duits, dat op de redactie in Amsterdam werd vertaald.

Na het vertrek van Rudberg – ze verhuisde naar Wenen – nam buitenlandredacteur Marianne Boissevain korte tijd de honneurs in Joegoslavië waar. Maar zij vertrok zodra het vechten op de Balkan begon. 'Volgens de beste tradities van de *Volkskrant* nadat het eerste schot gevallen was', aldus oud-*Volkskrant*-verslaggever Ewoud Nysingh, nu redacteur bij het televisieprogramma NOVA.

'Op de redactie buitenland werd het belang van verslaggeving ter plekke snel ingezien', zegt oud-buitenlandchef Jan Luijten. 'We hechtten grote waarde aan een correspondent aan de Servische kant. Toen de gevechten eenmaal waren begonnen, werden regelmatig verslaggevers vanuit Amsterdam voor korte tijd, doorgaans

enkele weken, naar de Balkan gestuurd, om ook vanaf de Kroatische en Bosnische kant verslag te doen.'

Opvallend is dat het op een enkele uitzondering na, steeds ging om journalisten zonder oorlogservaring en met geen of zeer beperkte kennis van de complexe situatie in Joegoslavië. Ze werden meestal naar het oorlogsgebied gestuurd zonder voorbereiding en moesten ter plaatse vooral op eigen kompas leren varen. De begeleiding vanuit Amsterdam was minimaal of geheel afwezig. Moderne hulpmiddelen als satelliet-telefoons of kogelvrije vesten kwamen pas in een veel later stadium na lang soebatten beschikbaar.

Frank Westerman vertrok in oktober 1992 voor een proefperiode van drie maanden naar Belgrado. Zijn journalistieke ervaring was beperkt. Westerman, landbouwkundig ingenieur, was eerder op eigen initiatief kort in Roemenië en Joegoslavië geweest. Toine Berbers, coördinator van de buitenlandredactie, nodigde Westerman uit voor een gesprek over een correspondent-schap, nadat hij onder de indruk was geraakt van diens portret van de leider van Lichtend Pad, de guerrilla-beweging in Peru. Westerman bedong in eerste instantie dat hij vanuit Belgrado niet naar oorlogsgebieden hoefde. 'Dat vond ik te gevaarlijk. Ik ben het tegenovergestelde van een avonturier', zegt hij. Zijn voorbereiding voor het correspondent-schap bestond uit een verblijf van drie weken in het archief van de *Volkskrant*, waar hij een koffer vol krantenartikelen kopieerde. Er werd door de redacteurs in Amsterdam geen enkele poging gedaan hem vooraf in een bepaalde richting te sturen. Westerman had in die tijd geen uitgesproken mening over de strijdende partijen in Servië. Hij wilde ook zelf uitmaken welke onderwerpen hij wilde uitdiepen. 'Ik had niet de indruk dat er in Amsterdam een lijn werd bepaald waaraan ik moest voldoen.' In zijn eerste weekend in Joegoslavië schreef hij vanuit zijn hotelkamer al verscheidene verhalen, onder andere over recente ontwikkelingen in Kosovo.

Zijn enige kennis over de actuele situatie in Kosovo kwam van een paar faxen die de redactie uit Amsterdam

naar zijn hotel had gezonden. Verwoede telefonades naar Pristina leverden weinig op. Van deadlines was hij onvoldoende op de hoogte. Pas later kwam Westerman erachter dat er in Belgrado een perscentrum bestond, waar hij het nieuws kon volgen en collega's kon ontmoeten. Achteraf vond de nieuwbakken correspondent het een klein wonder dat zijn verhalen op tijd in Amsterdam arriveerden en de volgende dag in de krant stonden.

Ook Ewoud Nysingh wist weinig van de Balkan toen hij in de zomer van 1991 voor de eerste keer naar het oorlogsgebied vertrok. Hij werkte sinds enige tijd op de redactie buitenland als specialist voor Noord-Afrika. Nysingh: 'Ik was totaal onvoorbereid. Maar dat bleek voor de redactie geen probleem. Ik werd gevraagd omdat niemand anders wilde reizen. Ik kreeg van de redactie geen enkele opdracht mee. Ik heb me gewoon als verslaggever opgesteld en beschreven wat ik zag. Ik ben met fotograaf Daniel Koning naar de Krajina gereden. Achteraf bezien levensgevaarlijk.'

Bart Rijs had wat meer ervaring opgedaan als journalist van HP/De Tijd, toen hij voor *de Volkskrant* naar Joegoslavië vertrok. Maar een verslaggever als Hans Moleman kon zich alleen handhaven door snel van Nederlandse, Britse of Amerikaanse collega's te leren en zich te houden aan de basisregels van de verslaggeving: beschrijf wat je ziet en bezondig je niet aan speculatie. 'Ezelachtig, naïef, ziende blind en bovenal onervaren, onvoorbereid op de plaatselijke werkelijkheid.' Zo begaf *de Volkskrant*, en niet alleen deze krant, zich volgens Hans Moleman, nu correspondent voor *de Volkskrant* in Zuid-Afrika, zich in het Joegoslavische moeras. Op de redactie was volgens hem geen belangstelling voor verslaggeving ter plekke. 'Ik voelde me steeds een rare snijboon, als ik voorstelde naar de Balkan te gaan', aldus Moleman, die zelfs een keer ongevraagd in een geleende auto naar het gevaarlijke Sarajevo vertrok, tot grote woede van de hoofdredactie.

Zonder uitzondering reppen verslaggevers en correspondenten van een zeer gebrekkige begeleiding. Ze voelden zich vaak aan hun lot overgelaten en hadden, op een enkele uitzondering na, niets aan de *feedback* van Amsterdam. Nysingh: 'Op de redactie ging het alleen maar over de standpunten die de redacteuren over

conflicten moesten innemen. Nooit over de feiten die door de krant boven water gehaald moesten worden.' Ze geven tegelijk volmondig toe dat aan deze situatie ook grote voordelen kleefden: verslaggevers konden ter plaatse doen wat ze wilden.

Wat ze ook leverden, het was voor Amsterdam bijna altijd goed. Niemand zat te wachten op redacteuren die de correspondent wilden aansturen. De ideologisch getinte discussies in Amsterdam hadden volgens de mensen in het veld geen enkele invloed op hun werk. Nysingh: 'Ik had geen last van de debatten in Amsterdam. Niemand had eigenlijk belangstelling voor de keuzes die ik als verslaggever maakte. Amsterdam had het te druk met opinies om zich nog om de feiten te kunnen bekommeren. Ik had onderweg al moeite genoeg om onafhankelijk te blijven. Gaandeweg begreep ik in welk wespennest ik was terechtgekomen. Ik vertrouwde niemand meer. Dat bleek een goed uitgangspunt. Ik richtte me op de praktijk van alledag en schreef alleen over de zaken die ik zelf kon waarnemen. Ik ben vaak teruggeweest op de Balkan. Hoe meer ik ervan zag, hoe minder ik van het conflict begreep. Dat is niet erg zolang je je gezonde verstand gebruikt en niet in de valkuilen stapt die door alle partijen worden gegraven.' *De Volkskrant* heeft geluk gehad dat Westerman, Rijs, Moleman en Nysingh zich flexibel opstelden en goed solistisch konden werken. Ze pasten zich in vlot tempo aan aan de snel wisselende situaties en zorgden ervoor dat de verslaggeving ter plaatse op een redelijk tot zeer goed peil bleef.

De onprofessionele omgang van *de Volkskrant* met oorlogsverslaggeving is deels te verklaren uit het verleden. Dat de krant eigen mensen naar brandhaarden stuurt in een poging grote conflicten integraal te verslaan, dateert pas uit het begin van de jaren negentig. In de Golfoorlog werd een tiental verslaggevers en correspondenten ingezet. Maar de Vietnam-oorlog werd door de jaren heen vanuit Nederland gevolgd. Met de meningsvorming had de krant toen al geen moeite, maar ter plaatse gaan kijken of de verhalen klopten, werd niet overwogen.

Dat lag voor de kleine redactie van zestig man buiten bereik. Ook de financiële middelen waren beperkt. Alleen de verzekering van een oorlogscorrespondent kan

al oplopen tot duizenden guldens per week. Maar ook de cultuur op de redactie was er niet naar om collega's aan gevaren bloot te stellen. Voor achtereenvolgende hoofdredacteuren was een gewonde of gedode collega een nachtmerrie.

Niettemin werd er in de jaren zeventig en tachtig verslag gedaan van langdurige conflicten in Zuid- en Midden-Amerika en het Midden-Oosten. Jan Keulen versloeg jaren vanuit Beiroet het Palestijns-Israëlische conflict. Jan van der Putten begaf zich in het strijd-gewoel na staatsgrepen in Chili, Argentinië en El Salvador. Hun gewaagde activiteiten waren niet zozeer het gevolg van beleid van de krant, als wel van hun eigen nieuwsgierigheid en beroepsopvatting. Bovendien waren zij, net als bijvoorbeeld Westerman en Rijs in de Balkan en Els de Temmerman in Ruanda werkzaam op freelance basis.

Jan Luijten, zelf oud-correspondent in Bonn en Brussel: 'We waren natuurlijk slecht voorbereid op het verslaan van een langdurige en ingewikkelde oorlog op de Balkan. We wilden van het begin af aan wel zelf aan reportages doen, maar het was erg moeilijk daar de goede mensen voor te vinden.' Jan Luijten geeft toe dat de gesprekken op de redactie vooral gingen over de mening van de redacteuren (en de krant als geheel) over kwesties als zelfbeschikkingsrecht, interventie door de VN en acties van Dutchbat. Veel minder werd er nagedacht over de journalistieke invulling, over de vraag op welke manier de krant zelf achter de waarheid kon komen, over de keuzes van verslaggevers.

In de loop van 1995 werd de aandacht van *de Volkskrant* in toenemende mate opgeëist door de spanning rond Srebrenica en de positie van Dutchbat. Het werd pijnlijk duidelijk dat de Nederlandse militairen in de val zaten en weinig tegen een Servische aanval konden doen. Ze waren afhankelijk van afspraken met de VN over de exitstrategie (Britten maken het vertrek mogelijk) en van luchtsteun bij een Servische aanval.

De centrale vraag is of de journalistiek, en *de Volkskrant* in het bijzonder, genoeg moeite heeft gedaan om erachter te komen of de uitzending van Dutchbat verantwoord was. Is bijvoorbeeld bij de Canadezen, de voorgangers in Srebrenica die met grote opluchting vertrokken, geïnformeerd naar de risico's ter plekke?

Uit het NIOD-rapport blijkt dat niet alleen de Nederlandse militaire top dat naliet, maar wat deden de journalisten?

Zijn er vraagtekens gezet bij de garanties van de VN? Heeft *de Volkskrant* zich ingezet om de militaire positie van Dutchbat correct in kaart te brengen (bijvoorbeeld de gevolgen van de zwakke bewapening). En: heeft de krant zich ingespannen om in Srebrenica ter plekke te onderzoeken hoe het Dutchbat verging? Had *de Volkskrant* voor de val van de enclave voldoende notie van de anti-Moslimhouding van het bataljon en de gespannen relatie met de Moslims?

Naarmate de Serviërs verder oprukten in Bosnië en de Moslimbevolking werd samengedreven in enclaves als Srebrenica, werd de roep om interventie ook in Nederland luider. Toen de Franse generaal Morillon onder druk van de bevolking Srebrenica had uitgeroepen tot veilig gebied, was het voor het Nederlandse publiek, de politiek en de journalistiek duidelijk dat Nederland hier een rol moest spelen.

Achteraf moet worden vastgesteld dat de manier waarop die steun werd verleend, door *de Volkskrant* nauwelijks kritisch is benaderd. De krant ging, net als alle andere media, volledig mee in het nationale gevoel dat hier voor Nederland een morele verplichting lag. Van de landelijke dagbladen was *de Volkskrant* volgens het NIOD het sterkst voor interventie in Bosnië. Het was voor de krant helder dat de Moslims in Bosnië de slachtoffers waren en dat zij beschermd moesten worden, maar een zelfstandige journalistieke speurtocht naar de gevaren die ingrijpen in de complexe situatie in Bosnië met zich mee bracht, bleef achterwege.

Nauwelijks werd onderzocht of Dutchbat wat betreft training, ervaring, bewapening en omvang op zijn taak berekend was. Alleen van militaire zijde kwam enige kritiek over de onmogelijke situatie waarin het bataljon zou terechtkomen, de slechte bewapening en de twijfelachtige toezeggingen van de VN. Die kritiek van sommige commandanten haalde de krant, maar viel weg tegen de dominante overtuiging dat Nederland een goede daad moest stellen.

Wio Joustra was van begin 1990 tot midden 1994 chef van de Haagse redactie en specialist voor de departementen van Buitenlandse Zaken en Defensie. Tijdens het

Nederlandse voorzitterschap van de EU in 1991 werd hij tot Joegoslavië-specialist gebombardeerd, omdat hij geacht werd minister Hans van den Broek te volgen. De minister eiste tijdens het voorzitterschap een voorname bemiddelingsrol in de Balkan voor zich op.

Joustra: 'Dan zit je plotseling in Den Haag bij conferenties over een ingewikkelde internationale kwestie en word je geacht te schrijven over de posities van Milosevic en Karadzic, zonder voldoende kennis om de gang van zaken te kunnen beoordelen. Dat is eigenlijk heel vreemd. Ik heb me vaak erover verbaasd dat er op *de Volkskrant* geen denktank werd gevormd, waarin kennis werd uitgewisseld en een lijn in deze affaire werd bepaald.'

Joustra, nu plaatsvervangend hoofdredacteur van de *Leeuwarder Courant*, kan zich niet herinneren dat hij ooit met de redactie in Amsterdam heeft gesproken over de journalistieke aanpak van de Balkanoorlog en de Nederlandse betrokkenheid. Hij handelde volledig op eigen initiatief. Met het aflopen van het Nederlandse EU-voorzitterschap werd Joustra ook verlost van de Joegoslavische kwestie. Wat voor hem bleef, was de Nederlandse militaire betrokkenheid.

Achteraf ziet Joustra in dat de krant kritischer had moeten staan tegenover de uitzending van Dutchbat en meer eigen onderzoek had moeten doen naar de risico's die zowel de Nederlandse soldaten als de Moslimbevolking liepen. Maar onder de omstandigheden van toen vindt hij de volgzaam journalistieke handelwijze wel begrijpelijk. 'Vergeet niet dat Nederland toen gedompeld was in een sfeer van: in Bosnië gebeurt iets verschrikkelijks. Daar moeten we iets aan doen. Daarover was iedereen in de politiek het eens, van de Kamerleden Van Middelkoop tot Van Traa, iedereen ging ervan uit dat de risico's voor Dutchbat aanvaardbaar waren. Als je daarover kritische vragen stelde, was je verdacht. Bovendien zouden de Nederlanders niet gaan om te vechten, maar om de vrede te bewaren. Niemand twijfelden aan de noodzaak daarvan. Navraag doen bij de Canadezen? Achteraf een goed idee. Maar niemand zag daarvan toen de noodzaak in', aldus Joustra. Zijn taak was het volgen van het politieke debat in Den Haag. Hij reisde een keer met minister Ter Beek mee naar Zagreb, een tripje met volgens zijn zeggen 'erg weinig bewegingsvrijheid'.

Achteraf zijn alle betrokkenen het erover eens dat *de Volkskrant* zich meer had moeten inspannen om de risico's voor Dutchbat en de bevolking van Srebrenica beter in kaart te brengen. In hun verklaringen waarom dat niet gebeurd is, komt steevast de 'weinig inspirerende sfeer' op de krant terug, als het gaat om militaire zaken. Nysingh stelt met spijt vast dat hem pas achteraf gebleken is wat een 'bijeengeraapt ongetraind zootje' Dutchbat III eigenlijk was. Hij had naar Srebrenica willen gaan. Hij heeft zelfs geprobeerd als reserveofficier bij Dutchbat ingedeeld te worden (verzoek door de legerleiding afgewezen), maar gaf zijn pogingen op. 'We hadden totaal geen zicht op wat de militaire deelname van Dutchbat betekende. Militairen hebben voor *de Volkskrant* altijd iets exotisch. Dom, om te lachen. Serieuze verhalen over bijvoorbeeld de bewapening van pantservoertuigen waren moeilijk in de krant te krijgen. Als ik voorstelde dichter op de mensen te gaan zitten, op de militairen die het moesten doen, werd ik glazig aangekeken. Bij *de Volkskrant* gold: hoe verder weg hoe interessanter. Ze schreven liever van achter het bureau over de Tamil Tijgers.'

Hans Moleman: 'Bij de opinieleiders op de krant bestond weinig belangstelling voor de risico's die Dutchbat liep. Ze vonden dat Nederland moest helpen en over de risico's moest je niet te veel zeuren.' Pogingen om de militaire en humanitaire dilemma's realistisch weer te geven, strandden volgens hem op z'n best in een donker hoekje in de krant. Moleman maakte in de jaren negentig deel uit van de algemene verslaggeving, een ploeg verslaggevers die in binnen- en buitenland op alle onderwerpen konden worden ingezet. In de Balkanoorlog is dat slechts in beperkte mate gebeurd. Naast Moleman reisden sporadisch algemeen verslaggevers naar Joegoslavië met een bijzondere opdracht. Zo maakte Ineke Jungschleger reportages over vluchtelingen en was Bas Mesters ter versterking aanwezig op de beruchte persconferentie van Dutchbat in Zagreb na de terugkeer van de VN'ers uit Srebrenica. Na de val van Srebrenica kwamen in Nederland verscheidene verslaggevers in actie bij pogingen de waarheid over Dutchbat boven tafel te krijgen. Maar geen van hen reisde voor, tijdens of na de val van de enclave af naar de plaats des onheils.

In Bosnië deden tussen 1993 en 1995 eerst Westerman en later Rijs verwoede pogingen in Srebrenica informatie te verzamelen. Dat gebeurde door middel van hun relaties in de VN-bureaucratie, de VN-commandanten en hun relaties aan de Servische en de Bosnische kant. Soms was de Dutchbat-commandant in Srebrenica telefonisch te bereiken. Maar het beste was toch waarneming ter plekke, in Srebrenica. Voor de journalisten in Bosnië was tussen 1993 en 1995 een bezoek aan deze enclave de meest begeerde reportage. Terwijl het oog van de wereld was gericht op de door de Serviërs omsingelde valei en iedereen speculeerde over wat er in de enclave gebeurde, werd het verslaggevers bijna onmogelijk gemaakt de stad binnen te komen.

Het lukte Westerman twee keer de enclave illegaal te bezoeken. De eerste keer tijdens het bewind van de Canadezen. De tweede keer in de slipstream van Zweedse bouwvakkers die in Srebrenica prefabwoningen gingen bouwen. Srebrenica werd in die periode al beschermd door Dutchbat II. Westerman had toen allang zijn voornemen laten varen om niet naar oorlogsgebieden af te reizen.

Zijn tripjes naar Srebrenica duurden maar kort, vijf en zes uur. In die tijd vergaarde hij informatie voor drie verhalen, respectievelijk een verhaal. Westerman: 'We hadden geen tijd voor grondig onderzoek. Toch was het belangrijk dat we er waren. De eerste keer konden we met eigen ogen zien wat er waar was van de verhalen over het verschrikkelijke lijden van de bevolking. De tweede keer konden we zelf ook constateren hoe Dutchbat er voorstond.' Uit zijn reportages die in juni 1994 in de krant verschenen, blijkt niet alleen de hopeloze situatie van de bevolking, maar ook de kansloze positie van Dutchbat.

'Onze aanwezigheid voorkomt misschien een slachting zoals in Gorazde', zegt eerste luitenant Corne van Overveld in Westermans reportage van 22 juni 1994. 'Maar militair-technisch hebben we weinig in te brengen. Het beschermen van de pocket (de enclave, red.) lukt niet. Wat wij hier doen, is het opknappen van een klusje voor de politiek.'

Westerman was een van de weinige journalisten die tot Srebrenica doordrongen nadat de VN het stadje tot *safe area* hadden uitgeroepen. De anderen waren aange-

wezen op informatie uit de tweede of derde hand. Ze moesten het doen met flarden van informatie over de toestand in de enclave, waar 70 duizend vluchtelingen waren samengedreven. Westerman vindt de beschuldiging van het NIOD dat de pers te weinig zou hebben gedaan om in Srebrenica te geraken, erg gemakkelijk. Het was erg zwaar en gevaarlijk om de stad binnen te komen en het werd vrijwel onmogelijk gemaakt om er, eenmaal gearriveerd, te werken. Hij werd in eerste instantie bijna door Dutchbat gearresteerd toen hij zich bij het bataljon meldde.

Reportages van eigen verslaggevers zijn belangrijk. Maar *de Volkskrant* beschikte, naast de waarneming door eigen mensen, over verscheidene mogelijkheden om de ontwikkelingen in Joegoslavië te volgen en te duiden. De krant had de geijkte abonnementen op persbureaus als ANP, AP en Reuters. Daarnaast kocht de krant de rechten op bijdragen uit *The New York Times* en de toonaangevende Britse krant *The Guardian*. Ook kregen deskundigen uit binnen- en buitenland de gelegenheid hun licht te laten schijnen op de situatie. Er kwam verder veel informatie binnen langs de Haagse kanalen, met name het ministerie van Defensie. Het totaalbeeld dat *de Volkskrant* geeft in de periode tot de val van Srebrenica is, zeker in vergelijking met andere Nederlandse kwaliteitskranten, redelijk tot goed. De krant had een eigen uitgesproken mening, maar ook afwijkende opvattingen kwamen aan bod.

Er werd ook in politiek Den Haag veel aandacht besteed aan de problemen rond Dutchbat. De Tweede Kamer debatteerde over de benarde positie van de Nederlandse militairen en de problemen rond de aflossing van Dutchbat, die moeilijk te regelen was. In de maanden voor de val van de enclave verschenen daarover, ook in *de Volkskrant*, verslagen van de politieke discussies, waaruit grote verontrusting sprak. Nysingh noemt de constatering van het NIOD dat de gevaren voor Dutchbat en de bevolking van Srebrenica in die periode onvoldoende werden onderkend, dan ook onzin. Dat dit onvoldoende leidde tot eigen onafhankelijk journalistiek onderzoek is volgens hem juist.

Lang voor de val van Srebrenica was het volgens Bart Rijs al duidelijk dat het niet goed zat met het Nederlandse bataljon. Er werden ook door hem verhalen geschreven over dreigend voedselgebrek bij de mili-

tairen. Twee maanden voor de val van Srebrenica waren er volgens Rijs al signalen dat het niet goed ging met de enclaves. De Serviërs waren toen al bezig de smokkelroute Zepa-Srebrenica af te zetten. 'De betekenis daarvan had ik moeten beseffen', aldus Rijs. Hij wijst op de problemen die verslaggevers hadden om zich in Bosnië te verplaatsen. Door de opdeling van het land in etnische zones, kostte het soms dagen reizen om langs een lange gedwongen omweg naar een plaats op misschien niet meer dan 15 kilometer afstand te komen. De Nederlandse journalisten misten in Joegoslavië volgens Rijs de vaste gewoonten van doorgewinterde buitenlandse oorlogsverslaggevers. Die wagen zich vaker dicht bij het front in pogingen feiten te verifiëren en richten zich daarbij meer op eigen waarnemingen en minder op meningen van anderen. Bovendien waren ze beter op de hoogte van militaire mogelijkheden, bijvoorbeeld de vuurkracht van wapens, en herkenden ze op grond van hun ervaring bepaalde situaties eerder en beter. In het hele pakket aan informatievoorziening bleven pogingen van *de Volkskrant* beperkt om door middel van eigen onderzoek witte plekken in de verslaggeving in te vullen. Dat gold met name waar het de risico's betrof voor Dutchbat en de door het bataljon beschermde bevolking, en – zoals we verderop zullen zien – de nasleep van de val. In het bijzonder de betrokkenheid van Dutchbat bij de massamoord in Srebrenica. Op die momenten wreekte zich het gebrek aan eigen initiatief, een kritische attitude en een volgzame houding ten opzichte van vooral de Haagse autoriteiten. Waar in het begin van het conflict de buitenlandredactie de exclusieve behandeling voor zich opeiste, deed de Haagse redactie dat in de nasleep van de val van de enclave. De kritiek van het NIOD spitst zich toe op de gebrekkige wijze waarop de Nederlandse pers verslag heeft gedaan van de rol van Dutchbat tijdens de val van Srebrenica en de houding van de Nederlandse militairen bij het afvoeren (en vermoorden) van duizenden weerbare Moslimmannen. Tijdens de aanval van de Serviërs op Srebrenica bevonden zich geen journalisten in de enclave. Net als alle andere media over de hele wereld, moest *de Volkskrant* zich baseren op mededelingen uit de hoofdkwartieren van de VN in Zagreb en Sarajevo en uit het crisiscentrum in Den Haag.

Op 6 juli 1995 begonnen de gevechten rond Srebrenica. In de krant van vrijdag 7 juli maakte *de Volkskrant* melding van hevige gevechten rond de stad. Bart Rijs volgde de strijd vanuit Tuzla, waar hij gebruik kon maken van de telefoon van de Nederlandse VN-officier Brandts, die het VN-netwerk tot zijn beschikking had. Hij bleef zo goed op de hoogte. Op maandag 10 juli schreef Rijs dat hoge VN-officieren een Nederlands verzoek om luchtsteun hadden afgeslagen en dat de VN op zondagavond alsnog met luchtaanvallen hadden bedreigd als de Serviërs hun aanval op Srebrenica zouden doorzetten. Rijs in dat artikel: 'Maar zolang er Nederlanders (door de Serviërs gegijzelde VN'ers, red.) in Servische handen zijn, is het hoogst onwaarschijnlijk dat er daadwerkelijk om luchtsteun zal worden gevraagd.' Al die tijd bestond er bij de VN en onder de Nederlandse militaire leiding twijfel of de Serviërs echt uit waren op verovering van de enclave. Op dinsdag 11 juli maakte minister Voorhoeve de val van Srebrenica wereldkundig. 'De ramp was onafwendbaar'. *De Volkskrant* van 12 juli meldde dat Dutchbat-commandant Karremans met de Serviërs onderhandelde over een staakt-het-vuren en een vrije aftocht van de ongeveer 44 duizend Moslims en de 400 blauwhelmen. Donderdag 13 juli schreef de krant dat de Serviërs waren begonnen met de etnische zuivering. Medewerkers van Artsen zonder Grenzen vertelden toen al dat de vluchtelingen vreselijk bang en uitgeput waren en schreeuwend en volstrekt in paniek in de bussen werden geladen, die generaal Mladic had laten komen. Jongens en mannen werden gescheiden van vrouwen en kinderen om volgens een VN-medewerker te worden ondervraagd om vast te stellen of ze zich schuldig hadden gemaakt aan oorlogsmisdaden. Op elke bus zou een Dutchbatter meereizen om de veiligheid van de vluchtelingen te garanderen, aldus de VN. Alom bleek grote waardering voor de rol van Dutchbat. In de Tweede Kamer, bij de Bosnische regering ('dappere mannen'), CNN ('historisch optreden') en de NAVO. Uit vrijwel alle hoofdsteden stroomden de gelukwensen binnen. Ook Karremans en Voorhoeve kregen schouderklopjes. Op 13 juli verscheen in *de Volkskrant* prominent een verhaal van Jan Hoedeman en Ewoud Nysingh over Voorhoeve, die dagenlang in de commandobunker in



Een forensische onderzoeker aan het werk in het lijkenhuis van Tuzla, waar meer dan 3500 slachtoffers van het Srebrenica-drama wachten op identificatie. (Foto Reuters/Damir Sagolj)

Den Haag had gezeten. 'Voorhoeve bewijst zich als juiste man op juiste plaats'. Er was nog geen spoor van twijfel over de rol van Dutchbat.

In de krant van 14 juli verschenen de eerste verhalen van Rijs over wat zich heeft afgespeeld in Srebrenica, deels op basis van gesprekken met vluchtelingen in Tuzla. Rijs was een van de eersten die de verhalen van de vluchtelingen optekende. Iedereen die de situatie in Bosnië kende, wist toen volgens hem eigenlijk al wat er met de mannen gebeurd zou zijn. 'Gelukkig liet ik in mijn verhalen met de vluchtelingen al twijfel blijken over het lot van de mannen en de opstelling van Dutchbat', aldus Rijs in een column in *de Volkskrant* van 22 augustus 1998. 'In Bosnië werd je nog met de neus op de feiten gedrukt (...), in Nederland

was de realiteit van de oorlog ver weg.' Zijn bezwaren tegen het lovende artikel over Voorhoeve werden in Amsterdam volgens Rijs 'niet helemaal begrepen'. Srebrenica bleef dagelijks groot nieuws. Op 15 juli publiceerde *de Volkskrant* de beruchte foto van Karremans die met Mladic toost. In het begeleidende verhaal werd uitgelegd dat de Nederlandse commandant het prototype is van een militair die geleerd heeft als diplomaat te fungeren. 'Karremans omgeschoold van groendenker tot blauwdenker.' Ook de andere Nederlandse media leverden nauwelijks kritiek op deze pose. Buitenlandse kranten wisten daar wel raad mee. 'De VN-commandant, die tienduizenden vrouwen, kinderen en bejaarden overleverde aan de Bosnische Serviërs, liet onbeschaamd de champagne knallen met de commandant van de Serviërs', stond er in het

onderschrift van de Turkse krant *Hürriyet*. Intussen leverde de Franse minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Hervé de la Charette de eerste kritiek op de Nederlandse houding inzake Srebrenica. De suggestie dat Nederland de enclave verkwanseld zou hebben om de Dutchbatters ongedeerd thuis te kunnen krijgen, lokte een nijldige reactie uit van premier Kok. Terwijl het drama zich in Srebrenica ontwikkelde en Bart Rijs, als enige verslaggever ter plekke, pogingen bleef doen te achterhalen wat er gebeurd was, woedde in de kolommen van *de Volkskrant* een ware meningenstrijd over het concept van de *safe areas*.

In de verslagen uit Bosnië nam de kritiek op Dutchbat toe. Moslimvrouwen verweten de VN'ers hen in de steek te hebben gelaten. 'U bent verantwoordelijk voor deze genocide.' Jacques de Milliano van Artsen zonder Grenzen sprak op 18 juli over een massaslachting in Srebrenica. Ook minister Pronk heeft het over genocide. Op 22 juli nam *de Volkskrant* een bericht over van *The Independent*, waarin melding wordt gemaakt van vierduizend geëxecuteerde Moslimmannen. Maar steeds weer werden hierbij door anderen vraagtekens gezet. Dutchbat-kolonel Hegge zei in de *NRC* van 22 juli dat de verhalen over de massaslachtingen sterk werden overdreven: 'Je moet er ook rekening mee houden dat de mensen in Srebrenica drieënhalve jaar door de plaatselijke mafia zijn onderdrukt. Velen zijn blij dat ze daar nu weg zijn.'

Op zondag 23 juli vond de beruchte persconferentie in Zagreb plaats, waar Karremans zijn uitspraak over 'no good guys' en 'no bad guys' doet. Alle Nederlandse militairen zijn dan terug op veilige Kroatische bodem. In aanwezigheid van premier Kok, minister Voorhoeve, prins Willem Alexander en opperbevelhebber Couzy worden de Nederlandse blauwhelmen met muziek ingehaald. Uit het NIOD-rapport blijkt dat de uitlatingen van Karremans op de persconferentie voor Nederlandse journalisten in eerste instantie nauwelijks een reactie veroorzaakt. Pas als later de buitenlandse pers te woord wordt gestaan, neemt die Karremans en Voorhoeve onder vuur.

*Volkskrant*-verslaggever Hans Moleman was de enige die daags daarop verslag daarvan deed in zijn krant. De berichtgeving over de rol van Dutchbat veranderde na

de persconferentie. De rol van Dutchbat en die van Karremans kwamen ter discussie. In hoeverre hebben de Nederlanders meegeholpen aan de deportatie van de Moslimbevolking van Srebrenica en hoever reikte hun sympathie voor de Serviërs? In alle kranten was er veel aandacht voor de persconferentie in Zagreb. Vanaf dat moment ging het steeds meer over de vraag of Dutchbat en Karremans hebben meegewerkt aan oorlogsmisdaden.

Net als de andere landelijke kranten begon *de Volkskrant* direct na 'Zagreb' met het zoeken naar verklaringen voor het gedrag van de Nederlandse militairen. Verslaggever Bas Mesters schreef in het katern *Vervolg* een verhaal over de Nederlandse Dutchbatters en hun gedrag in Srebrenica.

Een passage uit een interne analyse van de nieuwsdienst van *de Volkskrant* van december 1995 over de verslaggeving rond Srebrenica: 'Achteraf kunnen we vaststellen dat we ons daarbij te veel gericht hebben op de teruggekeerde Nederlandse militairen en de politieke, vooral Nederlandse reacties op de gebeurtenissen. Srebrenica werd te veel behandeld als een nationaal evenement. We werden in beslag genomen door verkeerd ontwikkelde filmrolletjes, verdwenen lijsten en controverses tussen Voorhoeve en de legertop. We hebben ons, net als vrijwel alle andere Nederlandse media, laten meeslepen op zijwegen. Daarop scoorden we van tijd tot tijd wel: over de geheim gehouden afspraak tussen generaal Smith met Mladic en over het tegenhouden door minister Van Mierlo van het Dutchbat-rapport.

'We hebben pas in een laat stadium, na de zomervakantie, pogingen ondernomen om Nederlandse militairen te spreken te krijgen over wat er in Srebrenica was gebeurd. We zijn ook laat op het idee gekomen terug te gaan naar de plaats des onheils om zelf onderzoek te doen.'

Op 26 juli ging Bart Rijs terug naar Srebrenica. Hij deed direct verslag van zijn bevindingen in de beruchte school en in het stadion. Hij zag stille getuigen van de schietpartijen. De Serviërs verhullen in dat verhaal niet dat er tweeduizend mensen begraven liggen. Maar dat zijn volgens hen allemaal slachtoffers van gevechtshandelingen. Wat het eigen onderzoek ter plaatse betreft, bleef het daarbij.

Uit de interne *Volkskrant*-analyse uit 1995: 'Aan dat verhaal mankeert wel iets. Het eigen nieuws was weg-gemoffeld. [De tweeduizend slachtoffers werden pas aan het slot van het artikel opgevoerd, red.] Onder de gegeven omstandigheden (onder toezicht van de Serviërs) kon Rijs ter plekke niet meer doen. We hadden onze pogingen echter niet mogen staken om tot een eigen reconstructie te komen.' Het waren buitenlandse journalisten die aanvullend nieuws brachten over massagraven van geëxecuteerden. Die verhalen, onder andere van David Rohde, *Associated Press* en *The Christian Science Monitor*, werden door *de Volkskrant* overgenomen. Rijs in zijn column in het mediakatern *Stroom* van 22 augustus 1998: 'De buitenlandse journalisten begonnen uit te zoeken wat er was gebeurd. De buitenlandse media verbloemden de werkelijkheid niet: *'Dutch soldiers welcomed the Serb killers'*, kopte *The Independent*. Nederlandse journalisten namen in eerste instantie niet de moeite bij de Moslims te informeren wat er was gebeurd en al helemaal niet bij de Serviërs. De meeste verslaggevers durfden zich tijdens de oorlog alleen in Bosnië te wagen aan de hand van Unprofor, het VN-leger, en schrokken van elke knal.' Rijs is achteraf ook minder te spreken over zijn goedgelovigheid als het over Dutchbat ging. 'Ik kon me niet voorstellen dat zij zo over zich hadden laten lopen', schreef hij in zijn column. Volgens Bart Rijs is het gebrek aan eigen onderzoek na het drama in Srebrenica voor een deel te verklaren uit het feit dat de oorlog in Bosnië na de val van de enclave in een stroomversnelling raakte. Daardoor werd veel aandacht van de correspondent, verslaggevers en redactie buitenland opgeslokt door de actuele oorlogshandelingen.

In de nasleep van Srebrenica probeerde *de Volkskrant* het nieuws over de rol van Dutchbat vooral in Nederland te halen. Daarbij werd zwaar geleund op de informatie die uit het Haagse circuit lekte. Volgens Rijs deden de spindokters van het ministerie van Defensie, met voorop voorlichter Bert Kreemers, alles om de schade voor Dutchbat te beperken. 'Ze bagatelliseerden of ontkenden elke onthulling, lekten selectief informatie naar lievelingen in de media en snoefden dat ze van hen geen gevaar meer te duchten hadden. "Die hangen aan het infuus", aldus Kreemers'.

Volgens Ewoud Nysingh raakte *de Volkskrant* in de nasleep van Srebrenica inderdaad verstrikt in de netten van Defensie. 'Omdat we geen journalistieke strategie hadden, geen notie van wat we zelfstandig moesten onderzoeken, werden we afhankelijk van iemand als Kreemers, een man die soms loog en bedroog om zijn minister in het zadel te kunnen houden.' Volgens Nysingh wist landmachtchef Couzy al direct na de val van Srebrenica dat Dutchbat er niks van gemaakt had. Maar hij wilde koste wat het kost voorkomen dat het beeld ontstond van 'ze stonden erbij en keken ernaar'. Hij begreep dat dit dodelijk zou zijn voor de landmacht. Pas veel later kwam Nysingh erachter dat ook Kreemers niet alle relevante feiten kende, omdat de landmacht cruciale informatie voor hem en zijn baas Voorhoeve achterhield.

Hoe er gemanipuleerd is, heeft Nysingh ook pas ten volle begrepen uit het NIOD-rapport. 'Vanaf de eerste dag heeft de generaal zo gemanoeuvreed dat er geen negatief beeld over Dutchbat kon ontstaan. Wij zijn er niet in geslaagd dat spel te doorbreken.' Gebrek aan nieuwsgierigheid bij 'de intelligentsia op de krant' heeft volgens Nysingh ook ertoe geleid dat journalisten van *de Volkskrant* te laat in de gaten kregen hoe gevaarlijk anti-Moslim de stemming bij Dutchbat was en hoe de Bosnische regering de slachtofferrol van de Moslims uitbuitte.

'Voor wie werkelijk begreep wat er in Srebrenica aan de hand was, kon het "no good guys, no bad guys" van Karremans geen verrassing zijn. De militairen kregen in de dagelijkse praktijk door dat de Moslims ook geen lieverdjes waren. Maar dat wilde men in Nederland liever niet weten. Achteraf moet ik erkennen dat ik de Bosnische regering ook te veel krediet heb gegeven. De Moslimbevolking werd door de Serviërs verdreven en uitgemoord, maar ik heb niet gezien dat de Bosnische leiders gebruik maakten van die situatie en hun eigen mensen opofferden om dat beeld te bevestigen en verder te versterken.'

Opvallend is hoe weinig er is geschreven over de duizenden Moslimstrijders die zich in Srebrenica bevonden toen de Serviërs aanvielen. Ze bliezen snel de aftocht en lieten de verdediging van de enclave over aan de Nederlandse VN-soldaten.

In de Nederlandse media ging het in de eerste maanden na de val van Srebrenica vooral om de vraag wat Dutchbat heeft geweten en gezien van de massaslachting onder Moslimmannen, of Dutchbat medeplichtig was aan de executies en wie verantwoordelijk was voor de rol van de Nederlandse militairen. De *Volkskrant* besteedde veel aandacht aan het onderwerp en gaf militairen de ruimte die getuige waren geweest van bijvoorbeeld verdachte transporten. Maar spraakmakende onthullingen kwamen toch vooral voor rekening van *NRC Handelsblad* en *NOVA*. De *Volkskrant* was in de commentaren en analyses zeer kritisch over de Nederlandse partijen in dit conflict. Met de pogingen van minister Voorhoeve alle verantwoordelijkheid op de VN te schuiven, maakte de krant korte metten. In het nieuws scoorde de *Volkskrant* slechts incidenteel met berichten over het blokkeren van een rapport over Dutchbat door minister Van Mierlo en een

geheime afspraak van VN-generaal Smith met Mladic. In de jaren na 1995 blijft dit beeld globaal bestaan. Er verschijnen in de krant jaarlijks tientallen artikelen over Srebrenica. Maar het komt in de *Volkskrant* toch vooral neer op het volgen van de ontwikkelingen, veel meer dan het initiëren van eigen onderzoek. Na veel duw- en trekwerk stemt de politiek stukje bij beetje toe in nader onderzoek naar de gebeurtenissen in Srebrenica. *Debriefings* van militairen, debatten en hoorzittingen in de Tweede Kamer, de commissies Van Kemenade en Bakker en het NIOD-rapport leggen stukjes van de waarheid bloot. Het wordt allemaal genoteerd in de *Volkskrant*. Hans Moleman: 'Alle betrokkenen op de redactie van de *Volkskrant* faalden lange tijd in het organiseren van een serieuze, gestructureerde aanpak van de eigen vervolgerberichten over deze internationale blamage met haar o zo Hollandse randje.'

## HOOFDSTUK 3: INTERNATIONAAL KADER

Eén van de conclusies van het NIOD-rapport is dat de Nederlandse media, inclusief de *Volkskrant*, geen evenwichtig beeld hebben gegeven van het conflict in Bosnië en de daarbij betrokken strijdende partijen. In zijn algemeenheid hebben ze zich sterk laten leiden door het denken in termen van *good guys* en *bad guys*, waarbij de laatste term vooral de Bosnische Serviërs gold. Sommige journalisten spanden zich actief in voor gewapende internationale interventie om die *bad guys* een halt toe te roepen. In het verlengde daarvan kenmerkte de berichtgeving zich door een kritiek op de neutrale opstelling van Unprofor. Voor een afgewogen oordeel over deze en andere tekortkomingen is het echter van belang om vast te stellen dat de problemen bij de oorlogsverslaggeving niet uitsluitend waren voorbehouden aan de Nederlandse mediavertegenwoordigers. Ook hun buitenlandse collega's kampten met soortgelijke moeilijkheden. De kanttekeningen die critici, onder wie ook veel journalisten zelf, bij hun functioneren plaatsten, gaan in veel gevallen ook op voor Nederlandse journalisten en media. Hieronder volgen een paar van die elementen van kritiek, die duidelijk maken hoe in zijn algemeenheid de media hebben geworsteld met de berichtgeving over de gebeurtenissen in Bosnië. De *tyranny of victimology* (een term die onder meer is gebezigd door David Binder, journalist van *The New York Times*): wreedheden begaan door Moslims kregen minder aandacht dan die van Serviërs en Kroaten. Moslims werden allereerst als slachtoffers beschouwd. Een (te) grote emotionele betrokkenheid van sommige journalisten bij hun onderwerp; dit leidde tot emotionele 'actie-journalistiek' of *attachment-journalism*, die ten doel had actief ingrijpen in het conflict te bevorderen. Vaak ging dat ten koste van de objectiviteit. Die houding werd overigens vaker aangetroffen op de redacties dan bij de correspondenten in het veld. Vooral bij degenen van hen die langere tijd in het oorlogsgebied verbleven en erin slaagden ook buiten Sarajevo de oorlog te verslaan, nam de verwarring en het cynisme over het

verschil tussen goed en kwaad alleen maar toe. Bij veel politici en VN-militairen overheerste echter het beeld dat de bevooroordeelde media in meerderheid hun werk alleen maar bemoeilijkten; de klacht was dat ze geen idee hadden van de ware aard van de oorlog in Bosnië. Veelzeggend is de opmerking uit het begin 1996 vertrouwelijk uitgebrachte *Force Commander's End of Mission Report*, een terugblik op de Unprofor-missie, waarin werd beweerd dat 'the international media played a significant role in exerting pressure for Unprofor to be manoeuvred into tasks beyond its capability and mandate'. Veel van deze frictie tussen Unprofor en de media was terug te voeren op een verschillend idee over de betekenis van 'onpartijdigheid'. In een analyse van de spanningen tussen militairen en journalisten in Bosnië wees de Amerikaanse journalist Tom Gjelten erop dat dit begrip voor de media een veel abstracter betekenis had, die in de praktijk tot een meer anti-Serviëse opstelling leidde. De 'onpartijdigheid' van Unprofor betekende daarentegen in de ogen van veel journalisten dat de sterkste partij, de Bosnische Serviërs, daarvan het meest profiteerde. In de smerige en verwarrende dagelijkse praktijk van *peace keeping* gingen VN-militairen bovendien al snel ertoe over om alle strijdende partijen op één hoop te gooien. In tegenstelling tot Nederlandse journalisten, voor wie de uitspraken van Karremans over de strijdende partijen als een grote verrassing kwamen, hadden veel van hun buitenlandse collega's al langer in de gaten dat het denken in de termen *no good guys - no bad guys* min of meer standaard was bij Unprofor. Manipulatie door de Bosnische regering: de Bosnische regering koesterde de westerse media als haar 'artillerie' en deed bewuste pogingen, onder andere door het inschakelen van grote pr-firma's, om de media te beïnvloeden. De sterke nadruk op het lot van het belegerde Sarajevo was daarvan een belangrijk onderdeel. De meeste buitenlandse journalisten bevonden zich in de stad en omdat ze daardoor ook doelwit van beschietingen waren, werd de identificatie met de Bosnische partij vergemakkelijkt. Sommigen journalisten kwamen

de *Holiday Inn*, waar de meesten verbleven, nauwelijks uit. Ze namen door hun hotelraam de oorlog waar en leunden verder sterk op de persconferenties en *handouts* van de Bosnische regering en Unprofor, en op hun lokale *stringers* die nieuws en beelden aanleverden. Ook veel 'parachute-journalistiek' (waarbij journalisten of *anchormen* een kort en snel bezoek aan Bosnië brachten) had vooral Sarajevo als reisdoel en onderwerp. Reële problemen bij nieuwsgaring: in de loop van het conflict werd het steeds moeilijker om elders op het strijdtoneel het conflict te volgen. De strijdende partijen lieten journalisten vaak niet toe (zoals bij Srebrenica) en bovendien was reizen erg gevaarlijk. Unprofor was niet verplicht journalisten te helpen en te beschermen; het hing van individuele commandanten af of journalisten bijvoorbeeld in konvoien van Unprofor mochten meereizen. Alle journalisten hadden te maken met het

probleem van de gebrekkige communicatie met de achterban; het zoeken en vinden van een deugdelijke telefoon- of straalverbinding om het verhaal door te geven was een dagelijkse strijd. Vice versa was het vaak erg moeilijk om correspondenten aan te sturen, te informeren en hun activiteiten te coördineren. Het overzicht ontbrak vooral in tijden van crises, zoals die rond Srebrenica.

Nederlandse en buitenlandse journalisten stemden mede als gevolg daarvan overeen in hun onvermogen om de aard en de schaal van de gebeurtenissen na de val van Srebrenica te doorgronden. De uitzonderingen daargelaten, deelden ze het ongelooft in de mogelijkheid van een massamoord, in Europa, na Auschwitz.

Voor veel journalisten was de val van Srebrenica het verhaal van het einde van de politiek van de *safe areas*; de geruchten over een massamoord werden met scepsis

ontvangen, te meer omdat in 1995 de Bosnische regering niet meer het krediet had waarover ze in het begin van de oorlog beschikte. De Bosnische manipulatie van het leed van de vluchtelingen uit Srebrenica op Tuzla Air Base wekte bij veel journalisten weersin. Kort daarna trok het dreigende Kroatische offensief, Operatie Storm, al snel de aandacht weer weg. Het waren in het algemeen de *old Bosnia hands* onder de journalisten, die de verschrikkingen uit de eerste oorlogsjaren hadden meegemaakt, bij wie het wantrouwen over het lot van de mannen van Srebrenica niet doofde. Veel ervaren journalisten waren er niet meer in 1995; de schijnbare uitzichtloosheid en de gruwelijkheid van de oorlog leidden tot een grote doorstroming onder journalisten. Hun traumatische ervaringen werkten grofweg op twee manieren uit: of ze keerden de oorlog de rug toe, of ze doken juist met grotere verbeterheid

en gedrevenheid in het conflict om de waarheid boven water te halen.

Aan Nederlandse kant waren dat er maar weinig. De meeste Nederlandse journalisten richtten zich op het 'Haagse' Srebrenica-verhaal. Op dat punt manifesteerde zich wel een duidelijk verschil met de buitenlandse pers. De grote verhalen over de massaslachting in het najaar van 1995 waren van de hand van buitenlandse journalisten. De eerste monografieën waarin de val van Srebrenica in breed perspectief, maar ook in de diepte werd uiteengezet, waren echter wel weer van Nederlandse hand: van de wetenschappers Norbert Both en Jan Willem Honig, docent aan het *Department of War Studies* van het *King's College* in Londen, en van Frank Westerman en Bart Rijs, die tot de weinige Nederlandse journalisten behoren die in Bosnië zelf op onderzoek zijn uitgegaan.



Potocari bij Srebrenica, voorjaar 2002. (Foto Reuters/Damir Sagolj)

## CONCLUSIES

1. Op de redactie van *de Volkskrant* lag de nadruk zeker in de eerste fase van de Balkanoorlog op de opinievorming, zowel binnen de organisatie van de krant, als in de kolommen. De discussies gingen vooral over standpuntbepalingen, veel minder over feitenonderzoek door verslaggevers. Er was op de redactie van *de Volkskrant* bij het uitbreken van het Balkanconflict geen sprake van vooringenomenheid. De redactie heeft in de tweede helft van 1992 de Serviërs tot boosdoeners bestempeld. Die keuze kwam tot stand op basis van de feiten, zoals zich die in het conflict voordeden. Als er aanleiding toe was, zoals in de Krajina, werden ook anderen, in dit geval de Kroaten, aangemerkt als de *bad guys*.
2. Die keuze werd duidelijk gemaakt in commentaren en columns. Ze werkte niet door in de selectie van verslaggevers in hun feitelijke verhalen. De correspondenten en verslaggevers werden nauwelijks begeleid vanuit Amsterdam.
3. De verslaggeving werd meestal overgelaten aan journalisten zonder oorlogservaring en zonder specifieke kennis van Joegoslavië. Het waren veelal freelancers. Zij werden niet of zeer gebrekkig begeleid. Dat de eigen berichtgeving in Joegoslavië niettemin op peil bleef, was geen gevolg van bewust beleid. Het was vooral een gevolg van de inzet van beginnende correspondenten als Frank Westerman en Bart Rijs, die zich met kunst en vliegwerk snel ontwikkelden tot gezaghebbende oorlogscorrespondenten.
4. Gebrek aan belangstelling op de redactie in Amsterdam voor zelfstandig journalistiek onderzoek leidde ertoe dat belangrijke ontwikkelingen, zoals de groeiende anti-Moslimhouding van Dutchbat en de overhaaste aftocht van de Moslimstrijders uit Srebrenica, de redactie konden ontgaan.
5. Er zijn in *de Volkskrant* geen afwijkende standpunten genegeerd. In elke fase van het conflict werd er naast de eigen mening ruimte gemaakt voor oppositionele

geluiden. Zowel in eigen opiniërende stukken als op de Forum-pagina's.

6. De organisatie van de redactie van *de Volkskrant* was onvoldoende berekend op het volgen van dit complexe langdurige internationale conflict. Zeker nadat door de inzet van Dutchbat het Nederlandse aspect in deze oorlog groter was geworden, werkten deelredacties volslagen langs elkaar heen. Bij hoge uitzondering werd overlegd. Nooit werd het Srebrenica-dossier bewust tot een journalistiek speerpunt verheven. De rol van de hoofdredactie was in de opinievorming minimaal en in de organisatie geheel afwezig.
7. Rond de val van Srebrenica en in de nasleep ervan

kwam het onderwerp vrijwel geheel in handen van de Haagse redactie, die sterk leunde op de informatie die door het ministerie van Defensie naar buiten werd gebracht. Ook in deze fase verzuimde de krant zelfstandig onderzoek te plegen om erachter te komen wat er werkelijk was gebeurd in de enclave.

8. Over de hele linie heeft *de Volkskrant* de Balkanoorlog niet slechter verslagen dan de andere landelijke kranten in Nederland. De lezer werd een vrij compleet, doorgaans evenwichtig beeld voorgeschoteld. Zwakste punten waren: een gebrekkige interne organisatie en een tekort aan inzet bij het zelfstandig achterhalen van de feiten in Bosnië.

## AANBEVELINGEN

1. De redactie moet bij langlopende gecompliceerde onderwerpen mensen vrijmaken voor een speciaal team, eventueel een aparte deelredactie, zoals tijdens de Golfoorlog. De hoofdredactie moet daarbij aan de hand van een draaiboek veel meer sturend optreden dan tot nu toe is gebeurd.
2. In de berichtgeving moet de nadruk meer komen te liggen op feitenonderzoek. Opinievorming vindt plaats op basis van het verzamelde feitenmateriaal. Daarbij moeten ook de teksten van persbureaus, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* en anderen maximaal worden gebruikt.
3. *De Volkskrant* moet expertise opbouwen en doorgeven in oorlogsverslaggeving, zodat niet steeds het wiel uitgevonden moet worden door onervaren nieuwkomers. De begeleiding van verslaggevers en correspondenten moet worden verbeterd.
4. De discussie op de redactie over het standpunt dat *de Volkskrant* inneemt over belangrijke onderwerpen als de Balkanoorlog, de Oorlog tegen het Terrorisme of een aanval op Irak, moet worden verbreed. Een taak voor de hoofdredactie.
5. Met zelfstandig onderzoek moet worden voorkomen dat *de Volkskrant* in belangrijke conflictsituaties vrijwel uitsluitend afhankelijk wordt van overheidsvoorlichting.

## HOOFDSTUK 4: PUBLICATIES 1991-1993

1991 / 1992

Op 31 december 1991 riepen een paar redacteuren van *de Volkskrant* (en van *NRC Handelsblad*) elk in hun eigen krant op tot een brede burgerbeweging tegen de oorlog in Joegoslavië: 'Joegoslavië schreeuwt om actie Europese burgers'. Zij vroegen zich af wat het verschil was tussen de oorlog in Joegoslavië en die in Vietnam. Om publieke verontwaardiging op te roepen, moeten burgers zich kunnen identificeren met de slachtoffers van een oorlog. In Vietnam werd aan deze voorwaarde voldaan. Maar de oorlog in Joegoslavië liet (nog) geen duidelijk beeld zien van de *bad guys* en de *good guys*, dus wie de agressor was en wie het slachtoffer. Toen de brieven verschenen, was de situatie in Joegoslavië wel gespannen, maar het was nog geen oorlog. Ruim een maand later, in februari 1992, besloot de Veiligheidsraad van de Verenigde Naties om een vredesmacht voor Kroatië te vormen, op 8 juni gevolgd door een vredesmacht voor Bosnië-Herzegovina. Nederland bood prompt aan bij te dragen aan de vredesmacht voor Bosnië. De directe aanleiding was dat in de zomer van 1992 – de oorlog in Bosnië was toen al enkele maanden aan de gang – de eerste berichten verschenen over het bestaan van gevangenkampen in Bosnië, waar de Serviërs een onbekend aantal mannelijke Moslims gevangen hielden. De kranten, ook *de Volkskrant*, publiceerde foto's van uitgemergelde mannen achter prikkeldraad in het Omarska-kamp. Bij de eerste berichten over de gevangenkampen kwam meteen ook de kwestie aan de orde wie de hoofdschuldige was van het gewapende conflict in Bosnië. Het Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (NIOD) concludeerde na een analyse van de berichtgeving in 1992 in de Nederlandse landelijke dagbladen dat volgens deze kranten met name de Bosnische Serviërs wreedheden begingen en de mensenrechten schonden. *De Volkskrant* bleek in 81,1 procent van haar berichtgeving over Bosnië sleutelwoorden te gebruiken

als 'gevangenkampen', 'etnische zuivering', 'marteling', 'deportatie' en 'plundering', waarbij het begrip 'gevangenkampen' het meest werd gebruikt. *NRC Handelsblad* bleef met 80 procent overigens niet ver achter bij *de Volkskrant*, zij het dat *de Volkskrant* vaker het begrip 'gevangenkampen' gebruikte en *NRC Handelsblad* het begrip 'etnische zuivering'. Alle kranten tezamen schreven in 1992 bijna 80 procent van de vermeende misdaden en schendingen van de rechten van de mens toe aan de Bosnische Serviërs. Voor de Kroaten gold iets meer dan tien procent, en voor de Moslims 4,2 procent. In *de Volkskrant* van 14 augustus 1992 zou cultureel antropoloog Gremaux betogen dat de berichtgeving over de oorlog in Bosnië sterk vertekend was ten nadele van de Serviërs: zij werden stelselmatig als agressors beschreven, de Bosniërs als verdedigers. Volgens Gremaux werd gemakshalve vergeten dat 200 duizend Serviërs door de oorlog van huis en haard werden verdreven. Overigens had verslaggever Ewoud Nysingh toen al in *de Volkskrant* in een reportage de wreedheden van extreem-rechtse krachten in het Kroatische leger beschreven. Het nieuws en de beelden over de gevangenkampen leidden tot spontane acties van Nederlanders om Joegoslavische vluchtelingen op te vangen; de Tweede Kamer wenste een ruimer toelatingsbeleid voor vluchtelingen uit Joegoslavië. 'Ruim vierduizend gastgezinnen willen Joegoslaven opvangen', schreef *de Volkskrant* op 18 augustus 1992. Een week eerder, op 12 augustus 1992, had de krant ervoor gepleit zoveel mogelijk vluchtelingen toe te laten. Voorts bleek de Nederlandse bevolking na de schrikbeelden uit Bosnië voor een militaire interventie te zijn. Peilingen duiden op een ruime meerderheid van het Nederlandse volk die zo'n ingrijpen wenste, ook als daarbij slachtoffers zouden vallen. Sinds begin augustus 1992 pleitte ook *de Volkskrant* voor militair ingrijpen

'Waarom wordt er niet ingegrepen in Bosnië?', vroeg de krant zich in die maand af. In de koppen en de aanhef van artikelen bleek *de Volkskrant* een tamelijk interventionistische houding aan te nemen, waar *Trouw* en *NRC Handelsblad* nog terughoudend waren.

Deskundigen op de opiniepagina van *de Volkskrant* stonden positief tegenover militair ingrijpen. Zo verweet columnist Anthony Lewis van *The New York Times* in *de Volkskrant* van dinsdag 4 augustus de Amerikaanse president Bush (de vader) veel te passief te zijn in zijn houding ten opzichte van Joegoslavië. Hij vergeleek Bush met Neville Chamberlain die door zijn toegeevende houding tegenover Hitler diens oorlogszucht zou hebben aangewakkerd. Lewis: 'Als iemand moet worden vergeleken met Hitler is het eerder Slobodan Milosevic, de uitvinder van de etnische schoonmaak.'

Op 5 augustus 1992 riepen Joris Voorhoeve en Theo van den Doel, beiden verbonden aan het instituut 'Clingendael', Nederland op om het initiatief tot actie te nemen in Bosnië. Ook zij plaatsten de gebeurtenissen in het licht van de Tweede Wereldoorlog: volkerenmoord, concentratiekampen en wreedheden van de nazi's in Polen. Daarom werd het tijd om gewapenderhand in te grijpen. Diezelfde dag concludeerde *Volkskrant*-redacteur André Roelofs dat het Westen de Servische veroveringen accepteerde. De internationale gemeenschap had twee opties: óf accepteren óf militair ingrijpen. Het eerste was verwerpelijk, het tweede riskant. Roelofs was in toenemende mate voor ingrijpen.

Op 8 augustus 1992 riep columnist Martin Woollacott van *The Guardian* (*de Volkskrant* heeft een contract met die Britse krant om artikelen over te nemen) ertoe op de Serviërs militair een nederlaag te bezorgen en zo Milosevic ten val te brengen. Twee dagen later publiceerde *de Volkskrant* een artikel van Margaret Thatcher die meende dat de Servische politiek de barbarij van Stalin en Hitler combineerde. In een commentaar op 12 augustus 1992 verweet *de Volkskrant* de Verenigde Naties en de Europese Unie dat zij zorgvuldig de schuldvraag in het Bosnische conflict vermeden en zich onpartijdig opstelden. De krant wees erop dat Servië een aanvalsoorlog voerde, waarbij de etnische schoonmaak de door de Serviërs veroverde gebieden rijp moest maken voor annexatie. 'Alleen een geloofwaardige

militaire dreiging zal de Servische leiders overtuigen', concludeerde de krant.

Op 14 augustus 1992 schreef verslaggever Ewoud Nysingh dat de Serviërs de Servische burgers in Kroatië en Bosnië-Herzegovina vanaf 1988 stelselmatig van wapens hadden voorzien, en dat Servische media jarenlang tegen het 'fascistische en islamitische gevaar' hadden gewaarschuwd. Het Joegoslavische leger en de Cetniks dwongen deze Serviërs nu om de wapens tegen Kroaten en Moslims te gebruiken. Volgens Nysingh zouden de Serviërs echter niet tegen een militaire interventie bestand zijn.

Verslaggever Hans Moleman zette in augustus 1992 in een interview met luitenant-kolonel Duine, docent aan de Koninklijke Militaire Academie, daarentegen de risico's van een militair optreden in Bosnië op een rijtje. Het NIOD kwam, dit alles overziende, tot deze conclusie: 'Samengevat is de conclusie dat de berichtgeving in augustus 1992 de toon zette voor de stemming die in Nederland ging heersen: de Serviërs waren de bad guys, de Moslims de slachtoffers.' Die conclusie gold overigens niet uitsluitend *de Volkskrant*. Wat deze krant betreft kwam het NIOD tot de volgende slotsom: In de tweede helft van augustus 1992 was de spanning tussen "bevlogen moralisten" en "verstandige realisten" voortdurende herkenbaar in de vele analyses, commentaren en achtergrondartikelen in *de Volkskrant*. Zo werd er veelvuldig gepleit voor militair ingrijpen. Morele overwegingen leken meer gewicht in de schaal te leggen dan de risico's van ingrijpen. Verder nam het aantal verwijzingen naar de Tweede Wereldoorlog af, en een analogie met Palestijnen kwam nadrukkelijker naar voren en fungeerde als schrikbeeld voor Europa. Voorts werd de historische en godsdienstige achtergrond van het conflict (Moslims tegen christenen) tamelijk uitvoerig belicht. De Serviërs werden ook in de tweede helft van augustus 1992 gezien als de grootste boosdoeners, een beeld dat enigszins gerelativeerd werd door de aandacht voor de slachting van katholieke Kroaten in 1940 door orthodoxe Serviërs en door de stelling van onder anderen Gremaux dat de Moslims niet nalieten om de Serviërs te provoceren in de hoop daarmee een interventie naderbij te brengen.'

Op maandag 31 augustus 1992 luidde de kop in

*de Volkskrant*: 'Mortiergranaat richt bloedbad aan op drukke markt in Sarajevo'. Volgens de Verenigde Naties was het geen toeval. Maar de Bosnisch-Servische leider

Radovan Karadzic wees de Moslims als de daders aan: zij hadden de afspraken van de Joegoslavië-conferentie willen saboteren.

## 1993

In augustus 1992 is volgens het NIOD de publieke opinie over 'militaire interventie' voor een belangrijk deel al gevormd. De kern van dat debat – het dilemma van 'bevlogen moralisten versus de verstandige realisten', de afweging van morele onaanvaardbaarheid versus militaire risico's – was ongewijzigd gebleven. In augustus 1992 werd de toon gezet voor het interventiedebat zoals dat in 1993 in de media en de politiek werd voortgezet. In de loop van 1993 werd het debat over al dan niet interveniëren steeds specifiek, waarbij het ging om verschillende vormen van militaire interventie en het risicoprofiel.

In de berichtgeving, analyses en commentaren van *de Volkskrant*, toegespitst op een eventuele Nederlandse bijdrage aan een vredesmacht, ontstaat de indruk dat Nederlandse politici redelijk positief staan tegenover militaire interventie. *De Volkskrant* zelf is in haar commentaren ook voor militaire interventie in Bosnië. Begin januari 1993 verklaarde de Franse minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Roland Dumas dat Frankrijk desnoods alleen en met militair geweld vrouwenkampen in Bosnië zou gaan bevrijden. PvdA-leider Wim Kok pleitte eveneens voor militair ingrijpen. 'We kunnen de zaak niet op zijn beloop laten', citeerde *de Volkskrant* Kok. Maar hij wenste wel dat een interventie onder de vlag van de Verenigde Naties zou geschieden.

In de krant begon opnieuw een discussie over wel of niet ingrijpen. Zo bepleitte Joris Voorhoeve (Clingendael) een beperkt ingrijpen, terwijl historicus Henri Beunders verwachtte dat de Nederlandse steun wel zou verdwijnen zodra er doden gingen vallen. Bemiddelaar Lord David Owen uitte in *de Volkskrant* zijn twijfels over ingrijpen. Intussen werd in Nederland een 'Joegoslavië-moeheid' geconstateerd.

Op 9 maart 1993 bleek in de Tweede Kamer grote overeenstemming te bestaan over het sturen van

Nederlandse grondtroepen naar Bosnië. Nu werd de vraag actueel wie de regering als VN-macht naar Bosnië wilde sturen. Mochten het dienstplichtigen zijn? Zouden ze slechts op vrijwillige basis gestuurd kunnen worden? *De Volkskrant* besteedde van alle landelijke dagbladen de meeste aandacht aan deze discussie. De krant kwam tot de conclusie dat de Nederlandse regering er niet aan ontkwam om dienstplichtigen naar Bosnië te sturen, want het Nederlandse bataljon moest uit zwaar bewapende gevechtstroepen bestaan en dat kon toen alleen met dienstplichtigen, schreef de Haagse defensiespecialist van *de Volkskrant*, Wio Joustra, op 19 maart 1993.

Intussen meldde op het meningenfront Mient-Jan Faber zich in *de Volkskrant* met felle kritiek op het voornemen een VN-macht naar Bosnië te sturen die het Vance/Owenplan moest realiseren, dat in een opdeling van Bosnië voorzag. Faber ergerde zich aan het 'gemak' waarmee door de hele Tweede Kamer werd gepleit om troepen te sturen, terwijl de politiek al anderhalf jaar toekeek bij een gruwelijke oorlog. In Srebrenica toonde de Franse VN-generaal Morillon moed toen hij besloot net zo lang in Srebrenica te blijven tot de Serviërs de hulpkonvooien voor de burgers niet meer zouden blokkeren. 'Morillon bejubeld als held na moedig besluit', schreef *de Volkskrant* op 17 maart 1993.

Op 30 april 1993 noteerde *de Volkskrant* dat de 'Doe-Iets-Brigade' richting Bosnië oprukte. Het was een inleiding op twee artikelen over al dan niet ingrijpen in Bosnië. Buitenlandredacteur Joris Cammelbeeck vroeg zich af of het Westen moreel wel verplicht was om tot actie over te gaan en of een mislukte interventie niet veel erger was dan niets doen?' Cammelbeeck: 'Alle morele opwindingen ten spijt, zal een rationele afweging moeten worden gemaakt bij het beantwoorden van de vraag of er militair moet worden ingegrepen. Bosnië is geen Auschwitz.'

Maar Theo van den Doel en Dick Leurdijk, beiden verbonden aan Clingendael, concludeerden dat het risicomijdend gedrag van het Westen slechts geleid had tot verergering van de situatie. Uitvoering van Vance/Owen had geen kans van slagen. De tijd voor diplomatieke oplossingen was voorbij. Het Westen moest meer risico's nemen.

Op 7 mei 1993 nam de Veiligheidsraad de resolutie aan die behalve Srebrenica ook Tuzla, Gorazde, Bihac, Sarajevo en Zepa verhiel tot *safe areas*. Unprofor en zijn hulporganisaties in Bosnië kregen bijgevolg recht op vrije en onbelemmerde toegang tot deze gebieden. Maar de internationale gemeenschap bleek verdeeld. De Verenigde Staten wilden geen grote risico's lopen, en Europa was beducht voor luchtaanvallen op Servische stellingen vanwege de kans dat de Serviërs wraak zouden nemen tegen de VN-soldaten op de grond. Theo Brinkel van het wetenschappelijk instituut van het CDA vond in *de Volkskrant* van 30 juni 1993 dat de

westerse onwil om te interveniëren getuigde van grove nalatigheid. De Britse minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Douglas Hurd schreef op 2 juli 1993 in een bijdrage voor *de Volkskrant* dat hij opheffing van het wapenembargo de laatste optie achtte. Hurd: 'We trekken onze handen niet van Bosnië af, maar gebruiken ons verstand.'

In de tweede week van juli 1993 bleek de 'Joegoslavië-moeheid' nog springlevend. In een politieke prent van Jos Collignon zegt een tv-verkoper over een toestel: 'Hij schakelt zelf naar een ander net bij het woord Bosnië.' Intussen hekelde Anet Bleich op 21 juli 1993 dat er nog steeds geen VN-troepen naar Bosnië waren gestuurd. 'De kans bestaat dat Sarajevo valt, voordat de beloofde VN-troepen arriveren', vreesde ze. Op donderdag 29 juli voerden de vaste kamercommissies voor Buitenlandse Zaken, Defensie en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking een spoeddebat met ministers over de onmacht omtrent Bosnië. In een nieuwsanalyse schreef Wio Joustra in de



Tekening van Jos Collignon in *de Volkskrant* van 7 juli 1993

krant: 'Kamer uit gevoelens van onmacht en frustratie.' Intussen werd in Genève weer onderhandeld over een Owen/Stoltenbergplan (de Zweed Stoltenberg had namelijk de Amerikaan Vance afgelost). Dat plan voorzag in een opdeling van Bosnië in een Servisch-, Kroatisch- en Moslimdeel). In *de Volkskrant* van 29 juli vergeleek Jan Siccama dat nieuwe plan met het beruchte Hitler-Stalin-pact. Het plan, aldus Siccama, is een schijnoplossing. Het leidt niet tot vrede. Eind augustus 1993 bezochten de bemiddelaars minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Kooijmans in Den Haag. Kooijmans stond zeer kritisch tegenover de nieuwe voorstellen. Op 25 augustus had Ewoud Nysingh het eigennuttige optreden van Lord Owen gehekeld in een voorbeschuiving op het bezoek. Owen had het nieuwe vredesplan gelanceerd zonder tevoren te overleggen met Europese ministerraad van Buitenlandse Zaken. Begin september 1993 circuleerden de eerste berichten dat Nederland vanaf begin 1994 gevechtstroepen beschikbaar zou stellen voor de VN-macht in Bosnië. Het betrof het eerste parate bataljon van de luchtmobiele brigade van de Koninklijke Landmacht. Uitzending van dit bataljon werd afhankelijk gemaakt van een daadwerkelijke vredesregeling voor Bosnië. Het debat over Bosnië luwde vervolgens heel even, omdat in Washington een akkoord tussen Palestijnen en Israël werd getekend.

*Volkskrant*-redacteur Nysingh beschouwde het Owen/Stoltenbergplan als 'eigenlijk onaanvaardbaar'. Nysingh: 'Als je niet uitkijkt, ga je het nog gewoon vinden ook.' Eind september verwierp het Bosnische parlement het Owen/Stoltenbergplan. Begin september onthulde een VN-onderzoekscommissie het mogelijke bestaan van 98 massagraven in voormalig Joegoslavië. Op 3 september noteerde *de Volkskrant*: Ook Kroaten folteren nu Moslims in concentratiekampen. En op 16 september 1993 berichtte *de Volkskrant* dat ook Moslimsoldaten oorlogsmisdrijven pleegden: 'Moslims slachten burgers af'. Begin oktober bracht de Tweede Kamer een bezoek aan de Nederlandse transport- en verbindingseenheden in Bosnië. *De Volkskrant* liet op 6 oktober 1993 PvdA-Kamerlid Maarten van Traa waarschuwen dat Nederland zich wel twee keer moest bedenken om troepen te

leveren voor de vredesmacht, omdat het erg moeilijk zou zijn om een goed mandaat te ontwikkelen voor die vredesmacht. De majoor Planqué van de Koninklijke Landmacht schreef vervolgens op 11 oktober in *de Volkskrant* dat de politici nog steeds niet goed genoeg hadden nagedacht over wat crisisbeheersing, *peace keeping* en *peace enforcing* in de praktijk konden betekenen. 'Er zal per definitie in zeer onoverzichtelijke gebieden en situaties moeten worden opgetreden. Het is goed dat tevoren te beseffen.'

