

“Srebrenica”

The Conceptualisation, Collectivisation and Abstraction

of a Traumatic Memory:

Representations of Srebrenica in Bosnian Memory

1995 – 2011

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“Europe’s worst massacre since World War II”

Srebrenica - a town in eastern Bosnia, a one-time popular local holiday resort, a Muslim enclave within (Bosnian) Serb held territory, a United Nations’ ‘safe area’, a site of mass murders and genocide, a symbol of resistance, a symbol of man’s evil towards man, a symbol of passivity in the face of cruelty - in the last twenty years the name Srebrenica has come to embody these and many more meanings. In international literature it is perhaps most frequently referred to as ‘Europe’s worst massacre since World War II’; a statement which alludes as much to the gravity of what occurred, as to its ultimate geographic closeness to the main actors in the world’s defining genocide, the Holocaust. It is from this vantage point – of genocide and ethnic warfare at Europe’s doorstep at the turn of the twenty-first century – that much of the Balkan conflict and the events of Srebrenica in particular are today being studied.

During a three-week stay in Srebrenica in July 2011,¹ I came to think of this town in eastern Bosnia as much more than a site of genocide at the crossing point of East and West; much more than a massacre that occurred at a time when the West in particular felt that ethnic warfare was a thing of its past. As Srebrenica became a place of learning, the deeply contrasting nature of its past and therefore the often conflicting future of its memory were revealed. Through lectures from professors in the fields of law and sociology, conversations with fellow post-graduates and doctoral students, and perhaps most strikingly, encounters with survivors of July 1995 (both Bosnian Muslim – ‘Bosniaks’ - and former Dutch battalion – ‘Dutchbat’- soldiers), what came to the forefront most poignantly was a scramble to assign valid and accurate meaning to a crime and a trauma of such magnitude.

In foreign literature, this is reflected in the scholars’ tendency to view the conflict in Bosnia through a lens of the sociology of genocide, wondering how it was possible for neighbour to turn on neighbour in such gruesome ways, as well as debating on the morality of UN’s neutrality policy, which constricted its peacekeeping forces to mere observers.² At the same time, due to the particular nature of their involvement in the conflict, a great deal has been written on Srebrenica and the involvement of the UN specifically, from the side of Dutch actors as well as scholars, journalists and (oral) historians. The perspectives of these works vary in their specific focal points and scope; the report of the Dutch Institute for War Documentation (‘NIOD’) being by far the most extensive, but

¹ Please see Appendix for more details.

² See the works of David Rhode and Elizabeth Neuffer (as listed in the bibliography) for further information.

certainly not final. Scholars have continued to debate the appropriateness and accuracy of the research available on Srebrenica, and while journalists such as Frank Westerman and Bart Rijs argue in favour of a greater role for Srebrenica within the general Dutch consciousness ('Wat Saigon is voor de Amerikanen, dat is Srebrenica voor de Nederlanders: een kras op de volksziel')³, in her book on the women of Srebrenica Dutch oral historian Selma Leydesdorff rather argues for the limitation of the Dutch perspective on the conflict in favour of local testimony. 'Giving the conflict back' to the people of Srebrenica specifically, and Bosnia more generally, has remained a powerful trope in international writings on the events of July 1995.

At the same time, some local scholars and witnesses similarly argue in favour of a return to a more local memory (for example, Emir Suljagić in his speech to the participants of Summer University Srebrenica 2011)⁴, where the inhabitants and witnesses of Srebrenica remain its key actors, while others – such as Hasan Nuhanović and Sonja Biserko - simultaneously support the rhetoric which calls for a broader admittance of guilt from the side of international community, continuously asking the question: "kako je Srebrenica uopšte bila moguća?"⁵ Survivors of the genocide, predominately women organised in groups such as 'Mothers of Srebrenica', have continued their struggle for international recognition of the wrongdoings committed in and around Srebrenica in July 1995, and this has been reflected in their publication *The United Nations and Srebrenica's Pillar of Shame*, as well as in court cases against the UN and the Dutch government. Hasan Nuhanović, himself a survivor of Srebrenica and author of *Under the UN flag: The International Community and the Srebrenica Genocide*, has remained the cause's most outspoken supporter, recently winning a lawsuit against the Dutch government on the basis of gross criminal negligence towards the people of Srebrenica (and his parents and brother in particular).

As the verdict in Hasan Nuhanović's lawsuit became public just days before Srebrenica's sixteenth anniversary, this year's July 11th commemoration practices were largely placed within the light of a continuing search for justice from the side of survivors; and in many ways the desire for an admittance of guilt from the side of the international community, and the Dutch specifically, overshadowed the significance of the arrest of Ratko Mladić that occurred not even two months prior. The various and varying interpretations of both the Bosnian war and the events in Srebrenica, in local and international writings and testimonies alike, differ in particular on issues of seeking

³ Frank Westerman and Bart Rijs, *Srebrenica: het zwartste scenario* (Amsterdam: Atlas, 1997) back cover.

"What Saigon is to the Americans, that's what Srebrenica is to the Dutch: a scratch on the soul of its people."

⁴ See Appendix, 11 July 2011

⁵ Sonja Biserko (ed.), *Srebrenica: od poricanja do priznanja* (Beograd: Biblioteka Svjedočanstva, 2005) 7. "How was Srebrenica even possible?"

justice, or rather the narratives of reconciliation versus retribution. However, what remains largely uncharted, in almost all treatises on the events of July 1995, is an exploration of the underlying trauma that has and will ultimately shape the remembrance of Srebrenica within local consciousness. Therefore, rather than focusing solely on the testimonies or the historiography at hand, what I hope to examine within the context of this dissertation are the ways in which the Srebrenica genocide is represented in both individual and collective Bosnian memory, especially within the wider theoretical frameworks of traumatic recollection and memorialisation practices. In order to do so, I have explored various perspectives on the topics relating to the interplay between history and memory, the collectivisation of memory, the specific nature of Holocaust testimonies (as Europe's defining genocide and therefore Srebrenica's frame of reference), and indeed the nature of the traumatic experience as such.

What this dissertation hopes to explore are the patterns of local Bosnian memory and the notion of remembering as a way of dealing with traumatic experiences, such as that of Srebrenica. What will furthermore be addressed are questions of how memory has managed to evolve within this particular setting, on an individual and a collective level alike. While in many ways it is too soon to tell in what specific ways the remembrance of Srebrenica - as a hometown, an enclave, a genocide and a site of memory - will continue to develop, this dissertation will nonetheless attempt to investigate how the cultural, social and political climate of Bosnia (for example, its division into two republics and three ethnic and religious entities) has framed the resulting narratives of trauma and of commemoration. How Srebrenica is remembered now, and its various layers of memory, are furthermore placed within the context of the individual traumatic narrative, the process of collective traumatisation and the memorialisation controversies and practices that have emerged.

This is achieved by placing the discussion within a four tier structure, the first focusing on the period before July 1995, when Srebrenica became a Muslim enclave within Bosnian Serb territory. The individual, traumatic and largely ignored recollections of this period are, in the second chapter, contrasted and compared with the traumatic, anguished memory of July 1995 and the narrative of genocide. In the third chapter, this is subsequently placed within the context of a broader Bosnian remembering of Srebrenica and the war, by focusing on issues and practices surrounding the collectivisation of memory. Finally, an exploration of the notion and importance of the narrative of genocide within local memory, as well as the particular practices of memorialisation which now frame the Srebrenica genocide, are explored within the chapter on the 'memorialisation of a memory'.

On a final note, I would like to explain the exclusion of the (Bosnian) Serb narrative from the context of this dissertation. The focus of this dissertation is on Srebrenica; on how one trauma has shaped the memorialisation practices of an ethnic group (the Bosniaks), and to a large respect, of an entire nation (Bosnia and Herzegovina). The terms Bosniak and Bosnian are not used interchangeably, but as a mean to distinguish between possible varying recollections on an ethnic or rather a state level. 'Republika Srpska', as a separate entity, has been taken out of the narrative, as the motivation of this group as well as their political and social background is different to that of the group under examination, and therefore the process of collective traumatising and memorialisation of the group's own suffering (the auto image of their suffering) respectively varies. A deliberate choice was made to focus on the Bosnian Muslim practices of remembrance and creation of Srebrenica as a collective Bosniak and Bosnian trauma, as well as the processes of memorialisation which have been employed and the narratives of memory this has resulted in.

Furthermore, my choice for not dealing with the Serb memory of Srebrenica was determined by practical as well as ethical concerns. Despite Serbia's official apology for Srebrenica in March of 2010, the government of 'Republika Srpska' headed by Milorad Dodik still does not recognise the 'Srebrenica Massacre' as genocide. Denial of genocide remains one of the most potent tools for the prolonged suffering of the survivors of Srebrenica and a major point of contention for future cooperation and possible reconciliation between the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and 'Republika Srpska'. On an academic and a personal level, I therefore decided it would be too difficult to reconcile the moral and technical implications of dealing with the memory of genocide from a perspective of a group which still denies that genocide in fact took place.

What remains to be explored in the following chapter are then the theories on the creation and expression of individual (traumatic) memory as well as collective remembrance and the formation of a cultural trauma, within a narrative of Holocaust testimonies. The discourse on the nature and scope of remembrance, both individual and collective, is placed within theories on traumatic memory and the constructivist approach on creating collective trauma. This will be followed by a far more detailed investigation into the nature of remembrance of Srebrenica within Bosnia, ending in an exploration on the content of the annual July 11th commemoration - as a symbolic representation of the memory at hand, as well as a prime example of the process of memory creation which is being studied.

1. Theoretical background

In order to be able to place the narrative of the Bosnian memory of Srebrenica (as an enclave, a genocide and a site of memory) within the context of discussions on the interplay between history, memory and trauma, what must be explored first and foremost is the theoretical background to ideas on the collectivisation of trauma, the traumatic response, and its particular role in the construction of memory. In their seminal piece on *Cultural trauma and collective identity*, Jeffrey Alexander and his colleagues define the concept as follows:

“Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their identity in fundamental and irreversible ways.”⁶

While the core argument of this work - that all events are not inherently traumatic but are rather constructed as such in both public and private narrative - goes beyond the scope of this dissertation, it remains important to note that the constructivist approach, with its focus on the creation of memory through models of collective representation, provided an important framework for the discussion surrounding the memorialisation of Srebrenica in Bosnian consciousness. By being able to explore the representation of the trauma at hand (through both literature and physical commemorative practices) as patterns of remembrance of a constructed cultural trauma, the necessary distance was gained to allow for investigation into local practices within limited contextualisation. This, as will be explored further in subsequent chapters, allowed for a deconstruction of concepts such as genocide, in terms of their meaning to the survivors of Srebrenica, and therefore enabled a more nuanced discussion on the politicisation and the victimisation of the memory at hand. Furthermore, within the constructivist approach, the role of the state (in this case Bosnia and Herzegovina) and its particular actors, in the process of the creation of a collective, cultural trauma, was subsequently explored. Alexander et al. define the role of the state as “handling and channelling the spiral of signification that marks the trauma process”⁷, and it is the precise nature of the channelling and the handling of signification from the side of the Bosnian state, through practices such as an annual commemoration, that will be investigated further in upcoming chapters.

However, it is not only collective practices of commemoration or remembrance that will be explored within the scope of this dissertation, but furthermore the theories of individual as well as collective

⁶ Jeffrey Alexander e.a., *Cultural trauma and collective identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) 1.

⁷ Alexander e.a., *Cultural trauma*, 19.

traumatic memory. In order to define and explore the meaning and repercussions of individual traumatic recollection and its use in the construction of memory and the collective traumatic experience, the basis of certain psychological concepts must be identified and understood. Richard McNally claims that “understanding how people remember trauma requires familiarity with the science of human memory”⁸, while Rolf Kleber argues that “medical models are limited because they do not embody a socialized view of mental health. Exposure to massive trauma, and its aftermath, is not generally a private experience.”⁹ Thus while an understanding of the science of memory is relevant to a degree in order to understand the intricacies of traumatic recollection on an individual level, within the scope of this dissertation the prevalent focus will rather be on the representations of said traumatic memory, of Srebrenica as a multitude of meanings, within both private and public consciousness.

Kleber focuses primarily on the interplay between the individual and his or her cultural and societal surroundings, claiming that:

“The context of atrocity is frequently the intended destruction of the economic, social and cultural worlds of the victims. Western mental health professionals and their conceptual frameworks have been prominent in the contemporary debate about human responses to such events. [...] Traumatic experience, and the search for meaning which it triggers, must be understood in terms of the relationship between the individual and his or her society, with outcomes influenced by cultural, social and political forces.”¹⁰

However, concepts of individual traumatic memory alone do not account for the contrasts visible within the process of memory formation on a wider, collective level. Rather, traumatic memory can be viewed as “means of bridging the gap between the two [individual and collective memory]; the making public of private trauma relocates individual suffering in historical and social context.”¹¹ As such, the process of the collectivisation of traumatic memory will be explored, from the vantage point of constructivism, whilst keeping in mind that the historical context of traumatic memory is almost always seen “exclusively through the lens of the Second World War”¹². The Second World War, and more specifically the Holocaust as the contextual background to all future genocide, including Srebrenica, will be explored within the framework of Lawrence Langer’s 1993 work on

⁸ Richard J. McNally, *Remembering trauma* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003) 27.

⁹ Rolf J. Kleber, Charles R. Figley and Berthold P.R. Gersons (eds.), *Beyond trauma: cultural and societal dynamics* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1995) 19.

¹⁰ Kleber e. a., *Beyond Trauma*, 26-27.

¹¹ Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (eds.), *Contested pasts: the politics of memory* (London: Routledge, 2003) 100.

¹² Hodgkin and Radstone, *Contested pasts*, 101.

Holocaust testimonies: the ruins of memory. The importance of studying the memory of trauma and in particular genocide through the aforementioned framework becomes apparent especially when one considers that all traumatic memory is still predominately studied within the context of the Holocaust, while “other massacres and genocides [...] are either little studied, or studied in other contexts than that of traumatic memory [...] The specific horrors of the Holocaust have generated a sense that it is a problem for representation in a way that no other event can be; that it is set apart, requiring its own language, its own theory.”¹³

Herein lies the importance of the investigation at hand, which aims not only to explore the process of memory formation and cultivation at a very early stage in the process, but furthermore hopes to explore this process through the lens of traumatic memory, which has thus far predominately been reserved for studies into the nature of Holocaust recollections. Testimonies and traumatic memories of the Holocaust therefore remain a potent frame of reference, and these will be discussed on the basis of Lawrence Langer’s definitions of the different types of traumatic memories of a genocide (of the Holocaust); namely deep memory, anguished memory, humiliated memory, tainted memory and unheroic memory. Deep memory, defined by Langer as “the buried self”¹⁴, refers to the notion that intensely traumatic experiences cannot be recalled simply at the will of the victim, despite their often very strong desire to do so. This relates to Geoffrey Cubitt’s treatise on “recounting the untellable”¹⁵; a concept referring to the inability of victims of trauma to fully express or recall the traumatic events they endured. Both ideas will be explored in more detail in chapter two, which also includes a discussion on the intricacies of narrating the individual traumatic experience.

Lawrence Langer furthermore explores the notion of anguished memory; related to deep memory but existing as its own entity that is linked to ideas of normalcy, by navigating the discrepancy between the normal world to which the rest of us appear to belong to, and of which survivors feel they have been excluded from. Continuing on this premise is then the idea of humiliated memory, or what Langer refers to as “the besieged self”¹⁶. As the author explains; “humiliated memory records those moments when history failed the individual and left him victim to what Nietzsche called the ‘blind power of the facts...the tyranny of the actual’.”¹⁷ Once again, Langer maps the contradiction of the idea of normalcy, as it exists in the mind of the victim as well as the mind of the observer, in

¹³ Hodgkin and Radstone, *Contested pasts*, 7.

¹⁴ Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust testimonies: the ruins of memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 2.

¹⁵ Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: MUP, 2007) 110.

¹⁶ Langer, *Holocaust testimonies*, 79.

¹⁷ Langer, *Holocaust testimonies*, 80.

order to explore it as a notion that is superimposed on the memory of the victims of trauma both from within the narrative and outside of it.

This is furthermore addressed within the concept of tainted as well as unheroic memory; tainted memory existing somewhere in the realm of “the expectation of the outsider and the silence of the insider”¹⁸, while unheroic memory refers to the perception of ‘the diminished self’ – the realm where traumatic memory struggles most profoundly with subjective ideas on heroism from the side of the observer. As Langer describes, by “rejecting nihilism and heroism, the diminished self lapses into a bifocal vision, as its past invades its present and casts a long, pervasive shadow over its future, obscuring traditional vocabulary and summoning us to invert a still more complex version of memory and self.”¹⁹ The complexity of traumatic recollection, from the point of view of an individual memory of a horror that has been named Europe’s first and worst genocide since the Second World War, is explored within the full scope of the intricate framework of Holocaust memories - as “the paradigmatic genocide in world consciousness”²⁰ - in order to gain a broader understanding on the interplay of emotions, trauma and memory.

Within the scope of this dissertation, the discussion also includes a treatise on concepts of preservation of memory or memorialisation, namely through commemorative practices. It can be said that “physical and ritual memorials are in a sense another means of trying to ensure the preservation of meaning in memory, to prolong an existence in the present, where history is seen to allow it to escape – letting the past bury its dead.”²¹ Ideas of Pierre Nora on the establishment, significance and struggle for meaning of what he refers to as *lieux de memoire* - “simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are *lieux* in three senses of the word - material, symbolic and functional. [...] Moreover, the three aspects always coexist”²²- are furthermore explored, within the context of Srebrenica as a changing *lieux de memoire* in both public and private narrative, as well as the interplay between the evolving meanings of Srebrenica and the establishment of one, fixed memorial centre at the site of the Potočari army base, where the annual commemoration practices take place every July 11th.

¹⁸ Ibid, 123.

¹⁹ Ibid, 172.

²⁰ Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad (eds.), *Memory in a global age: discourses, practices and trajectories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 97.

²¹ Hodgkin and Radstone, *Contested pasts*, 10.

²² Pierre Nora, ‘Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire’, *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989) 18-19.

It is through an interchange between all aforementioned theoretical concepts that the memory of Srebrenica from a Bosnian perspective will be explored in the subsequent chapters. Trauma remains an complex notion, which both “has become a central term within the field of memory studies; but it is at the same time an intensely problematic concept, both in its applications and its implications”²³, and therefore the question of how to adequately explore the effect of traumatic memory both on human psyche and its evolution into history remains a matter of debate. Without attempting to answer this question on a wider scale, for the purposes of this investigation a broad spectrum of theories was put under examination in order to attempt to bypass the pitfalls of using traumatic recollection as evidence in the formation of memory and ultimately history. What now remains to be explored is how the Bosnian trauma of Srebrenica, both individual and collective, has evolved in the period between 1995 and 2011.

²³ Hodgkin and Radstone, *Contested pasts*, 97.

2. Before there was genocide: traumatic recollections of life in an enclave

2.1 Context and pretext

Before the wars of the 1990s broke out on the territory of former Yugoslavia, Srebrenica was a relatively unknown town in eastern Bosnia's 'Podrinje' region.²⁴ At this time, according to various sources, the municipality of Srebrenica had approximately 40.000 inhabitants²⁵, 9000 of whom lived in the town of Srebrenica proper, while the rest resided in numerous surrounding villages. Outside of the 'Podrinje' region,²⁶ the municipality was known for the 'Crni Guber' mineral springs and the health spa that was built around it. Even today, the locals swear by the healing properties of the water at Guber springs, claiming that (depending on the spring) the water can cure anything from bad eyesight to multiple sclerosis. Aside from being employed in the tourist industry, the inhabitants of the municipality of Srebrenica were then predominately factory workers (at one of the three large factories located in Potočari – car battery, car brake and zinc factories), mine workers (in the bauxite or zinc mines in the south and northeast of the region²⁷), or indeed agricultural workers who farmed the land in the surrounding villages. Furthermore, at this time, approximately 75 percent of the local population was Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim), and the remaining 25 percent were Bosnian Serb.²⁸

This demographic situation remained relatively stable since the end of the Second World War, but it was to undergo some drastic and unforeseen changes in the aftermath of October 15th, 1991, when, following Croatia and Slovenia's lead, The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its own independence from The Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia. Following the official declaration of independence by the Bosnian government in Sarajevo, later that same fall the Bosnian Serb faction declared autonomy for 'Republika Srpska' in the east of Bosnia, in an area which, as previously mentioned, included Podrinje and therefore Srebrenica. Fighting broke out in the region in early 1992, and for most inhabitants the war arrived entirely unexpectedly:

“Ćamila, een inwoonster van Srebrenica die al eerder werd aangehaald, vertelde toen ik haar vroeg of ze de oorlog voelde komen: 'Ik voelde niks. Wat moet ik je erover zeggen? De oorlog

²⁴ The area under the Drina River, which marks the border with Serbia. For a detailed map of the region, please see: Peace March (2011), <http://www.marismira.org/en/marismira.php> Accessed 01 November 2011.

²⁵ David Rhode, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre since World War II* (New York: FSG, 1997) xiv.

²⁶ Rhode, *Endgame*, xiii.

²⁷ Rhode, *Endgame*, xiv.

²⁸ Peter Bootsma, *Srebrenica: Het officiële NIOD-rapport samengevat* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2002) 31-38.

brak opeens uit. We hadden niet gezien dat hij werd voorbereid, in de regio brak de oorlog in twee, drie dagen uit. Een paar dagen voor de oorlog begonnen mensen erover te praten.”²⁹

The element of surprise and shock remains a powerful trope in the memory of the Srebrenica genocide and the war as a whole. To the Bosniak inhabitants of Podrinje, it appeared that - as if overnight - the Bosnian Serb population had taken up arms, and (para) military troops from Serbia proper entered the region. As “the Serbs, the largest group in former Yugoslavia [...] controlled the Yugoslav National Army and its vast stockpile of ammunition”³⁰, the arms embargo that was imposed by the UN on all constituting countries of Yugoslavia did very little to relieve the fighting efforts throughout the former socialist federation. Unsurprisingly therefore, it did not take long for Serb militia to overpower many predominately Muslim villages in eastern Bosnia, and as the fighting continued throughout 1992 and 1993, most of the region came under control of the Bosnian Serb troops bar a few villages – so-called enclaves or Muslim strongholds within an otherwise Serb dominated territory. Srebrenica was one such enclave, and therefore it inevitably attracted hordes of refugees from nearby towns and villages, as well as from around the rest of (eastern) Bosnia, causing the number of inhabitants in the enclave – the town proper – to swell up to 35- 40.000 in the years 1992-1995.³¹

It was at a crucial point in the spring of 1993 that the international community recognised the gravity of the humanitarian crisis in the enclave. Following more than a year of constant warfare, and resulting furthermore out of a disproportionately rapid increase in population, the inhabitants of Srebrenica found themselves without (regular) access to food or clean water, yet at the same time unable to leave the confines of the enclave without risking their lives by crossing some 110 kilometres needed to reach safety in Federation-held territory.³² Once the international community acknowledged the gravity of the situation on the ground, Srebrenica was proclaimed a United

²⁹ Selma Leydesdorff, *De leegte achter ons laten: Een geschiedenis van de vrouwen van Srebrenica* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2008) 110-111. “Ćamila, an inhabitant of Srebrenica whom I’ve cited before, told me the following when I asked whether she felt the war was coming: ‘I felt nothing. What do you want me to say? The war broke out suddenly. We didn’t see that it was prepared; it broke out within two, three days in the region. People only started talking about it a few days before it broke out.’”

³⁰ Rhode, *Endgame*, xii.

³¹ Leydesdorff, *De leegte*, 181. “Exacte gegevens over aantallen vluchtelingen waren er niet. Algemeen wordt vernomen dat er tussen 1992 en 1995 tussen de 35.000 en 40.000 mensen op het terrein in de veilige zone Srebrenica vertoefden.” Translation: “There were no exact records about the number of refugees. It is generally accepted that between 1992 and 1995 between 35.000 and 40.000 people inhabited the ‘safe area’ of Srebrenica.”

³² The nearest Federation-held stronghold was the town of Nežuk in the vicinity of Tuzla. For a detailed map of the region, please see: Peace March (2011), <http://www.marismira.org/en/marismira.php> Accessed 01 November 2011.

Nations 'Safe Area' under Declaration 819; stating that "all parties and others concerned treat Srebrenica and its surroundings as a safe area which should be free from any armed attack or any other hostile act".³³ The Declaration offered as its solution a complete demilitarisation of the area, in exchange for "the promise of a cease fire, the insertion of a UNPROFOR [United Nations Protective Forces] company into Srebrenica, the evacuation of the seriously wounded and seriously ill, unimpeded access for UNHCR and ICRC, and certain other provisions."³⁴ Within the terms of the Declaration, therefore, the fighting factions in Srebrenica were to be disarmed, and UN peacekeeping forces were deployed to the region in order to offer protection and to ensure access to humanitarian aid for the already malnourished population.

2.2 Life in the enclave

Therefore in the spring of 1993, for the people of Srebrenica – both original and newly arrived refugees from the rest of (eastern) Bosnia – their status as inhabitants of an enclosed enclave (now dubbed a 'safe area') became an officially recognised reality. At the time, there was no intended end in sight for the situation on the ground, nor was there an international precedent or timeframe to be followed. In his book entitled *Razglednica iz groba* ('Postcards from the grave'), Emir Suljagić, a then teenage refugee in Srebrenica and now journalist and advisor at the Ministry of Education, describes the living conditions in Srebrenica between 1992 and 1995:

"Do jula 1992. glad je već postala središna tačka u životu svakog stanovnika enklave. Jeli smo jednom, rijetko dva puta dnevno. Grad je bio pun iscrpljenih ljudi, koji su dane provodili lutajući uokolo bez određenog cilja [...] Što su gladniji i iscrpljeniji bili, rasprave su bile glasnije; što su beznadniji bili, argumentacija je bila žučnija, kao da su htjeli nadomjestiti osjećanje nemoći koje je prevladavalo. Onda bi se ponovo vraćali u kuće da provedu još jednu dugu noć čiju će tišinu prekinuti iznenadni noćni artiljerijski napad ili glad, koja se javljala tako snažno da joj se nijedan san, ma kako čvrst, nije mogao oduprijeti [...] Dani su ljetom postajali sve duži, predugi, a zalazak sunca nije bio poziv na večeru; najteže je bilo poslijepodne, glad se pretvarala u bol, nalik grču u stomaku, bol koju se nije moglo odgnati."³⁵

³³ Rhode, *Endgame*, xv.

³⁴ Smail Čekić, Muharem Kreso and Bećir Macić (eds.), *Genocide in Srebrenica, United Nations' 'Safe Area' in July 1995* (Sarajevo: CPU, 2001) 53-54.

³⁵ Emir Suljagić, *Razglednica iz groba* (Zagreb: Durieux, 2005) 38-39. "By July of 1992 hunger became the main focal point in the life of every inhabitant of the enclave. We ate once a day, rarely twice. The town was filled with exhausted people, who spent their days wandering around without a specific purpose [...] The hungrier and more exhausted they got, the louder their discussions became; the more hopeless they felt, the more heated the arguments got, as if they wanted to substitute for the feeling of powerlessness that prevailed. Then they would return to their houses to spend another night in silence, which would only be interrupted by a sudden artillery attack or hunger; hunger that would call on you so strongly that no dream, no matter how strong, could resist it [...] Days became longer in the summer, too long, and the setting of the sun wasn't an

By focusing on the overwhelming hunger of its inhabitants, Suljagić creates a powerful metaphor for the overall state of helplessness felt by the inhabitants of the enclave. The idea that there was no escape from the enclave, yet just the same no access to food or basic medication, left the inhabitants of Srebrenica in a predicament where the main choice was between death, or indeed survival by means of what Lawrence Langer describes as ‘humiliation’.³⁶ Langer argues against the idea that “choice is purely an internal matter, immune to circumstance and chance”³⁷, and it is indeed this lack of an appropriate decision-making framework that is explored further in statements attesting to the nature of life in the enclave:

“In Srebrenica was het vreselijk. Het was vreselijk er te wonen. Er was gewoon niet te leven. Angst en honger. Vier of vijf gezinnen woonden in een flat [...] We waren bang [...] Maar het ergste was dat we geen water hadden. We moesten op zoek naar water en soms drie, vier of vijf kilometer lopen. [...] In het begin was er voedsel. [...] In 1993 konden we het volhouden, omdat we wat eten uit de dorpen konden halen, maar eind 1993 en in 1994 konden we nergens iets vandaan krijgen en kwamen die konvoeien er niet door. [...] De vliegtuigen dropten wel wat. We gingen ’s nachts op pad om op luchtdroppings te wachten, en soms kregen we wat, soms niets. Nogal wat mensen werden op die manier gedood. Ik kan je niet meer vertellen behalve dat het vreselijk was, dat mensen echt geleden hebben.”³⁸

The traumatic characteristics of these individual memories are highlighted in the witnesses’ inability to recall the exact details of the suffering that was endured, other than to use hunger as an almost poetic trope to describe a kind of timeless suffering, or indeed to emphasise on the general horror of the situation. In many ways, this type of memory correlates to what Langer describes as ‘deep memory’ and to what Cubitt furthermore defines as “problems in memory, either [from] breaking or discrediting conceptual frames that have previously governed people’s autobiographical remembering, or by making a host of memories which had previously guided people in the routines

invitation to dinner; it was most difficult in the afternoon, when the hunger would turn into a sharp pain, kind of like a stomach cramp, a pain which you couldn’t get rid of.”

³⁶ For further information, please consult the ‘Theoretical background’ chapter.

³⁷ Langer, *Holocaust testimonies*, xii.

³⁸ Leydesdorff, *De leegte*, 212-213. “In Srebrenica it was horrible. It was horrible to live there. You just couldn’t live there. Fear and hunger. Four or five families living in one flat [...] We were afraid [...] But the worst thing was that we had no water. We had to walk sometimes three, four, five kilometres in search for water. [...] In the beginning there was still food [...] In 1993 we could still take it, because we could get some food from the villages, but by the end of 1993 and in 1994 we couldn’t get food from anywhere anymore and they weren’t letting the convoys through. [...] The planes would drop some food. We would go out at night to wait for the air drops, and sometimes we would get something, and other times we wouldn’t. A lot of people were killed in this way. I can’t tell you any more, except that it was horrible, that people really suffered.”

of everyday life suddenly redundant.”³⁹ Remembering life in the enclave is therefore clearly problematic for the survivors of Srebrenica, not in the least because the framework of life as they knew it had reached a level beyond all recognition, but in fact – it can be argued – because the relative inescapability of the situation they were encountered with presented them with an impossibility of choice, which however still may be deemed as the wrong one when viewed through the vantage point of a ‘framework of normalcy’.⁴⁰

Emir Suljagić, in turn, bravely engages in an open discussion on the ways in which people dealt with hunger and an overall lack of resources. As Suljagić recalls:

“Kada je glad postala neizdrživa i kada su oni koji su bili njene najveće žrtve iz dobro skrivenih zavežljaja počeli izvlačiti i posljednje, davno uštedene njemačke marke i porodični nakit, seljani su to i dalje koristili da zarade [...] Uskoro je uspostavljeno čudovišno tržište na kojem se najčešće mjenjala roba za robu, jer skoro niko više nije vjerovao u novac. Trgovci su mijenjali cigarete i šibice za krompir ili brašno. To se ljeto za jedno pakovanje šibica moglo dobiti desetak kilograma krompira ili desetak jaja [...] Cigarete su dostigle nevjerovatnih 150, pa čak i 200 njemačkih maraka za jednu kutiju [...] Činjenica da nisu mogli krenuti nigdje dalje sa svojom zaradom nije ni malo zbunjivala trgovce.”⁴¹

Suljagić therefore narrates of instances of hunger in the years between 1992 and 1995 predominately in order to describe how relationships changed, and in many ways deteriorated, between the town folk, refugees and villagers alike. He describes the creation of an almost inhuman and certainly inhumane black market, produced in a state where all aforementioned actors, stripped of decision-making powers over their own destinies, ‘began to act as animals’: “Srbi su nas tretirali kao životinje i mi smo se nakon izvjesnog vremena počeli ponašati kao životinje.”⁴² This image furthermore perpetuates in his description of prostitution in Srebrenica, which, according to Suljagić, occurred on rather a mass scale and was enabled by both the Canadian and Dutch soldiers.⁴³ The

³⁹ Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 111.

⁴⁰ Langer, *Holocaust testimonies*, 9. Please see chapter on ‘Theoretical Background’ for more information.

⁴¹ Suljagić, *Razglednica*, 40-44. “When the hunger became unbearable, and when those who were its greatest victims started to pull out from some well hidden storage place their long ago saved Deutschmarks and family jewellery, the villagers still used this to make a profit [...] Soon enough a wondrous market was established where goods were traded for goods, as almost no one believed in money anymore. Tradesmen exchanged cigarettes and matches for potatoes or flour. That summer [of 1993] you could get almost ten kilos of potatoes or ten eggs for a pack of matches [...] Cigarette price reached an incredible 150, sometimes even 200 DM for a single pack [...] The fact that they couldn’t take their profits anywhere did not in the least deter the tradesmen.”

⁴² Suljagić, *Razglednica*, 97.

⁴³ This is corroborated by several Dutch soldiers in Hendrina Praamsma e.a., *Herinneringen aan Srebrenica: 171 soldatengesprekken* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2005). See testimony of Rob Benner on page 39 for example.

author recalls instances where Dutch soldiers paid local girls anything from a few cigarettes for performing oral sex through the barb wire which surrounded their compound, to a few packs for spending the night with them in one of the many observation posts that surrounded the town and the municipality. In this case Suljagić makes a clear judgement call on the nature of the guilty party: “Izbor koji ona nije imala, imali su vojnici koji su je surovo iskorištavali [...] Ali kao i uvijek tokom tih godina u Srebrenici, pravili su pogrešan izbor.”⁴⁴

From this perspective, life in the enclave is similarly placed within the context of choice, or rather the lack thereof – now in relation to those actors who are seen as in possession of the ability to engage in moral judgement; of which the years in the enclave, a de facto ghetto, had made the local population void. Suljagić, however, in a later essay on his remembrance of life in Srebrenica, refuses to call it either a ghetto or a concentration camp, claiming the following:

“And I do not know what Srebrenica actually was. It was not a concentration camp, because we could imitate life – at least to the extent that we had houses and beds in them, or at least something that resembled houses; for some they were basements, for others crowded rooms, and for others, classrooms in schools. But it was not a concentration camp. Srebrenica was not a ghetto, either. In a ghetto you would at least have the chance to get out, to climb over walls. Breaching the borders of the enclave meant an automatic death for all of us. Certain similarities did exist however: Srebrenica ended up like most ghettos – emptied by mass deportation and massacre. But that still does not make Srebrenica a ghetto. It was an experience that cannot be compared to any other I know of.”⁴⁵

In attempting to conceptualise the trauma which they experienced between 1992 and 1995 as inhabitants of the world’s first UN ‘safe area’, survivors of Srebrenica such as Emir Suljagić find themselves unable to articulate the exact nature of their suffering, as the type of horror they lived through, for years before the mass executions of July 1995 took place, have not (yet) been placed within an appropriate terminology. David Becker, a scholar in the field of mental health and human rights, talks of a very similar situation being faced by survivors of the Holocaust, when attempting to narrate their suffering:

“In 1943, Bruno Bettelheim wrote about his experience in a concentration camp and justified the need for a new term to describe the experiences he and his fellow prisoners had suffered: “What characterized it most was the inescapability, its uncertain duration, but

⁴⁴ Suljagić, *Razglednica*, 151-155. “The choice she didn’t have, the soldiers who brutally took advantage of her did [...] But as always during those Srebrenica years, they made the wrong choice.”

⁴⁵ Biserko, *Srebrenica: Remembrance for the future*, 123.

potentiality for life; the fact that nothing about it was predictable, that one's very life was in jeopardy at every moment and that one could do nothing about it."⁴⁶

While notions of 'inescapability', 'uncertain duration' and 'jeopardy' can to a large extent be seen as correlating to the experience of life in an enclave or rather 'safe area', as Suljagić argues Srebrenica was a much more "post-modern genocide".⁴⁷ Post-modern in a sense where the world would not or rather seemed incapable to choose between a right and wrong, guilty or innocent party, and in the spirit of relativity observed the trauma that was endured. As will be discussed in the third chapter on conceptualisation and collectivisation of memory, the sense of despair is then also being projected on parties other than the Bosnian Serbs – namely the Dutch and the UN – who are seen as perpetrators of this untellable or rather 'unnarratable' crime for the fact of not having found themselves in the same inescapable situation (at least not from the perspective of Bosniak survivors).

At the same time, it remains difficult to separate the memories of life under siege from the traumatic recollections of the mass murders which occurred in July of 1995, and the relative roles of the Bosnian Serbs and 'Dutchbat' therein. As Selma Leydesdorff concludes: "Het risico bestaat de verhalen over de jaren 1992-1995 te schrijven vanuit de optiek van de grote moord. Niemand zal ontkennen dat deze herinnering bepaalt en dat wat toen slecht was, wordt geprojecteerd op de tijd vooraf."⁴⁸ The knowledge of the genocide that was about to occur, as well as one's own perspective on the role of various actors who were seen as in possession of choice over their own destinies as well as those of the inhabitants of the enclave, is therefore certain to cloud the recollection of the occupation years. From the point of view of the Bosnian population of Srebrenica, the events of 1992-1995 are almost always irrevocably linked to the events in July of 1995, and their own judgement on the actions of the Dutch battalion as much as the actions of the Bosnian Serbs. However, the images and descriptions of life in the enclave - often particularly confronting – continue to play a prominent role in the memories of most survivors of the genocide. As heinous as the crimes committed ultimately were, there is a sense amongst survivors that the three years prior to July 11th, 1995, must equally be remembered, as a true testament to what was endured, and furthermore as an indication that what eventually transpired was a planned attack that was a long

⁴⁶ David Becker, 'The Deficiency of the Concept of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder When Dealing with Victims of Human Rights Violations' in Rolf J. Kleber, Charles R. Figley, and Berthold P.R. Gersons (eds.) *Beyond trauma: cultural and societal dynamics* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1995) 105.

⁴⁷ Biserko, *Srebrenica: Remembrance for the future*, 123.

⁴⁸ Leydesdorff, *De leegte*, 254. "There is a great risk that the stories about the years 1992-1995 are only written through the lens of the mass murder. No one will deny that this memory is decisive, and that what was bad then, is projected onto the time that preceded it."

time coming. What remains to be explored now, however, is how the remembrance of the mass murder in July of 1995 is represented in the Bosnian consciousness, both individual and collective, and how this remembrance has developed in the years 1995-2011 respectively.

3. The individual traumatic experience: narrating a genocide

A lot has been written on the topic of the events of July 1995 in Srebrenica, from the perspective of the Bosniak survivors as well as local and international scholars. Without going into extensive detail on the debates still surrounding the interpretation of what transpired,⁴⁹ a brief chronology of events from the Bosniak perspective must none the less be provided. According to sources quoted in *Srebrenica, Remembrance for the future*;⁵⁰ the attack on Srebrenica began on July 6th, 1995, by (Bosnian) Serb troops. In the afternoon of that same day, as can be verified in the NIOD report⁵¹, the commander of the Dutch battalion Thom Karremans “phoned the UN headquarters in Sarajevo and asked for ‘air support’ after refugee camps and UN observation posts were shelled.”⁵² The shelling of the municipality of Srebrenica and fighting between (Bosnian) Serb and Bosniak forces continued in the following days, leading up to an “intensified shelling of the urban area of Srebrenica”⁵³ in the early morning hours of July 11th, when the enclave ultimately fell into the hands of the rebel Serb army. By this point, the majority of the citizens of Srebrenica were already on their way to the Potočari army base, located some nine kilometres from the town of Srebrenica. The issue of the 40.000 refugees, who were seeking protection at the Dutch army base, or alternatively trying to flee the town on foot through the surrounding forests and hills, was then discussed between Generals Mladić and Karremans in the evening hours of July 11th. By 10:00 hours the following day, “Mladić ordered Bosniak refugees to be evacuated. He also informed the meeting that all men between the ages of 16 and 60 were to be separated in order to identify ‘war criminals’ among them.”⁵⁴ The act of genocide, which General Radislav Krstić would eventually be convicted of in 2004, was then effectively committed in the days between July 12th and July 18th, 1995, when the men who had not fled Srebrenica by foot were separated from their wives, mothers and children (who were in turn taken by buses to a Bosniak army controlled territory near Tuzla) and systematically executed in the Serb army stronghold of Bratunac, or in nearby fields and warehouses. On a side note, precise locations of executions are difficult to determine because of the nature of the gravesites; many

⁴⁹ For example, the arguments that still exist between ‘Republika Srpska’ and the Bosnian Federation on the exact number of victims, or indeed the case of Hasan Nuhanović against the Dutch government surrounding their role and effective responsibility.

⁵⁰ Biserko, *Srebrenica: Remembrance for the future*, 10-13.

⁵¹ Peter Bootsma (ed.), *Srebrenica, een veilig gebied: reconstructie achtergronden, gevolgen en analyse van de val van een ‘safe area’* (Boom: Amsterdam, 2002) 2103.

⁵² Biserko, *Remembrance for the future*, 10.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 11.

⁵⁴ Biserko, *Remembrance for the future*, 12.

bodies having been dug up again and redistributed over several secondary or even tertiary gravesites.⁵⁵

While there is still some disagreement over the official number of (men) missing from Srebrenica, predominately from the side of the Bosnian Serbs⁵⁶, the International Commission on Missing Persons estimates that some 8000 predominately Bosnian Muslim men were victims of genocide in July of 1995, and have thus far (between 1999 and 2011) managed to identify approximately 6800 bodies, while between 2003 and 2011 5137 bodies have been buried at the Potočari Memorial Centre's cemetery.⁵⁷ It is then the memories of the some 30.000 survivors of this ordeal – predominately women who witnessed the murder of their sons, husbands and fathers, or alternatively men and women who often spent several months hiding in the forests of eastern Bosnia in order to cross the 110 kilometres separating them from safety in the Federation – that will be explored further in the subsequent chapter.

3.1 The trauma of July 1995: anguished memory

In her book entitled *Srebrenica: Het verhaal van de overlevenden*⁵⁸ (originally entitled *Samrtno Srebreničko ljeto '95* and published in the winter of 1998 by the 'Women of Srebrenica' organisation in Tuzla), Hatidža Hren (herself a survivor of Srebrenica) collected testimonies from 104 witnesses of the July '95 genocide; women and men and adults as well as children. This is the most comprehensive record to date of the days and sometimes weeks surrounding the exodus of July 11th, and covers stories of those evacuated from Potočari by Bosnian Serb buses, as well as those who braved the trek to Federation territory by foot. What most, if not all, testimonies have in common is a recollection of a passive surrendering to circumstance in a situation entirely void of personal choice – what Lawrence Langer describes in his book as anguished memory. Such is also the testimony of

⁵⁵ Bootsma, *Srebrenica, een veilig gebied*, 2558. "In September 1995 beginnen de pogingen de omvang van de massamoord te verbergen door grote massagraven die zich bij de executieplaats bevonden te openen en de lichamen te verspreiden over meerdere kleinere graven: van 'primary' naar 'secondary' graven." Translation: "In September 1995 the attempts to cover up the extent of the mass murders began, by opening the large mass graves that were located next to the places of execution, and spreading the bodies over several smaller graves: a transition from primary to secondary graves."

⁵⁶ Office of the High Representative, 'RS Government Special Session A Distasteful Attempt to Question Genocide' (20 April 2010), http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/presso/pressr/default.asp?content_id=44835 Accessed 29 August 2011.

⁵⁷ International Commission on Missing Persons, '613 Srebrenica Victims to be Buried at a Memorial Ceremony in Potočari' (10 July 2011), <http://www.ic-mp.org/press-releases/613-srebrenica-victims-to-be-buried-at-a-memorial-ceremony-in-potocari613-srebrenickih-zrtava-bice-ukopane-u-memorijalnom-centru-potocari/> Accessed 15 August 2011.