Twee dagen eerder, op 9 oktober 1993, had Wio Joustra een interview gehad met luitenant-generaal van de landmacht Couzy over opbouw en uitrusting van de luchtmobiele brigade. Hij beoordeelde de uitzending van Dutchbat toen eerder positief dan negatief. Couzy: 'Ik heb altijd op zorgvuldige besluitvorming aangedrongen en dat blijf ik doen. Als dat gebeurt en het politieke antwoord is ja, dan gaan wij.' André Roelofs veronderstelde op 1 oktober dat de NAVO een zucht van verlichting moet hebben geslaakt toen de Bosnische Moslims het plan van Owen en Stoltenberg afwezen. Roelofs: dat verloor de NAVO van de taak een onuitvoerbaar plan uit te voeren.

Begin november 1993 vroeg VN-secretaris-generaal Boutros Ghali Den Haag officieel om een bijdrage te leveren. Nog was niet duidelijk waar de Nederlandse eenheid ingezet zou worden. Op 13 november 1993 besloot het kabinet dat de troepen naar Bosnië gingen. *De Volkskrant* meldde expliciet dat nog steeds niet bekend was in welk veilig gebied de eenheid gelegerd ging worden en dat Nederland als voorwaarde had gesteld dat de eenheid zoveel mogelijk in een aaneengesloten gebied werd ingezet. Volgens *de Volkskrant* vond luitenant-generaal Couzy de uitzending 'volledig verantwoord.' Er zit geen lucht tussen de opvattingen van minister Ter Beek van Defensie en mij hierover.' *De Volkskrant* meldde verder dat de gevechtstroepen 'robuuster' zouden kunnen optreden dan de verbinding- en transporteenheden die al in Bosnië waren. Maar het overleg over opdracht en voorwaarden ging nog door.

Tijdens de Raad van Europese ministers in Luxemburg bleek dat de Europese liefde voor de Bosnische leider Izetbegovic intussen was bekoeld. Ewoud Nysingh

reageerde in *de Volkskrant* cynisch over de daadkracht van de Europese Unie. Hij vreesde dat de VN-troepen uit Bosnië zouden worden teruggetrokken en dat Bosnië inderdaad zou worden opgedeeld. Mient Jan Faber riep in *de Volkskrant* van 18 november 1993 de Verenigde Naties en de Europese Unie op om de *safe areas* te beschermen en de strijdende partijen via ultimata te dwingen ermee in te stemmen.

Eind november van dat jaar vergaderden de Europese ministers in Genève voor overleg met de drie strijdende partijen. Minister Kooijmans toonde zich weinig optimistisch over de onderhandelingen. Anet Bleich had op 1 december in *de Volkskrant* geen goed woord over voor de opstelling van de Europese Unie en Lord Owen. Ze verweet Owen dat hij zich liet leiden door teleurstelling en rancune vanwege de hardere opstelling van de Moslims. Maar hij dankte het volgens Bleich aan zijn eigen plannen waarmee hij de Moslims onder druk had gezet om het streven naar een multi-etnisch Bosnië te laten varen.

Minister Kooijmans bracht in december een bezoek aan Sarajevo. In *de Volkskrant* verweet Wio Joustra Kooijmans dat diens activistische opstelling ertoe had geleid dat Nederland in de Europese Unie in een politiek isolement was geraakt en dat Bosnische politici Kooijmans meer en meer als laatste strohalm en vertrouwensman waren gaan beschouwen. 'Een al te assertieve rol in het intensieve diplomatieke verkeer van de komende dagen voor de vredesregeling zal met de nodige argwaan worden gadeslagen in Londen, Bonn en Parijs. En een al te zeer aan de Moslims gelieerde houding zal Nederland bepaald niet in dank worden afgenomen door Kroaten en Serviërs. Ziedaar het dilemma van een bezielde Bosnië-beleid', aldus Joustra op 17 december 1993.

Begin december arriveerde een brief van minister van Defensie Relus ter Beek bij de Tweede Kamer: de luchtmobiele brigade ging in januari 1994 opereren in Srebrenica en Zepa. Vervolgens werd op 22 december bericht dat de uitzending niet doorging. *De Volkskrant* vermoedde dat het op afstel zou uitlopen. Maar uiteindelijk vertrok het Nederlands bataljon eind januari 1993 naar Srebrenica en Zepa. Het NIOD vatte deze periode als volgt samen: 'Uitstel, onduidelijkheden rond

de geweldsinstructie, de tegenwerking van de Serviërs en de daarop volgende onderhandelingen over de voorwaarden waaronder de Nederlandse eenheid in Srebrenica en Zepa gelegerd zal worden, vormen een goede voedingsbodem voor het voortzetten van de discussie over "militair ingrijpen" en de Nederlandse bijdrage aan een interventie.' In Nederland bleken sommige generaals te twifelen aan een militaire interventie, anderen waren vierkant tegen. VN-gezant Mazowiecki bracht in december een rapport uit over de mensenrechten in Joegoslavië. Op 8 december citeerde *de Volkskrant* hem: 'In Bosnië-Herzegovina zijn dit jaar de etnische zuiveringen, de executies van burgers, massaarrestaties en verkrachtingen onverminderd doorgaan. Het nieuwe element in 1993 is dat de grootscheepse schendingen van de mensenrechten niet langer in hoofdzaak voor rekening van de Serviërs komen. Kroaten en sinds enkele maanden ook regeringsgetrouwe Moslims maken zich er schuldig aan.' Het Kerstbestand van 1993 hield niet stand. 'Misschien helpt bidden nog', zette *de Volkskrant* boven ingezonden brieven over Joegoslavië. Met een paginagroot verhaal sloot de krant een jaar van 'praten en vechten' in Joegoslavië af. 'Het einde van een dramatisch mislukte bemoeienis van de Europese Unie en de VN met het bloedvergieten in het voormalige Joegoslavië is in zicht. Nog even, dan is alles geprobeerd, heeft niets een uitweg geboden en zit er niets anders meer op dan de Bosniërs, de Kroaten en de Serviërs alleen te laten met hun onbegrijpelijke, zinloze oorlog. Misschien zullen de westerse landen ook in 1994 weer voedselhulp sturen naar de hongerigen en geneesmiddelen naar de gewonden en zieken. Maar de hoop dat van buitenaf een oplossing voor de waanzin kan worden aangedragen, is een illusie gebleken.' Kop boven de pagina: 'Einde van een ideaal'. Maar op 20 januari vertrokken verkenners van de brigade naar Srebrenica, terwijl opnieuw vragen werden opgeworpen over de veiligheid van Dutchbat. Een NIPO-onderzoek wees volgens *de Volkskrant* uit dat 57 procent van de Nederlanders het met Ter Beek eens was dat het risico aanvaardbaar was, en 29 procent achtte uitzending van Dutchbat een 'onaanvaardbaar risico'. Anet Bleich zag op 25 januari 1994 nog drie opties. Eerste optie: druk opvoeren op oorlogvoerende partijen,

met name op de Serviërs, door te dreigen met lucht-aanvallen. Tweede optie: doorgaan met humanitaire hulpverlening en voortzetten van de vredesonderhandelingen voor acceptatie door strijdende partijen van het Owen/Stoltenbergplan. Laatste optie: de VN-militairen uit Bosnië terugtrekken zolang er geen akkoord is en de VN-aanwezigheid de oorlog verlengt.

Op 27 januari 1994 publiceerde *de Volkskrant* de hoofdpunten van de geweldsinstructie voor Dutchbat: gebruik van geweld is alleen toegestaan ter zelfverdediging; vuren op een persoon mag uitsluitend als deze een vijandelijke handeling pleegt die naar alle waarschijnlijkheid levensbedreigend is en als er geen andere manier is om de handeling te doen ophouden.

## HOOFDSTUK VIJF: PUBLICATIES 1995

De berichtgeving in *de Volkskrant* over de rol van Dutchbat III, de val van Srebrenica in 1995 en de nasleep daarvan, week structureel niet opvallend af van de weergave in de drie andere Nederlandse landelijke dagbladen, *NRC Handelsblad*, *Trouw* en *De Telegraaf*. *De Volkskrant* legde haar eigen accenten, maar in grote lijnen richtten de kranten zich op dezelfde onderwerpen, met een sterke nadruk op de Nederlandse betrokkenheid in het Bosnische conflict. Dat blijkt uit het chronologisch overzicht dat The Amsterdam School of Communications and Research maakte over de periode 1 januari tot 31 juli 1995.

In vergelijking met 1993, toen de verslaggeving zich vooral concentreerde op een mogelijke uitzending van Nederlandse blauwhelmen, schetsen de vier dagbladen twee jaar later een minder complex beeld van het conflict in Joegoslavië. Het was nog steeds een ingewikkelde situatie.

In de eerste maanden van het jaar leden de Nederlandse bevolking en de pers duidelijk onder Joegoslavië-moeheid. In de periode van 1 januari tot begin mei verschenen er in de vier kranten 1683 artikelen over Joegoslavië met daarin 32.304 uitspraken over het conflict. Er was sprake van een sluimerende aandacht met enkele honderden artikelen per week, tot er begin mei VN-soldaten werden gegijzeld.

Toen schoot het aantal omhoog tot 3000, maar de echte piek deed zich pas voor in de week van de val van Srebrenica en de twee weken daarna, vierduizend artikelen per week. 'Een patroon dat voedsel geeft aan de veronderstelling dat Joegoslavië in 1995 pas echt nieuws wordt als de vijandelijkheden zich niet langer beperken tot de strijdende partijen onderling, maar ook VN-soldaten direct bloot staan aan levensbedreigende situaties', concluderen de onderzoekers van ASCoR. *NRC Handelsblad* en *de Volkskrant* ontlopen elkaar niet veel in aandacht voor Joegoslavië. Vooral in de aanloop naar de val van Srebrenica ruimen deze kranten aanzienlijk meer ruimte in dan *Trouw* en *De Telegraaf*. *De Volkskrant* blijft iets achter bij het gemiddelde waar

het nieuwsberichten betreft, maar scoort hoog met achtergrondverhalen. *NRC* en *Volkskrant* ontlopen elkaar niet veel in presentatie. Ze gebruiken minder vaak Nederlandse betrokkenen als bron dan *Trouw* en *Telegraaf*. *De Telegraaf* richt zich het sterkst op de Nederlandse deelnemers in Joegoslavië, *NRC* en *Volkskrant* het minst.

De verschillen tussen de dagbladen in aanpak zijn gering. Evenals in 1993 worden de Moslims het vaakst genoemd als de aanvallende partij, zolang het gaat om gevechten tussen geregelde troepen. Bij aanvallen op burgers worden de Serviërs in 80 procent van de gevallen genoemd als agressor. Ook hier geen opvallende verschillen. In *De Telegraaf* en *de Volkskrant* worden de Moslims nog het meest als agressor genoemd.

Uit een analyse van het taalgebruik, blijkt dat in de teksten vooral het optreden van de Servische militairen van negatieve kwalificaties wordt voorzien.

In *de Volkskrant* komt dat naar verhouding nog het minst voor (67 procent van alle kwalificaties over de militaire partijen), in *De Telegraaf* het meest (90 procent).

In de commentaren en analyses over de strijdende partijen is *de Volkskrant* het meest genuanceerd. In 50 procent van de gevallen wordt geoordeeld over de Serven, tegen 45,5 en 4,5 procent in geval van Moslims en Kroaten. In hun opvattingen zijn de kranten zeer uitgesproken over de strijdkrachten van de drie partijen. Over de Servische troepen wordt uitgesproken negatief geoordeeld, over de Moslimtroepen behoorlijk positief. Kortom: wat dit aspect van de berichtgeving betreft zijn volgens ASCoR de rollen van *good guy* en *bad guy* in 1995 helder verdeeld. Het positieve oordeel over de Moslimtroepen komt vrijwel geheel voor rekening van *de Volkskrant*.

In 1995 bevestigen de kranten volledig het beeld van de Serviërs als *bad guys*, dat in 1993 al ontstond. Een typerend voorbeeld van dat sjabloon is de analyse van Anet Bleich op 15 juli 1995, enkele dagen na de val van Srebrenica, in *de Volkskrant*. Fel uithalend naar de strategie die de VN heeft gevolgd, schrijft zij: 'Mijnheer

Mladic en zijn "president" Karadzic zijn namelijk - dat hebben ze deze week opnieuw overtuigend bewezen - ordinaire racisten of desgewenst fascist. (...) Ze hebben het bewezen tegen alle voorspellingen in van goed ingevoerde VN'ers ter plekke, die tot een uur voor het gebeurde bleven zeggen dat de strijdkrachten van Mladic Srebrenica niet zouden willen veroveren, want het etnisch zuiveren, van veertigduizend Moslims was toch ook voor hen wel wat veel. Nou proficiat, de operatie is gesmeerd verlopen!' In 1995 zijn de dagbladen zeer eensgezind in het aanwijzen van de Serviërs als plegers van wandaden: de verschillen tussen de vier dagbladen zijn vrijwel te verwaarlozen. Als we kijken naar de mening van *de Volkskrant* over zaken als terugtrekking van VN (tegen), luchtaanvallen (licht voor), militaire interventie en inzetten snelle reactiemacht (tegen) en gebruik van geweld door VN (voor), dan wijkt de krant daarmee niet opvallend sterk af van andere dagbladen. Vanaf 1992 is in de onderzochte dagbladen het standpunt 'Bosnische Serviërs zijn de agressor, de Moslims het slachtoffer' met grote regelmaat uitgedragen. Met grote regelmaat, maar nooit zonder tegenspraak. Ook in *de Volkskrant* is in de berichtgeving, analyses en (hoofd)redactionele commentaren geschreven en betoogd dat alle betrokken partijen in voormalig Joegoslavië zich schuldig maken aan gruweldaden. Soms met, soms zonder de toevoeging 'het meest van allen maken de Bosnische Serviërs zich schuldig aan oorlogsmisdaden'. De discussie over dit punt is politiek relevant omdat er een directe relatie bestaat met de discussie over de vraag of met militaire middelen vrede in voormalig Joegoslavië afgedwongen moet en/of kan worden (*peace enforcing*). Kort gezegd komt het erop neer dat wie vast overtuigd is van het *good guys - bad guys* schema van Moslims als slachtoffer en Bosnische Serviërs als agressor, doorgaans pleit voor afdwingen van vrede met militaire middelen, aldus ASCoR. Wie afdingt op dit schema en betoogt dat het conflict aanzienlijk ingewikkelder ligt dan met dit schema gesuggereerd wordt, pleit doorgaans voor het voortzetten van de *peace keeping*-missie van de VN. Dat patroon is al vanaf augustus 1992 in de onderzochte dagbladen herkenbaar.

Eind juni 1995 is in die situatie niets veranderd. Op 29 juni pleit de NRC, voor harder militair optreden, een paar dagen later volgen in *de Volkskrant* en *Trouw* betogen dat dit de slechtst denkbare oplossing is.

In *de Volkskrant* van 1 juli schrijft de oud-commandant van Dutchbat, Arnold Jansen op de Haar, dat de berichtgeving over de burgeroorlog in het voormalig Joegoslavië tot simplificatie van het conflict leidt. Lord Owen, EG-onderhandelaar in Joegoslavië, maakt zich in de NRC boos over de gang van zaken in Nederland: 'Ik hoor dat de mensen hier inzien hoe emoties - rauwe emoties - zowel de buitenlandse politiek van hun land als de media hebben geleid. Ik hoop echt dat uw land dat heel serieus onderzoekt.'

*De Volkskrant* besteedt van de landelijke dagbladen het meeste aandacht aan humanitaire en volkenrechtelijke interventies (oorlogstribunaal, sancties en wapenembargo) in Bosnië. De krant is net als andere dagbladen, maar in tegenstelling tot de Nederlandse regering, voorstander van het opheffen van het wapenembargo tegen Bosnië.

Opvallend is dat in *de Volkskrant* (maar ook in *NRC Handelsblad*) een baaierd van meningen wordt afgedrukt, waarin ook redacteurs de gelegenheid krijgen elkaar in de haren te vliegen over het Bosnische conflict. Er wordt weinig moeite gedaan de interne meningsverschillen te verbloemen. Niet alleen in columns, ook in analyses meten redacteurs hun controverses breed uit.

Op 6 juli beginnen de gevechten rond Srebrenica. Op vrijdag 7 juli maken *de Volkskrant* en de andere ochtendbladen voor het eerst melding van hevige strijd rond Srebrenica. Geen van de kranten heeft verslaggevers ter plekke, de berichten komen uit Sarajevo, Zagreb en Den Haag en zijn grotendeels gebaseerd op informatie van de hoofdkwartieren van de VN in Zagreb en Sarajevo en van het crisiscentrum in Den Haag.

Niet alleen de journalisten vragen zich af of de Serviërs zullen doorzetten. Bart Rijs schrijft op 7 juli op gezag van overste De Ruyter op het hoofdkwartier van de VN in Sarajevo: 'Het is moeilijk in te schatten of dit een offensief is dat door zal gaan. Sinds de middag zijn de gevechten weer geluwd, dus houden we het voorlopig op een schermutseling.'

De *Volkskrant* blijft goed op de hoogte. Op maandag 10 juli meldt Bart Rijs dat hoge VN-officieren een Nederlands verzoek om luchtsteun hebben afgeslagen en dat de VN op zondagavond alsnog met luchtaanvallen hebben bedreigd als de Serviërs Srebrenica zouden aanvallen. 'Maar zolang er Nederlanders in Servische handen zijn, is het hoogst onwaarschijnlijk dat er daadwerkelijk om luchtsteun zal worden gevraagd.' Ook in de krant van 11 juli schrijft Rijs opnieuw dat hoge VN-functionarissen nog steeds vermoeden dat de Serviërs niet uit zijn op verovering van de enclave.

Op dinsdag 11 juli maakt minister Voorhoeve op een persconferentie de val van Srebrenica wereldkundig: 'Er heeft zich een ramp voltrokken met verregaande consequenties. Srebrenica is gevallen en onder de voet gelopen door de Serviërs. (...) De ramp was onafwendbaar.' In de *Volkskrant* van 11 juli wordt al duidelijk dat het overgrote deel van de Nederlanders in het basiskamp Potocari is aangekomen, ruim dertig man nog in handen zijn van de Serviërs; dat er geen slachtoffers zijn gevallen en dat er in het kamp water is voor een dag. Volgens de *Volkskrant* onderhandelt Karremans met de Serviërs over een staakt-het-vuren en een vrije aftocht van de ongeveer 44 duizend Moslims en de 400 blauwhelmen.

De *Volkskrant* meldt op 12 juli voor het eerst lof over Dutchbat van een VN-functionaris: 'Ik denk dat we alles hebben gedaan wat in ons vermogen lag'. (Over de inzet van de VN-interventiemacht bestaat dan grote verwarring. In de dagen na de val vertrekken 125 Nederlandse mariniers voor deelname aan de macht, maar de opdracht is nog duister. Alleen de Fransen dringen aan op herovering van de enclave, gesteund door Eurocommissaris Van den Broek). Op donderdag meldt de *Volkskrant* dat de Serviërs begonnen zijn met de etnische zuivering: Mladic reed Srebrenica binnen met in zijn kielzog 400 bussen. Jongens en mannen werden gescheiden van vrouwen, kinderen en bejaarden, om volgens een VN-medewerker in het stadion van Bratunac te worden ondervraagd om te bepalen of ze zich schuldig hebben gemaakt aan oorlogsmisdaden. Medewerkers van Artsen zonder Grenzen zeggen dat de vluchtelingen vreselijk bang en

uitgeput zijn en schreeuwend en volstrekt in paniek in de bussen geladen zijn. In elke bus reist volgens de VN een Nederlandse militair mee om de veiligheid van de vluchtelingen te garanderen. Dit had de commandant van Dutchbat, overste Karremans, geëist. De berichten in de andere kranten hebben die dag dezelfde strekking. Er blijkt bijna overal, ook in de Tweede Kamer, grote waardering voor Dutchbat. Lof is er ook voor Voorhoeve en Karremans. Ook zijn er schouderklopjes van de Bosnische regering ('dappere mannen'), CNN ('historisch optreden') en de NAVO. Volgens minister Van Mierlo zijn er positieve reacties uit vrijwel alle hoofdsteden. Op 13 juli verschijnt in de *Volkskrant* het verhaal 'Voorhoeve bewijst zich als de juiste man op de juiste plaats': 'Vanuit de bunker zal Voorhoeve dagenlang zijn rol spelen. Geen moment raakt hij in paniek, fouten maakt hij niet. Voorhoeve bewijst zich als de juiste man op de juiste plaats.'

Op vrijdag 14 juli verschijnen voor het eerst artikelen, ook in de *Volkskrant*, over wat zich heeft afgespeeld in Srebrenica, deels op basis van gesprekken met vluchtelingen in Tuzla. 'De berichten over wat zich heeft afgespeeld, veranderen nu duidelijk van karakter. Afstandelijke mededelingen en voorzichtige speculaties over aantallen vluchtelingen en erbarmelijke omstandigheden worden aangevuld met persoonlijke, vaak dramatische verhalen vol pijnlijke details. Maar er is ook kritiek. Volgens een Nederlandse kolonel, die in de *Volkskrant* wordt opgevoerd, 'speelt de Bosnische regering met het lijden van deze mensen om ons een politieke elleboogstoot te geven'. De VN kan verhalen over verkrachtingen en mishandelingen niet bevestigen. De *Volkskrant* meldt de weigering van de Bosnische regering om zich over de vluchtelingen te ontfemen. Zij vindt dat een taak van de VN, die immers geweigerd heeft de enclave te beschermen. 'Het is chaos', aldus de Nederlandse kolonel.

De eerste kritiek op het optreden van Dutchbat komt van de Franse minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Hervé de la Charette. Het blijkt later 'een misverstand'.

De *Telegraaf* meldt: 'Nederlandse Moslims verwijten Voorhoeve en Dutchbat te weinig te hebben gedaan om val van Srebrenica te voorkomen.'

Srebrenica blijft groot nieuws, dagelijks is er veel aandacht, terwijl ook de voorpagina's er mee worden

geopend. Op 15 juli staat in de *Volkskrant* een instemmend verhaal over Karremans na diens toost met Mladic. Nog steeds wordt ervan uitgegaan dat op elke bus een Nederlander is meegereisd. 'Karremans omgeschoold van groendenker tot blauwdenker', staat er boven het verhaal bij de foto, waarin wordt uitgelegd hoe militairen als Karremans hebben geleerd diplomatiek op te treden. Een soortgelijk artikel verschijnt in *Trouw*.

Premier Kok maakt zich nijdig erover dat Nederland volgens de Fransen de zaak in Srebrenica zou lopen te verkwanselen (uit angst voor de levens van de nog steeds in Bosnië aanwezige Dutchbatters) en dat de Fransen oproepen om Srebrenica te heroveren. In Nederland ontstaat intussen amper ophief over de omstrede toost van Karremans; in het buitenland des te meer. De Turkse krant *Hurriyet* schrijft in het onderschrijf: de VN-commandant, die tienduizenden vrouwen, kinderen en bejaarden overleverde aan de Bosnische Serviërs, liet onbeschaamd de champagne knallen met de commandant van de Serviërs.'

Terwijl het drama in en om Srebrenica zich ontwikkelt, en Bart Rijs als enige ter plekke pogingen blijft om te achterhalen wat er is gebeurd, woedt in de kolommen van de *Volkskrant* een ware meningenstrijd. Oordeelt de krant op 11 juli nog mild over het concept van de veilige gebieden, een dag later meldt Bart Rijs dat dit concept nu ten grave is gedragen in Srebrenica. Volgens Anet Bleich lokte de VN met haar slappe houding het drieste optreden van de Bosnische Serviërs tegen de veilige enclaves uit. Promovendus Norbert Both pleit op de opiniepagina voor het opgeven van de veilige gebieden. Maar in de krant van 15 juli hekelt Bleich zijn voorstel. Zij stelt zich op achter de Franse president Chirac, die de enclave wil heroveren. Op dezelfde *Forum*-pagina staan nog twee beschouwingen. Een van Jan Willem Honig, docent aan het *Department of War Studies* van het *King's College* in Londen en een van Martin Woollacott, redacteur van *The Guardian*. Honig concludeert dat het Nederlandse beleid een opeenvolging van verkeerde zetten is geweest 'die een man als Mladic - die de subtiele interactie tussen politiek en oorlog tot in alle finesses beheerst - ongenadig heeft uitgebuit en afgestraft'.

Woollacott ontdekt nog een positief punt bij de val van Srebrenica. Als de opgave van dit gebied een prelude is op de resolute verdediging van Sarajevo en andere kerngebieden en steden, dan is dat volgens hem te accepteren. In drie hoofdredactionele commentaren laat de krant weinig twijfel bestaan over haar standpunt. De Bosnische Serviërs zijn de grote boosdoeners, de internationale gemeenschap laat hen de ruimte die rol te spelen, de Moslims zijn het slachtoffer en Dutchbat/Nederland verdient lof voor het optreden en de politieke opstelling.

Vanaf maandag 17 juli richten de media zich meer op de vraag wat zich precies heeft afgespeeld in Srebrenica. Dat gebeurt vooral op basis van verhalen van vluchtelingen in Tuzla. Ook vragen de media zich af wat het lot is van de duizenden vermiste mannen.

Er verschijnen verhalen, ook van Bart Rijs, met gruwelijke details over mishandelingen en moord op Moslimmannen en verkrachting van meisjes. Minister Pronk, op reis in Bosnië, spreekt op 18 juli van genocide. Dat doet ook Emma Bonino, Europees commissaris verantwoordelijk voor de humanitaire hulpverlening in Bosnië. Volgens de VN worden 10- tot 15 duizend mannen en jonge vrouwen vermist.

Na hun vrijlating op 16 juli krijgen 55 gegijzelde Nederlandse blauwhelmen een spreekverbod. Desondanks komen steeds meer ooggetuigen van de gebeurtenissen in de uren en dagen na de val van Srebrenica aan het woord. Alle kranten berichten over de vlucht van vierduizend Moslimstrijders, die na een tocht van zes dagen door vijandelijk gebied Tuzla bereiken. Sommige vluchtelingen hebben geen goed woord over voor Dutchbat. 'Ze hebben niets voor ons gedaan'. En: 'De wereld, maar Nederland in het bijzonder, heeft Srebrenica verraden. Ze hebben mensen ontwapend en daarna aan de Cetnics overgeleverd. Uw mijnheer Nicolai in Sarajevo heeft de luchtaanvallen tegengehouden, want uw dertig mensen vindt u belangrijker dan dertigduizend van onze mensen. En voor deze vluchtelingen, die zes dagen op weg waren, hebt u niets gedaan. U bent verantwoordelijk voor deze genocide.' Op 18 juli verschijnt een interview met De Milliano van Artsen zonder Grenzen in *Trouw*. Volgens hem is sprake van een massaslachting. 'De gebeurtenissen werden zo

gedetailleerd beschreven, dat ik wel moet geloven dat het waar is.' Hij vreest dat er tienduizend mensen blijvend verdwenen zullen zijn. Hij mist veel jonge meisjes tussen de vluchtelingen. Op deze dag keren de 75 gegijzelden terug in Nederland. De gegijzelden hebben zelf geen gruwelen ondergaan of gezien, ze zeggen door de Serviërs fair te zijn behandeld. In de gesprekken blijkt dat bij sommige gegijzelden wel begrip of sympathie is gegroeid voor de Serviërs. 'Zij voelden zich door hen beter behandeld dan door de Moslims', aldus de militair Venhoven in *de Volkskrant*. Sommige soldaten vinden de Moslims onbetrouwbaar. De soldaten zelf mogen hierover niet praten met de pers. *De Volkskrant* bericht ook over de demonstratie op het Malieveld tegen het slappe beleid van de internatio-

nale gemeenschap. Op 19 juli komen vluchtelingen nauwelijks aan het woord. In *de Volkskrant* staat nog wel een verhaal met persoonlijke getuigenissen over de vlucht van de vierduizend mensen. ('Niemand zal ooit weten wat we doorstonden'). Op 19 juli stelt De Milliano, 'Na alles wat ik gehoord en gezien heb, zie ik geen aanleiding voor een onderzoek naar de houding van de Nederlandse blauwhelmen ter plekke. Maar alleen al om de geruchtenstroom tegen te gaan dat ze onvoldoende zouden hebben gedaan om de vluchtelingen te beschermen, zou het goed zijn als het kabinet met een volstrekt eenduidig verhaal komt over wat zich heeft afgespeeld in de verhouding tussen Serviërs, vluchtelingen en Nederlandse blauwhelmen.' Hij pleit voor een reconstructie van de feiten, waarmee hij doelt op de



Premier Kok op zondag 23 juli 1995 in gesprek met militairen van Dutchbat, die de dag tevoren via Potocari uit Srebrenica waren teruggekeerd. (Foto ANP/Toussaint Kluiters)

aanhoudende stroom verhalen van vluchtelingen over verkrachtingen van vrouwen en executies van Moslimmannen door Bosnische Serviërs in de nabijheid van Nederlandse militairen in de Moslimenclave. Ook Pronk verklaart op deze dag dat er sprake is van genocide. 'Pronk: 'Serviërs plegen genocide in Srebrenica', meldt *de Volkskrant* op 19 juli.

Op 21 juli staat de komende terugkeer van Dutchbat centraal in de berichtgeving. Op 22 juli neemt onder andere *de Volkskrant* een bericht over van *The Independent* waarin wordt gemeld dat Serviërs vierduizend Moslims hebben geëxecuteerd. De Britse krant baseert zich op getuigenissen van Servische inwoners van Bratunac. Zodra Dutchbat de grens van Bosnië en Servië over is, spreekt Voorhoeve ook over ernstige oorlogsmisdaden, waarbij honderden of zelfs duizenden doden zijn gevallen. Maar toch worden hierbij ook steeds vraagtekens gezet. Bijvoorbeeld door de chirurg van Dutchbat, kolonel Hegge, in de NRC van 22 juli. Hij meent dat een groot deel van de verhalen over mishandelingen schromelijk overdreven is. 'Je moet er ook rekening mee houden dat de mensen in Srebrenica drieënhalve jaar door de plaatselijke mafia zijn onderdrukt. Velen zijn blij dat ze daar nu weg zijn.'

Er komt kritiek van Wil de Wolf, directeur van de hulporganisatie Mensen in Nood, op *De Milliano*. Hij prijst Karremans en Dutchbat. Volgens De Wolf maakt *De Milliano* de klassieke fout om verhalen en getuigenissen uit de tweede en derde hand voor waar aan te nemen, zonder ze na te trekken. Hij pleit ook voor onderzoek. 'Nu worden de Bosnische Serviërs afgeschilderd als de *bad guys* en de Moslims als de *good guys*. Dat is te gemakkelijk. Er zijn ook berichten uit Slovenië waar Serviërs zijn mishandeld. En kijk ook eens naar wat er de afgelopen jaren is gebeurd.'

In *de Volkskrant* blijft de stroom opinierende stukken en commentaren aanhouden. Ook critici van de Bosnische Moslims komen aan het woord, zij het dat zij sterk in de minderheid zijn. Volgens twee opleiders van de naar Bosnië uitgezonden militairen, René Gremaux en Abe de Vries, die een publicitair offensiefje tegen de pro-Moslimpropaganda voeren, is het door de media breed uitgemeten lijden van onschuldige (Moslim)burgers, cynisch genoeg, van onschatbare waarde voor het

Bosnische bewind, dat zich daarmee verzekert van veel buitenlandse sympathie. 'Hardnekkige berichten als zouden Moslimautoriteiten 'hun' burgers opofferen om de westerse publieke opinie te beïnvloeden, zijn zeker geen perfide Servische leugen.'

Op zondag 23 juli vindt de beruchte persconferentie in Zagreb plaats, waar Karremans zijn uitspraak 'no good guys en no bad guys' doet. In aanwezigheid van premier Kok, minister Voorhoeve, prins Willem Alexander en opperbevelhebber Couzy worden de Nederlandse blauwhelmen met muziek ingehaald. Uit het NIOD-rapport blijkt dat de uitlatingen van Karremans in eerste instantie op de persconferentie voor Nederlandse journalisten nauwelijks een reactie veroorzaakt. Pas als later de buitenlandse pers te woord wordt gestaan, nemen die Karremans en Voorhoeve onder vuur.

*Volkskrant*-verslaggever Hans Moleman is de enige die daags daarop verslag daarvan doet in zijn krant. De berichtgeving over de rol van Dutchbat verandert na de persconferentie. De rol van Dutchbat en van Karremans komen ter discussie. In hoeverre hebben de Nederlanders meegewerkt aan de deportatie van de Moslimbevolking van Srebrenica en hoever reikt hun sympathie voor de Serviërs? Op maandag 24 juli opent alleen *De Telegraaf* met Dutchbat, de andere drie kranten vinden de opmars van de snelle interventiemacht naar Sarajevo het belangrijkste nieuws. In alle kranten is wel veel aandacht voor de persconferentie in Zagreb. Vanaf dit moment gaat het steeds meer over de vraag of Dutchbat en Karremans hebben meegewerkt aan oorlogsmisdaden. Er blijven vraagtekens bij de bewijzen, maar van de drie ochtendkranten bericht *de Volkskrant* het meest uitgebreid over Karremans' uitlatingen op de persconferentie. De krant plaatst de uitspraken in een militair-technische, maar vooral in een politieke context.

Alle dagbladen schrijven over de persoonlijke ervaringen van de Nederlandse militairen, maar het gaat toch vooral over de enorme spanning waaronder ze geleefd hebben en de ellende die ze onder de vluchtelingen hebben gezien. In *de Volkskrant* en *NRC* komt duidelijk naar voren dat de Dutchbatters positief zijn over het optreden van de Serviërs bij de verovering van Srebrenica

en voor het optreden van de Moslims geen goed woord over hebben.

In *De Telegraaf* oefent minister Sacirbey voorzichtig kritiek uit op Dutchbat. 'De Nederlanders hebben zich onvoldoende gerealiseerd dat ze te maken hadden met oorlogsmisdadigers. In feite hebben ze wel degelijk meegeholpen aan het etnisch zuiveren van de enclave'. Voorhoeve reageert in het artikel: 'Ik wil ook van hem (Sacirbey, red.) horen waarom het Bosnische regeringsleger al lang en breed op de vlucht was bij de eerste Servische aanval.'

Voorhoeve zegt bij de terugkeer van Dutchbat op Soesterberg: 'U bent dappere mensen, het ga u goed'. Opperbevelhebber Couzy zegt: U hebt maximaal weerstand geboden en humaan en uiterst professioneel hulp geboden. Dank, ik ben beretrots op u.'

In de kranten van 25 juli nemen Voorhoeve en Couzy afstand van de uitlatingen van Karremans in Zagreb. Eurocommissaris Van den Broek: 'Ik heb in de reacties van Dutchbat een ding gemist: het lot van de duizenden Bosniërs die worden vermist na de Servische verovering van Srebrenica.'

*De Volkskrant* staat stil bij de kloof tussen politici die verklaren dat de Serviërs zich schuldig hebben gemaakt aan genocide, en de militairen die niet denken in termen van goede Moslims en slechte Serviërs. De Leidse hoogleraar psychologie Wagenaar vindt dat de verklaring dat ex-gevangenen vaak sympathie koesteren voor hun gijzelnemers, geen hout snijdt. Hij zegt: 'De Nederlandse soldaten zijn juist niet overgeleverd geweest aan de eenzijdige propaganda van één partij. Ze kennen niet alleen de Serviërs van dichtbij, maar ook de Moslims. En die bleken een politieke mening te hebben en ook nog eens wapens te willen, kortom minder weerloos slachtoffer te zijn dan wij ons graag voorstellen.' Het is volgens hem veeleer zo dat 'de politici en de media zich eenzijdig hebben laten beïnvloeden door de Bosnische propaganda. Wat op zich niet erg is, want als de oorlog daardoor eerder voorbij is, dient dat de zaak alleen maar. Politici hebben vaak geen belang bij de waarheid.'

Intussen blijft de militaire top Dutchbat verdedigen. De voorzitter van de Nederlandse Officieren Vereniging, Stuiver: 'De mening van Karremans paste niet in het

straatje van de politici die de Serviërs van genocide beschuldigen.'

In *de Volkskrant* van 26 juli heeft verslaggever Jan Hoedeman een primeur: er was op 11 juli een scherp conflict ontstaan in het kabinet tussen Pronk enerzijds en Kok en Voorhoeve anderzijds. De laatsten wilden niet dat Dutchbat zou helpen ten koste van de eigen veiligheid, Pronk wilde wel zo ver gaan. Uit een geheim Nederlands VN-document zou blijken dat Karremans in zijn onderhandelingen met Mladic akkoord zou zijn gegaan met een *debriefing* van alle mannelijke Moslims tussen 17 en 60 jaar. Hij deed dat om de Nederlandse blauwhelmen uit Srebrenica los te krijgen. Wat in ambtelijk militair jargon sec als *debriefing* is genoteerd, is volgens Voorhoeve en Pronk vrijwel zeker uitgemond in genocide. Hoogleraar internationaal recht Van Boven zegt in *de Volkskrant* van 27 juli over het tekenen van Karremans: 'Een verregaande vorm van medeplichtigheid aan een oorlogsmisdrijf.'

De kranten melden op 28 juli nogmaals: Voorhoeve neemt Karremans in bescherming. Hij bevestigt in een brief aan de Tweede Kamer dat Dutchbat er niet in was geslaagd met elke bus een militair te laten meegaan. Op 29 juli vraagt *de Volkskrant* zich naar aanleiding van het vertrek van de VN-rapporteur voor de mensenrechten Mazowiecki, af hoe hard de bewijzen voor volkerenmoord zijn. 'Er zijn talrijke verhalen van vluchtelingen over gruweldaden, moorden en verkrachtingen door Bosnische Serviërs en de ministers Pronk en Voorhoeve hebben publiekelijk het woord genocide gebruikt. De verhalen van de vluchtelingen doen het ergste vrezen voor het lot van de duizenden vermisten uit Srebrenica, maar daarmee is nog niet bewezen dat ze vermoord zijn, aldus *de Volkskrant*. Over het lot van de vierduizend Moslimmannen in Bratunac doen tegenstrijdige berichten de ronde. Sommige bronnen zeggen dat de mannen geëxecuteerd zijn, het executieterrein was kniehoog bedekt met bloed. Een arts van Dutchbat beweert daarentegen dat hij acht dagen lang ongehinderd door Bratunac heeft gelopen en niets heeft gemerkt van executies. In een hoofdredactioneel commentaar van maandag 24 juli geeft *de Volkskrant* blijk van tegenstrijdige gevoelens. De krant toont zich verheugd en dankbaar (over

het feit dat Dutchbat veilig thuis is), geschokt (over de gemak waarmee Mladic Dutchbat opzij kon schuiven), bedroefd, boos en vol medeleven over het lot van de Moslims, en vooral machteloos over hoe het drama in Srebrenica heeft kunnen gebeuren. Verder vindt de krant dat de persconferentie in Zagreb nooit had mogen plaatsvinden. De krant meent dat de soldaten weinig kan worden verweten. Kwalijk is daarentegen dat de leiding van Dutchbat en van de Nederlandse landmacht de indruk hebben willen wekken dat het waarschijnlijk nogal is meegevallen.

Tot slot: De rol van de media is belangrijk voor de verwerving van brede steun onder de bevolking voor uitzending. Maar de media hebben zich laten inpakken door de Bosnische regering. Ze gaven een eenzijdig beeld van de oorlog door de indruk te wekken dat slechts de Serviërs zich schuldig maakten aan wandaden en de Moslims bezig waren met een verdedigingsoorlog. Met

name twee ex-opleiders van naar Bosnië uitgezonden militairen, René Gremaux en Abe de Vries dragen dit standpunt uit op de opiniepagina's van onder andere *de Volkskrant*: 'Een nuchtere gedachteswisseling over de oorlog is er in Nederland nooit geweest. Hier liepen de emoties hoog op en was volgens Lord Owen 'onwerkelijk moralisme' schering en inslag. Slechts enkele mediagenieke thema's - etnische zuiveringen en andere schendingen van de mensenrechten - overheersten de schijn discussie die maar niet tot een echt debat wilde uitgroeien. Dat vele commentatoren zo het slachtoffer zijn geworden van oorlogspropaganda staat buiten kijf, maar wie durft het te bekennen.'

De westerse pers heeft zich volgens hen voor het karretje van de Bosnische regering laten spannen. 'De eenzijdigheid van de westerse media zou nog niet zo erg zijn, ware het niet dat deze houding doorwerkt in de beslissingen van de politici.'

# BIJLAGEN

## REGISTER VAN NAMEN (1990 - 1998)

Berbers, Toine	coördinator buitenland
Bleich, Anet	redacteur en commentator buitenland
Boissevain, Marianne	redacteur buitenland
Broertjes, Pieter	adjunct-hoofdredacteur, hoofdredacteur sinds maart 1995
Cammelbeeck, Joris	redacteur buitenland
Hoedeman, Jan	politiek redacteur in Den Haag
Jungschleger, Ineke	verslaggever
Klaassen, Jos	correspondent in Brussel; redacteur buitenland; ombudsman
Klein, Theo	chef verslaggever; ombudsman
Koper, Arnold	chef redactie Forum; politiek commentator Den Haag
Lockeffer, Harry	hoofdredacteur tot maart 1995
Luijten, Jan	chef buitenland
Mesters, Bas	verslaggever
Moleman, Hans	verslaggever
Nysingh, Ewoud	redacteur buitenland; Haags redacteur Defensie/Buitenlandse Zaken
Rijs, Bart	freelance correspondent in Joegoslavië; correspondent in Moskou
Roelofs, André	correspondent in Moskou; commentator buitenland; redacteur Forum
Vuijsje, Bert	adjunct-hoofdredacteur tot maart 1996
Westerman, Frank	correspondent in Joegoslavië, aanvankelijk freelance

## OPDRACHT VAN HOOFDREDACTEUR PIETER BROERTJES TOT ONDERZOEK

Aan: Theo Klein en Jos Klaassen

Van: Pieter Broertjes

dd: 13 juni 2002

betreft: onderzoek naar VK-berichtgeving over Srebrenica 1993 en 1995

Beste collegae,

Graag wil ik via deze memo aan jullie de opdracht verstrekken om na te gaan hoe *de Volkskrant* het dossier Srebrenica heeft gevolgd. Het gaat om twee periodes: 1993 en 1995. Over beide periodes is uitvoerig verslag gedaan over de motieven die hebben geleid tot uitzending van Nederlandse militairen naar Srebrenica (1993) en over de uiteindelijke val van de enclave in juli 1995. Aanleiding voor deze bijzondere journalistieke opdracht is het verschijnen van het omvangrijke NIOD-rapport over de val van Srebrenica in april van dit jaar. De onderzoekers concluderen dat de media er goed aan zouden doen hun eigen rol in deze kwestie aan een kritisch zelfonderzoek bloot te stellen. Zij concluderen dat de media een tamelijk stereotiep en versimpeld beeld hebben geschapen van het Bosnische conflict en van de Nederlandse betrokkenheid. De media bedienden zich van 'te veel moraal, te weinig feiten, te veel standpunten, te weinig analyse en te veel emotie'. Als voorzitter van het Genootschap van Hoofdredacteuren heb ik op 19 april jongstleden mijn collega's opgeroepen hun eigen rol aan een openlijke en kritische zelfreflectie te onderwerpen. Ik stel het zeer op prijs dat jullie bereid zijn dat onderzoek te verrichten specifiek voor *de Volkskrant*. Ik ben vooral benieuwd naar de mate van zorgvuldigheid die *de Volkskrant* in deze kwestie heeft betracht: kan onze krant de toets der kritiek doorstaan? Natuurlijk beseft ik dat we met de kennis van nu mogelijk anders zouden hebben ge-

handeld dan destijds en ik verwacht ook van jullie dat je daarmee rekening houdt bij het formuleren van de conclusies. We hebben afgesproken dat jullie het onderzoek begin september zult afronden, maar in ieder geval voordat de openbare getuigenverhoren in het kader van de parlementaire enquête plaatsvinden. Naar verluidt zullen die verhoren in de maand september een aanvang krijgen. Ik ga ervan uit dat jullie rapport openbaar kan worden gemaakt. Op basis van dat rapport, dat is gebaseerd op onafhankelijk bronnenonderzoek en het voeren van gesprekken met (oud-) redacteuren, schrijven jullie een journalistiek verslag dat zal worden gepubliceerd in het mediakatern op zaterdag. Ik heb jullie uitgekozen als rapporteurs vanwege jullie speciale positie bij de krant als oud-ombudsman (Theo Klein) en fungerend ombudsman (Jos Klaassen). Hiermee wil ik benadrukken hoezeer ik hecht aan jullie onafhankelijke status in deze. De komende weken zal ik trachten een kleine commissie van toezicht te benoemen die als secondaire opinie kan fungeren. De gedachte gaat uit naar de heer P. Koedijk (mede-opsteller van het NIOD-rapport), de heer H.J. Schoo, prof. dr. F. van Vree en dr. M. Deuze). Ik zal hen de komende dagen benaderen. Ik wens jullie heel veel sterkte met de uitvoering van deze opdracht.

Met vriendelijke groet,  
Pieter Broertjes

## INTERNE ANALYSE VAN THEO KLEIN, 7 DECEMBER 1995

Srebrenica in de *Volkskrant* van 1 januari tot 4 december 1995

In deze periode werden er volgens het EDS-systeem (elektronisch documentatiesysteem) 152 stukken over het onderwerp geschreven. In werkelijkheid zijn het er meer. Bij controle blijkt dat niet alle stukken in het EDS-overzicht staan. Eén conclusie dringt zich al op: aan kwantiteit heeft het niet ontbroken. Op alle fronten is er geproduceerd. Van nieuws, reportages en achtergronden, tot veel columns, commentaren en bijdragen aan *Forum*.

In Den Haag hebben vooral Nysingh, maar ook Rottenberg en Hoedeman zich met het onderwerp bezighouden. Van de verslaggevers Moleman en Mesters, en van de buitenland redactie vooral Rijs, maar ook Garschagen, Veraart, Bleich en Klaassen.

Op *Forum* hebben met name Bleich, maar ook Van Dam (in mindere mate Sanders) een stempel op de opinievorming gedrukt. De *Volkskrant* liep in de zomermaanden voorop met een serie bijdragen van (ex-)officieren van de krijgsmacht.

We kunnen gemakshalve de periode-Srebrenica in vier fasen verdelen:

1. De tijd voor de aanval, van 1 januari tot begin juli.
2. De aanval tot en met het vertrek van Dutchbat op 23 juli (Zagreb).
3. De directe nasleep tot 30 oktober.
4. De tijd na verschijning van het rapport van Voorhoeve op 30 oktober.

Ad 1. De berichtgeving rond Dutchbat concentreert zich vooral op de vraag of de Nederlandse militairen weg zullen gaan en door wie ze opgevolgd zullen worden. De meeste berichten en verhalen worden geproduceerd door de Haagse redactie.

De *Volkskrant* mist geen grote affaires. We vallen zelfs op door eigen berichtgeving over Nederlandse soldaten die

zich misdragen zouden hebben (waren wij de eersten die dit meldden?) tegenover Bosnische kinderen. Nysingh meldde als eerste de aflossing van Nederlandse militairen door Oekraïners.

Achteraf bezien (maar dat is altijd gemakkelijk) hadden we wellicht met meer inspanning (ter plekke) toen al kunnen constateren dat de stemming van Dutchbat gevaarlijk anti-Moslim was geworden.

Ad 2. Tijdens de val van Srebrenica hadden wij Rijs in voormalig Joegoslavië. Moleman reisde af om de terugkeer van Dutchbat te verslaan en bleef uiteindelijk ruim drie weken. Mesters ging naar Zagreb om te assisteren bij de inmiddels beruchte persconferenties.

In deze periode verliep de verslaggeving uitstekend. De aandacht was niet alleen gericht op Srebrenica. Ook de komst van de VN-troepen naar de berg Igman en (na de val van Srebrenica) de overrompeling van de Krajina door het Kroatische leger werden verslagen.

Srebrenica was in die tijd niet bereikbaar voor buitenlandse verslaggevers. We moesten het, net als alle andere media, doen met observaties vanuit Belgrado en Zagreb. En natuurlijk met wat we via Den Haag te weten kwamen.

We kregen pas uit de eerste hand contact met de Nederlandse militairen nadat ze Servisch grondgebied hadden verlaten. De berichtgeving over wat zich had afgespeeld in Srebrenica was in deze periode verwarrend en moeilijk. Dat gold voor iedereen. We hebben terecht kritisch bericht over de beruchte persconferentie in Zagreb, waar Karremans in de fout ging.

In deze periode werd niet duidelijk wie precies verantwoordelijk was voor de bevelvoering. Achteraf bekeken hadden we meer moeite moeten doen om dat in beeld te krijgen. Dan was wellicht eerder helder geworden dat het een vrij chaotisch geheel was. Waarschijnlijk was dan ook de rol van Voorhoeve ('de juiste man op de juiste plaats') beter ingeschat.

In Zagreb misten we de bewering van Couzy dat er geen massamoord had plaatsgevonden.

Ad 3. Direct na 'Zagreb' zijn ook wij begonnen met het zoeken van verklaringen voor het gedrag van de Nederlandse militairen (verhaal Mesters in *Vervolg*) en de gebeurtenissen in Srebrenica. Achteraf kunnen we stellen dat we ons daarbij te veel gericht hebben op de teruggekeerde Nederlandse militairen en de politieke, vooral Nederlandse reacties op de gebeurtenissen. Srebrenica werd teveel behandeld als een nationale gebeurtenis. We werden in beslag genomen door mislukte filmrolletjes, verdwenen lijsten, controversie Voorhoeve-legertop.

We hebben ons, net als vrijwel alle andere Nederlandse media, laten meeslepen op zijwegen. Daarop scoorden we van tijd tot tijd wel: Over de geheim gehouden afspraak van generaal Smith met Mladic en over het tegenhouden van het rapport-Dutchbat door Van Mierlo. We zijn pas in een laat stadium serieus gaan proberen om Nederlandse militairen (na hun vakantie) te spreken te krijgen over wat er in Srebrenica is gebeurd. We zijn ook te laat op het idee gekomen, terug te gaan naar de plaats des onheils en zelf onderzoek te doen.

Feitenonderzoek is sowieso niet ons sterkste punt. Te snel bouwen we ons verhaal op meningen. Rijs is wel op 26 juli terug gegaan naar Srebrenica. Hij doet direct verslag van zijn bevindingen: in de beruchte school en in het stadion. Hij ziet stille getuigen van schietpartijen. De Serviërs verhullen niet dat er tweeduizend mensen begraven liggen. Maar dat zijn volgens hen allemaal slachtoffers van gevechtshandelingen.

Aan dat verhaal mankeert wel iets. Het eigen nieuws was weggemoffeld. Onder de gegeven omstandigheden (onder toezicht van de Serviërs) kon Rijs ter plekke niet meer doen. We hadden onze pogingen echter niet moeten staken om tot een eigen reconstructie te komen. Vreemd genoeg publiceren we later wel verhalen van buitenlandse verslaggevers die doodleuk beweren als eerste ter plekke te zijn geweest.

Zij hadden niet zo veel meer te melden dan Rijs in juli (18/11 Rohde; 1/9 AP e.a.; 5/10 Christian Science Monitor; 10/10 Human Right Watch). Kennelijk geloven we het zelf eerder als de feiten over Dutchbat door buitenlandse collega's worden vermeld.

Ad 4. Na de verschijning van het rapport spitst de berichtgeving zich toe op het wel of niet houden van een hoorzitting in de Tweede Kamer. *Brandpunt* voegt iets nieuws toe met de mededeling dat medische hulp aan Bosnische vluchtelingen werd geweigerd.

Conclusies:

1. We hebben ons op cruciale momenten, met name direct na de persconferentie, te volgend opgesteld. We hadden zelf terug moeten gaan voor onderzoek uit de eerste hand. Ook in een later stadium, toen de NRC die fout wel had goedge maakt, hebben we dat niet gedaan. We zijn te veel gericht op meningen. Het nieuws komt toch vooral uit Den Haag, te institutioneel.
2. We waren lang te zeer gericht op het Nederlandse aspect. Dat wil zeggen, in de verslaggeving. De *Volkskrant* was sterk in het becommentariëren en het analyseren, ook in mondiaal (VN-)kader. Hoe de politieke processen lopen, leggen we goed uit. Idem: hoe de macht verschuift tussen de politiek en de legertop. Maar we onderzoeken niet zelf wat die Voorhoeve eigenlijk te zoeken had in zijn bunker, tijdens een VN-operatie. Wie beveelt wie, hoe laat, waarover en waarom?
3. We zijn niet toegekomen aan goede reconstructies van wat er gebeurd is in Srebrenica. De gang van zaken rond de opening van *Vervolg* (21/10) is typerend voor de *Volkskrant* rond dit soort verhalen. De reconstructie zou gemaakt worden door Nysingh, met behulp van Moleman. Moleman was een week tevoren nog in Bosnië. In laatste instantie werd Mesters erbij betrokken omdat de militairen met wie hij eerder een *Vervolg*-verhaal maakte, alleen met hem wilden spreken. Zijn informatie zou alleen aanvullend zijn. Maar wat blijkt? Nysingh valt weg, hij wordt vader. Moleman levert wel zijn tekst. Maar die komt in een verkeerd opslaggebied terecht. Mesters houdt zijn afspraak en maakt in laatste instantie een verhaal met Moleman, grotendeels gebaseerd op uitspraken van Mesters' vrienden. Bleich schrijft een analyse, waar *Vervolg* mee opent. Al met al niet de verhalen die we bedoeld hadden.

4. De Volkskrant heeft moeite met gecompliceerde langlopende processen die door verscheidene deelredacties verslagen moeten worden. Te veel worden opdrachten doorgegeven of niet gemaakt. Afspraken kunnen te gemakkelijk worden geschonden. Dat het beter kan, bleek onder meer tijdens de Golfoorlog, de 'overstromingen' begin dit jaar of het vliegtuigongeluk in Faro.

5. Om deze langlopende gecompliceerde onderwerpen in goede banen te leiden, moet één collega (een adjunct) verantwoordelijk worden gesteld. Hij of zij moet ervoor zorgen dat de juiste initiatieven worden genomen, de deelredacties goed samenwerken en de afspraken worden nagekomen. Gaat het om echt grote kwesties dan kan de vorming van een tijdelijke redactie (zoals tijdens de Golfoorlog) worden overwogen.

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## COLUMN VAN CORRESPONDENT BART RIJS, DE VOLKSKRANT, 22 AUGUSTUS 1998

Journalist leek meer op Dutchbatter dan hij wil toegeven

'Na Srebrenica is Nederland niet meer hetzelfde', schreef de hoogleraar Henri Beunders na de val van de Moslimenclave. Er was een eind gekomen aan de illusie dat je de wereld kunt verdelen in *good guys* en *bad guys*, en dat wij in de eerste categorie thuis horen. Het zou mooi zijn als de media de eer zou toekomen deze illusie te hebben doorgeprikt. Mooi voor mezelf ook. Tenslotte was ik de Volkskrant-correspondent in het voormalige Joegoslavië tijdens de val van de enclave. Maar wie terugkijkt, begint al snel te twijfelen. De media vierden het heldenonthaal van de Dutchbatters bij hun terugkeer vrolijk mee. Veel kritische vragen werden er niet gesteld. Ik heb mijn eigen stukken uit juli 1995 nog eens opgediept. Wat schreef ik? 'De Nederlandse VN-soldaten konden alleen toekijken. Moslimvrouwen vertellen hoe de 'blauwen' hen probeerden gerust te stellen en te troosten terwijl hun geliefden werden weggevoerd.' Ja, ja. Gelukkig is er tussen de regels ook twijfel te lezen. Hoe kwam het dat Dutchbat zweeg over de Servische gruweldaden waar de vluchtelingen over vertelden?

In Bosnië werd je nog met de neus op de feiten gedrukt. Ik was erbij toen de eerste vrouwen, kinderen en ouden van dagen uit Srebrenica door de Serviërs over de frontlijn naar Moslimgebied werden gejaagd. De

mannen ontbraken, en iedereen vermoedde waarom. In Nederland was de realiteit van de oorlog ver weg. Toen ik met de redactie van de krant belde, kreeg ik te horen dat er een lovend commentaar over Defensie-minister Joris Voorhoeve in de maak was. Ik geloof niet dat ze mijn bezwaren toen helemaal begrepen.

Het waren buitenlandse journalisten die begonnen uit te zoeken wat er echt was gebeurd. De Amerikaan David Rohde spoorde als eerste de massagraven bij Srebrenica op, waar hij een Pulitzer voor kreeg, en het Amerikaanse *The New Republic* publiceerde als eerste een reconstructie van de val van de enclave. De buitenlandse media verbloemden de werkelijkheid niet: '*Dutch soldiers welcomed the Serb killers*', kopte *The Independent*.

Nederlandse journalisten namen in eerste instantie niet de moeite bij de Moslims te informeren wat er was gebeurd, en al helemaal niet bij de Serviërs. De meeste verslaggevers durfden zich tijdens de oorlog alleen in Bosnië te wagen aan het handje van Unprofor, het VN-leger, en schrokken van elke knal. Bovendien leken velen, bewust of onbewust, ervan uit te gaan dat Balkanbewoners primitievelingen zijn, die elkaar al eeuwen de hersens inslaan, en dus niet te vertrouwen zijn. De journalisten hadden meer met de Dutchbatters gemeen dan ze later deden voorkomen.

Pas een kleine maand na de val verschenen in de Nederlandse pers de eerste berichten over het minder

dan heldhaftige gedrag van Dutchbat. Eerst *NRC Handelsblad*, toen *Netwerk*, en later ook de *IKON* hadden doorgevraagd. Stukje bij beetje brachten ze naar buiten dat Dutchbatters hadden toegekeken, terwijl de Moslimmannen van hun families werden gescheiden en de vluchtelingen van het VN-basiskamp in de armen van de Serviërs werden gejaagd. De andere media probeerden uit alle macht hun verzuim goed te maken. Ze zochten als razenden naar Dutchbatters die uit de school wilden klappen, en het ene onthullinkje volgde op het andere. 'Srebrenica' werd opeens overal besproken. Na de regering jarenlang te hebben aangespoord in Bosnië te interveniëren, ontladen de media nu hun gram op Dutchbat. Ik heb wel begrip voor de Dutchbatter die uithaalde naar 'het soms hysterisch aandoende geblaat van allerlei deskundigen, politici en tv-mensjes.' De spindoctors van het ministerie van Defensie - voorop voorlichter Bert Kreemers die zijn inspanningen met promotie beloond zag - deden alles om de schade te beperken. Ze bagatelliseerden of ontkenden elke onthulling, lekten selectief informatie naar lievelingen in de media en snoefden dat ze van hen geen gevaar meer te duchten hadden: 'Die hangen aan het infuus.' Ze deden hun best het publieke debat te sturen in de richting van anderen, zoals de VN-top, de Franse VN-commandant en de VS. Ondertussen kregen Dutchbatters die wilden praten - inclusief commandant Karremans - een spreekverbod. Een hoge militair die

desondanks informatie verschaftte, werd uren door de marechaussee verhoord en al zijn telefoontjes werden nagetrokken.

Defensie slaagde min of meer in zijn opzet. Door de onthullinkjes, gevolgd door ontkenningen, gevolgd door meer onthullingen, en nieuwe ontkenningen, zagen de meeste mensen door de bomen het bos niet meer. De media verloren hun interesse. De Haagse politiek deed niets, zo redeneerden ze, dus was het verhaal min of meer dood.

Dat er nu wellicht toch nog een parlementaire enquête komt, is ironisch genoeg niet het gevolg van vasthouden de onderzoeksjournalistiek, maar van de behoefte van media om makkelijk te scoren. Oude feiten werden afgestoft, aangevuld met een enkel nieuw detail en vervolgens met veel fanfare opgedist als een schandaal. De feiten stonden zelfs al, zij het in een wolk van verhullend taalgebruik, in het *debriefingsrapport* van Defensie. De nieuwe minister van Defensie en de nieuwe Tweede Kamer hebben dit zoveelste relletje aangegrepen om eindelijk schoon schip te maken.

Wij van de media hebben niet veel reden onszelf al te zeer op de borst te kloppen. Een paar journalisten hebben vakwerk verricht; de meesten bleken lui, matig geïnformeerd en gezagsgetrouw. Ook Nederlandse journalisten hebben nog wel eens de illusie dat je de wereld kunt indelen in goed en kwaad, en denken dat wij vanzelfsprekend bij de eerste categorie horen.

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## COLUMN VAN OMBUDSMAN THEO KLEIN, DE VOLKSKRANT, 7 OKTOBER 2000

Srebrenica ook journalistieke les

Parlement en kabinet praten deze en volgende week over de gang van zaken bij uitzending van vredesmissies. Op basis van het zeer kritische rapport van de commissie-Bakker proberen Kamerleden en bewindslieden vooral lessen te trekken uit de gebrekkige besluitvorming rond Srebrenica. Een nieuwe testcase

heeft zich al aangediend: mariniers voor Eritrea. Srebrenica was niet alleen een ontluisterende ervaring voor Nederlandse militairen en politici. Ook voor veel journalisten die het drama volgden, was er voldoende aanleiding na te gaan wat er mis ging. Waarom kwamen de media zo laat achter de massa-executies? Waarom bleef de rol van Dutchbat zo lang onduidelijk? Waarom liet men zich meeslepen in de euforie na terugkeer van

de militairen uit de door de Bosnische Serviërs veroverde enclave?

Bart Rijs, tijdens de val van Srebrenica correspondent voor *de Volkskrant*, vat het antwoord in drie woorden samen 'gemakzucht, provincialisme en bewustzijnsvernaauwing' bij de media in Nederland. Als kranten al een man ter plaatse hadden, dan werd er vaak slecht naar hem geluisterd. Aan een Haagse quote werd vaak meer waarde gehecht.

Eind 1995 analyseerde *de Volkskrant* de eigen verslaggeving over Srebrenica. Conclusies: de krant heeft zich te volgzzaam opgesteld en deed te weinig aan feitenonderzoek. Vooral na de beruchte persconferentie in Zagreb, waar Dutchbat onder toezicht van premier Kok polonaise liep, is te lang gewacht met onderzoek ter plaatse. Bij de reconstructie van de gebeurtenissen werd Srebrenica te zeer behandeld als een nationale zaak. Net als vrijwel alle Nederlandse media heeft *de Volkskrant* zich laten meeslepen op zijwegen. In de Nederlandse context werden verdwenen filmrolletjes, de controverses tussen minister Voorhoeve en de legertop en het tegenhouden van het Dutchbat-rapport door minister Van Mierlo belangrijke kwesties.

Het drama van Srebrenica werd onvoldoende geplaatst in het gecompliceerde internationale (VN-)kader, waarin het tot stand kwam. In analyses en commentaren werden die verbanden wel gelegd, maar bij het achterhalen van de gebeurtenissen leunde men zwaar op Nederlandse informanten. Net als de politici werden ook de meeste Nederlandse verslaggevers overrompeld door de ontwikkelingen in Srebrenica. Het duurde geruime tijd voor de omvang van de gebeurtenissen in de enclave en de Nederlandse rol in volle omvang tot hen doordrong.

De berichtgeving uit Srebrenica werd voor, tijdens en direct na de aanval door de Serviërs bemoeilijkt omdat geen buitenlandse journalisten tot de stad werden toegelaten. *De Volkskrant* moest het doen met observaties vanuit Belgrado, Zagreb, Moskou, Washington en

natuurlijk Den Haag. De berichten over wat zich in Srebrenica had afgespeeld, waren in die fase verwarrend.

Toen bleef ook lang onhelder wie verantwoordelijk was voor de VN-bevelvoering. De krant had meer moeite moeten doen de commandostructuur in beeld te krijgen. Dan was wellicht eerder vast komen te staan dat de Nederlandse politici en militairen op belangrijke momenten (geen luchtsteun) overruled konden worden door de grote westerse naties.

Bart Rijs is er nog altijd trots op dat hij direct aan de grens uit Srebrenica gevluchte vrouwen heeft opgevangen en als een van de eersten hun verhalen over de vermissing van hun mannen noteerde. Minder te spreken is hij over zijn goedgelovigheid als het over de rol van Dutchbat ging. 'Ik kon me niet voorstellen dat zij zo over zich hadden laten lopen.'

In Srebrenica werden Nederlandse troepen voor het eerst sinds de crisis in Nieuw-Guinea rechtstreeks betrokken bij gevechtshandelingen. Dat was niet alleen een nieuwe ervaring voor een generatie militairen en politici, maar ook voor verslaggevers. Srebrenica heeft in elk geval weer aangetoond dat niets gaat boven eigen waarneming ter plaatse.

Sindsdien is dat nadrukkelijker in praktijk gebracht zoals in Tsjetsjenië, Rwanda of Kosovo. Vorige maand ontving *Volkskrant*-correspondent Michel Maas de belangrijkste journalistieke onderscheiding in Nederland, de NDP-prijs, voor zijn reportages tijdens de oorlog in Kosovo. Daar liep hij wekenlang met een patrouille van het bevrijdingsleger langs het front en schreef indrukwekkende reportages.

Met de lessen van Srebrenica in het achterhoofd moet de Tweede Kamer beslissen over de uitzending van mariniers naar het grensgebied tussen Eritrea en Ethiopië. Nederlandse journalisten, onder wie *Volkskrant*-correspondent Kees Broere, hebben vanuit Eritrea al gewezen op gevaren. Niet alleen militairen en politici, ook journalisten zijn gewaarschuwd.

## COLUMN VAN OMBUDSMAN JOS KLAASSEN, DE VOLKSKRANT VAN 20 MAART 2002

### Feiten tellen: in Srebrenica én op de Dam

Het verschijnsel van de Nederlandse 'oorlogsverslaggever' is nog erg jong. In het verleden werd dit karwei meestal overgelaten aan internationale persbureaus, maar tegenwoordig besluiten kranten sneller om een eigen correspondent naar een oorlogsgebied te sturen. Zo was *de Volkskrant* 'erbij' in Libanon, Bosnië, Tsjetsjenië, Rwanda, Congo, Kosovo. . . Op bewonderenswaardige manier informeert Ferry Biedermann, onze correspondent in Jeruzalem, ons dagelijks en onder erg moeilijke omstandigheden over het geweld tussen Israël's en Palestijnen. Af en toe krijg ik (zéér misplaatste) brieven/emails van lezers die vinden dat 'een jood niet onafhankelijk kan schrijven over de oorlog tussen Israël en de Palestijnen'. Biedermann bewijst dagelijks onbetwist dat hij dat wél kan, en ook doet.

'Srebrenica', zo heeft mijn voorganger Theo Klein eind 2000 al eens op deze plek geschreven, was niet alleen een militair debacle. Ook journalistiek Nederland heeft grove fouten gemaakt. Klein citeerde onze toenmalige correspondent op de Balkan, Bart Rijs, die bij de Nederlandse media 'gemakzucht, provincialisme en bewustzijnsvernaauwing' constateerde.

Na een interne analyse bij *de Volkskrant* over de eigen Srebrenica-verslaggeving was de slotsom: 'de krant heeft zich te volgzzaam opgesteld en deed weinig aan feitenonderzoek.' Srebrenica werd ook door deze krant te zeer als een nationale zaak gezien, terwijl het VN-kader, waarin de missie plaats vond, werd genegeerd. Als Amerikaanse militairen ergens ter wereld in actie komen, hebben ze altijd een tros journalisten op hun hielen. Tijdens de jongste Amerikaanse acties in Afghanistan kregen de pers en de legerleiding het zelfs met elkaar aan de stok, omdat de militairen journalisten op een afstand probeerden te houden en daarmee het recht op vrije nieuwsgaring schonden.

Srebrenica was voor, tijdens en direct na de Servische aanval voor buitenlandse journalisten afgesloten. Ik vraag me af of iets dergelijks had kunnen gebeuren als er een contingent Amerikaanse militairen had gezeten. Waarschijnlijk hadden belangrijke Amerikaanse kranten voor de duur van de 'verdediging' van Srebrenica een oorlogscorrespondent ter plaatse gestationeerd. Als de Nederlandse media dat gedaan hadden, was het onheil misschien ook geschied. Maar de ware toedracht was dan sneller bekend geweest.

Er gaat niets boven eigen waarneming ter plaatse. zo schreef Theo Klein twee jaar geleden, over de Srebrenica-affaire. Dat geldt niet alleen voor situaties in oorlogsgebieden. Dat geldt ook voor gebeurtenissen vlakbij huis – in Amsterdam bijvoorbeeld.

Veel lezers hebben deze week boos gereageerd op onze verslaggeving in de maandagkrant van de Palestina-demonstratie op de Dam: 'Die domme mensen verbranden vlaggen'. *De Volkskrant* wordt verweten teveel aandacht besteed te hebben aan het geweld en te weinig aan het vreedzame protest tegen Israël. Veel briefschrijvers, onder wie een 'traditioneel gezagsgetrouw' ex-brigadegeneraal, vinden dat *de Volkskrant* zich meer op de omvang van de (vreedzame) demonstratie had moeten richten. De 'grimmige' presentie van de ME zou het geweld hebben uitgelokt. Andere lezers waren geschokt door 'vlaggen met Davidster en hakenkruis', megedragen 'op het Rokin, de *via dolorosa* van honderdduizend Amsterdamse joden'.

De afdeling verslaggeverij van *de Volkskrant* had zaterdag geen massale opkomst verwachtend, slechts één collega, een jonge verslaggeefster, belast met de Palestina-betoging. Mét de bespiegeling van Michaël Zeeman én de voorbeschouwing in de zaterdageditie ('Palestina-betoging uitlaatklep voor Moslims') werd gemeend dat deze gebeurtenis voldoende aandacht had gekregen. Een misrekening? Dinsdag was een 'inhaalmanoeuvre' nodig over het ME-optreden en voor de reactie van

burgemeester Job Cohen op de gebeurtenissen. Ik meen dat de verslaggeverij de Palestina-betoging, gezien de emoties die het geweld hier te lande al weken opwekt, heeft onderschat. De lezer heeft recht op een eerlijk,

degelijk en compleet verslag van zo'n betoging. Meer mankracht betekent meer (juiste) feiten. Want er gaat niets boven eigen waarneming ter plaatse. In Srebrenica én op de Dam in Amsterdam.

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## JAARREDE VAN HOOFDREDACTEUR PIETER BROERTJES, 19 APRIL 2002

Uitgesproken in zijn functie van voorzitter van het Nederlands Genootschap van Hoofdredacteuren tijdens de 43ste jaarvergadering in Utrecht.

Waarde collega's,

Uit een onderzoek van de Nederlandse Dagbladpers van vorige maand blijkt dat 86 procent van de ondervraagden de krant als nieuwsbron superieur vindt. De krant gaat dieper in op het nieuws en is betrouwbaarder dan de televisie, zeggen zij. Nederlanders blijken veel waarde te hechten aan hun krant en zij hebben daar ook extra geld voor over. Zij hebben voor een groot deel een hechte relatie met hun krant. Velen zijn getrouwd met hun krant. En dat laten zij ook blijken in hun reacties! Dit opmerkelijke nieuwtje werd door de kranten niet of in een klein bericht gebracht. Goed nieuws is immers geen nieuws. Of was er sprake van enig ongeloof vanwege de stortvloed van negatieve berichten over de dagbladsector in het voorbije jaar? Klopte dit allemaal wel? Het was het afgelopen jaar stormachtig weer in onze sectoren. De *Telegraaf* en Endemol schrapten honderden banen. In de regionale dagbladpers volgde de ene fusie na de andere. In deze maand zag het *Dagblad van het Noorden*, de erfopvolger van *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, het *Groninger Dagblad* en de *Drentse Courant*, het licht. In tal van provincies zijn Wegener en De *Telegraaf* genommeerde regionale kranten die ooit gezworen vijanden waren, aan het samenvoegen en aan het afsnaken. Ook PCM Uitgevers broedt plannen in die richting uit. In de hoop en de verwachting dat ze het daardoor langer volhouden.

[...]

De oude mediumtypen zijn sterk aan erosie onderhevig. Gratis verspreide kranten doen het goed, vooral onder jongeren. Spits is al de grootste krant van Nederland in de groep van 13 tot 35 jaar. De appreciatie van gratis tabloids ligt onder lezers bovendien behoorlijk hoog. Journalisten zijn niet zonder schuld aan het functieverlies en de verdere marginalisering van kranten. Het wordt tijd dat onze beroepsgroep de hand in eigen boezem steekt. De jonge Amsterdamse onderzoeker Mark Deuze, die in maart promoveerde op een studie naar journalisten in Nederland in vergelijking met enkele buitenlandse, kan ons daarbij helpen. Zijn conclusies zijn hard, maar rechtvaardig. Journalisten zijn vervreemd van hun publiek, zij hebben weinig tot geen contact met hun lezers, zij zitten liever achter hun computer dan dat ze de straat op gaan en zij staan afkerig tegenover internet. De journalistiek is een gewone bureaubaan geworden, liefst parttime. Aldus Deuze.

De observaties van Deuze hebben in de beroepsgroep al tot veel discussie geleid en – gelukkig – tot kritisch zelfonderzoek. Volgens 'mediawatcher' Henri Beunders zijn de media, met name de kwaliteitskranten, onder Paars te veel onderdeel geworden van het establishment. Zij hebben hun kritische taak ten opzichte van de machthebbers verwaarloosd. Zij hebben verzuimd misstanden (wachtlijsten, criminaliteit, illegalen, onderwijsvernieuwingen) met indringende reportages en heldere analyses aan de kaak te stellen. Beunders, maar ook anderen (zoals Jos van Kemenade),

gaan zelfs zo ver dat in hun ogen de 'verburgerlijkte en verrechtste' (Beunders) media de opkomst van Pim Fortuyn voor een deel in de hand hebben gewerkt. Beunders' pleidooi om de journalistiek terug te brengen naar de burger ('Kom uit die bureaustoel en begeef je onder het publiek') vindt zijn oorsprong in Amerika. Daar ontstond al tien jaar geleden een debat over *civic journalism*. De journalist moet niet alleen een onafhankelijke verslaggever zijn, maar ook een actieve medeburger, die zich bewust is van zijn of haar sociale verantwoordelijkheid.

Het motto van de aanhangers van *civic journalism* is: begin waar de burger begint, maar hou niet op waar de burger eindigt. Zo kan een synthese ontstaan tussen de kritische en de publieke journalistiek. Dat vereist een journalistieke culturele revolutie, waarbij journalisten de mondige burger niet vanuit de hoogte en met scepsis en cynisme informatie verstrekt, maar als medeburger en als bondgenoot van medelanders en wereldburgers. Hans van Mierlo stelde vorig jaar in een toespraak voor de redactie van de *Volkskrant*: 'Gezag verwerft een krant door een overtuigende balans te vinden tussen de journalistieke rol en de maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid. Dáár ligt het gezicht van de krant.' In zijn ogen is er grote behoefte aan houvast in de onmetelijke zee van onzekerheden. Hij pleitte daarom voor een ouderwetse krant: een krant die ontstijgt aan de waan van de dag, die dagelijks een bezonken, maar vlijmscherp oordeel velt.

Dergelijke accentverschuivingen – minder institutioneel nieuws, meer interactief, meer kwaliteit en meer gezaghebbend – sluiten goed aan bij de strategische heroriëntatie die verschillende media nu doormaken. Kranten zijn weer op zoek naar een herkenbaar 'smoel' en een eigen koers. Die profilering komt ook tegemoet aan critici zoals Marcel van Dam. Hij verwijt de media de kloof tussen politici en burgers mede op hun geweten te hebben, doordat wij het politieke proces hebben teruggebracht tot *onliners*, persoonlijke drama's en incidenten.

In de Nederlandse cultuur zijn ontwikkelingen gaande

die we niet of slechts amper kunnen beïnvloeden. Er wordt domweg minder gelezen. We kunnen niet alles, maar we moeten ons ook niet machteloos verklaren. Beter dan te vragen om overheidssubsidie, is het om een nieuwe kritische houding te ontwikkelen tegenover de eigen prestaties. Dat geldt voor uitgevers én journalisten.

[...]

Dames en Heren, ik wil afsluiten met de actualiteit. Het tweede kabinet-Kok is deze week gevallen over de kwestie Srebrenica. Het kritische rapport van het NIOD was de druppel. Vaststaat dat het beeld dat wij van Srebrenica hebben, is gekleurd door de media. In vier lijvige bijlagen schetsen de onderzoekers een nogal mistroostig beeld van de media. Wij, u en ik, hebben een tamelijk stereotiep, versimpeld beeld geschapen van het Bosnische conflict en van de Nederlandse betrokkenheid. Wij, sommigen meer dan anderen, boden 'te veel moraal, te weinig feiten, te veel standpunten, te weinig analyse en te veel emotie'.

Kranten konden dieper ingaan op de situatie ter plekke dan televisieprogramma's die daar vaak geen vaste correspondenten hadden. Maar welk profijt hebben de traditionele media daarvan gehad? Uit evaluaties blijkt dat de Nederlandse journalistieke prestaties het beste kunnen worden gekenmerkt met gemakzucht en provincialisme. Het lijkt erop dat het trauma van Srebrenica voor de politiek ook een trauma is geworden voor de Nederlandse journalistiek.

De politici zijn inmiddels begonnen hun eigen rol kritisch te evalueren. Het zou de media sieren als zij de komende tijd ook hun eigen rol aan een openlijke en kritische zelfreflectie onderwerpen. Kranten en televisie- of radioprogramma's die op onderzoeksgebied een reputatie hebben, kunnen veel eer inleggen met een gedegen en diepgravend onderzoek naar de eigen rol van de media bij het Srebrenica-drama. Lezers en kijkers verwachten niet anders meer van ons.

Amsterdam, april 2002.

Pieter Broertjes.

*De Volkskrant* heeft tussen 1991 en 1995 een redelijk evenwichtig beeld gegeven van de Balkan-oorlog. Tot die conclusie komen de ombudsman van *de Volkskrant* Jos Klaassen en zijn voorganger in die functie Theo Klein na een kritisch onderzoek van de berichtgeving over het uiteenvallen van Joegoslavië. Ze nuanceren daarmee het oordeel van het NIOD over het functioneren van de media. De redactie was bij het uitbreken van het conflict in Joegoslavië niet bevooroordeeld. Wel ontstond in de tweede helft van 1992 al het beeld van de Serviërs als *bad guys*, dat in de commentaren overheerste en in het verloop van de oorlog soms bepalend is geweest bij de keuze van artikelen en foto's. De verslaggevers en correspondenten die de krant naar de conflicthaarden stuurde, werden vrijgelaten in hun keuzes van de onderwerpen. Dat *de Volkskrant* een uitgesproken eigen mening ventileerde over de Balkan-oorlog had niet tot gevolg dat andere meningen niet aan bod kwamen of dat stelselmatig met feiten werd gemanipuleerd.

zijn.

De Secretaris-generaal van de VN Kofi Anan heeft het zelf bevestigd en neergelegd in een rapport: op de onschuldige mannelijke moslim-bevolking van Srebrenica is de ergste genocide gepleegd, die sinds WO-II heeft plaatsgevonden. Nooit enige veroordeling uitgesproken hebbend voor welke misdaden ook, die jegens de Serviërs worden begaan - om maar eens wat te noemen: de in strijd met het internationale recht uitgevoerde bombardementen op Joegoslavië bijvoorbeeld -, weet hij zeer goed uit welke hand hij moet eten. Diezelfde Amerikaanse hand namelijk, die hem ook aan zijn baan heeft geholpen.

#### Het Joegoslavië Tribunaal als 'kangaroo court'

En het Joegoslavië Tribunaal ? Het Joegoslavië Tribunaal zal er zorg voor dragen dat de Serviërs voor 'Srebrenica' worden gestraft met levenslange gevangenisstraffen. En dat de Moslim militieiders in Srebrenica, verantwoordelijk voor duizenden doden - zoals Naser Oric -, vrijuit blijven gaan.

Hoe ?

Door aangeleverd bewijsmateriaal van hun misdrijven gewoon eenvoudig kwijt te maken. En simpeler nog, door domweg niet op aanklachten tegen hen te reageren.

Is dan toch nog de een of andere westers journalist zo impertinent om niet te begrijpen dat het geen pas geeft om bij dit 'onafhankelijke tribunaal' te blijven informeren waarom de moslim-schurken van Srebrenica niet vervolgd worden, dan wordt het tijd voor een duidelijke terechtwijzing. Zoals de persofficier van het tribunaal Paul Risley die - volkomen terecht natuurlijk !- uitdeelde aan Geertjan Lassche: "ik vind het schandalig dat jullie je focussen op mensen als Naser Oric." Zie het slot van bijgaand artikel in de Nieuwe Revu.

Per slot van rekening heeft ook Lassche zo zachtjesaan te begrijpen, wat elke 'normale' journalist begrijpt, ook zonder dat hem dat steeds weer opnieuw behoef te worden uitgelegd: de schurkenrol is al vergeven. Aan de Serviërs. En het Joegoslavië Tribunaal is opgericht om dat te sanctioneren. Met het eerbiedwaardige instituut van het recht. Zo zijn de regels van het spel.

Jammer, jammer, jammer, dat er nog steeds mensen zijn als Geertjan Lassche. Die dat nog steeds niet schijnen te begrijpen !

Maar gelukkig hebben de 'normale' kranten en tijdschriften geen last van een dergelijk onbegrip. Zodat het Joegoslavië Tribunaal niet steeds opnieuw dergelijke terechtwijzingen behoeft uit te delen aan journalisten die niet vanzelf al begrijpen dat het nou eenmaal vanzelfsprekende de Serviërs zijn, die door het 'Tribunaal' aangepakt dienen te worden.

Namens de PC

mr. N.M.P. Steijnen

Meer weten? Anti-oorlogscomité Leiden, tel. 071- 5220296.  
Postbus 2228,  
2301 CE Leiden  
Balkan Vredescoalitie, Internet: [http://www.geocities.com/vrede\\_nl](http://www.geocities.com/vrede_nl)

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Herman de Tollenaere  
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My Internet site on Asian history and "new" religions:

<http://stad.dsl.nl/~hermantl/>

See also SIMPOS, information on occult tendencies' impact on society:

<http://www.stelling.nl/simpos/simpoeng.htm>  
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Date sent: Sun, 27 Feb 2000 17:13:12 +0100  
To: office@globalreflexion.org  
From: Herman de Tollenaere <her-  
mantl@stad.dsl.nl>  
Subject: ontwerp pamflet Balkan/8 maart

Beste mensen

onderstaand is een ontwerp pamflet over Kosovo, bestemd voor 8 maart, Internationale Dag van de Vrouw in Leiden; 1 A4 groot.

Eventuele suggesties voor verbetering zijn van harte welkom; bijvoorbeeld op de bijeenkomst van het Anti Oorlogs Comité Leiden op woensdag 1 maart a.s.

groeten,

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8 maart: steun vrouwen op de Balkan

In Nederland zijn inkomens van vrouwen nog steeds lager dan van mannen. Tegen vrouwen, die door ondraaglijke werkdruk in de WAO terechtkomen, voeren regering en pers een hetze.

Sinds honderd jaar is 8 maart de Internationale Dag van de Vrouw: een idee van socialiste Clara Zetkin. Toen al streden vrouwen tegen oorlog. Ook nu lijden vrouwen door oorlogen en hun gevolgen. Maar zij strijden daar ook tegen. Ook rond Joegoslavië: waar de NAVO in 1999 met bommen aanviel. Twee voorbeelden: het Humanitair Vrouwencomité Orahovac; en de Roma-vluchtelingvrouwen in Macedonië.

Nederlandse militairen trokken in juni 1999 Orahovac in Kosovo binnen. Vlak achter hen kwam het UCK. Doden vielen. In buurten waar Albanen, Serven, en Roma (ôzigeunersö) door elkaar woonden, brandden al snel de huizen van de twee laatst genoemden. De KFOR/NAVO deed hier niets tegen.

Ongeveer vierduizend niet-Albanen van Orahovac vluchtten naar een klein getto-wijkje. De NAVO omringde het getto met NAVO prikkeldraad met scheermesjes. Dit is strijdig met internationaal recht. Na al die maanden kunnen zij nog steeds zich niet bewegen buiten dit gebied. Wie dat probeert, heeft verwonding of dood te vrezen. Geen kranten, geen TV, geen telefoon. Voedsel is schaars.

Natasha, 27 jaar, slaagde er in, uit Orahovac te vluchten. Met twee lotgenotes richtte zij het Humanitair Vrouwencomit  Orahovac op, om de achtergeblevenen te steunen. Dit comit  heeft drie eisen:

- KFOR moet veiligheid, voedsel, water, elektriciteit en telefoonverkeer
- normale leefomstandigheden- garanderen; ook voor de niet-Albanezen in Orahovac
- KFOR moet bewegingsvrijheid garanderen voor iedereen in Orahovac
- KFOR moet onmiddellijk een veilige busroute garanderen van Orahovac naar het niet door de NAVO bezette deel van Servi 

We kunnen het Humanitair Vrouwen Comit  Orahovac steunen via [SaveFamilies@aol.com](mailto:SaveFamilies@aol.com)

Duizenden Roma-vluchtelingen uit Kosovo zitten nu in kampen als Stenkovec 2 in Macedoni . Want in Kosovo zijn 80% van de Roma-huizen in brand gestoken; 90% geplunderd (in Kosovska Mitrovica-Zuid is dat zelfs nog meer). In slechts 5% van die huizen wonen nog Roma. Tegen geen enkele Roma loopt een aanklacht wegens gewelddaden tegen Kosovo-Albanezen. De omstandigheden in Stenkovec zijn slecht. Vlees, groente, en fruit mogen de Roma niet eten. De winter moeten zij in lekke zomertenten zien te overleven.

Begin november 1999 stierven twee Roma-vrouwen in het kamp: Ajvazi Azemine uit Kmetovica-Gilane, en Raba Buza uit Kosovo Polje. Zij waren niet de eersten of de laatsten. De vluchtelingen voeren hongerstakingen en andere acties uit protest tegen de mensonterende omstandigheden.

De Roma-vrouwen van kamp Stenkovec roepen internationaal op, hen te steunen. Zij eisen:

- Stop discriminatie en fascisme [ook bij voorbeeld tegen Roma in de Tsjechische republiek]
- Stop etnische zuivering in Kosovo
- Landen van Europa en de wereld, erken Roma uit Kosovo als vluchtelingen

De Roma-vrouwen in de kampen in Macedoni  willen door gaan met hun acties.

Zij vragen om solidariteit, via email in Macedoni : [drom@soros.org.mk](mailto:drom@soros.org.mk) en [asmet@romanationalcongress.org](mailto:asmet@romanationalcongress.org)

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Is dan toch nog de een of andere westers journalist zo impertinent om niet te begrijpen dat het geen pas geeft om bij dit 'onafhankelijke tribunaal' te blijven informeren waarom de moslim-schurken van Srebrenica niet vervolgd worden, dan wordt het tijd voor een duidelijke terechtwijzing. Zoals de persofficier van het tribunaal Paul Risley die - volkomen terecht natuurlijk !- uitdeelde aan Geertjan Lassche: "ik vind het schandelijk dat jullie je focussen op mensen als Naser Oric." Zie het slot van bijgaand artikel in de Nieuwe Revu.

Per slot van rekening heeft ook Lassche zo zachtjesaan te begrijpen, wat elke 'normale' journalist begrijpt, ook zonder dat hem dat steeds weer opnieuw behoeft te worden uitgelegd: de schurkenrol is al vergeven. Aan de Serviërs. En het Joegoslavië Tribunaal is opgericht om dat te sanctioneren. Met het eerbiedwaardige instituut van het recht. Zo zijn de regels van het spel.

Jammer, jammer, jammer, dat er nog steeds mensen zijn als Geertjan Lassche. Die dat nog steeds niet schijnen te begrijpen !

Maar gelukkig hebben de 'normale' kranten en tijdschriften geen last van een dergelijk onbegrip.

Zodat het Joegoslavië Tribunaal niet steeds opnieuw dergelijke terechtwijzingen behoeft uit te delen aan journalisten die niet vanzelf al begrijpen dat het nou eenmaal vanzelfsprekende de Serviërs zijn, die door het 'Tribunaal' aangepakt dienen te worden.

Namens de PC

mr. N.M.P. Steijnen

(1-11 juli) 2005

## SREBRENICA TENTOONSTELLING

'Tien jaar later' was de titel van een expositie georganiseerd door het Vredesburo. Deze expositie vond plaats in het Inkijsmuseum, Dommelstraat 2a in Eindhoven. Eigenlijk al een jaar eerder, bij de expositie ter herdenking van de genocide in Rwanda, werd al besloten tot aandacht voor Srebrenica 10 jaar later. Onze aankondigingen, die al eind april van start gingen, spraken over een vooraankondiging van nationale activiteiten met betrekking tot deze herdenking. En aandacht is er geweest. De gehele maand juni is er aandacht geweest op iedere zender en in bijna elk programma. Tot en met een nieuwe dag voor veteranen aan toe. Het kabaal dat meer dan een maand duurde klinkt harder na, dan de stilte van de herdenking, als je het mij vraagt.

De uiteindelijke herdenking in Den Haag, en ook de bijeenkomst in het Inkijsmuseum werden door weinig mensen bezocht. De meeste mensen waren al een beetje Srebrenica-moe, nog voordat de werkelijke herdenking plaatsvond. Deze bijeenkomst werd opgeluisterd door verhalen van Sefkija, muziek van Saban Bajramovic (op cd) en heerlijk eten van Food Not Bombs. Zij hadden hun eerste try-out bij deze bijeenkomst.

Wij hebben uiteindelijk 2500 kaarten verspreid in stad en land, waaronder 500 aan scholieren en 500 aan leden van het Inkijsmuseum, vooral jongeren.

In het raam van het Inkijsmuseum verschenen in de 10 dagen voor de herdenking de namen van alle slachtoffers van dit drama. Gedurende deze dagen en de week erna, hebben ongeveer 700 mensen binnengekeken. De bijeenkomst in de tuin werd speciaal bijgewoond door Sefkija Hadziarapovic, voorzitter van de Bosnische stichting in Eindhoven.



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5 april 2000

#### DE TIENTALLEN VERZWEGEN SREBRENICA'S ROND SREBRENICA

##### 'Ik word niet goed'

Wordt u ook zo beroerd van de niet aflatende stompzinnige berichtgeving door de westerse media over Srebrenica ? Natuurlijk weten we het allemaal wel zo langzamerhand. Met onze 'vrije, pluriforme' en vooral ook 'democratische' media. Maar toch is het steeds weer verbijsterend. In zijn ongehoorde en botte misleiding over Joegoslavië. 'Srebrenica' spant daarbij ongetwijfeld de kroon.

##### 'Srebrenica' als onuitputtelijke bron voor anti-Servische gevoelens

Steeds weer als er een moment dreigt aan te breken, waarop het westers optreden op de Balkan met iets meer kritische zin dreigt bezien te gaan worden, wordt opnieuw het 'Srebrenica'-verhaal uit de kast getrokken.

Zoals nu ook weer.

De tijd dat we ons konden permitteren om de vooropgezetheid van belangrijke gebeurtenissen op de Balkan als pathologische 'samenzweringstheorieën' af te doen, is al lang voorbij. Als het erom gaat het complex van leugens en beschuldigen aan het adres van 'de Serviërs' in stand te houden, is niets toevallig. En worden de zaken grondig geregisseerd.

Zo ook het moment waarop de Bosnisch-Servische generaal Krstic door de NAVO-bezettingstroepen van zijn bed werd gelicht en werd overgebracht naar het Joegoslavië Tribunaal. De NAVO kwam immers onder steeds zwaardere kritiek te liggen ter gelegenheid van het 1-jarige jubileum van de NAVO-agressie tegen Joegoslavië !

Het werd dus tijd om weer eens een blik 'Srebrenica' open te trekken. Zodat de kolommen van westerse media weer doorspekt zouden raken met uitspraken als : "Gezien de reputatie van de Serven verwachtte ik dat ze zouden gaan moorden" (Trouw van 5 april 2000).

Dat is de toon waarop over 'de Serviërs' geschreven behoort te worden. En 'Srebrenica' is altijd bij de hand om daarbij te helpen. Op momenten van groeiende kritiek en dreigende herbezinning op wat er nu eigenlijk allemaal op de Balkan is gebeurd en nog gebeurt.

Zo wordt kunstmatig de stemming teruggebracht: 'het is toch maar goed dat we ze flink hebben gebombardeerd en eigenlijk zouden we dat nog eens over moeten doen'. Het is die stemming, die de NAVO graag ziet ! En het journaal wordt namens de NAVO bedankt voor zijn belangeloze medewerking.

### 'Een dwarsliggeresignaleerd'

Hoewel 'belangeloos'. Je moet hier als journalist eens wat anders durven schrijven!

Soms, een heel enkele keer, durft iemand dat. Zoals Geertjan Lassche in het eerste nummer van de Nieuwe Revu van dit jaar in bijgaand artikel.

Bravo, Geertjan ! Maar tegelijkertijd, vanuit carrière-perspectief, een onverstandige daad, jongen ! Want denk maar niet dat je nou nog ooit bij een van de 'pluriforme en democratische' kranten aan de bak komt. Als je meent zó ver en zó vrij buiten de pot te kunnen pissen !

Overigens, dat de Serviërs in de streek rond Srebrenica als eersten met etnische zuiveringen begonnen en dat er al "duizenden moslims waren vermoord, voordat zij zelf een schot losten", is zeker de concessie, die je moest doen om dit verhaal überhaupt in de Nieuwe Revu geplaatst te krijgen ? Er is uitgebreide documentatie van het tegendeel al in een vroeg stadium aan het Joegoslavië Tribunaal overgelegd. Het was juist het geregelde Bosnische leger dat voor het eerste geweld zorgde, maar daarover in een later stadium meer. Niettemin laat je althans een stuk van de andere kant van het verhaal 'Srebrenica' zien !

### Het rovershol Srebrenica

Lassche beschrijft hoe Srebrenica feitelijk fungeerde als een rovershol.

Hoeho 'rovershol', Lassche ? Srebrenica was toch een gedemilitariseerde enclave, waarin louter onschuldige moslim-vluchtelingen samengeperst zaten ? Bevend en sidderend voor de wrede Serviërs buiten de poorten van stad ?

Dat hebben we allemaal voortdurend in de krant kunnen lezen, van onze politici gehoord en op televisie gezien. En dus is dat zo !

Lassche onthult, impliciet en soms ook expliciet, dat een groot deel van de mannelijke bevolking van Srebrenica helemaal niet uit 'onschuldige burgers' bestond. Maar in plaats daarvan uit vele duizenden militairen van het geregelde Bosnische leger en duizenden paramilitairen.

En dat 'Srebrenica' dus helemaal geen 'gedemilitariseerde' enclave was, zoals de bedoeling van de VN was.

Een onthulling is dat eigenlijk niet, want iedereen wist dat natuurlijk al lang. Maar dat mocht niet gezegd worden. Benieuwd wat er met Lassche gaat gebeuren, nu hij deze 'omerta' - zwijgplicht - als journalist heeft doorbroken !

Vrij en zonder remmingen beschrijft Lassche vervolgens hoe door deze paramilitaire bendes misbruik werd gemaakt van de

status van Srebrenica als 'safe haven', om tot tientallen kilometers in de omgeving de Servische bevolking te terroriseren. Om te moorden, te roven, te plunderen en om onbeschrijflijke wreedheden te bedrijven. Als SS-ers gingen zij tekeer. Tientallen dorpen werden platgebrand, mensen werden gemarteld en verminkt, gekruisigd en onthoofd, ogen werden uitgestoken. Bewijs hiervan is geen probleem, want de roverhoofdman Oric van de moslim-milities, Oric, heeft er zelf voor gezorgd dat het allemaal op video werd vastgelegd.

### Die arme vluchtelingen in Srebrenica toch !

Toen dit roversnest uiteindelijk door generaal Mladic werd opgerold, kon de balans worden opgemaakt en bleek dat deze vanuit Srebrenica opererende bendes verantwoordelijk waren voor 192 platgebrande dorpen, 2800 doden en 6000 gewonden.

Geen wonder dat de eerste woorden van generaal Mladic tegen de commandant Karremans waren: "Waarom heb je de moslims niet ontwapend ?" Zoals het VN-concept van demilitarisering van de 'safe havens' immers ook ondubbelzinnig voorschreef.

Geen wonder dat die 'onschuldige mannelijke vluchtelingen' bang waren voor 'de wrede Serviërs' van Mladic. Geen wonder dat het overgrote deel van de mannelijke bevolking van Srebrenica dan ook al op de loop was, voordat de enclave viel. Zij hadden tonnen boter op hun hoofd. Die vele duizenden 'onschuldige moslim-mannen', die de val van de enclave niet afwachtten, maar al de benen hadden genomen voor 'de wrede Serviërs', kunnen dan ook onmogelijk door het 'verradelijke Dutchbat' zijn 'uitgeleverd'. Aan hun 'Servische slachters', zoals een van de 'onafhankelijke en onpartijdige' rechters van het Joegoslavië-Tribunaal dat op dinsdag 4 april 2000 tijdens de zitting hiervan formuleerde ('rechter' Riad).

### Maar weinig mannen bleven achter

Hoeveel mannen er werkelijk in Srebrenica achterbleven totdat de enclave was gevallen en zo in handen kwamen van het Bosnisch-Servische leger, is niet precies bekend, maar erg veel zijn het er niet geweest. Het NOS-journaal van 20.00 uur van 5 april 2000 noemde terloops een aantal van 600.

In elk geval stellen de westerse media er een eer in het te doen voorkomen dat zo ongeveer de gehele - natuurlijk onschuldige ! - mannelijke bevolking die in Srebrenica verbleef door Karremans aan 'zijn Servische beulen' zou zijn 'uitgeleverd'. Ter fine van genocide.

Veel meer dan 600 kunnen het er dus niet geweest zijn, want de rest had al zijn stutten getrokken !

Stel dat al die 600 mannen zijn vermoord - vast staat dat dat in elk geval niet is gebeurd, maar stel -, dan is dat nog maar een klein deel van de slachtoffers, die vanuit het roversnest Srebrenica door 'die arme Bosnische vluchtelingen' in de omgeving onder de Servische bevolking zijn gemaakt.

Nogmaals, verreweg het grootste deel van de arme mannelijke 'vluchtelingen' was al op de loop. Met een alleszins terechte schrik in de benen, gezien de voorgeschiedenis.

## De verdere uitbating van de Srebrenica-mythe

Hoe loopt het Srebrenica-verhaal af ?

Zoals gepland. Tot in lengte van dagen zal de zorgvuldig gesmede mythe rond Srebrenica van stal gehaald blijven worden, telkens als tegenwicht nodig is. Dat wil zeggen, wanneer op enig moment enig begrip voor de Servische positie dreigt te ontstaan.

"Srebrenica" zal daar dan zijn om dat te corrigeren en ons opnieuw in te peperen wat een duivels die Serviërs werkelijk zijn.

De Secretaris-generaal van de VN Kofi Anan heeft het zelf bevestigd en neergelegd in een rapport: op de onschuldige mannelijke moslim-bevolking van Srebrenica is de ergste genocide gepleegd, die sinds WO-II heeft plaatsgevonden. Nooit enige veroordeling uitgesproken hebbend voor welke misdaden ook, die jegens de Serviërs worden begaan - om maar eens wat te noemen: de in strijd met het internationale recht uitgevoerde bombardementen op Joegoslavië bijvoorbeeld -, weet hij zeer goed uit welke hand hij moet eten. Diezelfde Amerikaanse hand namelijk, die hem ook aan zijn baan heeft geholpen.

## Het Joegoslavië Tribunaal als 'kangaroo court'

En het Joegoslavië Tribunaal ? Het Joegoslavië Tribunaal zal er zorg voor dragen dat de Serviërs voor 'Srebrenica' worden gestraft met levenslange gevangenisstraffen. En dat de Moslim militieleiders in Srebrenica, verantwoordelijk voor duizenden doden - zoals Naser Oric -, vrijuit blijven gaan.

Hoe ?

Door aangeleverd bewijsmateriaal van hun misdrijven gewoon eenvoudig kwijt te maken. En simpeler nog, door domweg niet op aanklachten tegen hen te reageren.

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Zoals de persofficier van het tribunaal Paul Risley die - volkomen terecht natuurlijk !- uitdeelde aan Geertjan Lassche: "ik vind het schandelijk dat jullie je focussen op mensen als Naser Oric." Zie het slot van bijgaand artikel in de Nieuwe Revu.

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Namens de PC

mr. N.M.P. Steijnen

# Srebrenica And the Politics of War Crimes

**Findings of the Srebrenica Research Group**  
into the allegations of events and the background leading up to  
them, in Srebrenica, Bosnia & Herzegovina, in 1995.



# Foreword

By Philip Corwin

**O**n July 11, 1995, the town of Srebrenica fell to the Bosnian Serb army. At the time, I was the highest ranking United Nations civilian official in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In my book, *Dubious Mandate* (Duke University Press, 1999), I made some comments on that tragedy. Beyond that, I decried the distortions of the international press in their reporting, not only on that event, but on the wars in Yugoslavia (1992-95) in general. I expressed the wish that there could have been, and must be, some balance in telling the story of what actually happened in Srebrenica and in all of former Yugoslavia, if we are to learn from our experience.

The report by the Srebrenica Research Group, *Srebrenica: Manipulating a Tragedy*, answers that call. It presents an alternative and well-documented assessment of the tragedy of Srebrenica, and of the suffering of all the constituent peoples of former Yugoslavia. It is an invaluable document. Of course, there will be those who will disagree with the report's perspective. But if we are to open a discussion that has been closed to all but the faithful, if we are to prevent similar tragedies from occurring again, then we must take seriously the accounts put forward by the bright and discerning contributors to this document. No honest reader can doubt the credentials of these authors. And no honest reader should doubt the importance of what they have to say. I congratulate them on their scholarship and their courage.

\*

Coincidentally, I have a personal reason for recalling what happened on July 11, 1995, for not only was that the day Srebrenica fell, but it was also the day that a Bosnian sniper tried to assassinate me as my vehicle, white and clearly marked as a UN vehicle, was driving over Mt. Igman on the way back to Sarajevo from a staff visit to Gornji Vakuf. A Bosnian sniper targeted our vehicle as we sped around the hairpin turns of that narrow, rutted mountain road, and it was due only to the courageous efforts of Bruno Chaubert, the Corsican warrant officer who was my driver, that we survived. We knew from the trajectory of the bullet, and the fact that we had identified ourselves only minutes earlier at a Bosnian army checkpoint, that the sniper who fired on us was in Bosnian government controlled territory, and that he knew who we were. Actually, the sniper had targeted the driver, because he knew if the driver had lost control, then the vehicle and all its passengers would have gone over the mountain. At the time, however, I chose not to publicize the event because the Bosnian government would have denied it, and the UN would not have protested, given its gaping lack of credibility with the Bosnian government. But the message was clear. The Bosnian government considered the UN to be its enemy.

\*

When I think back on the atmosphere at UN headquarters in Sarajevo in the days leading up to fall of Srebrenica, I think mainly of confusion. UK General Rupert Smith, the UNPROFOR commander in Sarajevo at the time, when speaking of the military situation in the theater, was fond of saying "We have no intelligence". NATO was unwilling to share with the UN whatever intelligence it had, and the UN had very few intelligence resources of its own. The UN had no satellites, and its unarmed military observers (UNMOs) were not authorized to gather intelligence. Of course they did, but they were limited in what they could collect. General Smith was on target. We had very little intelligence regarding what was happening in and

around Srebrenica.

When the Serbs first began moving on Srebrenica, we had no firm idea of the size of their forces or of their intentions. In fact, most of the Western European officers, including those of the UK, thought the Serbs were just going to lop off the southern third of Srebrenica in order to be able to save mileage when transporting troops and supplies across Bosnia from Serbia and points east. The Serbs were terribly strapped for fuel. If they could cut across the southern third of Srebrenica instead of going around it, they could save 40-50 kilometers. Besides, they appeared not to be attacking from the north, and not to be creating a pincer movement that would have signaled their intention to take the whole of Srebrenica.

Only the Russians knew what was happening. The Russians in our command that I talked to at the time smiled when I asked about Serb intentions in Srebrenica. They knew the Serbs were going to take all of Srebrenica, and if possible the other enclaves of Zepa and Gorazde. "It's only reasonable," one Russian officer said to me.

Meanwhile, General Kees Nicolai, a Dutch national and UNPROFOR Chief of Staff, was on the phone constantly to The Hague, to discuss whether or not NATO should bomb. Sentiment was divided. There were about 300 lightly-armed Dutch soldiers in Srebrenica, scattered among the local population, and they would be at risk. And the Dutch public would not take lightly having their soldiers killed by NATO bombs, or being taken hostage in a country where their presence was dubious. The Dutch government might even fall.

And then there was the weather. Clouds, then sun, then clouds again. It was unpredictable, weather satellites notwithstanding. Anyone today who says otherwise is stretching the truth – in other words, lying. Yes, we had regular weather reports, but they changed constantly. Meanwhile, the laptop bombardiers, particularly those in faraway Washington, kept demanding air strikes. But to European powers, the demands of the United States, which had no troops on the ground and was tardy in paying its assessments, seemed like those of a proverbial cowboy – full of bravado and recklessness, but short on wisdom. And while certain elements in Washington seemed willing to fight to the death of the last Dutch soldier, other nations with troops on the ground that might have been killed or taken hostage were not so eager to welcome NATO intervention.

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Once the takeover of Srebrenica had been completed, I decided I would try to go there. Obviously, I would not have been allowed to enter while the fighting was going on. But once it was over, I thought I might be able to bring an international presence to the scene, and perhaps negotiate the safety of the survivors. I was able to get through by satellite phone to Bosnian Serb Vice President Nikola Koljevic in Pale. I told him I wanted to go to Srebrenica, and I wanted to bring General Nicolai with me. Koljevic returned my call within the hour and said he had cleared the way for me to come alone. General Nicolai would have to stay in Sarajevo. I would meet Koljevic in Pale, and we would go together to Srebrenica. I then called my headquarters in Zagreb to tell them I intended to go to Srebrenica, even though I knew the Bosnian Army might not let me out of Sarajevo, or might never let me back in if I left. I thought it was worth a try. As anyone involved in humanitarian work will attest, there is nothing that gives one a rush like the prospect of being able to save hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lives.

My headquarters in Zagreb, however, suggested that I should stay in Sarajevo, and send instead to Srebrenica one of my staff, a former U.S. military officer now with the UN in Tuzla. I said I would consider it, but the fact was that no other UN officer in Bosnia had the trust of the Bosnian Serbs. Zagreb didn't understand. It was not a matter of sending a UN representative. It was a question of sending me or no one.

I had to make a quick decision, and I had no one to consult. General Smith was busy; General Nikolai was busy. And neither would not have told me what to do anyway. It was my decision. I knew that my trip to Srebrenica would be resented by the Bosnian government. As for danger, if I were with Koljevic, I would be safe in Serb territory. The danger would be from the Bosnian government when I returned. They had already blamed the UN for the fall of Srebrenica. They had already tried once to assassinate me.

Looking back now, I doubt if it would have mattered whether I went to Srebrenica, even though at the time I had hoped it would. General Mladic was not about to be deterred or dissuaded from his chosen course of action by my presence. In any case, I decided not to go for a reason that I think was sound. I didn't want to be used.

I imagined myself on television shaking hands with General Mladic as if I were endorsing whatever was happening. No, I'd had enough of Balkan theater. I called Koljevic and told him I wasn't coming.

\*

In the years since Srebrenica fell, the name itself has become a buzzword for allegations of Serbian genocide. Books have been written, reports have been compiled, and radio and television broadcasts have saturated the air waves with "evidence" of this crime against humanity. The United Nations Security Council has convened an international tribunal in The Hague to "prove" this pre-trial judgment. It would not be an exaggeration to say some journalists and aspiring politicians have made careers out of promoting this allegation.

But the situation is a bit more complicated than the public relations specialists would have us believe. That there were killings of non-combatants in Srebrenica, as in all war zones, is a certainty. And those who perpetrated them deserve to be condemned and prosecuted. And whether it was three or 30 or 300 innocent civilians who were killed, it was a heinous crime. There can be no equivocation about that. At the same time, the facts presented in this report make a very cogent argument that the figure of 7,000 killed, which is often bandied about in the international community, is an unsupportable exaggeration. The true figure may be closer to 700.

The fact that the figure in question has been so distorted, however, suggests that the issue has been politicized. There is much more shock value in the death of 7,000 than in the death of 700.

There is also evidence in this report that thousands of Serbs were massacred, expelled, tortured, raped, and humiliated during the wars within former Yugoslavia. The international community has not seen fit to publicize these atrocities with as much vigor as it has those of Srebrenica. That simple observation does not justify what occurred in Srebrenica. But it is another piece of the puzzle that explains the anger of the Serbs when they assaulted Srebrenica. In May 1995, for example, just two months before Srebrenica fell, the Croatian army captured Western Slavonia and expelled 90 per cent of the Serb population in that region. Serbs had lived in Western Slavonia for hundreds of years. But the international community said nothing about those expulsions; in fact, it applauded the Croatian action, as though the Serb civilians deserved what had happened. To massacre Croats or Bosnians or Kosovars was genocide. To massacre Serbs was regarded appropriate retribution. Clearly, the international community has not seen fit to consecrate the massacres of Serbs with monuments. Instead, it has issued arrest warrants for Serb leaders.

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There are several points to be made in any consideration of what happened at Srebrenica on July 11, 1995. First, one has to realize that the tragedy of Srebrenica was part of a larger tragedy, and that the attempt to interpret the wars in former Yugoslavia in terms of what happened at Srebrenica, to present that one event as a microcosm of the larger picture, is an attempt to distort the larger picture and to demonize one of its actors. The experience of Srebrenica must broaden our understanding of history, not diminish it.

What happened in Srebrenica was not a single large massacre of Muslims by Serbs, but rather a series of very bloody attacks and counterattacks over a three-year period, which reached a crescendo in 1995. And the number of Muslim dead in the last battle of Srebrenica, as BBC reporter Jonathan Rooper has pointed out, was most likely in the hundreds, not in the thousands. Moreover, it is likely that the number of Muslim dead was probably no more than the number of Serbs that had been killed in Srebrenica and its environs during the preceding years by Bosnian Commander Naser Oric and his predatory gangs.

Foreign interventionists are fond of praising themselves for having invaded former Yugoslavia for what they refer to as "humanitarian reasons". But there has never been a war fought for humanitarian reasons, and the wars in former Yugoslavia at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were no exception.

The events at Srebrenica in July 1995 did not occur in a political vacuum. In fact, they might never have occurred at all if Yugoslavia had not been forcibly dismembered against the will of 45 percent of its people, the Serbs. (Serbs were about 31 percent of pre-war Bosnia). The break-up of Yugoslavia, in fact, was contrary to the Yugoslav Constitution, which required that all three of the main populations of Yugoslavia had to agree to any partition of Yugoslavia. And of course, the Serbs never agreed. In my book, *Dubious Mandate*, I report the following question, which was posed to me by a Bosnian Serb: *why, after 50 years as a Yugoslav, should I suddenly be told I'm a minority in a Moslem State, when I was never even given a choice?*

People can get very angry when you take away their country.

Today, one can only imagine what might have happened in the Balkans if diplomacy had been given a better chance, if NATO had not had the ambition it had to push eastward, up to the borders of the former Soviet Union, to annex what is now being called "the new Europe". It is possible – not certain, but possible – that in due time there might have been a *peaceful* break-up of former Yugoslavia, probably along different boundary lines. But the decisions to fracture former Yugoslavia were taken precipitously, by minority communities *within* Yugoslavia, and were driven by powerful forces *outside* Yugoslavia – namely, those of NATO, especially the newly-reunited Germany.

One of the big lies we heard during the wars in Yugoslavia was that NATO had to intervene because there was danger the conflict would spread. But no group within former Yugoslavia had ambitions outside of Yugoslavia. It was the nations outside Yugoslavia that had ambitions inside Yugoslavia.

When the greatest military power of all time has an identity crisis, the world is in danger. With the end of the Cold War, NATO's role as a defensive alliance ended. There were those who said that NATO should have been dissolved, now that there was no more Soviet Union. But there were also those – many of whom were bureaucrats benefiting from the existence of such a massive organization – who said NATO should now be used as a weapon to forge "democracy" around the world – in other words, it should be used to promote the global economy, and make the world free for Coca-Cola. Four of the six constituent republics within former Yugoslavia agreed to this immediate transition to "democracy". Serbia did not, and it paid the price. In fact,

everyone in former Yugoslavia paid the price, and Srebrenica was part of that price.

Post mortem studies of events in the former Yugoslavia, including those by the United Nations, have cited the international community's inability to recognize "evil" as the main reason for its being unable to end the wars of the 1990s in the Balkans. If such self-delusion were not so tragic, it would be comic. Wars have never been fought to destroy evil, no matter what religious zealots may assert. Wars have been fought for economic, political, strategic and social reasons. The wars of the 1990s in the Balkans were no different. It was geopolitics, not original sin, that drove NATO's ambitions.

But take this quixotic assertion about evil one step further. As I have asked in my book *Doomed in Afghanistan* (Rutgers University Press, 2003), are we to prepare peacekeepers for deployment in the world's trouble spots by giving them EAT (Evil Awareness Training)? Must the world's leaders receive religious instruction on the nature of evil before they can be effective interlocutors and diplomats?

This abstract flummery about evil has an even more insidious dimension, in that implies that the only effective action is military action; therefore, NATO should have acted sooner to bomb the Serbs, a people clearly demonic for not wanting to have its country dismembered. Trying to understand why one party to the conflict acted as it did is not an option for the Ayatollahs of the international community.

And there is still more mischief that flows from this assertion that policy decisions should be made on the basis of evil awareness. If recognition of evil is to be the basis for military intervention, then who shall be The Grand Inquisitor? Who shall decide who is evil? The answer is not very difficult to imagine. Apparently, the most powerful nations, themselves exemplars of The Good, shall determine who is evil. And for now, the Inquisitors, the identifiers of evil in the Balkans, reside in The Hague.

\*

On 21 August 2000, a blue-ribbon panel on UN Peace Operations issued a report that sought to provide direction for future peacekeeping operations in light of lessons learned from several operations during the 1990s, that in former Yugoslavia among them. In its report the Panel had this astonishing paragraph:

Impartiality for United Nations operations must therefore mean adherence to the principles of the Charter: where one party to a peace agreement clearly and incontrovertibly is violating its terms, continued equal treatment of all parties by the United Nations can in the best case result in ineffectiveness and in the worst may amount to complicity with evil. (UN document A/55/305)

And what should the peacekeeping forces do in such a case in order to ward off "complicity with evil?" The Panel suggests that the peacekeepers should transcend their mandate and behave in accordance with the higher principles of the Charter. In other words, the mandate of the peace keeping force, a mandate diligently negotiated by the Security Council, should be abandoned if Satan is spotted on the horizon. This is the lesson learned, the Panel would have us believe. And if this lesson had been learned before the Balkan wars of the 1990s, NATO would have bombed the Serbs much sooner, is the undeniable implication. Thus, the vendetta continues against a country whose great sin was its refusal to be dismembered in order to make way for the global economy.

For the record, the United Nations has never worked in such a fashion. The normal procedure is for the Security Council to adopt a resolution containing a mandate for its peace

keeping forces. Each mandate is unique, depending on the situation. If a mandate proves to be ineffective, then the Security Council can change that mandate. Those nations that voted for a mandate do not appreciate having it changed at the whim of those who claim to have sighted Evil. If a mandate is to be changed, it must be changed by those who adopted it.

\*

There is one more general comment I must make, by way of background, about the wars in former Yugoslavia, and that comment involves the concept of *historical memory*. We allow certain peoples to have historical memory. We allow the Jewish people to remember the Holocaust. And they *should* remember it. It was a terrible tragedy. But we do not allow the Serbian people to remember their massacre during World War II at the hands of the Nazis, whose puppets at the time were Bosnian and Croatian fascists. This is not to say that *all* Bosnians and Croatians were Nazi collaborators; but the Croatian *Ustaše* regime, which included Bosnia, was. And why should Serbs *not* have been suspicious and angry when they were suddenly told that vast numbers of their people were about to become minorities in new countries that were their killers during World War II? Especially when the Serbs had never even been consulted! They would have been crazy *not* to be anxious. Imagine if a decade ago the people of Israel had been told that they would immediately become a minority in Yassir Arafat's Palestine. My question is, why did the international community not understand the perplexity, the anger, and the historical memory of the Serbs?

The events at Srebrenica in July 1995 had a history. To begin with, when it and other towns in Bosnia were declared safe areas, those areas were never "delimited". In other words, no one had specified what were the legal boundaries of Srebrenica. That meant there was no definition as to where demilitarization was supposed to end. The town of Srebrenica was generally considered to be within the safe area, but from the town outward there was a large region comprising villages, forests, and hills, which were not considered part of the safe area. Thus, if those areas were attacked, or if an attack were launched from there, either by Serb or Bosnian armies, the UN had no right under its mandate to intervene unless the attack were directly against UN soldiers, in which case they could exercise the right to self-defense.

And let me assure you, there *were* attacks on Serb villages in the region, and they *were* launched from within the safe area of Srebrenica.

Here is a comment by two Dutch journalists, Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both, from their book entitled: *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*:

On 16 April 1993, the Security Council adopted Resolution 819, which declared Srebrenica a safe area. The resolution was dangerously inconsistent . . . The Council agreed on creating a safe area without specifying what the "area" was and how its safety could be achieved . . . The Council firmly placed the onus on the Serbs and the Muslims to make Srebrenica safe. UNPROFOR's role would simply be to "monitor" the humanitarian situations. (pp. 103-104)

Meanwhile, the main threat in Srebrenica to any legitimate cease fire was the Bosnian commander in the area, Naser Oric, who used Srebrenica as a base for his murderous forays into Serbian villages in the countryside. Once again, let me quote Honig and Both:

The Dutch were blamed for the perceived failure of the UN to do enough for the people of Srebrenica. Matters were not helped by the character and behaviour of the dominant personalities in the enclave. Naser Oric, the overall military commander, and his two main "brigade commanders", Zulfo Tursunovic and Hakija Meholic, appeared to the Dutch to be little more than gangsters, who terrorized the refugee population and

profited greatly from the war. These men jealously protected their own fiefdoms. As the refugees were not represented in the local governments, international aid agencies suggested in the second half of 1993 that the refugees should elect their own representative to assist in the distribution of food. The man was found murdered the day after his election.

Oric and his cronies were also responsible for much of the trouble with the Serbs, which stemmed from Muslim raids on Serb communities just outside the enclave. Also, Oric's men had the disconcerting habit of taking up positions close to the Dutch and then opening fire on the Serbs, hoping to entice them and the Dutch into a firefight. (pp. 132-133.)

Two other journalists, Laura Silber and Allan Little, who will never be accused of being sympathetic to the Serbs, note in their book *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, that "on January 7, 1993 (the Orthodox Christmas), Oric's forces launched a surprise attack on Serb positions to the north, killing Serb civilians and burning their villages." (pp. 265-266) Serb sources claim Oric massacred as many as 2,500 Serbs on this occasion. Even allowing for exaggeration in the count, there is no doubt that the number slaughtered was substantial, brutal, and not to be forgotten. And this attack occurred only three months before Srebrenica was declared a safe area. In short, Serbs had good reason to doubt that Srebrenica would ever be safe for them so long as Naser Oric and his gang were operating there.

In his report issued on 30 May 1995, the UN Secretary-General had this to say about the Bosnian Government's provocations from the safe areas:

The party defending a safe area must comply with certain obligations if it is to achieve the primary objective of the safe area regime, that is, the protection of the civilian population. Unprovoked attacks launched from safe areas are inconsistent with the whole concept.

In recent months, (Bosnian) government forces have considerably increased their military activity in and around most safe areas, and many of them, including Sarajevo, Tuzla and Bihac, have been incorporated into the broader military campaigns of the government side. The headquarters and logistic installations of the Fifth Corps of the government army are located in the town of Bihac and those of the Second Corps in the town of Tuzla. The Government also maintains a substantial number of troops in Srebrenica (in this case, a violation of a demilitarization agreement), Gorazde and Zepa, while Sarajevo is the location of the General Command of the government army and other military installations.

Please note that in his report, the Secretary-General refers to *all* the safe areas, not just Srebrenica. And just as Srebrenica could not be isolated then in any discussion of the Bosnian Government's military campaigns, it should not be isolated now in any discussion of what happened in Srebrenica three months later when Serb forces overran the town. From a military standpoint there was no question that the Bosnian Serb army had to react to military attacks from the enclaves. The safe areas in eastern Bosnia were like holes in a blanket. All of the enclaves were behind Serb military lines, and had to be closed off. Not only did they pose a military threat, but their location forced Serb forces to detour around them and waste precious fuel in a time of war. As the Russian officer in Sarajevo had said to me, it was only "reasonable" that the Serbs should capture the eastern enclaves.

(And while I am on the subject of fuel, let me point out how foolish it is to allege, as some have alleged, that the Serbian army loaded hundreds of its victims at Srebrenica into refrigerated trucks, and transported the bodies to some obscure site, and then buried them in

mass graves. Where would the Serbs have found the fuel to perform such an operation? I can personally recall when UNPROFOR had to give the Serbian army fuel to withdraw Serbian tanks from the exclusion zone around Sarajevo. The Serbs, whatever their political agenda, didn't have the fuel to move hundreds or thousands of bodies anywhere, not in refrigerated trucks, not in any trucks.)

Back to military concerns. It was evident by July 1995 that the Bosnian Serb army could not continue to allow five enemy bases to exist behind its front lines. Mind you, I am not speaking about the humanitarian issue here, because I have never, and will never, condone the slaughter of civilians. But it would be irresponsible to ignore the military aspect of the campaign in eastern Bosnia when discussing Srebrenica, just as it would be foolish to ignore the historical process that led up to the events of July 1995.

Today in Bosnia there is a campaign of disinformation that has all but buried the facts along with the bodies. To pretend that the events in Srebrenica were a microcosm of any sort is to take an oversimplified, fast-food view of history. One isolated event does not explain a process as complicated as war. History is not a collection of sound bites. History is a process with several watersheds, and to understand Srebrenica one must understand the watershed of NATO's identity crisis.

As part of that campaign of disinformation, the authors of recent reports about Srebrenica, both inside and outside the UN, have judiciously avoided interviewing those in the know who might not have told them what they wanted to hear. For example, the authors of the first comprehensive United Nations report on Srebrenica, entitled "The Fall of Srebrenica," issued in the fall of 1999, never interviewed me, and did not list my book in their short bibliography, even though I was the ranking UN official in Bosnia at the time of the takeover of Srebrenica. Nor was I alone in being ignored by the compilers of politically correct history.

In my case, my major error was that I dared to *defend* the United Nations at a time when it was fighting as hard as possible to be a scapegoat. UN leadership, which was desperately trying to curry favor with the United States in order to prevent the world organization from completely collapsing, could not afford to criticize the world's only superpower. The United States, which had been useless in Rwanda, embarrassed in Somalia, and frustrated in former Yugoslavia, needed a sacrificial lamb. And because I refused to be part of the UN's *mea maxima culpa* campaign, I was ignored. There were others too, prominent intellectuals, who were ignored in the flurry of reports that emerged, "studies" righteously denouncing the United Nations for not having recognized the existence of evil. But one day their story, our story, must be heard if one is ever to understand the history of Srebrenica, of former Yugoslavia, of Europe, and of the world. The beginnings of that untold story, hitherto marginalized by official renditions, are here for all to read in this report.

— July 2005  
New York City



Van: "R Despotovic" <despot@tiscali.nl>  
Aan: "Nico en Neeltje" <nico.s@slobodan-milosevic.org>  
Verzonden: dinsdag 12 juli 2005 0:45  
Onderwerp: Fw: [SUC Media Advisory] Srebrenica Research Group to hold Press Conference at

— Original Message —

From: Serbian Unity Congress' Announcements  
To: despot@wishmail.net  
Sent: Monday, July 11, 2005 7:41 PM  
Subject: [SUC Media Advisory] Srebrenica Research Group to hold Press Conference at UN



Serbian Unity Congress

Конгрес Српског Уједињења



**Srebrenica and the Politics of War Crimes: Srebrenica Research Group to hold Press Conference at UN**

July 11, 2005



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The Srebrenica Research Group will hold a press conference at 2 PM Monday on July 11 at the UN head quarters in New York City where the group will release their conclusions based on three years of research. Former UN Civilian Affairs Coordinator Phil Corwin will be in attendance along wit George Szamuely, George Bogdanich and a former UN Deputy Director of UNMO (UN monitors in Bosnia) who debriefed UN monitors in Srebrenica.

Srebrenica Report ([www.srebrenica-report.com](http://www.srebrenica-report.com))

Media Advisory

**Report to Challenge Potrayal of Events at Srebrenica**

The conclusions of a report which challenges the official portrayal of events ten years ago in Srebrenica, Bosnia will be presented at a UN press conference on Monday, July 11, at 2 PM in the 3rd floor room of the UN Correspondents Association. The press conference will include two senior UN officials who served in Bosnia, including Philip Corwin, who served as the UN Civilian Affair Coordinator, the senior civilian position at the time of the capture of Srebrenica and author of Dubious Mandate: A Memoir of the UN in Bosnia, Summer 1995. Former UN Military official Carlos Martins Branco, who debriefed UN monitors who served at Srebrenica, will also be on hand to answer questions. Also in attendance will be documentary film maker George Bogdanich and journalist George Szamuely of the Srebrenica Research Group.

The conclusions of the 200 page report "Srebrenica and the Politics of War Crimes" will cite evidence that disputes both the scope of the casualties and the portrayal of key events in misleading reports by government, non-government organizations and news organizations which of have provided a distorted picture of events which could delay reconciliation and political stability in the Balkans.

The Srebrenica Research Group which is headed by author Ed Herman, Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, includes former BBC journalist, Jonathan Rooper, columnist George Szamuely, writer and documentary filmmaker George Bogdanich, Michael Mandel, Professor of International Law at York University in Toronto, Professor Phil Hammond, South Bank University in London, Dr. Milan Bulajic of the Fund for Genocide Research and others academic researchers based in Europe and North America.

Contact: George Bogdanich at (646) 709-9199 [georgebogdanich@aol.com](mailto:georgebogdanich@aol.com)

Ed Herman at [hermane@wharton.upenn.edu](mailto:hermane@wharton.upenn.edu)

see also [www.Srebrenica-report.com](http://www.Srebrenica-report.com)

**Selections from the Report**

- **Foreword**  
*by Philip Corwin former UN Civilian Affair Coordinator*
- **Prelude to the Capture of Srebrenica**

by George Bogdanich

- **The Numbers Game**  
by Jonathan Rooper, former BBC Reporter
- **The ICTY calls it 'Genocide'**  
by Michael Mandel
- **The UK Press on Srebrenica**  
by Philip Hammond

### Articles related to Srebrenica

- **The Politics of the Srebrenica Massacre**  
by Edward S. Herman, Z-mag
- **Muslim leader says Srebrenica was "sacrificed"**  
Slobodna Bosna, July 14, 1996
- **"Making Peace with the Guilty"**  
by General Charles Boyd
- **"Flaws in the Official Story of Srebrenica"**  
by Carlos Martins Branco, former UN military official

### UN Documents

**ON WAR CRIMES  
AND CRIMES AND GENOCIDE IN EASTERN  
BOSNIA  
(COMMUNES OF BRATUNAC, SKELANI AND  
SREBRENICA)**

UN Security Council, 2 June 1993

- **Introduction** - Pages 1 - 21 of the document.
- **Victims** - Pages 22 - 40 of the document.
- **Massacres** - pp. 41 - 51
- **Perpetrators** - pp. 52 - 80
- **Statements (Part 1)** - pp. 81 - 104
- **Statements (Part 2)** - pp. 105 - 132

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# Srebrenica And the Politics of War Crimes

**Findings of the Srebrenica Research Group**  
into the allegations of events and the background leading up to  
them, in Srebrenica, Bosnia & Herzegovina, in 1995.



## Conclusions of Srebrenica Research Group

Following three years of research as a group and many more as individuals, the Srebrenica Research Group reports the following conclusions:

**1.** Both the scale of the casualties at Srebrenica and the context of events have been misrepresented in official reports from governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as news organizations. Senior UN military and civilian officials, NATO intelligence officers and independent intelligence analysts dispute the official portrayal of the capture of Srebrenica by the International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia, (ICTY) as a unique atrocity in the Bosnian conflict. The contention that as many as 8,000 Muslims were killed has no basis in available evidence and is essentially a political construct.

**2.** The 8,000 figure was first provided by the Red Cross, based on their crude estimate that the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) had captured 3,000 men and that 5,000 were reported "missing." It is well established that thousands of those "missing" had reached Tuzla or were killed in the fighting, but in an amazing transformation displaying the eagerness to find the Bosnian Serbs evil and the

Muslims victims, the "reaching safety/killed-in-action" basis of being missing was ignored and the missing were taken as executed! This misleading conclusion was helped along by the Red Cross's reference to the 5,000 as having "simply disappeared," and its failure to correct this politically biased usage despite its own recognition that "several thousand" refugees had reached Central Bosnia. It was also helped along by the Bosnian Muslim leadership's refusal to disclose the names and numbers of those reaching safety, but there was a remarkable readiness in Western governments not only to ignore those reaching safety, but also to disregard deaths in fighting and to take dead bodies as proving executions. The will to believe here was limitless: reporter David Rohde saw a bone sticking up in a grave site near Srebrenica, which he just knew by instinct was a remnant of an execution and serious evidence of a "massacre." It was standard media practice to move from an asserted and unproven claim of thousands missing, or a report of the uncovering of bodies in a grave site, to the conclusion that the claim of 8,000 executed was thereby demonstrated.

**3.** With 8,000 executed and thousands killed in the fighting, there should have been huge grave sites and satellite evidence of both executions, burials, and any body removals. But the body searches in the Srebrenica vicinity were painfully disappointing, with only some two thousand bodies found in searches through 2001, including bodies killed in action and possibly Serb bodies, some pre-dating July 1995. The sparseness of these findings led to claims of body removal and reburial, but this was unconvincing as the Bosnian Serbs were under intense military pressure after July 1995. This was the period when NATO was bombing Serb positions and Croat/Muslim armies were driving towards Banja Luka. The BSA was on the defensive and was extremely short of equipment and resources, including gasoline. To have mounted an operation of the magnitude required to exhume, transport and rebury thousands of corpses would have been far beyond the BSA's capacity at that time. Furthermore, in carrying out such a program they could hardly hope to escape observation from OSCE personnel, local civilians, and satellite observations.

**4.** On August 10, 1995, Madeleine Albright showed some satellite photos at a closed session of the Security Council, as part of a denunciation of the Bosnian Serbs, including one photo showing people--allegedly Bosnian Muslims near Srebrenica--assembled in a stadium, and one allegedly taken shortly thereafter showing a nearby field with "disturbed" soil. These photos have never been publicly released, but even if they are genuine they don't prove either executions or burials. Furthermore, although the ICTY speaks of "an organized and comprehensive effort" to hide bodies, and David Rohde claimed a "huge Serb effort to hide bodies," neither Albright nor anyone else has ever shown a satellite photo of people actually being executed, buried, or dug up for reburial, or of trucks conveying thousands of bodies elsewhere. This failure to provide evidence occurred despite Albright's warning the Serbs that "We will be watching," and with satellites at that time, making at least eight passes per day and geostationary drones able to hover and take finely detailed pictures in position over Bosnia during the summer of 1995. The mainstream media have found this failure to confirm of no interest.

**5.** There have been a great many bodies gathered at Tuzla, some 7,500 or more, from all across Bosnia, many in poor condition or parts only, their collection and handling incompatible with professional forensic standards, their provenance unclear and link to the July 1995 events in Srebrenica unproven and often unlikely, and the manner of their death usually uncertain. Interestingly, although the Serbs were regularly accused of trying to hide bodies, there has never been any suggestion that the Bosnian Muslims, long in charge of the body search, might shift bodies around and otherwise manipulate evidence, despite their substantial record of dissembling. A systematic attempt to use DNA to trace connections to Srebrenica is underway, but entails many problems, apart from that of the integrity of the material studied and process of investigation,

and will not resolve the question of differentiating executions from deaths in combat. There are also lists of missing, but these lists are badly flawed, with duplications, individuals listed who had died before July 1995, who fled to avoid Bosnian Muslim Army service, or who registered to vote in 1997, and they include individuals who died in battle or reached safety or were captured and assumed a new existence elsewhere.

**6.** The 8,000 figure is also incompatible with the basic arithmetic of Srebrenica numbers before and after July 1995. Displaced persons from Srebrenica--that is, massacre survivors-- registered with the World Health Organization and Bosnian government in early August 1995, totalled 35,632. Muslim men who reached Muslim lines "without their families being informed" totaled at least 3,000, and some 2,000 were killed in the fighting. That gives us 37,632 survivors plus the 2,000 combat deaths, which would require the prewar population of Srebrenica to have been 48,000 if 8,000 were executed, whereas the population before July was more like 37-40,000 (Tribunal judge Patricia Wald gave 37,000 as her estimate). The numbers don't add up.

**7.** There were witnesses to killings at Srebrenica, or those who claimed to be witnesses. There were not many of these, and some had a political axe to grind or were otherwise not credible, but several were believable and were very likely describing real and ugly events. **But the available evidence indicates hundreds of executions, not 8,000** or anything close to it. The only direct participant witness claim that ran to a thousand was that of Drazen Erdemovic, an ethnic Croat associated with a mercenary group of killers whose members were paid 12 kilos of gold for their Bosnian service (according to Erdemovic himself) and ended up working in the Congo on behalf of French intelligence. His testimony was accepted despite its vagueness and inconsistencies, lack of corroboration, and his suffering from mental problems sufficient to disqualify him from trial--but not from testifying before the Tribunal, free of cross-examination within two weeks of this disqualification from trial. This and other witness evidence suffered from serious abuse of the plea-bargaining process whereby witnesses could receive mitigating sentences if they cooperated sufficiently with the prosecution.

It is also noteworthy how many relatively impartial observers in or near Srebrenica in July 1995 *didn't* see any evidence of massacres, including the members of the Dutch forces present in the "safe area" and people like Hubert Wieland, the chief UN investigator of human rights abuses, who could find no eyewitnesses to atrocities after five days of interviewing among the 20,000 Srebrenica survivors gathered at the Tuzla airport refugee camp. Carlos Martins Branco, former UN Deputy Director of UNMO (UN Monitors) in Bosnia, who debriefed UN monitors assigned to Srebrenica, writes that casualty estimates of 8,000 have been "used and manipulated for propaganda purposes... there is little doubt that at least 2,000 Bosnian Muslims died in fighting the better trained and better commanded BSA" in three years of fierce fighting. This is roughly the number of bodies (2,028) which were exhumed by the International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the region by the year 2001. Many of these deaths occurred before the fall of Srebrenica, according to Branco.

**8.** The events of Srebrenica and claims of a major massacre were extremely helpful to the Clinton administration, the Bosnian Muslim leadership, and Croatian authorities. Clinton was under political pressure in 1995 both from the media and from Bob Dole to take more forceful action in favor of the Bosnian Muslims, and his administration was eager to find a justification for more aggressive policies. Clinton officials rushed to the Srebrenica scene to confirm and publicize the claims of a massacre, just as William Walker did later at Racak in January 1999. By inflating the casualties following the capture of Srebrenica, US officials also diverted attention from

larger-scale, US-supported Croatian attacks on Serb populated UN Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Western Slavonia ("Operation Flash") and the Krajina region ("Operation Storm") in May and August of 1995. Having undermined a UN-European Community agreement that would have prevented the outbreak of war (the March 1992 Lisbon agreement) and two other negotiated settlements (the Vance-Owen and the Owen-Stoltenberg agreements) which would have ended the fighting in 1993, US State Department hardliners were committed to imposing a military solution, that prolonged the war till 1995.

By facilitating the illegal transfer of weapons to Bosnian Muslim forces and turning a blind eye toward the entry of foreign Mujahadeen fighters, the US turned supposed safe zones for civilians into staging areas for conflict and a tripwire for NATO intervention. Dr. Cees Wiebes who authored the chapter on military intelligence in the Dutch government report on Srebrenica, notes that the US Defense Intelligence Agency facilitated the transfer of illegal arms from Muslim countries to the Tuzla airport using black Hercules C-130 transport planes and arranged for gaps in air surveillance by AWACs which were supposed to guard against such illegal arms traffic. Along with these weapons came Mujahadeen fighters, from both Iranian Shiite training camps and al-Qaeda, including two of the hijackers involved in the attacks on the World Trade Center and Khaled Sheik Mohammed who helped plan the attack. Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Ladin, himself, was issued a Bosnian passport by the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Vienna in 1993, according to the Bosnian Muslim publication *Dani*. Bin-Ladin was observed on two occasions at the office of Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic.

## 9. **Both US and US-appointed ICTY officials acknowledged political considerations in issuing genocide indictments, which were announced prior to an investigation of events surrounding the capture of Srebrenica.**

On July 24, 1995 the UN's chief investigator (for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) Henry Wieland, who had spoken to scores of Muslims at the main refugee camp at Tuzla airfield told the London Daily Telegraph "we have not found anyone who saw with their own eyes an atrocity taking place." Three days, later, however, the ICTY issued indictments charging Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. In news accounts reports of July 27, ICTY Chief Judge Antonio Cassesse praised the indictments as "a good political result" and added that the indictment means that "these gentlemen [Mladic and Karadzic] will not be able to take part in peace negotiations." The Boston Globe reported the same day: "The Clinton Administration has not obtained independent confirmation of atrocities [at Srebrenica]," but does not doubt that these occurred "I realized that the War Crimes Tribunal was a very valuable tool," Richard Holbrooke told the BBC. "We used it to keep the two most wanted war criminals in Europe out of the Dayton process and we used it to justify everything that followed."

## 10. **Bosnian Muslim leaders had been struggling for several years to persuade the NATO powers to intervene more forcibly on their behalf, and there is strong evidence that they were prepared not only to lie but also to sacrifice their own citizens and soldiers to serve the end of inducing intervention.**

Bosnian Muslim officials have claimed that their leader, Alija Izetbegovic, told them that Clinton had advised him that U.S. intervention would only occur if the Serbs killed at least 5,000 at Srebrenica. The abandonment of Srebrenica by a military force much larger than that of the attackers, and a retreat that made that larger force vulnerable and caused it to suffer heavy casualties in fighting and vengeance executions, helped produce numbers that would meet the Clinton criterion, by hook or by crook. **There is other evidence that the retreat from Srebrenica was not based on any military necessity but was strategic, with the personnel losses incurred considered a necessary sacrifice for a larger purpose.** On July 9, 1995, two days before Bosnian Serbs had captured the nearly empty town of Srebrenica

and before any serious fighting had taken place, President Izetbegovic was already calling President Clinton and other world leaders urging them to take action against "terrorism" and "genocide" by Bosnian Serb Forces. This was part of an ongoing pattern in which charges of mass rape, death camps, staged atrocities were used to manipulate public opinion in favor of military intervention.

**Military sources confirm that the 5,500 strong Muslim military force in Srebrenica made no effort to defend Srebrenica against 200 Serbian troops supported by five tanks.** Tim Ripley, a military analyst for Janes' Defense publications notes that Muslim forces fled from Srebrenica to the surrounding hills before Serbs captured the nearly empty town. He writes that Dutch troops "saw Bosnian troops escaping from Srebrenica move past their observation points carrying brand new anti-tank weapons, still in their plastic wrappings. This, and other similar reports, made many UN officers and international journalists suspicious." Former Deputy Director of UNMO (UN Monitors) Carlos Martins Branco who debriefed the UN monitors who served in Srebrenica, writes: "Muslim forces did not even try to take advantage of their heavy artillery, under control of the United Nations (UN) forces at a time in which they had every reason to do so ... Military resistance would jeopardize the image of 'victim', which had been so carefully constructed, and which the Muslims considered vital to maintain." Lt Col British Lt.-Col. Jim Baxter, assistant to UN Commander Rupert Smith, told Tim Ripley "They [the Bosnian government] knew what was happening in Srebrenica. I am certain they decided it was worth the sacrifice."

**Muslim leaders from Srebrenica claim that the town was deliberately "sacrificed" by the Presidency of the Bosnia and the Military High Command in order to encourage NATO intervention.** In their testimony before the Hague Tribunal, Bosnian Muslim Generals Halilovic and Hadzihasanovic testified that General Staff of the Bosnian Army abruptly removed 18 top officers of the 28<sup>th</sup> division in Srebrenica. This was done even as the high command was ordering sabotage operations against Bosnian Serbs. One of these was a militarily meaningless attack on a strategically unimportant nearby Serb village of Visnica. The final operation was an attack on Bosnian Serb Army units on the road south of Srebrenica, just days before the Serbs captured the nearly undefended town.

Ibran Mustafic, the head of the Muslim SDA party in Srebrenica, who had clashed with local Bosnian Muslim military commander Naser Oric, and was badly wounded in two assassination attempts, told *Slobodna Bosna*: "The scenario for the betrayal of Srebrenica was consciously prepared. Unfortunately the Bosnian presidency and the Army command were involved in this business ... Had I received orders to attack the Serb army from the demilitarized zone, I would have rejected to carry out that order without thinking and would have asked the person who had issued that order to bring his family to Srebrenica so that I can give him a gun let him stage attacks from the demilitarized zone. I knew that such shameful, calculated moves were leading my people to catastrophe. The order came from Sarajevo"

In his book *Warriors for Peace*, Bernard Kouchner, former head of Doctors Without Borders, states that on his death bed, Bosnia's wartime president, Alija Izetbegovic, acknowledged to both Kouchner and former UN envoy Richard Holbrooke that he had exaggerated claims of atrocities by Serbian forces to encourage NATO intervention against the Serbs. Specifically he mentions wartime POW camps that all three factions in the Bosnian civil war utilized, but which his government claimed in 1992 were really "death camps," a charge which was widely publicized by reporters such as *Newsday's* Roy Gutman (who shared a Pulitzer prize for this story) and ABC anchor Peter Jennings. Izetbegovic admitted to Kouchner and Holbrooke that "There were no extermination camps, whatever the horror of those places. I thought my revelations [sic] would precipitate bombing [against Serbs]."

**11.** Croatian authorities were also delighted with the claims of a Srebrenica massacre, as this deflected attention from their prior devastating ethnic cleansing of Serbs in Western Slavonia (almost entirely ignored by the Western media), and it provided a cover for their already planned removal of several hundred thousand Serbs from the Krajina area in Croatia. In "Operation Flash," carried out in Western Slavonia in May 1995, the Croats did not provide safe passage for a huge column of Serb refugees, which included many women and children. "Many Serbs perished in heavy Croatian tank, artillery and aerial bombardments ... as they tried to flee southward toward the Sava River bridge into Bosnia," wrote New York Times reporter Roger Cohen, who noted that "the estimate of 450 Serbian dead, given by Gojko Susak, the Croatian Defense Minister appears to be conservative." The followup massive ethnic cleansing operation by Croatia in Krajina was carried out with U.S. approval and logistical support within a month of the Srebrenica events, and it may well have involved the killing of more Serb civilians than Bosnian Muslim civilians killed in the Srebrenica area in July: most of the Bosnian Muslim victims were fighters, not civilians, as the Bosnian Serbs bused the Srebrenica women and children to safety; here as in Western Slavonia the Croats made no such provision and many women, children and old people were slaughtered in Krajina. The ruthlessness of the Croats was impressive: "UN troops watched horrified as Croat soldiers dragged the bodies of dead Serbs along the road outside the UN compound and then pumped them full of rounds from the AK-47s. They then crushed the bullet-ridden bodies under the tracks of a tank." But this was hardly noticed in the wake of the indignation and propaganda generated around Srebrenica, with the aid of the mainstream media, whose co-belligerency role in the Balkan wars was already well-entrenched.