⁵⁸ Translation from original title: *The deadly summer of Srebrenica '95*. Translation from Dutch title: *Srebrenica: Stories from Survivors*.

the first witness in the book, F.S. from the village of Hrnčići who left Srebrenica for the UN army base in Potočari on July 11th, with her three children, father-in-law and disabled cousin. She recalled the following course of events, testifying subsequently to her own inability to protest:

“De kinderen sprongen van het hek, maar het eerste kind dat sprong werd door de tsjetnik in de sprong opgevangen met die draad en zo onthoofde hij hem. Ook een tweede jongentje sprong en hem sneed hij ook het hoofd af, dat werd gescheiden van zijn romp. Hij onthoofde ze, en die kinderen waren niet ouder dan twaalf jaar. Ik deed alsof ik niets zag, haalde mijn zoon en ging ervandoor.”⁵⁹

These are narratives still in their very pure form, which describe – to the extent where this is possible in the case of traumatic or deep memory – clear recollections of an almost palpable anguish, without a superimposed sense of closure such as may exist in 1970s and 1980s writings on the memories of the Holocaust. As Langer discusses in *Holocaust testimonies*,⁶⁰ a lot of the original witness accounts describing the suffering of the Holocaust were later placed within a more humanist and coherent narrative of a kind of ‘passive heroism’ of survivors, where the mere act of survival assigns to the witness heroic qualities and the idea of a greater purpose, even when this contradicts the original testimony.

It is worth noting that Hren by no means attempts to place the recollections at hand within a broader history of the survival of humanity against all odds. As such, the anguished, deep memory of a complete loss of hope and faith in humanity in the face of the horrors of genocide very much comes to the forefront in numerous testimonies recorded in *Srebrenica: Het verhaal van de overlevenden*, including that of I.P., born in 1963 in the village of Cerska:

“Mijn zoontje van zes was doodgedrukt voordat ik hem onder de voeten vandaan kon trekken. Hij stierf in mijn armen, hij blies net zijn laatste adem uit. Daarna weet ik niks meer. Ze gooiden water over me heen om me af te koelen [...] Als ik op dat moment een mes had gehad, zou ik zeker zelfmoord hebben gepleegd.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Hatidža Hren, *Srebrenica: Het verhaal van de overlevenden* (Amsterdam: van Genneep, 1999) 32-33. “The children jumped from the fence, but the first child that jumped was caught in the air by a chetnik holding a wire, and was decapitated in this way. The second boy jumped as well, and his head was cut off too, it was separated from his body. He decapitated them, while those children couldn’t have been more than twelve years old. I pretended not to have seen anything, got my son and left.”

⁶⁰ See chapter on ‘Theoretical Background’ for a more in-depth discussion.

⁶¹ Hren, *Srebrenica*, 47. “My little boy of six was trampled to death [note: in a truck while on their way out of Srebrenica] before I could pull him out from under their feet. He died in my arms, blew out his last breath. After that, I don’t remember anything. They threw water over me to cool me off [...] if I had had a knife at that time, I would have surely committed suicide.”

This idea of wishing for death after having so narrowly escaped it is presented in the following testimony as well, of a young man born in 1980 whom it took a whole of nine months to reach safety in the Federation after escaping from the enclave in July of 1995:

“Toen ik het vrije territorium bereikt had en eindelijk gered was, op mijn zestiende, zag ik eruit als een oude man in vergelijking met mijn leeftijd genoten. Mijn handen leken op die van een oude man. Ik had soms zelfmoord neigingen [...] terwijl ik niets misdaan had.”⁶²

Theorists have connected this seeming anomaly to the idea of shame, and argue the following:

“Witnessing violence done to others and surviving can seem to be as traumatic as suffering brutality oneself. Here a sense of shame is paramount. The survivor feels complicit in the betrayal perpetrated by others. [...] The camp survivor is filled with shame for the deeds done by the guards, and because the inmates were powerless to prevent them.”⁶³

The dominant framework therefore remains one of powerlessness, where survivors find it impossible to reconcile the pre-traumatic auto-image of oneself as a moral human being in control of his or her destiny, with the (post) traumatic experience, or rather rupture, which places them entirely out of this context. As Langer argues, “[one] lesson of the Holocaust is the facility with which most people put into a situation that does not contain a good choice[...] argue themselves away from the issue of moral duty[...]adopting instead precepts of rational interest and self-preservation.”⁶⁴ As in the case of the Holocaust, the guiding principles of the victims of this kind of overwhelming trauma appear to be those of survival, at least at the time when the trauma is taking place. Shame is only introduced afterwards, in the instance when survivors attempt to bridge the gap in the narrative between one’s own life before, during and after the traumatic event. Langer dubs this as an “effort to reconstruct a semblance of continuity in a life that began as a normal existence”⁶⁵, which then rather results in the construction of a narrative of shame and betrayal; the betrayal of the self as well as a betrayal from the side of ‘others’.

⁶² Hren, *Srebrenica*, 51. “When I reached the free territory and was finally saved, age sixteen, I looked like an old man in comparison with other boys my age. My hands were old man’s hands. Sometimes I had suicidal thoughts [...] while I had done nothing wrong.”

⁶³ Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 4.

⁶⁴ Langer, *Holocaust testimonies*, 11.

⁶⁵ Langer, *Holocaust testimonies*, 2.

3.2 The narrative of betrayal

In his almost poetic treatise on the years spent in Srebrenica, and his current remembrance of the days spent in Potočari awaiting evacuation, Emir Suljagić affirms this point by narrating the following:

“To je jedino vrijeme koje mi još uvijek mnogo više izgleda kao san, nego kao stvarno sjećanje. Ljudskost je bila potrošena, surovost njegovana u ratu kao sredstvo preživljavanja još više je došla do izražaja u ovom provizornom paklu [...] povjerovao sam u to da se čovjek nalazi u konstantnom stanju rata, pažnju potrebnu da bi preživio niko od nas nije razasipao na emocije, na one obične ljudske stvari poput suosjećanja, solidarnosti, razumijevanja. [...] Ne znam zašto je tako, ali znam da smo uništeni kao ljudi, mnogo prije nego kao zajednica. Uništeni smo na više od jednog načina, razasuti posvuda, potpuno usamljeni gdje god da se nalazimo, nespremni na nova osjećanja, jer su sva od pada Srebrenice nekako polovična, skoro teret. Iz nekog razloga se samo tamo među uspomenu, među sjenkama, osjećam bolje.”⁶⁶

‘I don’t know why this is the case, but I do know we are ruined, and that we were ruined as people much sooner than we were ruined as a community’; perhaps the most powerful claim in this treatise on remembering a trauma from the perspective of an individual survivor, strongly attests to the feelings of betrayal of oneself in a state of suffering, and the subsequent feelings of shame as well as the inability to connect the memory of said trauma with one’s own auto-image, except in the place where the most potent trauma occurred. The relevance of place in the process of remembering as well as memorialisation will be explored further in the chapter on ‘Memorialising a memory’, but for now it suffices to say that, in his exploration on the betrayal of the self, Suljagić (perhaps inadvertently) discloses the nature of remembrance of trauma from the side of the survivor as one of a complex inability to bridge the gap between the powerless survival-mode, and the enabled pre- and post-traumatic decision-making versions of himself.

Aside from the narrative of shame stemming from the exploration of the betrayal of the self, there also emerges a discourse on the blame of the ‘other’; of those (as discussed in the previous chapter) who were seen as in possession of the decision-making powers, of which the survivors of the trauma

⁶⁶ Suljagić *Razglednica*, 147-148. “That is the only time that still seems more to me like a dream than a real memory. Humanity was spent, cruelty nurtured in war as a means of survival came even more to the foreground in this provisional hell [...] I believed that man was captured in a constant state of war, and the attention needed to survive none of us wasted on emotions; on those common human things like compassion, solidarity, understanding. [...] I don’t know why this is the case, but I do know we are ruined, and that we were ruined as people much sooner than we were ruined as a community. We are ruined in more than one way, scattered around, completely lonely wherever we are, incapable of feeling, because since the fall of Srebrenica all feelings seem only partial, a burden. For some reason only there, amongst memories and shadows, I feel better.”

felt themselves stripped. One's view on the nature of the guilty party, of the 'betrayal', depends in this case almost entirely on one's own idea on who was in charge; of who was the powerful and the hegemonic in relation to their powerless and subaltern position. Emir Suljagić had the following to say on the topic of 'betrayal by the other' from his vantage point:

"Izdaja koju sam video ja, razlikuje se od one koju su vidjeli oni koji su preživjeli masakr. Oni su gledali kako se ljudski rod spušta u dubine bez presedana, bili su poniživani i mučeni, preživjeli samo čudom. Ono što sam ja video bila je hladna, skoro birokratska nezainteresiranost, izdaja koju su počinili obrazovani, po svim standardima inteligentni ljudi. Ljudi koji se tih dana nisu usuđivali ili htjeli biti upravo to."⁶⁷

The betrayal from the side of the UN peacekeepers, and therefore the Dutch, has remained a powerful trope in the narrative of the survivors of Srebrenica – most of whom lived to tell of their ordeal in Potočari by being evacuated or by surviving the 'Death March', rather than escaping the massacres committed by the Serb rebel army. As a result, the prevalent discourse from the side of the Bosniak survivors has more often than not turned into a chronicle of betrayal from the side of the Dutch. One such survivor, Sabaheta, who lost her son and husband during the 1995 genocide, is noted as recalling the following:

"We bleven daar de nacht, bang om naar de bussen te gaan die ons zouden deporteren, daarna bleef ik nog een nacht, een vreselijke en verschrikkelijke nacht vol schreeuwen, vol angst. Je kon iemand horen schreeuwen en dan stonden we allemaal, met misschien vijftienduizend mensen, op en schreeuwden we tegelijk. Kun je voorstellen dat vijftien-tot zestienduizend mensen tegelijk schreeuwen en dat niemand het hoort? [...] En de wereld wist niet wat er gebeurde? Iedereen zag wat er gebeurde. Maar ze wilden niet helpen."⁶⁸

From a memory of betrayal, lies and even conspiracies – "En de Nederlandse soldaten keken ernaar en deden niks"⁶⁹ – then emerges a narrative of resentment. 'Dutchbat' as well as the international community is resented for not acting quickly enough, and for allowing the situation to escalate to

⁶⁷ Suljagić *Razglednica*, 174. "The betrayal which I witnessed [as a translator for the UN] differs from the one seen by survivors of the massacre. They watched human kind lower themselves to unprecedented depths, they were humiliated and tortured, and survived only by a miracle. What I witnessed was a cold, almost bureaucratic disinterest, a betrayal committed by, by all standards, educated and intelligent men. People who at that time did not dare or want to be just that."

⁶⁸ Leydesdorff, *De leegte*, 31. "We stayed there all night, afraid to go to the buses which would deport us, and after that I stayed one more night, one horrible, awful night full of screams, full of fear. You could hear someone scream, and then all of us, maybe fifteen thousand people, would stand up and scream at the same time. Can you imagine fifteen to sixteen thousand people all screaming at the same time, and no one can hear them? [...] And the world didn't know what was happening? Everyone saw what was happening. But they didn't want to help."

⁶⁹ Leydesdorff, *De leegte*, 28. "And the Dutch soldiers looked and did nothing".

proportions of such great magnitude. They are furthermore begrudged for promising the inhabitants of Srebrenica a kind of safety they were clearly unable to provide; a promise which arguably only worsened the situation and ultimately lead to a greater number of casualties, as people could have fled the 'safe area' or at least would not have sought refuge there, had they not felt they been promised protection.⁷⁰

Hasan Nuhanović, whose court case against the Dutch government has been mentioned on several occasions, is then one of the survivors' strongest advocates on this issue. In his book as well as his lengthy presentation on the proceedings of the court case against the Dutch government⁷¹, Nuhanović expressed his view that the Dutch are guilty of gross criminal negligence because of the fact they instructed their soldiers to forcibly expel Bosniak refugees seeking shelter in Potočari. His memory; as a survivor of genocide, a former translator for the UN, and indeed a son and brother who lost his entire family in the few days around July 11th, 1995, is a deeply traumatised one. In all his retellings of the events surrounding July 11th, including an almost 400 page book which offers an hour-by-hour recount of the period between July 6th and July 18th in Srebrenica, Nuhanović refrains from statements on the deeply personal and anguished nature of his trauma. As he notes in an interview with a Bosnian weekly *Dani*, conducted just days after his unexpected victory in the court case against the Dutch government:

“Ja mogu opisati taj trenutak, ali ne mogu govoriti o svojim osjećajima. Svi su me u Holandiji pitali za osjećaje, a ja sam im rekao da su holandske vlasti od početka pokušavale da me diskvalifikuju iz pravnog procesa zato što, kako su rekli, pričam sa previse emocija. Onda si ti automatski diskvalifikovan kao relevantan sugovornik.”⁷²

To date, Hasan Nuhanović's retelling of the trauma of Potočari has focused almost entirely on describing the betrayal felt from the side of the Dutch soldiers, in this case seen as those in the position of power over the life and death of himself and his family. From his vantage point, there seems to be a need for a collective admission of guilt from the side of those who were seen as in possession of this kind of power. Individual trials and admissions of guilt do not seem to suffice, as rather than accounting for the massacre which occurred, survivors of trauma need to equally – and perhaps more importantly – account for the breach in faith that ensued, for the betrayal and the

⁷⁰ See Appendix and the commentary provided by Hasan Nuhanović on this issue (11 July 2011 interview).

⁷¹ See Appendix.

⁷² Dragan Stanojlović, 'Hasan Nuhanović: Tužit ću i Ratka Mladića!', *Dani*, 15 July 2011, 16. "I can describe the moment, but I cannot talk about my feelings. Everyone in Holland asked me about my feelings, and I told them that the Dutch authorities, from the very beginning, tried to disqualify me from legal proceedings because, as they said I spoke with too many emotions. Then you are immediately disqualified as a relevant conversationalist."

rupture of consciousness which transpired between the person one was and the person one has become. Only then perhaps can the victims of trauma finally feel justified in the fact that the choices they were presented with at the time were unjust and impossible; that the collective was wrong rather than just the individual.

3.3 Recounting the untellable: the drive to remember

On a final note, linked closely to the idea of deep, anguished and traumatic memory, of powerlessness as well as betrayal, is the sense of the impossibility of expressing emotions combined with a deep need to do so, together with the notion that one will never be fully understood; as what was experienced was the unimaginable becoming the common – what Lawrence Langer refers to as the “anxiety of futility”⁷³ and Geoffrey Cubitt refers to as “recounting the untellable”⁷⁴. This idea is carried across in several testimonies in Hren’s compilation, including that of a then twenty-five year old student from Sarajevo (testimony no. 12) and a 40-year-old housewife from Srebrenica (testimony no. 15):

“De tranen stroomden me vanzelf over de wangen, maar het was geen gewoon huilen. Je bent daar gewoon, er gebeurt van alles om je heen en je hebt geen tijd om je emoties hardop uit te spreken, om te schreeuwen of te brullen. Bijna alles wat abnormaal is wordt op zulke momenten normaal. Woorden schieten tekort om al die gebeurtenissen te verklaren en uit te drukken.”⁷⁵

“Het is moeilijk iemand die het niet heeft meegemaakt een beschrijving te geven van dat afscheid [...] ik geloofde niet dat we elkaar ooit weer zouden zien [...] [Mijn zoon] werd door twee tjetniks meegenomen naar een huisje [...] ik was met stomheid geslagen ik telde alleen zijn passen tot die portiersloge [...] ik had een schok, zodat ik niet weet hoe ik in de bus terechtgekomen ben [...] ik heb nog alleen de hoop en de wens dat de waarheid over de vermisten uit Srebrenica aan het licht komt.”⁷⁶

⁷³ Langer, *Holocaust testimonies*, xiv.

⁷⁴ Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 110.

⁷⁵ Hren, *Srebrenica*, 56. “The tears kept streaming on their own down my cheeks, but this wasn’t normal crying. You are just there, it’s all happening around you and you have no time to voice your emotions, to scream or to sob. Almost everything that is abnormal becomes completely normal at that time. Mere words do not do justice to these events.”

⁷⁶ Hren, *Srebrenica*, 65-66. “It is difficult to explain that goodbye to someone who hasn’t been through it [...] I believed that we would never see each other again [...] [My son] was taken by two chetniks into a small house [...] I was dumbfounded and could only count his steps to the gatehouse [...] I was in shock, such that I have no idea how I got on that bus [...] now I only have the hope and the wish that the truth about the missing of Srebrenica will someday see the light of day.”

Emir Suljagić furthermore speaks of his inability to recall the chronology of events of the ten days he spent trapped within the confines of the army base in Potočari, while at the same time still being haunted by the memory of the people he saw disappear, and the sheer anguish he felt:

“Ne znam kako da okarakteriziram deset dana koje sam proveo u Potočarima, nakon pada enklave. Ne izdaju me riječi, izdaje me ono što osjećam, još uvijek košmarno sjećanje na to vrijeme. Događaji za mene nikad neće biti poredani onako kako su poredani drugima, uvijek ću imati problema da se sjetim tačnog toka stvari. Ali, pamtiću svako lice koje sam tamo vidio tih dana, svaku grimasu, strah u očima, imena ću pamtit, dok god sam živ.”⁷⁷

The testimonies of surviving the genocide and escape from Srebrenica are then, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, closely linked to ideas on traumatic memory – of a deeply seeded anguish, personal shame and a sense of betrayal (of the self and of and from others), ultimately combined within a narrative structure of ‘recounting the untellable’. It now remains to be seen in what ways the traumatic memory of what transpired in July of 1995 has been shaped and transformed through the process of the collectivisation of memory, and more specifically by the placing of said memory within the context and narrative of the terminology of genocide.

⁷⁷ Suljagić, *Razglednica*, 174. “I don’t know how to characterise the ten days I spent in Potočari, after the fall of the enclave. My words don’t betray me, my feeling does and the still chaotic remembrance of that time. Events will never line up for me as they do for others; I will always have trouble remembering the exact course of events. But, as long as I live, I will remember every face I saw, every grimace, every fear in their eyes, and their names.”

4. The collectivisation of a memory

4.1 Srebrenica and the rebuilding of Bosnia: the collective betrayal

Having in the previous two chapters discussed the issues of memory of life in the enclave or 'safe area', and subsequently having placed the remembrance of July 1995 within the context of traumatic memory from an individual perspective, it now remains to be seen how and in what ways the trauma of Srebrenica can be defined as a collective Bosnian or rather Bosniak memory. As was clarified in the introductory paragraphs, defining a memory as wholly 'Bosnian' remains a complex impossibility due to the ethnic and political divisions which result from and exist in the post-war situation. Setting aside the memory of Srebrenica within the context of 'Republika Srpska', or rather the Bosnian Serb consciousness, a valid discussion can nonetheless be had on the nature of policies of remembrance within the context of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and amongst the Bosniak ethnic group as such.

In the years following the disappearance of approximately 8000 predominately Bosnian Muslim men from the municipality of Srebrenica, the memory of life in the enclave as well as the mass murders – still unconfirmed but suspected at the time - continued to evolve and gain new meaning amongst the individual survivors as well as the Bosnian people as a collective. While individual testimonies on the Srebrenica genocide abound in the period after 1995, it is however much more difficult to find works in Bosnian or by Bosnian authors which place the Srebrenica genocide within the wider context of Bosnian history and memory prior to 2004/2005. The memory of Srebrenica in the years immediately following July 1995 was still far from crystallised in the minds of the Bosnian population at large, and the focus was rather placed on issues surrounding the end of warfare, the Dayton agreement and the subsequent division of Bosnia into the Federation and 'Republika Srpska'. Srebrenica was then still viewed in the context of the war as a whole, where almost no part of the country was spared grave destruction or a subsequent need for rebuilding. These were furthermore the years when the majority of Srebrenica survivors were displaced throughout refugee camps in Bosnia, and when the country as whole had not even begun to physically recuperate let alone mentally deal with the legacy of the preceding four years of warfare. While Bosnia remains divided, both politically and ethnically, there is much more debate at present about the remembrance of war through various commemorations - with Srebrenica as its most potent symbol – and these will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.

However, in the years directly after the fall of the enclave, the predominant focus of the collective Bosnian consciousness - arguing for the moment in favour of its theoretical existence - was on rebuilding and survival, rather than commemoration or cultivation of a memory. An example of this is provided in Swanee Hunt's (former US ambassador to Austria and author of *This was not our war*, a collection of testimonies from female victims of the war in Bosnia) account of the first make-shift commemoration for the victims of July 1995, held in Tuzla in 1996 at the initiative of a group of grieving mothers of Srebrenica:

"I said I would take on some small part: helping the women who were planning a one-year commemoration of their boys' and men's disappearance. (The mass graves had not been discovered, and the women refused to say 'death.')

[...] The commemoration would mark the hour the women had been given five minutes to board buses and leave behind their boys and men to be executed [...] it was important to keep this ceremony from devolving into a protest rally that would allow them to be dismissed as trouble makers or political puppets. [...] The program, planned by the survivors, began with a tourism promotional film recalling the quiet pre-war spa town of Srebrenica. That was followed by news footage of citizens terrified as shells burst around them, a gruesome account of a baby decapitated because it wouldn't stop crying, and unarmed boys and men marching off to execution."⁷⁸

The description of the proceedings of this first commemorative gathering for what was then still being described as 'the missing of Srebrenica' is very much an emotionally laden one, where the women who had not seen their sons or husbands for a year were trying to raise awareness on the side of the international community to intensify the search for their loved ones, and ultimately to speed up the process of excavation which is still taking place today. What remains striking is not Hunt's retelling of a politically charged situation, where the international community had to remain at least seemingly impartial, but rather the response from the organisers of the commemoration towards her request for inviting grieving Serbian mothers to join in the proceedings:

"Despite the flaw in the commander's reasoning, I asked the women if they could invite Serbian women also grieving, even though those missing sons might have been perpetrators of the massacre. As soon as the words were out of my mouth, I feared I was asking too much of women whose losses I would never be able to fathom. But Fatima, one of the organizers, looked me in the eye and said simply, 'We are all mothers.'"⁷⁹

The commemoration, or rather the events of July 1995, had clearly not yet begun to be assigned the kind of political importance or level of a collective Bosniak/Bosnian trauma which they presumably enjoy today (to be discussed further in the remained of this chapter as well as the following chapter

⁷⁸ Biserko, *Remembrance for the future*, 73-79.