**12.** The International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) and UN also had an important role to play in the consolidation of the standard Srebrenica massacre narrative. From its inception the ICTY served as an arm of the NATO powers, who created it, funded it, served as its police arm and main information source, and expected and got responsive service from the organization. The ICTY focused intensively on Srebrenica and provided important and nominally independent corroboration of the massacre claims along with citable "judicial" claims of planned "genocide." Although the death toll in Operations "Flash" and "Storm" is believed to be in the thousands, in contrast with its treatment of Srebrenica, but in keeping with its role as a political instrument of NATO, no genocide indictments were issued by the ICTY for these ethnic cleansing operations and massacres.

**13.** The UN is less thoroughly integrated into NATO-power demands than the ICTY, but it is highly responsive, and in the Srebrenica case, it came through just as the United States and its main allies desired. Under pressure from the US, the UN employed a double standard for reporting alleged abuses by Serb forces as compared with comparable abuses by Croatian Muslim forces. Between May of 1992 and April of 1993, scarcely a day went by without massacres and scorched earth attacks by Muslim warlord Naser Oric on towns and villages such as Sikirici, Konjevic Polje, Glogova, Zalazje, Fakovici, Kaludra, Loznica, Fakovici, Brezani, Krnica, Zagoni, Orlice, Jezhtica, Bijlaca, Crni Vhr, Milici, Kamenica, Bjelovac, Kravica, Skelani and Zabokvica. "Naser Oric was a warlord who reigned by terror in this area and over the population itself," General Phillippe Morillon testified at the Hague Tribunal. "He could not allow himself to take prisoners. According to my recollection, he didn't even look for an excuse." Oric's forces are responsible for 1,200-1,500 deaths in the Srebrenica area.

Yet, despite extensive evidence of Oric's direct participation in such atrocities in a report submitted to the UN by the Yugoslav State Commission on War Crimes, the US State Department, the UN and major news organizations were largely silent on these crimes. UN

Security Council resolutions to condemn abuses by Muslim forces or Croatian forces were routinely thwarted by threatened veto from Madeleine Albright. The report on Oric was submitted to the UN Commission of Experts on War Crimes, whose chairman Cherif Bassiouni was appointed by Ambassador Albright, but Oric was not even mentioned in the final report of the Commission. When the ICTY finally got around to indicting Nasir Oric on March 28, 2003, very possibly to create the image of judicial balance, he was charged with killing only seven Serbs who were tortured and beaten to death after capture, and with the "wanton destruction" of nearby villages. Although he bragged to Western reporters of slaughtering Serb civilians, the ICTY reportedly "found no evidence that there were civilian casualties in the attacks on Serb villages in his theater of operations."

Former NATO Deputy Commander Charles Boyd, who was in charge of intelligence assessments, wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that the Croatian attack on the UN Protected Serb-inhabited area of Western Bosnia, which preceded the capture of Srebrenica "appears to differ from Serbian actions around the UN safe areas of Srebrenica and Zepa only in the degree of Western hand-wringing and CNN footage the latter have elicited. **Ethnic cleansing evokes condemnation only when it is committed by Serbs, not against them.**"

**14.** Another anomaly also showing the sacred, untouchable, and politicized character of the Srebrenica massacre in Western ideology has been the ready designation of the killings as a case of "genocide." The Tribunal played an important role here, with hard-to-match gullibility, unrestrained psychologizing, problematic legal reasoning, and the ready acceptance of trial testimony by prosecution witnesses who committed perjury as part of plea bargains (most notably, Drazen Erdemovic and Momir Nikolic). The term genocide, once reserved for the most horrific crime, the planned extermination of a particular group, was manipulated by the ICTY to justify indictments that preceded any serious investigation of events related to the capture of Srebrenica.

On gullibility, one Tribunal judge accepted as fact the witness claim that Serb soldiers had forced an old Muslim man to eat the liver of his grandson; and the judges repeatedly stated as an established fact that 7-8,000 Muslim men had been executed, while simultaneously acknowledging that the evidence only "suggested" that "a majority" of the 7-8,000 missing had not been killed in combat, which yields a number substantially lower than 7-8,000. The Tribunal dealt with the awkward problem of the genocide-intent Serbs bussing Bosnian Muslim women and children to safety by arguing that they did this for public relations reasons, but as Michael Mandel points out, failing to do some criminal act despite your desire is called "not committing a crime." The Tribunal never asked why the genocidal Serbs failed to surround the town before its capture to prevent thousands of males from escaping to safety, or why the Bosnian Muslim soldiers were willing to leave their women and children as well as many wounded comrades to the mercies of the Serbs; and they failed to confront the fact that 10,000 mainly Muslim residents of Zvornik sought refugee from the civil war in Serbia itself, as prosecution witness Borisav Jovic testified.

Among the other weaknesses in the Tribunal judges' argument, it was genocide if you killed many males in a group in order to reduce the future population of that group, thereby making it unviable in that area. Of course, you might want to kill them to prevent their killing you in the future, but the court knows Serb psychology better--that couldn't be the sole reason, there must have been a more sinister aim. The Tribunal reasoning holds forth the possibility that with only a little prosecution-friendly judicial psychologizing any case of killing enemy soldiers can be designated genocide.

There is also the problem of definition of the group. Were the Serbs trying to eliminate all the

Muslims in Bosnia, or Muslims globally? Or just in Srebrenica? The judges suggested that pushing them out of the Srebrenica area was itself genocide, and they essentially equated genocide with ethnic cleansing. It is notable that the ICTY has never called the Croat ethnic cleansing of 250,000 Krajina Serbs "genocide" although in that case, many women and children were killed and the ethnic cleansing applied to a larger area and larger victim population than in Srebrenica. (On August 10, 1995, Madeleine Albright cried out to the Security Council that "as many as 13,000 men, women and children were driven from their homes" in Srebrenica.) Perhaps the ICTY had accepted Richard Holbrooke's designation of the Krajina as a case of "involuntary expulsions." The bias is blatant; the politicization of a purported judicial enterprise is extreme.

**15.** Media treatment of the Srebrenica and Krajina cases followed the same pattern and illustrates well how the media make some victims worthy and others unworthy in accord with a political agenda. With the Serbs their government's target, and their government actively aiding the massive Croat ethnic cleansing program in Krajina, the media gave huge and indignant treatment to the first, with invidious language, calls for action, and little context. With Krajina, attention was slight and passing, indignation was absent, detailed reporting on the condition of the victims was minimal, descriptive language was neutral, and there was context offered that made the events understandable. The contrast is dramatic: the attack on Srebrenica "chilling," "murderous," "savagery," "cold-blooded killing," "genocidal," "aggression," and of course "ethnic cleansing." With Krajina, the media used no such strong language—even ethnic cleansing was too much for them. The Croat assault was merely a big "upheaval" that is "softening up the enemy," "a lightning offensive," explained away as a "response to Srebrenica" and a result of Serb leaders "overplaying their hand." *The Washington Post* even cited U.S. Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith saying the "the Serb exodus was not 'ethnic cleansing'." The paper does not allow a challenge to that judgment. In fact, however, the Croat operations in Krajina left Croatia as the most ethnically purified of all the former components of the former Yugoslavia, although the NATO occupation of Kosovo has allowed an Albanian ethnic cleansing that is rivalling that of Croatia in ethnic purification.

Many journalists covering Srebrenica and the Bosnian war consistently accepted Bosnian and US government pronouncements as fact instead of independently verifying evidence. U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel John Sray, on the scene in Bosnia, wrote in October 1995 on "Selling the Bosnian Myth: Buyer Beware," that while "many journalists, who undeniably labor under dangerous and miserable conditions... have permitted themselves to become pawns of the propaganda structure.... These correspondents frequently limit their time in Bosnia to short stays and fail to gain an appreciation for the true nuances at play in this war. Watching and reading their reports too often conveys the impression that they feel the pressure of competition for a voyeuristic audience against their pampered tabloid-like peers (such as those who covered the O.J. Simpson trial) and try to react accordingly. This segment of the media views its job security as dependent upon obtaining thirty seconds of good video footage accompanied with appropriate sound bites from Muslim officials or their populace. The result, obviously, becomes tawdry reporting that panders to the Bosniac point of view and results in misleading news reports."

Obviously, this characterization does not describe all the coverage of the conflict or events around Srebrenica, but it describes the long-standing mainstream perspective and serves to remind us that ten years later, a highly skewed version of what happened at Srebrenica dominates public perceptions, and may influence decisions now being made about the fate of Kosovo and Bosnia.

An understanding of the events surrounding Srebrenica may also determine if the Serbs will

continue to bear the brunt of the blame for the tragic conflict that occurred when the major powers – the EU, the United States and the UN -- encouraged the breakup of Yugoslavia through diplomatic recognition of armed separatist states, despite the warning of UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar. Compounding this error, the US, the most important member state of the UN, then helped prolong the conflict by taking sides, instead of permitting the UN to act as an honest broker, its traditional role, which was repeatedly undermined during its mission in the former Yugoslavia.



# Srebrenica And the Politics of War Crimes

**Findings of the Srebrenica Research Group**  
into the allegations of events and the background leading up to  
them, in Srebrenica, Bosnia & Herzegovina, in 1995.



# I. Prelude to the Capture of Srebrenica

By George Bogdanich

**F**rom the very outset of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Srebrenica was the locus of tragic events, a fiercely contested strategic outpost near the Drina River that very quickly became known as the base of Muslim warlord Naser Oric. It was from Srebrenica that Oric and his allies launched methodical, scorched-earth attacks against the civilian population in 192 Serbian villages beginning in May of 1992. These attacks continued after Srebrenica was declared a safe zone in 1993 by a Security Council resolution, until it was captured by the Bosnia Serb Army BSA in July 1995.

In the course of the conflict, Srebrenica would become a focal point of the propaganda battle between the warring sides where tragedy would become entwined with myth, both in public perception and in the official histories written by the UN, non-government agencies, the court documents of the ICTY and news organizations. While local forces, both Serb or Muslim, must bear responsibility for wartime abuses they committed in the Srebrenica-Bratunac region from 1992-1995, the major powers, particularly the US policymakers, bear substantial responsibility for protracting the war and for the violent end of the safe zones and UN Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Bosnia and Croatia in 1995.

In taking sides in the conflict, the US eschewed the role of the honest broker and undermined three UN and European Community negotiated settlements which could have prevented the war altogether in March of 1992, (the Lisbon Plan) or ended it in late 1992 or 1993 (the Vance-Owen and Owen-Stoltenberg plans). While the public impression is that the US brought the war to a halt, a wealth of evidence suggests that by undermining diplomatic efforts by others, the US bears a great responsibility for the length of the conflict and the suffering by all sides.

"From the spring of 1993 to the summer of 1995, in my judgement, the effect of US policy, despite its being called 'containment', was to prolong the war," writes European Union mediator David Owen in *Balkan Odyssey*. Writing in *Foreign Affairs* USAF General Charles Boyd, who served Deputy NATO Commander in Europe and the head of intelligence until the final months of the war observes:

The US approach to the war in Bosnia is torn by a fundamental contradiction. The United States says that its objective is to end the war through a negotiated settlement, but in reality what it wants is to influence the outcome in favor of the Muslims.

At a time when NATO's historic mission had vanished with the collapse of the Soviet Union, US policymakers were anxious to maintain a major role in Europe, which meant a new role for NATO had to be found. If the Yugoslav conflict were resolved diplomatically without the US, the need for NATO would be further diminished and might be replaced (as originally envisioned by President Dwight Eisenhower) by a European alliance. Indeed, high level discussions of the Western European Union military alliance had been going on in 1992 between Germany and France.

In *Balkan Tragedy*, Susan Woodward observes that "while the Bush administration chose to abdicate leadership in the early stages of the Yugoslav conflict, both the Bush and the Clinton administrations were also unwilling to remain uninvolved, leaving the situation entirely to Europeans. Whenever developments toward the Yugoslav conflict seemed to challenge the U.S. leadership role in Europe, it stepped in."

Despite the violence that accompanied the successful separatist campaigns in Slovenia and Croatia the previous year, senior diplomats believed that war in Bosnia was avoidable. UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and European Community mediator Lord Peter Carrington all warned that diplomatic recognition of armed separatist republics would damage chances of a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Germany's plan to recognize Croatia and Slovenia was initially opposed by the US, until Germans succeeded in pressing a reluctant European Community to join them. At this point, the first Bush administration, under pressure from the leaders of Saudi Arabia to recognize Bosnia as a future Muslim led European state, persuaded the Europeans to extend diplomatic recognition to Bosnia on April 6, 1992 in return for US recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. This was done despite the fact that there was no agreement among the Serbs, Muslims and Croats. To secede legally from Yugoslavia, the assent of all three sides -- Serbs, Muslims and Croats -- was required under the Bosnian constitution. The move for a separatist state would fracture the fragile consensus that kept had kept the peace following World War II, when Croat and Muslim leaders allied with the German invaders embarked on an extermination campaign against Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, which killed hundreds of thousands of civilians.

The ruling Muslim-dominated Bosnian government controlled less than forty percent of Bosnian territory at the time of recognition. Moreover, as George Kenney of the US State Department acknowledged, "the [US] intelligence agencies were unanimous in telling us that if you recognize Bosnia it will blow up."

Realizing that recognition without agreement between the parties could lead to disaster, EU mediator Lord Peter Carrington and Portuguese Foreign Minister Jose Cutillero, tried to soften the impact, by brokering an agreement among Bosnian Serb, Muslim and Croat leaders known as the Lisbon Agreement, establishing three Swiss style semi-autonomous ethnic cantons under a central government. The Lisbon agreement was signed by all three parties on March 20, but two days later US Ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmerman encouraged Bosnia's Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic to disavow his signature on the treaty. Two weeks later, war broke out. Roger Cohen of the *New York Times* later noted that international recognition under these circumstances, was "as close to criminal negligence as a diplomatic act can be. Indeed international recognition and the outbreak of the Bosnian war were simultaneous: The world put light to the fuse."

US recognition for the Muslim President of Bosnia was accompanied by a media campaign that targeted the Bosnian Serbs as the aggressor, although the first attacks in Bosnia, reported by the pro government newspaper *Oslobodjenje*, took place on March 26 when Croatian forces crossed the Sava River from Croatia and attacked the Serb inhabited village of Sijekovac near Bosanski Brod in Northern Bosnia. The village was burned and five Serbian families were slaughtered initiating a cycle of fear and revenge that was watched with apprehension throughout Bosnia. The first killing in Sarajevo took place on March 1, 1992, a month before the official start of the war when two Muslims and Croat gunmen stalking a Serbian wedding in the downtown section of Saarajevo, known as Bascarsija, killed Nikola Gardovic, father of the bridegroom. The failure of officials of the ruling SDA party to arrest the killers, who were well known, helped set the stage for the battles that erupted the following month.

"By organizing parties along national lines, all three communities bear responsibility for the country's appalling fate," observed Misha Glenny in the *Fall of Yugoslavia*. The pattern was set, however, by the Muslim faction, which was the first to organize a nationalist party, the SDA. On March 31, 1991, a year before the civil war began, the SDA established the Patriotic League, the first party army since the Axis parties of World War II. According to General Sefer Halilovic, Commander of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina, by the time the war began, Bosnian Muslims had "120,000 people under arms."

Both the Bush and incoming Clinton administrations portrayed President Izetbegovic as defender of a multi-ethnic Bosnia, a description at odds with a strongly expressed pan-Islamic views and actions. Izetbegovic had begun his career as recruiter for the SS Handschar party which Nazi SS leader Heinrich Himmler set up for Bosnian Muslims and which was led by the fanatically anti Semitic Mufti of Jerusalem. Izebegovic was later jailed for his intolerant writing by Yugoslavia communist leader Josip Broz Tito. While cultivating a tone of moderation in dealing with Western leaders during the Bosnian conflict, Izetbegovic remained a fervent admirer of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and frequent traveler to Iran. Izetbegovic's *Islamic Declaration*, first circulated in 1970 and published in time for his 1990 campaign for the presidency of Bosnia Herzegovina stated:

There can be no peace or coexistence between the "Islamic faith" and non- Islamic societies and political institutions... Islam clearly excludes the right and possibility of activity of any strange ideology on its own turf.

Thousands of copies of the *Islamic Declaration* were distributed to members of the Army of Bosnian Herzegovina. Significantly, President Izetbegovic never disavowed his stated views during the war or afterward while fighting to consolidate control over a republic in which Serbs and Croats together held a numerical majority over Muslims, who were the largest single ethnic group. Within the first few months of war, Yossef Bodansky Chief of Staff of the Sub Committee on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare published a report detailing the assistance the Bosnian Muslim faction had been receiving from Islamist extremist organizations, especially Iran ("Iran's European Springboard?")

On two occasions in 1993, *Der Spiegel's* respected Balkan correspondent Renate Flottau encountered Osama Bin-Ladin in the waiting room the office of Bosnian President Alija Izetgevic. Bin-Ladin, then based in Sudan, had received a Bosnian passport thru the Vienna embassy of Bosnia Herzegovina according to the Bosnian Muslim daily *Dani*. Bin-Ladin and his military chief of Staff Ayman al-Zawahiri helped establish the Mujahadeen fighters as a force in Bosnia, mostly as special forces of the 7<sup>th</sup> Corps of the Bosnian Army in Central Bosnia. Bodansky notes that support for the Bosnian Muslims was the first time that Shiite and Sunni Muslim terrorist organizations worked together.

Yet, despite the presence of these extreme elements, and opposition from CIA Director James Woolsey, the Clinton administration would give the green light to an increase in arms shipments from Iran. The policy to facilitate illegal arms imports was promoted by US National Security Advisor Anthony Lake and US Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith. Amsterdam University Professor Cees Wiebes, who documented the role of intelligence agencies in Bosnia in the Dutch report on Srebrenica, states that the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) was given the responsibility of enabling the accelerated transfer of weapons and personnel from Iran and other Islamist regimes, from Malaysia to Algeria.

Why would the US resort to measures that violated UN resolutions, alienated former allies such as Britain and France which had UNPROFOR troops on the ground and which risked a longer war? General Boyd wrote:

The linchpin of the US approach has been the underinformed notion that this is a war of good versus evil, of aggressor against aggrieved. From that premise, the United States has supported UN and NATO resolutions couched in seemingly neutral terms – for example, to protect peacekeepers – and then has turned them around to punish one side and attempt to affect the course of the war. It has supported the creation of safe areas and demanded their protection even when they have been used by one warring faction to mount attacks against another...It has supported the legitimacy of a leadership that has become increasingly ethnocentric in its makeup, single-party in its rule, and manipulative in its diplomacy.

General Phillipe Morillon, who served as UN Commander in Sarajevo, observed: "The aim of the Presidency of Bosnia, from the very outset was to ensure the intervention of the international forces for their own benefit and this one of the reason why they never were inclined to engage in talks." Morillon's predecessor, Canadian General Lewis MacKenzie often criticized Serbs for their use of heavy weaponry around Sarajevo, but upon leaving his post in Sarajevo, wrote that 19 ceasefires he negotiated, were broken by Muslim forces, "because their policy was, and is, to force the West to intervene."

Given the Serbs' initial superiority in heavy weapons, they gained control of substantial territory in the first three months of war that they hoped to trade for peace. "The Serbs think they won already and want the war to end," observed General Boyd. "The Muslims know they have not, and are seeking ways to continue it."

BBC reporter Misha Glenny observed that "the Bosnian government was quick to understand that most of the world viewed them as innocent victims. Throughout the war, they used this perception to undertake offensive actions" and then portray themselves as victims. The Bosnian government strategy was immeasurably aided by the US. Secretary of State James Baker, who writes that he instructed his Press Secretary Margaret Tutwiler to help Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic utilize Western mass media to build support in Europe and North American for the Bosnian cause. "I also had her talk to her contacts at the four television networks, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*." [FN] George Kenny, who served on the State Department's Yugoslavia desk confirms that he was asked to help "gin up" public opinion favorable to the Bosnian government and draft material for the spokesman Margaret Tutwiler who was "always looking for something inflammatory."

These efforts were highly successful and it was often hard to tell where State Department and Bosnian government press releases on events in Bosnia left off, and where news reports by major news organizations began. The misuse of casualty figures by the mainstream media was underway long before events at Srebrenica in 1995. For example, through December of 1992, the bloodiest year of the conflict, Bosnian government stated that there had been 17,000 casualties in the conflict. Two months later, in the dead of winter, when fighting in this mountainous terrain had nearly ground to a halt, the Bosnian government abruptly began using a figure of 200,000 "killed or missing" which was used by such reporters as John Burns of the *New York Times* and John Pomfret of the *Washington Post*. Shortly thereafter, the phrase "or missing" was dropped from news accounts. Thus, the number of casualties claimed by the Bosnian government was brazenly multiplied ten fold in two months, as an obliging press adopted the new numbers. Incredibly, the 200,000 fatality figure remained constant over the next two years.

Similarly, Bosnia's Foreign Minister Silajdzic made headlines around the world when he appeared on NBC's "Today Show" in December of 1992, claiming that up to 40,000 Muslim women were being held in camps where they were raped and are being raped, even as we speak

now." In fact, as interested reporters might have confirmed with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the number of prisoners held by the Bosnian Serbs were overwhelmingly male and had numbered less than ten thousand at the peak of incarceration, five months previously. Jerome Bony for the French program "Envoye Special" reported his experience in tracking the rape story: "When I was at 50 kilometers from Tuzla I was told, 'go to Tuzla high school ground (where) there are 4,000 raped women'. At 20 kilometers this figure dropped to 400. At 10 kilometers only 40 were left. Once at the site, I found only four women willing to testify."

By 1994, following further investigation, the official number of rape victims *by all three sides*, was revised downward to an estimated 2400 victims based on 119 documented cases according [TO] a report by UN Special Rapporteur Tadeusz Mazowiecki. By then, however, public impressions had been made and corrective news accounts were given little prominence. Writing in October of 1995, Lt.-Col. John Sray, US Army military analyst described a "prolific propaganda machine" made up of "public relations (PR) firms in the employ of the Bosniacs, media pundits, and sympathetic elements of the U.S. State Department, who have managed to manipulate illusions to further Muslim goals." Sray goes on to add:

Another persistent element of the propaganda onslaught involves legitimate ownership of land. The BSA [Bosnian Serb Army] could never have "overrun, seized, or captured" 70 percent of the country as Bosniac government verbal gimmicks state. While they controlled 70 percent of the territory during much of this conflict, the BSA certainly did not possess the military manpower to overrun, seize, or capture it. The media and PR firms employ these inflammatory words only to obfuscate the pre-war situation. Due to their agrarian way of life, the Serbs formed a plurality in 64 percent of the territory at the beginning of the war while the more urban Muslim business-oriented people resided in the cities.

There is substantial testimony from senior military and diplomatic officials that Muslim forces undertook operations that would portray them as victims. European Union negotiator Lord David Owen, who took over from Lord Peter Carrington following the London Conference in 1992, wrote that Muslim forces would from time to time shell the airport to stop relief flights and focus world attention on the plight of Sarajevo. Owen wrote also that UN observers noted that Bosnian Army forces fired mortar weapons from beside the Kosevo hospital to provoke retaliatory fire from Serbian forces, events which credulous reporters invariably described as Serb shelling of the Kosevo hospital.

A pattern of staged incidents to engage world sympathy was revealed in a classified UN report leaked to the London newspaper, *The Independent*, which reported:

"United Nations officials and senior Western military officers believe some of the worst killings in Sarajevo, including the massacre of at least 16 people in a bread queue, were carried out by the city's mainly Muslim defenders — not Serb besiegers — as a propaganda ploy to win world sympathy and military intervention. . . . Classified reports to the UN force commander, General Satish Nambiar, concluded . . . that Bosnian forces loyal to President Alija Izetbegovic may have detonated a bomb. 'We believe it was a command-detonated explosion, probably in a can,' a UN official said then."

The successful attempt by Muslim forces to cast suspicion on Serbs for a staged atrocity — which came to be known as the 'breadline massacre' — seriously affected the outcome of conflict, because it gave strong impetus to the passage three days later of Security Council Resolution 757 which placed international sanctions on Serbia, the most important ally of the Bosnian Serbs. The sanctions were proposed by the US to punish the remainder of Yugoslavia

for the alleged presence of Yugoslav troops in Bosnia.

But, in fact, a UN report received two days earlier, confirmed that the Yugoslav National Army, the JNA, had "withdrawn already into Serbia and Montenegro" some eleven days before it was required to do. By contrast, the UN report noted that, "in the case of the Croatian Army," which was also required to leave, "no such withdrawal had occurred." The Chairman of the Security Council, Austria's Ambassador Peter Hohenfellner, received the report two days before the vote on US sponsored sanctions, but the report was kept from other members of the Security Council until one hour after the vote for sanctions against Yugoslavia. Several delegates complained to reporters that they had been misled, but the US had prevailed its efforts to target the Serbs indelibly as the villains and Muslims would be encouraged to continue the war as sanctions wore down the Serbs. British diplomat Cedric Thornberry, Assistant UN Secretary General, who personally investigated atrocities committed by each of the warring sides, writes:

"By early 1993, a consensus developed — especially in the United States, but also in some West European countries and prominently in par parts of the international liberal media — that the Serbs were the only villains, all through Yugoslavia, and that the victims were overwhelmingly or even exclusively the Croats and Muslims. This view did not correspond to the perceptions of successive senior UN personnel in touch with daily events throughout the area; as a kindly soul at the UN headquarters in New York, ear to the diplomatic grapevine, warned me, take cover — the fix is on."

These observations describe the political and military climate that developed as events were unfolding in Eastern Bosnia when Srebrenica first gained international attention in 1993.

### **Naser Oric's Reign of Terror**

**M**ost of the world first heard of Srebrenica in March of 1993, when UN Sarajevo Commander General Phillip Morillon, acting without the approval of his superiors, made a risky visit to open a humanitarian convoy route to the city in Eastern Bosnia where fierce fighting had been taking place between the predominantly Muslim forces of the Army of Bosnian Herzegovina and the largely Serbian BSA.

Despite Morillon's willingness to take risks to help the Muslim civilians who sought relief, the UN Commander was taken hostage as a way of publicizing a humanitarian crisis to force Western military intervention. "The fact that they held me as a prisoner in Srebrenica was orchestrated in Sarajevo," Morillon later stated in testimony at the Hague. It was Srebrenica warlord Naser Oric, Cammander of the 28<sup>th</sup> Division of the Bosnian Army that received the order to hold General Morillon as a hostage. "Naser Oric was a warlord who reigned by terror in this area and over the population itself," Morillon observed, "He could not allow himself to take prisoners. According to my recollection, he didn't even look for an excuse."

General Morillon understood clearly that Naser Oric's murderous forays against Serbian villages and numerous civilian massacres since May of 1992-93 were the reason that Serb military forces had blockaded Srebrenica. "I wasn't surprised, when the Serbs took me to a village to show me the evacuation of the bodies of the inhabitants that had been thrown into a hole, a village close to Bratunac." Both Morillon and Lt. Col Thomas Karremans, who commanded the UN's Dutch battalion at Srebrenica prior to its eventual capture, drew a very clear connection between the murderous attacks of Oric on civilians populations of Bratunac, Skelani, Kravica, Milici and numerous other towns and villages and the events of 1995.

In August of 1995, when unsubstantiated media accusations against the Serb forces around Srebrenica had reached a reached a crescendo, Lt. Col Karremans reminded reporters

that the "Muslims had burned around 192 surrounding (Serbian) villages" and "that there are no good guys or bad guys." General Morillon was asked directly by Judge Patrick Robinson at the War Crimes Tribunal: "Are you saying, then, General, that what happened in 1995 was a direct reaction to what Naser Oric did to the Serbs two years before? Morillon replied: "Yes your Honour. I am convinced of that."

There is ample evidence that in fiercely contested Eastern Bosnia, both Serbian and Muslim forces engaged in serious abuses. But in a civil war where fear and revenge created a fertile climate for atrocities, the cruelty and scale of Naser Oric's attacks became well known across Bosnia. By June of 1993, a detailed report by the Yugoslav State Commission on War Crimes accepted as a UN document detailed a pattern of attacks in which entire villages were burned and all civilians murdered. Internationally recognized forensic pathologist Zoran Stankovic, currently Director of the Belgrade Military Hospital performed full autopsies and forensic reports on victims in a number of villages where Muslim troops led by Oric and his deputy Zulfo Tursunovic massacred the towns inhabitants.

Typical victims in Dr. Stankovic's extensive files are elderly women and men born between 1915 and 1930. Photos accompanying these reports reveal throats slashed from ear to ear. Some of these (mostly) female corpses are pictured as they were found, dressed in military uniform jackets many sizes too large, a grotesque effort by their executioners to suggest that these elderly victims died actively defending their homes.

Writing in London-based *South Slav Journal*, reporter Joan Phillips visited the town of Fakovici a year after it had been attacked by Oric's Muslim forces for the first time on July 12, 1992. The same town had been razed to the ground in World War II and its inhabitants slaughtered by the Croatian-led Ustasha. "In this war, Fakovici was once again the scene of a terrible massacre, on October 5, 1992, in which a quarter of its inhabitant were killed... There used to be 115 people living in Fakovici before the war. By the time of the massacre, the number had dwindled. And then 25 or 26 were killed on the same day."

One survivor of the attack interviewed by Phillips was Andrija Markovic, whose grandfather had led the Partisan resistance to the Fascists from the hills around Fakovici in World War II. On the day of the attack, the Markovic family lost 57-year old Olga Markovic, 61 year old Slavka Markovic and 51 year old Radoje Markovic, 53 year old Radomir Markovic and several cousins. Having lost 16 members in the previous war, the Markovic family had now lost 10 more to the soldiers of the 28th Division of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"Naser Oric's reign implied a thorough knowledge of the area held by his forces." Morillon testified. "It appeared to me that he was respecting political instructions coming from the Presidency" in Sarajevo." Oric and his Deputy Zulfo Tursunovic were installed by the Izetbegovic government despite the wishes of Srebrenica's moderate Muslim leader Township Assembly President Besim Ibisevic who was trying to reassure Serbs. Oric, himself, acknowledged to *Olslobodjenje* that he had to hide in forests together with his allies and obtain food secretly because most muslim residents did not share the views of the extremists who would take over. Since the end of 1991, however, the Muslim National Council was preparing armed insurgents with rifles and uniforms and began to deployed hardened criminals to serve as paramilitaries, a tactic later used by some Serb and Croat leaders.

Born in nearby Potocari, Oric had worked as a Belgrade policeman, and for two years as a bodyguard for Serbian President Milosevic, but had been fired for theft at the end of 1991 and returned to Bosnia. Tursunovic was in jail in Zenica, part way through a 15 year sentence for murdering three Muslims in 1986, when he was released from prison at the end of 1991 by President Izetbegovic and assigned to be Deputy Commander in Srebrenica. He and Oric

slipped into Srebrenica in the spring of 1992. The attacks on Serbs began almost immediately. On May 6, the nearby Serb villages of Gniona and Bljeceva were burnt and plundered. The following day, seven Serbs who tried to escape from Srebrenica were ambushed and killed. On May 8, Judge Goran Zekic, President of the Serbian SDS Party and representative to the Bosnian parliament was murdered, triggering a mass exodus of the 1500 remaining Serbs in Srebrenica. At this point, scarcely a day went by without scorched earth attacks on towns and villages such as Sikirici, Konjevic Polje, Glogova, Zalazje, Fakovici, Kaludra, Loznica, Fakovici, Agoni, Brezani, Krnica, Zagoni, Zelazije, Orlice, Jezhtica, Bijlaca, Crni Vhr, Milici, Kamenica, Bjelovac, Kravica, Skelani and Zabokvica.

The massacre of Serbs at Kravica, typical in most ways of these attacks, gained notoriety mainly because it occurred on Orthodox Christmas January 7. The total number of those massacred was unknown, but Dr Stankovic examined 48 corpses of people who had been murdered on their most important holiday. According to Phillips, by March 31 1993, 1200 Serbs had been killed and 3,000 wounded, adding:

“Today, there are virtually no Serbs left in the entire Srebrenica municipality. Out of 9300 Serbs who used to live there, less than 900 remain. Out of the 11,500 Serbs who used to live in the Bratunac municipality, more than 6000 have fled. In the Srebrenica municipality, only three Serbian villages remain and around 26 have been destroyed; in the Bratunac municipality, about 24 Serbian villages have been razed. The last major Serbian villages in the vicinity of Bratunac and Skelani were attacked and destroyed on January 7, 1993.”

US intelligence agencies were well aware of Oric's activities and his close coordination with the Bosnian President. Transmissions of conversations between Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and Naser Oric were monitored by US intelligence and Oric himself acknowledged that he was in constant radio communication with General Sefer Halilovic the Muslim Commander of the Army of Bosnia Herzegovina “who knew exactly what was happening.” While the US State Department churned out press releases and briefings citing Muslim reports of abuses by Serbs, Naser Oric's reign of terror was almost entirely absent from press briefings and human rights reports. Similarly, Madeleine Albright, the US Representative on the UN Security Council regularly sponsored resolutions and reports criticizing Serbian abuses, but used her veto power to block condemnation of Muslim abuses according to UK representative Sir David Hannay and Russian representative Yuli Vorontsov.

Oric clearly understood that with uncritical US support for the Izetbegovic government, he could act with impunity. He even videotaped some of his butchery, including severed Serbian heads, and showed these videotapes to John Pomfret of the *Washington Post* and Bill Schiller of the *Toronto Star*. Schiller writes that Oric was “as bloodthirsty a warrior as ever crossed a battlefield” and then recounts a visit to the warlord's home in January 1994:

“On a cold and snowy night, I sat in his room, watching a shocking video version of what might have been called Naser Oric's Greatest Hits. There were burning houses, dead bodies, severed heads and people fleeing. . . Oric grinned throughout, admiring his handiwork. ‘We ambushed them,’ he said. The next sequence of dead bodies had been done in by explosives: ‘We launched those guys to the moon,’ he boasted. When footage of a bulletmarked ghost town appeared without any visible bodies, Oric hastened to announce. ‘We killed 114 Serbs there.’ Later, there were celebrations, with singers with wobbly voices chanting his praises.”

It speaks volumes that, despite massive and detailed evidence about the crimes of Naser Oric, Zulfo Tursunovic and other commanders of the 28<sup>th</sup> Division, the Ad Hoc Tribunal on

Yugoslavia did not indict Nasir Oric until 2003, and then, only on the relatively minor charge of mistreatment of prisoners. By contrast, the quick decision to charge Serbian leaders with genocide after the capture of Srebrenica involved the much disputed, and as yet uninvestigated, fate of military age men who refused safe passage and fled across Bosnian Serb held territory with the well armed 28<sup>th</sup> division.

That the systematic slaughter of the Serbian civilian population in the area west of the Drina by Oric's forces did not qualify as a crime against humanity, says a great deal about the political agenda of the sponsors of the Hague Tribunal, most notably then Madeleine Albright, who arranged the appointment of top prosecutors of the Tribunal Cherif Bassiouni as the head of the Commission of Experts on war crimes. Bassiouni, an Egyptian expert on Islamic law who taught at DePaul Law School in Chicago did not even mention Oric's attacks from Srebrenica in the Final Report of the Commission of Experts established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 submitted on May 27, 1994, though he had been provided the forensic evidence from Dr. Stankovic's extensive files on crimes.

Bassiouni's decision and the pattern of the indictments by the Tribunal reflected the political goals of the US, which dominated the Security Council on the Bosnia issue, and which viewed the Tribunal as another weapon to mobilized on behalf of the Bosnian government, rather than an impartial judicial body. Because the US and other permanent members of the Security Council had veto power, the work of the ICTY was inherently political and even the most brazen crimes by Muslim units were given a low priority. Antonio Cassese, the first President of the Tribunal, and US envoy Richard Holbrooke stated publicly that the indictment of Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic on charges of genocide immediately following the capture of Srebrenica was justified on the grounds that this charge would remove them from upcoming negotiations over territory. By contrast, officials of the Tribunal let investigations of Bosnian President Izetbegovic and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman drag on until their deaths. Spokesperson for the Tribunal simply announced that no information would be made public about these investigations and imminent indictments, because the deceased were unable to defend themselves.

Oric's destruction of Serbian villages created two major problems for those under his command in 1993. Srebrenica had depended on pillaging Serb villages for food but these sources had been destroyed. Meanwhile Serbian survivors of the massacres along Muslim supply lines did their best to block international aid convoys. Muslim refugees inside Srebrenica complained that food was being diverted to Oric who set up a lucrative black market. International aid officials encouraged the refugees to elect one of their own to distribute foods, but a day after a man was elected to carry out this function, he was murdered.

The second problem for Oric developed following the massacre at Kravica on Orthodox Christmas, when Bosnian Serbs formed the Drina Corp to protect surviving Serb inhabitants and to destroy Oric's forces. After defeats in Cerska and Koljevic Polje, Oric was pushed back to Srebrenica. If not for the intercession of UN troops," wrote John Pomfret in the *Washington Post*, "Oric would either be dead, in a prisoner of war camp or living in the hills." Instead, the warlord used the civilians that depended on him, as a shield.

### Manipulating the Safe Areas

Oric was allowed to remain in Srebrenica, because, as Lord Owen states, "the Security Council fatefully decided to demand that Srebrenica and its surroundings be treated as a safe area to be free from armed attack, while neither demilitarizing nor demarcating the boundaries of the area." He adds: "The main flaw to the concept of 'safe areas' from the perspective of the UN military, was that the UN Security Council were allowing the Muslims to

evade any demilitarization provision. This made the whole concept unsafe." The agreement, which preserved Muslim control of Srebrenica and enabled residents to receive humanitarian aid shipments, was immediately subverted by the government.

"Following negotiations, Halilovic writes "I returned to headquarters and issued an order to Srebrenica and Zepa that not a single functional piece of weaponry should be handed over or a single usable bullet. After that, I went to see Izetbegovic and was given congratulations for success." Oric confirms that "when the order on demilitarisation of the town itself was issued, the commander [General Sefer Halilovic] explained to me that we should hand over only non-functional and faulty weaponry, the ones that we could not hide, heavy weapons, which is what I did." Halilovic put the number of troops in the 28<sup>th</sup> division in Srebrenica at 5803.

In testimony before the War Crimes Tribunal, General Halilovic acknowledges using helicopters to resupply and further militarize the supposed "safe area." Reminded that the safe area agreement specifically prohibited flights from Tuzla to Srebrenica and Zepa to provide military supplies, Halilovic testified defiantly: "It is correct that I sent eight helicopters with ammunition, and if could have, I would have sent 180."

Despite the fact that Srebrenica was not successfully demilitarized, the Security Council extended the safe area concept to Sarajevo, Gorazde, Bihac, Zepa, Tuzla and their surroundings. Of course, these "safe areas" had never been safe for the Serb residents. As UNHCR maps reveal, with the exception of Sarajevo, the majority of Serbs had been cleansed from these areas by the summer of 1992, much as Muslims were being expelled from towns with Serb and Croat majorities. Sarajevo Serb neighborhoods, though reduced by fighting between Serb and government held sections of the city, would survive until they were placed under government control, following the Dayton agreement.

The militarization of the safe zones — in violation of stated UN policy — would have been impossible without US assistance. *Newsweek's* military correspondent David Hackworth states that the illegal supply of heavy weapons from Iran and other Islamic countries to the Tuzla airport by C-130 *Hercules* military transport aircraft had turned into "a regular shuttle" facilitated by the US, which scheduled lapses in surveillance coverage by AWAC radar to coincide with the flights of illegal arms. This increasing stream of sophisticated weapons, along with a clear grasp of US policy, gave the Bosnian government confidence in their ability to prolong the war and prevail militarily with assistance from both the US and their Islamic allies.

On February 5, 1994, another bloody staged incident in Sarajevo, enabled the US to pressure the UN to adopt a tripwire system in which a Serb attack on safe zone would trigger a NATO airstrike against the perceived threat. This shift in policy occurred after a mortar shell had killed 49 people at the Markale marketplace and injured two hundred more. The State Department and US representative on the Security Council Madeleine Albright was quick to blame the Serbs for the mortar and the Muslim faction tried to break off talks, but this time General Sir Michael Rose, the UN Commander in Sarajevo, who had forwarded a technical report indicating that Muslims were responsible for the carnage, went to the office of the Bosnian President Izetbegovic and threatened to make the report public if Muslims did not return to negotiations. Lord Owen, who knew about the report acknowledge that he helped suppress the report because "if the slightest hint that the Muslims were thought to be responsible" had emerged, the Bosnia Muslims would have cut off the talks.

On February 7 1994, UN Commander Francis Briquemont reported to the civilian head of the UN mission Yasushi Akashi that "in Sarajevo, the Bosnian Army provokes the Serbs on a daily basis. Since the middle of December, the Bosnian Army jumped another step by launching heavy infantry attacks from Sarajevo to the Serb held suburbs of the city." Briquemont then

describes a pattern of manipulation that would recur in Gorazde, Bihac and Srebrenica:

The Bosnian Army attacks the Serbs from a Safe Area, the Serb retaliate, mainly on the confrontation line, and the Bosnian Presidency accused UNPROFOR of not protecting them against Serb aggression and appeals for air strikes against the Serb gun positions.

Two months later, following attacks by Muslim units from Gorazde against nearby Serbian villages, the Bosnian Serbs began shelling Muslim units inside the Gorazke [SP]. Press reports quoted government claims that the 700 people had been killed and up to 2000 wounded and that the hospital was being destroyed. US officials demanded NATO airstrikes and General Rose, ordered a pinprick attack on a Bosnian Serb position. When Rose arrived in Gorazde, however, he observed a very different reality. *The New York Times* reported that senior UN officials had found "the hospital which had been reported as virtually destroyed, operative with just one shell through the roof. There was no evidence of 700 corpses."

Reports on Gorazde were deliberately exaggerated into order to shame the world into doing something, ... A dangerous overreaction was stirred up in international capitals, the talk of wider use of NATO power, hitting ammunition dumps and and infrastructure... would have turned the UN forces here into combatants.

The senior official quoted in this unusually frank criticism of the manipulation of the UN and press by the Muslims and US policymakers, was almost certainly General Rose, who went on to make these same points to John Simpson of the BBC at end of his term as UN Commander in Sarajevo. But Muslim government forces would be encouraged by their success in drawing NATO attacks, however limited, against the Serbs.

A similar strategy was employed in Bihac in November of that year, with Government forces using the safe zone as a staging area to attack and occupy the Serb inhabited Grabez plateau region. When Serbs responded by bringing their forces to the edge of the zone, Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic, told a startled press conference in Sarajevo that 70,000 people had been killed. As fighting subsided and General Rose and UN officers journeyed to Gorazde, the Bosnian government lowered their casualty count to 14,000. John Simpson of the BBC reported that Muslim forces threatened the lives of UN officials who used lower casualty figures, but that the UN estimated that "fewer than 1000" people had been killed in fighting around Bihac, that had been initiated by the Muslim side.

### Preparing a Sacrifice

**T**he failure of the safe area concept had become increasingly apparent to international officials involved in mediation efforts by the end of 1994. The crucial question was: Would the fate of these areas be resolved by diplomacy, or by military means? Because US military and political support for the Muslim government had repeatedly undermined efforts to end the war through negotiations, the European Union and UN officials encouraged the US to become more deeply involved in negotiations through the Contact Group, which also included Russia. Diplomacy, however, made little headway, despite the efforts of US envoy Robert Frasure, because the Bosnia's Muslim leaders were increasingly confident they could prevail militarily, thanks in large part to American support.

As early as 1993, in discussions with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic proposed the exchange of Serb-held Vogosca, a suburb of Sarajevo, for Srebrenica. Eventually, this idea was taken up by mediators. "There was a consensus amongst the negotiators (the US, the UN and European governments) that it was impossible to maintain three Muslim enclaves, and that they should be exchanged for territories in Central

Bosnia.," writes Carlos Martin Branco who served with UN Secretariat in Bosnia.:

"Madeleine Albright suggested this exchange on numerous occasions to Izetbegovic, based on the proposals of the Contact Group. The truth is that both the Americans and President Izetbegovic had tacitly agreed that it made no sense to insist in maintaining these isolated enclaves in a divided Bosnia...In 1995, the month before the military operation in Srebrenica, Alexander Vershbow, Special Assistant to President Clinton stated that 'America should encourage the Bosnians to think in terms of territories with greater coherence and compactness.'"

The problem for Alija Izetbegovic was that he felt he could not publicly acknowledge these discussions or he would lose the hardline support that had brought him to power.

In an interview with the Bosnian Muslim publication *Dani*, Hakija Meholic, the police chief of Srebrenica, recalls that at the Bosniak conference in Sarajevo in September 1993, Izetbegovic claimed to have discussed various scenarios for Srebrenica with President Clinton. According to Meholic, an ally of Naser Oric:

We were received there by President Izetbegovic, and immediately after the welcome he asked us: "What do you think about the swap of Srebrenica for Vogosca [a Sarajevo suburb]?" There was a silence for a while and then I said: "Mr. President, if this is a done thing, then you should not have invited us here, because we have to return and face the people and personally accept the burden of that decision." Then he said: "You know, I was offered by Clinton in April 1993 that the Chetnik forces enter Srebrenica, carry out a slaughter of 5,000 Muslims, and then there will be a military intervention."

Meholic, subsequently gave an interview about Izetbegovic's startling statement to a Dutch documentary that was shown as evidence in the War Crimes Tribunal. Here, Meholic explains that Izetbegovic told the Srebrenica delegation that he "had learned that a NATO intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina was possible but could only occur if the Serbs would break into Srebrenica are killing at least 5.000 of its people." According to the film, President Izetbegovic was questioned by UN investigators about these alleged statements which he denied making, while stating that he had accepted an opinion from the delegation on the exchange of territories.

While there is no evidence, nor any way to confirm that President Clinton actually made such a proposal to Izetbegovic, however hypothetical, there were at least eight surviving witnesses to confirm what Izetbegovic told the Srebrenica delegation. Nor would it have been out of character for Izetbegovic to approve a plan would sacrifice lives of his citizens for the cause or to inflate the number of casualties from a provoked engagement with Serbian forces. When it came to casualty counts, Deputy NATO Commander Boyd observed, "the Bosnian Government has an interest in portraying the number as high as possible." US Army analyst Lt.-Col. John Sray, noted that staged incidents such as Markale had approval at the highest level.:

"Given the proximity of the Markale Market Square to the Presidency (Bosniac White House), who granted permission to launch these brutal and insane attacks? Surely, it almost had to have been President Alija Izetbegovic or Vice President Ejup Ganic."

Before his death in a road accident in Bosnia, US envoy Robert Frasure worked on a diplomatic solution that would have traded the putative safe areas, Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde for the Serb-held suburbs of Sarejevo. But the same hardline US faction that arranged illegal arms for Muslim forces, helped a diplomatic solution negotiated by UN envoy Robert Frasure in the spring of 1995. Thus, the US "watched approvingly as Muslim offensives began,"

according to General Boyd, "even though these attacks destroyed a cease-fire Washington has supported." As EU envoy Carl Bildt would later observe, "there would be no peace in Washington until there was war in the Balkans."

Instead, of a diplomatic solution, the map changes sought by Washington for a settlement in both Croatia and Bosnia, would be achieved by military means and the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of refugees. In November of 1994, the US had licensed a private military contract firm MPRI, including "retired" four star generals, to prepare and organize the Croatian army for attacks on the UN Protected Areas (UNPA's) of Croatia where more than 200,000 predominantly ethnic Serbs lived. Unlike the safe areas of Bosnia, which served as staging areas for attacks against surrounding territories, the UNPA's remained quiet except for several attacks against them by Croatian forces in 1993. Restraint by the Krajina Serbs, however, would not save them from US sponsored Croatian military attacks, "Operation *Flash*" in May and "Operation *Storm*" in August, which were the largest ethnic cleansing campaigns of the war to date, involving more than 200,000 Serb refugees.

The effect of pressure from US negotiators became clear to knowledgeable observers as summer approached, when the Bosnian Serb military withdrew troops from Western Bosnian towns such as Bosanki Grahovo and Glamoc leaving Serb inhabited Western Bosnia vulnerable to Croatian and Muslim attacks. These areas would soon become the staging area for "Operation *Storm*"[,] the Croatian assault on the UN Protected Areas, in the adjacent Croatian Krajina region and the subsequent joint Croatian-Muslim military campaign to drive the Serbian population out of the Bosnian Krajina region.

At the same time, a month before the Serb capture of Srebrenica, the Bosnian government abruptly withdrew eighteen of their top commanders from Srebrenica. General Halilovic confirmed that President Izetbegovic himself persuaded Naser Oric to leave Srebrenica along with his fellow commanders, supposedly for training sessions in Zenica.

But in testimony to the War Crimes Tribunal Halilovic acknowledged that the government "should have been aware of the consequences of such a move, that is, that the combat readiness and defence capability of Srebrenica would be significantly affected." Had the Bosnian Government chosen to defend the town, the 5500 armed troops would have still been more than enough to repulse the force of 200 Serbian VRS troops supported by four tanks which were allowed to capture the town on July 11. According to British military analyst Tim Ripley, Dutch troops later "saw Bosnian troops escaping from Srebrenica move past their observation points carrying brand new anti-tank weapons, still in their plastic wrappings. This, and other similar reports, made many UN officers and international journalists suspicious."

Following the departure of the 18 commanders, the General Staff of the Bosnian Army instructed the 28<sup>th</sup> division in Srebrenica to launch a series of actions to draw in a Bosnian Serb forces. As General Halilovic testified: "In those days, there were a large number of orders for sabotage operations from the safe areas." This included a militarily meaningless attack on a strategically unimportant nearby Serb village of Visnica. The final operation was an attack on Serbian VRS units on the road south of Srebrenica, just days before the Serbs captured the nearly undefended town. Ibran Mustafic, the head of the Muslim SDA party in Srebrenica, who had clashed with Naser Oric and was badly wounded in two assassination attempts, told *Slobodna Bosna*:

The scenario for the betrayal of Srebrenica was consciously prepared. Unfortunately the Bosnian presidency and the Army command were involved in this business ... Had I received orders to attack the Serb army from the demilitarized zone, I would have rejected to carry out that order without thinking and would have asked the person who had issued that order to bring his family to Srebrenica so that I can give him a gun let

him stage attacks from the demilitarized zone. I knew that such shameful, calculated moves were leading my people to a catastrophe. The order came from Sarajevo and Kakanj.

As British Lt.-Col. Jim Baxter, assistant to UN Commander Rupert Smith, observed told Tim Ripley "They [the Bosnian government] knew what was happening in Srebrenica. I am certain they decided it was worth the sacrifice."



# Srebrenica And the Politics of War Crimes

**Findings of the Srebrenica Research Group**  
into the allegations of events and the background leading up to  
them, in Srebrenica, Bosnia & Herzegovina, in 1995.



# THE NUMBERS GAME

By Jonathan Rooper

Those who have asked questions about the Srebrenica numbers over the last ten years have invariably been treated with withering scorn. At best they have been characterised as would-be revisionists; at worst, deniers of a modern-day holocaust. Yet no serious analysis of events in and around Srebrenica in the summer of 1995 could be complete without detailed examination of the numbers. From the outset the numbers were used and abused, for a variety of political and other purposes, to conceal the fundamental truth of what had happened.

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## Origins of the massacre allegations

Over the years it has been held to be highly significant that original ballpark estimates for the number who might have been massacred at Srebrenica corresponded closely to the 'missing' list of 7,300 compiled by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). But the early estimates were based on nothing more than the simple combination of an estimated 3,000 men last seen at the UN base at Potocari and an estimated 5,000 people reported 'to have left the enclave before it fell'. Neither of these figures could be considered reliable: the estimate of the Dutch peacekeeping force in Srebrenica (Dutchbat) of males at Potocari was far lower. And, as the British journalist Linda Ryan pointed out in an article in 1996, the words 'before it fell' probably refer to the substantial numbers of the refugee population who had left the safe area days, weeks or months before the Serb takeover to move to other Muslim controlled areas. It was only because the Bosnian Muslim government refused to provide information on what had become of these people that they remained technically 'unaccounted for'.

Perhaps the most startling aspect of the 7-8,000 figure is that it has always been represented as synonymous with the number of people executed. This was never a possibility: numerous contemporary accounts noted that UN and other independent observers had witnessed fierce fighting with significant casualties on both sides. It was also known that others had fled to Muslim-held territory around Tuzla and Zepa, that some had made their way westwards and northwards, and that some had fled into Serbia. It is therefore certain that nowhere near all the missing could have been executed.

These points provide strong reasons for scepticism about the extent of the massacre claims. As further information has emerged over the last ten years, the version of events which was established in 1995 has come to seem more and more unlikely. The most fundamental problem of all is that the arithmetic does not add up.

## The sums that don't add up

By the end of the first week in August 1995 35,632 people had been registered by the World Health Organisation and Bosnian Government as displaced persons from the Srebrenica safe area - in other words, survivors of Srebrenica. The Red Cross had also seen and noted that 'several thousand' armed Muslim men from Srebrenica had passed safely behind Muslim lines to an area called Sapna Finger and had then been redeployed to fight elsewhere 'without their families being informed'. As noted above,

some 700 soldiers from Srebrenica had made their way to Zepa, emerging safely from that town when it fell to the Serbs during the last week of July 1995. So there were in total at least 38,000 / 39,000 survivors of Srebrenica – a figure that precisely coincides with the total pre-fall population estimates of the major aid agencies.

Making the sums add up becomes even more difficult because the figures above take no account of casualties from the fighting between the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) and the armed column that left Srebrenica for Muslim-held territory. It is common ground in accounts of what happened that there were significant casualties on both sides from these clashes. A report published in September 2002 by Republika Srpska estimated an overall figure of approximately 2,000 Bosnian Muslim Army (ABiH) combat deaths, in addition to some 500 BSA fatalities. Whilst some of these casualties were from the ABiH Tuzla brigade, which had come out in support, the vast majority were from the armed column which had left Srebrenica.

It doesn't end there. Both the Dutch peacekeeping force (Dutchbat) contingent in Srebrenica and undercover British SAS intelligence officers who were in the town when it fell said they had witnessed bitter fighting between Muslims in Srebrenica shortly before the Serbs entered the town. Descriptions suggest that around 100 may have died and that their bodies were left where they had fallen. There are also reports that considerable numbers of Muslims died when they crossed a minefield which had been laid by their own side.

Taking all these factors together, in order for 7,300 people from Srebrenica to have been massacred, the population of the safe area before it fell to the Serbs would have had to be well over 46,000 – a figure far in excess of any credible estimate put forward at the time.

It is immensely significant that one of the judges in the Krstic case, Judge Patricia Wald, estimated the total pre-fall population of Srebrenica at 37,000 when writing an account of the Krstic case for the Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics. (The Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics Spring 2003, SECTION: Vol. 16, No. 3; Pg. 445; ISSN: 10415548, HEADLINE: General Radislav Krstic: A war crimes case study, BYLINE: PATRICIA M. WALD)

*"Prior to the attack, Srebrenica was a village of some 37,000 inhabitants."*

Judge Wald was apparently supremely unaware that her own figure made it impossible for the crimes for which Krstic was convicted to have taken place.

#### Unreliable witnesses

Witness evidence has been equally insubstantial. With the exception of one execution at Potocari that was virtually witnessed by a UN soldier (though it did not quite occur within his sight), and a separate incident in which ten men were led behind a building and nine bodies were subsequently discovered, the main supporting evidence for summary executions comes from the handful of men who claimed to have survived mass executions by playing dead. It is on this flimsy basis that the crude 3,000 plus 5,000 sum remains the basis of massacre estimates. The figures have never been revised downwards. Indeed, it has been fashionable for human rights activists to inflate the Srebrenica figures to 10,000 or 12,000.

In fact the very first claims that many thousands of people might have been massacred at Srebrenica began to be made by members of the Bosnian Muslim government before the enclave had even fallen. President Alijah Izetbegovic and Foreign Minister Mohamed Sacirbey were on the telephone to world statesmen with a series of prescient reports. Further allegations were made by refugees when they began to arrive at Tuzla a few days after Srebrenica had fallen. Such claims had by this time become a stock-in-trade of the Balkan conflicts. The story was fuelled, however, on 20 July when the Dutch Co-operation Minister Jan Pronk, who had been sent by his government to find out what had happened at

Srebrenica, was reported by the ANP News organisation to have said (in an interview given to the Dutch current affairs television programme 'Nova') that *'Thousands had been murdered by the Serbs'*. The article went on:

*"Pronk said the claims of widespread abuses by Bosnian Serbs against Muslims could not be dismissed on the grounds that they had not been confirmed by the UN. "They have been confirmed by those involved," he said.*

*And he added that past experience of Bosnian Serb conduct did not inspire confidence. The Serbs had repeatedly violated human rights and committed war crimes in the last few years. The Muslims were justified in their fear of the Serbs because of these experiences, Pronk said. Thousands of people had been murdered, the minister added in a clearly emotional reaction to his three-day trip to refugee camps around Tuzla and to the Muslim-led Bosnian government in Sarajevo."*

In common with many politicians and journalists, Pronk<sup>[1]</sup> was prepared to reach judgement on the basis of uncorroborated accounts. He apparently did so because they were vivid and convincing – something which later found expression in the journalistic formula 'documented, consistent and credible'. As a standard of proof, it did not amount to much.

On 27 July 1995 The Boston Globe reported that atrocities were *'unconfirmed so far'*: (The Boston Globe July 27, 1995, Thursday, City Edition, HEADLINE: Reports of atrocities unconfirmed so far; US aerial surveillance reveals little. BYLINE: By Paul Quinn-Judge, Globe Staff)

"The Clinton administration has not obtained independent confirmation of reported atrocities by Bosnian Serbs but does not doubt that they have occurred, State Department and other administration officials said yesterday.

"The bottom line is that these guys have been indicted as war criminals," said a State Department spokesman, referring to the Bosnian Serb leadership.

The official noted eyewitness accounts of arbitrary executions provided by Dutch UN troops, and credible reports of atrocities from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

"These people are the experts, we trust them," the official said.

But there are ways to confirm what witnesses say, he added. If massacres were large enough "and if the timing is right, the birds can take a picture," he said, referring to spy satellites. So far, the official said, satellites have produced nothing.

Other sources with knowledge of the secretary of state's daily intelligence briefing said that Warren M. Christopher has not been presented with any intelligence imagery that could confirm massacres."

Although no further evidence was forthcoming in the following weeks, 'eyewitness' accounts sustained the story. Analysis of official reports and press coverage reveals that the same half-dozen or so men, all purporting to have survived massacres by playing dead, provided the 'evidence' from which David Rohde and other journalists projected the mass killings to the world. Little effort was made to test the credibility of these witnesses. Their testimony was accepted at face value, even though one of the most articulate, Mevludin Oric<sup>[2][i]</sup> was a cousin of Naser Oric, the Bosnian Army Commander of Srebrenica.

When asked several years later by journalism students how he knew which witnesses he could believe, Rohde explained that his acid test had been whether they presented themselves as heroes or terrified victims; if the latter, he found them credible. Whether this can be considered a valid basis for judgement is a matter of opinion; it certainly made Rohde a potential victim of deception.

In an article entitled "The Construction of a Trauma", the Dutch anthropologist René Grémaux and the historian / journalist Abe de Vries drew

attention to the inconsistencies in the accounts given by 'survivors':

"Oric's personal history is reason enough for doubt, but the inconsistencies in the accounts of Smail Hodzic and Hurem Suljic are obvious as well.

"Smail Hodzic: A basketball stadium becomes a soccer stadium becomes a School.

"Hodzic Story 1: Hodzic first said he witnessed ambushes by the Serbs on the road to Evornik. He was captured and then moved to a "basketball stadium near Bratunac" and subsequently taken to the execution spot, "a large field not far from a forest," he declared to Alexandra Stiglmayer in Die Woche of July 28.

Hodzic Story 2: Soon thereafter, Hodzic told Roy Gutman (in Die Tageszeitung of August 11), that he was held at the "soccer stadium in Nova Kasaba," from where he and others were moved to be killed, "probably in a town called Grbavce."

Hodzic Story 3: In the third version, told on October 4 to Aida Cerkez of Associated Press, Hodzic went through the same experience as Oric, Suljic and Avdic. Now he was taken to "a school in Krizevci" and the executions now took place not far from Karakaj.

"Hurem Suljic: Murder in a school becomes beatings in a department store Murders were committed at this school according to Suljic as well. On February 16 of that year, he spoke on BBC Newsnight. Footage of a not specified "school near Karakaj" indeed showed bullet holes, one in the ceiling and one at the toilet. But in the elaborate coverage of Suljic in 'The Washington Post' of 6 November 1995, there isn't a word about executions in a school; there is mention of beatings in a department store near Bratunac, a location where Suljic supposedly was kept prisoner.

Serbian woman: A school becomes a sports complex

"Woman's Story# 1: Bratunac is the location of another school where Massacres supposedly took place, according to Robert Block in The Independent, July, 1995. A woman is quoted. She is supposedly an inhabitant of Serbia who recently visited her brother-in-law, a soldier in the Bosnian Serb Army: "He and his friends are quite open-hearted about what happened over there," she said. "They are killing Muslim soldiers. They said that only yesterday (note: Monday, July 17) they killed one thousand six hundred, and they estimate to have killed about four thousand in total. They said to be in great hurry, and therefore shot most of them."

Woman's Story# 2: A few days later, Block's colleague Louise Branson of The Sunday Times brought the Serbian woman into the spotlight. Her husband, also fighting in the Bosnian Serb Army, mentioned mass shootings with more than three thousand dead. But not in a school in Bratunac. In a sports complex.

"Up to this moment, human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch have not been able to trace survivors of this crime. "There has to be a more detailed investigation, in order to establish the scale of violation of human rights that have taken place in the area of Bratunac," says their respective report."

Grémaux and de Vries went on to quote an interview given by a Dutch soldier, Captain Schouten:

"It is noticeable, however, that there has been little attention to the account of Captain Schouten, although this Dutchman was the only UN military officer in Bratunac, where he stayed for several days, at the time the alleged bloodbath took place. Schouten, quoted in Het Parool of July 27, 1995:

"Everybody is parroting everybody, but nobody shows hard evidence. I notice that in the Netherlands people want to prove at all costs that genocide has been committed. (...) If executions have taken place, the Serbs have been hiding it damn well. Thus, I don't believe any of it. The day after the collapse of Srebrenica, July 13, I arrived in Bratunac and stayed there for eight days. I was able to go wherever I wanted to. I was granted all possible assistance; nowhere was I stopped."

So the official version of what happened in and around Srebrenica in July 1995 rests heavily on the testimony of a small number of individuals who contradicted themselves. Others who have spoken to the media have also given accounts that test credibility to the limits - for example, a report for BBC Newsnight in 1999 included this 'witness' narrative:

*"This mother she fell on the side of the truck and broke her neck [demonstrates bringing both hands to her neck]. But as she slid down she grabbed my legs asking me to help her. I could not help her. I was holding my own child. She had a baby and I just managed to lift the baby with my leg to save her baby. My son was saying "Mum, I will die do not let go of me, hold me with both your hands". I said, "Son, let me save this tiny baby as well. Its mother is dead". When we finally reached Tuzla I handed the baby to the Red Cross and told them his mother is dead. I bathed that baby in Coca Cola."*

### A lack of evidence

Hard evidence of massacres was (and still is) in very short supply. Despite spending five days at the Tuzla airport refugee camp, where well over 20,000 Srebrenica survivors were gathered, the UN chief investigator into human rights abuses could find no eyewitnesses to atrocities:

*The Daily Telegraph Monday 24 July 1995  
"Serb Atrocities In Srebrenica Are Unproved - By Tim Butcher in Tuzla*

*After five days of interviews the United Nations chief investigator into alleged human rights abuses during the fall of Srebrenica has not found any first-hand witnesses of atrocities...*

*(UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) Mr Henry Wieland said yesterday "... we have not found anyone who saw with their own eyes an atrocity taking place." ...Mr Wieland travelled to Tuzla, the Bosnian city where almost all of the Srebrenica refugees were taken, with a team of investigators to gather evidence of human rights abuses...He said his team had spoken to scores of Muslims at the main refugee camp at Tuzla airfield and at other collective centres but no first-hand witnesses had been found..."*

The Dutch were also unable to find any eyewitnesses. Dr Dick Schoonoord of the Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdokumentatie (NIOD) confirmed at the beginning of 2005:

*"It has been impossible during our investigations in Bosnia to find any people who witnessed the mass murder or would talk about the fate of the missing men."*

There were other indications from an early stage that the massacre claims were unreliable. A former US State Department official, who remained in close contact with past colleagues at very senior levels, wrote in 1997 that he had been told that the South Central Europe section in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research 'saw nothing, repeat nothing, that had substantiated claims in the press'. He added that the individual who had told him this had security clearances to the highest level and 'would have had to know about it' had any such information existed.<sup>[3]</sup>

The last decade has been littered with instances where strong and specific allegations have been made, such as the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq before the 2003 war, which have later proved to be false. In 1999 NATO countries claimed that thousands (one US government official suggested a total of 500,000) of Kosovo Albanians had been summarily executed by the Serbs. When

the post-war body hunt in Kosovo produced fewer than 3,000 bodies in total, from all sides and all causes of death, stories began to emerge of a huge and immensely effective cover-up involving the mass transportation of bodies to burial sites in Serbia. The parallels with Srebrenica are obvious.

#### A rare example of consistency

The unchanging numbers of missing from Srebrenica are noteworthy also precisely because they have not moved in ten years. Military actions and terrorist incidents usually follow a very different pattern, as 9/11 clearly demonstrates:

The Office of the Medical Examiner of New York City reported in January 2004 that it had issued a total of 2,749 death certificates in connection with the hijacker attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001. "We believe this is the final number," a spokesperson for the medical examiner said.

"Two weeks after the attack," Associated Press reported at the time (January 23, 2004), "the number of missing-person reports [filed with New York authorities] peaked at 6,886 amid confusion and calls from frantic relatives. The number stood at 2,792 from December 2002 until October [2003], when 40 unsolved cases were removed from the list."

This final 2,749 figure represents less than half (39.9 percent) of the peak-number of missing-person reports that were filed amid the anguish and confusion of the early days. The outrage took place in the richest city in the richest country in the world, with all of the resources necessary to get the body count right. It was not a relatively impoverished, war-torn country with internally-displaced people scattered in all directions.

#### The role of Madeleine Albright

International outrage over Srebrenica was first provoked by claims made by the US Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, in late July 1995. Mrs Albright displayed US surveillance photographs to the UN Security Council, maintaining that they revealed mass execution and grave sites. Following the Dayton peace agreement in November 1995, the presumption was that these sites, and the rest of the surrounding area, would be fully investigated as soon as the winter was over. Mrs Albright added that the US would keep careful watch to ensure any attempt to cover up massacres was detected (*"We will keep watching to see if the Bosnian Serbs try to erase the evidence of what they have done."*). Shortly after Mrs Albright's

UN performance, the Croatian army (with massive US assistance<sup>[4]</sup>) invaded the Serbian Krijina, displacing some 200,000 people from their homeland of 400 years' standing. Many believed that the Srebrenica massacre claims had provided a vital distraction from the greatest act of ethnic cleansing of the 1990s Balkan wars. Mrs Albright never again showed much interest in establishing what had happened at Srebrenica.

The facts of this are remarkable. Mrs Albright, as US Ambassador to the UN, had told the world that the sites around Nova Kosaba, shown on the satellite images she had brandished at the UN, might contain 2,700 bodies. Eventually just 33 bodies were discovered at Nova Kasaba, at four different sites and no detailed information was issued about circumstances of death (i.e. whether or not there was evidence of execution). As Nova Kasaba is an isolated hamlet in the mountains, 19km from Srebrenica, and accessible only by a single-track, unmade-up road, it is difficult to imagine that anyone would have chosen it as a mass execution site – particularly as there was a chronic shortage of gasoline. Many lorries and journeys would have been required to transport 2700 men there. Such an exercise would have been highly conspicuous and easily captured by satellite photo since, despite the dry summer weather, the necessary levels of traffic would have been likely to cause considerable and readily visible damage to the road.

International journalists

In March 1996, the UK magazine LM reported:

*"Many (international TV) crews did not even bother to search out the site shown on the CIA satellite photograph because it had generally been agreed in media circles that it was not a mass grave".*

This also probably reflected the fact that some 30 international journalists had visited the Srebrenica area soon after it fell. None had published any kind of confirmation of mass slaughter allegations and one of their number, Jacques Merlino of the French Antenne 2 station, had broadcast a story saying he had found nothing.

Miroslav Deronjic, the civilian commissioner for the Srebrenica-Skelani municipality, was reported by Tanjug on 21 December 1995 as saying that on 25 August 1995 he received a group of 10 correspondents from the USA, Great Britain and Austria, led by Mike Wallace the anchor and co-editor of CBS' 60 Minutes programme. They brought with them many photographs taken from an AWACS of alleged mass graves of Muslim victims. Deronjic is quoted thus:

*"They insisted that we should take them to the sites in the photographs so that they could assess for themselves the truth of the Muslim allegations. Without hesitation, in other words immediately, although I had not seen the photographs, I agreed to take them personally to every place in which they were interested. They showed me photographs in the region of Hrnici, K. Polje and Kasaba, and asked to be taken to these places. I got into the car with Wallace and immediately took the whole group to these locations. I spent 44 hours with them driving around the area, and allowed them to see for themselves...after the investigation, Mike Wallace personally thanked me and expressed his belief that the allegations were completely unfounded, and that the entire international public had been manipulated".*

Little appetite for investigation

Scrutiny of media coverage over the last ten years suggests that, once made, the massacre claims, were treated as established fact by politicians and journalists. There are no indications of any 'rational scepticism'. This is surprising on two counts. First, natural justice demands that indictments for appalling crimes should be made only on the basis of very strong evidence. Second, where there is a history of false accusations, new allegations should be treated with the greatest caution. By 1995 the wars in the Balkans had generated repeated massacre claims. One of the most notorious was the charge – delivered in live television broadcasts by the Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Siladzic – that Serbs had massacred 70,000 Muslims in Bihac. It transpired that this was completely untrue – Bihac was never captured by the Serbs. Of the allegations involving significant numbers, none has subsequently been proven.

Veteran journalist John Pilger, in a December 2004 piece for the New Statesman magazine, noted a similar phenomenon during the Kosovo crisis of 1999:

*'Like the build-up to the invasion of Iraq, the media coverage in the spring of 1999 was a series of fraudulent justifications, beginning with US Defence Secretary William Cohen's claim that "we've now seen about 100,000 military-aged [Albanian] men missing... they may have been murdered." David Scheffer, the US ambassador at large for war crimes, announced that as many as "225,000 ethnic Albanian men aged between 14 and 59" may have been killed. Blair invoked the Holocaust and "the spirit of the Second World War". The British press took its cue. "Flight from genocide," said the Daily Mail. "Echoes of the Holocaust," chorused the Sun and the Mirror.*

*By June 1999, with the bombardment over, international forensic teams began subjecting Kosovo to minute examination. The American FBI arrived to investigate what was called "the largest crime scene in the FBI's forensic history". Several weeks later, having*

not found a single mass grave, the FBI went home. The Spanish forensic team also returned home, its leader complaining angrily that he and his colleagues had become part of "a semantic pirouette by the war propaganda machines, because we did not find one - not one - mass grave."

In November 1999, the Wall Street Journal published the results of its own investigation, dismissing "the mass grave obsession". Instead of "the huge killing fields some investigators were led to expect ... the pattern is of scattered killings [mostly] in areas where the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army had been active." The Journal concluded that Nato stepped up its claims about Serb killing fields when it "saw a fatigued press corps drifting toward the contrarian story: civilians killed by Nato's bombs .... The war in Kosovo was "cruel, bitter, savage; genocide it wasn't."

### Revisionism

Four months after Srebrenica fell to the Serbs the Dayton agreement brought an end to the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The cold Balkan winter made it impracticable to search for mass graves until spring came, but the international community showed little urgency in getting the process underway. It was not until mid to late summer of 1996 that the Boston-based organisation Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) began work in the area around Srebrenica. When they halted work in the late autumn they had recovered a total of around 200 bodies from 20 separate sites. Notwithstanding hawkish comments by their leader William Haglund, this was clearly regarded as a very disappointing haul.

During the winter this surfaced in the media. One of the earlier versions was a suggestion in the New York Times that the Serbs had destroyed the corpses with a corrosive agent:

*"American officials said today that they suspect Bosnian Serb soldiers may have tried to destroy evidence that they killed thousands of Muslim men seized in and around the town of Srebrenica in July. The Serbs are suspected of pouring corrosive chemicals on the bodies and scattering corpses that had been buried in mass graves, the officials said. The suspicions first arose in early August, after Central Intelligence Agency experts analyzed pictures of the area taken in July by reconnaissance satellites and U-2 planes."*

Jon Swain of The Sunday Times wrote an article on 3 November 1996 entitled "Empty Bosnian Graves baffle UN". Ignoring the evident possibility that an 'empty' grave might hold no bodies because, in fact, it had never been a mass grave, Swain contrived a bizarre logic:

*"In several months of digging at mass graves in the macabre hinterland around Srebrenica, the investigators recovered far fewer bodies than they had expected. Of the thousands of men and boys from the UN safe area who were executed by Bosnian Serbs in July 1995, only a few hundred - less than 10% of the 7,000 Muslims missing - have been dug up."*

*The empty graves speak volumes about the conspiracy by Bosnian Serbs to cover up the massacre at Srebrenica. Their leadership claims that few bodies have been found because the stories of atrocities there were exaggerated. The more plausible theory is that bodies have been made to "disappear"."*

### Surveillance

The reality as far as Srebrenica is concerned is that a cover-up would almost certainly have been impossible to achieve in the manner suggested. The area was under intense electronic and on-the-ground surveillance throughout the period:

*"US satellites make at least eight passes over Bosnia daily, according to John Pike, an expert on satellites at the Federation of American Scientists. These include Keyhole satellites, which can detect object as small as four inches but which cannot see*

*through clouds, and Lacrosse satellites, which can see through clouds but cannot focus enough to detect something the size of a human being. Then there are the Predators, known technically as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, commonly referred to as drones. Built by General Atomics, these small, remote controlled vehicles can hover over targets for more than 24 hours at a time. Four of the latest versions are thought to operate from a base in Albania. Designed to provide 'round-the-clock' coverage, the Predators are almost invisible to the naked eye and difficult to pick up on radar. They can fly at up to 25,000 feet, have infrared detectors for night vision and can purportedly relay video footage back to the Pentagon in real time." – New York Times 26 July 1995*

Confirmation that electronic surveillance had revealed nothing came in April 1996 when US LtCol John Batiste was quoted by AP as saying that satellite surveillance of mass graves showed "they had not been tampered with".

The cover-up theory is also unlikely for a host of low-tech reasons. The excavation, removal, transportation and reburial of 7,000 bodies – around 500 tonnes in total weight – could hardly have escaped normal human detection. There were many UN personnel in Bosnia throughout the autumn and winter of 1995/6. Moreover, the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) was under immense military pressure during the late summer and autumn of 1995, combating determined offensives in several areas and defending a front line almost a thousand miles long. It is inconceivable that the BSA could have spared either the men or the equipment necessary for such an operation. It is also unlikely that they could have found the gasoline- their supplies were so low they had been reduced to buying fuel from the Muslims on the black market.

### The hunt for graves

During the first five years after Dayton, relatively few mass grave discoveries were reported. It sometimes seemed, in fact, that the search had been quietly abandoned, only for occasional excitements of the kind described by Mike O'Connor in the New York Times in May 1998:

*"Deep in a remote rural stretch of Bosnia, war crimes investigators have found a tangle of buried bodies that they say is the remains of some of the 7,500 Muslim men that were hidden to try to thwart the prosecution of Bosnian Serb leaders for genocide. (...) Exhumations in 1996 recovered 460 bodies, but 7,500 others were still missing from the town of Srebrenica. Finding the others has been the goal of war-crimes investigators for more than two years. (...) The discovery Tuesday - and the thousands of bodies that investigators expect to find nearby - will bolster the cases against 2 Bosnian Serb leaders, Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, the investigators say. Both have been indicted for genocide by the tribunal in the Hague. Investigators for the tribunal spoke Tuesday on condition of anonymity. Satellites that can locate bodies decomposing underground, according to foreign military officers working with the tribunal, aided the search. Witnesses to the reburial also offered testimony, tribunal officials said. The first remains were uncovered Tuesday morning. Investigators unfurled a thin silvery sheet to protect their find from the sun. Next to it, small orange flags had been stuck in the ground to mark pieces of evidence such as bits of clothing or shell casings. Tuesday evening, according to a tribunal official, a layer of tangled bodies across an area of 200 ft (18 m) had been exposed. The bones were so intertwined, the official said, that it was not possible to exhume any of them Tuesday. Proving that the soil around the bodies came from the original mass graves, or that shell casings found here match those found at execution sites, will establish the connection they are looking for, investigators said.*

*When the original sites were inspected in 1996, investigators suspected most of the bodies had been moved. Doubts were cast on American military's satellite surveillance, with some investigators charging at the time that slipshod monitoring had allowed Bosnian Serb authorities to move the bodies undetected. Now, however, tribunal officials say the bodies were moved in October 1995, before the pinpoint satellite surveillance was requested by the tribunal. Once the original sites were discovered to have been tampered with, American satellite photographs of the region were reviewed and were found to show trucks and earth-moving equipment at the original burial sites, according to tribunal officials.*

*Anonymous investigators say that the find "will bolster the cases against [the] 2 Bosnian Serb leaders".*

In 2000/2001 there was a sea-change. Reports such as this began to appear with great regularity :

*"AP 11 July 2001*

*Since the end of the war, tribunal experts and the Muslim Commission for Missing Persons have exhumed the remains of about 4,800 victims, of whom only about 100 have been identified. "By the end of the year, we are planning to exhume 1,000 more bodies" said Amor Masovic, head of the commission.*

From this point regular mass grave reports were to be seen in the international media. Some were prompted by further mass grave discoveries; others, such as the one below, measured progress. Without exception, reports referred to Srebrenica massacres as established fact, not allegation. Most included at least one reference to the Holocaust:

*"Monday April 15, 2002*

*The smell is so overpowering that you try to breathe through your mouth. It's no good, and soon all you can taste is decay. All around, laid on shelves stretching in every direction, are the corpses of men, women and children who died in the biggest act of genocide in Europe since the Holocaust. Above the bodies, each wrapped in white plastic and marked with a serial number, are stacked brown paper bags, the kind American stores pack groceries in. They contain the washed and ironed clothes of the victims below. This warehouse, on the outskirts of Tuzla in Bosnia, belongs to the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), which has been exhuming the remains of people killed in the massacre at Srebrenica. The organisation was set up by Bill Clinton when he was US president to return victims' bodies to their families.*

*...Last week the ICMP made the 112th DNA identification."*

Slowly but surely media coverage helped to establish an impression that the missing bodies were now being found and identified in very large numbers and that the proof of large-scale massacres at Srebrenica had been assembled. Yet even within the terms of progress defined by the international community, there had been hardly any advance. By April 2002 – nearly seven years after Srebrenica fell – the BBC's Alex Kroeger reported that only 200 bodies had been identified:

Wednesday, 10 April, 2002, 10:22 GMT 11:22 UK

*Identifying Srebrenica's victims*

*Bosnian Muslim women remember the massacre*

*By Alex Kroeger  
BBC Belgrade correspondent*

*Around 6,000<sup>[5]</sup> bodies from the Srebrenica massacre of Muslim men and boys have so far been recovered, but fewer than 200 have been positively identified, most through DNA analysis.*

*....Nearly 200 bodies have been matched with blood and bone samples taken from their surviving relatives, and identifications are now going ahead at a rate of two or three a day. "*

Fifteen months later, in July 2003, the Washington Times reported a huge leap in the number of identified bodies:

*The Washington Times*

*WORLD*

12 July 2003/Pg.A5

'Forensics experts have exhumed more than 5,000 bodies, 1,650 of which have been identified through DNA analysis and other techniques.'

Even at this stage, however, the picture remained confused. Agence France Press in October 2003 placed a very different set of figures in the public domain:

*'Since its introduction two years ago [the new DNA testing technique] 5,000 Srebrenica victims have been identified, compared to 73 in the six previous years'.*

The ICMP now (June 2005) states on its website:

*"One month before the 10th anniversary of the fall of Srebrenica in 1995, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) has completed identifications of more than 2,000 of the Srebrenica victims."*

This confusing coverage reveals one thing above all – that at the time the ICTY indictments were issued in 1995 against Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic the Tribunal had no hard evidence to support its allegations of genocide. It had, in other words, issued indictments without having even the basis of a case.

## DNA

If details of the mass grave excavations were few and far between, so was information about the breakthrough DNA technique, developed in Bosnia, which had suddenly allowed identifications to be made at the claimed rate of three a day – something of an improvement on the three managed during the entire first year of investigations. Until recently, this excerpt from an article in Science magazine on August 24, 2001 was the most detailed explanation of the new technique:

*"...The ICMP project got going last year, when it began dispatching teams to collect blood from relatives of the missing persons. So far the ICMP has amassed more than 12,000 samples, with some relatives coming here from as far away as Australia. On average, it requires 2.5 donors to identify a body, says Huffine. The ICMP has 100,000 blood kits in hand, enough in principle to identify 40,000 bodies. "Once we have 100,000 samples, then we can expect that almost every body we find can be identified," says Amor Masovic, director of the Bosnian Muslims' missing persons commission."*

A paper by John Crews, published by the OST publication on Science & technology in April 2005, gave more detail about the DNA methodology devised by the ICMP. Mr Crews noted that:

*"As the DNA Laboratory Development and Operations Director from March 2001 through December 2002, I was charged with establishing six DNA laboratories throughout the former Yugoslavia to identify the remains of missing persons exhumed from mass graves in the region. The work was particularly difficult as high-end, high-purity supplies needed for a DNA laboratory were difficult to procure in-country. Compounding this issue was the lack of individuals with experience in such high-caliber laboratories and knowledge of the equipment being used. However, by the end of 2001 a supply line was established from both in-country and international vendors; the staff had not only completed validation and begun work, but grew from only eight at the beginning of 2001, to 34 -*

*including three senior scientists - in less than a year...*

Mr Crews goes on to give some information about the 'cutting-edge' DNA procedures developed by the ICMP:

2.A.

*"The process of DNA-based human identification relies upon the comparison of DNA analysis of blood samples from living family members to the analyzed DNA from bone samples cut from the femurs or molar teeth extracted from exhumed remains..."*

*"Blood samples were collected using Schleicher & Schuell Specimen Collection Paper and extracted using a simple, quick, and inexpensive water-based technique (contact author for protocol). This process allows for the extraction and amplification set-up of a plate of 96 samples in less than two hours. With this capacity, the blood processing laboratory in Tuzla, BiH is capable of processing up to 8,000 blood samples per month. The bone extraction procedure (contact author for protocol) relies upon a technique pioneered in the Sarajevo laboratory where DNA is bound to a silica membrane (DNA Blood Maxi Kit from Qiagen, www.qiagen.com), effectively isolating the DNA from other cellular contaminants. The silica-based DNA extraction procedure uses chaotropic salts that dehydrate the DNA and enhance intermolecular attractions that bind the DNA to the silica membrane. Elution of DNA from the membrane using ultra-pure (18 mOhms of resistivity), UV-irradiated water (to kill microbes, inactivate enzymes, and cross-link potentially contaminating DNA) provides approximately 30ml of DNA at a concentration of 250pg/ml to 1ng/ml with ~90% recovery of extracted DNA."*

DNA identification has come to be seen, in much the same way as fingerprint technology, as something of a gold standard. The perception is that, if the DNA matches, it constitutes unassailable evidence. This may be the case for matches made on the basis of readily available samples of uncontaminated DNA (from recently deceased bodies); whether it applies to DNA recovered in circumstances such as those associated with the ICMP's work is a matter of debate. The DNA community is deeply divided, for instance, on the validity of the DNA identification of the Romanovs.

No population database

Whether or not the DNA technique is reliable, there are compelling reasons to doubt the identifications made by the ICMP. The ICRC list of missing persons from Srebrenica was drawn up following public appeals for relatives and friends of Srebrenica missing to come forward. This inevitably created enormous potential for both deliberate and unintentional distortion. Since there were no population records for the safe area in 1995, the ICRC had no control data against which they could verify their list. The most recent population records for Srebrenica were from 1991, when the municipality (the town and the many villages in the surrounding area) of Srebrenica had 37,211 inhabitants, of which 27,118 were Muslims (72.8 percent) and 9,381 Serbs (25.2 percent). It is certain that many members of the 1991 population - 25% of whom were Serbs - were no longer living there in 1995. This means that there is no database for the Srebrenica population of July 1995. As Serbian historian Milivoje Ivanisevic has concluded :

*"Anybody could add a disappeared person to the list, without any elementary check of the person doing this. ICRC should not be criticized for this. Notifications were often made by individuals who presented themselves without any proof as family members, colleagues, co-combatants, neighbors. This list, without any further actions and checking was declared and transformed into the list of Srebrenica victims, and still*

later this went further, and the list was transformed into the list of massacred Muslim civilians."

Ivanisevic noted a series of further points concerning the list. In addition to Muslims, it included "persons of other nationalities and faiths", some individuals who were known to be still alive, people who had never existed, as well as:

"many that committed crimes in this region and in whose interest it is that they are listed as "disappeared". They change names and under other identity continue living in B&H or in foreign countries as refugees."

#### No adequate control of grave excavations and body storage

It was at the end of 1996 that the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) quietly assumed control of continued investigations, taking over from the UN. At first sight it might seem quite reasonable for the ICTY to take charge of the search for mass graves around Srebrenica. But, as a Tribunal set up by nations that had played a direct part in the Balkan conflicts and had an obvious political agenda, the ICTY had none of the crucial checks and balances that characterise inquisitorial legal processes such as the French system.

From the outset ICTY prosecutors and investigators made repeated public pronouncements that the Serbs massacred thousands of Muslim men from Srebrenica, even though the only evidence that such crimes had taken place was uncorroborated witness testimony. There was some respectability attaching to the search for mass graves when it was in the hands of an apparently independent organisation, PHR; the process became fatally compromised when, from 1997 onwards, this work was carried out by the International Commission for Missing Persons, an organisation originally created by the Izetbegovic government – particularly as, notwithstanding the inclusion of some foreign forensic experts in its team, the ICMP effectively remained under Bosnian Muslim control.

In his book, "The Graves", Eric Stover reveals the inadequate nature of the forensic work:

"With the departure of the tribunal's scientists in October 1996, the task of identifying the Srebrenica remains fell to the director of the forensic institute of the University of Tuzla, Zdenko Cihlarz... In the main laboratory of the institute, Cihlarz stopped and swept his arm around the room. "So, you see, it's all improvisation. Here you have one of the biggest forensic investigations of a war crime in European history and what have you got? Forensics on a shoestring." In the dimly lit room I could make out boxes of bones stacked against the tiled walls. Here and there, bones had fallen out, collecting dust, on the floor. Makeshift examining tables had been fashioned out of planks and sheets of thick cardboard. Several medical and forensic textbooks laid strewn across table tops, their covers torn and dog-eared. I picked one up and leafed to the title page. It was more than thirty-five years old. On an examining table, laid out in anatomical order, were less than half the bones of a skeleton, and next to it a makeshift bone board, an instrument physical anthropologists use for measuring stature from the long bones. It had been cobbled together by attaching two metal bookends to a smooth wooden plank. Tacked to the top of the board between the bookends was a cloth measuring tape. Fixed to the wall above the table was an illustration of a skeleton cut from the pages of an anatomy book."

Yet it was the ICMP in particular that fostered the belief that the Serbs had mounted a major cover-up operation in the late months of 1995 in which mass graves close to Srebrenica had been dug up and the bodies removed for reburial at far more distant sites along the Drina valley.

Once the cover-up theory had been widely reported, mass grave discoveries began to be announced on a regular basis. When details were given, it was evident that almost all these sites were far removed from Srebrenica – often fifty or sixty miles away. Their discovery was generally seen as confirmatory of the cover-up thesis, but no specific evidence to support the hypothesis was made public until the ICTY trials of Erdemovic and Krstic. This consisted of confessional evidence from Dragan Erdemovic, a Croatian, whose mental health had given cause for serious concern and whose motivation was open to doubt, and anecdotal evidence from other witnesses who claimed to have taken part. As with other ICTY cases, the testimony appeared to be part of a plea-bargaining process. So far as the mass grave discoveries were concerned, the fact that the work had been carried out (albeit under supervision of the ICTY) by an organisation set up by the Bosnian Muslim government would, under almost any accepted rules of evidence, be considered to have fundamentally compromised the value of the data gathered.

Some official figures now suggest that around 6,000 bodies linked to Srebrenica have been discovered in mass grave excavations. But there continues to be an absence of detailed data about individual excavations. In particular, there has been no serious explanation of how the finds have been linked to Srebrenica; how many of the bodies can be specifically linked to execution rather than other forms of death; and how many of the bodies have been individually identified. Nor has the ICTY (nor the International Commission for Missing Persons) explained how the search for Srebrenica bodies has been kept separate from the parallel search going on for the (now thought to be grossly exaggerated) estimated 250,000<sup>[6]</sup> people said to have died in the civil wars throughout Bosnia between 1992-95<sup>[ii]</sup>.

A seminal moment came in 1999 when the authorities in Tuzla announced that thousands of Srebrenica bodies had been gathered in the town's morgue. Once again, no detailed information was given about the provenance of the bodies, but Srebrenica relatives were requested to visit the morgue to see if they could identify their loved ones. Typical of the coverage was a report by David Sells of BBC Newsnight:

*In Tuzla there is a funeral parlour, called the Memorial Centre, a grim spot. Stored there, topsy-turvy, are 3,000 bodies. Some are kept refrigerated, most are not. They are victims of the Srebrenica massacre. Almost all are unidentified.*

*Why, still, four years on? The process of identification is painfully slow. A foreign pathologist told the Women of Srebrenica at a special Tuzla meeting: "This work is going to go on for many years." And there are thousands more Srebrenica citizens still unaccounted for.*

*.. Investigators from the Hague Tribunal, seeking to document the Srebrenica massacre, have exhumed dozens of mass graves, but their interest ends there. They are not concerned to identify individual bodies they dig up."*

It is very clear from this description that the bodies were stored chaotically at the Tuzla morgue and that few, if any, steps had been taken to ensure the integrity of the evidence. How David Sells could assert that they 'are victims of the Srebrenica massacre' is unclear; he certainly does not offer any explanation. If the bodies had not been identified, how could anyone be sure that they were connected with the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995? And, once again, there is no reference to evidence indicating that these bodies had shown signs of execution. In any case, as Sells noted, the ICTY 'are not concerned to identify individual bodies they dig up'. Unidentified bodies were apparently more useful for ICTY purposes.

More light was shed on the methodologies used in the search for mass graves in the broadcast report that Sells made at this time for the BBC Newsnight programme. The transcript below reveals that the quality of evidence-gathering was amateurish in the extreme. It is also noticeable – despite the rhetorical question in his commentary ("...the overall problem remains: who is buried where?") that Sells did

not ask his expert interviewee how, without having made any identifications, she could be sure that the bodies were those of people from Srebrenica who had died in 1995. Given the fighting that had gone on in the area from 1992-95 (not to mention the fierce engagements there during the Second World War), this seems a startling assumption. Nor did Sells raise any question about the secondary grave theory, although he must have been well aware that such an operation would have been exceedingly difficult for the Serbs to carry out and even more difficult, in a country under intense electronic and human surveillance, to achieve without detection:

5.B.

*David Sells:*

*This idyllic valley, despite appearances, is a graveyard. Some of the Muslims who vanished in Srebrenica were massacred and when the Hague war crimes tribunal began nosing about Bosnian Serbs quietly reburied the victims far from the scene. This was one reburial site.*

*Woman with North American accent:*

*This is it right in front of us. You can see the faint outlines...*

*David Sells:*

*Under the logs?*

*Woman:*

*Yes, under the logs. It's right here. It came more or less right up to the road and you can see where it's dirt there and then the grass begins growing again. And from this site we exhumed the remains of approximately 160 individuals.*

*[a digger is shown shovelling out earth - but not carefully, just shovelling]*

*David Sells:*

*They were dug up here just last year but the overall problem remains: who is buried where? In one organised Srebrenica massacre four years ago Muslim men were separated from women and children. Then bussed, not to safety as General Mladic had so disarmingly promised, but out to a state farm and firing squads. The Serbs on this occasion taking revenge for butcheries they themselves had suffered at the hands of Muslims. The Hague tribunal is interested in the crime, one mass grave fully exhumed can be evidence enough to make their point.*

*Woman:*

*This is what we call a secondary mass grave. That means that they were originally buried someplace else and then the perpetrators dug up their remains using heavy equipment and moved them to this location and interred them here. So it's quite obviously an effort to hide evidence of the crimes that have been committed.*

*[footage of grassy field]*

*David Sells:*

*This is another mass grave. The tribunal has probed it, it knows there are more bodies beneath the weeds but it now has evidence enough. It has no need for another exhumation. We were shown eight more such graves in this silent valley, probed but not exhumed. So there's a conflict of interest. Hasan Muhanovic's family could be buried here, but without precise identification he will never know."*

Within the forensic science community there is respect for the DNA work done by the ICMP. The technique it has developed is considered sound and the quality of the laboratory processes is also thought to be good. But, whilst this has been useful in identifying bodies recovered in Bosnia which might otherwise have remained unidentified, it has shed relatively little light on the events in and around

Srebrenica in July 1995. This is because the conventional forensic work carried out by the ICMP is perceived to have been of poor quality. Suspected grave sites were not kept secure; excavations were carried out by personnel without adequate training, using inappropriate tools and techniques; the transportation and storage of body parts was not done according to professional forensic standards; and, throughout the process, there was a failure to keep full and detailed records. As a result, there is no coherent data on such vital questions as time, cause and circumstances of death. And it must be noted once again that even the DNA identifications have served only to match body parts to individuals listed on the ICRC missing list. They provide no proof that the individuals concerned were casualties following the fall of Srebrenica.

### An assumption of guilt

Although for several years after 1995 virtually no evidence was found to support the massacre allegations, politicians and the media continued to suggest that they were proven beyond doubt. This point was made as early as March 1996 by the British journalist Linda Ryan:

*"Some might think that bodies would come in handy as evidence when charges of genocide are being levelled. There must be tens of thousands buried all over Bosnia. Yet not one had been uncovered at the alleged 'mass graves' near Srebrenica at the time of writing. All sorts of excuses were given for the lack of bodies--they had been covered by snow, dismembered by machines, destroyed by chemicals and moved elsewhere by the Bosnian Serbs. It almost seems like nobody wants to dig around in case they discover the 'mass graves' are empty. This is what happened when British divers went into the flooded mine at Ljubija, in north-west Bosnia, alleged to hold the bodies of 8,000 Bosnian Muslims and Croats. They found nothing."*

Commentators have nevertheless characterised the body hunt as a great success and have treated the ICMP as a bona-fide, impartial organisation. Although a measure of respectability was conferred on it by the establishment of an international supervisory board, the fact that former Senator Bob Dole and former AOL Chairman James V. Kimsey are numbered among its Chairmen is not compatible with the notion that it is impartial.

Dole is an anti-Serb of long standing. He set out to undermine the economy of Federal Yugoslavia through provisions he added to US legislation passed on 5 November 1990 which made further US aid payments to Yugoslavia conditional on the holding of "democratic" elections in each of the Yugoslav republics. These elections were bound to give a boost to nationalists and encourage secessionist aspirations; they also brought effective end to aid, which immediately threw the Yugoslav Federal government into crisis because it was unable to pay the enormous interest on its foreign debt or to continue the purchase of raw materials for industry. Credit collapsed, recriminations broke out on all sides and the pathway to conflict was set. Subsequently Dole allowed his Washington office to be used by Kosovo Albanian lobbyists and, as a member of a group of US senators visiting Sarajevo in 1992, he was heard in a US TV News report telling a group of Bosnian Muslims 'We're on your side'.

Kimsey is distinct from Dole in that he had not expressed strong sympathies with particular groups in the Balkans. He does, however, have pronounced views about the United States' role in the world. In an article entitled "Former AOL Chief Seeks to Fix Washington, World", John Shaw quoted James V. Kimsey as follows:

*"We should be much more chess player-like in our view of the world. We should stop thinking tactically and reactively and develop broad, strategic plans. Americans think very near term. We don't have long-range goals," he said. "George Marshall had a strategy after World War II. It was well thought out. We're in a war now, and we really haven't thought our way through it—and we need to."*

## Other factors

There were other fallacies in the massacre scenario. One was the notion that the inhabitants of the safe area were at the mercy of the BSA. This is unsustainable. By all accounts there were at least 5,000 armed ABiH (Muslim army) troops in Srebrenica – and probably many more. According to the UN contingent based in the safe area, the ABiH in Srebrenica was well armed – indeed, members of Dutchbat had noted that state-of-the-art armaments and communications equipment had been flowing into Srebrenica during 1995. The town's defenders were also dug into excellent defensive positions. In the light of all this it was a great surprise that what appears to have been a very small BSA force took the town virtually without resistance and was then alleged to have overpowered and executed a vastly superior force of well-armed men over the ensuing days. The London Times' long-standing and well-respected Defence Correspondent, Michael Evans, wrote on 14 July 1995:

*"There were reports that up to 1,500 Serbs were involved in the assault on Srebrenica, but intelligence sources estimated the main attack was carried out by a force of about 200, with five tanks. "It was a pretty low-level operation, but for some reason which we can't understand the BiH (government) soldiers didn't put up much of a fight," one source said."*

Some confirmation of this estimate can be taken from the fact that the Serbs were very concerned that the fleeing ABiH troops might be able to capture the town of Zvornik as they travelled towards Muslim lines.

Writing in 1997, Carlos Martins Branco, who was one of the UNMO Deputy Chief Operations Officers of UNPF (at theatre level) at Srebrenica in July 1995, had this to say, based on information he had acquired from debriefing UNMOs who were posted to Srebrenica during those days and from 'some UN reports not disclosed to public opinion'.

*"If there had been a premeditated plan of genocide, instead of attacking in only one direction, from the south to the north - which left the hypothesis to escape to the north and west, the Serbs would have established a siege in order to ensure that no one escaped. The UN observation posts to the north of the enclave were never disturbed and remained in activity after the end of the military operations. There are obviously mass graves in the outskirts of Srebrenica as in the rest of ex-Yugoslavia where combat has occurred, but there are no grounds for the campaign which was mounted, nor the numbers advanced by CNN.*

*The mass graves are filled by a limited number of corpses from both sides, the consequence of heated battle and combat and not the result of a premeditated plan of genocide, as occurred against the Serbian populations in Krajina, in the Summer of 1995, when the Croatian army implemented the mass murder of all Serbians found there. In this instance, the media maintained an absolute silence, despite the fact that the genocide occurred over a three month period. The objective of Srebrenica was ethnic cleansing and not genocide, unlike what happened in Krajina, in which although there was no military action, the Croatian army decimated villages. "*

There are also detailed reports suggesting that the BSA, far from having genocidal intentions, immediately wanted to pass responsibility for the displaced Srebrenica population to the UN peacekeepers and the aid agencies. It makes sense: the BSA force was small in number and short of supplies. Records show that there was detailed discussion between Serbs and Muslims about the treatment of the Srebrenica population.

*"The Srebrenica Committee for Civil Affairs made public the record of a meeting held with Muslim representatives on July 12 in the "Fontana" hotel (in Bratunac) which shows that the Serb side conducted properly, and as was agreed, the evacuation of Srebrenica residents. "During the evacuation there were no incidents from either side, with the Serb side respecting all the terms of the Geneva Convention and International War Law", says the joint communique signed by the former executive official of Srebrenica, Nesib Mandzic, for the Muslim side. According to the minutes, the meeting was held at the request of Muslim delegation, made by Camila Purkovic, Ibro Nuhanovic and Nesib Mandzic. Representing the Serb side were the chief-of-staff of the Republic of Srpska Army, General Ratko Mladic, the head of Srebrenica Civil Affairs, Miroslav Deronic, the mayor of Bratunac Municipality, Ljubislav Simic, and the president of the Bratunac Municipality Executive Council, Srbislav Davidovic. It was agreed at the meeting, also attended by the commander of UNPROFOR Dutch battalion, that civilians may stay within enclave or be evacuated, depending on the wishes of each resident. "In the event that we decide to be evacuated, we will be allowed to decide where to go. We decided to transfer the entire Srebrenica population to Kladanj Municipality", says the agreement signed by Mandzic, which specifies that the RS Army and Police will conduct the evacuation under UNPROFOR supervision." - SRNA 18 July 1995.*

And over the years there has also been evident a conspicuous lack of interest on the part of the international community in following up indications that the 'missing' from Srebrenica might not be dead. In 1997 the Bosnian Serbs claimed that more than 3,000 of the people on the electoral roll for the 1996 elections in Srebrenica were also on the list of 7,300 missing from Srebrenica drawn up by the ICRC. A BBC journalist contacted the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which had overseen the elections, to ask if they could investigate. He pointed out that either some 3,000 people on the missing list were either still alive, or there had been massive election fraud. The OSCE were not very interested, but – after some perseverance – the BBC journalist spoke to an official called David Foley. He promised to look into the matter and duly sent this e-mail to his colleagues:

*Subject: FW: ICRC Missing List cross-ref Date: 23/07/97 Time: 5:44p resend with correct address. DF*

*From: David Foley*

*Sent: Wednesday, July 23, 1997 5:41 PM*

*To: Linda Edgeworth; Deborah Alexander; Michael Yard; Christian Christensen; Nicole Szulc*

*Subject: ICRC Missing List cross-reference with PVL*

*A BBC journalist working on the issue of the missing in BiH has asked an interesting question. He is checking a claim made by Mr. Kalinic, the President of the National Assembly of RS that 3,000 people who are on the ICRC list of missing from Srebrenica voted in last year's elections.*

*I have no memory of any attempt by OSCE to check the refugee registration database against the ICRC computerized list, and I doubt whether there are records available of who actually voted in the elections last year. Does anyone know if this is the case?*

*Would it be possible to check the ICRC list against the 1996 PVL? This would potentially unite people long separated, and would, at a stroke, potentially do more to cut down the ICRC list of misery than any effort so far. We should do this if it is at all possible. Thoughts?*

*David Foley Spokesman and Senior Advisor for Public Policy Phone: 444-444 x222, e-mail: davidf@oscebih.org).*

After several months with no further response, the BBC journalist made repeated attempts to contact Mr Foley. Eventually he spoke to him. Foley explained that the electoral records from 1996 had been locked away in warehouses around Bosnia and that the OSCE did not have the resources to recover them and cross reference the names that appeared on both the electoral roll and the ICRC missing list. The BBC journalist expressed surprise, noting how important it was to get further information on the Srebrenica missing. Mr Foley said the OSCE would be sure to keep this in mind during the 1997 elections which were soon due, but he could do nothing more on 1996.

The political background is also murky. There are confirmed witness reports that Alijah Izetbegovic, the Bosnian President, was pursuing a parallel strategy of exchanging Srebrenica for a strategic Serb-held part of Sarajevo, while seeking to engineer circumstances in which he could provide the Clinton administration with a pretext to renounce international impartiality and take sides with the Bosnian Muslims. The Dutch commentators, René Grémaux and Abe de Vries, reported this as follows:

*"Eventually, while the "Dayton" agreement was in preparation, the Bosnian government [Izetbegovic] accepted the concept of exchanging territory: Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde for the Serb Sarajevo. Bosnian Minister of foreign affairs Muhammad Sacirbey had already informed Secretary of State Voorhoeve about this option during talks held in May (see De Volkskrant of 1 November 1995). The deal came as a blessing for the Americans, so close to the start of an election campaign. The fiercely criticized UN peace force very much wanted to abandon the "safe havens" as well. Srebrenica became the turning point from a military, political and publicity perspective. Only the*

*retreat of the peacekeepers made it possible for NATO to start with the air strikes in September. The wave of horror stories about mass executions overshadowed the Croatian terror in the Krajina and no word got out about the Muslim-Croatian crimes in cities like Glamoc, Grahovo and Sanski Most... "*

Other reports claimed that Izetbegovic had told Muslim leaders from Srebrenica that Clinton had said to him that a 'massacre of 5,000' would give the US government an excuse to abandon neutrality. And of course, as noted above, Madeleine Albright's production of US surveillance pictures of Srebrenica coincided with the US-backed Croatian invasion of Krijina and was soon followed by the three-day NATO bombing of BSA positions around Sarajevo.

In addition to all this there are two fundamental points that should not be forgotten: (i) that the finding of a "mass grave" is not necessarily proof of a mass execution. In wartime the battlefield victims of the opposing side may be disposed of in this way, until a transfer of the remains can be negotiated with the other side, to avoid the health problems that their decomposition on the surface could cause, particularly in summer; and (ii) that 'comingling' of corpses and bones is not necessarily an indication of a cover-up operation to hide evidence of a massacre. As some of the accounts quoted above make clear, the excavation of suspected mass graves in Bosnia appears in many instances to have involved mechanical diggers going to considerable depths – one report referred to bodies recovered from 9 metres below ground level. Such techniques in themselves would cause comingling.

#### Reports and 'confessions'

During the past few years the international community has appeared anxious to underpin the regnant version of events at Srebrenica. Successive UN High Representatives in Bosnia, equipped with draconian powers, required the government of Republika Srpska to produce a report admitting that massacres had been carried out by the BSA. The original report, produced in September 2002, was a detailed and thorough account. It concluded that there had been no massacres, but that some 2,500 Bosnian Muslims and 500 Serbs had been killed in fighting in the forests as the column of men from Srebrenica had made their way towards Muslim lines. Lord Paddy Ashdown, who had just taken over as UN High Commissioner, was infuriated and ordered Republika Srpska to produce a new report to his own prescription on pain of drastic penalties if they did not co-operate. When the RS government sought to approach the task with a degree of independence, he sacked several members of the committee producing the report, replacing them with his own placemen, including one Muslim. This individual is believed to have largely drafted the report which Ashdown published with a flourish in 2004. To cement the massacre theory more firmly still, Ashdown had commissioned an extremely expensive memorial at Srebrenica, complete with 10,000 token gravestones, which was very publicly opened – with a speech by former US President Bill Clinton – on the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of events in July 2003.

#### The Skorpion Tape

As the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Srebrenica approaches, attempts to embed the massacre story have intensified. In both the USA and the UK, newspapers began to carry lengthy features a full two months before the anniversary date. On the legal side, ICTY Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte redoubled her media campaign for the arrest of Karadzic and Mladic, timing a visit to Belgrade to coincide with the screening during the ICTY Milosevic trial of a video purporting to show the execution of young Muslim men from Srebrenica by a special Serbian unit called the Skorpions.

This development, eagerly seized on by the world's media as 'final proof' of the Srebrenica massacres, was no more than a bizarre stunt. Geoffrey Nice, the ICTY prosecutor in the Milosevic case, was clearly under instruction to use the video in his cross-examination of a Serbian military commander, but had not been able to work out any coherent legal basis for doing so. Nor had he even been able to disclose the evidence to the defence. The witness was asked to comment on video extracts which appeared to have been of extremely poor quality in their original form (consumer-quality video, badly shot), further

degraded by compression to small-window streaming video format. The Court was given nothing more than Mr Nice's assurance that the video related to Srebrenica – and even Mr Nice admitted that it had been shot at a place near Sarajevo, almost 200 km from Srebrenica.

The ostensible justification for the use of this material was that it established a link between Milosevic and the events in Srebrenica because, Mr Nice claimed, the Skorpions were a special unit of the Serbian police. Within a week of the screening of the video in Court, it had emerged that the Skorpions were a group of mercenaries who had, briefly it appeared, had some relationship with the forces of Republika Srpska Krijina, but no relationship with the Serbian police.

Examination of the video demonstrated that both the pictures and sound had been doctored. There were indications that it had been edited together from tapes shot at different times and in different places. And the weight of clothing worn by both soldiers and prisoners did not appear consistent with weather conditions around Srebrenica in July 1995, which were extremely hot.

The provenance of the video was also highly suspect. According to official statements, it had been provided to the ICTY by Nastasa Kandic, usually described as a Serbian civil rights activist. Ms Kandic, who is reported to receive funding from a number of national governments and such sources as the George Soros foundation, had several times previously been instrumental in providing timely support for the official line when it was coming under question – for example, she was the source of the 'freezer truck' theory that the Serbs had disposed of thousands of massacred Kosovo Albanians by removing them to gravesites in Serbia in refrigerated trucks.

#### Some conclusions

So what has really happened in the ten years since July 1995? It might be summarised in this way:

In the late summer of 1995 the US produced satellite photographs at the UN which, the US claimed, suggested that a number of mass graves had been dug in the close neighbourhood of Srebrenica town. Madeleine Albright warned that the US would monitor these sites closely to ensure that they were not disturbed. No more was heard from her about these sites, nor of the close monitoring which she had promised. Subsequently a number of journalists, notably the cub reporter David Rohde, wrote reports in which they claimed to have found evidence corroborating Mrs Albright's allegations. In strict terms this evidence amounted to nothing.

In mid-summer of 1996 excavation work began on some of these sites, under the control of an international organisation with at least some pretence of impartiality. From 1997 onwards one of the warring factions was allowed to act as independent investigator of deeds alleged to have been carried out against it by another warring faction. The products of this investigation became the core evidence of the International Criminal Tribunal set up to prosecute war crimes in the former Yugoslavia. This Tribunal fulfilled its remit by indicting and prosecuting Serbs to the almost total exclusion of everyone else – of the very few Muslims, Croats and Kosovo Albanians indicted, even fewer were actually brought to trial. Compounding this in the case of Srebrenica, the post-war administration of Bosnia put in place by the international powers was, from the outset, plainly and overtly biased against the Bosnian Serbs and used every means of economic and political pressure to compel the Republika Srpska leadership to confirm the received version of what had happened at Srebrenica. And throughout everything, western politicians and media lost no opportunity to invoke the massacre story as justification of international intervention and of the continued oppression of Serbia.

What seems far more likely than the accepted version of events is that Srebrenica was a crucial part in preparing the ground for the end-game for Bosnia which was concluded at Dayton just a few months

later. Alijah Izetbegovic was fully prepared to sacrifice Srebrenica in exchange for total US support; he gained the additional benefit that he could redeploy several thousand troops from Srebrenica to other fronts such as the Bihac pocket. By the same token, the Clinton government was delighted to be furnished with a propaganda coup that enabled them to give the green light to Croatia's Operation Storm in Krijina and to pressgang Yugoslavia to the Dayton negotiations.

Those who look without prejudice at the available data on Srebrenica invariably conclude that the orthodox version of what happened is extremely hard to reconcile with the known facts. By contrast, there are many clear indications that complex political strategies were being followed by Alijah Izetbegovic, the USA, the UK, and other powers, and that Srebrenica played a crucial part in the development of these strategies.

[1] Jan Pronk was later to become Head of the United Nations' operations in Sudan. In this capacity he made a statement supporting allegations of rape in the Darfur region of Sudan which had been made by the NGO, Medecins Sans Frontieres.

#### **Sudan charges MSF man over report**

The head of the Dutch wing of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) has been charged with crimes against the Sudanese state over a report on rape in Darfur. Paul Foreman was arrested on Monday and later released on bail. The state crime prosecutor said Mr Foreman had failed to hand over evidence on which the report was based. The charity says it is confidential. Pro-government militia in Darfur are accused of mass rape and killings, but the government denies complicity.

#### **Jail term**

The BBC's Martin Plaut, who recently travelled to Darfur, says the charges are part of a concerted drive by the Sudanese authorities to end western criticism of their behaviour in the region.

He says that many Sudanese believe western aid workers have given information on alleged human rights abuses in Darfur to the United Nations, which has passed a sealed list of 51 war crimes suspects to the International Criminal Court. Our correspondent says that in March, aid workers were threatened over their reports of mass rape.

"He (Mr Foreman) is on bail and not allowed to leave the country," MSF Holland spokesman Geoff Prescott told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme.

"He's been charged with crimes against the state by the government on the grounds that they didn't seem to have appreciated our report on rape in Darfur".

Mr Foreman had said "medical privilege" and patient confidentiality prevented him from handing over documents requested by the authorities.

Another reason for respecting the information, Mr Prescott explained, was because women "made pregnant as a result of rape outside wedlock can be arrested by the authorities" in Sudan.

He said the charity stood by its report, which he described as "accurate and truthful".

Sudan's state crime prosecutor said he had come to conclusion that the report was false.

#### **Sensitive**

Mr Foreman could face up to three years in prison if found guilty of falsifying the report. It is not yet known when he will appear in court.

"We would like to reiterate that we think it's the people who perpetrate rape in Darfur who should be in court, not the people who are trying to bring medical assistance to the victims," Mr Prescott said.

The report - *The Crushing Burden of Rape: Sexual Violence in Darfur* - which came out in March, was based on the treatment of 500 women over a four-and-a-half month period in Darfur.

It details nearly 300 of these cases, with several written up as witness statements, Mr Foreman said.

#### **Contrary to Islam**

Rape is a sensitive subject for the Sudanese government.

The government had always maintained that, as it runs contrary to Islam, rape is not taking place on the scale that numerous United Nations and international agencies have claimed.

*Jan Pronk, head of the United Nations in Sudan, said he deplored the arrest.*

*"That document was a non-political document only based on humanitarian concern of MSF which has done an excellent job of helping victims of rape," Mr Pronk told the BBC.*

MSF says it has a significant presence in Darfur, with more than 300 international staff and 3,000 local staff treating some one million patients.

The UN says that about 180,000 people have died in the two-year conflict in Darfur, and more than two million driven from their homes.

Story from BBC NEWS:

Published: 2005/05/30 18:14:21 GMT

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[2]: "Mevludin Oric left as a volunteer to Croatia in January 1992, getting military training there. He...ended up as a member of the infamous Croatian volunteer brigade 'King Tomislav' in Herzegovina, where he helped with the occupation of the barracks at Capljina (which later became a POW camp for Serbs). After a short holiday in Croatia, Oric crossed the Sava River, together with other volunteers, to fight the 'Chetniks' [name used for Serb soldiers by the Muslims and Croats, meant to be derogatory] in the town of Orasje. It is in this area, the Posavina, that the first mass murder took place and the war hadn't even started. Its victims were not Croats or Muslims, but Serbs." (Sijekovac, March 27, 1992).

[3] (Extract from e-mail, June 1997: "One source .. often remarked to me at that time and later that he saw nothing, repeat nothing, that had substantiated claims in the press. Without going into all the boring details of security clearances, it is enough that you know if, in fact, there had been any such evidence xx would have had to know about it.")

[4] US Role in Storm

Author: Ivo Pukanic

Source: Nacional, Croatian weekly magazine

<http://www.nacional.hr/index3e.php?broj=2005-05-24&kat=english&id=516>

May 24, 2005

Thrilled with Operation Flash, President Clinton gave the go ahead for Operation Storm

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The United States was actively involved in the preparation, monitoring and initiation of Operation Storm: the green light from President Clinton was passed on by the US military attache in Zagreb, and the operations were transmitted in real time to the Pentagon. Considering that the US was much more interested in the situation in BiH (Bosnia) than in Croatia, they asked Croatia to permit them to install a Military base with unmanned aircraft. The United States not only monitored the complete Operation Storm, but they also actively participated with the Croatian Military in its preparation, and in the end directly initiated the operation. The green light from the White House and then President Clinton for Operation Storm was passed on by Colonel Richard C. Herrick, then US military attache in Zagreb. Several days prior to the commencement of Operation Storm, Herrick visited Markica Rebia in Zagreb. Rebia, Miroslav Tudjman, then director of HIS and Miro Medimurac, then head of SIS, held the most intensive communications with the American military and intelligence agencies. As such, in 1996, Rebia was awarded the Meritorius Service Medal by Peter Galbraith, then US Ambassador to Croatia.

Herrick passed on the message that the US had no opposition to the Beginning of Operation Storm, that the operation had to be 'clean and fast' and had to be completed in 5 days time. As Nacional has learned, Rebia was surprised that such an important political and military message would be passed on through those channels, and following Herrick's visit, he immediately

informed the state administration of the message in writing, and there is certain record of this today in the archives. As such, it is important to note the Ambassador Peter Galbraith was completely left out of the chain of 'command', and that this message came directly from President Clinton, Anthony Lake (then National Security Advisor) and William Perry (then Defense Secretary) via Rebia to Minister Gojko Susak and President Tudjman.

This was the climax of the cooperation between the US and Croatia, which began to develop in 1992 at the beginning of the Serbian-Muslim war. In 1995, Clinton was preparing for his re-election, and Bob Dole was the Republican candidate who had requested that Congress remove the arms embargo for the Muslims in BiH. For Clinton, the Balkans became an important issue due to internal matters in the US and his stay in the White House. In their strategy to resolve the crisis, they decided to use Croatia to attack the Serbian forces in BiH, and therefore the Split Declaration was signed by Izetbegovic and Tudjman, which permitted the entry of HV forces under the leadership of Ante Gotovina into BiH for the purposes of cooperation with Army BiH. In order to realize that operation, HV had to climb the Dinarid mountains above Knin and liberate the city and Krajina through Operation Storm, and then immediately transfer their troops into BiH in order to pressure the Serbs and force Milosevic to sign the Peace Accord in Dayton.

This was a battle against the clock for Clinton, for he needed a quick solution to the crisis in order to halt Dole's initiative and to prove himself before his voters as a decisive president who could resolve such great crises such as the one in the former Yugoslavia, the horrors of which were shown daily on CNN and other American TV stations. In order to keep the English and French off his back, Clinton bypassed the classical diplomatic channels, in order to be able to claim that he had not participated if the operation were to go sour. However, considering that the operation, led by Richard Holbrook on his behalf, ended successfully, and the men emphasized their success in their respective books.

The first contact at the highest intelligence levels began in 1992, when James Clapper was director of DIA (the Defense Intelligence Agency). His men in Croatia were Colonel Richard Herrick and his assistant Ivan Sarac. Sarac was a fourth order [master] sergeant, the highest rank for a non-commissioned officer. Of Croatian descent, he emigrated to the US when he was 17 years old. After a few years, he enlisted in the army and was sent to Zagreb at the beginning of the war there as he was familiar with the circumstances and knew the language. Colonel Herrick was a construction engineer, however, over time he climbed the ladder in the American military and became one of Clapper's most trusted men.

Quickly a sort of 'trade' between the two agencies began. Croatia gave DIA Russian 500 kg underwater mines and the most modern Russian torpedos as well as the encryption codes used by the Yugoslav Army and the Russian army. These weapons were transferred to the US via the Split airport. When the transport was conducted, the entire airport was closed off. Hercules C-130s landed in the night, the arms were loaded and transferred to the US or one of their European bases under the greatest security measures. Also, the Croatian agency revealed the location of a chemical weapons factory in Bijelo polje near Mostar which the Serbs had transferred to Serbia. This was a well-concealed factory which was unknown even to General Blenfeld, who was the greatest expert for chemical weapons in Croatia. With the help of samples found, the American experts were able to uncover all the types of toxins produced there which had possibly been sold to Iraq or other potential enemies of the US. This was only the beginning of cooperation, by which the US immediately delivered wiretapping equipment aimed at monitoring Serbia and Montenegro, a system which could simultaneously record 20,000 telephone conversations. This cooperation was conducted with the US NSA.

Prior to Storm, the operations Summer 94 and Summer 95 had to be carried out. In planning the operations of bringing Croatian troops above Knin, the US assisted in the intelligence part of the operations. In order to precisely plan the penetration into the Bosnian mountains inland of Knin, much information was needed on the movement of Serbian troops, their communication system, codes and establishment of shelling points.

Considering that the US was much more interested in the situation in BiH than in Croatia, they asked Croatia to permit them to install a Military base with unmanned aircraft. The basic condition was that this be the best-kept secret, so that it would not appear that the US had taken sides in this war. The island of Brac was selected, as it could be well protected. There all the equipment and personnel led by the CIA experts, with the

long-range unmanned aircraft which could cover the entire territory of BiH to the Serbian corridor on the Sava River. The entire Krajina region in Croatia was also in its range. At that time, no one had any idea what was going on and what was being hidden on the island of Brac. Nor did the US allies, the Germans, have any idea. They sent their military attache There on 1 January 1994. He hired a rent-a-car and drove the outer fence of the base and began taking pictures, thinking that the alertness in the base had faltered on New Year's Day. However, he was quickly spotted by SIS and arrested. Only when he was brought into Gotovina for questioning was it learned that this was the German military attache in Zagreb, Hans Schwan.

After this incident, the entire base was transferred to Sepurina near Zadar, and a triple line of defense placed around it. Equipment was brought in from the US overnight, and from Sepurina, the unmanned aircraft could cover every corner of Krajina and BiH. The Americans had a silent agreement with HV to hand over all the photos of the terrain and the Serbian troops, while the images were transferred via satellite in real time to the Pentagon. Three US and three Croatian officers monitored the situation at all times.

Prior to Operation Flash, which was supposed to serve as a dress Rehearsal for Storm, at exactly midnight, six hours prior to the beginning of the operation, Herrick and Sarac were called into the police and were informed that the planned action would begin in a few hours time. In the Police Ministry, at exactly midnight, the staff of Operation Flash was formed, which was transferred to the Defense Ministry at 6 a.m. When the staff was moved, the American military attache moved with it. He constantly requested updates and sent them directly to Clinton in the White House. Each morning, the American President was informed of the preparations and every part of the operation. The Americans were thrilled by the way Flash was carried out, they realized that this model of cooperation with the Croats was ideal, and could be decisive in the battle against Milosevic in BiH and could ultimately result in removing him from power. The Pentagon coordinated the entire action via Richard Herrick, and the CIA activities were coordinated by Marc Kelton, head of the CIA branch in Zagreb, who cooperated closely with Miroslav Tujman, then head of HIS.

At the time Storm was under preparation, the Americans supplied HV with intelligence on the movements of Serbs in Krajina and the movements of YNA on the eastern borders of Croatia. They feared that Milosevic would launch a counter-attack with two tank brigades in eastern Slavonia if the Croats launched an attack on Knin. Through intensive monitoring of communications between Belgrade and Knin, and within Serbia, they came to the conclusion that there would be no counter-attack. It was risky that the Serbs might launch an attack from Knin itself when Gotovina and his units arrived on the Dinarid mountains above the city. Had the unmanned aircraft and monitoring showed offensive maneuvers by the troops, Storm would have begun ten days earlier.

In the wee hours of 4 August 1995, the Croatian units were issued the command to turn off all telecommunications devices between midnight and 4 am. Later it was learned that the Americans had used that time to electronically intercept and destroy the Serbian telecommunications devices.

HV was left with one hour, from 4-5 AM to use their radio ties to coordinate the operation. Just prior to Storm, the American military attache was again called to the operation staff. Ivan Sarac was again with him. One or two days prior to Storm, Herrick, who had prepared Storm with the Croatian officers and gave the operation the green light on Clinton's behalf, was replaced by Colonel John Sadler. At exactly midnight, they arrived at the operative staff and from there followed all the events in the field. This time, the entire Operation was transmitted in real time via satellite to the Pentagon, where these images remain archived today. The signal transmitted to the signal by the Americans was also received by HV, and with the help of those images, the firing upon Serbian positions and the military base near Knin could be monitored to within millimeters. In addition to electronically destroying the Serbian communications, the US military also acted militarily against the Serbian positions, when it fired on the anti-aircraft battery near Knin from American combat planes that flew over the battle area. That news was released only once, on the 6 o'clock news. Afterwards, the US sharply condemned this, and that news was never repeated. No one believed the official American explanation for the rocket attack, and today the general perception is that this was direct US assistance to HV, only that even ten years after Storm this must not be admitted, due to US-British relations, as Britain had a completely different perspective on how to resolve the Balkan issue. And it still does today.

The US was thrilled with the how fast and clean the operation was conducted, and with its outcome, which permitted the lightning fast entry of HV into BiH and penetration all the way to Banja Luka and, finally, Belgrade's consent to sign the Dayton Accord. The American control and satisfaction of the complete operation was later confirmed in the statements that the operation was carried out properly, and as such, the US-Croatian cooperation in intelligence and military matters intensified. General Colonel Patrick Hughes, Clapper's successor as director of DIA, visited Croatia, Intensified cooperation in the sector of electronic monitoring of Serbia and Montenegro, other intelligence was swapped, MPRI began its intensive training of The Croatian military and Rebia was decorated for his efforts.

The first word that Croatian officers might have to stand trial for the events during Storm was heard in 1997. The US immediately responded and requested on a dozen occasions in discussions with the Hague Prosecutor that Storm, as a militarily-clean operation, be left alone, as Nacional has learned from a high-ranking diplomatic source. At that time, there was a problem concerning the extradition of Mladen Naletilija Tuta to the Hague, and the US promised Croatia that the Hague would not raise charges for Storm if they handed Naletilija over. Naletilija was extradited, and Carla Del Ponte outwitted the American administration and began with her demands that The Croatian generals be investigated as suspects in Storm. The US was Dismayed but was not allowed to show this, trying to resolve the matter through Quiet diplomacy instead, which to this day has not succeeded. Therefore it Would be a step in the right direction for the Hague to request that the Pentagon hand over all the images recorded by the 'Predator' unmanned aircraft During and after Storm.

Furthermore, for the interests of truth, all of the high ranking American military and intelligence officers involved in the entire operation, which ended the war in the Balkans and removed Milosevic from power, should be called to testify in the Hague. Those responsible for the crimes which took place after the operation are known, and they are the ones which should stand before the court, as they should have eight or nine years ago. Had these men been tried then, Carla Del Ponte today would have no aces up her sleeve, and Croatia would not have the problems it has, with the entire operation proclaimed a 'criminal operation' and the entire state administration of the time a 'criminal organization'.  
<http://cryptome.org/us-op-storm.htm>

[5] Quite how 5,800 unidentified bodies could be definitely linked to Srebrenica was not explained. Nor did the journalist appear to be aware that the 200 identified bodies were not those of people who were definitely in Srebrenica when it fell, just 200 people whose names were on the list of missing persons compiled by the ICRC.

[6] [6] Reporters always find it difficult to establish accurate figures for casualties or displacements caused during conflicts. But, whilst this is readily understandable, there are indications that the use of such statistics during the conflicts in Yugoslavia was subject to even greater distortions than is normal.

Media coverage from 1993/4 until the end of the decade routinely asserted that the war in Bosnia had claimed 250,000 lives. Those who have made serious efforts to discover the source of this figure believe that it was originally merely an estimate issued by the Bosnian Muslim government in Sarajevo. It was initially reported in this way, but as time passed the qualifications were gradually dropped and it became an official figure – despite the fact that it was not backed by supportive evidence.

Large, uncorroborated figures of this kind are useful to journalists. They provide the simplest and most effective justification for the importance of a story. Aid agencies also find them helpful in their struggle to fundraise to support their activities. For the Bosnian Muslim government (and their overt and covert backers in Western countries), the statistics were crucial: the outside world was not going to intervene in a small local war, but was likely to do so if it could be portrayed as a cruel and vicious conflict with many casualties.

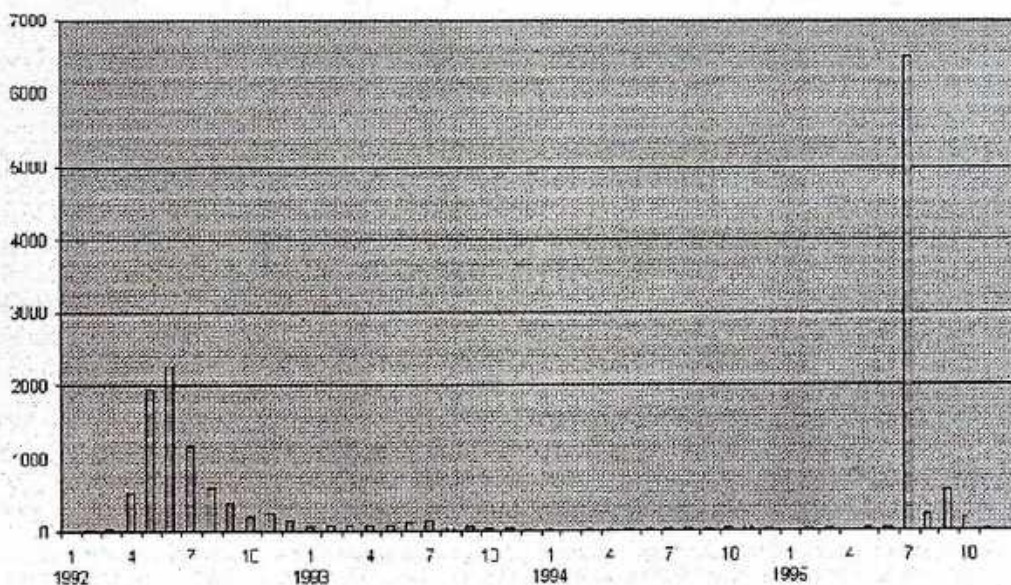
Official UK deaths in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War were 388,000, made up of 326,000 military and 62,000 civilian. This was a war that lasted more than five years and involved heavy fighting on land, sea and in the air in many different theatres of war. It is extremely hard to believe that deaths in the Bosnian war, which lasted half as long and was not comparable in terms of the scope and intensity of conflict, were on anything like the same scale – especially as the 200,000+ figure was circulating as early as 1993..

George Kenney was one of the first to question the figures coming out of Bosnia. He resigned from the US State Department Yugoslav desk in 1992 in protest at the US government's lack of action over what he then perceived to be a great humanitarian tragedy. Over the following years he looked into matters in much more depth and significantly revised his views. He pointed out as far back as 1993 that estimated casualties were inflated. Twelve years later his criticisms still stand, yet little has apparently been done to establish the reality of what happened.

Up to the present time, spring/summer 2005, a total of around 20,000 bodies from improvised graves appear to have been recovered in the whole of Bosnia. No attempt seems to have been made to count the people, on all sides, who died in the conflict and were buried in marked graves. A full ten years after it ended, therefore, there is no reliable total – indeed, no good ballpark figure – for the casualties of the war.

A chart of the numbers of missing in Bosnia during each month from 1992 to 1995 suggests that casualties were on a far smaller scale than was suggested at the time. Only July 1995 (when people were actively encouraged to come forward to report relatives missing from Srebrenica) shows a total running to many thousands; for most months during the three year period, missing totals are negligible.

Total



[1]



# Srebrenica And the Politics of War Crimes

**Findings of the Srebrenica Research Group**  
into the allegations of events and the background leading up to  
them, in Srebrenica, Bosnia & Herzegovina, in 1995.



# The Politics of the Srebrenica Massacre\*

By Edward S. Herman

"Srebrenica" has become the symbol of evil, and specifically Serb evil. It is commonly described as "a horror without parallel in the history of Europe since the Second World War" in which there was a cold-blooded execution "of at least 8,000 Muslim men and boys." [1] The events in question took place in or near the Bosnian town of Srebrenica between July 10 and 19, 1995, as the Bosnian Serb army (BSA) occupied that town and fought with and killed many Bosnian Muslims, unknown numbers dying in the fighting and by executions. There is no question but that there were executions, and that many Bosnian Muslim men died during the evacuation of Srebrenica and its aftermath. But even though only rarely discussed there is a major issue of how many were executed, as numerous bodies found in local grave sites were victims of fighting, and many Bosnian Muslim men who fled Srebrenica reached Bosnian Muslim territory safely. Some bodies were also those of the many Serbs killed in the forays by the Bosnian Muslims out of Srebrenica in the years before July 1995.

The Srebrenica massacre has played a special role in the politics of Western treatment of the restructuring of the former-Yugoslavia and in Western interventionism more broadly, and it is receiving renewed attention and memorialization at its tenth anniversary in July 2005. It is regularly cited as proof of Serb evil and genocidal intent and helped justify a focus on punishing the Serbs and Milosevic and NATO's 1999 war on Serbia. It has also provided important moral support for the further Western wars of vengeance, power projection, and "liberation," having shown that there is evil that the West can and must deal with forcibly.

However, there are three matters that should have raised serious questions about the massacre at the time and since, but didn't and haven't. One was that the massacre was extremely convenient to the political needs of the Clinton administration, the Bosnian Muslims, and the Croats (see Section 1 below). A second was that there had been (and were after Srebrenica) a series of claimed Serb atrocities, that were regularly brought forth at strategic moments when forcible intervention by the United States and NATO bloc was in the offing but needed some solid public relations support, but which were later shown to be fraudulent (Section 2). A third is that the evidence for a massacre, certainly of one in which 8,000 men and boys were executed, has always been problematic, to say the least (Sections 3 and 4).

## 1. Political Convenience

The events of Srebrenica and claims of a major massacre were extremely helpful to the Clinton administration, the Bosnian Muslim leadership, and Croatian authorities. Clinton was under political pressure in 1995 both from the media and from Bob Dole to take more forceful action in favor of the Bosnian Muslims, [2] and his administration was eager to find a justification for more aggressive policies. Clinton officials rushed to the Srebrenica scene to confirm and publicize the claims of a massacre, just as William Walker did later at Racak in January 1999. Walker's immediate report to Madeleine Albright caused her to exult that "spring has come early this year." [3] Srebrenica allowed the "fall to come early" for the Clinton administration in the summer of 1995.

Bosnian Muslim leaders had been struggling for several years to persuade the NATO powers to intervene more forcibly on their behalf, and there is strong evidence that they were prepared

not only to lie but also to sacrifice their own citizens and soldiers to serve the end of inducing intervention (matters discussed further in Section 2). Bosnian Muslim officials have claimed that their leader, Alija Izetbegovic, told them that Clinton had advised him that U.S. intervention would only occur if the Serbs killed at least 5,000 at Srebrenica. [4] The abandonment of Srebrenica by a military force much larger than that of the attackers, and a retreat that made that larger force vulnerable and caused it to suffer heavy casualties in fighting and vengeance executions, helped produce numbers that would meet the Clinton criterion, by hook or by crook. There is other evidence that the retreat from Srebrenica was not based on any military necessity but was strategic, with the personnel losses incurred considered a necessary sacrifice for a larger purpose. [5]

Croatian authorities were also delighted with the claims of a Srebrenica massacre, as this deflected attention from their prior devastating ethnic cleansing of Serbs and Bosnian Muslims in Western Bosnia (almost entirely ignored by the Western media), [6] and it provided a cover for their already planned removal of several hundred thousand Serbs from the Krajina area in Croatia. This massive ethnic cleansing operation was carried out with U.S. approval and logistical support within a month of the Srebrenica events, and it may well have involved the killing of more Serb civilians than Bosnian Muslim civilians killed in the Srebrenica area in July: most of the Bosnian Muslim victims were fighters, not civilians, as the Bosnian Serbs bused the Srebrenica women and children to safety; the Croats made no such provision and many women, children and old people were slaughtered in Krajina. [7] The ruthlessness of the Croats was impressive: "UN troops watched horrified as Croat soldiers dragged the bodies of dead Serbs along the road outside the UN compound and then pumped them full of rounds from the AK-47s. They then crushed the bullet-ridden bodies under the tracks of a tank." [8] But this was hardly noticed in the wake of the indignation and propaganda generated around Srebrenica with the aid of the mainstream media, whose co-belligerency role in the Balkan wars was already well-entrenched. [9]

The International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) and UN also had an important role to play in the consolidation of the standard Srebrenica massacre narrative. From its inception the ICTY served as an arm of the NATO powers, who created it, funded it, served as its police arm and main information source, and expected and got responsive service from the organization. [10] The ICTY focused intensively on Srebrenica and provided important and nominally independent corroboration of the massacre claims along with citable "judicial" claims of planned "genocide." The UN is less thoroughly integrated into NATO-power demands, but it is highly responsive and in the Srebrenica case it came through just as the United States and its main allies desired. [11]

This political interest in the Srebrenica massacre hardly proves that the establishment narrative is wrong. It does, however, suggest the need for caution and an awareness of the possibility of falsification and inflated claims. That awareness has been entirely absent from mainstream treatment of Srebrenica.

## **2. The Serial Lying Before and After Srebrenica**

At each stage in the dismantlement of Yugoslavia, its ethnic cleansing, and before and during the NATO war over the Kosovo province of Serbia in 1999, propaganda lies played a very important role in forwarding conflict and anti-Serb actions. There were lies of omission and lies that directly conveyed false impressions and information. An important form of lie of omission was the regular presentation of Serb misbehavior as unique to the Serbs, not also characteristic of the behavior of the Muslims and Croats or of the conflict overall. In case after case the media would report on Serb attacks and atrocities, having neglected to report the prior assaults on Serbs in those same towns and making the Serb behavior seem like unprovoked acts of

aggression and barbarity.

This was evident from the very start of the serious fighting in 1991 in the republic of Croatia. In their treatment of the Eastern Croatian city of Vukovar, for example, the media (and ICTY) focused exclusively on the federal Yugoslav army's capture of the town in the fall of 1991, completely ignoring the prior spring and summer's slaughter by Croatian National Guard troops and paramilitaries of hundreds of ethnic Serbs who had lived in the Vukovar area. According to Raymond K. Kent, "a substantial Serb population in the major Slavonian city of Vukovar disappeared without having fled, leaving traces of torture in the old Austrian the spring catacombs under the city along with evidence of murder and rape. The Western media, whose demonization of the Serbs was well underway, chose to overlook these events..." [12] This selective and misleading focus was standard media and ICTY practice.

Lies of omission were also clear in the attention given Bosnian Serb prison camps like Omarska, which the media focused on intensively and with indignation, when in fact the Muslims and Croats had very similar prison camps—at Celebici, Tarcin, Livno, Bradina, Odzak, and in the Zetra camp in Sarajevo, among other sites—[13] with roughly comparable numbers, facilities, and certainly no worse treatment of prisoners; [14] but in contrast with the Serbs, the Muslims and Croats hired competent PR firms and refused permission to inspect their facilities—and the already well-developed structure of bias made the media little interested in any but Serb camps.

Wild allegations of Auschwitz-like conditions in Serb "concentration camps" were spread by "journalists of attachment" who lapped up propaganda handouts by Muslim and Croat officials and PR hirlings. Roy Gutman, who won a Pulitzer prize jointly with John Burns for Bosnia reporting in 1993, depended heavily on Croat and Muslim officials and witnesses with suspect credentials and implausible claims, and he was a major source of inflated, one-sided, and false "concentration camp" propaganda. [15] John Burns' Pulitzer award was based on an extended interview with Boris Herak, a captured Bosnian Serb supplied to him and a Soros-funded filmmaker by the Bosnian Muslims. Several years later Herak admitted that his extremely implausible confession had been coerced and that he had been forced to memorize many pages of lies. Two of his alleged victims also turned up alive in later years. In reporting on Herak, John Burns and the *New York Times* (and the Soros-funded film) suppressed the credibility-damaging fact that Herak had also accused former UNPROFOR commandant, Canadian General Lewis Mackenzie, of having raped young Muslim women at a Serb-run bordello. [16] These scandalous awards are symptomatic of the media bias that was already overwhelming in 1992 and 1993.

In a recent development of interest, on a visit to the dying Alija Izetbegovic, Bernard Kouchner asked him about the Bosnian Serb concentration camps, whereupon Izetbegovic, surprisingly, admitted that these claims had been inflated with the aim of getting NATO to bomb the Serbs. [17] This important confession has not been mentioned in the U.S. or British mainstream media.

One of the most important propaganda lies of the 1990s featured the Serb-run Trnopolje camp, visited by Britain's ITN reporters in August 1992. These reporters photographed the resident Fikret Alic, showing him emaciated and seemingly inside a concentration camp fence. In fact, Fikret Alic was in a transit camp, was a sick man (and was sick with tuberculosis long before reaching the camp), was not in any way representative of others in the camp, and was soon able to move to Sweden. Furthermore, the fence was around the photographers, not the man photographed. [18] But this hugely dishonest photo was featured everywhere in the West as proving a Serb-organized Auschwitz, was denounced by NATO high officials, and helped provide the moral basis for the creation of the ICTY and its clear focus on Serb evil.

In the case of the siege of Sarajevo, as with conflict around many "safe haven" towns, the Bosnian Muslim government engaged in a steady program of provoking the Serbs, blaming them for the ensuing response, lying about casualties, and trying—usually successfully—to place the blame on the Serbs. As Tim Fenton has said, "Massacre allegations by the Bosnian Muslims followed any reported conflict as night followed day: most notoriously Muslim Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic claimed the UN was responsible for the deaths of 70,000 in Bihac in early 1995, when in fact there had barely been any fighting and casualties were small." [19]

A remarkable feature of the Bosnian Muslim struggle to demonize the Serbs, in order to get NATO to come to Bosnian Muslim aid with bombs, was their willingness to kill their own people. This was most notable in the case of the ruthless bombing of Sarajevo civilians in three massacres: in 1992 (the "Breadline Massacre"), 1994 (the Markale "Market Massacre") and a "Second Market Massacre" in 1995. In the standard narrative the Serbs were responsible for these massacres, and it is admittedly not easy to believe that the Muslim leadership would kill their own for political advantage even if the evidence points strongly in that direction. But these massacres were all extremely well timed to influence imminent NATO and UN decisions to intervene more forcibly on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims. More important, numerous UN officials and senior Western military officials have claimed that the evidence is strong in all three cases that the actions were planned and executed by Bosnian Muslims. [20] U.S. Army officer John E. Sray, who was on the scene in Bosnia during these and other massacres and was head of the U.S. intelligence section in Sarajevo, even suggested that the incidents, and probable Bosnian Muslim official connivance in these atrocities, "deserve a thorough scrutiny by the International War Crimes Tribunal." [21] Needless to say no such scrutiny was forthcoming. In short, this view of the three massacres is not conspiracy theory, it is a conclusion based on serious and substantial evidence, but not even debated in the party-line dominated accounts of recent Balkan history. [22]

Both before and after Srebrenica lying about numbers killed was also standard practice, helpful in sustaining the dominant narrative. For Bosnia, in December 1992 the Bosnian Muslim government claimed 128,444 deaths of their forces and people, a number which grew to 200,000 by June 1993, rising to 250,000 in 1994. [23] These figures were swallowed without a qualm by Western politicians, media, and intellectual war-campaigners (e.g., David Rieff), with Clinton himself using the 250,000 figure in a speech in November 1995. Former State Department official George Kenney has long questioned these figures and marveled at media gullibility in accepting these claims without the least interest in verification. His own estimate ran between 25,000 and 60,000. [24] More recently, a study sponsored by the Norwegian government estimated the Bosnian war dead as 80,000, and one sponsored by the Hague Tribunal itself came up with a figure of 102,000 dead. [25] Neither of these studies has been reported on in the U.S. media, which had regularly offered its readers/listeners the inflated numbers.

A similar inflation process took place during the 78-day NATO bombing war in 1999, with high U.S. officials at various moments claiming 100,000, 250,000 and 500,000 Serb killings of Kosovo Albanians, along with the lavish use of the word "genocide" to describe Serb actions in Kosovo. [26] This figure gradually shrank to 11,000, and has remained there despite the fact that only some 4,000 bodies were found in one of the most intense forensic searches in history, and with unknown numbers of those bodies combatants, Serbs, and civilian victims of U.S. bombing. But the 11,000 must be valid because the NATO governments and ICTY say it is, and Michael Ignatieff assured readers of the *New York Times* that "whether those 11,334 bodies will be found depends on whether the Serb military and the police removed them." [27]

This record of systematic disinformation certainly does not disprove the truth of the standard narrative on the Srebrenica massacre. It does, however, suggest the need for a close look at the

claims, which have proved so convenient, a close look that the mainstream has steadily refused to provide.