⁷⁹ Biserko, *Remembrance for the future*, 75.

on memorialisation practices), but rather in the immediate aftermath of the massacres which took place, the predominant focus from the side of survivors' groups seems to have been on raising awareness for their predicament on an international platform, while the attention of the collective on the ground in Bosnia was not per se focused on the suffering of Srebrenica's refugees.

An example of this is provided in the work of Alok van Loon, a Dutch freelance journalist and co-founder of 'Stichting Toekomst Overlevenden Srebrenica',⁸⁰ who since 2000 has been involved with various women's organisations and survivors from the Podrinje region. In her travels through Bosnia, she describes visiting the refugee camp Grab Potok near Tuzla, which was still hosting displaced persons from all around Bosnia as late as 2002. Van Loon notes the following:

"Ongeveer driehonderd mensen leefden hier op elkaar geplakt een mensonwaardig leven. We waren verbijsterd. Overal was het smerig en er hing een misselijkmakende stank. Hele families woonden op een kamer van drie bij vier meter. Keukens en sanitaire voorzieningen werden gedeeld en waren zo onvoorstelbaar vies dat ik er van moest kokhalzen. Depressie, lethargie, fatalisme en regelrechte krankzinnigheid makten dat niemand zich meer bekommerde om de omgeving [...] Het werd ons duidelijk dat hier, weggestopt van de bewoonde wereld en buiten het gezichtsveld van de internationale hulpverlening, de meest kwetsbaren woonden."⁸¹

The horrid living conditions faced by a great number of survivors of Srebrenica up until and even after 2000, added a new layer of betrayal and helplessness to the memory of genocide within individual remembrance. The Bosnian government, if seen as an official representative of the collective Bosnian consciousness, was at the time not involved with the memory of Srebrenica in any particular, special or engaging way. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the focus of the larger Bosniak collective was still very much on rebuilding and survival, and therefore initial commemorations for the missing of Srebrenica were not visited by any prominent Bosnian dignitaries or politicians, nor was the status of Srebrenica refugees any different to that of hundreds of thousands of other displaced persons from around Bosnia.

⁸⁰ 'Foundation for the Future of Srebrenica Survivors'

⁸¹ Alok van Loon, *Vrouwen van Srebrenica* (Amsterdam: Contact, 2005) 71. "Approximately three-hundred people lived there, stacked on top of one another - an inhumane existence. It was filthy everywhere and there hung a nauseating stench. Whole families lived in a single room of three by four meters. Kitchens and sanitary facilities were shared, and were in such appalling conditions that I had to gag. Depression, lethargy, fatalism and right out craziness made it so that no one cared about their environment [...] It became clear to us that here, tucked away from the inhabited world and out of sight of the international community, the most vulnerable lived."

Hasan Nuhanović also speaks of a continuing sense of betrayal from the side of the Bosnian government as a collective, at least in terms of his struggle for personal justice:

“DANI: Kakav je bio stav BiH o tome [o ostavci Vlade Holandije 2002]? NUHANOVIĆ: Molim? Pazite, sve se ovo događa a da u BiH niko pojma o tome nema! Sve ovo smo gurali sami mi koji smo preživjeli Srebrenicu. U Holandiji je onaj izvještaj bio skandal, ovdje tek trećerazredna vijest. DANI: “Gospodine Nuhanoviću, razgovaramo, evo, u petak, a presuda je bila objavljena u utorak. Da li Vam se obratio bilo tko od zvaničnika BiH? NUHANOVIĆ: Ne. Pazite, ovo moje traje već osam godina i nikad se nijedan naš ambasador nije pojavio u sudnici da mi makar pruži moralnu podršku.”⁸²

In an ironic twist of faith, much of the support offered to Mr Nuhanović during his eight years long battle against the Dutch government, came from the side of his Dutch attorney and the Dutch NGO IKV Pax Christi.⁸³ His has become a very personal struggle against what he views as wrongdoings towards his family from the side of the Dutch army, and the Dutch government as their controlling body, but despite being one of the most prominent representative of Srebrenica’s survivors, it does not appear that Mr Nuhanović’s trauma has been translated into a kind of symbolic narrative of suffering and struggle against injustice for all survivors of the Bosnian war, at least on a local or governmental level. It remains to be discussed how and in what ways the narrative of Srebrenica as a symbol of a collective trauma changed in the period after 2004, when the atrocities of July 1995 were named genocide.

4.2 The introduction of genocide: Srebrenica as a collective trauma?

The memory of what happened needs to be framed within the official narrative of the Srebrenica ordeal, which in a 2004 verdict against a responsible Bosnian Serb general was finally and irrevocably declared as genocide:

“They targeted for extinction the forty thousand Bosnian Muslims living in Srebrenica, a group which was emblematic of the Bosnian Muslims in general. They stripped all the male Muslim prisoners of their personal belongings and identification, and deliberately and

⁸² Dragan Stanojlović, ‘Hasan Nuhanović: Tužit ću i Ratka Mladića!’, *Dani*, 15 July 2011, 19. “DANI: What was the Federation’s attitude on this [on the resignation of the Dutch government following the 2002 NIOD report]? NUHANOVIĆ: Excuse me? Listen, all this was happening without anyone in BiH having a clue! The only ones pushing for these were the survivors of Srebrenica, on their own. That report was a scandal in Holland, and nothing but third-rate news over here. DANI: “Mr Nuhanović, we are speaking on Friday, and the verdict was read out on Tuesday. Has any representative of the Bosnian government spoken with you in the meantime? NUHANOVIĆ: No. Look, my case has been going on for eight years, and never has one of our ambassadors shown up in the courtroom, to offer me so much as moral support.”

⁸³ See Dragan Stanojlović, ‘Hasan Nuhanović: Tužit ću i Ratka Mladića!’, *Dani*, 15 July 2011.

methodically killed them solely on the basis of their identity. The Bosnian Serb forces were aware, when they embarked on this genocidal venture that the harm they caused would continue to plague the Bosnian Muslims. The Appeals Chamber is fully convinced that justice condemns with the appropriate formulations a huge and permanent damage and calls Srebrenica by its name: genocide. The responsible ones will bear this stigma and it will serve as a warning to all those who may think of committing such a heinous crime.”⁸⁴

This statement by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has very much shaped and given a new direction to the conversation of the memory of Srebrenica. Partly because of this recognition within such a laden terminology, the discourse about Srebrenica has far transcended the conversation about the other mass murders and sufferings during the Bosnian War, and rather some would argue that Srebrenica has become emblematic for all the atrocities endured during the four year period as well as their aftermath. As such, the memory of what happened has become very symbolic in its nature. As Selma Leydesdorff mentions in her book on the history of the women of Srebrenica:

“In de regio zijn er twee soorten manieren om over Srebrenica te spreken. Er is in de eerste plaats de aanklacht tegen de wreedheid van de Bosnische Serven en de Serviërs. Er is alles op alles gezet om te komen tot een schuldbekentenis van de kant van de daders [...] In de regionale literatuur die deel is van een herinneringscultuur die langzaam in Bosnië aan het groeien is, bestaat daarnaast voor Srebrenica zeker een plaats als het gaat om te wijzen op het lijden van Bosniërs tijdens de oorlog. In dat lijden is Srebrenica een metafoor, het absolute lijden en het absolute door iedereen in de steek gelaten worden.”⁸⁵

However, the framing of the memory of what happened within a narrative of genocide has also incurred other long-lasting and largely unforeseen consequences for both remembrance and politics. As Hasan Nuhanović so poignantly expressed during a presentation held for the participants of Summer University Srebrenica on July 16th, 2011:

“When those things were happening here we didn’t have that word in our minds – genocide. We just thought they would kill us all. Now I feel that Bosnian politicians are using the word for their own means. However, if the word genocide is going to keep Bosnia together then

⁸⁴ From the ICTY verdict against the General of the Army of ‘Republika Srpska’, Radislav Krstić, 19 April 2004. Biserko, *Remembrance for the future*, 17-18.

⁸⁵ Leydesdorff, *De leegte*, 20. “In the region, there are two ways of speaking about Srebrenica. In the first place, there is the indictment against the cruelties committed by the (Bosnian) Serbs. Everything has been geared toward eliciting a confession of guilt from the side of the wrong doers. [...] In regional literature, which is part of the culture of memory slowly developing in Bosnia, a place is also given to Srebrenica as an indicator of the suffering Bosniaks endured during the war. Within that suffering Srebrenica is a metaphor, for absolute anguish as well as absolute abandonment by everyone.”

I'm for it. But we didn't have that word on our minds during the war. We were just trying to survive."⁸⁶

For those who went through the ordeal of July 1995 in Srebrenica, the word genocide probably did not enter into their vocabulary until much later in the process of remembrance. It is almost impossible to say in what ways the naming of Srebrenica as genocide has shaped individual memories of what has occurred, other than the fact that a legal justification was offered for the feelings of defenceless or lack of choice which were described in the two previous chapters. This correlates to narratives offered by Auschwitz survivors, as told by Langer:

"You don't think, you don't ask yourself where you are, the only thing you can think of is that you're hungry [...] I never heard the name Auschwitz, I didn't even know I was in Auschwitz, I didn't know what a concentration camp was."⁸⁷

While the reality of the situation, both in terms of location and conditions, was very different for survivors of Srebrenica as opposed to Auschwitz, the idea that the eventual narrative within which their experiences were placed – of a concentration camp, of genocide – somehow entered into the original experience is negated by both testimonies.

However, on a collective level of Bosnian consciousness and memory, the declaration of Srebrenica as genocide has – not without controversy - shaped the memory of the war as a whole. While Selma Leydesdorff claims that in using the term genocide Srebrenica has become a symbol of 'absolute anguish as well as absolute abandonment' of the Bosnian people, local scholars such as Irina Bećirević have argued the opposite. Bećirević does not deny the power granted to Srebrenica as a symbol for genocide within the wider Bosnian narrative, but she does call into question the insistence of the international community on seeing Srebrenica as a "genocidal outburst, set amidst a broader murderous cleansing of Muslims which was too erratic and regionally varied to be called genocide."⁸⁸ Rather, the author argues in favour of a proclamation which would recognise the entire period of 1992-1995 on the territory of Bosnia as genocide, in favour of extracting Srebrenica out of the context of a war which is otherwise widely referred to as 'ethnic cleansing'. While the legal aspects of the debate surpass the scope of this dissertation, it remains important to note that by arguing in favour of genocidal intent from the side of the Bosnian Serbs for the whole period of 1992-1995 and across Bosnia, the author voices the sentiment of many survivors from outside of

⁸⁶ See Appendix, 11 July 2011.

⁸⁷ Langer, *Holocaust testimonies*, 24.

⁸⁸ Irina Bećirević, 'The issue of genocidal intent and denial of genocide: a case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina', *East European Politics and Society* 24 (August 2010) 480. Quotation taken from Mann, Michael, *The Dark-Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 21.

Srebrenica, such as for instance Prijedor.⁸⁹ It can be said that an unusual kind of jealousy has arisen about Srebrenica within the wider Bosnian consciousness, where survivors of events that have been dubbed 'ethnic cleansing' argue that all excavation, identification and commemoration attention is focused solely on Srebrenica.⁹⁰ An unjust claim according to officials at ICMP, this is nonetheless an issue that is being investigated, through means such as proposals for a joint commemoration for all missing across Bosnia.⁹¹

Aside from the effect of the proclamation of genocide on individual and collective consciousness in terms of justification of suffering or rather a denial thereof on a wider scale, the issue of genocide versus ethnic cleansing, of Srebrenica subtracted from the rest of the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, once again ties in to the wider problematic of a lack of choice and ultimate "defencelessness of the victim."⁹² As Bećirević narrates, and as has been discussed in the chapter on theory, the idea that a victim of genocide must be defenceless in order to be a true victim, has perpetuated throughout Holocaust narratives, despite their relative inaccuracy even in terms of this fundamental case study. The insistence on defencelessness as well as the denial of genocide from the side of 'Republika Srpska'⁹³ and certain prominent international scholars⁹⁴, has arguably perpetuated a focus on victimisation in Bosnian memory, as well as a denial of own 'unheroic' memories. Effects on Bosnian memory as a whole are yet to be seen, but worrying trends – such as inflating the numbers of deceased from both sides⁹⁵ - point to a culture of memory where the ultimate focus is placed on who was the greatest and most defenceless victim of the war. Srebrenica being declared genocide then both confirms and negates the suffering of the war in Bosnian consciousness.

⁸⁹ Approximately 3.300 Muslims were murdered in Prijedor between 1992 and 1995. International Commission on Missing Persons, 'Burial of Prijedor Victims Identified with the Assistance of ICMP' (19 July 2006), <http://www.ic-mp.org/press-releases/burial-of-prijedor-victims-identified-with-the-assistance-of-icmp/> Accessed 15 August 2011.

⁹⁰ See Appendix for notes on 05 July 2011 ICMP Sarajevo visit.

⁹¹ International Commission on Missing Persons, 'Poruka generalne direktorice ICMP-a Kathryn Bomberger povodom Međunarodnog dana nestalih' (30 August 2011), <http://www.ic-mp.org/BA/press-releases/icmp-dg-letter-intl-day-of-disappeared/> Accessed 12 September 2011.

⁹² Bećirević, 'The issue of genocidal intent and denial of genocide', 494.

⁹³ Office of the High Representative, 'RS Government Special Session A Distasteful Attempt to Question Genocide' (20 April 2010) http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/presso/pressr/default.asp?content_id=44835 Accessed 29 August 2011.

⁹⁴ See following publication: Herman, Edward. 'The approved narrative of the Srebrenica Massacre' *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law - Revue internationale de Sémiotique juridique* 19:4 (2006) 409-434.

⁹⁵ See Appendix for notes on 05 July 2011 ICMP Sarajevo visit.

The question of whether or not the Srebrenica genocide has already become a symbol of a collective cultural trauma in the Bosniak consciousness is an inherently complex one, especially at such an early stage in the process. As mentioned in the introductory chapter on 'Theoretical background', Alexander defines cultural, collective trauma as follows:

“Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their identity in fundamental and irreversible ways.”⁹⁶

While the war as a whole may be viewed from this context in Bosnia today, the issue whether Srebrenica has in fact become emblematic of this suffering as a kind of symbol of a collective trauma in local consciousness remains a difficult issue that is still very much open to debate. This is further reflected in the way in which the Srebrenica genocide has been memorialised, which is to be explored in the following chapter.

⁹⁶ Alexander, *Cultural trauma*, 1.

5. Memorialising a memory

5.1 ICMP: defining the scope

The memorialisation of the genocide that occurred in Srebrenica and its surroundings, as a concept, a campaign and since 2004 an annual reality on July 11th, came out of a practical necessity for burial of thousands of identified bodies, as well as a profound yet somewhat political desire of survivors for a joint commemoration on the grounds where they last said goodbye to their loved ones. The process of memorialisation and commemoration effectively began with the founding of the International Commission on Missing Persons, which was “established at the initiative of U.S. President Clinton in 1996 at the G-7 Summit in Lyon, France. Its primary role is to ensure the cooperation of governments in locating and identifying those who have disappeared during armed conflict or as a result of human rights violations.”⁹⁷ The ICMP began the process of identification of missing persons, from all around Bosnia as well as parts of Croatia, in 1999. Since 2001, they have become the leader in the field of forensic analysis, by relying almost exclusively on DNA analysis rather than object recognition for the purposes of identification. The importance of ICMP, for the purposes of this dissertation, is then in the way in which more than 6800 identifications over the last ten years have managed to bring some sort of closure to the survivors of the Srebrenica genocide, as well as the way in which DNA analysis, in all its finality, has proven to be an invaluable tool in attesting to the genocide that occurred, and in confirming the numbers of missing peoples.⁹⁸ Elizabeth Neuffer further describes the way locating mass graves and identifying the bodies achieved justice on a personal as well as a judicial level:

“You could smell the mass grave at Cerska long before you could see it [...] Investigators with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) had discovered the grave [...] The corpses were dressed in civilian clothes. They had gunshot wounds to the back of their heads. Their decaying hands were bound behind their back. These men and boys, forensic experts at the scene said, had been gunned down in cold blood. The Cerska grave is one of several exhumed in Bosnia that help explain the fate of approximately seven thousand Bosnian Muslim men and boys from Srebrenica, who disappeared after Bosnian Serb forces overran the UN safe area in July 1995. Bosnian Serb leaders asserted that Srebrenica’s men, wielding arms, were killed in combat. The grave proved otherwise. Individual and mass graves provide vital evidence to war crimes prosecutions, especially those involving extrajudicial executions and targeting of civilians [...] Evidence from the exhumations will be a key part of upcoming war crimes cases. For example, evidence from graves like Cerska, combined with witness testimony, would be part of the case against former Bosnian Serb

⁹⁷ International Commission on Missing Persons, ‘About ICMP’, <http://www.ic-mp.org/about-icmp> Accessed 12 September 2011.

⁹⁸ See Appendix for notes on 05 July 2011 ICMP meeting in Sarajevo and 07 July 2011 meeting in Tuzla.

leader Radovan Karadzic and army commander Gen. Ratko Mladic. Both men have been charged with war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity.”⁹⁹

Furthermore, the identification of the missing also raised another powerful issue, that of burial and commemoration, and it is this topic and its effect on memory that will be explored further in the subsequent chapter.

5.2 Potočari Memorial Centre

The idea for establishing a memorial centre and cemetery at Potočari, where most survivors saw their loved ones for the last time, was born out of a desire to commemorate the trauma experienced at a site of “ultimate horror [...] connected to their sense of home, [which] underscored the various power relationships.”¹⁰⁰ Different to the experience of Auschwitz described in the previous chapter, where aside from not knowing or placing one’s own experience within the context of the concentration camp survivors also attested to not knowing exactly where they were, for most survivors of Srebrenica the place of ‘ultimate horror’ was at the same time their former home. Therefore, in a sense the choice for Potočari, as a site of both burial and commemoration, was a very logical one and this desire was expressed through numerous surveys conducted amongst survivors in the summer of 2000:

“Organized by the Women of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves and supported by Freedom House and the International Commission on Missing Persons, the poll asked families where they wanted burial to occur. Members of the family advocacy associations conducted the poll in face-to-face interviews. Approximately 10,000 people who currently live in the Sarajevo Canton were questioned.”¹⁰¹

Between the years of 2001 and 2003 then, when the Memorial Centre was officially opened by Bill Clinton,¹⁰² a Foundation sponsored predominately by the governments of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom gathered a team of local experts to decide on the look and content of the project. As Suzanne Bardgett, one of the foreign experts called in for consultation recalls; “The Imperial War

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Neuffer, ‘Mass Graves’, <http://www.crimesofwar.org/a-z-guide/mass-graves/> Accessed 01 October 2011.

¹⁰⁰ Craig Evan Pollack, ‘Burial at Srebrenica: Linking Place and Trauma’, *Social Science and Medicine* 56 (2003) 793.

¹⁰¹ Craig Pollack, ‘Burial at Srebrenica’, 795.

¹⁰² International Commission on Missing Persons, ‘Official Opening of Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery’ (20 September 2004), <http://www.ic-mp.org/press-releases/official-opening-of-srebrenica-potocari-memorial-and-cemetery/> Accessed 01 October 2011.

Museum provided advice on content and visitor service aspects, with additional historical input from King's College London. Funding came from the British and Dutch governments.”¹⁰³

At the same time, the choice for Potočari was by no means a straightforward one. Under the stipulations and the borders drawn by the Dayton Agreement, the territory of Potočari and the entire Srebrenica municipality, fell deep within the confines of ‘Republika Srpska’.¹⁰⁴ As Pollack describes, the ‘social and political context’ amongst which the choice for a burial and commemoration site was considered, was one in which many survivors, though adamant about the importance of locating the site in Potočari, very much feared the return to the place from which they were so forcibly expelled, and which was now in the hands of those who were responsible for their expulsion. At this time, in 2000, the return of Bosniak refugees to Srebrenica had barely even begun. According to official estimates, by 2003, when the Memorial Centre was opened by President Bill Clinton, only 649 Bosniak refugees had returned to Srebrenica.¹⁰⁵ In his speech to the students of Summer University Srebrenica, Thomas Miller, a former US ambassador to Bosnia, and one of the key actors responsible for the ultimate location of the site in Potočari, expressed the following views:

“Potočari was chosen because it was important to the families, and therefore should be important to us. The Women of Srebrenica wanted to bury their loved ones here and not somewhere in the Federation like Kladanj. This does not mean that there weren’t real fears that the cemetery would be desecrated and that the women would be attacked [...] this is a Bosnian thing. It’s about the victims. They have to decide where to put the memorials, and our job is to offer support there.”¹⁰⁶

Therefore practical concerns that surrounded the choice of Potočari as a location for the burial site were set aside in favour of what was seen as the survivors’ right to choose the site of commemoration of their loved ones. This return of choice, of which they were stripped during the years of occupation, and to an extent subsequent refugee years, was a strong factor in the decision making process. As Pollack explains, “running through these issues was the sense of power in choosing one’s own site as compared to having one dictated by someone else.”¹⁰⁷ On a sociological

¹⁰³ Suzanne Bardgett, ‘Remembering Srebrenica’, *History Today* 57:11 (2007) 52.

¹⁰⁴ For a detailed map of the region, please see: Peace March (2011), <http://www.marismira.org/en/marismira.php> Accessed 01 November 2011.

¹⁰⁵ UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, ‘Review of returns to Srebrenica July 2005’ (2005), <http://www.unhcr.org/42ce6bf84.html> Accessed 05 October 2011. That is compared to a pre-war (1991) Bosniak population of 27,572.

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix, 16 July 2011.