### 3. The Problematic Massacre Claims

By the time of the Srebrenica events of July 1995 the stage had been well set for making massacre claims effective. The serial lying had been largely unchallenged in the mainstream, the demonization process and good-versus-evil dichotomy had been well established, the ICTY and UN leadership were closely following the agenda of the United States and its NATO allies, and the media were on board as co-belligerents.

In this environment, context-stripping was easy. One element of context was the fact that the "safe area" concept was a fraud, as the safe areas were supposed to have been disarmed, but weren't, and with UN connivance. [28] They were therefore used by the Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica and other safe havens as launching pads for attacks on nearby Serb villages. In the three years prior to the massacre well over a thousand Serb civilians were killed by Muslim forces in scores of devastated nearby villages; [29] and well before July 1995 the Srebrenica Muslim commander Nasir Oric proudly showed Western reporters videos of some of his beheaded Serb victims and bragged about his killings. [30] Testifying before the Tribunal on February 12, 2004, UN military commander in Bosnia in 1992 and 1993, General Philippe Morillon, stated his conviction that the attack on Srebrenica was a "direct reaction" to the massacres of Serbs by Nasir Oric and his forces in 1992 and 1993, massacres with which Morillon was closely familiar. [31] Morillon's testimony was of no interest to the Western media, and when the ICTY finally got around to indicting Nasir Oric on March 28, 2003, very possibly to create the image of judicial balance, he was charged with killing only seven Serbs who were tortured and beaten to death after capture, and with the "wanton destruction" of nearby villages. Although he openly bragged to Western reporters of slaughtering Serb civilians, the ICTY reportedly "found no evidence that there were civilian casualties in the attacks on Serb villages in his theater of operations." [32]

When the Bosnian Serbs captured Srebrenica in July 1995, it was reported that the 28<sup>th</sup> regiment of the Bosnian Muslim Army (BMA), comprising several thousand men, had just fled the town. [33] The media failed to ask how such a large force could have been present in a disarmed "safe area." Having also succeeded in ignoring the prior abuses emanating from the safe area, this allowed them to follow a quickly established party line of a planned "genocide" and inexplicable brutality rather than the vengeance which the media allow as semi-exoneration of violence by "worthy" victims (e.g., Kosovo Albanians driving out and killing Serbs and Roma after the NATO takeover of Kosovo).

A second element of context was the possible political basis for the surrender of Srebrenica by a force in a good defensive position, outnumbering the attacking BSA by a 6-1 or 8-1 ratio, but retreating in advance of the assault, their leaders having been withdrawn previously by order of the Bosnian Muslim leadership. [34] This left the population unprotected, and made the BMA cadres vulnerable as they retreated in disarray toward Bosnian Muslim lines. Could this have been another self-sacrificing maneuver by the leadership to produce victims, perhaps designed to help meet the Clinton 5,000 target and induce more forcible NATO intervention? These questions never arose in the mainstream media.

The Srebrenica events had a number of features that made it possible to claim 8,000 "men and boys" executed. One was the confusion and uncertainty about the fate of the fleeing Bosnian Muslim forces, some reaching Tuzla safely, some killed in the fighting, and some captured. The 8,000 figure was first provided by the Red Cross, based on their crude estimate that the BSA had captured 3,000 men and that 5,000 were reported "missing." [35] It is well established that

thousands of those “missing” had reached Tuzla or were killed in the fighting, [36] but in an amazing transformation displaying the eagerness to find the Bosnian Serbs evil and the Muslims victims, the “reaching safety/killed-in-action” basis of being missing was ignored and the missing were taken as executed! This misleading conclusion was helped along by the Red Cross’s reference to the 5,000 as having “simply disappeared,” and its failure to correct this politically biased usage and claim despite its own recognition that “several thousand” refugees had reached Central Bosnia. [37]

It was also helped along by the Bosnian Muslim leadership’s refusal to disclose the names and numbers of those reaching safety, [38] but there was a remarkable readiness in the Western establishment not only to ignore those reaching safety, but also to disregard deaths in fighting and to take dead bodies as proving executions. The will to believe here was limitless: reporter David Rohde saw a bone sticking up in a grave site near Srebrenica, which he just knew by instinct was a remnant of an execution and serious evidence of a “massacre.” [39] It was standard media practice to move from an asserted and unproven claim of thousands missing, or a report of the uncovering of bodies in a grave site, to the conclusion that the claim of 8,000 executed was thereby demonstrated. [40]

With 8,000 executed and thousands killed in the fighting there should have been huge grave sites and satellite evidence of both executions, burials, and any body removals. But the body searches in the Srebrenica vicinity were painfully disappointing, with only some two thousand bodies found in searches through 1999, including bodies killed in action and possibly Serb bodies, some pre-dating July 1995. The sparseness of these findings led to claims of body removal and reburial, but this was singularly unconvincing as the Bosnian Serbs were under intense military pressure after July 1995. This was the period when NATO was bombing Serb positions and Croat/Muslim armies were driving towards Banja Luka. The BSA was on the defensive and was extremely short of equipment and resources, including gasoline. To have mounted an operation of the magnitude required to exhume, transport and rebury thousands of corpses would have been far beyond the BSA’s capacity at that time. Furthermore, in carrying out such a program they could hardly hope to escape observation from OSCE personnel, local civilians, and satellite observations.

On August 10, 1995, Madeleine Albright showed some satellite photos at a closed session of the Security Council, as part of a denunciation of the Bosnian Serbs, including one photo showing people—allegedly Bosnian Muslims near Srebrenica—gathered in a stadium, and one allegedly taken shortly thereafter showing a nearby field with “disturbed” soil. These photos have never been publicly released, but even if they are genuine they don’t prove either executions or burials. Furthermore, although the ICTY speaks of “an organized and comprehensive effort” to hide bodies, and David Rohde claimed a “huge Serb effort to hide bodies,” [41] neither Albright nor anyone else has ever shown a satellite photo of people actually being executed, buried, or dug up for reburial, or of trucks conveying thousands of bodies elsewhere. This evidence blank occurred despite Albright’s warning the Serbs that “We will be watching,” and with satellites at that time making at least eight passes per day and geostationary drones able to hover and take finely detailed pictures in position over Bosnia during the summer of 1995. [42] The mainstream media have found this failure to confirm of no interest.

There have been a great many bodies gathered at Tuzla, some 7,500 or more, many in poor condition or parts only, their collection and handling incompatible with professional forensic standards, their provenance unclear and link to the July 1995 events in Srebrenica unproven and often unlikely, [43] and the manner of their death usually uncertain. Interestingly, although the Serbs were regularly accused of trying to hide bodies, there has never been any suggestion that the Bosnian Muslims, long in charge of the body search, might shift bodies around and

otherwise manipulate evidence, despite their substantial record of dissembling. A systematic attempt to use DNA to trace connections to Srebrenica is underway, but entails many problems, apart from that of the integrity of the material studied and process of investigation, and will not resolve the question of differentiating executions from deaths in combat. There are also lists of missing, but these lists are badly flawed, with duplications, individuals listed who had died before July 1995, who fled to avoid BSA service, or who registered to vote in 1997, and they include individuals who died in battle or reached safety or were captured and assumed a new existence elsewhere. [44]

The 8,000 figure is also incompatible with the basic arithmetic of Srebrenica numbers before and after July 1995. Displaced persons from Srebrenica—that is, massacre survivors—registered with the World Health Organization and Bosnian government in early August 1995, totalled 35,632. Muslim men who reached Muslim lines “without their families being informed” totalled at least 2,000, and some 2,000 were killed in the fighting. That gives us 37,632 survivors plus the 2,000 combat deaths, which would require the prewar population of Srebrenica to have been 47,000 if 8,000 were executed, whereas the population before July was more like 37-40,000 (Tribunal judge Patricia Wald gave 37,000 as her estimate). The numbers don't add up. [45]

There were witnesses to killings at Srebrenica, or those who claimed to be witnesses. There were not many of these, and some had a political axe to grind or were otherwise not credible, [46] but several were believable and were probably telling of real and ugly events. But we are talking here of evidence of hundreds of executions, not 8,000 or anything close to it. The only direct participant witness claim that ran to a thousand was that of Drazen Erdemovic, an ethnic Croat associated with a mercenary group of killers whose members were paid 12 kilos of gold for their Bosnian service (according to Erdemovic himself) and ended up working in the Congo on behalf of French intelligence. His testimony was accepted despite its vagueness and inconsistencies, lack of corroboration, and his suffering from mental problems sufficient to disqualify him from trial—but not from testifying before the Tribunal, free of cross-examination, within two weeks of this disqualification from trial. This and other witness evidence suffered from serious abuse of the plea-bargaining process whereby witnesses could receive mitigating sentences if they cooperated sufficiently with the prosecution. [47]

It is also noteworthy how many relatively impartial observers in or near Srebrenica in July 1995 *didn't* see any evidence of massacres, including the members of the Dutch forces present in the “safe area” and people like Henry Wieland, the chief UN investigator into alleged human rights abuses, who could find no eyewitnesses to atrocities after five days of interviewing among the 20,000 Srebrenica survivors gathered at the Tuzla airport refugee camp. [48]

#### 4. Anomalies

One anomaly connected with Srebrenica has been the stability of the figure of Bosnian Muslim victims—8,000 in July 1995 and 8,000 today, despite the crudity of the initial estimate, the evidence that many or most of the 5,000 “missing” reached Bosnian Muslim territory or were killed in the fighting, and the clear failure to produce supportive physical evidence despite a massive effort. In other cases, like the 9/11 fatality estimate, and even the Bosnian killings and Kosovo bombing war estimates, the original figures were radically scaled down as evidence of body counts made the earlier inflated numbers unsustainable. [49] But because of its key political role for the United States, Bosnian Muslims and Croats, and an almost religious ardour of belief in this claim, Srebrenica has been immune to evidence. From the beginning until today the number has been taken as a given, a higher truth, the questioning of which would show a lack of faith and very likely “apologetics” for the demon.

Another anomaly also showing the sacred, untouchable, and politicized character of the massacre in Western ideology has been the ready designation of the killings as a case of "genocide." The Tribunal played an important role here, with hard-to-match gullibility, unrestrained psychologizing, and incompetent legal reasoning, which the judges have applied to Serb-related cases only. On gullibility, one Tribunal judge accepted as fact the witness claim that Serb soldiers had forced an old Muslim man to eat the liver of his grandson; [50] and the judges repeatedly stated as an established fact that 7-8,000 Muslim men had been executed, while simultaneously acknowledging that the evidence only "suggested" that "a majority" of the 7-8,000 missing had not been killed in combat, which yields a number substantially lower than 7-8,000. [51]

The Tribunal dealt with the awkward problem of the genocide-intent Serbs bussing Bosnian Muslim women and children to safety by arguing that they did this for public relations reasons, but as Michael Mandel points out, failing to do some criminal act despite your desire is called "not committing a crime." [52] The Tribunal never asked why the genocidal Serbs failed to surround the town before its capture to prevent thousands of males from escaping to safety, or why the Bosnian Muslim soldiers were willing to leave their women and children as well as many wounded comrades to the mercies of the Serbs; [53] and they failed to confront the fact that 10,000 mainly Muslim residents of Zvornik sought refugee from the civil war in Serbia itself, as prosecution witness Borislav Jovic testified. [54]

Among the other idiocies in the Tribunal judges' argument, it was genocide if you killed many males in a group in order to reduce the future population of that group, thereby making it unviable in that area. Of course, you might want to kill them to prevent their killing you in the future, but the court knows Serb psychology better—that couldn't be the sole reason, there must have been a more sinister aim. The Tribunal reasoning holds forth the possibility that with only a little prosecution-friendly judicial psychologizing any case of killing enemy soldiers can be designated genocide.

There is also the problem of definition of the group. Were the Serbs trying to eliminate all the Muslims in Bosnia, or Muslims globally? Or just in Srebrenica? The judges suggested that pushing them out of the Srebrenica area was itself genocide, and they essentially equated genocide with ethnic cleansing. [55] It is notable that the ICTY has never called the Croat ethnic cleansing of 250,000 Krajina Serbs "genocide" although in that case many women and children were killed and the ethnic cleansing applied to a larger area and larger victim population than in Srebrenica. [56] (On August 10, 1995, Madeleine Albright cried out to the Security Council that "as many as 13,000 men, women and children were driven from their homes" in Srebrenica.) [57] Perhaps the ICTY had accepted Richard Holbrooke's comic designation of Krajina as a case of "involuntary expulsions." [58] The bias is blatant; the politicization of a purported judicial enterprise is extreme.

Media treatment of the Srebrenica and Krajina cases followed the same pattern and illustrates well how the media make some victims worthy and others unworthy in accord with a political agenda. With the Serbs their government's target, and their government actively aiding the massive Croat ethnic cleansing program in Krajina, the media gave huge and indignant treatment to the first, with invidious language, calls for action, and little context. With Krajina, attention was slight and passing, indignation was absent, detailed reporting on the condition of the victims was minimal, descriptive language was neutral, and there was context offered that made the events understandable. The contrast is so gross as to be droll: the attack on Srebrenica "chilling," "murderous," "savagery," "cold-blooded killing," "genocidal," "aggression," and of course "ethnic cleansing." With Krajina, the media used no such strong language—even ethnic cleansing was too much for them. The Croat assault was merely a big "upheaval" that is "softening up the enemy," "a lightning offensive," explained away as a "response to

Srebrenica” and a result of Serb leaders “overplaying their hand.” The *Washington Post* even cited U.S. Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith saying the “the Serb exodus was not ‘ethnic cleansing’.” [59] The paper does not allow a challenge to that judgment. In fact, however, the Croat operations in Krajina left Croatia as the most ethnically purified of all the former components of the former Yugoslavia, although the NATO occupation of Kosovo has allowed an Albanian ethnic cleansing that is rivalling that of Croatia in ethnic purification.

Another anomaly in the Srebrenica case is the insistence on bringing all the criminals (Serb) to trial and getting the willing executioners (Serb) to admit guilt as necessary for justice and essential for reconciliation. A problem is that justice cannot be one-sided or it ceases to be justice, and shows its true face as vengeance and a cover for other political ends. Ethnic cleansing in Bosnia was by no means one-sided, and deaths by nationality were not far off from population proportionality; [60] the Serbs claim and have documented thousands of deaths at the hands of the Bosnian Muslims and their imported Mujahedin cadres, and by the Croats, and they have their own group examining and trying to identify bodies at an estimated 73 mass graves. [61] This victimization has hardly been noticed by the Western media or ICTY—the distinguished Yugoslav forensic expert Dr. Zoran Stankovic observed back in 1996 that “the fact that his team had previously identified the bodies of 1,000 Bosnian Serbs in the [Srebrenica] region had not interested prosecutor Richard Goldstone.” [62] Instead, there is a steady refrain about the Serbs tendency to whine, whereas Bosnian Muslim complaints are taken as those of true victims and are never designated whining.

Rather than producing reconciliation the steady focus on Srebrenica victims and killers makes for more intense hatred and nationalism, just as the Kosovo war and its violence exacerbated hatred and tensions there and showed that Clinton’s claimed objective of a tolerant multi-ethnic Kosovo was a fraud. In Kosovo, this one-sided propaganda and NATO control has unleashed serious and unremitting anti-Serb—along with anti-Roma, anti-Turk, anti-dissident-Albanian—violence, helped along by the willingness of the NATO authorities to look the other way as their allies—the purported victims—take their revenge and pursue their long-standing aim of ethnic purification. [63] In Bosnia and Serbia the Serbs have been under steady attack, humiliated, and their leaders and military personnel punished, while the criminals among the Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and NATO powers (e.g., Clinton, Blair, Albright, Holbrooke) suffer no penalties [64] and may even be portrayed as dispensers of justice (Clinton et al.).

It is clear that the objectives of the retribution-pushers are not justice and reconciliation—they are to unify and strengthen the position of the Bosnian Muslims, to crush the Republica Srpska, and possibly even eliminate it as an independent entity in Bosnia, to keep Serbia disorganized, weak and dependent on the West, and to continue to put the U.S. and NATO attack and dismantlement of Yugoslavia in a favorable light. The last objective requires diverting attention from the Clinton/Bosnian Muslim role in giving Al Qaeda a foothold in the Balkans, Izetbegovic’s close alliance with Osama bin Laden, his Islamic Declaration declaring hostility to a multi-ethnic state, [65] the importation of 4,000 Mujahaden to fight a holy war in Bosnia, with active Clinton administration aid, and the KLA-Al Qaeda connection.

These aspects of the siding with the Bosnian Muslims have always been awkward for the war propagandists, and they became more so after 9/11—the U.S. *9/11 Commission Report* claims that two of the 19 hijackers, Nawaf al Hazmi and Khalid al Mihdhar, and a “mastermind” of the attack, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, “fought” in Bosnia, and that bin Laden had “service” offices in Zagreb and Sarajevo. [66] Despite the huge focus on 9/11 and Al Qaeda these links have not been featured in the mainstream media and have not influenced Bosnian proconsul Paddy Ashdown, who attended Izetbegovic’s funeral and continues to push Bosnian Muslim interests. The Serbs, of course, were complaining about the brutality (and beheadings) of the Mujahaden in 1993, but the media and ICTY were not interested then and remain uninterested. Let’s just

talk about Srebrenica, the Bosnian Muslims as unique victims, and Clinton's and the West's generous if belated service to those victimized underdogs.

But didn't the Bosnian Serbs "confess" that they had murdered 8,000 civilians? This has been the take of the Western media, but again demonstrating their subservience to their leaders' political agenda. The Bosnian Serbs actually did put out a report on Srebrenica in September 2002, [67] but this report was rejected by Paddy Ashdown for failing to come up with the proper conclusions. He therefore forced a further report by firing a stream of Republica Srpska politicians and analysts, threatening the RS government, and eventually extracting a report prepared by people who would come to the officially approved conclusions. [68] This report, issued on June 11, 2004, was then greeted in the Western media as a meaningful validation of the official line—the refrain was, the Bosnian Serbs "admit" the massacre, which should finally settle any questions. Amusingly, even this coerced and imposed report didn't come near acknowledging 8,000 executions (it speaks of "several thousand" executions). What this episode "proves" is that the Western campaign to make the defeated Serbia grovel is not yet terminated, and the media's continuing gullibility and propaganda service.

### Conclusion

The "Srebrenica massacre" is the greatest triumph of propaganda to emerge from the Balkan wars. Other claims and outright lies have played their role in the Balkan conflicts, but while some have retained a modest place in the propaganda repertoire despite challenge (Racak, the Markale massacre, the Serb refusal to negotiate at Rambouillet, 250,000 Bosnian dead, the aim of a Greater Serbia as the driving force in the Balkan wars), [69] the Srebrenica massacre reigns supreme for symbolic power. It is the symbol of Serb evil and Bosnian Muslim victimhood, and the justice of the Western dismantling of Yugoslavia and intervention there at many levels, including a bombing war and colonial occupations of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

But the link of this propaganda triumph to truth and justice is non-existent. The disconnection with truth is epitomized by the fact that the original estimate of 8,000, including 5,000 "missing"—who had left Srebrenica for Bosnian Muslim lines—was maintained even after it had been quickly established that several thousand had reached those lines and that several thousand more had perished in battle. This nice round number lives on today in the face of a failure to find the executed bodies and despite the absence of a single satellite photo showing executions, bodies, digging, or trucks transporting bodies for reburial. The media have carefully refrained from asking questions on this point, despite Albright's August 1995 promise that "We will be watching."

That Albright statement, and the photos she did display at the time, helped divert attention from the ongoing "Krajina massacre" of Serbs in Croatian Krajina, an ethnic cleansing process of great brutality and wider scope than that at Srebrenica, in which there was less real fighting than at Srebrenica, mainly attacks on and the killing and removal of defenseless civilians. At Srebrenica the Bosnian Serbs moved women and children to safety, and there is no evidence of any of them being murdered; [70] whereas in Krajina there was no such separation and an estimated 368 women and children were killed, along with many too old and infirm to flee. [71] One measure of the propaganda success of the "Srebrenica massacre" is that the possibility that the intense focus on the Srebrenica massacre was serving as a cover for the immediately following "Krajina massacre," supported by the United States, was outside the orbit of thought of the media. For the media, Srebrenica helped bring about Krajina, and the Serbs had it coming. [72]

The media have played an important role in making the Srebrenica massacre a propaganda triumph. As noted earlier, the media had become a co-belligerent by 1991, and all standards of objectivity disappeared in their subservience to the pro-Bosnian Muslim and anti-Serb agenda. Describing the reporting of Christine Amanpour and others on a battle around Goradze, U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel John Sray wrote back in October 1995 that these news reports “were devoid of any semblance of truth,” that Americans were suffering from “a cornucopia of disinformation,” that “America has not been so pathetically deceived” since the Vietnam War, and that popular perceptions of Bosnia “have been forged by a prolific propaganda machine.. [that has] managed to manipulate illusions to further Muslim goals.” [73]

That propaganda machine also conquered the liberals and much of the left in the United States, who swallowed the dominant narrative of the evil Serbs seeking hegemony, employing uniquely brutal and genocidal strategies, and upsetting a previous multi-cultural haven in Bosnia—run by Osama bin Laden’s friend and ally Alija Izetbegovic, and with rectification brought belatedly by Clinton, Holbrooke and Albright working closely with Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia! The liberal/left war coalition needed to find the Serbs demons in order to justify imperial warfare, and they did so by accepting and internalizing a set of lies and myths that make up the dominant narrative. [74] This liberal/“cruise missile left” (CML) combo was important in helping develop the “humanitarian intervention” rationale for attacking Serbia on behalf of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and in fact preparing the ground for Bush’s eventual basing of his own wars on the quest for “liberation.” [75] The Srebrenica massacre helped make the liberals and CML true believers in the crusade in the Balkans and gave moral backup to their servicing the expanding imperial role of their country and its allies.

Former UN official Cedric Thornberry, writing in 1996, noted that “prominently in parts of the international liberal media” the position is “that the Serbs were the only villains,” and back at UN headquarters in the spring of 1993 he was warned: “Take cover—the fix is on.” [76] The fix was on, even if only tacit and built-in to the government-media-Tribunal relationship. It helped make the Srebrenica massacre the symbol of evil and, with the help of Tribunal “justice,” and support of liberals and CML, provided a cover for the U.S.-NATO attack on and dismantling of Yugoslavia, colonial occupations in Bosnia and Kosovo, and justification for “humanitarian intervention” more broadly. What more could be asked of a propaganda system?

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#### Notes:

\*This paper is partly drawn from and cites chapters in a forthcoming book on the Srebrenica massacre, *Srebrenica: The Politics of War Crimes*, written by George Bogdanich, Tim Fenton, Philip Hammond, Edward S. Herman, Michael Mandel, Jonathan Rooper, and George Szamuely. This book is referred to in the notes below as *Politics of War Crimes*. The author and his colleagues are indebted to Diana Johnstone, David Peterson, Vera Vratusa-Zunjic, Milan Bulajic, Milivoje Ivanisevic, Konstantin Kilibarda, and George Pumphrey for advice. Johnstone’s *Fools Crusade* is a fine basic statement of an alternative perspective on the Balkan Wars; George Pumphrey’s “Srebrenica: Three Years Later, And Still Searching,” is a classic critique of the establishment Srebrenica massacre narrative and repeatedly hit the target with facts and analyses still not rebutted.

1. “Bosnia: 2 Officials Dismissed for Obstructing Srebrenica Inquiry,” AP Report, *New York Times*, April 17, 2004; Marlise Simons, “Bosnian Serb Leader Taken Before War Crimes Tribunal,” *New York Times*, April 8, 2000; UN, *The Fall of Srebrenica (A/54/549)*, Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/35, November 15, 1999, par. 506 (<http://www.un.org/News/press/docs/1999/a54549.pdf>)

2. See Ivo Pukanic, “US Role In Storm: Thrilled With Operation Flash, President Clinton

Gave the Go Ahead to Operation Storm," *Nacional* (Zagreb), May 24, 2005.

3. Barton Gellman, "The Path to Crisis: How the United States and Its Allies Went to War," *Washington Post*, April 18, 1999

4. "Some surviving members of the Srebrenica delegation have stated that President Izetbegovic also told that he had learned that a NATO intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina was possible, but could occur only if the Serbs were to break into Srebrenica, killing at least 5,000 of its people. President Izetbegovic has flatly denied making such a statement." *The Fall of Srebrenica* (A/54/549), Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/35, November 15, 1999, par. 115, (<http://www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/reports/UNsrebrenicareport.htm>)

The UN report does not mention that there were nine others present at that meeting, and that one of them, Hakija Meholic, former Srebrenica chief of police, has stated that eight of them (all those living) "can confirm" the Clinton suggestion. (*Dani*, June 22, 1998: <http://cdsp.neu.edu/info/students/marko/dani/dani2.html>)

5. *Politics of War Crimes*, Bogdanich, chapter 2, "Prelude to Capture," and Fenton, chapter 3, "Military Context." See also Tim Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force* (Center for Defence and Security Studies: 1999), p. 145.

6. In his *Balkan Odyssey*, Lord David Owen stated that "By acquiescing in the Croatian government's seizure of Western Slavonia, the Contact Group had in effect given the green light to the Bosnian Serbs to attack Srebrenica and Zepa" (pp. 199-200). Owen was mistaken; the Contact Group was serving one side only, and the media's failure to report on and criticize the approved aggression made it possible to present the takeover of Srebrenica as a unique and unprovoked evil.

7. Veritas estimated that 1,205 civilians were killed in Operation Storm, including 358 women and 10 children. In the graves around Srebrenica through 1999, among the 1,895 bodies only one was identified as female. See "Croatian Serb Exodus Commemorated," Agence France Press, Aug. 4, 2004; also, Veritas at [www.veritas.org.yu](http://www.veritas.org.yu).

8. Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, p. 192. See also footnotes 56 and 70.

9. The co-belligerency role was described by Peter Brock in "Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press," *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1993-94. A forthcoming book by Brock, on *Media Cleansing: Uncovering Yugoslavia's Civil Wars*, shows this partisanship in greater and effective detail. In his autobiography, U. S. Secretary of State James Baker says that he instructed his press secretary, Margaret Tutweiler to help Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic utilize the Western media to further the Bosnian Muslim cause, noting that he "had her talk to her contacts at the four television networks, the Washington Post and the New York Times." James A. Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy* (Putnam: 1995), pp. 643-4.

10. As NATO PR spokesman Jamie Shea stated on May 16, 1999, when asked about NATO's vulnerability to Tribunal charges, he was not worried. The prosecutor, he said, will start her investigation "because we will allow her to." Further, "NATO countries are those that have provided the finance," and on the need to build a second chamber "so that prosecutions can be speeded up...we and the Tribunal are all one on this, we want to see war criminals brought to justice." <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/press/p990516b.htm>

See Michael Mandel, *How America Gets Away With Murder* (London: Pluto, 2004), chaps. 4-5; Edward Herman, "The Milosevic Trial, Part 1," *Z Magazine*, April 2002.

11. See *Politics of War Crimes*, chap. 7, Bogdanich, "UN Report on Srebrenica-A distorted Picture of Events."

12. Raymond K. Kent, "Contextualizing Hate: The Hague Tribunal, the Clinton Administration and the Serbs," *Dialogue* (Paris), v. 5, no. 20, December, 1996 (as posted to the Emperor's Clothes website, <http://www.emperors-clothes.com/misc/kent.htm>)
13. Carl Savitch, "Celebici," <http://www.serbianna.com/columns/savich/047.shtml>.
14. It would be hard to surpass the savagery of the Bosnian Muslims at the Celebici camp, described in *ibid.* See also, Diana Johnstone, *Fools' Crusade* (Pluto: 2002), pp. 71-72.
15. See the two works by Peter Brock, note 9 above; also Johnstone, *Fools' Crusade*, pp. 70-83.
16. For details and citations see Brock's article and book (note 9 above).
17. Bernard Kouchner, *Les Guerriers de la Paix* (Paris: Grasset, 2004), pp. 372-4.
18. Johnstone, *Fools' Crusade*, pp. 72-73; Thomas Deichmann, "Misinformation: TV Coverage of a Bosnian Camp," *Covert Action Quarterly*, Fall, 1998, pp. 52-55.
19. In a private communication dated November 21, 2003.
20. For a good summary of the case that these were "Self-Inflicted Atrocities," with further references, see the Senate Staff Report of January 16, 1997, on "Clinton Approved Iranian Arms Transfers Help Turn Bosnia Into Militant Islamic Base," <http://www.senate.gov/terpc/releases/1997/iran.htm#top>. See also Cees Wiebes, *Intelligence and the War in Bosnia, 1992-1995*, London: Lit Verlag, 2003, pp. 68-69: [http://213.222.3.5/srebrenica/toc/p6\\_c02\\_s004\\_b01.html](http://213.222.3.5/srebrenica/toc/p6_c02_s004_b01.html)).
21. John E. Sray, "Selling the Bosnian Myth to America: Buyer Beware," *Foreign Military Studies*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, October, 1995, <<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/bosnia2.htm>>.
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23. For a good summary, Srdja Trifkovic, "Une spectaculaire revision de chiffres," *Balkan Infos* (B.I.), February 2005.
24. George Kenney, "The Bosnian Calculation," *New York Times Magazine*, April 23, 1995.
25. See Trifkovic, *supra* note 23; also, <http://grayfalcon.blogspot.com/2004/12/death-tolls-part-3.html>.
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27. Michael Ignatieff, "Counting Bodies in Kosovo," *New York Times*, November 21, 1999.
28. *Politics of War Crimes*, Bogdanovich, chap. 2, "Prelude to Capture."
29. Detailed evidence was presented to the UN on "War Crimes and Crimes of Genocide in Eastern Bosnia (Communes of Bratunac Skelani, and Srebrenica) Committed Against the

· Serbian Population from April 1982 to April 1993,” by the Yugoslav Ambassador to the UN; see also Joan Phillips, “Victims and Villains in Bosnia’s War,” *Southern Slav Journal*, Spring-Summer 1992.

30. Bill Schiller, “Muslims’ hero vows he’ll fight to the last man,” *Toronto Star*, January 31, 1994; John Pomfret, “Weapons, Cash and Chaos Lend Clout to Srebrenica’s Tough Guy,” *Washington Post*, February 16, 1994.

31. Carl Savich, “Srebrenica and Naser Oric: An Analysis of General Philippe Morillon’s Testimony at the ICTY,” <http://www.serbianna.co>.

32. “No Evidence of Civilian Casualties in Operations By Bosnian Commander,” BBC Monitoring International Reports, April 11, 2003; for a review of Oric’s operations and a critical analysis of the ICTY decision, Carl Savitch, “Srebrenica: The Untold Story,” <http://www.serbianna.com/columns/savich/o51.html>.

33. *Politics of War Crimes*, chaps 2-3. The UN estimated that there had been 3-4,000 Bosnian Muslim soldiers in Srebrenica just before its fall.

34. Ibid.

35. *Politics of War Crimes*, chap. 2.

36. “Conflict in the Balkans, 8000 Muslims Missing,” AP, *New York Times*, Sept. 15, 1995.

37. One Red Cross official told a German interviewer that the Muslims who reached safety “cannot be removed from the list of missing....because we have not received their names,” quoted in Pumphrey, “Srebrenica: Three Years Later, And Still Searching.” See also, “Former Yugoslavia: Srebrenica: help for families still awaiting news,” International Committee of the Red Cross, September 13, 1995  
<http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/iwpList74/7609D560283849CFC1256B6600595006>

38. Ibid.

39. Johnstone, *Fools’ Crusade*, p. 76.

40. This jump from a few bodies to 8,000 was recently illustrated in the treatment by Tim Judah and Daniel Sunter in the London *Observer* of the video of six killings of Bosnian Muslims, given heavy publicity in June 2005—it is the “smoking gun,...the final, incontrovertible proof of Serbia’s part in the Srebrenica massacres in which more than 7,500 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were murdered.” (“How the video that put Serbia in dock was brought to light,” June 5).

41. ICTY, Amended Joinder Indictment, May 27, 2002, Par. 51:  
<http://www.un.org/icty/indictment/english/nik-ai020527c.htm>.; David Rohde, “The World Five Years Later: The Battle of Srebrenica Is Now Over The Truth,” *New York Times*, July 9, 2000.

42. Steven Lee Meyers, “Making Sure War Crimes Aren’t Forgotten,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1997. In fact, one U.S. official acknowledged in late July 1995 that “satellites have produced nothing.” Paul Quinn-Judge, “Reports of Atrocities Unconfirmed So Far: U.S. Aerial Surveillance Reveals Little,” *Boston Globe*, July 27, 1995.

43. The web site of the International Commission on Missing Persons in the Former Yugoslavia acknowledges that the bodies “have been exhumed from various gravesites in northeast HiH,”

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31. Carl Savich, "Srebrenica and General Criv: An Analysis of General Philippe Morillon's Testimony at the ICTY," <http://www.scrimms.ca>.

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33. *Politics of War*, Chapter 2-3. The UN punished UN soldiers for the Srebrenica genocide.

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1995; John Pomfret, "Investigators Begin Exhuming Group of Mass Graves in Bosnia," *Washington Post*, July 8, 1996. Biggest "upheaval" is in "Softening Up The Enemy," *Newsweek*, Aug. 21, 1995.

60. See the evidence drawn from the Norwegian study of Bosnia casualties in: <http://grayfalcon.blogspot.com/2004/12/death-tolls-part-3.html>.

61. Slavisa Sabijic, "The Trade in Bodies in Bosnia-Herzegovina": <http://www.serbianna.com/press/010.html>; Joan Phillips, "Victims and Villains in Bosnia's War," *Southern Slav Journal*, Spring-Summer 1992.

62. "Yugoslav Forensic Expert Says No Proof About Srebrenica Mass Grave," BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 15, 1996.

63. Kosta Christitch, "Les veritable raisons d'une faillite," B.I., March 2005. As Diana Johnstone has said, "by endorsing every accusation against Serbs, and ignoring crimes against Serbs, the United States and its NATO allies have given carte blanche to violence against them. Ethnic Albanian children are growing up in the belief that nobody really blames them for hunting down elderly 'Skinje' (the ethnic slur for Serbs) and beating them to death." "The OSCE Report: Things Told and Things Seen," *ZNet Commentary*, Dec. 26, 1999.

64. There have been a modest number of exceptions, mainly Muslim and Croat small fry, usually indicted at a time when the imbalance appeared exceptionally gross and some PR offset was needed. None of the leaders of Croatia or Bosnia were indicted, although it was alleged that indictments were near soon after Tudjman's and Izetbegovic's deaths, although the long delays were never explained. No leader or anybody else in NATO was ever indicted. For a good discussion of the deep bias, Mandel, *How America Gets Away With Murder*, Part II.

65. In his 1970 *Islamic Declaration*, never repudiated by him, Izetbegovic said: "There is neither peace nor coexistence between the 'Islamic religion' and non-Islamic social and political institutions... Having the right to govern its own world, Islam clearly excludes the right and possibility of putting a foreign ideology into practice on its territory." Quoted in Johnstone, *Fools' Crusade*, p. 58.

66. *The 9/11 Commission Report*, Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, Official Government Edition, pp. 58, 146-147, 155, 238-239.

67. Documentation Centre of Republic of Srpska, *Report About Case Srebrenica (The First Part)*, (Banja Luka, Sept. 2002).

68. Gregory Copley, "US Official Implicated With Bosnian High Representative Ashdown in Attempting to Force Fabricated Report on Srebrenica," *Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily*, September 8, 2003: <http://www.slobodan-milosevic.org/news/ssi09082003.htm>; Nebojsa Malic, "Srebrenica Revisited: Reports, Confessions and the Elusive Truth," *Antiwar.com*, June 24, 2004: <http://antiwar.com/malic/?articleid=2865>

69. On the fallacies of the claims regarding Racak, Rambouillet and the Serb drive for a Greater Serbia as a reality and causal force, see Johnstone, *Fools' Crusade*, and Mandel, *How America Gets Away with Murder*.

70. Only one body found around Srebrenica in the graves explored through 1999 was identified as female.

71. See note 7 above. Tim Ripley says that "Thousands of people, those too old or infirm to flee,....remained behind. UN patrols soon found hundreds had been murdered by Croat soldiers and civilians. Almost every home had been looted." (p. 192).

72. Serb refugees in Srebrenica in 1997 are explained as "coming from neighborhoods elsewhere that Croat and Muslim armies emptied in retaliation for the Srebrenica atrocities and other such killings." Dana Priest, "U.S. Troops Extend a Hand To Refugees Tainted by War," *Washington Post*, Feb. 18, 1997.

73. Sray, "Selling the Bosnian Myth."

74. For an account and critique of these humanitarian interventionists, see Edward Herman and David Peterson, "Morality's Avenging Angels: The New Humanitarian Crusaders," in David Chandler, ed., *Rethinking Human Rights* (Palgrave: 2002). For a more extensive dismantling of their arguments, see Johnstone's *Fools' Crusade* and Mandel's *How America Gets Away With Murder*.

75. On the meaning and application of "cruise missile left" (my phrase), see my "[The Cruise Missile Left: Aligning with Power](#)," *Z Magazine*, November, 2002; and "[The Cruise Missile Left \(part 5\): Samantha Power And The Genocide Gambit](#)," ZNet Commentaries, May 17, 2004.

76. Cedric Thornberry, "Saving the War Crimes Tribunal; Bosnia Herzegovina," *Foreign Policy*, September 1996.



**-Ethnic Conflicts in Civil War in Bosnia -**  
**Political manipulation with term of**  
**-Genocide-**  
**Case Study: Srebrenica**  
**-Role of so called international media's**  
**-Photo documentations**

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Rome Statute of the  
**International Criminal Court**

**Srebrenica:**  
**Ignored Massacre of Bosnian Serbs**  
**&**  
**Alleged Massacre of Muslims**

**Summary**

**13. The current situation of Srebrenica: Despair of Serbs**

The town of Srebrenica, which is located at the east of the entity of Bosnian Serbs or Republika Srpska in Bosnia, has the population of approximately 20 thousands now. Eighty percent of the current population is Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) particularly from Sarajevo in Bosnia and refugees mostly from Krajina in Croatia. Although almost three years have passed since the end of the war in Bosnia, no sign to restore Srebrenica can be seen. Water is still limited in supply, and not suitable for drink. Broken windows and doors make people shivering in winter. The school buildings in the elementary school have disgusting stench of damaged toilets. There are almost no economic activities to hire the population to sustain the life although this area is rich in land and minerals such as lead and zinc. Under these circumstances, refugees or IDPs have to endure the lowest level of the living conditions, and most of them are left alone without any means of income. The local report<sup>[1]</sup> warned that the rate of suicides and sudden death among the refugees

continued to say that the year of 1996 particularly saw the high rate of mortality of the refugees and IDPs in the area, citing the deaths of more than 150 IDPs in Bratunac, a relatively large town in the area.

Aid, which has recently begun to trickle down into Republika Srpska due to its apparent willingness to cooperate with western countries, carefully avoids Srebrenica area not to make it a beneficiary. The reason is the alleged massacre of Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995. For the countries insisting that the bad guys, Serbs, carried out cruel ethnic cleansing of poor Muslims in Srebrenica area, the emotional conscience is so convincing that they do not want to hurt Muslims by rewarding Serbs, no matter how many refugees and IDPs are living in Srebrenica area. In general, however, emotion is often shaped by temporary hysteria and biased or unconfirmed information. Conscience driven by emotion, thus, tends to be deceived fairness. The case of "alleged Srebrenica massacre" is not an exception.

#### 14. Depressive History of Serbs in Srebrenica:

##### From the majority to the minority

Srebrenica has a sad history for Serbs particularly during World War II, and their sorrow is reflected in the number of Serbs population in Srebrenica. Before the World War II, Serbs accounted for 50.6% and Muslims for 49.4% of the total population, or 36,000, in Srebrenica area. However, because of the atrocities of German Nazi's collaborators against Serbs in the area during the war and its resultant low growth of the population afterwards, the ratio of Serbs to the total population, or 80,000, dropped to 35.6%, and the ratio of Muslims increased to 61.9% in 1991, according to the census of the former republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina (BH).

#### 15. Nazi's "SS Handzar Division" and Srebrenica

Nazi collaborators in BH, which belonged to Independent State of Croatia, or a puppet state of Fascist Germany, were called "SS Handzar Division" of Ustasha. The Division was established in February 1943, by the order of Hitler and with the blessing of Jerusalem Mufti, Hitler's close associate, in order to fight against Tito's partisans. The role of "SS Handzar Division" was to eradicate Serbs, and it consisted of 20,000 soldiers, mainly Muslims<sup>[3]</sup>. The techniques of terror that it used were appallingly cruel, being inherited from Turks in the period of Ottoman Empire<sup>[4]</sup>. According to Florentin Manuel<sup>[5]</sup>, the most usual techniques were raping women, removing eyes and cutting testicles of alive men, and the action of "SS Handzar" was more like an armed band than a military unit<sup>[6]</sup>. It is said that their cruelty was such that even German SS officers accused actions of those people<sup>[7]</sup>. Srebrenica area was under the direct assault of this "SS Handzar Division" during World War II.

#### 16. Alija Izetbegovic (President of Bosnian Muslims) and Srebrenica

In the history of Srebrenica, Alija Izetbegovic, the current President of Bosnia and Hercegovina, is the person who connects the present and the World War II. During the World War II, he was a main actor for "SS Handzar Division". He joined the organization "Young Muslims" in Sarajevo on March 5, 1943, and was engaged as a member of the organization in recruiting young Muslims for "SS Handzar Division" in collaboration with Hitler's intelligence service (ABWER and GESTAPO). In 1946, however, he was sentenced by former Yugoslav Supreme Military Court to three years of imprisonment and two years of deprivation of civil rights, because of his fascist activities<sup>[8]</sup>. This criminal record of Izetbegovic was published by Russian gazette "Izvestija" dated 17 November of 1992.

"Islamic Declaration" was another criminal record of Izetbegovic. Having shown his fundamentalism or intolerance of other religions<sup>[9]</sup>, he was sentenced to twelve years imprisonment by Supreme Court of Bosnia on March 14, 1983. However, in spite of the prohibition of its publication, "Islamic Declaration" was reprinted in 1990. Two years later, it seemed that he began to resume the activities of "SS Handzar" based on his Islamic fundamentalism particularly in Srebrenica area, intentionally or unintentionally.

#### 17. Srebrenica area: Strategic Importance for Muslims

##### Creation of Cordon (Geographical Center of Islam)

According to Muslim National Council established on the eve of Bajram (the end of February) in 1992, the goal of all radical Muslims led by Izetbegovic was to create the Islamic State within the borders of BH<sup>[10]</sup>. The largest concern to achieve this goal was the geographical and ethnical closeness between eastern Bosnia and Serbia in Yugoslavia. Taking into the consideration the fact that south eastern Bosnia already had demographic and Islamic connection to Sandzak and Kosovo in Serbia, the serious problem lay in 'north eastern Bosnia', where Srebrenica area stretched over. Therefore, there was an urgent necessity to draw a cordon between Serbs in eastern Bosnia and Serbs in Serbia<sup>[11]</sup>. Under these circumstances, a huge number of invitations to the gathering in Bratunac in Srebrenica area were distributed among Muslims throughout Bosnia at the beginning of 1992, and the large gathering was held in Bratunac on the first day of Bajram, the celebration to end Ramadan, in the presence of Izetbegovic. There, Bratunac was proclaimed 'Geographic center of Muslim for the whole (former) Yugoslavia,' and to arm Muslims was openly declared.

## 18. Mutual Fear

In the middle of the radical Islamic and militant activities, however, the general Muslim citizens in Srebrenica area were afraid of this abrupt militant move in their area in the same way that Serbs were frightened. As Besim Ibisevic (Muslim), former President of Township Assembly<sup>[12]</sup> in Srebrenica, told a local magazine in Sarajevo, the general Muslim citizens had shouted 'peace at any cost' in the big crowded hall of culture club in Srebrenica in April 1992<sup>[13]</sup>. People in Srebrenica, therefore, did not allow Muslim extremists, such as Naser Oric and Zulfo Tursunovic, to enter the Srebrenica area at the beginning. According to the confession of Naser himself, he had to hide in forests together with his fellows, and get food secretly<sup>[14]</sup>. Behind the scene, however, rifles and uniforms had been already sent to every township assembly and SDA (or Muslims') party<sup>[15]</sup>. In addition, Vox, radical Muslim magazine in Sarajevo, published the name of Serbs to be killed in Srebrenica to threaten Serbs under the excuse of 'War Criminals' who fought as Tito's partisans against "SS Handzar". Only a little provocative push was necessary to drive people to conflicts.

At the end of 1991, when Muslim National Council was on the last stage to prepare insurgence against the Former Yugoslavia, Izetbegovic and his followers decided to depend on criminals' power. For Srebrenica, they found Naser Oric and Zulfo Tursunovic as the persons whom they could depend on. Naser, born in Srebrenica area, was a policeman in Beograd in Serbia, and worked as one of the bodyguards of Milosevic, the current President of Yugoslavia. However, when Oric was fired for theft in the end of 1991, Izetbegovic's group picked him up, and appointed him as the Commander of Territorial Defense for Srebrenica. Meanwhile, Zulfo Tursunovic was in the jail in Zenica in 1991 because he had killed three Muslims in 1986. Although he did not finish the service of 15 year-imprisonment, Izetbegovic ordered the release of Zulfo, and appointed him as Deputy Commander of BH Army in Srebrenica at the end of 1991. In the beginning of 1992, Naser and Zulfo got together in order to sneak into Srebrenica. They hid in the woods, and succeeded to sneak into Srebrenica in Spring 1992.

## 19. Start of Ethnic Cleansing of Serbs

Mutual distrust and fear between Serbs and Muslims were mounting high in Srebrenica. Armed Muslim gangs among which the Patriot League was formed in Vlasenica near Srebrenica area started raising mutual fear among people from April 1992<sup>[16]</sup>. Serbs already began to be fired from governments, police, schools, health institutions, and business. A group of Muslim locals in the disguise of Arkan soldiers, a Serbian para-military group, came to Srebrenica area and raised the fear in Muslim civilians<sup>[17]</sup>. Then, on May 8 1992, Judge Goran Zekic, President of SDS (Bosnian Serbs' political party) in Srebrenica area and Bosnian Serb representative of Srebrenica to BH Parliament was ambushed and killed. A mass exodus of Serbs from Srebrenica town to Bratunac started immediately<sup>[18]</sup>.

### Ethnic Cleansing of Serbs

#### Reliance on Serbs' Supply and Cleansing of Serbs

According to Sefer Halilovic, former Chief of Staff of BH Army, Muslim's military strategy for Srebrenica area was the total dependence on the Serbs' supplies and properties<sup>[19]</sup>. He continued to say "The only source of our supply was chetnik's (Serbs') stores and their production."<sup>[20]</sup> In other words, it was nothing more than the robbery of bandit groups. Muslims started their assault against the smallest Serbian hamlets and then against the villages where Serbs are minority. Afterwards, they targeted Serbs villages surrounded by Muslim villages. Finally, large Serbs villages were

targeted. On May 6, 1992, just two days before Zekic was killed, small hamlets, Bljeceva and Gniona, had been already robbed and burnt as a sign indicating what would happen from now on. On May 7, seven Serbs who tried to escape from Srebrenica were ambushed and killed. On May 15, the villages of Viogor, Orahovica, Karno, Civevci, and Radossevi were attacked. In this way, from May 1992 to Jan 1994, as many as 192 villages were robbed and burnt<sup>[21]</sup>. During the period, 8,000 Serbian houses had been assaulted, and 5,400 houses were completely demolished into rubbles<sup>[22]</sup>. The number of the killed were more than 1,000, including women, children, and the elderly, and 90% of those were killed particularly during the first six months from May 1992 in spite of the fact that most of them were civilians<sup>[23]</sup>.

## 20. Cruelty of violent ethnic cleansing

The wild cruelty of Muslim soldiers in Srebrenica area was very similar to the techniques of "SS Handzar" in the period of World War II. Rather than using bullets, Muslim soldiers used dull objects as weapons and gradually killed Serbs, mostly civilians, by mutilating, taking off an eye, castrating, crucifying, or burning. The traces of the torture were so visible on corpses that most of the autopsy process was videotaped and photographed by Serb doctors who conducted autopsy<sup>[24]</sup>. Meanwhile, the top Muslim commander in Srebrenica, Naser Oric, who orchestrated the attacks together with Zulfo Tursunovic, also videotaped the scene as trophies of war. Washington Post dated February 16, 1994 said: "Burnt Serb houses, headless Serb men, their bodies crumpled in a pathetic heap"<sup>[25]</sup> was on a videocassette tape. In the article, Naser said, "We had to use cold weapons that night," and explained as scenes of dead men sliced by knives roll over his 21-inch Sony.<sup>[26]</sup> As Muslim soldiers did not carry this kind of tapes with them in fleeing, Commission of Legal Experts of Republika Srpska kept most of them as evidences.

Documents which Muslim soldiers did not have time to take with them in fleeing Srebrenica revealed hideous crimes committed under the order of Naser Oric. One of the Muslim forces' report of No. 06-08/95 explained about the death of a Serb, Milko Markovic, who remained in the town of Srebrenica even after the death of Judge Zekic, as follows; "Milko Markovic was arrested, and delivered to Mis. Mis maltreated him, stung him by knife, and cut his throat. However, because Milko was still alive, Mis brought Milko to a small stream, and tortured him again. As Milko lost consciousness, Mis awoke Milko by pouring water on him. Then Mis burned him alive." It is said that Mis is living in Tuzla now without any troubles. There were some Serbs who received an illogical notice on the death of their families from Muslim authorities. For instance, the daughter of Radovan Marinkovic received the death notice of her father through ICRC (International Committee of Red Cross) on September 24, 1992. The notice with the signature of Zulfo Tursunovic said that her father was killed as a Serb soldier in front of his house. However, her father was too old in fact to be a soldier, and it is weird for any soldier to carry out military actions in front of his house.

It is a mystery why the international media and society hardly paid attention to this savage behavior although a series of attacks were so evident that even a local Muslim citizen<sup>[27]</sup> explained to the author without any hesitation. More strangely, Prof. Cherif Bassiouni, Chairman of the Commission of Experts, avoided to mention the Muslims' attacks on Srebrenica in Final Report<sup>[28]</sup>, and submitted it to Security Council through Secretary-General on May 27, 1994. It should be noted that Dragomir Djokic, then Yugoslav Charge d'affaires to UN, had submitted the criminal report and relevant evidences on the Muslims' attacks on Srebrenica to General Assembly of Security Council in June 93, and that the Dr. Stankovic, a world-famous doctor of forensic medicine who had implemented most of the autopsies for the Serbs victims in Srebrenica in 1993, had directly handed over the same report and evidences to Bassiouni. As the report became a basis for the indictments of war criminals in the territory of former Yugoslavia later, those criminals evaded accusations, and they are still free to do anything. The responsibility of Prof. Bassiouni is enormous if they repeat crimes of this kind particularly because he intentionally avoided accusing those criminals.

## 21. Absence of Bosnian Serb Forces

From 1992 to January 1993, Bosnian Serb citizens in Srebrenica area were at the mercy of Muslim forces. What Bosnian Serb citizens did was to defend themselves individually by the old weapons that they could find in the house, and wait for the Former Yugoslav Army to help them. However, it never came.

In 1992, the Former Yugoslav Army (FYA) was in confusion to see former Yugoslav republics receive the recognition of independence from international society. Although FYA had been in Bosnia since the birth of the Former Yugoslavia, FYA was suddenly left alone in the territory of the enemy after the independence of Bosnia April 1992. One after another Muslim and Croat soldiers deserted the Army. At the decision of the withdrawal from Bosnia in May 4, 1992, FYA started to withdraw and completely withdrew from Bosnia by May 15, 1992, leaving Bosnian Serbs behind.

Meanwhile, Bosnian Serb citizens, accounting more than 30% of the Bosnian population, completely relied on the arrival of FYA. Their trust in FYA was so firm that they couldn't believe the withdrawal of FYA. In other words, they didn't understand the seriousness of the situation, particularly in countryside. Thus, they failed to organize self-defense in the absence of leadership. In Srebrenica area, even after the killing of Judge Zekic, Bosnian Serb citizens just waited for the arrival of FYA without taking any all-out defense measures.

In order to fill the absence of FYA, Repulika Srpska Army was set up in May 12, 1992. Serb FYA soldiers of Bosnian origin joined Republika Srpska Army after quitting the job in FYA. Being concerned about Bosnian Serb citizens, FYA left the weapons for Republika Srpska Army. However, as the formation of Republika Srpska Army was not well-planned and make-shift in nature due to the sudden withdrawal of FYA, Republika Srpska Army was not able to take effective action in an organized way until the autumn of 1992. Even after the autumn, Republika Srpska Army, being inferior in number to Muslim Army, had to narrow down the area in which they could be totally engaged. As Bosnian Serb civilians in western Bosnia were severely assaulted by Croat Army, Republika Srpska Army focused on west, and it could not defend Bosnian Serb civilians in east Bosnia.

It was January 7 of 1993 when Bosnian Serb citizens finally realized that they had to organize themselves to defend. 'Drina Corps' was created in Srebrenica area under the direction of Mladic. Having looked at fire on their houses, Several Serbs of Bosnian origin joined 'Drina Corps' after quitting FYA's 'Drina Corps,' which was stationed in Serbia. However, FYA's 'Drina Corps' never moved to Srebrenica area, and never directed their weapons at Srebrenica area across Drina River from Serbia.

Serbs paramilitary forces were not in Srebrenica from the beginning of the war to the end of the war although there are some reports on Serbs paramilitary forces in Srebrenica. According to the report of UN<sup>[29]</sup>, for example, "Drina Wolves, Seselj Militia, Specialna Policia, White Eagles, Arkan Tigers and Krajina Serbs" were said to be seen in the area. However, "Seselj Militia" was a regular unit of Republika Srpska Army as Karadzic prohibited paramilitary groups and ordered them at the end of 1992 to join the regular Republika Srpska Army in order to put them under control. "Drina Wolves" was the name of a regular unit of Republika Srpska from the beginning. There were no "Specialna Policia" except Military Police of Republika Srpska. "White Eagles", comprising of only about 50 members, never approached to eastern Bosnia. Neither did "Arkan Tigers." "Krajina Serbs" did not have any energy to defend places other than Krajina in Croatia.

## 22. Large Territorial Gain and Limitation

By pursuing the savage policy of fighting, Muslim forces acquired as much as 95% of Srebrenica area by the end of December 1992<sup>[30]</sup>. Sefer Halilovic boasted of the expansion of the territory in his book, saying that Srebrenica and Zepa had become an unrealized dream for alive and dead chetniks (Serbs) in spring 1993<sup>[31]</sup>. However, serious problems began to change the course of the war from the spring of 1993. The most important problem was lack of food. Having faced the vast territory stretching 70 miles (approx. 113km), from the village of Zepa in the south to Kamenica in the north by the end of January 1993, Muslims did not have any more Serbs villages to attack in order to obtain food.<sup>[32]</sup> A huge amount of food that Muslim forces had taken from Serbs was consumed up by the end of the spring in 1993, and the shortage of food became evident. The second problem was the encirclement of Srebrenica. Geographically, Srebrenica town had been surrounded by villages that had the relatively large Serbs population. Since the Muslims' drive to mop up Serbs was initiated from the inside of Srebrenica town, Serbs were simply pushed outwards and Muslims were drawn closer into the center in exchange. Therefore, although the encircled territory of Muslims grew and expanded outwards, the position of Muslims remained unchanged, being encircled by Serbs. The last problem was the start of the offensives of Bosnian Serb forces. As Drina corps of Republika Srpska Army was eventually created in January 1993<sup>[33]</sup>, more effective and systematic strategy began to be implemented. Muslim forces were required to take some urgent measures.

## 23. Safe Area

### Srebrenica as a temporary base of Muslim attack

Under the plan of Muslim leaders, Muslims' territories in Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde were supposed to grow endlessly until the three areas would merge into a huge chunk connecting central and north eastern Bosnia and create a huge cordon between Muslim state and Serbia in Yugoslavia. When Muslims' territory in Srebrenica area hit the ceiling of expansion, however, this plan collapsed, and the role of Srebrenica changed. Now, they were just like isolated islands

in the enemy's sea, waiting for the control of the enemy. However, they could be temporary bases for Muslim forces to attack Serbs until the enclaves would come into the hands of Bosnian Serb forces. Particularly, the location of Srebrenica was best suited to break the Bosnian Serbs' vital supply route (Sarajevo-Vlasenica-Milici-Konjevic Polje - Zvornik) for Sarajevo. Therefore, while knowing that no enclave can last long, Muslim leaders wanted to keep Srebrenica as the base as long as possible. Later, on September 22, 1994, Izetbegovic admitted to a senior UN official that Srebrenica was 'indefensible.'<sup>[34]</sup>

## 24. Involvement of UN

What Muslim leaders came up with a device to prolong the life of Srebrenica was to use their own civilians and UN to their advantage. Having known that international organizations would bring relief supplies to the civilians, Muslim leaders have decided to keep civilians in the enclave in order that Muslim forces could obtain food and other supplies. In fact, at the end of November in 1992, UNHCR already dispatched the convoy of relief supplies to Muslims in Srebrenica area<sup>[35]</sup> partly because Srebrenica area became an enclave encircled by Serbs who had been actually pushed outwards by Muslim forces of Srebrenica, and partly because the shortage of food became a serious problem. Being helped by this relief supplies, Muslim forces of Srebrenica launched large-scale attacks on Serbs villages along the Drina River, such as Loznica, Bijelovac, and Sikiric, two weeks later.<sup>[36]</sup>

A number of evidences that belong to Commission of Legal Experts to Republika Srpska easily prove that Muslim forces considered civilians as a magnet to attract relief food from international organizations. One of the proofs is 'demonstration of citizens.' A large group of civilians complained about too small rations of wheat flour, and protested against the Muslim authorities of Srebrenica on May 21, 1993<sup>[37]</sup> although UNHCR had sent wheat flour more than the required amount. A Muslim woman that spent years in the enclave of Srebrenica also complained in the author's interview<sup>[38]</sup> that a half of the vehicles carrying humanitarian aid had been usually empty. Meanwhile, Ibran Mustafic, a founder of SDA (Muslim's political party) of Srebrenica and representative to Muslim BH Parliament, explained about the abundance of supplies as follows: "It was always possible to buy at the market anything one might have wanted. Hardly anything was lacking. Still the only source of goods was humanitarian aid since not a single commercial convoy had ever reached Srebrenica."<sup>[39]</sup> In order to solve the problem, International aid agencies suggested that the refugees should elect their own representative for the distribution of food. However, the man elected was killed the day after his election.<sup>[40]</sup> As Dutch battalion said in "Srebrenica: Record of a war crime", Naser Oric<sup>[41]</sup>, top commander in Srebrenica, and his fellows such as Zulfo Tursunovic and Hakija Meholic, were nothing more than gangsters who took most of relief supplies from refugee population for his personal profit<sup>[42]</sup>.

Human shield was the other way of using civilians. When UN decided to evacuate 15,000 people at the end of March and at the beginning of April in 1993, the Muslim commanders were furious about the idea, by insisting that UN operation was tantamount to 'ethnic cleansing' and decided that the convoy should not be allowed to come in Tuzla, Muslim territory. Later, however, the Muslim commanders privately confided to a reporter of Independent the real reason: Serbs could not launch an all-out attacks as long as civilians and refugees were there<sup>[43]</sup>. Muslim forces' attitude towards their own civilians or refugees was merciless particularly when Srebrenica was about to fall under Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995. During the night of July 10 and 11, 1995, people started leaving Srebrenica town and headed for Potocari because of the combat. UNPROFOR decided to help transfer those people to Potocari. However, Muslim soldiers and Mayor of Srebrenica turned those people back<sup>[44]</sup>, thinking that civilians would become shields from Bosnian Serb forces and hoping for the direct involvement of UN who was supposed to protect civilians.

When Muslim leaders were looking for a more effective device to prolong the life of Srebrenica, the international society gave the most ideal scheme for Muslim leaders partly out of the egoistic national interests and partly out of the emotional outrage against Bosnian Serbs offensive called "aggression" and "ethnic cleansing". The scheme which international society offered was the half-hearted setup of "Safe Area", a product of each country's compromise. The most terrible compromise was Paragraph 5 of UN Security Council Resolution 836, which allowed Bosnian forces to stay in "Safe Area" together with civilians<sup>[45]</sup>. Moreover, although "Safe Area" was supposed to be demilitarized, UNPROFOR were asked not to pursue the demilitarization so actively<sup>[46]</sup>. Immediately after signing the agreement of cease-fire and demilitarization of Srebrenica and Zepa with Mladic (Supreme military commander of Republika Srpska), Halilovic (Supreme military commander of Muslim Bosnian Army), sent the order to both enclaves that weapons should not be delivered<sup>[47]</sup>. He explained to Naser Oric that Muslim forces should hand over only unusable arms<sup>[48]</sup>. In this way, UN, which was supposed to be an impartial institution, allowed Muslim forces to stay with civilians, attack Serbs from the enclave and secure food under the protection of UNPROFOR. It was the best environments for Muslim forces that wanted to break the Bosnian Serbs' vital supply line rather than to expand the

enclave and it was the worst environment for Muslim citizens who did not want to be trapped in the combats. Ibran Mustafic criticized this strategy of Muslim government later, saying that the person who had issued the order should bring his family to Srebrenica before the implementation.

## 25. Normal War Engagement

The conditions that were set by UN SC allowed Muslim forces in Srebrenica enclave to do virtually anything. Under the Muslim Command Unit of 8th Operative Group, 28th Division, consisting of 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, etc., launched the attacks on Serbs villages that had been already attacked during 1992 and 1993. Most of the attacks were terroristic action by a small group of soldiers. More than 500 Serbs were killed by the attack from "Safe Area", and the cruelty of killings were the same as before<sup>[49]</sup>. Dutch battalion later described this attack as follows. "Operations were relatively unpredictable because the units were almost without training and rather non-disciplined. Muslim forces made systematic assaults from the enclave, and afterwards they used to withdraw to the territory under the protection of UN."<sup>[50]</sup> It is needless to say UNPROFOR as well as civilians were used as human shields.

Military supplies were sufficient in "Safe Area," so that there were almost no problem to continue the offensive. The huge documents which Muslim forces left in Srebrenica delineate each delivery of ammunition, military uniforms, boots, computer equipment, office equipment, cigarettes, etc. Furthermore, even money amounting to 308,850 DEM were transferred to Naser Oric, according to the document from Commander Colonel Avdo Palic (dated Feb 14, 1995). More surprisingly, Muslim forces used even helicopters between Headquarters and Srebrenica or Zepa<sup>[51]</sup>. A series of documents which were exchanged with Headquarters recorded the helicopter accident of 7 May 1995 at Igrisnik between Zepa and Srebrenica, informing 11 deaths and 9 injuries.<sup>[52]</sup> Taking an advantage of virtually free traffic, US secretly had communication equipment flown to Tuzla, which would enable Muslim forces to coordinate offensive operations between larger units<sup>[53]</sup>. Thanks to those conditions of "Safe Area", Muslim forces regained the power enough to attack Bosnian Serbs' vital supply route, being well coordinated with other units. Even one month before the fall of Srebrenica, Muslim forces in "Safe Area" were planning to break the road communication around Vlasenica in cooperation with the units of 2nd corps in Sarajevo.<sup>[54]</sup>

Meanwhile, operation of Republika Srpska forces of Bosnian Serbs were generally directed to keep the status quo and to protect Bosnian Serbs population in Srebrenica area from the attacks of Muslim forces in the enclave, or "Safe Area"<sup>[55]</sup>. As all Muslim enclaves or "Safe Area" including Srebrenica were less important for Serbs, territory wise, Republika Srpska forces did not care very much about the enclaves as long as Muslim forces refrained from attacking Serbs' village and the Serbs' vital supply route. Moreover, Bosnian Serb forces did not have enough soldiers to take over Srebrenica although they had more heavy weapons, which would become ineffective in the mountainous landscape of Srebrenica. Therefore, even when Muslim forces of Srebrenica faced food crisis in spring 1993, the two Bosnian Serb political leaders, Karadzic and Milosevic, were adamant that there was no intention to take Srebrenica.<sup>[56]</sup> Although Mladic had not been in good terms with Karadzic in those day by his quasi-coup d'état against Karadzic, he also answered to Kareeman's question on July 21, 1995, after the fall of Srebrenica, that he would not have thought about attacking the enclaves if Muslim soldiers in "Safe Area," such as Srebrenica, Gorazde, and Zepa had been completely disarmed<sup>[57]</sup>. In addition, on the fall of Srebrenica, Mladic showed his indifference to the territory itself by asking representatives of Muslim refugees and civilians in Srebrenica whether they would like to stay in Srebrenica or go to Muslim territories or foreign countries. What Bosnian Serb forces wanted from Muslim forces was to stop the assaults against Serbian civilians and their vital supply route.

## 26. Fall of Srebrenica

### Chaotic Muslim Soldiers

When Srebrenica began to fall into the hands of Serbs from July 6, 1995, Muslim forces in Srebrenica were hysterical, being in confusion and chaos. Having seen Dutch Battalion of UNPROFOR withdrawing, Muslim forces together with three citizens shot a blue helmet, Sergeant Van Rensen, to death on July 8.<sup>[58]</sup> On the same day, some Muslim soldiers threw grenade at Dutch Battalion, demanding the Dutch to go towards Bosnian Serb forces and fight.<sup>[59]</sup> On July 9, Muslim soldiers who did not allow Dutch to withdraw held another Dutch battalion for overnight<sup>[60]</sup>. On July 10, Muslim troops threatened a Dutch captain with anti-tank weapons not to move although the Dutch captain wanted to move in order to target Bosnian Serb forces more directly<sup>[61]</sup>. On July 11, Dutch soldiers saw mutual fighting in various places between Muslim soldiers who wanted to surrender and Muslim soldiers who wanted to continue to fight<sup>[62]</sup>. On July 12, several Dutch soldiers saw a man hang himself in factory complex opposite of the Dutch base in Potocari.<sup>[63]</sup>

### Negotiation With Muslim Civilians & Refugees in Srebrenica Enclave

At the fall of Srebrenica, Mladic negotiated with Karremans, Dutch commander, and three representatives of Muslim civilians and refugees three times. Based on the decision of the three representatives including a woman, Mladic organized the evacuation of people, and asked for the help of the three representatives to carry out the evacuation smoothly. What he repeatedly told them was to ask soldiers to give up weapons within 24 hours. He said that Muslim soldiers, including soldiers not in uniform and even war criminals, would be treated according to the Geneva Convention if they hand over their weapons.

### Muslim Soldiers Who Did Not Surrender

The conclusion of this negotiation must have been a nightmare for Muslim forces that were in confusion. Most of the soldiers were occupied with the worst scenario in which Bosnian Serb forces would execute all men. Later, some of the Muslim soldiers who had fled admitted, in various magazines, that the reason they had decided to flee was due to this worst scenario.<sup>[64]</sup> Besides, Muslim hard liners' pressure was mounting so high that soldiers that had decided to surrender had to expect some assaults from their own fellows<sup>[65]</sup>. At the night of July 10, the Muslim soldiers who had decided not to surrender started fleeing. According to Dutch Battalion, a group of some 300 soldiers of Muslim forces disappeared in moving toward the west.<sup>[66]</sup> On the night of July 11-12, between 10,000 and 15,000 men, who had converged on the area of Jaglici and Susnjari, went in the forests to reach Tuzla or Kladanj.<sup>[67]</sup> Mehruudin Mesanovic said in the local magazine of Sarajevo that brigades gathered in Buljim on July 11 started into woods by platoon and platoon.<sup>[68]</sup> Although no confirmed figures are available, it is estimated that 10,000-15,000 Muslim soldiers had left Srebrenica through woods according to the Report of the Secretary-General<sup>[69]</sup> and other accounts<sup>[70]</sup>.

### Muslim Who Surrendered

Approximately 25,000<sup>[71]</sup> out of 40,000 Muslims<sup>[72]</sup> decided to surrender and gathered in Potocari. According to Dutch battalion<sup>[73]</sup>, the majority of people were women, children, and the elderly, and the military capable men accounted for only 2% to 3%. Bosnian Serb forces separated them into a group of women, children, and the elderly and a group of military capable men. The purpose of this separation was two-fold: to catch Muslim soldiers as many as possible as war prisoners in order to exchange them for Serbs imprisoned by Muslim Army particularly in Sarajevo, and to screen out Muslims who had committed hideous crimes against Serbian citizens particularly in 1992 and 1993. Being free from allegation of military engagement, a group of women, children, and the elderly were directly transferred to Kladanj, a Muslim territory. On the other hand, a group of men, amounting to about 500 to 750<sup>[74]</sup> (or 2%-3% of 25,000), were transferred to Bratunac, where they were screened for the check of war crimes, and were grouped into three; (1) a group of men who did not have any criminal records, (2) a group of men who were required to go through farther check for war crimes, (3) a group of men who were determined to be war criminals.

As for (1), Bosnian Serb forces considered the men of this group as civilians but not as prisoners of war. Thus, they were transferred from Bratunac to Kladanj, a Muslim territory, on July 14, immediately after the criminal screening. The fact that the men in this group did not become the targets for the exchange of prisoners was noteworthy because the men in this group might have fought as soldiers. In fact, a Muslim man that had been released as a civilian on this time in Bratunac disappointed Bosnian Serb forces later when he was caught as a prisoner of war on the front line near Sarajevo<sup>[75]</sup>. The number of Muslim men in this group is estimated to be around 500 because six buses and four trucks are said to be used to transport them<sup>[76]</sup>.

The Muslim men in the remaining two groups became prisoners of war, according to their war activities. As for (2), the group was transferred from the prison of Bratunac to the prison of Batkovic. As for (3), the group was sent from the prison of Bratunac to the prison of Zvornik. The number of Muslim men in these two groups is estimated to be less than 250 in total because the number of men in all three groups totaled 500 to 750, and the group (1) consisted of approximately 500 men. When ICRC visited all three prisons in Bratunac, Batkovic and Zvornik afterwards<sup>[77]</sup>, it registered 164 persons from Srebrenica at the prison of Batkovic on July 26, 1995<sup>[78]</sup>, and noted 193 persons from Srebrenica in total by November 1995<sup>[79]</sup>. Later, the majority of the Muslim war prisoners in these groups seems to have been exchanged for the Serbian war prisoners via ICRC. One of the example is Ibran Mustafic, a founder of the ruling Muslim party (SDA) in Srebrenica and Srebrenica representative to Muslim Parliament<sup>[80]</sup>. He was exchanged for a Serb imprisoned by Muslim Army<sup>[81]</sup> after having spent nine months in the prison in Batkovic although Mustafic was on the list of war criminals of Bosnian Serbs side<sup>[82]</sup>. Unfortunately, the number of the persons who were exchanged from the group (2) and (3) is unknown due to the confidentiality of ICRC documents. Yet, taking into consideration the fact that about 500 out of 750 men gathering in Potocari were transferred to Kladanj unconditionally,

the remaining 250 must have been very precious war prisoners for Bosnian Serb forces.

Other than the above three groups, there was a group of 88 wounded persons<sup>[83]</sup>. As for the evacuation of this group, ICRC said that 65 of them were transferred to Muslim territories on July 17 and 18<sup>[84]</sup>. Although 23 remained, ICRC noted their identities to trace them as war prisoners afterwards<sup>[85]</sup>. As ICRC's check of identities would secure the lives of the noted persons, almost all wounded persons are considered to be exchanged for Serbian war prisoners later. Other than ICRC report, there were two accounts that contradict each other: the statement of Medicina Sans Frontiers<sup>[86]</sup> and the statement of Dutch battalions<sup>[87]</sup>. Taking into consideration that the statement of Medicina Sans Frontiers was also inconsistent with ICRC report and that the statement was given by the locals that Medicina Sans Frontiers employed from the enclave, their statement should not be taken seriously.