¹⁰⁷ Pollack, ‘Burial at Srebrenica’, 756.

level then, Potočari was the obvious choice because of the sense of empowerment it offered to the survivors; what Thomas Miller described as “spite”.¹⁰⁸

At the same time, the choice for Potočari can be seen as a political one. As one of the refugees interviewed by Pollack explained, the desire for establishing the Memorial Centre in Potočari, rather than in a safer location somewhere else in the Federation, came partially out of a “desire to go back where we come from—to go back to our houses, to go back to our places of work, to live where we’re supposed to live.”¹⁰⁹ Therefore, aside from purely emotional or sociological considerations, the choice for the creation of a burial site and Memorial Centre in the heart of ‘Republika Srpska’, and in such a contested location, was both on a collective and individual level linked to a desire for the return of refugees to their homes. As a 2005 UNHCR report on the status of Bosniak returnees to Srebrenica claims: “The establishment of the Potocari Memorial provided a critical incentive to the return and reconciliation process in Srebrenica.”¹¹⁰ This is supported by the facts, according to which in 2003 a total of 1,455 Bosniak refugees returned to the Srebrenica municipality, which is more than double the amount in the previous four years combined. Therefore emotion, sociology and politics alike can be named as relevant considerations in determining Potočari as the site of both burial and commemoration, in a process which brought together the wishes of Srebrenica’s survivors together with the political backing of officials such as former US ambassador Thomas Miller, and the financial support from the side of the Dutch and British governments.¹¹¹

What has then been established at this site over the course of the last ten years is a place of remembrance as well as closure and reconciliation. The Memorial Centre in Potočari, and the Srebrenica Memorial Room as the location of the permanent exhibition, needed to strike a delicate balance between allowing for grief while failing to explicitly blame or aggravate. It is up to the individual visitor to decide on the extent to which this has in fact been achieved. What can be described, however, is the look and feel of the Memorial Room, the Centre and cemetery as such, before moving on to discuss the nature of the annual July 11th commemoration. As Susan Bardgett narrates, “after consulting with associations representing the bereaved families, and with religious leaders and academics, it was agreed that the Memorial Room should have two principal narrative elements: a thirty-minute film to inform visitors about what happened in July 1995; and a series of

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix, 16 July 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Pollack, ‘Burial at Srebrenica’, 796.

¹¹⁰ UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, ‘Review of returns to Srebrenica July 2005’ (2005), <http://www.unhcr.org/42ce6bf84.html> Accessed 05 October 2011.

¹¹¹ Please see Appendix, especially the notes on the conversation with Thomas Miller.

personal stories based on the objects excavated by the ICMP.”¹¹² The thirty-minute film which is shown to visitors in the glass-enclosed space within the Remembrance Room is by and large a shortened adaptation of Leslie Woodhead’s 1999 documentary entitled ‘A Cry from the Grave’.¹¹³ The non-accusatory tone of this documentary has been questioned by Dutch soldiers in particular, who argue that the scenes in which they are shown drinking beer at the Zagreb army base just days after the fall of Srebrenica are staged representations which depict predominately soldiers who were stationed at the Zagreb base throughout the mission (rather than soldiers who had just returned from Srebrenica).¹¹⁴ At the same time, this is now the largely unquestioned course of events and remembrance, which through its often very emotional tone asks of the visitor to relinquish a sense of impartiality.

Outside of the hall in which the movie is screened, the former battery factory which once housed the UN soldiers (both Dutch and Canadian) stationed in Srebrenica, has remained a desolate and grey place, offering scope for reflection and, as its architect expressed, “evoking a sense of loss.”¹¹⁵ Around the room, numerous framed narratives and photographs have been placed, offering a chronological recounting of the Srebrenica genocide, starting as far back as the early-Roman history of the region.¹¹⁶ In a separate area, stories of twenty inhabitants of the enclave who lost their lives in the days following July 11th, 1995 were chosen along with some of their artefacts identified by the ICMP, in order to offer a representation of the crime as a whole: “each providing evidence of genocidal murder but also offering a link back to life in the Srebrenica enclave.”¹¹⁷ The stories of the victims, as told by members of their families who survived the ordeal, were recorded by Emir Suljagić, himself a survivor and author of a book testifying to the nature of life in the enclave, who certainly brought his own perspective (as discussed in chapters two and three) on the course of the events into the narratives presented.

What came to the foreground during the time spent at the Potočari Memorial Centre was the insistence from the side of the Bosniak community for this story to remain their own. Aside from the fact that the introductory movie which is shown paints a fairly negative picture of the involvement of

¹¹² Bardgett, ‘Remembering Srebrenica’, 53.

¹¹³ The movie can be viewed on YouTube in eleven separate fragments. See link for the opening sequence and first fragment <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-DUsQyklUM>.

¹¹⁴ See Appendix on meeting with Dutch soldiers, 06 July 2011.

¹¹⁵ Bardgett, ‘Remembering Srebrenica’, 53.

¹¹⁶ See Appendix for photographs of the Memorial Centre.

¹¹⁷ Bardgett, ‘Remembering Srebrenica’, 53. See Appendix for photographs of the displays showcasing victims’ artefacts and stories in Potočari Memorial Centre.

'Dutchbat' soldiers in Srebrenica, the story of the Dutch soldiers who lived in the compound where the Memorial Centre is now housed has not been recorded in any other way. Their daily life in the battery factory is not discussed and has not been chronicled, and the only element of their stay in Srebrenica which is part of the tour of the Memorial Centre is the showing of the offensive and now rather infamous graffiti painted by a yet unnamed 'Dutchbatter'.¹¹⁸ The portrayal of the Srebrenica genocide then, in the place at which it has been tangibly memorialised, is one which focuses almost entirely on the nature of the victim - the Bosniak inhabitants of the enclave. By placing the 'Dutchbat' soldiers and their experiences outside of the scope of this narrative, they have once again been identified as actors of power and choice, and even wrongdoing, within the Bosniak memory. It now remains to be seen to what extent this is reflected in the annual commemorative processions, which have been conducted on the site of the Memorial Centre since 2003, and how said commemorative practices have contributed to shaping both the individual and collective memory of the Srebrenica genocide, effectively transforming Potočari into what Pierre Nora would have dubbed a *lieux de memoire* or 'site of memory'.

5.3 Nature of the commemoration

A *lieux de memoire* is described by Nora as "simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are *lieux* in three senses of the word - material, symbolic and functional. [...] Moreover, the three aspects always coexist."¹¹⁹ In order to determine in what sense this has been recreated and established, both consciously and unconsciously in Potočari - as the now material, symbolic and functional site of remembrance of the Srebrenica genocide - the processes of commemoration must be examined. When he officially opened the Memorial Centre in 2003, former President Bill Clinton concentrated his speech around the idea that the newly established memorial was to bring "a lasting and just peace" to the region, through a focus on remembrance above all; Srebrenica marking a kind of "beginning of the end of genocide in Europe".¹²⁰ The opening of the memorial site included the burial of 107 men, alongside 882 who were buried there earlier in the year. These two vital points of the annual commemoration: speeches by prominent politicians followed by a religious ceremony including the burial of hundreds of victims, have become the material, symbolic and functional aspects of the July 11th processions.

¹¹⁸ See Appendix for a photograph of the graffiti.

¹¹⁹ Pierre Nora, 'Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire', *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989) 18-19.

¹²⁰ BBC, 'Clinton unveils Bosnia memorial' (20 September 2003)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3124642.stm> Accessed 02 October 2011.

In 2006, an additional element was added to the commemoration proceedings, namely the 'Peace March'.¹²¹ Starting in Nežuk, in the vicinity of Tuzla,¹²² the 'Peace March' begins each year on the 8th of July, and tracks the route taken by most men and boys who escaped Srebrenica before the massacre back to the army base in Potočari. As participants follow the reverse track of the so-called 'Death March' it took most survivors months to complete, the symbolic nature of the 'Peace March' becomes evident. The arrival at the cemetery in Potočari occurs in the late afternoon hours of July 10th, when all participants of the March are invited to join in a prayer for the deceased, while the coffins of those to be buried have been laid out by the freshly dug holes.

The following day the ceremony begins at the Potočari Memorial Centre around 11 AM. Most visitors would have spent the night camping in the vicinity of the Memorial Centre, after a three-day, 110 kilometre hike through the hills of Bosnia. As mentioned, the commemoration service begins with speeches by various politicians, and since 2007 has been opened by a reading of a poem by Bosnian author Abdulah Sidran. The most poignant lyrics and message of the poem are summarised in the following lines:

“Možda i jeste, kako vi velite, Prestao rat! Ali je nama, u našoj Srebrenici,
Rat prestao malčice, dok se i sami, preko dana,
Varkamo da je tako, i da jeste prestao!
Ali su unas, i ljeti i zimi – i već je sedamnaest godina
Tako! – prekratki dani, a duge i preduge noći.

On nam, danas, Mir u Srebrenici čuva!
Kako da spava srebrenička majka?
Čim sklopi oči, eto rata na vrata, eto one sekunde
U kojoj je vidjela kako se, pod četničkim nožem,
Rastavila, od vlastitog tijela, glava njenog sina!

Kako da živimo sadašnjost?
Kako da u prošlost ne gledamo?”¹²³

¹²¹ For more information, please consult the Peace March website on. www.marismira.org/en

¹²² For a detailed map of the region, please see: Peace March (2011), http://www.marismira.org/_en/marismira.php Accessed 01 November 2011.

¹²³ Abdulah Sidran, 'Srebrenica' (13 July 2007), <http://bosnamuslimmedia.com/2007/06/13/srebrenica-abdulah-sidran/> Accessed 03 October 2011.

“Maybe the war, as you say, has stopped! But to us, in our Srebrenica, the war has only stopped for a second, and we fool ourselves during the day thinking that it has stopped! But, come summer or winter, for seventeen years now the days are too short and the nights too long. And he, today, keeps the peace in our Srebrenica! How can a mother of Srebrenica sleep? As soon as she closes her eyes, the war is there, that second is there

The insistence of a focus on the past, on remembrance above all, is then a powerful image which opens each commemoration service at the Memorial Centre, adding and shaping its symbolic value as a *lieux de memoire*. This opening then stands in contrast to speeches offered by politicians, where the most often heard message is about the future of Bosnia and Srebrenica, which different politicians see as being achieved either through reconciliation or indeed by hinting at a reversal of the current post-Dayton Agreement situation. At the 2011 commemoration service, for example, Bosnian politicians such as the Minister of Security Mr Ahmetović, as well as the Bosniak Member of the Presidency Bakir Izetbegović, focused predominately on the need for Serbia and Bosnian Serbs to accept full and collective responsibility for the events of July 1995, and reflected furthermore on what they described as the ‘shameful’ role of ‘Dutchbat’ soldiers and the Dutch government in the events that took place. On the other hand, the messages of diplomats such as the US ambassador and the representative from the Office of the High Commissioner were centred around the idea of a lasting peace for the region, stemming from a basis of reconciliation and cooperation within the current ethnic and political construction.

As Selma Leydesdorff summarises:

“Steevast komen tienduizenden naar deze door de media overheerste plechtigheid. Het ongelooflijk publieke, politieke en formele karakter kan niet verhullen dat ieder jaar weer tientallen kisten ter aarde worden besteld. Daarbij zijn de rouw en de bitterheid echt, ook de bitterheid jegens het VIP-platform waar mensen staan die bij kunnen dragen aan het levend houden van de herinnering. Naar die mensen gaat meer aandacht uit dan naar de duizenden op de hellingen, die gewoon treuren en proberen door bidden overeind te blijven. Wie daartussen gaat staan, voelt dat verdriet lichamelijk [...] het scenario verandert door de sprekers, maar tussen de coulisse blijft alles hetzelfde.”¹²⁴

This passage points not only to the symbolic, practical and material nature of the memorialisation at hand, but at the same time, it again alludes to a split in Bosnian memory when it comes to remembrance and commemoration of the war and of Srebrenica. The political aspect of the commemoration, largely predetermined by its location and the outcome of the war, has become a potent characteristic of the yearly memorialisation proceedings, and continues to exist alongside both religious and otherwise symbolic commemorative practices, despite the initial lack of involvement of the Bosnian government in the process of establishing a Memorial Centre for Srebrenica.

when she saw, under the chetnik knife, her son’s head separated from his body! How can we live in the present? How can we not look to the past?”

¹²⁴ Leydesdorff, *De leegte*, 355-356.

The split in Bosnian memory when it comes to collective or rather individual commemoration and memorialisation is expressed in calls for one, joint memorialisation day that have been voiced by international organisations and to a lesser extent local governments. Currently, the 1992-1995 war is memorialised on 120 different occasions throughout the year, the Srebrenica commemoration being by far the largest and most internationally relevant. The ICMP and other organisations have called for the all memorialisation days and practices within Bosnia (and even the region as a whole) to be joined on August 30th, the 'International Day of the Disappeared', which would then commemorate the total 40.000 missing from all around former Yugoslavia, regardless of their religion or ethnicity.¹²⁵ 2011 was the first year in which such a joint commemoration was held in the town of Brčko, which has the status of a special district within 'Republika Srpska'. The focus of the proceedings on truth and reconciliation was further emphasised in a speech given by Kathryn Bomberger, Director-General of ICMP, in Brčko:

“Ove godine su porodice iz regije, uključujući Bosnu i Hercegovinu, Hrvatsku, Srbiju i Kosovo, odlučile zajedno obilježiti ovaj važni dan kroz komemoraciju održanu u Brčkom u BiH. Komemoraciju su organizovala udruženja porodica nestalih osoba, koje zastupa Savjetodavni odbor Instituta za nestale osobe Bosne i Hercegovine, kako bi odali počast svim nestalim osobama, bez obzira na njihovo etničko, religijsko ili nacionalno porijeklo. Cilj je bio naglasiti da se proces pronalazaženja, ekshumacije i identifikacije preostalih 14.000 osoba u Regiji (od čega se oko 10.000 nestalih odnosi na BiH) mora nastaviti. Pored toga želimo istaći trud porodica nestalih iz Regije da zajednički odaju počast svim osobama nestalim usljed oružanih sukoba bez obzira na njihovo etničko, religijsko ili nacionalno porijeklo.”¹²⁶

¹²⁵ International Commission on Missing Persons, 'Missing Persons Institute Launched on International Day of the Disappeared' (30 August 2005), <http://www.ic-mp.org/press-releases/missing-persons-institute-launched-on-international-day-of-the-disappeared/> Accessed 06 October 2011.

¹²⁶ International Commission on Missing Persons, 'Poruka generalne direktorice ICMP-a Kathryn Bomberger povodom Međunarodnog dana nestalih' (30 August 2011), <http://www.ic-mp.org/BA/press-releases/icmp-dg-letter-intl-day-of-disappeared/> Accessed 12 September 2011.

“This year, families from the region, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo, have decided to mark this day together through a commemoration held in Brčko in BiH. The commemoration was organized by groups of families of the missing, which are collectively represented by the Missing Persons Institute from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to pay respects to all the missing persons, regardless of their ethnic, religious or national origins. The goal was to emphasize that the process of locating, exhuming and identifying the remaining 14.000 missing persons from the region (10.000 from BiH) must continue. We would also like to mention the efforts of the families of the missing from the region to collectively honour all the persons who went missing as a result of armed conflicts, regardless of their ethnic, religious or national heritage.”

By campaigning for a joint day of commemoration for all ethnic groups on the territory of former Yugoslavia, organisations such as ICMP and Re-Com¹²⁷ are representative of a trend which is also seen during the annual Srebrenica commemoration in Potočari, that of the politicisation of memory. As Hodgkin and Radstone note:

“The establishment of memorial sites, places where the past is not only preserved as fetish but also transmitted as signification, is inevitably a focus for struggle over meaning: what monument is permitted, what meanings may it convey? And since these sites are also often publicly established, or at least sanctioned, they are inescapably implicated in the construction of narratives – or perhaps maps – of national identity.”¹²⁸

It has become clear, through the discussion in the preceding chapters, that the struggle for meaning over Srebrenica is at the moment far from over. While current commemoration practices emphasise both the individual trauma and the general collective disagreement over the broader message of the event – as one of reconciliation or rather retaliation – it would appear that this struggle furthermore reflects (as the theory would suggest) a larger battle for Bosnian national identity; as one incorporating various ethnicities (as supporters of a joint commemoration would perhaps argue), or rather a strictly Bosniak identity that is centred around remembrance practices with a clear focus on the previously discussed narrative of betrayal. As such, some individual survivors and members of survivor organisation are rather in favour of building a commemorative ‘Pillar of Shame’ in the hills outside of Srebrenica, in order to memorialise what they see as the detrimental and indeed shameful role played by the UN in Srebrenica specifically. Here the split in memory is again evident, as it wavers between both individual and collective calls for reconciliation, or indeed retribution.

¹²⁷ For more information on Re-Com, a regional organisation seeking to collect witness and victim testimonies from around former Yugoslavia in an attempt to destigmatize the concept of victimisation in the area, please see www.zarekom.org.

¹²⁸ Hodgkin and Radstone, *Contested pasts*, 11.

A memory abstracted

To conclude, the Bosnian memory of Srebrenica, as it has been identified within the parameters of this dissertation, has evolved over the course of the last sixteen years from purely traumatic descriptions of life within an enclave and the witnessing of mass murders which have now been dubbed genocide, into a far more complex, collective and cultural trauma, which is currently undergoing a process of memorialisation through a multitude of commemorative practices, both religious and secular. In the second chapter, traumatic recollections of life within an enclosed 'safe area' or enclave were discussed. Emir Suljagić's testimony provided for the bulk of the analysis, and his astute commentary on the need for a different conceptual structure (other than 'ghetto' or 'concentration camp') when addressing the complexities of the memories of Srebrenica's survivors for the period 1992-1995 provided for the contextual path which the remainder of this study would follow. Hunger, powerlessness and lack of choice were all brought forward as key concepts in identifying the trauma of that period, and thus deep, anguished and unheroic memories were taken aboard as the framework for the testimonies at hand, while acknowledging the need for a terminology broader than the one used to structure and contextualise Holocaust testimonies.

In the third chapter, on the subject of individual traumatic experience and the narration of genocide in testimony, concepts of deep, anguished memory in particular were discussed. Several new notions were introduced and explored, including the idea that a traumatic experience of this kind of magnitude often results in a deep contrast with one's own as well as others' 'frameworks of normalcy', from which the narrative of shame and therefore betrayal is likely to arise. The incompatibility of what the survivor sees as his or her existence before and after the profoundly traumatic event (what Langer would call a falling apart of 'a semblance of continuity') linked with the impossibility of the 'anxiety of futility', has in this case resulted in the survivors' placing of their own experiences of the trauma within a greater and more understandable narrative of shame and ultimately betrayal. The nature of the guilty party, of the 'betrayal', as was discussed in chapter three, depends entirely on who is seen as being in control of the situation at hand, therefore the nature of the party in power. As was noted, for many survivors of Srebrenica the actors in control were the Dutch battalion soldiers, who were seen as in possession not only of the power of choice over their own destinies, but indeed over the destinies of all those trapped in Potočari.

Furthermore, the discussion in this chapter alludes to the fact that due to the inability of witnesses and survivors of trauma to link their pre and post traumatic worlds together, there always exists a need for the establishment of a framework differing from the 'framework of normalcy' within which

their pre traumatic lives took place, thus allowing the survivors of traumas the magnitude of genocide to explain for the gaps in memory as well as the feelings of shame and remorse that a framework of normalcy superimposes upon them. While for most survivors the actual trauma remains unspeakable, and the chronology of those crucial events almost always untraceable, the lens through which they will eventually view their experience is always shaped by the lack of a valid continuity of life, as well the inability to narrate it.

In the fourth chapter, on the question of how individual traumatic memory becomes collectivised, the realities of rebuilding a war-torn country were contrasted with the eventual emergence of Srebrenica as the defining massacre of the Bosnian War. It was noted that the initial instances of commemoration were organised by survivors of Srebrenica alone, occasionally with the help of international actors, and focused predominately on raising awareness abroad for the predicament of what were then still being described as 'Srebrenica's missing'. It cannot be said that in the period before 2001 or perhaps even 2005, the Bosnian government afforded any special or constructive attention to the memorialisation of Srebrenica, or indeed to the living conditions and the future of its refugees. The level of symbolic meaning that Srebrenica has presumably been awarded since was certainly not reached at this stage.

Within this context, the proclamation of Srebrenica as a genocide in 2004 was furthermore discussed, by arguing against Selma Leydesdorff's idea that Srebrenica has become symbolic for all the sufferings of the wartime period in local consciousness, and rather in favour of a more nuanced realisation that by deciding Srebrenica was a sole instance of genocide within a four year timeframe, the rest widely being referred to as 'ethnic cleansing', a discrepancy and a contradiction was created in local memory. Outside of Bosnia, it can in fact be argued that Srebrenica has become eponymous with the futilely destructive nature of the Bosnian war as a whole. However, as scholars such as Irina Bećirević have argued, and as became apparent through conversations with both survivors and experts on commemorative practices of the war in Bosnia, the position of Srebrenica within Bosnian memory is more complex than the idea that it is an overriding symbol of suffering for all Bosnians. While annual commemorations are attended by great numbers of Bosnians from home and abroad, it can at the same time be argued that the special status which has been granted to Srebrenica has come from the side of a public and foreign rather than a private and Bosnian narrative.

As was discussed in chapter five, on the memorialisation practices surrounding the Srebrenica genocide, the process of establishing a site of commemoration for Srebrenica and the shape the commemorative proceedings would eventually assume, was determined largely through a

cooperation between Srebrenica's most vocal survivors (such as Emir Suljagić, the author of the permanent display in the Memorial Centre, Hasan Nuhanović, Chairman of the Board at Potočari Memorial Centre and indeed 'Mothers of Srebrenica', who attend in great numbers each year and continue to fight for an international admittance of guilt from the side of the UN and the Dutch), prominent international actors such as former US ambassador Thomas Miller (who was the first foreign official to visit Srebrenica after its fall in 2001, and without whose political support very little would have been possible), completed by financial backing from the side of Dutch and British governments. Thus while the Bosnian government did not create the platform through which the collectivisation of the memory of Srebrenica did and will eventually take place, by now it is certainly using the platform in the political battle for Bosnia's identity. Furthermore, what came to the forefront during a detailed recounting of the annual July 11th commemorative proceedings, was the idea that the Bosnian memory of Srebrenica remains split along individual and collective lines, the process of collectivisation not yet having been completed as the narrative remains divided between calls for retribution or rather reconciliation.

It can be said that the aforementioned process has, rather than affirming one definitive narrative and memory of Srebrenica for all Bosnians or even Bosniaks, resulted in the development of several differing abstractions of the memory at hand. Much like scholars have argued that traumatic recollections of the Holocaust were eventually abstracted into representations of an ultimate evil within the scope of a narrative authoritatively claiming 'never again', so it can be said that the memory being created in this case is one of ultimate betrayal. It ranges from an individual's betrayal of one self, or at least an idea of the self as it existed before the defining trauma, to an individual's betrayal by another, one who is seen as in a position of power, all the way to a sense of collective betrayal by the self and the outsider, as a Bosnian, a Bosniak and ultimately a Muslim. In the struggle for Bosnian and Bosnia's identity, the memory and memorialisation practices surrounding the Srebrenica genocide remain dominant. As Tone Bringa argues:

"For a large majority of Muslims in Bosnia, the identification as Muslims/Bosniaks vis-à-vis Croats or Serbs is, I contend, primary to their identification with a worldwide umma [worldwide community of Muslims]. However, there is in Bosnia what we would call a religious elite or Bosnian-Islamic establishment for whom identification with the Islamic umma is a more important identification. In war and post war Bosnia those Bosniaks have become not only more visible but also politically influential."¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Tone Bringa, 'Islam and the quest for identity in post-communist Bosnia-Herzegovina' in Schatzmiller, Maya (ed.), *Islam and Bosnia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002) 24-35, 31.

Srebrenica's various commemorative layers, and namely the interplay between the political and the religious, reflect the power balance as it exists in Bosnia today, and furthermore point to attempts at the creation of an identity that is far more centred on religion. Bringa does note this can be argued for all countries and ethnicities of the former Yugoslavia, but for the purposes of this dissertation, it is Bosnia's identification with Islam that remains relevant. While far more investigation on the topic is necessary in order to reach any profound conclusions, the presence of Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister at the July 11th, 2011 commemoration, the attendance of the Peace March by several Islamic groups from the UK and Turkey, and furthermore the opening of a new mosque in Srebrenica on July 12th, 2011, were events worth noting as they indeed seem to point to a broader trend in the shaping of the memory of Srebrenica in local consciousness, as well as outside of the western world. Despite the fact that the west eventually intervened on the side of the Bosniak community, the auto image of victimisation, utter helplessness and the impossibility of the choice, further reinforced through the narrative of betrayal, seems to allude that the more fundamental betrayal that took place, on a collective level, was against Bosniaks as a community of Muslims. As Tone Bringa explains:

“The war in Bosnia and the desperate plight of particularly its Muslim citizens did intensify this process, in some instances opening up Bosnia to a new kind of involvement from Islamic countries [...] war changes people and their perceptions of who they are. For some Bosnian Muslims, who were the main victims in the 1992-95 wars, this has led to a reassessment of identity and a reorientation of group affiliation towards the wider world community of Muslims. This reorientation is expressed through a more assertive Islamic identity, primarily by expanding the use of Islamic discourse and symbols into new domains.”¹³⁰

Thus on an external as well as an internal level, it can be argued that since the fall of Srebrenica commemorative practices have arisen which attempt to place the narrative of the memorialisation of the Srebrenica genocide within the context of genocide against Muslims as a religious group. Schatzmiller argues that “‘Chosen trauma’ refers to the shared image of an event that causes a large group (i.e. ethnic group) to feel helpless, victimised and humiliated by another group”¹³¹, and while this process is still in its infancy in relation to Bosnia, and the psychologising and mythologizing of the event is only starting, the far reaching and often unforeseen consequences of a narrative of victimisation on an entire ethnic and even religious group must nonetheless be considered. The Battle of Kosovo in 1389 stands as a prime example of this, and thus similarly the abstraction of the

¹³⁰ Bringa, ‘Islam and the quest for identity in post-communist Bosnia-Herzegovina’, 32.

¹³¹ Maya Schatzmiller, *Islam and Bosnia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002) 86.

memory of Srebrenica as any kind of symbol in both local and foreign consciousness remains of importance.

Finally, as was noted on several occasions, the process of memory formation and collectivisation of the Srebrenica genocide is still largely in its beginning stages. Whether or not it will develop into a cultural trauma on a local or even broader scale remains unforeseen. As Jeffrey Alexander explains:

“Whether or not any of these structures actually come into play is not itself a matter of structural determination. It is subject to the unstructured, unforeseeable contingencies of historical time. A war is lost or won. A new regime has entered into power or a discredited regime remains stubbornly in place. Hegemonic or counter publics may be empowered and enthusiastic or undermined and exhausted by social conflict and stalemate. Such contingent historical factors exercise powerful influence on whether a consensus will be generated that allows the cultural classification of trauma to be set firmly in place.”¹³²

¹³² Alexander e.a., *Cultural trauma*, 24.

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Appendix: Report on the proceedings of Summer University Srebrenica, July 2011¹³³

Monday, 4 July 2011 / Srebrenica

Leave Zagreb at 1200. Arrive in Tuzla at 1730. Leave to Kladanj at 1800. Arrive in Kladanj at 1915. Arrive in Srebrenica at 2100. Dinner and meet and greet with Muhamed Duraković, the programme director, and some of the other participants (including Ana Antić, Heather Anderson, Mona Sattarvand, Christos Iliadis, Ines Amézaga, Anita Sobjak, Tea Rozman Clark, Šemso Osmanović).

Tea Rozman Clark is conducting similar research on the topic of oral history of Srebrenica.

Šemso Osmanović grew up in Srebrenica and escaped in 1995 at age 12 together with his mother, on one of the last buses out of town. He lost a brother, brother in law and uncle (at least one) during the fall of Srebrenica and the Death March. His father and another brother were lucky enough to survive the ordeal. Šemso received a scholarship in 1998 for further schooling in Italy, where he finished the IB programme and went on to obtain a degree in Sociology. He is currently conducting PhD research in the field of the sociology of genocide, but finds himself tempted to move back to Bosnia (and Srebrenica specifically). Šemso's enthusiasm for the place is contagious, and he is our courageous guide on many expeditions around the area, as well as a relentless motivator during the physically and mentally taxing Peace March.

The programme director, Muhamed Duraković, told me his story during the car ride from Kladanj to Srebrenica. He is a schoolmate of Hasan Nuhanović and Emir Suljagić, both of whom worked as translators for the UN during the siege of Srebrenica. Hasan Nuhanović has gone on to become Chairman of the Board at Potočari Memorial Centre, while Emir Suljagić is currently employed at the Ministry of Education in Sarajevo. Mr Duraković himself, aged between sixteen and seventeen in 1995, refused to leave Srebrenica until the fall of the enclave, and managed to escape in July 1995. It took him 35 days, over the rugged hills and mountainous countryside of eastern Bosnia, to reach safety in Nežak. Around the year 2000 he received a scholarship to continue his schooling in the United States, where he finished a degree in computer engineering. He spoke of those years with great affection, and was dedicated to recreating an international students' exchange with this programme. Mr Duraković returned to Bosnia in 2005, in order to be closer to his family. He is now married with two children, and divides his time between his family and work in Sarajevo (at the Ministry of Security) and his family's home in Srebrenica. He is hoping to get the SUS programme accredited with the University of Sarajevo, and to become its full-time organiser.

We went to bed early on the evening of July 4th, as a whole day trip to Sarajevo was planned for the next day.

¹³³ For more information on the programme, please see: Summer University Srebrenica (July 2011), <http://sus.potocarimc.ba/index2.php> Accessed 01 November 2011.

Tuesday, 5 July 2011 / Sarajevo

Leave Srebrenica around 0900. On our way to Sarajevo, we stop near Potočari to pick up our guide for the week, Nihad Huseinović. He is a dry character with a talent for acting, and an impeccable gift of seeing right through people. His insights into local dynamics were, to me at least, invaluable. This is also the first time I meet some of the other participants, including Laura Cohen and Vera Mironova.

We arrive in Sarajevo close to 1230, just in time for our meeting at ICMP (International Commission on Missing Persons). At ICMP we speak to Klaudia Kladanj (who works as a Political Liaison between the side of the organisation and the Bosnian government) and Mathew Holiday (Justice and Civil Society initiative). The presentation conducted was recorded in shorthand, and will be present here in abbreviated note form.

Klaudia Kladanj (KK):

The ICMP was established in 1996 on the initiative of former President Clinton. 40.000 people missing in former Yugoslavia at the time.

Headquarters of the entire organisation are based in Sarajevo, though it is questionable for how long.

The ICMP was established as a political organisation. The forensics were always politicised due to the nature and the course of the war, for example the lists of the missing were often tampered with. There still no complete agreement over the number of missing from the Bosniak, Serb and Croat factions. All have been caught inflating the numbers of the missing from their own side, and all downplay the number of missing from the side of the other group.

ICMP were the first to introduce DNA into the search of missing persons, and are now leaders in the field (what KK describes as a 'strange, unpredictable legacy of the war'). Before ICMP, identification was mostly conducted on the basis of recognition of personal belongings. This proved impossible in Bosnia, also because of the number of secondary mass graves.

The Missing Persons Institute (MPI), as a side-arm of ICMP, but one much more in the hands of the Bosnian government, is still trying to compile one centralised list of the missing (Central Evidence List). However, as by now 26.000 of the presumably 40.000 missing persons have been identified, the focus of both organisations has shifted from identification to the pursuit of justice. Kladanj hopes Mladić's trial might finally bring justice to the region and to survivors.

Mathew Holiday (MH):

He speaks about the three-fold approach at ICMP, which focuses on politics, victims and forensics.

"Law on Missing Persons" – passed in Bosnia in 2004, guarantees survivors the right to know, and also gives them the right to financial support (from the fund of the Missing Persons Institute as the government body in charge).

The main focus of the Justice and Civil Society initiative at ICMP is to deal with issues of implementing transitional justice and liaison with the victims (groups).

According to the transitional justice agenda, after periods of chaos victims have the right to:

- Truth (the right to know)
- Justice
- Reparation – restitutions, both financial and symbolic
- Non repetition

Obligations of the state:

- Make full and well intentioned investigation into the past – find and punish
- Establish organisations of reparations
- Dismantle organisations which contributed to the chaos

This is the 'transitional justice matrix'.

The agenda of the ICMP – Justice and Civil Society Initiative has switched from a humanitarian one, to a focus on the rule of law.

Memorialisation was described as a process of symbolic reparations.

2003 'Dealing with the past' initiative.

Leading up to today when the focus is to get all victims' groups to commemorate together. This is the proposed purpose of August 30th, now commemorated as the International Day of Missing Persons. This year's celebrations are to be held in Brčko. Aim: 'to develop innovative and respectful forms of commemoration.'

In consultation with ICSC – International Coalition on Sites of Conscience, as well as various victims' groups, round-table discussions and workshops have been held in order to decide on the appropriate nature of the August 30th proceedings. 'Women and Mothers of Srebrenica' were of course consulted, and their opinions varied. Some say it's too soon, others that it would be possible if it was culturally sensitive, while some place all emphasis on the coming of the 'Pillar of Shame' memorial (note: certain factions within Srebrenica's victims' organisations have been calling for the building of a 'Pillar of Shame' in the hills just outside of Srebrenica, to commemorate what they see as the ultimate betrayal of their safety from the side of the UN. The Pillar is to be adorned in woven messages of survivors, attesting to the betrayal).

Question & Answer session

Q: Could you tell us a bit more about the centralised list of the missing being written by MPI?

KK: MPI is in the process of composing one, central list only for Bosnia, but for the whole of Bosnia. At the moment, it comprises of more or less 34.000 names, but has not been agreed upon entirely yet.

Q: You spoke about establishing one, joint day of commemoration for all of Bosnia, and addressed the opinions of victims' organisations from Bosnia on this issue. What are the opinions of other victims' organisations from around Bosnia, and how do they feel about the upcoming annual commemoration in Srebrenica?

KK: Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a lot of jealousy about Srebrenica in the rest of Bosnia, especially perhaps Prijedor (note: a place where more than 5000 people, again predominately men and boys, were murdered in 1992. Furthermore, several detention camps such as Omarska were established in the vicinity of Prijedor. They held Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croatian detainees throughout the 1992-1995 war).

The feeling amongst other victims' organisations is that Srebrenica gets all the attention, from excavations to identification and commemoration. From our point of view, this is simply not true, but one cannot deny that the July 11th commemoration in Srebrenica gets far more political and media attention, both foreign and local. It's setting the tone for the commemoration of the war.

Q: What are the procedures surrounding the excavation and identification processes?

KK: There is a clear chain of command. MPI conducts research and collects information about potential sites. The state prosecutor's office has to issue an order to exhume, only then can ICMP start their job.

In the afternoon, we get a tour of the ICMP DNA lab in Sarajevo, and note the procedures surrounding the analysis.

Maria O'Reilly joins the group a day late. She is conducting PhD research at King's College London War Studies' Department, on the topic of women's activism and peace-building in Bosnia.

We have two -hours to explore the town before embarking on the journey back to Srebrenica.

Wednesday, 6 July 2011 / Potočari Memorial Centre

Breakfast in hotel 'Alić'.

Brief meeting two Dutchbat soldiers (Dutchbat 2 and 3) through Tea Rozman Clark – Ynse Schellens and John Nieuwkoop. It's John's fifth and Ynse's first time back to Srebrenica. John is looking into starting a foundation in the Netherlands to collect food, supplies and monetary aid for the local population.

Around 11 AM we leave for the Memorial Centre where we are to watch the introductory movie shown to all visitors – 'A Cry from the Grave' (Leslie Woodhead's documentary made for the BBC) and speak with a one of the founding members of 'Mapping Genocide'.

Woodhead, Leslie. *A cry from the grave* (1999).

Van Dijkmans (one of the Dutch soldiers interviewed): "I never expected general Mladić to attack because the world was watching."

Van Dijkmans on the death of Raviv (note: van Rensen, killed at Observation Point (OP) Foxtrot on July 8th, 1995, allegedly by a Bosniak soldier): “You blame a big part of the population for it.”

“We all were convinced there would be air strikes in the southern part. We should have known better. The feeling the whole world had let us down we had for months.”

July 11th 1995

Two Dutch F-16’s fire on Serb positions. No help from outside the enclave. Vincent Egbers: “It was very very sad.”

16:00 Mladić enters Srebrenica.

16:30 Dutch base declared full.

Marc Klavers: “You could notice the fear in the Muslim refugees for the Serbs.”

Van Dijkmans: “The Dutch had strict orders to defend and return with no body bags. Now what to do?”

Video of Karremans speaking with Mladić: “If I may offer my opinion” – Image being portrayed is that Karremans felt frightened, out of his depth and out of control.

Mladić: “Svima koji polože oružje garantiram život.” “Možete opstati ili nestati.”¹³⁴

Paul Groeneweg (note: Dutchbat soldier who witnessed the killing of a Muslim man already on the 11th): “took him behind the house with his face to the wall and shot him in the head.”

Van Dijkmans on 12.7.95: “some women tried to tell me their men were taken to be murdered by the Serbs. We didn’t know anything at the time and I didn’t believe them.”

Hasan Nuhanović (note: former UN translator for Dutchbat, author of *Under The UN Flag; The International Community and the Srebrenica Genocide* and winner of lawsuit against the Dutch government in 2011 on the grounds of Dutch soldiers having forcibly expelled his family from the army base):

“I cannot tell you what happened then. I do not know how I survived that moment.”

“For some reason in those moments you have no brain, you just do what they tell you.” – Nuhanović suggests they (the Bosniaks) followed orders because they trusted the Dutch soldiers knew best. He questions why the 40.000 refugees did not overrun the soldiers and take over the base. According to Nuhanović, it is because they trusted them, and herein lies the responsibility of Dutchbat and therefore of the Dutch government, for having taken on the mission.

Mapping Genocide: Suada Kapić

See www.srebrenica-mappinggenocide.com/en for more information.

¹³⁴ ‘To everyone who puts down their weapons I can guarantee survival.’ ‘You can prevail or disappear.’

Aim: “to create a permanent educational tool for people to study and learn about Srebrenica.”
Wanting to create a positive culture of memory. Only ICTY testimonies used, the rest were felt to be too personal and objective.

More on the concept from the accompanying website:

“In order to get a modern and user friendly tool, particularly intended for younger population, after comprehensive research, we decided to adopt documentary animation as a new model of presenting facts, whilst applying modern technology for its user-friendly application and dissemination. The project contains 17 animated maps. The maps are organised in chronological order and in line with the methodologies adopted by institutions collecting and archiving documents related to Srebrenica genocide and genocide in general - as identified by number of respective studies. Each map has key points containing particular evidence (text files, photos, video clips).”

We are shown a kind of ‘one-day in the life of Srebrenica’ animation on the course of events of July 9th, 1995.

The tool was only launched in June 2011 so its ultimate success is yet to be judged. So far, Kapić claims there have been only positive reactions. The website and CD have been shown in several (Bosnian) Serb high-schools as well, and received praise.

Meeting with Mirsada Gusić and Mirsada Sahdić at their home in the vicinity of the Memorial Centre

Involved with ‘Snaga Žena’; a victims’ organisation from Tuzla. The two women returned to Srebrenica in 2004 and 2006 respectively. They are sisters-in-law, and will be burying Gusić’s husband and Sahdić’s brother this year. Some of his bones were first discovered two years ago, but they had hoped that the whole body would eventually be found. Due to the fact certain family members were already coming back to Bosnia from abroad this year, they decided on the burial despite of half of the victim’s upper body never having been found.

The two women make money by growing flowers (roses) in the back yard. This project was started in cooperation with ‘Snaga Žena’ and the Dutch foundation ‘Stichting Toekomst Overlevenden Srebrenica’. They speak very highly of Alok van Loon, (Dutch) founder of the organisation and their friend. They attest to having no bad opinions about the Dutch, and in fact praise all the help Srebrenica has received from the side of the Dutch government and NGOs. Mirsada Sahdić’s son attended a semester of high-school in the Netherland through an exchange programme, and they have a lot of connections and friends there.

Before the war, Mirsada Sahdić was employed in one of the factories near town, as a technical engineer. Now, she is the sole provider for her two children, both of whom are attending university in Tuzla. She has been forced to move back to her parents’ old farmhouse outside of town, as it was still partially standing, and agriculture subsidies seem to be one of the only ways of earning income for these women.

Still, the situation remains difficult. Mirsada Gusić, whose children are grown and have moved away from Srebrenica, admits to feeling rather lonely. Luckily, her sister in law lives next door, and the women’s organisation provides a lot of support. The money they earn from selling the roses,

however, barely covers their overhead. The Memorial Centre, which usually buys their flowers for the commemoration, went with a different distributor this year. A lot of flowers are donated each year, so the MC does not feel the need to buy it from the organisation. The women have decided to donate their flowers this year, so at least some use would come of them. They view the project more as therapy than a job, saying how wonderful it is to have something so beautiful growing near their house, in Srebrenica.

The two women are not very positive about the future of Srebrenica. Children who are above school age tend to move away to bigger towns. There is a need for more jobs, not more mosques, as Gusić comments. It seems to her that the only money coming in from domestic investment is going into building yet more places of worship. While being a religious woman herself, she does not see the practical use of this. Employment remains the main problem, as does the current political situation, and what they describe as the preferential treatment of Serbs in terms of employment opportunities.

Note: a brief but impressive meeting with two survivors, who are trying in their own way to build a new future for themselves and their children in Srebrenica.

Evening: Interview with John Nieuwkoop and Ynse Schellens

John: Dutchbat II, fifth time back, first time in 2007. Last year with 10 other Dutchbat soldiers for the 15 years commemoration.

Ynse: Dutchbat III, first time back since 1995.

John: joined the navy at age 18, then Airborne Services. He was a Red beret in the army. He was trained in operating helicopters, and only upon arrival in Srebrenica had to train himself to operate tanks. Describes his daily activities in Srebrenica: he was the bus driver and drove the supply truck from Zagreb. Sometimes the trips took 24-48 hours, depending on the road blocks put in by the Serb forces. He would often see dead children on the road during his patrols “that was not nice” – he says while choking up.

Due to supplies being cut off on such a regular basis, it was very difficult for the UN staff as well. They had to ration their supplies, ate poorly and suffered from overall bad living conditions.

Ynse – he was the medic assigned to Dutchbat, and arrived in Srebrenica in March 1995.

“For me at first it was good here.” – he reflects on a good, collegial bond with other soldiers.

Ynse was stationed at OP Kilo in June 1995. Hearsay spreads about other OP’s falling but he has nowhere to go. His OP falls and he is taken to Milići and kept hostage there until 15 July.

About his return to Srebrenica: “I was very afraid to come here. I had a lot of problems back in Holland.” He explains he had to come back to relive and face the past. He has quit the army in the meantime and now works with youth offenders in a half-way house.

Both men attest that their reception here by the locals has been better than when they tell people in the Netherlands they are former Dutchbatters.

John stayed in the army until 2004. He left because of severe PTSD, and only returned to active duty in 2010. He mentions that a lot of former Dutchbatters have left the army in the mean time, and even more are ill, though a lot still do not dare to seek official help.

Question & Answer session

Q: Who is to blame in your opinion?

A (J): Who is to blame? That's the guy who pulled the trigger. Who is responsible though, that's a different matter.

Q: Were there any frictions with locals at the time?

A (J): The local people were very nice and kind and happy to see us.

A (Y): I didn't feel any bad feelings at the time; we had good contact with the locals and tried to help them when we could. I always carried pencils around for the kids, and gave first aid lessons to locals.

A (J): There were certain frustrations of course, frictions were mostly with Orić and his men. "These were big questions for young guys."

On misrepresentation of the Dutchbat story (J): He has the feeling that in the press, the most negative story is always being portrayed. He is very weary of reporters, especially from Holland. On the day of his return from Srebrenica, there was a reporter waiting to interview him on his doorstep, and he feels his story has been taken out of context each time. Comments on movie 'Cry from the grave', which shows Dutch soldiers dancing in Zagreb (Pleso base) after having just escaped Srebrenica. Most of the men dancing were those stationed in Zagreb. "It didn't happen the way the press told it. I only talk to the press now under certain conditions."

Q: What were your expectations initially, before arriving in Srebrenica?

A (J): "Very naïve, but I wanted make it a better world, to go there and help people." "What I couldn't do then, I'm trying to do now" (note: John is starting a foundation to help the locals and organise trips for Dutchbat soldiers to come to Srebrenica).

John then briefly speaks of his first return trip to Srebrenica, and meeting with 'Mothers of Srebrenica' near the cemetery in Potočari: "they were not very friendly". But, he feels now there is more agreement between the two groups. With permission from all parties, a remembrance stone has been raised for Raviv (note: van Rensen) near OP Foxtrot (note: Observation Point where he was murdered on July 8th, 1995). The Dutchbat soldiers who are in Srebrenica at the time always visit on the 11th in the evening. "I was only once afraid to come here and that was the first time I came back."