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*THE BETRAYAL OF SREBRENICA: WHY DID THE MASSACRE HAPPEN? WILL IT HAPPEN AGAIN?*

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

MARCH 31, 1998

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Mr. Hasan Nuhanovic, former translator, U.N. Peacekeeping Force in Srebrenica  
Mr. Eric Stover, Director of Human Rights Center, Adjunct Professor of Public Health, University of California/Berkeley  
Ms. Diane Paul, Consultant on Former Yugoslavia, Human Rights Watch  
Mr. John Heffernan, Executive Director, Coalition for International Justice

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Prepared statements:

Hon. Christopher H. Smith, a Representative in Congress from New Jersey and Chairman, Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights

Mr. Hasan Nuhanovic

Mr. Eric Stover

Ms. Diane Paul

Mr. John Heffernan

Additional material submitted for the record:

Statement from the Committee of the Dispossessed from Srebrenica and Zepa

Map of the Trail of Life and Death

Article written by Bianca Jagger from *The European*, week of September 25, 1997, "The Betrayal of Srebrenica"

Letter written to Mr. Hasan Nuhanovic from U.N. Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 27, 1997

Letter from Comite International de la Croix-Rouge, May 20, 1996

Letter written to Mr. Hasan Nuhanovic from UNHCR Sarajevo, June 9, 1997

Letter written to Mr. Hasan Nuhanovic from Ministerie van Defensie, November 7, 1997

THE BETRAYAL OF SREBRENICA: WHY DID THE MASSACRE HAPPEN? WILL IT HAPPEN AGAIN?

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TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 1998

House of Representatives,  
Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights,  
Committee on International Relations,  
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:10 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. [presiding] The Subcommittee will come to order.

Good morning. Today's hearing is about four terrible days in July 1995, when an estimated 8,000 people were executed by Bosnian Serb soldiers who had overrun the United Nations designated safe area of Srebrenica. The invaders killed women and children, and they almost certainly killed the majority of the adult male population of the so-called safe area. These brutal killings were not committed in battle. They were committed against people who were unarmed and helpless and who had been repeatedly assured that they would not be harmed if they surrendered. In some cases, these assurances came not only from the killers themselves, but also from the U.N. peacekeeping forces whose mission was to protect them. The evidence is overwhelming that the executions were committed with the specific intention of destroying the Bosnian Muslim population of the area. This intention is the central element in the crime of genocide.

The U.N. peacekeeping forces in Srebrenica were charged with enforcing Security Council Resolution 836, which had pledged to defend the safe areas with "all necessary means, including the use of force." But when the moment of truth came, the U.N. forces offered only token resistance to the Serb offensive. Their military and political commanders had redefined their primary mission not as the protection of the people of Srebrenica, but as the safety of the U.N. forces themselves. When Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladic threatened violence against the blue-helmeted U.N. soldiers, here is the way one of those soldiers described the reaction. I quote: "Everybody got a fright. You could easily get killed in such an operation. As far as I knew, we had not been sent to Srebrenica to defend the enclave, but rather as some kind of spruced-up observers."

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So that is what the peacekeepers became. Observers to genocide. Soon they became something more than observers. On July 13, the Dutch blue-helmet battalion handed over to the Serb invaders 300 Bosnian Muslims who had sought safety within the U.N. compound. They watched as the men were separated from the women and the children, a process which was already well known in Bosnia as a sign that the men were in imminent danger of death. These men were never heard from again.

Terrible as these events were, they could hardly have been a surprise to those who liked to call themselves the international community. I happened to be chairman of the Helsinki Commission at the time of the fall of Srebrenica. Three months earlier, the commission had held a hearing documenting the systematic nature of the ethnic cleansing then going on in Bosnia and the subsequent widespread attempts by Serb militants to destroy mosques and to otherwise erase all evidence of Muslim culture.

Another hearing also in April 1995 dealt with the question of what the United States ought to do about the atrocities being perpetrated in Bosnia. Richard Holbrooke represented the Administration. Though he offered sympathy for the Bosnians, he gave us all the reasons why the United States would neither come to their defense nor allow them to defend themselves through the lifting of the arms embargo. A genuine effort by the United States to halt the slaughter in Bosnia-Herzegovina would not come until months later when it was too late for the victims of Srebrenica.

In the 2 1/2 years that have passed since the fall of Srebrenica, we have learned more details not only about the scope and the brutality of the massacres, but also about why nobody did anything to stop them. First, as some of our witnesses will testify today, it appears that the United Nation's top military and political officials in the former Yugoslavia, Mr. Akashi and Bernard Janvier, regarded the safe areas as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. As David Rohde and others have written, most projected scenarios for an end-game in Bosnia involve trading the Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia for Serb-dominated suburbs of Sarajevo.

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It further appears that these same officials may have been on better terms with the Serb commanders who were threatening the enclaves than with the Bosnian Muslim population that they were supposed to protect. To paraphrase a remark by another United Nations leader about another mass murder, Mladic seems to have impressed them as a man that they could do business with. Even before July 1995, Akashi and Janvier had begun to act as though the protection of the safe areas was not an important part of their mandate and they had communicated this to the Serbs. A month earlier, Akashi may have reached a secret agreement with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic that, in return for releasing U.N. hostages held by the Serbs, the U.N. forces would stop calling for NATO airstrikes in response to future Serb aggression.

Within days of the massacres, accounts by survivors and by U.N. peacekeepers themselves had begun to surface. It also appears that the United Nations had access to satellite photographs of mass graves and perhaps even of men kneeling on the ground waiting to be shot. This evidence had surprisingly little effect on the attitudes of the U.N. commanders, whose own reports had described nothing more serious than harassment and unfortunate incidents. Rohde reports that 3 weeks after the massacres at Srebrenica, Akashi and Janvier had dinner with Milosevic at a hunting lodge outside of Belgrade. When Milosevic pointed out that hunting was prohibited in the immediate vicinity of the lodge, Akashi joked that it was a safe area for animals. Everybody laughed.

These are serious charges. At the least, a betrayal of trust, at worst, complicity in the crime of genocide. Unfortunately most of the journalists and human rights advocates who have studied the events surrounding the fall of Srebrenica, believe them to be true. We will never know for sure until the United Nations releases the documents in its possession that will tell the world what the peacekeepers knew and when they knew it.

Two weeks ago in preparation for this hearing, I wrote to Secretary General Kofi Annan requesting the release of communications between Akashi, Janvier, and other U.N. officials about the events in Srebrenica. I also invited them to send a witness to be at today's hearing. They chose not to send a witness. The only documents they have sent have been a couple of U.N. press releases and other documents that were already made public.

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I intend to renew my request. The credibility of the United Nations is very much at stake in this matter, particularly because some of the documents that are still being kept secret were addressed to Secretary Annan himself in his former position as head of U.N. peacekeeping operations.

I also requested that our own government release any records in its possession that may shed light on what the international community knew about

Srebrenica before, during, and immediately after the massacres. I particularly hope our government will give a full accounting of when the U.S. intelligence analysts and policymakers came to understand the importance of satellite pictures of men kneeling on the ground near what soon turned out to be mass graves.

I make these requests not only because the victims and their families are entitled to the truth, not only because truth and justice are essential prerequisites to peace and stability, but because we need to find out what we did wrong and make sure that we change it in the future. Srebrenica was not the first nor the last time the United States or the United Nations has known about massacres in progress and has done nothing.

President Clinton recently acknowledged that we ignored the signs of the 1994 Rwanda genocide until it was too late. He has not yet acknowledged that his Administration made exactly the same mistake during the later stage of the same conflict, when in 1996 and 1997, they failed to act on credible reports that the Rwandan Patriotic army was engaging in mass slaughter of Hutu refugees. Most recently the international response to the killings in Kosovo, which could become Milosevic's next Bosnia, shows that we have not yet learned the lesson of Srebrenica. At a minimum, that lesson requires that when we are put on notice that a massacre is about to happen, we must not wait for proof beyond a reasonable doubt before acting to prevent it. Such proof always comes too late.

I would like to yield now to the very distinguished chairman of the Full Committee, Mr. Gilman, for any opening comments he might have.

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Chairman **GILMAN**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to commend you for holding today's hearing on the betrayal of Srebrenica and why this massacre occurred, and what we can do to prevent it from happening again.

As the international community is once again confronted with the same kind of violence in the former Yugoslavia, it is certainly timely to remind ourselves of the tragic occurrences at Srebrenica in the summer of 1995. The name of that small town in eastern Bosnia has come to epitomize the ignominy of our collective response to that conflict. During 4 years of the bloodiest conflict seen in Europe since the end of the Second World War, the world regrettably stood by, watched, and treated, threatened, vacillated, and capitulated as a gang of war criminals systematically attempted to exterminate the Bosnian Muslims. Our feckless policy culminated with the massacre of Srebrenica, where some 8,000 persons are believed to have been murdered in cold blood.

We should recall that Srebrenica had been designated a safe area by the U.N. Security Council, whose members had guaranteed the safety of all of its inhabitants. Regrettably and tragically for the citizens of Srebrenica who took the United Nations at its word about the pledges made and the assurances that were given, the pledges were never backed up with the military resources to ensure that aggression against Srebrenica could be met and thwarted.

The shameful result was that Bosnian Serbs were able to amass around the town, envelop it, finally overrun it with only the most weak and pulsivious protests from the west. It is believed that our government had satellite photographs simultaneously to the attack on Srebrenica and that we saw what was about to happen. Madeleine Albright, then our U.N. representative showed other Security Council members photos shortly after the attack that revealed signs of disturbed earth in the soccer field believed to be the evidence of a mass grave. Yet despite the knowledge of what was happening, the world just stood by, watched, and did nothing.

Troops from the Netherlands were in a token UNPROFOR unit that had responsibility for protecting Srebrenica. Those troops were ordered by U.N. commanders to do nothing other than to secure their own safety. They tried to provide shelter to several thousand Bosnians who fled to their compound. But when they were surrounded by the Serbs, they were ordered to withdraw again by the same U.N. command.

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In the Netherlands, there was denunciation and a sense of national guilt for what happened to these Dutch soldiers. I think we should be saying to our Dutch friends that they should feel no greater shame or remorse for the tragedy that unfolded in Srebrenica than any other country. We are all equally guilty of looking the other way, and now making excuses in allowing that slaughter to have occurred. The policy that permitted Srebrenica to happen was one agreed to by the entire international community.

Today as we learn of a renewed campaign of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, let's hope that the memory of Srebrenica will be seared in our souls and let our shameful response in that instance be redeemed by a strong resolute action that prevents the same fate from befalling the Albanian majority of Kosovo.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to note that next week I will be sending a staff team from our International Relations Committee to Srebrenica to review these issues and to review the role of the newly elected government there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. **SMITH**. Thank you, Chairman Gilman.

I would like to introduce our panelists for today's hearing and ask that they limit their opening statements to between 10 and 15 minutes and their full statements will be made a part of the record.

Our first witness will be Bianca Jagger, who is a member of the Executive Director's Leadership Council of Amnesty International USA, as well as a member of the advisory committee of Human Rights Watch Americas. For the past 20 years, she has campaigned for human rights around the world, including extensive work in Central America and the former Yugoslavia. From 1993 to 1995, Ms. Jagger evacuated children out of Bosnia for medical care in the United States.

Hasan Nuhanovic was formerly a translator for the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Srebrenica. Members of his family have not been seen since they were turned over to Bosnian Serbs by U.N. peacekeeping forces in July 1995. Since that time, Mr. Nuhanovic has been investigating the fate of the thousands who were turned over to Serb forces and the possibility of complicity of U.N. forces in those disappearances.

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Eric Stover is the director of the Human Rights Center and an adjunct professor of public health at the University of California at Berkeley. He was the executive director of Physicians for Human Rights until December 1995, and has served as an expert investigator on several missions for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague.

Diane Paul is a consultant of the former Yugoslavia for Human Rights Watch on the former Yugoslavia. She has traveled to the region in 1993 as a delegate for the International Red Cross. Since that time, she has done extensive field work in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, and Kosovo, and has written numerous articles and reports on the human rights situation in those areas.

Finally, John Heffernan is the executive director of the Coalition for International Justice, a nonprofit organization created to assist the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the tribunal for Rwanda. Prior to his service with the coalition, Mr. Heffernan was the director of the International Rescue Committee's operation for refugees in Zagreb, Croatia.

Ms. Jagger, if you could begin now, the Committee would appreciate it.

STATEMENT OF BIANCA JAGGER, MEMBER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Ms. JAGGER. Let me thank you, Congressman Smith, for having taken the leadership in having this hearing. Thank you, Congressman Gilman, for your offer to send an inquiry group to Srebrenica. It would be very helpful.

It has been 2 1/2 years since I have been haunted by the atrocities perpetrated in Srebrenica. I decided that I was not going to forget those who were executed, massacred, tortured and buried alive because I felt that if I forgot them I would be completing their extermination. I met many of the women who were either the widows or the mothers or the daughters of those men and boys who were killed. I met Hasan Nuhanovic. It was meeting them that convinced me and prompted me to do everything in my power so that we needed to do an inquiry into what happened in Srebrenica.

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During that time, I have written articles that have appeared all over Europe. I have lobbied high ranking members of the United Nations requesting that they hold an inquiry into the United Nations. Strangely enough, as a member of the United Nations said to me the other night, the United Nations holds inquiry when we lose a car, when we have a computer that has disappeared, but 8,000 people were not important enough for them to call for an inquiry.

I must point out as well that there are many high ranking officials inside the United Nations who feel that there is a necessity for the United Nations to become transparent and accountable to their actions and who want the Secretary to open an inquiry as to what happened in Srebrenica.

It is important, and Congressman Smith pointed out that now there has been a suit against the State Department, the CIA, the National Security, requesting that photographs and all the information that the U.S. Government has be released. Until now, we have received information relating to all parts of Bosnia, but very little information has been released that has anything to do with Srebrenica.

It is important too to point out that there are moves around the world today. There is an organization that deals with the prevention of genocide in France who have asked for the indictment of General Janvier.

I would like to introduce various documents that I have obtained from inside the United Nations of those people who did not agree that they should give the seal of approval to what happened in Srebrenica. That includes as well letters of exchange between the Right Honorable Patty Ashdown, letters that he wrote to Prime Minister Major where he speaks about the fact that General Janvier on the 24th of May gave a speech where he almost told the members that he thought that they should abandon the safe areas. It is the belief of Mr. Ashdown in this particular letter that there was a change of policy that took place as a result of that meeting on the 24th in the Security Council, and that because of that, the members, government had decided that they will abandon Srebrenica, which if you will look at the timetable schedule, it will make some sense.

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I wanted to just go through very quickly about the timetable of what happened leading up to the fall of Srebrenica. There is so much detail that what I will do is I will request if I can introduce as a part of my testimony all the documents that I have obtained from the United Nations.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, that request will be honored. Anyone on the panel who would like to add additional documentation to the record, it will be made a part of the record without objection.

Ms. JAGGER. I think maybe I would like to be able to read Judge Riad when he asked for the indictment of General Janvier and Karadzic. He described in the following way. "The evidence standard to the prosecutor describes scenes of imaginable savagery. Thousands of men executed and buried in mass graves, hundreds of men buried alive, men and women mutilated and slaughtered, children killed before the mother's eyes, a grandfather forced to eat the liver of his own grandson. These are truly scenes from hell, written on the darkest pages of human history."

Massacres in the wood. As Srebrenica's population fled the coming army and its fire power, the fate which befell the column of people who set off to reach Tuzla on the night of the 11th of July, 1995, and on the morning of the 12th of July, was an appalling one. The column was ambushed by Bosnian Serb soldiers attacking with artillery shells and anti-aircraft guns, automatic weapons, and the like. These attacks caused enormous loss of life. Thousands of Muslims were killed and many more were wounded. Many were driven bezerk by the assault and eye witness accounts described how people were so horrified that they committed suicide to avoid capture. Many who were captured or surrendered, among them the wounded, were summarily executed.

One eye witness described how more than 100 captive Muslim men, women and children were slowly slaughtered by a group of Serbian soldiers using knives. Witnesses also saw hundreds of Muslim men buried in mass graves, some after having been shot, some buried alive. Mass executions at Karakaj, thousands of Muslims suffered, surrendered to Serb forces under the command and control of Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, having been assured that they will not be harmed.

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Some of the Serb soldiers giving assurances were wearing stolen U.N. uniforms. The captured men were then taken to a large assembly point, including a football stadium where they were addressed by Ratko Mladic. Hereto, many were summarily executed.

According to the testimonies of the witnesses who survived, the men were then taken the next day on or about the 14th of July 1995, taken in trucks to at least two nearby fields, those fields that the U.S. Government had photographs of. They were then taken out in small groups, told to find a spot, and then shot where they stood. The survivors say that the men were shot in the thousands until the field was full of bodies after they were shot. Serbian soldiers walked over the bodies, checking that everyone was dead.

I have, by the way, taken testimonies of many of these men and women. I can tell you that I worked for many years in Central America. I heard a lot of atrocious accounts of what happened there. But nothing compares to what I heard in Srebrenica. That is why it is extraordinary that 2 1/2 years after there has been no inquiry with the exception of the one that is being carried out today by the Dutch.

I would like to point out as well that the Dutch are doing an independent inquiry. They have requested on various occasions from the United Nations that they release documents which until now they have not been able to attain.

I am here because I believe that if we stay silent and we don't speak out about what happened in Srebrenica, we will be part of the coverup. Maybe a coverup is a big word, but everything seems to indicate that the fact that the international community has refused to apprehend Karadzic and Mladic and that there is no intention whatsoever until now to do so, maybe because they feel that it will implicate them and that maybe it will shed light as to the kind of war crimes or crimes against humanity that were committed by some members of the international community, and in particular, of the United Nations. Maybe it will shed light as to the kinds of agreements that were made between General Mladic and General Janvier, and many other dealings that were carried out by European and U.S. politicians who were in Bosnia who negotiated the peace accord with Milosevic, not withstanding the fact that Milosevic should be considered to be a war criminal.

It is for that reason that I thank you for holding this hearing, and that I hope that what Hasan Nuhanovic has to say may convince you that it is important that there be an inquiry and that we open and that we have clarity and accountability about the kinds of crimes that took place in Srebrenica. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Jagger, thank you very much for that very moving testimony. When you appeared some years ago before the Helsinki Commission and brought with you some of the women who had suffered the absolute cruelty of rape which was done by the Bosnian Serbs as a way of breaking the Muslims, then you were bearing witness. You continue to bear witness, and I think it is very important to note that it was you who encouraged that this hearing occur today. I am very grateful for your tenacity in keeping this extremely important human rights issue and the fact that there has to be an accounting with regard to Srebrenica so that these kinds of atrocities are less likely to happen again.

Again, as we have looked at the volumes of information—my staff director and I, and members of the Helsinki Commission staff who are here and continue to monitor this—it is one of the gravest and poorest performances ever by the United Nations when they not only apparently looked the other way, but may indeed have been complicit in these atrocities. So again, I want to thank you. We need to continue probing until we get to the bottom of it. We will do that. I thank you again for your testimony.

Chairman GILMAN. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Chairman GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank Bianca for her very eloquent statement. She has been a true leader for human rights throughout the world. We hope she will continue in that area.

Mr. Chairman, if I might interrupt, I see we are joined by a very distinguished gentleman who has come to our Committee. Hans Christian Kruger, who is a Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, formerly Secretary General of the European Commission on Human Rights, and he is here exploring arrangements for a celebration by their commission of their 50th anniversary next year of the Council of Europe. We welcome you, Hans Christian Kruger.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Chairman Gilman.

I would like to ask Mr. Nuhanovic if he would now present his testimony.

STATEMENT OF HASAN NUHANOVIC, FORMER TRANSLATOR, U.N. PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN SREBRENICA

Mr. NUHANOVIC. I want to thank everybody here for inviting me to testify. I came to Washington with an intention to ask for support. The families of missing persons from Srebrenica in Bosnia really need support from anybody who is willing to help us because we really feel strongly that we are left alone.

There are many agencies and organizations who have a mandate to search for missing persons in Bosnia, but for 2 1/2 years only 10 persons missing from Srebrenica were identified out of 8,000 to 10,000 people who are missing, which is a very, very small number. I will explain in some chronological order of events what happened in the area of a Dutch compound in Potocari, which is a village north of Srebrenica after Srebrenica fell to the Serb hands.

I was in Srebrenica with my parents and my brother for 3 1/2 years as a refugee from another town in eastern Bosnia. Srebrenica fell on 11 July 1995. I at that time worked as the interpreter of U.N. military observers and also for the Dutch battalion commander. On 11 July, Srebrenica fell to the Bosnian Serb army and approximately 25,000 refugees moved toward Dutchbat headquarters in Potocari village. The Dutch allowed about 6,000 refugees to enter the camp, including my parents and my brother. The remaining refugees were told to stay outside the camp.

In the meantime, a group of 12,000 to 15,000 refugees, mainly grown up males and some women, take to the surrounding mountains, attempting to flee to Tuzla. So what I saw is related to the situation, what happened to the people who were among the 25,000 people around the area of Dutch battalion compound. I haven't seen what happened to the people in the mountains.

On 12 July, the day before the fall of Srebrenica, the Bosnia Serb Army (BSA) commander, General Ratko Mladic, requested a meeting with Dutchbat commander, Lieutenant Colonel Karemans, and local representatives of Srebrenica in the nearby town of Bratunac, outside the enclave. My father, Ibro Nuhanovic, volunteered to go as one of the three local representatives. The officially elected representatives were among the 12,000 to 15,000 who had taken to the surrounding mountains attempting to flee to Tuzla.

During the meeting, Mladic assured the Dutch and local delegation that no harm would come to the refugees in Potocari, though all men would be screened against a Serb-drawn list of war criminals. That is what my father told me when they came back from the meeting.

Upon returning to the camp, three local representatives are ordered by the Dutchbat deputy commander, Major Franken, to prepare a list of all males, all men and boys between the ages of 16 and 65 among the refugees inside and outside the camp. The list of the males among the 6,000 inside the camp was completed the same day, reflecting the total of 239, including approximately 20 wounded. Between 50 and 100 males inside the camp refused to give their names. My father and other representatives, fearing the list would be used for untoward purposes, refrained from putting his own and my brother's names on the list. A list of the males outside the camp was not made because the Serbs allowed the representatives and my father to leave the camp only for 5 minutes at the request of General Mladic. Then they returned to the camp.

The rumors about executions of males outside the camp spread inside the camp. So we the people who were inside the camp could hear the noise and shooting outside the camp, but we didn't know what exactly happened. So we needed Dutch commanders, Dutch officers to explain to us what was going on outside.

The Dutchbat deputy commander, Major Franken denied saying that everything outside the camp was all right and the evacuation of refugees was going on in order. So he denied saying that no man or boys were killed outside the camp, which was not true. I found that out later on. So that let the people inside the camp, they made them think that when the following day they were the ones to be evacuated, everything would be all right.

In the night between 12 and 13 July, 2 days or two nights after the fall of Srebrenica, there were more rumors about executions of males outside the

camp. I tried to confirm the rumors. Major Franken denied it again. U.N. military observers denied too. Major Franken informs the representatives that the evacuation of some 5,000 refugees from outside the camp will be continued the following day at 8 a.m. He states that the refugees from inside the camp will be evacuated immediately after the evacuation of refugees from outside the camp is complete. Major Franken orders that the list of all locally employed people by organizations, like United Nations, MSF, and UNHCR should be drawn. Only people whose names were on this list were allowed to stay inside the camp.

On 13 July, the Dutch ordered 6,000 refugees out of the Potocari camp. The Serbs were waiting at the gate, separating all males from the women and children. Major Franken stated that all the males whose names were on the list of 239 would be safe. He told the people who asked him the questions about what the fate of the people from inside the camp was going to be, he told us that everything was going to be all right and the Serbs would not harm the people because he sent the list to the Hague, Geneva, and some more addresses.

He allows my father, like the other two representatives, to stay, but refuses to allow my brother to stay. So my father decides to join my mother and my brother. I remain in the camp and I watched my parents and my brother being handed over to the Serbs at the gate. None of them have been seen since.

We interpreters and the Dutch soldiers and officers stayed in the camp for another 7 or 8 days. So on 21 July, I was evacuated to Zagreb as part of the Dutch convoy. As soon as I arrived in Zagreb, I tried to contact all relevant organizations, International Community of the Red Cross, UNHCR and others asking for information on the people from the list of 239 from the Dutch battalion camp. I am told in Zagreb that none of these organizations has ever heard about such a list.

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Then I returned to Tuzla. I resumed to work as a U.N. interpreter, hoping to find out something about my family through the U.N. channels since the area of responsibility of U.N. headquarters in Tuzla covered Srebrenica. So I tried to contact more people, including the Serbs. For the remainder of 1995, I traced down three U.N. military observers from a former Srebrenica team. I convinced them to sign statements in which they state—I will read, it's very short. It says, "I, Major Kingori hereby state that Nuhanovic, Ibro and Nuhanovic, Nasiha, parents of Hasan Nuhanovic and brother of Hasan Nuhanovic, came to the Dutch compound in Potocari on the evening of 10 July. All three spent 2 days there under UNPROFOR protection until they were ordered by Dutch officers to leave the compound together with the other refugees in the evening of 13 July 1995. They were last seen passing through the compound gate behind which the Serb soldiers were standing."

I want to explain here that the people who hoped that the Dutch were going to protect them, the U.N. peacekeeping troops and all other members of all other organizations who were present in Srebrenica who were inside the camp, the people hoped that they would be protected, but the Dutch soldiers and officers gave no other option to the refugees but to leave. So the refugees inside were told to leave without any other choice. My family was told on the evening of 13 July that they should leave. About 6 p.m. there were no more refugees inside the camp.

I don't know if this is the topic of the meeting or the hearing but the same night the Dutch soldiers had a party inside the camp because they received two or three trucks full of beer and cigarettes. They played music while I was sitting, not knowing what happened to my family. Also when we came to Zagreb on July 22, the Dutch had another party when a whole orchestra arrived by plane from Holland and they all got drunk together. I have it on the video tape. So I had very little understanding from the United Nations and all other organizations involved in this issue.

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I continued to search for information on missing persons for the next 2 1/2 years. I wrote many letters to the Ministry of Defense of Holland. The last answer I received from the Minister of Defense was that I should no more address the Ministry of Defense of Holland because they claim that they can not help the people of Srebrenica look for their missing relatives. He told me that if I had any further questions I should contact the Dutch Embassy in Sarajevo.

I also wrote letters to U.N. headquarters in Sarajevo. One of the letters I received a year ago, it was in fact the only official reply I received from the United Nations. It says during your meeting, you informed Mr. Armstrong that you had appealed to the ambassador of the Netherlands in Sarajevo for help in obtaining information from the RS Government on the fate of residents of Srebrenica. You had arranged to contact the Ambassador in 3 months' time to see whether she had made any progress. Mr. Armstrong noted that this was an important initiative and encouraged you to follow up. Mr. Armstrong also explained to you that the mandate of the U.N. Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIDH) with respect to missing persons, is limited to facilitation and referral rather than being an operational one. Current information and practical assistance should be sought through the offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Office of High Representative.

There are five or six organizations in Bosnia which have mandates to assist the families of missing persons in their search. It is the International Committee of the Red Cross, it is the Office of the High Representative, and all the organizations claim that there is very little they can do. The people of Srebrenica and I myself are looking for my missing family, we have no use of promises. We really need something to be done as soon as possible. We hope that there are still some alive people, maybe hidden in detention camps in Bosnia or Serbia. But also we are aware of the fact that the 8,000 or 9,000 people from Srebrenica have probably been murdered. We would also like the bodies to be exhumed and identified so that we know for sure what happened to our family members.

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But I would like also say one thing concerning the mass grave sites in Bosnia. American troops, when they got deployed in Bosnia, they were deployed in eastern Bosnia. The American zone of responsibility covers exactly the area where all mass grave sites, all the victims from Srebrenica are located. None of those sites have been protected from tampering. Many of them were disturbed. Some sites are even empty. There are no more body remains there.

I contacted some American officers, trying to indicate that it will be really necessary to mark the sites and protect them from disturbance because they are being disturbed every day. Nothing has been done so far about that.

I have also many documents here with me which I have already given to the organizers of this hearing. It would take a long time to go through all of them, but one thing is for sure, so far we had no results at all when concerning the issue of missing persons. The families in Bosnia are told that International Tribunal in the Hague is performing an investigation on war crimes in Srebrenica. War crimes and war criminals is a separate issue from missing persons. The families of missing persons like myself, we have no use of Ardamovic being in prison for 5 years. He is going to come out of the prison in 3 years now. It is not going to change anything in my search for my family. We can not rely on only international tribunals in Sarajevo. Many of their investigators stated to the families, when families asked questions, that all evidence that the International Tribunal for War Crimes in the Hague obtains on the ground remains a secret until the trial starts. None of us knows when the trial is going to start. So we don't have any use of the

tribunal in the Hague at the moment. It may take 5 or 10 years for the trial to start. We are not intending to wait for 5 to 10 years to find out the truth on Srebrenica. There must be some other body which will launch a thorough investigation right now, not waiting for the politicians to decide when the political situation is suitable for such an investigation.

I only want to say one more thing, that the missing persons from Srebrenica has nothing to do with politics. We are just looking for our missing relatives. We really are not interested in any political games. Unfortunately it all became part of it. That's probably what's stopping the whole process.

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I would like to thank everybody here and I will leave the documents which I have brought with me with the organizers of the hearing.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nuhanovic appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Yes. We'll put that in the record.

Mr. Nuhanovic, let me just say that I believe and I believe every member of our panel and every Member of Congress believes that you and people like you are entitled to answers, whether it be as a result of gross miscalculation or cowardice or complicity in these crimes of the United Nations, of which we are a part, even though the Dutch had the lead here. You are entitled, regardless of any political consideration, to know exactly what happened to your family. As you pointed out, you still harbor some hope that one or more may survive.

Mr. NUHANOVIC. I will only say one more thing, if I may. When I approached the Ambassador of Netherlands in Sarajevo last year trying to follow up on the action of the Minister of Defense who instructed the Ambassador in Sarajevo to meet Mrs. Plavsic, the President of the Republic of Srpska. So the Ambassador in Sarajevo met Mrs. Plavsic once a year ago and addressed Mrs. Plavsic with the question of missing persons from Potocari, Dutchbat camp. There was still no answer from Mrs. Plavsic.

So I tried to approach the Ambassador several times again. I was every time told during the last summer that the political situation does not allow any contacts with Mrs. Plavsic concerning this issue because the international community was dealing with some problems, political problems inside the Republic of Srpska. So it looks like everybody is in Bosnia waiting now for the political situation to settle down and then start, let's say, opening mass graves and answering different questions. But we can not wait for that long. It's just out of the question.

Mr. SMITH. You know, I agree. The political situation has limited the number of people that even the international tribunal will look at. I find it appalling to this day that Milosevic himself, whom former Secretary of State Eagleburger as he was leaving office said he believed was a war criminal, perpetrated the crimes first in Croatia and then in Bosnia. And yet there is to the best of my knowledge, and I have asked this question a number of times, no effort to gather information about Milosevic's ordering these crimes throughout the wartime period. Now he is our "partner in peace" and there's very little or nothing being done to gather the record.

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I think it is important to note for the record that we had invited a very important witness to this hearing, a former U.N. employee in Bosnia who now works with the U.S. Department of Defense. The department unfortunately responded that they normally don't allow their employees to testify about their former employment. They refused to make an exception. It would have been very helpful to have his information on the record today.

I intend to insist that not only the United Nations, but also our State Department and Defense Department come clean and tell us exactly what they knew, when they knew it, about this terrible situation.

I would like to yield to Mr. Wolf who has joined us, a member of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and also a member of the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. WOLF. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I don't serve on this Committee, but Mr. Gilman and Mr. Smith invited me to come. I guess I have a couple comments. One, you are fortunate that Mr. Gilman and Mr. Smith are interested in this issue to eventually get the truth out, because I think, unfortunately, it is going to take people digging and pursuing and requesting and requiring people to come forward. I don't think people on their own are going to come forward.

Second, having been over there a number of times, I think much of the responsibility lies with Mr. Akashi. I have often thought the times that I was over there and watched him that if my loved one had their future dependent upon Mr. Akashi, it would be absolutely depressing. His activity, the lack of action and movement, all the activity that took place and the atrocities time after time after time and he would just be there in Zagreb. You just never could get a feeling that he really cared about this. I think he was much more sympathetic to the Serbs than anybody else.

Third, I think your statement is very damaging to the Dutch military. I mean I think if what you say is accurate, they have to be somehow held accountable. I would hope that the Dutch Foreign Ministry and the Dutch Parliament would hold some hearings on this. Holland has a very proud history of standing up to the Nazis. They must understand this. All you have to do is to go to Amsterdam and go into the house of Anne Frank, who wrote "The Diary of Anne Frank". Every citizen of the Netherlands must be sensitive to this. I would urge that a letter be done to the Dutch Government asking that they hold an inquiry, that their Foreign Ministry hold an inquiry or that their Dutch Parliament hold an inquiry because until there is knowledge of what happened, it is very difficult for reconciliation to take place. Reconciliation can take place, but there has to be something to close this down, whereby there is some closure. There must be acknowledgement of guilt and either people go to prison or something is done to end this.

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So I just wanted to tell you. I appreciate so much what you have been through, having been there about five or six times during the war. I had the opportunity back in 1992 or 1993 to go into a Serb-run prisoner of war camp, where we saw what they were doing to the Muslims. The Muslims were running around with their hands behind them, their heads down, and it was almost like a scene out of World War II, out of the Nazi camps.

So I appreciate what you have done. Anything we can do to help, Mr. Smith or Mr. Gilman, we'll be glad to do it. I just think what you are doing is being faithful to your parents and being faithful to those people. It is very, very important. Ultimately the truth will come out. The truth has to come out for there to be any kind of healing and any kind of reconciliation.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Wolf.

Mr. Stover.

STATEMENT OF ERIC STOVER, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA/BERKELEY

Mr. STOVER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to show some slides, which I'll try to go through fairly quickly.

First let me note that I am a former executive director of Physicians for Human Rights. I also have served as an "Expert on Mission" for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. However, today I will be testifying in my own capacity. I don't think either institution

would have any difficulty with what I am going to say, but there are some things that I can not mention because they relate to the Tribunal's work.

Let me first begin by saying that I have come here with a profound sense of failure. The reason for that is in January 1993, I testified at the "Hearing on War Crimes in the Former Yugoslavia" for the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe of the House of Representatives, which Wolf had helped organize. On a collective farm outside of Vukovar a forensic investigation was completed. We had discovered one of the first war crimes of the wars in the former Yugoslavia. What it amounted to was a mass grave containing the bodies of nearly 200 hospital patients and staff. It wasn't until 2 or 3 years later that we were able to do a full investigation. As of today, 91 of the 200 victims have been identified.

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At that hearing, I brought forward what evidence we had uncovered. It was clear a massacre had taken place. We needed to investigate further. But I called on the need for the international community to take strong measures to protect Croatian-based evidence that we had collected. I hope I don't have to return here 5 years from now.

I would like to turn to the slides now, and begin by saying that my perspective is going to come from the forensic investigators and also from some of the families and the victims. The slides that you are about to see were taken by Gilles Peress, who is a photographer who documented the war in Bosnia and also in Rwanda. His photographs are the ones that line the room today.

First of all, let me mention that turning to the first slide here, this is the "Trail of Life and Death" which Hasan Nuhanovic had mentioned earlier where the men had fled up the trail toward Tuzla in an attempt to escape. Here is Srebrenica. Up here is Potocari. As the women and children on July 11 through July 12 fled up to Potocari, the men went along a trail in this direction. It's about 40 miles up to Tuzla from the enclave of Srebrenica. As they went across the trail, many men and boys were captured or called down from the mountain and executed. Others were killed in the hills. Several months after the fall of Srebrenica, I was able with Gilles Peress to walk along the trail for about 3 or 4 miles. It was as if we were descending into hell.

There were bodies on all sides of the trail, 200 or 300 bodies just along one stretch of about a mile. As you went along the trail, you found objects that were left behind by the men as they fled. This is a slide of a little shaving mirror which was left behind. In this particular site, Bosnian forensic investigators have ascertained that artillery shells (or at least some type of mortar shells) were launched into the center of the group. As they fled, Bosnian Serb army soldiers opened fire on those fleeing. This is a slide of a book of the Qu'ran, which was left behind as the men fled or were captured.

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Personal objects were everywhere along the trail. Clearly the men were desperate as they were fleeing. Many of them were rounded up and taken down to this warehouse and other buildings and executed. What appears to have happened here was that the Bosnian Serb army soldiers stood outside and fired into the room or through the windows, massacring hundreds inside this warehouse.

In July 1996, the forensic investigations began of the mass graves under the auspices of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. It was hell for the investigators. There were about 90 scientists from 19 different countries. These were scientists from Chile, Argentina, the Philippines, and the National Park Service in the United States. When they arrived U.N. or NATO troops at that time were not providing them security at the sites, neither was there any demining activity. So private arrangements had to be made by Physicians for Human Rights, which was actually conducting the investigations on part of the Tribunal.

At first, in the evenings when the teams left the sites, the NATO troops would not protect the graves. As anyone knows in a criminal investigation, you need to keep the sites protected. So in fact the leader of the forensic investigation, William Haglund, who deserves a great deal of credit for his work, stayed behind with a couple of other forensic scientists. They would actually sleep in their vans waiting to make sure that the sites weren't disturbed.

For the first 2 months they worked in almost perpetual rain. Then it turned to blistering sun. I have worked in the sites. I have been there. It was a very difficult work for all of those involved. Particularly because there was a growing sense because that perhaps this effort would not result in justice or that the families would never eventually get the remains identified.

What was important initially was to show to the Serb leaders, political and military, who had claimed that these were just military exchanges between the men fleeing and the Bosnian Serb army, were not true. In fact, as we were able to see in this site here, body number 19 has its hands tied behind its back.

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In the four graves that were exhumed in that period of time from July through October 1996, some 500 bodies or more were removed. Many of them had hands tied behind their backs in a way that was consistent with execution-style killings. This is important forensically: many of the bodies in their particular graves had been bound by the same type of telephone wire or a piece of curtain that may have been pulled down. There was a systematic approach to these executions that were clear in the forensic evidence.

The bodies were taken to Kalesiza, which was on the front line and autopsied in an abandoned garment factory which had been turned into a makeshift morgue. The clothes would be cleaned. Work would begin in reconstructing. Some of the skulls and so on would be shattered by gunshot wounds. Some of the graves contained hundreds and hundreds of projectiles and bullets.

What was interesting was that in the clothes one found that the men in their desperation as they left Srebrenica had grabbed whatever they could. It was only normal. You find keys, keys because you think you are going to return at some point to your home. This is an x-ray of a bullet embedded near the spinal cord. Objects were found on the bodies such as religious artifacts and objects for starting fires. Many of these were rural Bosnian Muslims. Here is a slide of a child's drawings found on one of the bodies. Photographs were found on some of the bodies. One man had over 40 photographs stuffed in his clothing. In this photograph on the lefthand side, there is evidence that a bullet has gone through the photograph.

There is a great deal of anger, as Hasan Nuhanovic has mentioned, among the women and children of Srebrenica, because the one thing that comes out in the discussions is what happened in the political machinations of the United Nations. It is important we get to the depth of this. But there is another issue there. For the women and the survivors of Srebrenica, they believed they were going to be protected. What we need to learn from this experience is that the international community doesn't pass Security Council resolutions declaring safe areas to people who are living and believing that they are going to be protected. That is the key issue we have to take forward.

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As one woman told me during my interviews this summer in preparation for the book I'm publishing with Gilles Peress called *The Graves: Srebrenica and Yukova*, she said "Srebrenica taught us that our lives were less valuable than the lives of U.N. soldiers. That for us was the final truth." What has happened with the women of Srebrenica, as Hasan has mentioned earlier, is they want to know the truth. It is important to have the trials in The Hague, but the women also want to know what happened to their men. Many of the women still live in collective centers around the city of Tuzla. These are dreadful places where 20 or 30 people will share a room together. There are food supplies that are brought in, but they are hardly adequate.

What remains the problem for many of the women is that without the return of the bodies, they can not visualize the death of their husbands and sons, and thus accept it as real. So as a Bosnian psychologist told me, "And so when the women think of moving on with their lives, they are often hit with strong feelings of guilt because they think they will maybe, just maybe still be alive."

Also as a result of the fall of Srebrenica there were hundreds of orphans. About 110 of them are still in a Tuzla orphanage.

This is a slide of four elderly people in a collective center sharing the same room. There's loneliness there, boredom.

I would like to just give one other brief quote by a Bosnian psychiatrist, Irfanka Pasagic, who works for the organization Amica, a Tuzla-based clinic which provides therapeutic services to refugees. Dr. Pasagic said: "What is the utmost importance now is the message that the international community sends those boys and what they communicate to their sons and daughters. If you say to a child, look, that man there killed your father and now he lives in your house, what kind of message is that going to send? But if you say look, that man there killed your father and that is the reason why he is in prison, the message is very different." So for now, there may not be a lot of talk of hatred or revenge, but if we don't find a way to punish those responsible for these crimes, it will be surely something we can count on in the future.

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To understand is not to forgive or forget. It is to accept things as they are. Forgiveness for those who massacred the men and boys in Srebrenica is not ours to give. Only the victims have the right to forgive. Forgetting is also unthinkable, as it would be a dishonor to the dead and their memory. The most disturbing truth is that we are at the end of the Never Again century and genocide is happening again. Bosnia's nightmare, like Rwanda's is not hers alone. Until we accept the moral imperative of acting swiftly to stop genocide and crimes against humanity and punishing those responsible, it will happen again.

This is a photograph of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo burying their dead that appeared recently in the *New York Times*. Over 80 people have been killed in Kosovo. The bodies have been buried. And the forensic scientists are purchasing their tickets to fly to Kosovo. It is happening again. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stover appears in the appendix.]

Mr. WOLF. Would the gentleman yield? These are very powerful visuals. I guess I had two questions. Where do you think that most of the Serbs are who were involved in the killings? Where are they now? Because in Tuzla there are very few Serbs obviously in the Tuzla area now. Where are they? Do we have any sense of where that battalion or that unit is or did they go back to a certain area, a certain village?

Mr. STOVER. In some ways it's conjecture. We know that Arkan's paramilitary forces were there. The Drina Wolves were there. Many of those who carried out the killings came from other parts of Serbia, Montenegro. Many of the paramilitary groups were comprised of people that weren't necessarily from within the region. Many I would presume are in the Republic of Srpska, which is not far from Tuzla.

Mr. WOLF. I know.

Mr. STOVER. So clearly they are in areas, many of them, where they can be arrested. Of course the most important ones to arrest are Mladic and Karadzic.

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Mr. WOLF. I agree. I have said over and over, I did a report when I came back in December again, that until that issue is dealt with, there can never be peace and healing there. I mean you have to go back and find and hold accountable the people that have been involved. It just has to be done.

I was one of the Republican Members that supported sending troops. I think what we have done there has been very, very positive, but I think we should be doing more, I agree.

The other question that I wanted to ask you is what should we be doing? What should the U.S. Government do? What should the Congress do? What should be done?

Mr. STOVER. First of all we must make every effort to arrest Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. That is No. 1. And others who are associated with war crimes throughout the former Yugoslavia.

I would also say that we need to understand what are the needs of women and children throughout the former Yugoslavia. This is especially true of the young men and boys. If we don't find ways of supporting them on many levels, we will see more violence in the future. What has happened to the women and the people of Srebrenica who fled, who quite technically should have been by virtue of their safe haven status, the best protected people in the world? A Security Council resolution was passed to protect them. But what has happened is they have ended up in Tuzla and central Bosnia in deplorable conditions with few, if any possibilities for meaningful jobs. Here are young men and women who are feeling guilty because their brothers and mothers and fathers may have died or were executed. Yet they are not getting any kind of basic job training. They don't necessarily need to be taught English or computer skills. Many of them want to learn how to be mechanics. Now I know this sounds small, but it is important to be helping these people re-establish their lives again. The U.N. community has abandoned them. More effort needs to be put in that regard.

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Also I think clearly support for an international criminal court must be forthcoming, and clear financial and military support for that.

Mr. WOLF. Thank you very much. Excuse me. Go ahead.

Mr. NUHANOVIC. Can I answer your question about where the Serbs who have done this are now?

Mr. WOLF. Yes.

Mr. NUHANOVIC. I have been trying to find out where they are for 2 1/2 years now, not because I just want to get them but only because I want them to tell me what happened to my family.

One of them who was definitely involved in Srebrenica's massacre was until 10 days ago chief of police of the entire area, which is in a way overlapping with the American zone of responsibility of eastern Bosnia. So I have gone to the American officers and it's called Camp Double near Kalesiza. It's only 10 kilometers east of Tuzla, east of the American main base. I gave them the video and I showed them on the video the man they

were meeting every day at the meetings, because American military is communicating with the local authorities, civilian authorities like police authorities. So they met these men many, many times. They had some suspicions about him. I told them this is a man who coordinated the mass executions around Zvornik, which is the town where the mass graves are concentrated mostly. This man was sitting in Zvornik. His office was there for 2 1/2 years. Americans knew it for half a year now.

I also went to the Office of the High Representative several times and gave them this video tape because this Serb is on the video tape in Srebrenica and there is a date on the video tape also. He is talking to the Minister of Interior for Republic of Srpska at that time on the tape reporting to him. More things can be seen on that tape. Nobody has done anything about this. Only ICTY about 10 days ago, first time, approached this police officer and he is missing now for 10 days. He is gone. He is probably hiding. But this shouldn't have been allowed. Because ICTY went to his office to ask if he wanted to talk, and of course after that he fled his job or hid. He was probably promoted or I don't know. So it's really not dealt with in a serious manner at all.

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Some of the Americans, when I tell them or any other members of the United Nations in Bosnia, if I tell them that this Serb has been involved in war crimes, I have proof that can support this, I receive answers saying like we don't care. It's been 2 1/2 years ago. It's over now. It's time for reconciliation. But you see thousands of refugees were supposed to return to the area controlled by this person. They were being encouraged by Americans, by UNHCR, by ICRC to return to their homes which are in the area controlled by this Serb police officer. How can you expect the people to return there where the murderers of their brothers, fathers, mothers, are sitting in a police headquarters? I have names of more Serbs involved.

But also only one more thing. The only organization which is really investigating what happened in Srebrenica is as I mentioned, the International Tribunal for War Crimes in the Hague. They are the only ones who follow the path, the line, everything that happened between the place where somebody disappeared, and following it down to the place where somebody might be buried or maybe alive in a prison. Because if somebody disappeared, there is one location where somebody has been seen last time that's like location A. So we are all now looking for location B. OK? Which is a mass grave or a prison, most probably mass grave.

But all these organizations in Bosnia are looking for the location B without following this line. The line is really very simple, in fact. It's only two or three villages or towns in Bosnia through which these people were transported. And the Serb authorities who were in charge of those towns in 1995 when it happened, the mayors, the chiefs of police, the military commanders, are all there talking to American soldiers every day, American officers as if nothing happened because these things are forgotten.

It is just simple. Just go there and talk to them. All Serbs involved in war crimes in Srebrenica are still sitting in the same positions as they were in 1995.

Mr. WOLF. Thank you.

Ms. JAGGER. I would like to add just a small point. I was a part of an "apprehend war criminals" task force with Justice Goldstone very recently. We visited the State Department, the Pentagon and the White House. When we met at the Pentagon I asked the question about why have they not apprehended Karadzic and General Mladic. The answer they gave me was because they didn't know where they were situated today.

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So I would like to introduce in the record a map that Human Rights Watch has put out of where the war criminals are today, in which areas. It is extraordinary to be given an answer by the Pentagon telling us that they don't know where they are, when everybody is seeing them and when a human rights organization has done a map of all the places.

What I wanted to say was that I am convinced that the reason why Karadzic and Mladic and other war criminals have not been apprehended is not because it is a danger for the lives of the soldiers that will do it, but simply because it will shed light as to the kinds of crimes that may have been committed by high ranking U.N. officials and the kind of negotiation that they may have undertaken with Mladic and Karadzic that will become public if they were brought to the Hague.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much. I would like to ask Ms. Paul if she would speak.

Before doing that, without objection I would like the record to include a statement from the Committee of the Dispossessed from Srebrenica and Zepa. There are some 300 refugee survivors living in St. Louis, Missouri. They have made an appeal asking for the immediate arrest and prosecution of those responsible for the war crimes and genocide in Srebrenica and Zepa, including Mladic and Karadzic, which Ms. Jagger just made reference to. Information about those killed or missing and material, including financial compensation for their loss. Without objection this will be made a part of the record.

[The statement referred to appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Paul.

MS. DIANE PAUL, CONSULTANT ON FORMER YUGOSLAVIA, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Ms. PAUL. Thank you very much. Chairman Smith, Members of Congress, ladies and gentlemen here today, the events of over 2 1/2 years ago in Srebrenica must be remembered. For this reason, your decision to hold this hearing is deeply appreciated. To the families of the missing, however, it seems the world has already forgotten, has moved on. Yet the survivors can not. They are frozen in the trauma of not knowing the fates of those who disappeared. They must endure the cruelty of hoping against hope that some may still be alive while knowing that few are likely to have survived.

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I worked with Holocaust survivors to assist them in determining the fates of family members who disappeared into Nazi concentration camps. What I will tell you is that after 50 years, the trauma was still very fresh. What I know about the survivors of Srebrenica, about those families is that they will never stop searching. I think that we must help them find the answers.

Adding to the already unbearable burden that they face, the two persons believed responsible for organizing the systematic deaths of thousands of people from Srebrenica are still at large. What message is being sent to Milosevic on Kosovo when Mladic and Karadzic are permitted to escape justice? It should not be forgotten that Milosevic is believed to have played a large part in what happened in Srebrenica. Yet we have been told repeatedly, and I must say often condescendingly, that those indicted for war crimes will be brought to justice sooner or later. One senior U.S. diplomat told me recently when I asked him if it were true if Ratko Mladic had sought refuge in Serbia, responded "I am satisfied that Mladic is in a cocoon. He is not interfering with the peace process. We can take care of him later." That U.S. Government officials are satisfied with the status quo for reasons of political expediency is deeply offensive and wholly unacceptable. Patience has worn thin. The survivors demand justice. How long must they wait?

The questions raised in the title of today's hearing are critical. To rephrase them slightly, we might ask, could the people of Srebrenica have been saved, and might we prevent further such tragedies? Despite everything that's happened, we believe the answer is yes. Most of those who died during those days in July might have been saved had the international community's response been more decisive. The possibility to protect civilians in Kosovo and elsewhere exists. We heard President Clinton admit that early action could have prevented many deaths in Rwanda. Reports of new attacks in Kosovo last week and the failure of Serbia to withdraw so-called police forces which act in every way like military forces, are not surprising developments. They were anticipated and, in fact, easily predicted, given the broken promises of the past.

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Milosevic is a master of brinkmanship. We should not forget that. Once again, he is thumbing his nose at the international community, as evidenced by the recent arrest of Americans in Pristina and his refusal to accept an international mediator.

A reported arms deal with Russia which may even now be funneling sophisticated arms to Serbia, including attack helicopters, has gone unchallenged by the contact group. There are no international human rights monitors on the ground and humanitarian organizations do not have full access to those in need. Full and unimpeded access to international monitors is an absolute imperative. Yet to date, Milosevic has refused to permit the OSCE to reestablish a presence there after booting them out a number of years ago. The disunity within the contact group does not bode well and echoes the ineffective international response to the crisis in Bosnia, the lowest point of which was Srebrenica.

Action must be taken now to get people on the ground in Kosovo. Should there be a no-fly zone over Kosovo to at least prevent the use of attack helicopters indiscriminately against civilians as it's believed they have already been used there? Speaking more generally, I would argue that the potential use of safe areas as a strategy to protect civilians should not be discarded, despite the failure at Srebrenica. Zones of safety have saved lives, even in the former Yugoslavia. The safe area in northern Iraq did provide some protection over time until international will eroded. Designated safe houses established by the International Committee of the Red Cross, Raoul Wallenberg and others, enabled thousands of Hungarian Jews to survive during the darkest days in Budapest during World War II. An international safety zone created by fewer than a dozen internationals protected tens of thousands of people during the rape of Nanking. None of the safe zones mentioned provided complete safety. Rather, they mitigated the danger, enabling some persons to survive. The lesson is not to avoid the establishment of safe areas, but to ensure that they are indeed safe and to glean what we can from the successes and failures of the past.

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In the case of Srebrenica, the political will existed only to protect international troops, not civilians. UNPROFOR commanders were permitted to narrowly interpret their mandate to include only the protection of their own troops, despite clear instructions from the U.N. Secretary General who in 1994 stated that UNPROFOR understands its mission as follows: to protect the civilian populations of the designated safe areas against armed attacks and other hostile acts through the presence of its troops and if necessary through the application of air power in accordance with agreed procedures.

Yet again and again in Bosnia and elsewhere, we have missed the boat and failed to focus on the real issue, stopping attacks on civilians. Instead, efforts have focused on merely containing the conflict, and I hear that language being used a lot again in Kosovo, preventing refugee flows or pumping in humanitarian assistance. All these are important, but none of them constitutes protection. While we welcome the intent of the tribunal to investigate events in Kosovo, this also does not provide protection.

Boutros-Ghali, confronted by journalists with the U.N.'s failure at Srebrenica said no, I don't believe this represents a failure. You have to see if the glass is half full or half empty. We are still offering assistance to refugees, and we have been able to maintain the dispute within the borders of the former Yugoslavia.

Had the safe area been properly reinforced, the Dutch troops might never have abandoned the persons who sought their protection in Potocari. Instead, anxious to leave the enclave, Dutch troops deliberately failed to report troop movements and other activities to headquarters, long before the actual fall of the town. As Srebrenica fell, international reaction was divisive and undermined any hope of protection. The British threatened to pull troops out. The Germans recommended leaving Srebrenica to its fate and concentrating on Zepa. NATO said it was awaiting orders from the United Nations. The United States refused to provide troops at all. A year earlier, U.N. troops had been pulled out of Rwanda at a critical moment with overwhelmingly devastating results.

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Some of the principles which have to be followed in the future if we are to consider these as safe areas again, and I'll just mention a few: Safe havens or safety zones should not be set up without a protection plan. If peacekeeping troops are involved, the plan should include the specific measures which should be used to protect civilians. Safe areas must be completely demilitarized. They must not compromise the right to seek asylum to escape attack. Contingency plans for the evacuation of the populations from the safe areas should be developed at the outset just in case the safe areas should fall to hostile forces. Safe areas must not be used to shield suspected perpetrators of genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity. Agreements with the parties to the conflict must include schedules for regular distribution of humanitarian aid, unlike what we saw in Srebrenica, where many, many, many months went by without any international aid getting into the city at all.

The possible negative consequences of implementing a safe area should be well thought out. For example, the use of safe areas as a substitute for actions to stop abuses, i.e. ethnic cleansing. Persons in a safe zone should be registered by neutral international third parties, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross. Evacuations, if absolutely necessary, must be accompanied by internationals, who should travel in the same vehicles as the evacuees. In Srebrenica, UNPROFOR escorts were simply turned back or their vehicles confiscated. Evacuations from Zepa, however, were less disastrous because UNPROFOR troops rode on the buses and not, by the way, out of their own initiative, but because people refused to permit them to leave Zepa.

No agreement should be made which will permit the evacuation of civilians by forces hostile to them, especially if unaccompanied. Any attempt to separate women and children from male family members should be resisted. Families must be kept together.

Intelligence information relating to impending attacks on civilians must not be withheld from the public or at the very least, from international organizations with protection or human rights monitoring mandates. We know that there was information about the attacks in Kosovo, information about troop movements, et cetera, before the attacks occurred. Why were they permitted to go forward? Clearly evidence relating to the Commission of War Crimes must never be destroyed by peacekeepers or other internationals as was the case in Srebrenica.

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Finally, I would like to raise an important issue that hasn't received much attention. That is the need for an international investigation into the possible use of chemical weapons at Srebrenica. Human Rights Watch interviewed numerous survivors from Srebrenica who claim they were attacked with a chemical agent that caused hallucinations and disorientation. Mr. E.J. Hogen-doorn, who conducted the study, is here today and could answer questions afterward on this topic. The results of the Human Rights Watch research into the use of chemical weapons in Srebrenica in 1995 are inconclusive, but indicate that there were unexplained events which affected primarily the rear sections of the column of persons fleeing the town through heavily wooded areas. The testimony collected by Human Rights Watch and statements made by U.S. Government officials indicate the possibility that chemical weapons were used, and strongly suggest that further investigation is warranted.

Human Rights Watch has conducted a study of allegations of the use of chemical weapons, primarily concerning BZ or BZ-like compound. BZ is a chemical warfare agent which causes psychological and physical incapacitation. Prior to the breakup of Yugoslavia, the JNA, the Yugoslav national army's arsenal is known to have included BZ and other chemical weapons, as acknowledged in a NATO intelligence assessment which Human Rights Watch has seen. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is one of the few states, by the way, that has not signed the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention.

The U.S. Government was aware of allegations of BZ use as early as August 1995, if not sooner, when Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck, during a trip to Bosnia, reported that "there were many credible accounts of the shelling of large columns of civilians attempting to flee and four separate accounts of the use of chemical weapons that severely disoriented fleeing people, causing several to commit suicide."

Human Rights Watch interviewed a number of U.S. officials from various branches of the government. While none agreed to speak for attribution, they did reveal the following: A small team of Defense Department experts interviewed a number of Srebrenica survivors in the summer of 1996, and concluded that their accounts supported allegations of the use of chemical incapacitants. The conclusion was deemed highly significant by the department. This information was sent up the chain of command.

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More than one person told Human Rights Watch that we were "on the right track." In late 1996, the U.S. intelligence community had information that chemical weapons may have been used in Srebrenica. A large investigation, which included physical sampling, was undertaken in late 1996 or early 1997 by the U.S. Government. The results of this investigation are not known to us. One official told Human Rights Watch in December 1996 that "we do not see an advantage in declassifying those documents relating to chemical weapons use in Bosnia. We have spoken with people and received assurances that other channels are being pursued that we believe would be more effective and achieve a more favorable outcome than simply publicizing them." That is where it's been left.

U.S. Public Law 102-182, the Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Eliminations Act of 1991 requires that a determination regarding the use of chemical weapons be made. If it is determined that chemical weapons were used, Public Law 102-182 would require the imposition of sanctions, which raises some other questions about why these questions haven't been further pursued.

The U.S. Government should release immediately all information on the development, production, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons in the former Yugoslavia which it may have in its possession. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Paul appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Paul, thank you very much for your very comprehensive testimony. We will follow up on the chemical weapons issue as well. I think we have been aware of it but there has been very little, as you have indicated, in terms of divulging what we know about the use of those weapons. So I do appreciate that.

The gentleman you mentioned being here, does he have a statement he could make a part of the record? And you did say he would be available for some questions.

Ms. PAUL. He feels my statement for now is sufficient. We will be releasing a report in a short time on this topic. However, if afterward anyone would like to speak with Mr. Hogendoorn, he will be available.

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Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Mr. Heffernan, if you could present your testimony?

STATEMENT OF JOHN HEFFERNAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

Mr. HEFFERNAN. Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for convening this hearing today. For the countless victims who have been permanently silenced, and for the family members and survivors who remain committed to finding out what happened to them, this hearing is welcome and long overdue. For some in particular, as others have said, the people of Kosovo, this hearing is ironically timely.

Over the last few weeks, the Kosovars have witnessed the massacre of nearly 100 people, many innocent women and children by Serbian paramilitary troops directed by the man who directed the slaughter in Srebrenica. The Kosovo Albanians might find the question "Will it happen again?" a bit after the fact. It is all too familiar to them. The faces of the victims have changed, but the genocidal perpetrators remain the same. The anemic reaction of the international community, expressions of outrage and as yet relatively empty threats, are hauntingly familiar. Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, indicted for genocide and charged with masterminding the largest single war crime in Europe since World War II, remain free today, almost 3 years after the massacre in Srebrenica.

At the same time, Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, although not indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal, is directing the crackdown in Kosovo, providing a safe area, confirmed by many high-level U.S. officials for the twice-indicted alleged architect of Srebrenica, General Ratko Mladic.

My message today is a simple one. Unless the perpetrators of these past heinous acts are arrested and brought to justice, the likelihood of a Srebrenica massacre being replicated in Bosnia or in other parts of the former Yugoslavia is almost certain.

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I spent 2 1/2, almost 3 years as a humanitarian aid worker in the former Yugoslavia during the war. I know first-hand that none of the admirable goals set out in the U.S.-brokered Dayton Peace agreement from the return of refugees, to the functioning of joint institutions and economically sound reconstruction efforts, will be achieved unless the architects of the genocide and their henchmen are captured and sent to the Hague. If you were a refugee, would you return to your home, knowing that the man who ran the concentration camp now works at the local police station? How free and fair can elections be if candidates running for office for exile are prevented, once elected, from taking office by the ethnic cleansing that drove them

from their home districts?

Just last week, it was reported that despite the presence and diplomatic efforts of the international community, after a few minutes the meeting of the Srebrenica town council ended in total chaos. Clearly the legacy of the massacre lives on.

In answering the questions why did the massacre happen, and will it happen again, it is important to understand the extent to which an escalating series of human rights abuses in Bosnia before the war contributed to a complete breakdown of civil society. These events and the negligible international response to them, paved the way for the eventual tragedies in Bosnia. To suggest, as many do, that ancient religious and ethnic hostilities are the cause of the most recent Balkan conflict, ignores recent history. For nearly 40 years following World War II, the people of former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia, lived in a peaceful multi-ethnic state.

The fragile peace came to an end in the 1980's when Belgrade unilaterally dismantled the Kosovo Government, stripping it of its autonomous status and created a police state. A few years later, as Croatia sought independence, fear of the denial of their rights sparked a rebellion among the Croatian Serbs, which led to the massive destruction of Vukovar. The failure of the international community to react to these events sent a message to the perpetrators that no one would intervene to prevent exploitation of minorities by nationalists. A pattern of human rights abuses was established and reinforced. The eventual result was the worst European bloodbath since World War II.

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Threatened by Bosnia's desire for independence, a few insecure demagogues launched campaigns of hate and terror aimed at achieving ethnically pure states. Seizing the opportunity, some of these nationalists began to promote their grand designs of creating a greater Serbia, others, a greater Croatia. Each fastidiously worked to eliminate any and all who would interfere with their nationalist expansionistic goals. During this time, the major players in the international community refused to get their hands dirty in the Yugoslav conflict. Although there were ongoing attempts to negotiate a peace and to propose territorial boundaries, the parties could not reach consensus and the killing continued.

Sensing very little progress in the negotiations, the United Nations declared certain areas to be safe, promising to protect the most vulnerable populations. The failure to protect the so-called safe areas set the stage for further human rights abuses, permitting the siege of Sarajevo and other safe areas, culminating in the massacre in Srebrenica.

As has been said by my colleagues here on the panel, the United States, the Netherlands, and other European Governments, the United Nations and the international community should be condemned for their failure to act on reports of impending Srebrenica massacre. Perhaps external force could have saved thousands of lives. But the ultimate culpability must rest firmly on the shoulders of the most senior Serbian politicians and officers who planned and authorized this crime. Evidence from the well-documented massacre points to the complicity of Bosnian Serb leaders in Pale as well as the leadership in Belgrade.

President Clinton said we have an obligation to carry forward the lesson of Nuremberg. Those accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide must be brought to justice. There must be peace for justice to prevail, but there must be justice when peace prevails.

Just last week while in Rwanda, the President, acknowledging that the world did not act quickly enough to the 1994 genocide, repeated his vow never again must we shy away in the face of evidence. While he said this, the Serbian paramilitary forces were firing on Albanians in Kosovo. The President said in Rwanda, genocide can occur anywhere. It's not an African phenomenon. In the case of Srebrenica, the evidence is clear. Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic must not be allowed, as former Senator Dole so eloquently put it, to exercise their noxious influence on the people who they sought to destroy, an influence that threatens to jeopardize the entire peace process in Bosnia.

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Arresting these two suspected war criminals is not the panacea, but it could influence the answer to the question that we are asking today, will it happen again? As long as war criminals are at large and justice is not done, the wounds of war can not heal, reconciliation and lasting peace can not be achieved. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Heffernan appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Heffernan.

Let me ask the entire panel first of all, and Ms. Jagger suggested this a few moments ago about the idea of not pursuing the evidence to these highest levels because of what it might reveal about U.N. complicity, certainly negligence and perhaps United States and other countries' negligence and complicity in the crimes as well.

Why do you think there is not an aggressive effort, now that many months have passed since there have even been elections in Bosnia and Republic of Srpska? Why does the reluctance remain to pursue the higher ups? That especially goes for Milosevic himself. I am, as I said earlier, appalled that our government is making no attempt whatsoever, unless they have changed yesterday, to pursue Milosevic because he is our "partner in peace" now.

What is your take on that?

Ms. JAGGER. I think it's clear if we understand that the State Department refused to send a witness today that the Pentagon refused to allow a very crucial witness who used to work with the United Nations and who would have given us a very credible account of what happened in Srebrenica and what happened especially with General Janvier and Akashi. That is the reason why they didn't want to allow that to happen.

I think it's important to understand that as the chronology shows us, if on the 24th of May, General Janvier went to the Security Council to advocate dropping the safe areas and not defending them, and if there was, as the British MB that I spoke about before, believe that there was a change of policy for the British, the French, and the Americans and the United Nations, and as we know on the fourth of June, there was a quid pro quo agreement between General Janvier and Mladic by which General Mladic was going to release the hostages in exchange for which General Janvier undertook that there will be no NATO air strike.

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But furthermore, there was one important thing. On June 9, U.N. Special Representative Akashi announced the United Nations will abide by strictly peacekeeping principles, i.e. no use of force. This is from a report done by Rob Guttman on the fall of Srebrenica that appeared in *Newsday*.

I am convinced that the word a "coverup" or a "conspiracy" is not a strong enough word for what happened in Srebrenica. They want us to forget what happened in Srebrenica. I feel that the anger and the outrage of the survivors, and especially the women of Srebrenica who feel that everybody wants us to forget what happened there, is the reason why we don't have any war criminals from Srebrenica who had been apprehended until now. That is the reason why the whole process of identification has been stalled. That is the reason why they still want to have the answers for the missing persons, and why so few of the missing have been identified until today.

I think that everything tends to show to us that there is too much to lose for the United Nations, for the U.S. Government, for the French

Government, for the Dutch, who by the way I would like to say are the only ones who are carrying out an independent investigation as to what happened in Srebrenica.

Mr. SMITH. Would anybody else like to answer that question?

Mr. STOVER. What needs to be known is the truth, whether you call it a coverup or whatever you call it. What needs to be known is the truth. I can tell you from the time that I spent during the war in the former Yugoslavia there often was a sense among younger UNPROFOR soldiers of complete frustration. I traveled with UNPROFOR troops, I worked with them, and they constantly questioned why they were there, if they couldn't use force to prevent the killing. I can remember in 1993 when we arrived in Vukovar to complete the evacuation of the mass grave, and the Belgian UNPROFOR commander met with the Serb commander to tell him that we were going to continue the work. In the meeting, the Serb commander said we couldn't go to the site, and the UNPROFOR commander didn't raise a word in protest.

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I think that what is important now is, and that we know among many U.N. colleagues I know who are still in the United Nations, a deep sense that our moral authority, not only of the United Nations, but of the governments that supported the safe havens, has been tarnished. Until there is a full airing of what happened, it is very difficult for us to listen to the proud words of even our own President that this will never happen again.

We need to know functionally and at an operational level what went wrong and who gave the order to abandon the enclave of Srebrenica.

Mr. SMITH. You know this idea that it will never happen again, and you mentioned, Mr. Stover, about Vukovar in the hearings that we held, Mr. Wolf and I were in Vukovar when it was under siege. When we visited a wine cellar where there were dozens of people holed up because of sniping and daily bombings that were occurring, one of the people when they heard we were U.S. visiting Congressmen were a little surprised that we were there, but then somebody shouted out why is this any different than Kuwait where this aggression will not stand, and started quoting President Bush's words right back to us.

So those words of "never again" take on a very hollow meaning when they do take place over and over again, and the response is tepid and there is a culture of appeasement.

That leads to my next question in terms of the chain of command. On May 24, 1995, General Janvier reported that the "military force deployed by UNPROFOR in these safe areas is of little use." Why did the United Nations and troop contributing nations not respond? Is he at fault? Were they sleeping at the switch in country or is the chain of command in your view flawed when it goes to the higher echelons at the United Nations in New York? Are they incapable of responding?

Ms. JAGGER. It is my belief that what General Janvier was advocating to the Security Council was really what everybody wanted to hear. That's the sad state of affairs. That they were not there to try to convince him that what he was saying was immoral, but they were willing to go ahead and change their policies toward Srebrenica and let the Srebrenica people be immolated and sell them to the Serbs. That is, I think, what is most outrageous about what happened in Srebrenica, is that as far as the 24th of May, they knew that the people of Srebrenica were going to be handed over to the executioners with the consent of the international community. By that, I mean by the French, the British, the Americans and the United Nations.

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Mr. SMITH. Yes?

Ms. PAUL. If I might add, Mr. Chairman, that I think that the critical issue here was one of troop protection. That frankly none of the contributing nations wanted their troops in any kind of situation which might compromise their own safety. That was the reason that the Dutch troops were not reinforced. As Dutch troops rotated out of the region, they were, in fact, not even replaced.

The enclaves presented a problem for the United Nations in terms of protection. I would have to concur with Ms. Jagger that there was a decision essentially to allow them to fall. It certainly appears that way.

When we did a report of what happened in Srebrenica in the early fall of 1995, one of the things we called for was an investigation of the role of U.N. officials. We called for the disclosure of all of available information pertaining to the U.N.'s response, and argued that this disclosure of information shouldn't just be targeted at the Dutch and the Dutch Government, but it should include senior military and civilian officials at UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb. In addition, I think that what was going on in New York would have to be taken under consideration as well.

However to date, no such investigation has taken place as we are all aware. I think it's still not too late to call for such investigation. In fact, I think it's critical that one be conducted.

Mr. SMITH. Yes?

Mr. NUHANOVIC. As Diane said, it was probably already decided that Srebrenica should be let to fall. The Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica were definitely not able to defend Srebrenica with the arms they had, although they have never really shot back. I mean they have never returned fire to the Serbs, not even once. That is what I have seen there. But probably that was the policy.

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But I was talking about the concrete case, specific case of people being allowed to enter the U.N. camp. They spent there 2 days and 2 nights. After 2 days and 2 nights, they are thrown out of the camp right to the Serbs. This is something different. So they were already protected in a way. They were inside the safe place. No one has ever answered my question why have those people been thrown out of the camp, because I was there and I know that the Serbs have not tried to break into the camp. They haven't tried. So there was no open threat from the Serbs against Dutch soldiers or officers to hand over the people from the camp. I have never been given any answer. There has never been any investigation about the situation inside Dutchbat camp.

I want to also say something about the meeting. As you know, on 11 July, Srebrenica fell. 12 and 13 July, people in Potocari area were being taken away. Many of them were executed also on the spot. From 13 July until 15 July, nobody knows what happened. But on 15 July, which means only 2 days, only 2 days after Potocari situation, on 15 July there was a meeting in Belgrade. At this meeting United Nations, international community representatives were supposed to save the lives of those whose lives could have been still saved if there was still anybody alive. It was only 2 days after they disappeared.

So there was a meeting in Belgrade. I have a document which attests to that. It says "Mr. Carl Bildt, Mr. Stoltenberg, and myself," and this was written by Akashi, "and myself in Belgrade with President Milosevic on Saturday, 15 July." They met with Milosevic. "I was accompanied by General Rupert Smith and Milosevic, at the request of Bildt to facilitate the presence of General Mladic at the meeting. Mladic and Smith had a long discussion. Despite their disagreement on several points, the meeting reestablished dialog between the two generals. An informal agreement was

reached in the course of the meeting on a number of points between the two generals, which will however have to be confirmed at their meeting scheduled for 19 July. In view of the highly sensitive nature of the presence of Mladic at the meeting, it was agreed by all participants that this fact should not be mentioned at all in public."