On Hasan Nuhanović (Y): "I do feel the victims should get compensation. They were promised something."

On disillusionment / break down (J): "you only allow yourself to feel when you get back home".

Q: What happened when you found out the whole story, about the mass executions?

A (J): "I felt miserable. The Ministry (note: of Defence) had reported nothing, not to us. We heard it through the press"

A (Y): "I was released by the Serbs on the 15th. I saw a lot of things on the road we weren't allowed to see. We knew something went terribly wrong."

Ynse about being kept hostage: "I was kept hostage for a week. The place where we were held was pretty ok compared to what we were used to. For me it's not a very clear memory". In general, he recalls being treated well by the Serb captors. He describes going back to Milići where he was held this time around, and noticing some women walking around town. He couldn't help but think that maybe they had met 16 years prior, maybe he had helped them.

Thursday, 7 July 2011 / Tuzla

Tuzla ICMP> Meeting with Head of Operations, his Chief Assistant and members of the forensic team

Figures for the period 1999-2011: 8000 missing from Srebrenica municipality alone. 6800 identified. 7000 bodies found.

16.000 exhumed bodies have been worked on over the 12 years.

10.000 remains have been re-associated to 2000 cases (for example, one person was found in four different mass graves, in 15 different locations).

6800 identifications have occurred by means of DNA. These differ from what they refer to as 'official identifications' or 'closed cases', which is when death certificates are issued following a DNA report, and bodies are prepared for burial. There have been 5600 of these cases regarding Srebrenica.

650 cases of bodies already buried having additional bones found and being reburied.

Following this brief introduction into the work that has been done by ICMP, we are escorted to the premises of the morgue and the forensics department. Human remains of those who have either not yet been identified, of where the families have decided to hold off on burial because of hope more body parts will be found, are kept in the aforementioned morgue. The stench was almost unbearable and this was a shocking experience for all.

Following the tour of the morgue, a resident forensic anthropologist explained the process of identification conducted at ICMP. The benefits of DNA over object identification were once again explained. Use of DNA was particularly important not only due to the controversies surrounding the numbers of missing and the difficulties presented by exhumations of secondary graves, but also because of the type of clothing worn by Srebrenica inhabitants right before the fall of the 'safe area'. Due to a lack of resources, most men wore very similar pants and shoes sewn together from parachutes used to drop UN supplies into the enclave. The clothing worn was often very similar, and before DNA was made the standard, numerous cases of double identification had occurred.

'Žene Srebrenice'> Meeting at Tuzla headquarters of 'Women of Srebrenica'

In a small, cramped room we speak with one of the female survivors and members of the organisation. Her story, while rather incoherent, portrayed a picture of the view point of local women's organisations towards who is at fault. She spoke very fast and in Bosnian, while our guide provided a rather broken translation.

"We were betrayed by the Dutch battalion"

On ICMP / MPI> "they are lying to us that there are mines there (note: in the hills surrounding Srebrenica, and near grave sites), that they can't exhume."

The women feel that the process of identification has been going on for so long because of the complicated situation in Bosnia, because of the lies. And because those who work for international organisations want to keep their well-paid jobs. There is a lot of anger about the fact that the process of identification is still not completed after 16 years.

(Note: the woman shows us a disintegrating skull and a rubber shoe members of the organisation found in the woods a few days ago. They ventured into a part of the forest which MPI claims is still mined. They do not believe them. MPI and ICMP were angry at them for going in on their own, not only because they could have gotten hurt, but also because they have now tampered with evidence and hindered any possible criminal investigation against the murderer of this person.)

We are told that on the 11th of every month, approximately (or at least) 150 women gather in the main square of Tuzla to commemorate the dead. They do this by displaying empty pillowcases embroidered with names of those not yet found. They feel that as long as there is no sleep for their loved ones, there shouldn't be any sleep for those responsible either.

The women have vowed not to stop until the very last body is identified.

"We will not allow for silence or forgetfulness."

"There is no difference between the criminals then and the politicians now." [note: in Republika Srpska].

Question & Answer session

Q: When will you feel like justice had been served?

A: When all the murderers have been locked up. The biggest success would be to arrest all the killers. But at the moment, no one is answering for their crimes. No one has been convicted. And there is no better future for Bosnia. We need them to be punished, to feel that justice has been done.

Q: Do you blame all the Serbs for crimes committed?

A: No, I don't, there were some good people who didn't commit any crimes. But the honest ones, who didn't kill, were often killed themselves.

Q: Who do you think is most guilty?

A: Milosević and Serbia, but also the UN and Netherlands.

8-10 July 2011/ Peace March Nezuk – Srebrenica

Monday, 11 July 2011 / Potočari Memorial Centre

Morning meeting. Speeches directed to participants of Summer University Srebrenica 2011; by the UK's Government Minister Baroness Warsi, the US Ambassador to Bosnia Patrick S. Moon, the Turkish Ambassador to Bosnia Vefahan Ocak and the Norwegian Ambassador to Bosnia Jan Braathu; as well as regional expert dr. Emir Suljagić.

The Norwegian Embassy, as the main funding body for the programme, through its Ambassador expressed a desire for “least some good to come out of this horrible ordeal” and for the region as well as Europe and the world to learn from the past. The Ambassador noted this was a “European and world tragedy, and therefore also our tragedy”, as well as that “to deny the genocide in Srebrenica is to deny fact and truth.”

Baroness Warsi of the UK furthermore focused on expressing a message for the future, emphasising that this day is as much about reconciliation as it is about memory and justice. She noted the overall aim is always for a single, stable and prosperous Bosnia, as well as for the world to learn from “the tragic consequences of the passive approach in the face of evil.”¹³⁵

The Ambassador of the United States gave a rather brief speech, emphasising the role of the programme and students of genocide in establishing a narrative for Bosnia. The Ambassador felt that a fully documented record of what transpired is needed, so that what was done as well as what was failed to be done can be both recorded and recognised. Furthermore, a focus was placed what the US views as central to its policy in Bosnia, namely the psychological and economic recovery for women.

The Turkish Ambassador, speaking on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey (who was to give a speech at the official commemoration), noted that remembrance should always retain as its main purpose keeping the memory of victims alive, and in a way where these horrors can never be repeated. He also pointed out the difficulty of keeping the ritual of remembrance in balance with a focus on the future, but that nonetheless Bosnia is destined to move forward, and Turkey is committed to helping.

Dr. Emir Suljagić, himself a survivor of Srebrenica, an author and one of the initiators of the Summer University, spoke of the need to write down the legacy as “acting in time.” Dr. Suljagić expressed a strong view that genocide has by no means been eradicated from our world, and that rather it will continue to be attempted globally. The only appropriate course of action in the face of this evil is prevention, and the lesson of Srebrenica should then be a need for acting in and on time. On a final note, dr. Suljagić expressed the importance of the local population taking back the memory of Srebrenica, and therefore the relevance of researchers conducting their investigations on the ground and within a setting of a programme dedicated to preserving the legacy of Srebrenica.

Myself and Ana Antić were then briefly interviewed by TV Sarajevo about the programme.

¹³⁵ Please see link for full text of the speech delivered by Baroness Warsi:
<http://ukinbih.fco.gov.uk/en/news/?view=Speech&id=629480082>

Commemoration proceedings at the Memorial Centre

Before the commemoration service officially began, the poem 'Srebrenica' by Abdulah Sidran was read.

What followed were speeches presented by Srebrenica's deputy mayor Ćamil Duraković, Bosnia and Herzegovina's Minister of Security Sadik Ahmetović, United Nations' High Representative in Bosnia Valentin Inzko, Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey Bulent Arinc, Croatian President Ivo Josipović and (Bosniak) Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Bakir Izetbegović.

Deputy Mayor Duraković alerted that the hiding of facts and denial of genocide not only perpetuate the suffering of victims, but constitute a form of genocide in themselves. He called genocide 'a reality of the new generation', and expressed hope for local and international dignitaries to keep this in mind not just in July of each year.

The US Ambassador Mr Moon, expressed his views on the need to continue 'mourning the victims', as well as hope for comfort stemming from the recent arrest of Mladić. He saw this arrest as even more reason to reflect on the horrors that occurred, 'to remember what was done and what the world failed to do'. Mr Moon alluded that those who 'deny the undeniable' are in effect obstructing the path to justice, and that forgiveness begins by 'gathering the moral courage to accept responsibility.' The predominant message of his speech was one of forgiveness and reconciliation through justice, and of finding a common way forward for the whole of Bosnia.

[Note: perhaps more so than any other, this speech stood in contrast to the messages delivered by Bosnian politicians.]

The Bosnian Minister of Security spoke of a 'message of truth, justice and peace', a message heard even amidst deathly silence in Bosnia. He spoke of a need for confronting the past, mainly from the side of the Serb population who must 'find the strength to face their crime, a crime of genocide'. Mr Ahmetović also briefly reflected on the 'dishonourable part' played by the Dutch forces, which he felt has now been confirmed by the recent verdict of the Dutch court in favour of Hasan Nuhanović.

The delegate from the Office of the High Representative gave a brief speech; emphasizing on two main points: nothing can be built solely on the legacy of genocide, and that the past ultimately holds valuable resources for rebuilding the present and future of this place and country.

His speech was followed by that of the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, Bulent Arinc, who addressed the crowd as his 'Srebrenica and Bosniak brothers and sisters'. His speech was unfortunately impossible to follow due to a break in translation services. According to online sources¹³⁶, Arinc expressed a deep lament for all the suffering endured in Srebrenica and vowed equally that "We will never forget Srebrenica and never let it happen again."

Croatia's President Ivo Josipović gave a brief but poignant speech about how Srebrenica has marked an entire generation in the Balkans, and not just in Bosnia, and that its main message should be to teach future generations mutual love and respect, so as never to repeat the horrors of the past.

¹³⁶ <http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=76171>

The official part of the commemoration was ended by a speech from Bakir Izetbegović, son of Bosnia and Herzegovina's first president Alija Izetbegović, and current Bosniak Member of the Presidency. He spoke of a planned genocide against a people 'whose only fault was that they were Muslim'. Bakir Izetbegović described Srebrenica as a permanent mark on the record of the international community, which has not been redeemed through the partial and relatively slow process of justice. He expressed lament that a large part of the Serb population has chosen not to face the truth, while returnees to Srebrenica and other parts of 'Republika Srpska' still feel – and according to Izetbegović rightfully so – as second-class citizens. He finally made a point of referring to the current peace in Bosnia as an 'unjust one', but still emphasised that any peace is better than none, and closed his speech with a call for an eternal remembrance of the brave defenders of Srebrenica.

Religious service and burial

After closing the official portion of the proceedings in the Memorial Centre, the commemoration then continued outside on the grounds of the cemetery. The religious service began with an all-female choir singing the powerful lyrics of 'Srebrenica's Inferno' above the 613 coffins to be buried this year.

The Grand Mufti of Bosnia led some hundred imams and thousands of visitors in a lengthy prayer, after which male members of each family of the deceased carried the coffins to the allocated spot on the hill above. Various survivors then read out the 613 names of those being buried, including their date of birth. The oldest person was 82, while the youngest was not even one year old.

The services ended around 15:00. Getting out of the Memorial Centre and on the road has proven more chaotic each year. There is only one road out of Srebrenica, and the thousands of visitors often wait for hours until their buses are allowed to leave. The participants of SUS, myself included, returned to the hotel in Srebrenica around 18:00.

Meeting with Suada from Bosnian Platform in the Netherlands

I met Suada Pasić, head of 'Het Bosnisch Platform', an organisation of Bosniaks in the Netherlands, partly responsible for the annual Srebrenica Commemoration in The Hague and numerous other events and discussions held on the topic of Srebrenica and Bosnia in the Netherlands each year.

She spoke of the organisation working closely together with the Dutch NGO IKV Pax Christi, and organising amongst other things, roundtable discussions between Dutchbat soldiers and 'Women of Srebrenica'. Suada mentioned that the women's organisations often resented the Dutch soldiers for keeping quiet for so long, but that once they found out most soldiers were suffering from PTSD and experienced a similar even if incomparable trauma and the inability to speak of it, a lot was 'forgiven'.

At the same time, Suada mentioned that 'Women of Srebrenica' and 'Mothers of Srebrenica' still intend to file a lawsuit against the Dutch government, especially now that Hasan Nuhanović had won his. However, there is growing consensus that perhaps not the individual soldiers but the government as a whole was to blame. [Note: Mrs. Pasić has lived in the Netherlands since 1993, and the opinions she has offered should be considered within this context].

The viewpoint was expressed that someone should certainly take responsibility, but the question of whom was not answered.

Tuesday, 12 July 2011 / Potočari Memorial Centre and Klotjevac

Talk with dr. Irina Bećirević, assistant professor at the Department of Security Studies, University of Sarajevo. She is a former journalist, who covered trials at The Hague Tribunal for Bosnian newspapers in the period of 1997-2001.

The focus of dr. Bećirević's current study is on the 'sociology of genocide', and it is furthermore framed around the entire period of war in Bosnia 1992-1995, which she sees as part of one planned genocide.

Dr. Bećirević defines genocide as follows: a long and planned process and a process backed by a political plan / from the side of the state.

Furthermore, dr. Bećirević spoke of the importance of the ICTY to the process of justice in Bosnia, and specifically the importance of 'judicially established truths'. She went on to argue that the fact that only Srebrenica has been proclaimed as genocide thus far leaves the process open to manipulation. Srebrenica, in her opinion, has been taken out of the whole process of genocide and coloured by politics.

Dr. Bećirević also argued for the need for researchers to look beyond just judgements and summary judgements of the ICTY. She argued that the documentation they have collected can be used outside of the context of the judgement it lead to, and thus also for purposes of research which disagrees with the final judgement.

The remainder of this lecture was an almost direct summary of the article which was used to explain the broader chronology of remembering genocide in chapter four of this dissertation. Main points worth noting were an emphasis on proving genocidal intent by focusing on speeches given and conversations had by the former Bosnian Serb leadership, which according to Bećirević prove intent to expel the majority of the Muslim population from the whole of (eastern) Bosnia. More was said on the ICTY having introduced a new, broader framework for scholars of genocide, which has resulted in disagreement. Not all authors agree on calling Srebrenica genocide, and for instance Michael Mann considers what happened in BiH to be too erratic and regionally dispersed to be dubbed genocide. Naimark, on the other hand, views only Srebrenica as genocide, even if of a 'local' nature.

Bećirević sees this as genocide minimised and denied, and claims that there are two predominant reasons why genocide is doubted and denied in the case of Bosnia. She claims that, because Article 1 of the Genocide Convention obligates all states who signed to prevent and punish perpetrators of genocide, many are weary to recognise anything that occurred before 1995 – when the intervention ultimately took place – as genocide. Furthermore, she discussed that denial of genocide may also stem out of a difficulty to reconcile with the resistance of victims. She questions whether it is important to see the victim as defenceless in order for genocide to be recognised, and on a theoretical level explores the role of the victim in the process of genocide.

The discussion ended on the topic of the historical as opposed to the legal perspective on genocide. Bećirević feels that the legal perspective is broader, while on a historical level still only the Holocaust is considered genocide.

Wednesday, 13 July 2011 / Potočari Memorial Centre

Movie screening and lecture by prof. dr. Džemal Sokolović, since 1994 Professor of Sociology and Political Science at Bergen University in Norway.

Movie screening - *And there was light* by Džemal Sokolović

A short-movie focusing on 'three good people', a Bosnian Muslim, a Bosnian Serb and a Bosnian Croat, all of who sacrificed their lives during the war for one or more members of the other ethnic group. The main message of the movie was that the focus of scholars and the media has remained solely on the catastrophes of the war in Bosnia, rather than any attention being paid to the positive, multicultural history of the region or indeed to the lives of those who fought against the prevalently nationalistic regimes. Dr. Sokolović is hoping to continue research on this topic, and especially so on the topic of not only the ethnicity but furthermore the family background of these 'good people'. He hopes to find out whether a trend can be established between Second World war allegiances of a family (Partisan, Ustashe or Chetnik) and indeed their actions in the last war.

Lecture by Džemal Sokolović: 'Multiculturalism'

The main theme or question was defined more closely as 'Ambiguities of Multiculturalism: Lessons from Bosnia', and the focus was placed on defining multiculturalism as well as discussing it being put into practice, in Bosnia in particular.

The lecture was divided into following sections:

Ambiguity of the cultural element

What is culture?

Stone axe / Missile tomahawk

Democracy / Totalitarianism

Science / Weaponry

It all makes us human, as well as destroys the human.

Democracy choosing for totalitarianism (for example, Hitler's Third Reich) as an example of the ambiguity of culture.

There are two sides to all elements of culture, use and exchange, but it is not the case that whatever is deemed useful is necessarily 'good'.

Openness and closure of culture

Levels of openness > 1. Diffusion of cultural elements, 2. Contact of cultures and 3. Multiculturalism.

1. Diffusion: involves appropriation of culture (of others)
2. Contact: either conflicting or pervasive
3. Multiculturalism: can it be defined? Only under the condition that the concept of 'culture' can be defined, and that a culture can be typified.

Levels of closure> 1.Homogenous, 2. Xenophobic and 3. Repressive.

1. Homogenous: most are open to new influences.
- 2 and 3. Xenophobic and Repressive: repressive to own citizens as well. Introverted aggressiveness.

Missing theoretical assumptions:

- Definition of culture
- Concept of single/one culture
- Definition of multiculturalism as the sum of two, three, n cultures.

Is a society which consists of more mixed cultures necessarily more multicultural?

Džemal Sokolović's definition of multiculturalism: meeting of two or more cultures where a group/people are allowed to keep their original identity, while building a new one.

Types of multiculturalism

- Marginal multiculturalism
- Intra multiculturalism > splitting within a culture, for example East and West Germany
- Stratified / sub- multiculturalism> class cultures, where a strong rural and urban division exists within a culture
- Minority multiculturalism> one-way multiculturalism, Northern Europe.
- Amalgam multiculturalism> Bosnia (before the war), idea that together we are stronger, better, different than just the sum of our parts.

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Thursday, 14 July 2011 / Potočari Memorial Centre

State Prosecutor's Office – Simon Farmer, Chief Investigator.

Mr Farmer spoke to us for over two hours on the work he does as an investigator for the State Prosecutor's Office. However, we were asked not do further divulge a lot of the information that was shared, and so this report offers a very succinct summary of what was discussed.

Mr Farmer did his best to explain the complex relationship between the State Prosecutor's Office, the State Courts and the ICTY. He commented on a 'good working relationship' with the ICTY staff

based in Sarajevo, and explained that the State Prosecutor's Office as well as the State Courts see it as their main duty to put on trial the 'smaller' perpetrators who have not been indicted by the ICTY; 'the people who pulled the trigger'.

The Srebrenica team, consisting of 3 prosecutors and numerous investigators, is dealing exclusively with the crimes committed in July of 1995. He noted that 80% of the allegations by the State Court have been against Bosnian Serbs, and comments on a mixed cooperation with the Dutch military regarding their investigation into crimes committed in Srebrenica. He feels that not all former Dutchbat soldiers are willing to speak openly about what they experienced and saw, perhaps also out of fear of being judged for their own actions (for example, for soliciting prostitution, rape or other sexual assaults some witnesses have accused them of).

Mr Farmer spoke of a resentment for the 'I don't remember' testimonies, which unfortunately after sixteen years stand up as a valid excuse. He personally doesn't believe any detail of such an ordeal can be forgotten.

Friday, 15 July 2011 / Potočari Memorial Centre

'Prijatelji Srebrenice' – Dragana Jovanović

'Prijatelji Srebrenice', 'Friends of Srebrenica', is a locally based and run NGO, supported by funds predominately from the Dutch Embassy in Bosnia, whose main focus is on youth employment and access to information. The NGO evolved out of the Dutch foundation 'Werkgroep Nederland-Srebrenica', where the current Director Dragana Jovanović worked between 2000 and 2004.

Their current projects include establishing a youth radio programme, which airs four hours each day, as well as organizing an annual short-film festival entitled 'Sreberna Traka' ('The Silver Lining'). As such, they are focused on spreading a positive message about the Srebrenica in the media, which is necessary to encourage a greater number of returnees – especially youngsters. NGO's such as this one are, in their own words, quite 'annoyed' for being in the news, both local and international, only on July 11th. They would prefer if more attention was paid to positive messages of rebuilding the community, and if their common, Bosnian values were emphasised.

Mrs Jovanović expressed her personal sentiment that the citizens of Bosnia were collateral damage of bigger interest groups, and proclaimed to still not be certain what happened and why. She is certain people [from different ethnic groups] still harbour some positive feelings towards one another, on a personal level.

She furthermore spoke of 'Youth Entrepreneurship Models' which the organisation uses as an incentive to cross border development in the region, by engaging young people from both Bosniak and Serbian municipalities. Their main projects therefore focus on youth education through work practice (where the young and unemployed are matched with a potential employer), through media and through a youth information centre.

Mrs Jovanović then discussed the past of the organisation and their funding, which as mentioned comes predominately from the Dutch Embassy. 'Werkgroep Nederland-Srebrenica', as a predecessor of this organisation, started as a citizens' initiative with around 200 Dutch volunteers, who were mostly motivated by a sense of personal responsibility. On a personal level, Mrs Jovanović feels that the Dutch specifically are not to blame, as it is 'our own Bosnian responsibility, or it is the responsibility of the whole world, but it is not specifically a Dutch responsibility'. She explains that the NGO has not had any trouble for accepting money from the Dutch government as in her own words 'everyone takes money from the Dutch', and they are in fact seen as greatly contributing to rebuilding the community.

On a final note, Mrs Jovanović mentioned that the international community is still learning how to deal with a crisis like Srebrenica, as well as its aftermath. There was no systematic approach in place for a crisis of this magnitude and complexity.

UNDP – Alexandre Pieto, Programme Director of the 'Srebrenica Regional Recovery Programme'

The UNDP started to be active in Srebrenica in 2001, and the Regional Recovery Programme has been in implementation (in its various stages) since September 2002.

The first project, lasting between 2002 and 2006, focused on quick and short-term solutions such as providing the town and its inhabitants with power supply systems, giving basic agricultural input and working with the different municipalities.

In 2006 the second phase of the Programme – focusing on medium term solutions - started to be implemented. This stage looked at making strategic investments into infrastructure, reconstruction and agriculture. Particularly agriculture was targeted, as a way of reaching families in rural areas and proving them with employment opportunities. The main focus has been on returnees, and agriculture was seen as the best source of income for them.