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So this was at that time a secret meeting. If I knew that the meeting was taking place, I would have expected these people to ask Mladic and Milosevic what happened with the people who were taken away from Potocari. According to the official document issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross, it's a book on missing persons which lists almost 20,000 persons missing in Bosnia.

One thousand eight hundred and eighty nine men, mostly men and boys and some women, which means the total number of missing persons from Potocari is 1,889. So many people disappeared in front of the eyes of all these representatives of the international community, and it seems like no one has asked about these people. But what is even worse than what I have told already is that the following day on 16 July, which means only 1 day after this meeting on 16 July, the Serbs killed 1,500 men and boys in Pilica. This has been proved by also the witnesses and also the indicted for war crimes, Mr. Damovic, who is in the Hague. Which means that all these facts show that there was very little interest to save the lives of anybody.

Ms. PAUL. I just wanted to add to that that what was discussed at this meeting was the safety of U.N. troops and the hostage situation in terms of Dutch troops, and also essentially an agreement, perhaps not stated quite so bluntly, but an agreement that there would be no further air strikes. Therefore, there was not a focus, again, on the fate of civilians, many of whom whose lives could have been saved had there been insistence or had there been some kind of plan developed at this meeting as a result. It was not even brought up.

Mr. NUHANOVIC. It was not even mentioned. It was not even mentioned. You see only 2 days after 2,000 people were taken away, this meeting took place. It was not even brought up.

Ms. JAGGER. I would like to add something more to that. Besides the safety of the Dutch troops, they were there to request for the military equipment of the United Nations, but I would like to read you in an unpublished interview that Carl Bildt gave to Rob Guttman from *Newsday*. He said, "We had to meet with Milosevic. He was the only person who could get the two generals together. Milosevic ordered Mladic to Belgrade. This leaves no doubt as to who was pulling the strings within and without the now ravaged enclave in Srebrenica. The point of the meeting, said Bildt, was to arrange access for the International Red Cross to an enclave in which the United Nations knew well that no Muslims were now living. Bildt made it clear that he knew a lot of details about the violence. He said we knew about men being separated."

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*Newsday* asked Bildt, "Did you raise the issue of massacres with Mladic and Milosevic?" "No, we didn't," replied Bildt. "We had unconfirmed reports of massacres, but we didn't raise the issue." Later in the interview he contradicted himself directly. "Of course we raised these issues." So it shows you and he was then the head of the Office of the High Representative and the former Prime Minister of Sweden.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask Ms. Paul if perhaps you could elaborate on the issue of chemical weapons and ask your associate if he would come and give us his name and tell us some information that he might have.

How much of it was used, how many people were affected? I think you said it was BZ? What is the consequence of coming in contact with that chemical agent?

Mr. HOGENDOORN. Well, it's difficult to tell what really happened because of course most of the people we believe were—

Mr. SMITH. Could you identify yourself for the record?

Mr. HOGENDOORN. I'm sorry. My name is E.J. Hogendoorn. I am a researcher with Human Rights Watch.

It is quite difficult to get the facts straight because of course most of the witnesses of these alleged attacks are dead. Because it appears clear from the testimony that most of the symptoms that were described to us were experienced by people in the rear of the column. These were the people that were cut off on the second day of the march out of Srebrenica and the majority of these people were then either killed in the area or executed later on.

The reason we suspect it is BZ or some kind of BZ-like agent is because of the effects that were described to us, which is disorientation and incapacitation. We were aware of the information that the Yugoslav national army had developed an incapacitant which they called BZ. They had weaponized it, and that they had actually developed doctrine for its use.

Ms. PAUL. In addition, there were some of the survivors interviewed who identified peculiar looking shells in terms of the way they exploded, that they described colored substance coming from the shells rather than an explosion, a detonation with shrapnel. These accounts varied.

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There are possibly other explanations for some of the behaviors that occurred. There were, however, some very bizarre behaviors which experts felt could not be explained by the traumatic stress of this situation which some people have said might explain some of the symptoms. There were a number of suicides and people who were very disoriented. One of the effects of BZ can be even the thought that someone near you is in fact the enemy. People weren't recognizing others in their vicinity whom they were believed to have known, et cetera. So there was a great deal of psychological reaction that doesn't seem to be adequately explained.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Stover, does a gassing of this kind show up when bodies are exhumed? Second, in looking at these gruesome pictures and some of the pictures that we saw on the slides that you presented, how many of those people have been identified and the survivors have been made aware of the fact that either their father or their son or husband or daughter has now been positively identified? Are the dental records sufficiently well kept in Bosnia? Are there other signs? Or is it usually just things that they might have been carrying that leads to a positive ID?

Mr. STOVER. I will deal with the first question. In the late 1980's, I was involved not directly, but I sent a team of forensic experts to Iraqi Kurdistan. The team was actually going to investigate mass graves, but took on investigating possible chemical weapons use. They were able to recover, and this was certainly early 1990's, they were able to recover from craters that were found in the area traces of serin and traces of mustard gas. In fact, it was the first time in history that traces of a chemical agent had been found so many years actually not in test situation, but had been found "in sites". They were analyzed in Britain and in England. The results were positive.

In this case, I don't know. It is something that certainly could be looked into and samples should be taken from some of the bodies in the clothes that are exhumed. A lot of it is the conditions and the type of agent and how long it lasts.

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In terms of how many identifications have been made, it's been some weeks since I have had any new information, that some 800 bodies have been exhumed or collected from the trail from Srebrenica to Tuzla. Of those, around a dozen or so have been identified. Most of those have been identified on the basis, I believe, of DNA analysis.

One of the things that I feared from the beginning is that the families may be led to believe that a large number of the dead will be positively identified. It is a very difficult situation because you have such a large number of men who were executed and buried at certain sites. Anti-mortem records are not as widely available as they were in Vukovar and so on. However, the forensic efforts need to continue. Perhaps by the end of this year, just simply my own projection, I mean it could be no more than 40, and this is insignificant, and the effect on the families is tremendous.

So any effort and support that can be given to help Physicians for Human Rights and the other organizations helping with the examination work would be beneficial.

**Mr. SMITH.** Mr. Nuhanovic implied that, absent a concrete identification, there is some hope that perhaps a relative might still be living. Is there any evidence that the Bosnian Serbs or Milosevic's people are holding in concentration camps or in any other situation people from either Srebrenica or any other Bosnian Muslims?

**Mr. STOVER.** You know, one of the women from Srebrenica who I spoke to about this said, "You know, all I have is hope. You know, you take away hope, I have nothing." It is understandable. We saw this in Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala. It is very unlikely, in my opinion, and this is based primarily by ICRC visits, that there may at this date still be men being held in Serbia or other areas. However, this is my own personal feeling.

But then, you never know. We need to continue to press for that information. But also a process of coming to understand that probably most of the men and boys are dead and that they are not being held in mines or in prisons also needs to be accepted.

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**Ms. PAUL.** If I might add to that. We have done some investigations into this. There is not much evidence that suggests that at least a large number of people survived or were taken either into Serbia or elsewhere. However, I think out of respect for the survivors and the need to get at the truth, that we should not discount those allegations. I have been told recently that a man was released from servitude in a mine in Serbia and arrived in Sarajevo and spoke on Bosnian television. We have not interviewed him so I can't say what I think about the veracity of his statement.

But what I would say is that through investigations that I have done starting back in 1994, when I was looking at the issue of forced labor in the Bozonska Cryena region of what is now Republic of Srpska, that there were a number of allegations of persons being taken into Serbia proper to work in the mines at Aleksinac and the area around Nis. So I think that we can't discount it.

I was never able, however, to find an individual who had actually been in the mines or even have a second hand story that I felt was solid enough to go on. But knowing what I know about the process of forced labor and what was happening during that period, it seems entirely conceivable to me that something like that could occur.

I think though one has to be cautious because one doesn't want to give false hope to the survivors. At the same time, it is completely unfair to discount their stories as mere wishful thinking. I think that we have not done a full enough investigation or satisfactory investigation of these issues.

**Mr. SMITH.** Let me ask just one final question. Why do you believe the U.N. peacekeepers and the UNHCR did not insist that the Muslims be evacuated through their good offices or on their trucks and buses rather than allowing the Serb captors? I mean, did they just trust Mladic, that somehow he was going to act benignly toward the Muslims, or was it just incompetence, or worse?

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**Mr. NUHANOVIC.** I think that they just didn't care. According to what I have seen there, I can give you many details but it would take a long time. The Dutch soldiers, the representatives from MSF who were there, and also UNHCR representatives who were there for maybe 1 or 2 hours while this was happening in Potocari didn't show an interest in protecting the civilians at all. I mean no one has shown any interest at all. Everybody just waited to pack up his things and leave. That's all. And leave that hell on earth.

But you mentioned UNHCR. I have managed to find out something concerning the UNHCR complicity, which has not been mentioned in any book. At the moment when people were being thrown out of the camp, there were two UNHCR trucks just arrived at the Potocari area. They were parked along with the Serb trucks and the Serb buses. There were still a few hundred people left in the camp. Two UNHCR officers were there on the spot. I saw them. I know their names. They didn't even try to suggest to the Dutch officers that maybe at least the remaining refugees should be evacuated by the UNHCR trucks because they were there.

Not only that, but later on, I found out that those two UNHCR officers have never written any report on what they have seen in Potocari. When I tried to contact them and ask if they have seen where the people were taken away, into what direction, the UNHCR spokesman in Sarajevo, Mr. Christianofsky in 1997 when I went to his office, told me but Hasan, we had no international staff in Srebrenica during the whole issue. So the spokesman of UNHCR and some other high officials in the organization didn't even know that UNHCR international staff was present in Srebrenica. Everything was just covered up.

**Ms. JAGGER.** I would like to quote the words at the debriefing by the Dutch Brigadier General van der Wind. The debriefing says, "In order to prevent excesses with regard to transport, the battalion commander decided to cooperate in the evacuation. When the first buses arrived, they were stormed by a large number of refugees who wanted to board as quickly as possible. Dutchbat personnel then formed an orderly pathway to the buses. But more extraordinary than that is the Dutchbat transferred 30,000 liters of fuel to the Bosnian Serbs in accordance with Mladic demands. The Dutch were fueling the very vehicles that Mladic used to bring the executioners to Potocari and the buses that brought the victims to the killing fields simply because General Mladic demanded it. The Bosnian Serbs held 55 Dutch personnel in Bratrnag," wrote General van der Wind. That is the excuse that he gave why they were cooperating with the Serbs in such a way.

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**Mr. SMITH.** You know, I do have one additional question to you, Ms. Jagger. You spoke of the Dutch investigation that has been undertaken. When is that expected to be concluded? How extensive is it? Does it have high-level, competent jurist investigators working on it? And do you think that might be the catalyst for additional investigations and are U.N. documents going to be part of the discovery?

**Ms. JAGGER.** Yes. There is a gentleman I think at the moment here present and maybe it would be good if he would be willing to speak. I do not know if he is still—

**Mr. SMITH.** He is coming up right now.

**Mr. KERSTEN.** My name is Albert Kersten. I am a member of the team of the Institute for Documentation in Amsterdam. Our institute is

investigating what has happened in Srebrenica in July 1995. It's an independent investigation by the Dutch Government. We have access to all Dutch documents. We are in contact now with the United Nations, with NATO, and other international organizations to reach agreement on access to their documents.

So far, we have an agreement with NATO. We hope to get soon an answer from the United Nations. We are also discussing this issue with the U.S. Government at the moment. We have also asked the French Government and the British Government to cooperate with the investigation.

Mr. REES. A technical question about that. Congressman Smith has requested that the United Nations release all of its internal documents, minutes of meetings, debriefings, communications, both within Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia and two other U.N. officials and even to the Security Council and member states. Have you made similar requests to the United Nations? Do you feel that the release of those sorts of documents is essential to being able to conduct a thorough investigation?

Mr. KERSTEN. Yes. I think access to the documents is essential for a thorough investigation. We have not asked for release of the documents. We have asked for access to the documents. After we have searched the documents, we will continue the discussion with the United Nations on which part of the documents or which documents we can use for our report. So the final decision on publication of the report is with the United Nations, but in general we have the impression that the United Nations will be cooperative with our investigation. We have had no negative indications so far, but we have to experience in practice how it will work out.

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Mr. REES. Is there anything that the U.S. Congress should do to encourage that cooperation that has not been done already?

Mr. KERSTEN. Well of course all assistance is welcome. At the moment I couldn't be very specific on what the U.S. Congress could do to help us. I think because we are an independent institute we have to do it on our own, contacts. So far, we are very grateful for what we have reached on cooperation.

Ms. PAUL. Although if I might add, intelligence information that's related certainly would be useful, I would imagine as well as the photographs.

Mr. KERSTEN. Oh, yes.

Ms. PAUL. So that is something the U.S. Congress could ask for, certainly would be the release of classified data.

Mr. REES. I think the Chairman will be making a request very shortly that those documents be declassified.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Rees. Your associate from Human Rights Watch I think wanted to make a comment? No, he covered it. I want to thank you very much for your testimony. You have long provided leadership very often not clearly taken by people in positions of authority. That's entirely regrettable. But for your good work on behalf of human rights and trying to prevent this from happening again and to get to the bottom of what happened in Srebrenica, I know that this Subcommittee is very, very grateful. Thank you.

As I said earlier, any additional comments, data that you would like to be made a part of the record, please get it to us and we will make it a part of the record.

The hearing is adjourned, and thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:28 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned subject to the call of the Chair.]

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## APPENDIX

Insert "The Official Committee record contains additional material here."

Permanente Commissie inzake  
(Nederlandse) oorlogsmisdrijven  
in Joegoslavië  
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5 april 2000

### DE TIENTALLEN VERZWEGEN SREBRENICA'S ROND SREBRENICA

#### 'Ik word niet goed'

Wordt u ook zo beroerd van de niet aflatende stompzinnige berichtgeving door de westerse media over Srebrenica ? Natuurlijk weten we het allemaal wel zo langzamerhand. Met onze 'vrije, pluriforme' en vooral ook 'democratische' media. Maar toch is het steeds weer verbijsterend. In zijn ongehoorde en botte misleiding over Joegoslavië. 'Srebrenica' spant daarbij ongetwijfeld de kroon.

#### 'Srebrenica' als onuitputtelijke bron voor anti-Servische gevoelens

Steeds weer als er een moment dreigt aan te breken, waarop het westers optreden op de Balkan met iets meer kritische zin dreigt gezien te gaan worden, wordt opnieuw het 'Srebrenica'-verhaal uit de kast getrokken.

Zoals nu ook weer.

De tijd dat we ons konden permitteren om de vooropgezetheid van belangrijke gebeurtenissen op de Balkan als pathologische 'samenzweringstheorieën' af te doen, is al lang voorbij. Als het erom gaat het complex van leugens en beschuldigen aan het adres van 'de Serviërs' in stand te houden, is niets toevallig. En worden de zaken grondig geregisseerd.

Zo ook het moment waarop de Bosnisch-Servische generaal Krstic door de NAVO-bezettingstroepen van zijn bed werd gelicht en werd overgebracht naar het Joegoslavië Tribunaal. De NAVO kwam immers onder steeds zwaardere kritiek te liggen ter gelegenheid van het 1-jarige jubileum van de NAVO-agressie tegen Joegoslavië !

Het werd dus tijd om weer eens een blik 'Srebrenica' open te trekken. Zodat de kolommen van westerse media weer doorspekt zouden raken met uitspraken als : "Gezien de reputatie van de Serven verwachtte ik dat ze zouden gaan moorden" (Trouw van 5 april 2000).

Dat is de toon waarop over 'de Serviërs' geschreven behoort te worden. En 'Srebrenica' is altijd bij de hand om daarbij te helpen. Op momenten van groeiende kritiek en dreigende herbezinning op wat er nu eigenlijk allemaal op de Balkan is gebeurd en nog gebeurt.

Zo wordt kunstmatig de stemming teruggebracht: 'het is toch maar goed dat we ze flink hebben gebombardeerd en eigenlijk zouden we dat nog eens over moeten doen'.  
Het is die stemming, die de NAVO graag ziet !  
En het journaal wordt namens de NAVO bedankt voor zijn belangeloze medewerking.

#### 'Een dwarsligger gesignaleerd'

Hoewel 'belangeloos'. Je moet hier als journalist eens wat anders durven schrijven!  
Soms, een heel enkele keer, durft iemand dat. Zoals Geertjan Lassche in het eerste nummer van de Nieuwe Revu van dit jaar in bijgaand artikel.  
Bravo, Geertjan ! Maar tegelijkertijd, vanuit carrière-perspectief, een onverstandige daad, jongen ! Want denk maar niet dat je nou nog ooit bij een van de 'pluriforme en democratische' kranten aan de bak komt. Als je meent zó ver en zó vrij buiten de pot te kunnen pissen !

#### Het rovershol Srebrenica

Zonder veel omhaal van woorden en goed gedocumenteerd beschrijft Lassche hoe Srebrenica fungeerde als een rovershol. Hoezo 'rovershol', Lassche ? Srebrenica was toch een gedemilitariseerde enclave, waarin louter onschuldige moslim-vluchtelingen samengeperst zaten ? Bevend en sidderend voor de wrede Serviërs buiten de poorten van stad ?  
Dat hebben we allemaal voortdurend in de krant kunnen lezen, van onze politici gehoord en op televisie gezien. En dus is dat zo !

Lassche onthult, impliciet en soms ook expliciet, dat een groot deel van de mannelijke bevolking van Srebrenica helemaal niet uit 'onschuldige burgers' bestond. Maar in plaats daarvan uit vele duizenden militairen van het geregelde Bosnische leger en duizenden paramilitairen.  
En dat 'Srebrenica' dus helemaal geen 'gedemilitariseerde' enclave was, zoals de bedoeling van de VN was.

Een onthulling is dat eigenlijk niet, want iedereen wist dat natuurlijk al lang. Maar dat mocht niet gezegd worden. Benieuwd wat er met Lassche gaat gebeuren, nu hij deze 'omerta' - zwijgplicht - als journalist heeft doorbroken !

Vrij en zonder remmingen beschrijft Lassche vervolgens hoe door deze paramilitaire bendes misbruik werd gemaakt van de status van Srebrenica als 'safe haven', om tot tientallen kilometers in de omgeving de Servische bevolking te terroriseren. Om te moorden, te roven, te plunderen en om onbeschrijflijke wreedheden te bedrijven. Als SS-ers gingen zij tekeer. Tientallen dorpen werden platgebrand, mensen werden gemarteld en verminkt, gekruisigd en onthoofd, ogen werden uitgestoken. Bewijs hiervan is geen probleem, want de rovershoofdman Oric van de moslim-milities, Oric, heeft er zelf voor gezorgd dat het allemaal op video werd vastgelegd.

## Die arme vluchtelingen in Srebrenica toch !

Toen dit roversnest uiteindelijk door generaal Mladic werd opgerold, kon de balans worden opgemaakt en bleek dat deze vanuit Srebrenica opererende bendes verantwoordelijk waren voor 192 platgebrande dorpen, 2800 doden en 6000 gewonden.

Geen wonder dat de eerste woorden van generaal Bladic tegen de commandant Karremans waren: "Waarom heb je de moslims niet ontwapend ?" Zoals het VN-concept van demilitarisering van de 'safe havens' immers ook ondubbelzinnig voorschreef.

Geen wonder dat die "onschuldige mannelijke vluchtelingen" bang waren voor "de wrede Serviërs" van Mladic. Geen wonder dat het overgrote deel van de mannelijke bevolking van Srebrenica dan ook al op de loop was, voordat de enclave viel. Zij hadden tonnen boter op hun hoofd. Die vele duizenden 'onschuldige moslim-mannen', die de val van de enclave niet afwachtten, maar al de benen hadden genomen voor 'de wrede Serviërs', kunnen dan ook onmogelijk door het 'verradelijke Dutchbat' zijn 'uitgeleverd'. Aan hun 'Servische slachters', zoals een van de 'onafhankelijke en onpartijdige' rechters van het Joegoslavië-Tribunaal dat op dinsdag 4 april 2000 tijdens de zitting hiervan formuleerde ('rechter' Riad).

## Maar weinig mannen bleven achter

Hoeveel mannen er werkelijk in Srebrenica achterbleven totdat de enclave was gevallen en zo in handen kwamen van het Bosnisch-Servische leger, is niet precies bekend, maar erg veel zijn het er niet geweest. Het NOS-journaal van 20.00 uur van 5 april 2000 noemde terloops een aantal van 600.

In elk geval stellen de westerse media er een eer in het te doen voorkomen dat zo ongeveer de gehele - natuurlijk onschuldige ! - mannelijke bevolking die in Srebrenica verbleef door Karremans aan 'zijn Servische beulen' zou zijn 'uitgeleverd'. Ter fine van genocide.

Veel meer dan 600 kunnen het er dus niet geweest zijn, want de rest had al zijn stutten getrokken !

Stel dat al die 600 mannen zijn vermoord - vast staat dat dat in elk geval niet is gebeurd, maar stel -, dan is dat nog maar een klein deel van de slachtoffers, die vanuit het roversnest Srebrenica door 'die arme Bosnische vluchtelingen' in de omgeving onder de Servische bevolking zijn gemaakt.

Nogmaals, verreweg het grootste deel van de arme mannelijke 'vluchtelingen' was al op de loop. Met een alleszins terechte schrik in de benen, gezien de voorgeschiedenis.

## De verdere uitbating van de Srebrenica-mythe

Hoe loopt het Srebrenica-verhaal af ?

Zoals gepland. Tot in lengte van dagen zal de zorgvuldig gesmede mythe rond Srebrenica van stal gehaald blijven worden, telkens als tegenwicht nodig is. Dat wil zeggen, wanneer op enig moment enig begrip voor de Servische positie dreigt te ontstaan.

"Srebrenica" zal daar dan zijn om dat te corrigeren en ons opnieuw in te peperen wat een duivels die Serviërs werkelijk

zijn.

De Secretaris-generaal van de VN Kofi Anan heeft het zelf bevestigd en neergelegd in een rapport: op de onschuldige mannelijke moslim-bevolking van Srebrenica is de ergste genocide gepleegd, die sinds WO-II heeft plaatsgevonden. Nooit enige veroordeling uitgesproken hebbend voor welke misdaden ook, die jegens de Serviërs worden begaan - om maar eens wat te noemen: de in strijd met het internationale recht uitgevoerde bombardementen op Joegoslavië bijvoorbeeld -, weet hij zeer goed uit welke hand hij moet eten. Diezelfde Amerikaanse hand namelijk, die hem ook aan zijn baan heeft geholpen.

### Het Joegoslavië Tribunaal als 'kangaroo court'

En het Joegoslavië Tribunaal ? Het Joegoslavië Tribunaal zal er zorg voor dragen dat de Serviërs voor 'Srebrenica' worden gestraft met levenslange gevangenisstraffen. En dat de Moslim militieleiders in Srebrenica, verantwoordelijk voor duizenden doden - zoals Naser Oric -, vrijuit blijven gaan.

Hoe ?

Door aangeleverd bewijsmateriaal van hun misdrijven gewoon eenvoudig kwijt te maken. En simpeler nog, door domweg niet op aanklachten tegen hen te reageren.

Is dan toch nog de een of andere westers journalist zo impertinent om niet te begrijpen dat het geen pas geeft om bij dit 'onafhankelijke tribunaal' te blijven informeren waarom de moslim-schurken van Srebrenica niet vervolgd worden, dan wordt het tijd voor een duidelijke terechtwijzing.

Zoals de persofficier van het tribunaal Paul Risley die - volkomen terecht natuurlijk !- uitdeelde aan Geertjan Lassche: "ik vind het schandelijk dat jullie je focussen op mensen als Naser Oric." Zie het slot van bijgaand artikel in de Nieuwe Revu.

Per slot van rekening heeft ook Lassche zo zachtjesaan te begrijpen, wat elke 'normale' journalist begrijpt, ook zonder dat hem dat steeds weer opnieuw behoeft te worden uitgelegd: de schurkenrol is al vergeven. Aan de Serviërs. En het Joegoslavië Tribunaal is opgericht om dat te sanctioneren. Met het eerbiedwaardige instituut van het recht. Zo zijn de regels van het spel.

Jammer, jammer, jammer, dat er nog steeds mensen zijn als Geertjan Lassche. Die dat nog steeds niet schijnen te begrijpen !

Maar gelukkig hebben de 'normale' kranten en tijdschriften geen last van een dergelijk onbegrip.

Zodat het Joegoslavië Tribunaal niet steeds opnieuw dergelijke terechtwijzingen behoeft uit te delen aan journalisten die niet vanzelf al begrijpen dat het nou eenmaal vanzelfsprekend de Serviërs zijn, die door het 'Tribunaal' aangepakt dienen te worden.

Namens de PC

mr. N.M.P. Steijnen



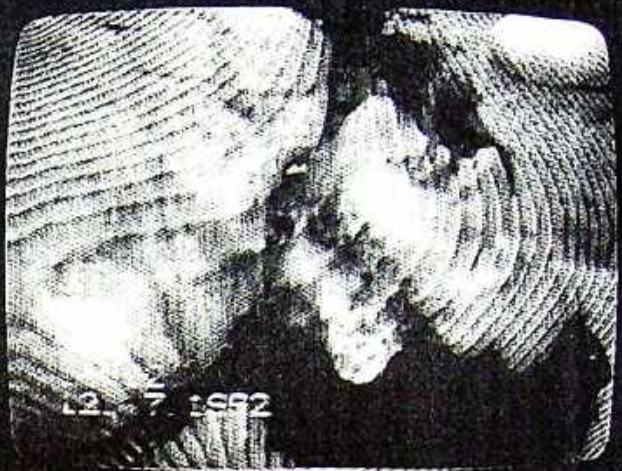
Dit is het einde

# Hoe moslim-beul Oric z'n volk in Srebrenica verraadde



De bijeengedreven moslims in de enclave Srebrenica adoreerden hem. Na de eerste etnische zuiveringen van de Bosnische Serviërs in 1991 was gangster-generaal Naser Oric met zijn legertje in oostelijk Bosnië degene die wraak nam. En hoe. Hij vermoordde jarenlang vrouwen en kinderen, castrerde en verminkte mannen in de Servische dorpen rond de enclave, zelfs nog nadat Dutchbat daar gearriveerd was. En hij filmde hoogstpersoonlijk de gevolgen van zijn misdaden. Maar toen het Servische leger van Mladic in april 1995 oprukte richting Srebrenica, liet Oric zijn volk in de steek en vluchtte. Met de bekende catastrofale gevolgen. Nu loopt de oorlogsmisdadiger Naser Oric (32) vrij rond in Tuzla.

Door Geertjan Lassche



"Naser Oric is de playboy van Tuzla en wordt omringd door vrouwen. Hij moet ontzettend rijk zijn. 't Is net Rambo met zijn brede schouders en dikke armen. Hij is omgeven door een onzichtbaar legertje van oudgedienden. Officieel heeft hij een restaurant, maar iedereen weet wel beter; Oric houdt zich met duistere zaken bezig binnen de Bosnische mafia." De man in Tuzla die dit vertelt, blijft liever anoniem. "Het is niet verstandig om over hem te praten." We zoeken verder. Iedereen in Tuzla kent zijn naam, maar ieder reageert er anders op. De een huivert, de ander vindt hem onplezierig, een derde aanbidt hem en een vierde grijnst alleen maar. Want voor veel mensen in de stad is het beter maatjes te blijven met de *godfather* van kanton Tuzla. Zij die hem goed kennen, blijven zakelijk en maken duidelijk dat Naser Oric liever niet herinnerd wordt aan Srebrenica. De grootste vechtersbaas van de stad vocht als een God voor ze, maar verdween plotseling uit de enclave, waarna de Bosnische Serviër en gezochte oorlogsmisdadiger Mladic deze innam. Tot op de dag van vandaag weet niemand wat de eigenlijke reden was van Oric' vertrek. De 30-jarige vluchteling Fata Ahmetovic: "Naser was een grootheid. Meisjes aanbaden hem en ouderen sidderden als hij verscheen. Maar toen hij wegging, liet hij ons onbeschermd achter. Daarom weten we niet wat we van hem moeten denken."

Naser Oric wordt op 3 maart 1967 geboren als zoon van Dzermal en Hata Oric te Potocari, gemeente Srebrenica. Vader Oric noemt zijn tweede zoon naar de in die jaren regerende Egyptische president en wenst dat Naser wordt als de volksheld Tito. Naser bezoekt de basisschool in Potocari en gaat in 1985 naar Srebrenica om het vak van metaalbewerker te leren. Eind 1985 maakt hij zijn opwachting bij het Bosnische leger in Tuzla. In z'n vrije tijd blinkt hij uit in het beoefenen van diverse vechten- en krachtporten. In 1987, hij is dan

20 jaar, zit zijn dienstplicht erop en staat hij zonder werk op straat. Naser heeft geen zin om zijn leven in een werkplaats of zilvermijn te slijten en meldt zich aan bij de geheime politie in Belgrado. Hij wordt aangenomen. De moslim Naser ontmoet in Belgrado de grote leider van de Rode-Ster-Belgrado-hooligans en tevens lijfwacht van Milosevic, de heer Zeljko Raznjatovic, beter bekend als Arkan.

President Slobodan Milosevic raakt in diezelfde periode steeds meer bevolgen van zijn ideaal van een Groot-Servië. In Kosovo protesteren Albanen tegen zijn ideeën. De geheime dienst in Belgrado krijgt daarom van Milosevic opdracht het verzet te smoren en de opstandelingen te arresteren. Tot grote verbazing van zijn Servische collega's meldt de moslim Oric zich vrijwillig aan om zijn broeders in Kosovo een lesje te leren. Belgrado beloont Oric met een onderscheiding. Oric is te vertrouwen, vinden de Serviërs. Voortaan mag hij het portier voor Slobodan Milosevic openhouden, want Oric is bevorderd tot lijfwacht van de Servische president en krijgt van Milosevic zelfs een pitbull cadeau.

Lang houdt Naser zijn baan niet vol. In zijn biografie schrijft Oric dat hij er langzamerhand achterkwam dat zijn collega's zich misdroegen tegenover de Albanese Kosovaren. NRC-journalist Frank Westerman komt in zijn boek *Het Zwartste Scenario* tot andere bevindingen: Oric' baantje als lijfwacht lijkt aanvankelijk spannender dan het feitelijk is en daarom begint hij bij te klussen in een disco in Belgrado. Ook koopt hij tweedehands auto's en lapt ze met provisorische middelen op, waarna hij ze voor een veel te hoge prijs verkoopt. Het bedrog wordt ontdekt, en op een avond krijgt Naser Oric ruzie met een Servische politieagent. Een paar dagen later wordt het lijk van deze man gevonden. Een goede bekende van Oric, het SDA-parlementslid Ibrahim Mustafic uit Potocari, hoort dat de zoon van Dzermal en Hata Oric wordt

gezocht en waarschuwt hem. Oric volgt Ibrahim's advies op en keert veilig terug naar Potocari waar hij een baan als agent krijgt. Vier jaar later zullen handlangers van Oric tot tweemaal toe proberen Ibrahim Mustafic te vermoorden, als deze kritiek uit op Naser Oric' leiderschap.

Vanaf 1991, wanneer Naser terug is in de Drina-vallei, haat hij iedere Serviër. Politiek en religie interesseren hem niet -de moskee heeft hij nog nooit van binnen gezien-, maar hij vindt wel dat de Serviërs een grote bedreiging vormen voor de moslims. Naser verzamelt mannen om zich heen. En hij zorgt dat hij wapens krijgt. In het bos leert hij de mannen hoe ze iemands nek moeten breken of met een mes kunnen doden.

Hij trouwt in 1991 met de knappe Zahida Avdic uit Bratunac en verwekt een zoon bij haar die hij Amar noemt. Nasers wittebroodsweken duren niet lang, want de oorlog breekt uit. De Serviërs in Bosnië beginnen -gehopen door Arkan en zijn doodseskaders- de omgeving te zuiveren door moslims te doden of gevangen te nemen. Honderden vrouwen worden verkracht. Een neveneffect van deze etnische zuivering is dat de nog niet geterroriseerde moslims huis en haard verlaten voordat de militie arriveert. Duizenden van hen zoeken hun toevlucht tot het overbevolk-

**Vanaf 1991 haat Oric iedere Serviër. Hij verzamelt mannen om zich heen. En hij zorgt dat hij wapens krijgt. In het bos leert hij de mannen hoe ze iemands nek moeten breken of met een mes kunnen doden**



te en door moslims gedomineerde zilverstadje Srebrenica. De verhalen over de gruweldaden van de naderende Serviërs maken de moslims woedend en bloeddorstig. De vluchtelingen die zich willen verdedigen, verzamelen zich rond de sterksten uit de regio: leiders als de politiemans Hakija Meholic en de ex-lijfwacht Naser Oric. Zo ontstaat spontaan een enorm moslimleger dat de verdediging van Srebrenica op zich neemt. Wanneer Oric' Servische buurman Goran Zekic, een leider van de nationalistische Servische partij SDS, door Oric' gevechtseenheid wordt gedood, breekt paniek uit onder de oprukkende Bosnische Serviërs. Plotseling bestaat er angst voor de wraaklustige moslims en de Serviërs blijven voortaan op eerbiedige afstand van Srebrenica. Zo ontstaat een overbevolkt moslim-eilandje midden in een groot Servisch gebied.

Nasers heldendaden maken zijn positie onaantastbaar. De jonge knappe strijder van Srebrenica wordt benoemd tot generaal en voorzitter van de oorlogsraad. Hij besluit meteen de aanval in te zetten en geeft bevel het gebied tussen Srebrenica en het riviertje Jadar te heroveren. In mei 1992 worden de Servische dorpen Gnjona, Cumovici en Osredak overmeesterd en nemen de moslims wraak. Er wordt vermoord, geplunderd en geroofd. Wanneer de kust weer veilig is, komen de Serviërs uit de bossen tevoorschijn en brengen de lijken naar een naburig mortuarium. Daar worden video-opnamen gemaakt van de lichamen met de meest afgrijselijke wonden. Tapes die nu als bewijsmateriaal dienen. De Servische aanklager Darko Trifunovic, die op dit moment de videobanden bezit, omschrijft zijn aanklacht tegen Naser Oric: "Ze voerden oorlog als de SS in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Ze namen ogen uit, castrerden, kruisigden en verbrandden lichamen." Hasan Nunhanovic, ex-inwoner van Srebrenica, was op de hoogte van de gevechten. Hij zegt nu: "Naser was moedig en dapper. Ik



KADIR VAN LOHUIZEN

Augustus 1992. Srebrenica belegerd door Bosnische Serviërs.

wist dat hij en zijn mannen met messen vochten. Maar waarom zou ik een kwaad woord zeggen over de man die Serviërs vermoordde die mij wilden vermoorden? En wees eerlijk: voordat Naser ook nog maar een schot gelost had, hadden de Serviërs al duizenden mensen omgebracht."

Omdat iedereen doodsbang is voor het leger van Oric wordt Srebrenica vanuit de lucht bestookt door MIG's. Ook regent het artillerievuur uit het even verderop gelegen Zalazje. De inwoners en vluchtelingen verschuilen zich in kelders terwijl de granaten boven de grond hun verwoestende werking doen. Naser vindt daarom dat het Servische dorpje Zalazje met de grond gelijk gemaakt moet worden. Hij leidt begin juni zelf de aanval. Om zijn nek een sjaap van patronen en de *koningin des doods*, de M-84, het zwaarste machineweer in de stad. Een paar dagen voor het gevecht eet hij zich vol met walnoten en drinkt bijenhoning om zijn potentie en kracht

te vergroten, de dag voor de strijd vast hij. Hasan Nunhanovic zag hoe Naser de vijand tegemoet trad: "We waren doodsbang voor de inslagen, niemand durfde de straat op. Toch hoorde ik voetstappen. Ik zag Naser Oric lopen met achter hem zo'n honderd soldaten. Dwars door het granaatvuur rende hij de heuvels op. Een paar uur later was het stil."

In juni en juli 1992 worden de dorpjes Zalazje, Obadi, Spat, Gostilj, Zagoni, Kunjerac, Sase en Bjelovac overvallen door de moslims. Niet alleen soldaten, ook vrouwen en kinderen vinden de dood. De begraafplaatsen in de dorpjes getuigen nog steeds van Nasers wraak.

Voor bezinning is geen tijd, want een nieuw probleem dient zich aan; Srebrenica is verstoken van contact met de buitenwereld. Met de winter voor de deur slinken de voedselvoorraden zienderogen. Om toch aan voedsel te komen, doen Naser en zijn troepen opnieuw aanvallen op Servische dorpjes in de omtrek. Hasan Nunhanovic: "De vluchte-



lingen gingen met duizenden achter Oric aan. De soldaten vochten en de burgers zochten eten tussen de smeulende puinhopen. Ik had honger, maar was niet moedig genoeg om mee te gaan. Toch zou ik iedereen vermoord hebben voor een kilo eten."

Respect kent Naser niet. Dat wordt duidelijk wanneer hij op 7 januari 1993, op een Servische religieuze feestdag, het dorpje Kravice platwalst.

De aanvallen van Oric en het leegroven van de dorpen gaan door tot half januari wanneer Nasers mannen voor het aan Servië grenzende Skelani staan. De moslims onder leiding van Oric zijn bloeddorstiger dan ooit. In Belgrado weet men inmiddels van zijn rooftochten en wordt hij in de volksmond *het beest in dienst van het rijk van de wassende maan* genoemd. Wanneer Naser op 16 januari Skelani overmeestert en uitmoordt, heeft Belgrado er genoeg van. Tot dan toe was vanuit het moederland Servië officieel geen militaire hulp geboden aan de Bosnische Serviërs; die moesten zichzelf maar zien te redden. Maar wanneer Oric een aantal kogels afvuurt over de grensrivier richting Servië, valt het machti-

ge Joegoslavische Nationale Leger Bosnië binnen om de Drina-vallei te verlossen van de moslim-terreur. En Naser Oric' hoofd wordt geëist. Generaal Ratko Mladic zal het karwei enkele jaren later afmaken door in juli 1995 ruim 7000 moslim-mannen, van wie een groot deel onder Naser diende, in de bossen en dorpen rond Srebrenica te vermoorden.

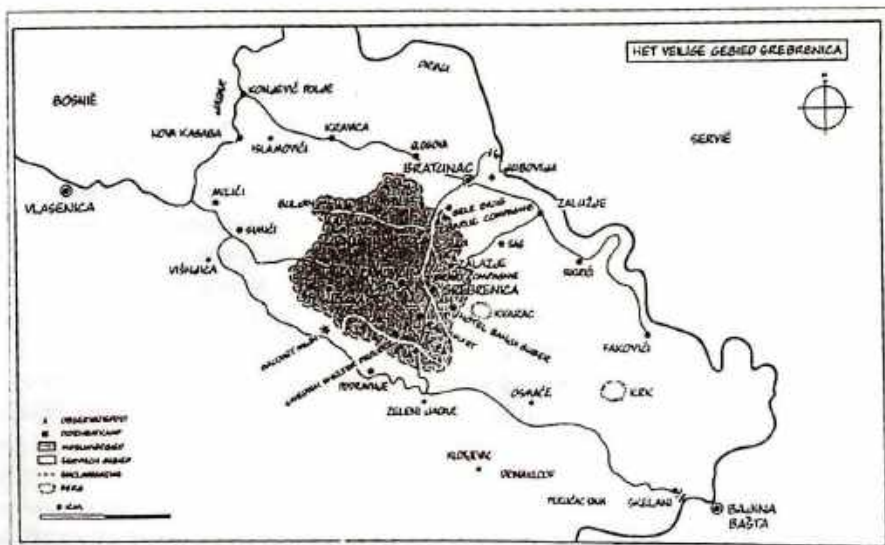
Oric zelf heeft begin 1993 geen benul van de in Servië ontstane woede. Hij waant zich veilig tussen de moslims. De vrouwen lachen naar hem, de oudjes op de hoek van de straat praten over zijn durf en de meisjes blozen wanneer hij naar ze kijkt. Zijn 'heldendaden' in de Servische dorpjes worden door hem zelf gefilmd met een Sony 21-inch camera. De banden stapelen zich op tot ruim tweehonderd stuks die, helaas voor Oric, na de val van Srebrenica in Servische handen vallen. De tapes zijn op dit moment deels in bezit van de plaatselijke SDS, de Servisch nationalistische partij, zodat die Oric terug kan pakken mocht de mogelijkheid zich voordoen. Een ander deel van het video-archief ging naar de Servische geheime dienst die dat aan eerdergenoemde aanklager Darko

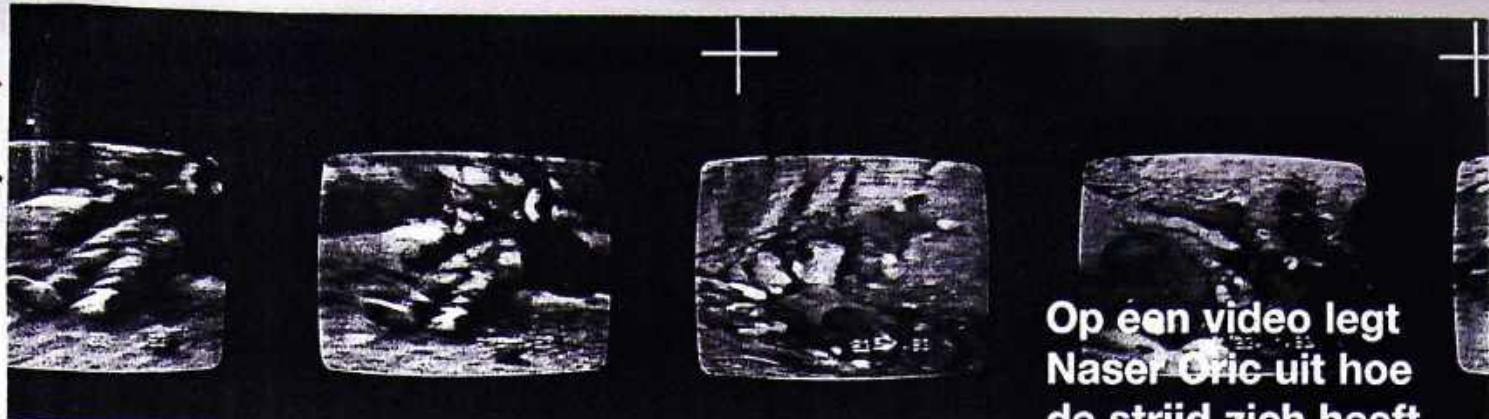
Trifunovic in bruikleen gaf. Trifunovic denkt met de banden genoeg belastend materiaal te hebben om Oric in het Haagse beklagdenbankje te krijgen. De videobanden liegen er niet om. Oric staat vaak prominent voor de camera, de ene keer schietend met een machinegeweer, de andere keer met een brandend dorp op de achtergrond. Oric voorziet de beelden zelf van commentaar. We zien een bruiloft waar, naast een dansende Naser Oric, ook VN-soldaten aanwezig zijn die een volle zaal toespreken en zeggen dat ze de moslims als hun vrienden beschouwen. Ook zijn er beelden van Oric temidden van volledig uitgeruste militairen toen Srebrenica reeds een *safe haven* was, en officieel gedomilitariseerd hoorde te zijn. Akelige hoogtepunten in de reeks videobeelden zijn die waarop Naser Oric door een Servisch dorpje rijdt en uitlegt hoe de strijd zich heeft voltrokken, terwijl hij met zijn auto rokende zwartgeblakerde huizen en een wagen met gestolen voedsel passeert en in de berm een rij vermoorde mensen zichtbaar is.

Wanneer de Amerikaanse oorlogscorrespondent John Pomfret Naser Oric een jaar later interviewt, geeft de moslim-generaal een videopresentatie van zijn eigen oorlogsvoering. Pomfret kijkt met ontzetting naar de ontzette Serviërs. De Yasser Arafat van Bosnië, zoals Oric zich het liefst betitelt, blijkt geen haar beter dan zijn Servische rivalen. Maar Naser is trots en zegt: 'We hadden die nacht alleen *koude wapens* tot onze beschikking.' (Washington Post, 16 februari 1994)

Na de oorlog maakt het Bosnisch-Servische weekblad Javnost de balans op en schrijft dat Oric en zijn milities verantwoordelijk zijn voor 192 platgebrande dorpen, 2800 doden en 6000 gewonden.

Het Servische Nationale leger rukt in de eerste maanden van 1993 op en staat al spoedig op nog geen twintig kilometer van Srebrenica. 3500 Militairen omsingelen de





**Op een video legt Naser Oric uit hoe de strijd zich heeft voltrokken, terwijl hij rokende zwartgeblakerde huizen en een wagen met gestolen voedsel passeert en in de berm een rij vermoorde mensen zichtbaar is**

stad en sluiten die hermetisch af. De 60.000 moslims in de enclave maken zich zorgen omdat er geen munitie en voedsel meer zijn. Srebrenica is in een jungle veranderd, waar iedereen vecht om te overleven. Regels bestaan niet meer. Meerdere malen vraagt Naser het hoofdkwartier in Sarajevo om wapens te sturen, maar die zendingen komen niet, op enkele helikopterladingen en wat manschappen na. Bij de ingang van de Drina-vallei staat een UNHCR-konvooi met hulpgoederen voor de moslims vast. Het Servische leger laat de vrachtauto's niet door, tot ongenoegen van de Internationale IFOR-troepen. De Franse generaal Philippe Morillon toont zijn moed en baant zich op donderdagmiddag 11 maart een weg door de Servische blokkade richting Srebrenica. Daar wordt hij ontvangen door duizenden uitgehongerde en sterk vermagerde inwoners die zich aan hem vastklampen en hem beletten te vertrekken. Naser staat de vreemdeling argwanend te observeren. Dan klinken de legendarische woorden van een in het nauw gedreven VN-bevelhebber: 'U staat vanaf nu onder bescherming van de troepen van de Verenigde Naties.'

Met die uitspraak is de officiële rol van generaal Naser Oric voorbij. Niet de moslims, maar de VN zullen Srebrenica beschermen. Daarvoor moeten wel eerst de wapens ingeleverd worden, want Srebrenica en het gebied eromheen worden vanaf 16 april 1993 een gedemilitariseerde zone die bewaakt wordt door Canadese militairen. De moslimsoldaten overhandigen het bespottelijke aantal van 285 kalashnikovs aan de VN-troepen. Naser beweert met een stalen gezicht dat dit alle wapens zijn.

Nu Srebrenica een *safe haven* is, kunnen de moslims terugkeren van de verdedigingslinie. Het normale leven lijkt weer op gang te komen. De hele dag is het gezellig druk en iedereen is op straat, er wordt weer gedanst en geflirt. De grootste showbink van de stad

is Naser, die de mooiste meisjes, goedschiks of kwaadschiks, voor zich opeist. Wanneer hij de liefde bedrijft, houden drie van zijn bodyguards de wacht. In mei 1994 wordt de tiener Vehida Dedic door drie van Oric' lijfwachten herhaaldelijk verkracht. Wanneer ze haar beklag doet, lacht iedereen haar uit.

Nu Naser Oric zich niet meer op het slagveld kan bewijzen, probeert hij op een charismatische en extraverte manier de sympathie van de bevolking te winnen. Zijn volgelingen zijn idolaat van hem. Baby's worden naar Naser genoemd en jongeren kopiëren het kapsel van de generaal: kort haar met een omhoogstaande kuif. Oric bevestigt zijn status door zowel de worstelkampioenschappen als de paardenrace te winnen. Toch wordt hij even hard gevreesd als geprezen. Sommige inwoners zijn niet vergeten dat Oric en veel van zijn mannen voor de oorlog ordinaire criminelen waren. Hasan Nunhanovic: 'Oric stond voor de oorlog al bekend om zijn contrabande.' Met name Ibrahim Mustafic, die Oric vier jaar daarvoor nog uit de klauwen van de Belgradose politie redde, kan Nasers gedrag niet uitstaan: 'Alleen de wetten van een paar individuen gelden hier nog,' zegt hij in een interview, Oric legde in 1994 beslag op voedsel van hulporganisaties en verkocht dit tegen woekerprijzen aan de vluchtelingen. Terwijl er in de hele enclave geen liter benzine verkrijgbaar was -iedereen zat zonder elektriciteit en duizenden inwoners kleumden van de koubrandde in zijn appartement een kachel, had hij stroom voor zijn video-apparaat en kon hij zorgeloos rondtoeren in zijn Mercedes.

Wanneer Dutchbat de Canadezen aflost, kijken de Nederlandse militairen hun ogen uit als ze Naser Oric zien. Ook al vinden ze hem een barbaar, stilletjes zijn ze jaloers op het gemak waarmee hij meisjes inpalmt. Al snel heeft Naser Oric door dat de Nederlanders hem nieuwe mogelijkheden bieden. 's Nachts sluip hij met zijn mannen langs de observatieposten om opnieuw te plunderen en te

moorden in de Servische dorpjes. Soms overvallen ze de militairen van het nabijgelegen Servische leger en stelen hun wapens. Tot grote woede van Mladic die de Nederlanders hiervan de schuld geeft en aanvallen op de enclave inzet. De verantwoordelijke minister Joris Voorhoeve schreef in die periode aan de Tweede Kamer: 'Stelselmatige uitvalen van moslimstrijders hebben de spanning rond Srebrenica verhoogd.' Overdag voert Oric braaf overleg met zijn ondercommandanten. In het appartement waar de kriegsraad bijeenkomt, hangt Nasers portret aan de wand. Wanneer de rondborstige serveerster koffie en drank binnenbrengt, wordt ze begerig nagestaard, blijkt uit video-opnamen. Toch voelt Oric de aanwezigheid van de VN-militairen als een beperking van zijn vrijheid. Aan overste Karremans heeft hij een hekel, 'een lulletje' noemt hij hem, en tijdens elk gesprek voelt Naser dat hij sterker is dan de Nederlandse commandant. Uit verveling begint Naser hem te treiteren. Nederlandse soldaten worden herhaaldelijk geïntimideerd en ook andere moslimstrijders beginnen te provoceren. Overste Thom Karremans hierover: 'Het aantal keren dat grotere groepen



moslimstrijders gewapend rondlopen, neemt zienderogen toe. Met nieuwe handvuurwapens, mitrailleurs en lichte anti-tankwapens. Kortom, we worden gewoon belazerd.' Hoewel Oric weet dat de enclave zonder de VN ten dode is opgeschreven, draait hij de zaak om: 'De VN hebben de Serviërs gered van onze tegenaanval. Wij zijn klaar om alles terug te pakken.' In juni 1994 geeft Naser Oric een interview aan NRC-verslaggever Frank Westerman en zegt: 'Naser laat zijn volk nooit in de steek. Er is te veel bloed gevloeid om Srebrenica op te geven.'

Nog geen jaar later gaat Naser er vandoor met duizend van zijn beste mannen, zijn lijfwachten en een aantal ondercommandanten. Te voet bereiken ze het Bosnische Zepa vanwaar ze door de lucht worden vervoerd naar Tuzla.

Wanneer Naser Oric in april 1995 in Tuzla arriveert, doet hij alsof zijn neus bloedt. Uit niets blijkt dat hij zich zorgen maakt over de toestand in Srebrenica. Omwonenden zien hem samen met zijn hond zwemmen in het meer van Lukovac. Zelfs wanneer een paar maanden later duizenden vluchtelingen de stad bereiken, houdt hij er de levensstijl van een rijke playboy op na.

Hoe Oric ook zijn best doet het verleden te negeren, zijn daden achtervolgen hem al snel. Op 14 november 1995 meldt de Bosnische Internet-site Bosnet dat Oric gezocht wordt voor oorlogsmisdaden. In september 1996 stuit een Amerikaanse IFOR-gevechtspatrouille nabij Srebrenica op enkele moslims die vertellen dat ze op weg zijn naar Oric. De Amerikanen zoeken ogenblikkelijk contact met het tribunaal in Den Haag, maar Oric hoeft niet te worden gearresteerd.

In augustus 1998 wordt Naser Oric wel een keer aangehouden, niet vanwege zijn oorlogsmisdaden, maar vanwege zijn criminele activiteiten na de oorlog. Al lange tijd werd hij verdacht van illegale autohandel en bovendien zou hij grote velden marihuana verbouwen

waarbij anti-tankmijnen als omheining dienen. Oric' organisatie houdt op een augustusdag een bijeenkomst in Mostar. De politie doet een inval en arresteert Oric. In zijn Wrangler-jeep vinden de agenten een arsenaal aan wapens, waaronder een 9 mm Baretta, een Smith and Wesson, 'n Magnum revolver, diverse messen en patroonhouders. De jeep met vals nummerbord wordt in beslaggenomen. Gedwee en nonchalant laat Oric zich arresteren, maar in een mum van tijd is hij weer op vrije voeten. Iedereen weet dat Oric bescherming krijgt van hooggeplaatsten.

Eind 1998 herkennen oud-collega's van de geheime dienst uit Belgrado Naser Oric in Kosovo, waar hij vecht voor het UCK, het Kosovo Bevrijdingsleger. Een van de UCK'ers wordt gearresteerd en bevestigt Nasers aanwezigheid samen met nog vijftig oudgedienden uit Srebrenica.

Volgend jaar wordt Naser 33. Sinds kort bezit hij naast zijn trouwe pitbull een tjigertje, net als zijn Servische rivaal Arkan. Hij rijdt in een

donkergroene Cherokee-jeep en draagt dure merkklaren. Hij woont in een flat in een achterstandswijk van Tuzla, op de vierde verdieping, op nummer 14. Elke dag is hij te vinden in café-pizzeria Verona in Tuzla. 's Avonds gaat hij naar de fitnesszaal en na middernacht zoekt hij z'n vertier in het uitgaansleven van Lukovac, een dorpje vlakbij Tuzla. Hij schijnt eigenaar te zijn van een restaurant, motel en aannemersbedrijf, maar sommige mensen beweren dat deze bedrijven slechts als dekmantel dienen voor Oric' drugshandel en zijn activiteiten in de prostitutie.

Via via vragen we hem om een gesprek. Dat wijst hij meteen af, hij heeft geen zin om alles weer op te rakelen. Na een hernieuwde poging zegt hij toe een kop koffie met ons te willen drinken om te bewijzen dat hij niet bang is. Eenmaal in Tuzla is Oric onvindbaar, maar krijgen we in opdracht van hem, via een tussenpersoon een biografie van Oric in handen gedrukt. Oric' vriend zegt dat we afstand moeten bewaren, omdat hij heeft gezegd dat hij het niet op prijs stelt dat journalisten ach-



Augustus 1992, potačari, bijna frontlijn.



**Sinds kort bezit Oric een tiggertje, net als zijn Servische rivaal Arkan. Tegenwoordig is hij elke dag te vinden in café-pizzeria Verona in Tuzla. 's Avonds zit hij in de fitnesszaal en na middernacht gaat hij uit**

ter hem aanlopen. "It's just one snap with his fingers." De man grijnst. Zo blijven de vragen omtrent Oric' vertrek onbeantwoord.

Frank Westerman, gehaat door Naser Oric vanwege diens boek, vraagt zich af of Oric verraden is door zijn eigen leiders. Hasan Nunhanovic formuleert het als volgt: "Waarom Oric Srebrenica verliet, is de belangrijkste vraag na die over wat er met de vermisten gebeurd is."

Al in 1993 gingen geruchten dat de Bosnische president Izetbegovic van de moslims geen heil meer zag in het behoud van de enclave Srebrenica. Op 22 juni 1998 publiceerde het onafhankelijke Bosnische magazine Dani een interview met commandant Hakija Meholic die in Srebrenica onder Naser Oric diende. Hakija Meholic: "In september 1993 werden wij met helikopters, op gezag van president Izetbegovic, van Srebrenica naar Sarajevo gebracht. Oric wilde niet mee. Toen wij in het hotel Holyday Inn arriveerden, vroeg Izetbegovic ons meteen wat wij vonden van de ruil van Srebrenica voor een Servische buitenwijk van Sarajevo. Na een moment van stilte antwoordde ik: "Als dit een gedane zaak is, had u ons niet moeten uitnodigen." We hebben geweigerd.' Ook

een oorlogsdocument uit Londen, gedateerd op juli 1996, duidt er op dat Meholic niet zomaar wat zegt. In het bewuste document beweert de schrijver Tihomir Loza dat Izetbegovic Naser Oric reeds in mei 1993 polste over een ruil van Srebrenica tegen een buitenwijk van Sarajevo. Naser was tegen. Waarschijnlijk heeft Oric in september van datzelfde jaar vermoed wat de reden was van Izetbegovic' uitnodiging, namelijk om nogmaals aan te dringen op een deal. Srebrenica was een onbeduidend stipje midden in een groot Servisch gebied en van minder belang dan het einde van Sarajevo's beleg dat toen al jaren duurde en talloze slachtoffers eiste. Srebrenica was een obstakel, vanwege de VN-troepen die gegijzeld konden worden, om de Bosnische Serviërs rond Sarajevo aan te pakken en hen vervolgens te dwingen een vredesregeling te accepteren. Waarom Naser Oric Srebrenica in april 1995 toch heeft verlaten en de verdediging van de stad overliet aan een krachteloos leger dat zich officieel niet mocht verdedigen, is niet bekend. Een goede of logische reden voor zijn vertrek heeft hij zelf nooit gegeven. De een zegt dat hij in Tuzla werd ontboden om zich te verantwoorden voor de wanorde in Srebrenica. De lezing van de Servische publicist Milivoje Ivanisevic wil dat Oric en zijn krijgers naar Sarajevo gingen om daar te gaan vechten in plaats van te lanterfantten in Srebrenica. Feit is dat Ratko Mladic Srebrenica na Oric' vertrek zonder slag of stoot innam.

En dat daarna meteen verkeer Sarajevo in en uit kon, omdat het Bosnische leger het Servische voorstadje Ilijas in handen kreeg. En na de oorlog vond er uitgerekend met dit Ilijas een uitwisseling plaats. De verdreven Serviërs uit Ilijas kwamen in Srebrenica terecht, de gevluchte moslims uit Srebrenica in Ilijas. De complottheorieën buitelen over elkaar heen: was er naast de miskleun van de VN ook nog een smerig spel binnen de Bosnische politiek gaande? Heeft de moslimpresident Izetbegovic Naser onder druk gezet? Heeft Oric, door niet terug te keren naar Srebrenica, de bescherming van Izetbegovic' tegen het oorlogstribunaal gekregen? Commandant Hakija Meholic zegt hierover het volgende: "Naser weet veel. Toen ik hem vertelde dat hij misschien wel eens iets heeft gekregen om zijn mond te houden, gaf hij geen antwoord. Hij lachte alleen."

We lopen nog eens door de stad, op zoek naar een levensteken van Oric. Precies op de dag dat het populaire Bosnische magazine Dani een artikel brengt waarin Naser Oric in verband wordt gebracht met cocaïnehandel, parkeren we in Tuzla onze auto naast een donkergroene Cherokee-jeep, kenteken 11-M-006. Daarin zit Naser Oric, duidelijk herkenbaar aan zijn kortgeknipte stekels, Mudjahedin-snor en -baardje. Even is er oogcontact, twee donkere ogen blikken in onze richting. Dan spurt de jeep de parkeerplaats af en verdwijnt in de verkeerschaos van Tuzla ●

**De Servische aanklager Darko Trifunovic beweert tegenover ons dat hij een deel van het video-archief naar het Joegoslavië-tribunaal in Den Haag heeft gestuurd. Persofficier Paul Risley van het oorlogstribunaal reageert: "Ik ken helemaal geen Darko Trifunovic. Het oorlogstribunaal is wel op de hoogte van de verhalen die over Oric gaan. Naser Oric was een oorlogsgod, zijn soldaten waren geen professionele militairen, ze kwamen uit de underground. Naser Oric staat niet op de openbare lijst van gezochte oorlogscriminelen, maar er bestaat ook nog een geheime lijst. Hij kan op de geheime lijst staan, maar dat hoeft niet. Ik twijfel er niet aan dat onze mensen momenteel uitzoeken wat hij precies heeft gedaan. Ik geloof zeker dat alle partijen schuldig zijn aan oorlogswandaden, maar toch vind ik het schandalig dat jullie je focussen op mensen als Naser Oric."**

DE EINDELOZE WESTERSE MEDIA-MANTRA 'SREBRENICA'

Het westerse journaal, dat zich met de grootst mogelijke gretigheid te buiten blijft gaan aan misleiding inzake Srebrenica, het kangaroo court in de Den Haag en alle andere westerse krachten die een niet aflatende hetze voeren tegen 'Servië' en/of 'de Serviërs', moeten nou eindelijk eens

BOTER BIJ DE VIS leveren:

1. Zijn de 'arme, onschuldige mannelijke moslim-vluchtelingen' van Srebrenica nu voor het merendeel door Dutchbat uitgeleverd aan 'hun Servische slachters' of niet? Of waren ze er voor het merendeel al zelf tussenuit gepiept voordat de enclave viel? Als ze er voor het grootste gedeelte al zelf tussenuit gepiept waren, kunnen ze dus ook niet door Dutchbat zijn 'uitgeleverd'. En vormen alle verhalen over de schuld van Dutchbat alleen maar één grote eindeloos voortgaande mediamieke massa-hysterie. Welke journalist maakt daar dan nu eens een eind aan en durft die waan te doorbreken?

Doorgaans wordt immers, al naar het het journaal uitkomt, de indruk gewekt dat Dutchbat zo ongeveer de complete mannelijke bevolking zou hebben 'uitgeleverd aan hun Servische beulen', die vervolgens na 'hun uitlevering' over de kling zou zijn gejaagd. Zodat Dutchbat medeverantwoordelijk zou zijn voor 'de genocide op 6 tot 8.000 onschuldige moslims'. Incidenteel echter, als de feiten gaan nijpen, komt men - met hetzelfde gemak - met een totaal andere lezing. Dan wordt plots verkondigd dat er nog maar zo'n 600 moslim-mannen in de enclave waren achtergebleven toen deze viel. Zodat er dus nooit meer dan 600 door Dutchbat 'uitgeleverd' kunnen zijn aan 'hun Servische beulen'. Bijgevolg kunnen er dan nooit meer dan 600 mannen met bussen zijn afgevoerd en vervolgens het slachtoffer zijn geworden van deze 'uitlevering'. Beide lezingen kunnen natuurlijk niet tegelijkertijd waar zijn!

Wil de ware lezing omtrent deze aantallen nu eindelijk eens vanuit de de media-burelen zijn opstanding beleven? Het maakt namelijk nogal verschil of er, toen de enclave viel, maar ongeveer 600 mannen achtergebleven waren die vervolgens vermoord konden worden, na 'het verraad van Dutchbat', of dat het 6 tot 8.000 mannen waren. Deze uitleg voor de media-vertegenwoordigers, die met moeite de MAVO hebben doorlopen (alleen al in Nederland tussen de 600 en 6 tot 8.000 naar schatting).

2. Als degenen die een voortdurende media-oorlog voeren tegen 'Servië' en 'de Serviërs' dan eindelijk eens boter bij de vis hebben gegeven en voor de draad zijn gekomen

met de waarheid op dit punt, namelijk dat inderdaad maar een zeer gering deel van de mannelijke bevolking in de enclave was achtergebleven totdat deze viel, dan wordt het automatisch hoog tijd voor een tweede punt voor boter bij de vis: waar komen dan die verhalen over die duizenden vermoorde moslim-mannen vandaan ?

Die zijn dan niet in de enclave opgepakt. (Als ze er niet waren, konden ze ook niet door Dutchbat zijn uitgeselecteerd, met bussen afgevoerd, etc. - dit ter verduidelijking voor de media-werkers met minder dan MULO-niveau (een percentage waarmee terdege rekening moet worden gehouden) -. Misschien ook iets voor het Joegoslavië-Tribunaal ter overdenking (als het van de Verenigde Staten mag) ?

Zouden er inderdaad 'duizenden moslim-mannen' zijn 'vermoord', dan moeten zij dus buiten de enclave zijn opgepakt. Dutchbat kan dat dan onmogelijk worden aangerekend, want die mannen waren dan op eigen houtje al vertrokken voordat de enclave viel.

#### VRAGEN

Dit doet dan, voor de objectieve waarnemer met meer dan Mulo, natuurlijk automatisch een aantal vragen rijzen. Zoals daar onder anderen zijn:

- a. waren de duizenden moslim-mannen die wegtrokken, gewapend ?
- b. zo ja, hoeveel waren er van hen gewapend ?
- c. vonden er gewapende confrontaties plaats tussen hen en de Bosnisch-Servische legereenheden ?
- c. zo ja, wat was de aard en intensiteit van deze gewapende confrontaties ?

Vaststaande feiten zijn in dit verband, hoewel je er - anders dan over 'de Servische moordzucht'- niet dagelijks over in de kranten zult lezen, of bij het kangaroo court in Den Haag niet dagelijks van zult vernemen, dat:

- I. er, voordat de enclave werd opgerold, duizenden mannen behorend tot para-militaire milities en tot het geregelde Bosnische leger vanuit Srebrenica opereerden;
- II. in ieder geval enkele duizenden van hen erin slaagden om zich, al vechtend, een weg te banen naar voor hen veilige gebieden, toen de enclave was gevallen. Alwaar hun aankomst is bevestigd en gerapporteerd.

#### TIJD VOOR EEN AANTAL CONCLUSIES:

- Die moslim-mannen, die gesneuveld zijn tijdens deze gevechten, zijn gesneuveld, niet vermoord. Als hun lijken worden aangetroffen, kunnen ze dus niet triomfantelijk worden ingelijfd als 'door de Serviërs wreed vermoorde burgers', zo leert het oorlogsrecht.
- Die moslim-mannen, die gewapend waren toen ze vanuit Srebrenica op de loop gingen, kunnen onmogelijk als 'onschuldige burgers' worden bijgezet, zo leert wederom het oorlogsrecht.

- Datzelfde geldt ook voor ongewapende mannen, die zich bij dergelijke gewapende eenheden aansloten, zo leert opnieuw het oorlogsrecht. Voor zover dergelijke ongewapenden bij de gevechtshandelingen gesneuveld zijn, kunnen ze niet als 'vermoord' worden ingelijst, zo luidt het oorlogsrecht.

- Voorzover zij met militaire overkill door Bosnisch-Servische eenheden zijn vernietigd, is er van die zijde sprake geweest van disproportionaliteit van geweld. Dat is een oorlogsmisdrijf, maar van een andere orde dan waarvan 'de Serviërs' hier worden beschuldigd. Uitgezocht zou moeten worden in hoeverre eventueel disproportioneel oorlogsgeweld van de kant van het Bosnisch-Servische leger is toegepast. Maar dat is een ander onderzoek dan de westerse inquisitie - en het Joegoslavië Tribunaal als anti-Servische grootinquisiteur - voor ogen hebben.

- Degenen bij de gewapende colonnes, gewapenden en ongewapenden, die door de Bosnisch-Servische legereenheden gevangen genomen werden of zich overgaven, konden recht doen gelden op een behandeling als krijgsgevangene of een daarmee overeenstemmende behandeling. Ook als zij zich eerder schuldig gemaakt zouden hebben aan de meest grote wreedheden tegen de Servische bevolking, tijdens plunderen en strooptochten vanuit Srebrenica. Voor zover een aantal van hen die eventueel niet heeft gekregen en/of eventueel bij gevangenneming of gevangenhouding is mishandeld of zelfs vermoord, vormde dit een oorlogsmisdrijf. Nader onderzoek zou nodig zijn, in hoeverre hiervan sprake zou zijn geweest. Maar 'het onderzoek' dat momenteel in de media en bij het kangaroo court in Den Haag plaatsvindt, heeft een totaal andere inzet en heel andere vertrekpunten. Namelijk pure 'pure Servische moordzucht' op 'onschuldige moslim-burgers'. Die 'genocide' op de 'arme vluchtelingen in Srebrenica' staat daarbij op voorhand al vast. Wat zich in dit verband werkelijk heeft afgespeeld, interesseert de inquisitoren geen laars.

3. Een derde punt waarover de westerse media nu eindelijk eens boter bij de vis zouden moeten geven, is antwoord op het complex van vragen dat als volgt is onder te verdelen:

a. Hoe zat het nou met de voorgeschiedenis van Srebrenica als 'safe haven' ? Het sprookje dat daar uitsluitend 'onschuldig vluchtelingen' zaten, kennen we nou zo zachtjesaan wel.

b. Hoeveel Servische burgers zijn er in de wijde omgeving van Srebrenica vanuit deze stad onder de valse vlag van 'safe haven' door moslim-milities en eenheden van het geregelde Bosnische leger vermoord ?

c. Als dat aantal in de duizenden zou lopen, hoe verklaren de westerse media-vertegenwoordigers en het kangaroo court in Den Haag dan dat ze het verdommen om daarvoor ook maar een greintje aandacht te hebben ?

d. Wat heeft het kangaroo court in Den Haag trouwens met het hierover van Bosnisch-Servische zijde aangereikte bewijsmateriaal gedaan ? De achterkant van deze stapels papier benut om daar anti-Servische aanklachten op te drukken ?

e. Waarom kwam er niks terecht van de demilitarisering van Srebrenica, zoals toch de eis van de VN luidde ? En wie is er verantwoordelijk voor dat daar niks van terecht kwam ?

d. Hoe zit het met de verhalen dat Dutchbat zelfs joviaal optrok met hoge militairen van het geregelde Bosnische leger in Srebrenica en vanuit Srebrenica opererende paramilitaire bendes geen strobreed in de weg legde ? Was het dan wellicht toch wat anders dan een 'Groot-Servië' of alleen 'pure Servische moordzucht', dat Mladic ertoe dreef om dit rovershol uiteindelijk uit te schakelen ?

f. Hoe is het verklaarbaar dat de westerse media eerst omtrent dit alles nog wel eens wat vragen durfden op te werpen, maar uiteindelijk allemaal kozen voor een collectieve stijve nek vanwege het krampachtig één kant op blijven kijken ? Is er een rationele verklaring voor deze voortgaande zelfdebilisering ?

Zo schreef Hervormd Nederland:

"Hoe meer feiten er boven water komen over de noodlottige ondergang van het 'veilige gebied' Srebrenica, hoe lastiger het wordt de schuld bij één partij te leggen. De journalisten Sijs en Westerman, die eerder een boek schreven over de verovering van de moslim-enclave, hebben nu een document in handen gekregen, waaruit blijkt dat de Boschnische regering voor een groot deel zelf de hand heeft gehad in het deblâche. Vanuit Srebrenica moesten gewapende burgers Servische stellingen bij de hoofdstad Sarajevo in de rug aanvallen. Dat er plundertochten waren geweest, was wel bekend, maar niet dat die door hogerhand werden geregisseerd. De Bosnische regering heeft dus doelbewust de neutrale positie van Srebrenica ondergraven en de verovering door de Serviërs uitgelokt, luidt de nieuwe verklaring."

Maar dat was op 10 mei 1995 dat Hervormd Nederland dit schreef, dus een eeuwige geleden.

Vandaag de dag hebben de media zich zodanig gedisciplineerd, dat dergelijke 'ingewikkeldheden' bij niemand in media-land zelfs meer opkomen. Een zalige simpelheid heeft zich in plaats daarvan hecht onder de nieuwe geesteszieken van de media genesteld.

Een kind kan voortaan de was doen: het zijn die verdomde Serviërs, die het allemaal gedaan hebben. De rest is bullshit, daar hoeven we ons niet mee bezig te houden. Ziedaar de ultieme simplificatie van een op zichzelf al eenvoudig beroep. Men neme een pen op en schrijft. Of een microfoon op en leutert. En als je dan ook nog de baas bent over de 'gepluriformiseerde en gedemocratiseerde vrije media' dan hebt je de inhoud van deze schrijfels en leuterpraat in een hechte greep nog ook. De waarheid en de werkelijkheid zijn dan wat er als waarheid en werkelijkheid wordt ingestopt. Want wat er wordt ingestopt komt er ook uit, zo luidt een in media-land dagelijks toegepaste variant op een gezegde van Cruijff.

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