At the moment, the project has entered its third and final phase. Completion is planned sometime between 2013 and 2015, though as was the case at other international organisations we met in Bosnia, finalizing their activities was not something many enjoyed or could discuss or even predict. This final stage focuses on including local administrative bodies in the implementation of activities, and in this time the UNDP hopes to effectively transfer responsibility to local authorities.

However, Mr Pieto was not coy about discussing the problems they had thus far encountered. As a result of the war, a lot of local potential in terms of human resources and leadership was lost, and at the moment Srebrenica (and perhaps Bosnia as a whole) is suffering from what can only be described as a chronic lack of leadership. Mr Pieto noted that unfortunately the majority of returnees tend to view their lives in Srebrenica now as a temporary solution, as they feel the town does not offer any opportunities for their children. The 2008 crisis actually saw a dramatic rise in returnees to Srebrenica, often due to a loss of employment elsewhere in the country. However, Mr Pieto doubted the longevity of their return.

He went on to discuss certain faults made by the UNDP in the beginning of their mission. He noted that the first phase was initially a failure, as there was a lack of coordination with local peoples and local actors were not consulted or taken into account. Since 2004, however, the UNDP in Srebrenica

has always relied on participatory decision making mechanisms. Furthermore, Mr Pioto mentioned that funding [note: provided predominately by the Dutch government] has now also been provided for the purpose of offering psychological help to the survivors.

Saturday, 16 July 2011 / Potočari Memorial Centre

Hasan Nuhanović translator for the UN in Srebrenica during the war, author of *Under the UN Flag: The International Community and the Srebrenica Genocide* and Chairman of Potočari Memorial Centre.

In July 2011, he won on appeal in a law suit against the Dutch government, claiming that “the Dutch State committed war crimes, was involved in genocide and violated fundamental human rights by handing [his] family members over to the (Bosnian-Serb) enemy.¹³⁷ The charge was therefore one of gross criminal negligence, and the verdict is currently awaiting ratification by the Dutch Supreme Court.

At first Mr Nuhanović spoke to us about his court case and very recent victory. He said he believed in his case, but that he was uncertain of a victory due to such strong resistance from all sides. He described the fight in the courtroom as “unfair”, as the Dutch government had on their side a team of professionals paid for by the state, while he was forced to conduct all preliminary research himself. He feels that his book, published in English in 2007, should have been more than sufficient to win him the case.

Mr Nuhanović went on to describe what he viewed as the basis of his case. It was not about evacuation, as the Dutch can argue that this was impossible, but rather the core of the case was that Dutch soldiers forcibly expelled his family (amongst many others) from their base. They used force without providing the people with any alternative other than death. Mr Nuhanović furthermore feels very strongly that the ‘Dutch state presented lies to the judge’, by for example claiming that Dutchbat soldiers never expelled any Bosniak refugee from the compound. The Dutch government wanted to present this as a situation beyond their control, however, as Mr Nuhanović and his lawyer argued, not only were the Dutch not passive actors, they were actively involved and knew they were sending thousands of men and boys to their deaths. [Note: on this point, I strongly disagree with Mr Nuhanović. While that may be his sentiment, it has never been proven that Dutchbat soldiers or the Dutch government knew without a doubt that mass executions would take place in the days following July 11th.] However, Mr Nuhanović does go on to contradict his own statement, by claiming that “the Dutch could not have stopped genocide at that point [after July 11th]. They should have done something earlier.”

Further claims made by Mr Nuhanović: “You cannot ask the question ‘how could we know’ after the fact. This question after the fact makes no sense. You either prevent or you don’t.”

Mr Nuhanović also inadvertently explained why his case ended up being against the Dutch government, rather than individual soldiers or indeed the UN as a whole. His case, presented together with the ‘Mothers of Srebrenica’ in a District Court in The Hague, was ruled in favour of the UN on the basis of a lack of jurisdiction and the inability to sue an organisation under international

¹³⁷ <http://www.haguejusticeportal.net/eCache/DEF/9/758.html>

immunity. Questions of jurisdiction and lines of responsibility were similarly at stake when Nuhanović discussed with his lawyer the idea of suing individual Dutch soldiers, as only the Dutch state is able to do so.

Mr Nuhanović then moved on to a PowerPoint presentation, which summarised many of the points presented in his book, and involved detailed, day-by-day and map-by-map accounts of the fall of Srebrenica.

He discussed the death of Raviv van Rensen, a Dutch soldier according to him “allegedly” killed by a Muslim fighter. Nuhanović [note: unlike many other Srebrenica survivors] does not entirely accept this version of the story, and rather claims that “there is no way of knowing whether it was a Muslim fighter or a Serb shell.” However, he does note that “later, many Dutch soldiers would say that from this moment on they despised the Muslims, and looked upon them as their enemies as much as they did the Serbs.”

What is described furthermore is a situation wherein - according to Nuhanović - the Dutch did not fire a single bullet to save Srebrenica, were “apparently” captured by the Serbs but in effect joined their ranks voluntarily and lied in initial reports about their positions surrounding the town. Nuhanović feels that they failed the locals on all fronts, from failing to protect the town by patrols or military means to actively assisting the Serb army by surrendering men and boys into their control. He questions the Dutch defence of failing to assure NATO air strikes after Mladić threatened to kill the Dutch hostages if any outside assistance was provided by claiming they were not ‘real hostages’.

Nuhanović then went on to discuss the Dutch soldiers’ treatment of the refugees, who reached Potočari in one large column leading back to Srebrenica. He remembers a cordon of ‘Dutchbatters’ guiding the refugees into the compound, through a single hole in the barb wire which was cut out the night before. At one point, however, the ‘Dutchbat’ soldiers declared the compound full and closed off all access to thousands of refugees still stranded outside. According to Nuhanović, there was still plenty of space left inside the compound for more refugees.

This is then one of his most prominent points of contention with Dutch soldiers and government, alongside the issue of forceful expulsion of refugees from the Dutch army base. Nuhanović takes issue with both the Dutch claim that the base was too full to accept more refugees, as well as their claim that those who were within the compound eventually chose to leave of their own accord.

Mr Nuhanović also reflected on issues of collective versus individual guilt, and noted that he does not feel the ICTY trials have in any way contributed to a sense of closure for the Bosnians in terms of one party claiming responsibility for what happened. He stated still being in favour of a lawsuit by the state of Bosnia against the state of Serbia.

Question & Answer session

Q: What was your primary aim in filing this law suit?

A: “I also did this in order to get the case discussed in the most serious manner, where some real and binding consequences could come out of it. I wanted the issue to be back on the table.”

Q: What is your opinion about Serbia's recent resolution on the case of Srebrenica?¹³⁸

A: "I feel that it is a step in the right direction. But in my opinion our relationship with Serbia is a necessary evil. They probably still have territorial ambitions, but they will always be our neighbours and we must learn to peacefully coexist."

Q: Having spent a lot of time in the Netherlands during the past 8 years, and knowing a lot of Dutch people yourself, what is your opinion on the memory of Srebrenica in the Netherlands? You said you wanted to set the record straight about what happened, and I was wondering what you think that record says?

A: "I don't think the Dutch came to Srebrenica out of entirely positivistic or philanthropic motivations. What I read from the Dutch NIOD report that came out in 2002, it seems to me that the Dutch wanted a testing ground for their new elite airborne brigade. The Netherlands were looking for their place within the new EU and the expanded NATO, and I think wanted to elevate themselves above other newly important NATO players. And now I think, you come here with your own motivation and then say it wasn't your war, and you want your troops out. Well, then you should have let someone else do it. We were just a polygon for a show of strength of Dutch Airborne brigade."

Further comments by Hasan Nuhanović:

Mr Nuhanović also expressed that he felt things would have been different if another country's troops were stationed in Srebrenica at the time. He commented: "you knew not to mess with the Canadians or the French because they would shoot back."

He furthermore said the following on the issue of Srebrenica being recognised as genocide: "When those things were happening here we didn't have that word in our minds – genocide. We just thought they would kill us all. Now I feel that Bosnian politicians are using the word for their own means. However, if the word genocide is going to keep Bosnia together then I'm for it. But we didn't have that word on our minds during the war. We were just trying to survive."

Thomas Miller: former US ambassador, now Chairman of the Board at ICMP in Sarajevo

Mr Miller spoke briefly and predominately about his time spent as a US Ambassador to Bosnia, between the years 1999 and 2001. He was closely involved with the struggle to acquire the land for the Memorial Centre and cemetery in Potočari.

He had the following to say about why this particular site was chosen:

"I see the need for closure over the destinies of loved ones as a basic human right. Identifying what happened, finding the remains and giving survivors the opportunity to bury them was always our

¹³⁸ In March 2010, the Serbian Parliament passed a resolution apologising to the Bosnian people of the events of July 1995 in Srebrenica. It, however, "stopped short of calling the Bosnian war killings a genocide."

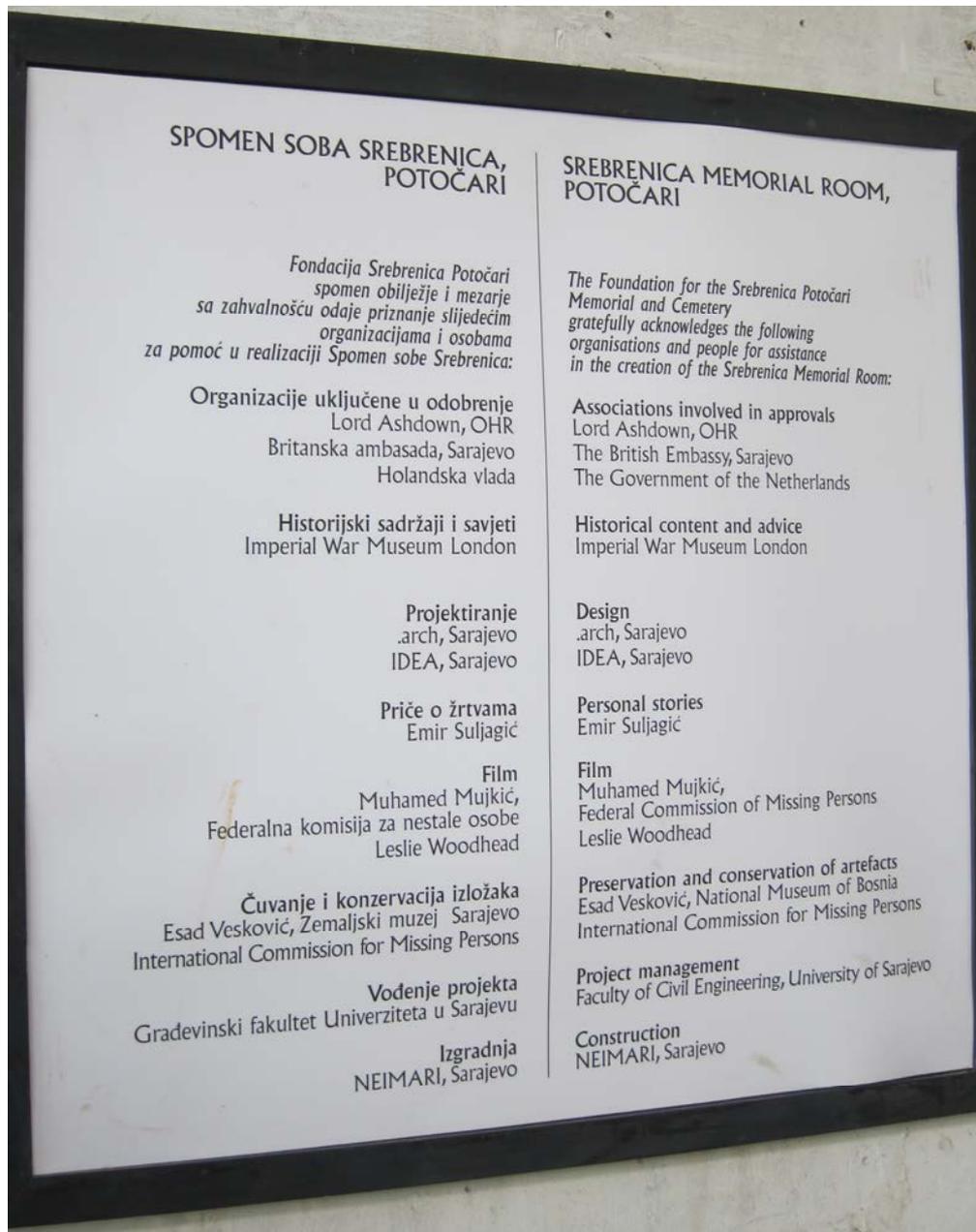
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8594625.stm>

primary goal. Potočari was chosen because it was important to the families, and therefore should be important to us. The Women of Srebrenica wanted to bury their loved ones here and not somewhere in the Federation like Kladanj. This does not mean that there weren't real fears that the cemetery would be desecrated and that the women would be attacked. I feel that the Mothers of Srebrenica were partially motivated out of this sense of spite as well, that they would not allow themselves to again be denied access to this place. At the end of the day, this is a Bosnian thing. It's about the victims. They have to decide where to put the memorials, and our job is to offer support there."

Sunday, 17 July 2011 and Monday, 18 July 2011 / Sarajevo

Short visit to Sarajevo. Return to Zagreb and then Amsterdam.

**Photographs of Srebrenica and surroundings taken in the period 04 July 2011 - 16 July 2011
(copyright Marcela Rilović)**



Potočari Memorial Centre, 'Memorial Room'

UNIVERZITET U SARAJEVU
Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv
čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava
SARAJEVO



UNIVERSITY OF SARAJEVO
Institute for the Research of Crimes
Against Humanity and International Law
SARAJEVO

SREBRENICA JE SIMBOL GENOCIDNOG STRADANJA BOŠNJAČKOG NARODA TOKOM AGRESIJE NA BOSNU I HERCEGOVINU. PREMA DO SADA PRIKUPLJENIM PODACIMA, TAMO SU VELIKOSRPSKE VOJNE I POLICIJSKE SNAGE POBILE, I TO NA NAJSVIREPIJI NAČIN, PREKO 8000 LJUDI.

SREBRENICA IS A SYMBOL OF GENOCIDAL SUFFERING OF THE BOSNIAK PEOPLE DURING THE AGGRESSION ON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA. ACCORDING TO COLLECTED DATA, THE GREATER SERB ARMY AND POLICE FORCES HAVE MOST BRUTALLY MURDERED OVER 8000 PEOPLE.

POSEBNU DIMENZIJU ZLOČINA U SREBRENICI NALAZIMO U ČINJENICI DA JE RIJEČ O SIGURNOSTI UN-a. OD 1993. GODINE, PA DO GENOCIDNOG POKOLJA U JULU 1995. GODINE, U NJOJ SU SE NALAZILI VOJNICI UN-a SA ZADATKOM DA ZAŠTITE POTPUNO IZOLOVANO BOŠNJAČKO STANOVNIŠTVO.

A PARTICULAR DIMENSION OF THE SREBRENICA CRIME IS FOUND IN THE FACT THAT THE ENCLAVE WAS GIVEN A „SAFE AREA“ STATUS BY THE UNITED NATIONS. FROM 1993 TO THE VERY GENOCIDAL MASSACRE IN JULY 1995, UN SOLDIERS WERE PRESENT IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE ISOLATED BOSNIAK POPULATION.

SKANDALOZNO JE DA SU TU SIGURNOSTI ZONU UN-a SRPSKE SNAGE OKUPIRALE UZ PRISUSTVO I NAOČIGLED MEĐUNARODNIH „MIROVNIH“ TRUPA, A POTOM IZVRŠILE I NAJGUSNJI ZLOČIN – GENOCID – KOJI JE VIĐEN NA TLU EVROPE NAKON HOLOKAUSTA.

IT IS SCANDALOUS THAT THIS SAFE AREA WAS OCCUPIED BY SERB FORCES IN THE VERY PRESENCE AND IN FRONT OF THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE KEEPING FORCES, AFTER WHICH THE MOST HORRIFIC OF CRIMES – GENOCIDE – THAT HAPPENED SINCE THE HOLOCAUST IN EUROPE, TOOK PLACE.

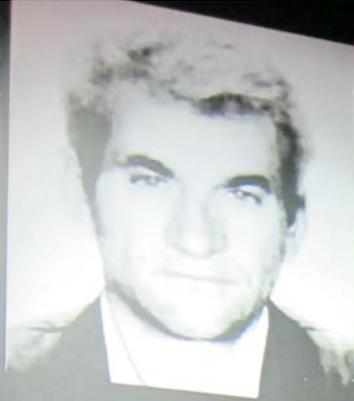
Potočari Memorial Centre, 'Memorial Room'



Potočari Memorial Centre, 'Memorial Room'



Potočari Memorial Centre, 'Memorial Room'



ŠEMSO (NAZIF) ZILDŽIĆ
(1934-1995)

Rođen 1934., Šemso Zildžić živio je u Tegarama kod Bratunca, gdje je radio kao varilac, ponekad odlazeći u Njemačku kao *gastarbeiter*. On i njegova supruga Hanifa potražili su utočište u Srebrenici u aprilu 1992. Hanifa nije dopuštala Šemsi ili njihovom sinu Ekremu da idu u potragu za hranom, i umjesto toga ona je hodala od jednog do drugog sela u okolini Srebrenice, hodala do Zepe proseći hranu. Kada je grad pao, Ekrem je krenuo ka Tuzli; Šemso i Hanifa uputili su se ka Potočarima. Šemso je odvojen od Hanife. Posljednja ga je vidjela njegova unuka Nevzeta, kroz autobuski prozor, dok je odlagao torbe i okretao se u pravcu neslavne "bijele kuće" u Potočarima, u kojoj su držani zatočeni muškarci prije odvođenja na pogubljenje.

Born in 1934, Šemso Zildžić lived in Tegare, Bratunac where he worked as a welder - sometimes going to Germany as a *gastarbeiter*. He and his wife Hanifa fled to Srebrenica in April 1992. Hanifa did not allow Šemso or their son Ekrem to take part in food raids and instead she went to surrounding villages and the neighbouring enclave of Zepe begging for food. When the town fell, Ekrem tried to reach Tuzla on foot, while Šemso and Hanifa made for Potočari. There Šemso was separated from Hanifa. His granddaughter Nevzeta, just five at the time, was the last to see him through the coach window, as he was made to put down his rucksack and marched in the direction of the infamous "white house", where all the men were kept in Potočari, before being taken for execution.

Češalj koji je pripadao Šemsi Zildžiću, pronađen 1998. sa njegovim tijelom u masovnoj grobnici Čančari-Kamenica, Zvornik.

Comb belonging to Šemso Zildžić, found with his body at the Čančari-Kamenica Zvornik mass grave in 1998.



Potočari Memorial Centre, 'Memorial Room'



IBRAHIM (HAMZA) HUBLIĆ
(1933-1995)

Otac šestoro djece, Ibrahim Hublić rođen je u Srebrenici 1933. godine. Oženio se pedesetih godina prošlog stoljeća i radio u građevinskoj firmi: posljednje godine radnog vijeka proveo je kao portir u sjedištu firme. Bio je otvoren i veseo tip. Kad je Srebrenica pregažena u julu 1995., Ibrahim, njegova supruga, kćerka Fadila i njeno dvoje djece otišli su u Potočare. Kada su stigli tamo, Ibrahim je otišao da potraži sestru svoje supruge u masi civila, da bi u tragičnom slijedu događaja bio odvojen od svoje familije i ostao izvan holandske baze. Preživjeli susjedi se sjećaju kako je narednih dana hodao između fabričkih hala u Potočarima i u suzama tražio svoju familiju.

A father of six, Ibrahim Hublić was born in 1933 in Srebrenica. He married in the 1950s and worked for a construction firm: his last years were spent as doorman at the company's headquarters. He was an outgoing type, and liked to be well turned-out. When Srebrenica was overrun in July 1995, Ibrahim, his wife, his daughter Fadila, and her two children, walked to Potočari. Once there, Ibrahim went to look for his wife's sister in the huge crowd and tragically got trapped outside the base. Neighbours remember seeing him walking around Potočari, tearfully trying to find his family.



Maramica koja je pripadala Ibrahimu Hubliću, pronađen 1998. sa njegovim tijelom iz masovne grobnice Hodžići-Zvornik.

Handkerchief belonging to Ibrahim Hublić, found with his body at the Hodžići-Zvornik mass grave in 1998.

Potočari Memorial Centre, 'Memorial Room'



RIJAD (ŠABAN) FEJZIĆ
(1977-1995)

Rijad Fejzić posljednji put fotografisan u jedanaestoj godini života. Bio je jedino dijete Šabana i Sabahete Fejzić, imućne familije koja je živjela u Srebrenici. Očajnički je želio da rat stane i da nastavi školovanje - njegove ambicije bile su da postane pilot. Kada je nestalo hrane, a familija, koja je sada uključivala i Sabahetinog brata i majku, morala je da preživljava na jednom kilogramu brašna dnevno, Rijad je uporno odbijao insistiranje roditelja da uzme i dio njihove porcije. Šaban, Sabaheta i Rijad su 11. jula kreuli pješice ka Tuzli. Ali, zbog kiše granata koja ih je pratila, odlučili su da Šaban nastavi ka Tuzli, a Sabaheta i Rijad krenuli su ka Potočarima. Dok su hodali prema autobusima, Rijadu je narađeno da "skrene desno". Sabaheta je čvrsto držala sina uza se, ali su je srpski vojnici brutalno je udarajući, odvojili od njega. Blijed i u suzama, Rijad se okrenuo Sabaheti i rekao: "Mama, molim te idi."

Rijad Fejzić, last photographed when he was just eleven, was the only child of Šaban and Sabaheta Fejzić, a well-off family living in Srebrenica. He desperately wanted the war to end so that he could continue his education - his ambition was to be a pilot. When food became short, and the family - now including Sabaheta's brother and mother - had to live on just a kilogram of flour a day, Rijad steadfastly refused his parents' offer of some of their share. On 11 July, Šaban, Sabaheta and Rijad set off on foot for Tuzla. As shells rained down nearby, they decided that Šaban should continue, but that Sabaheta and Rijad should go to Potočari. As they tried to board the coaches, Rijad was ordered to "go to the right". Sabaheta pulled her son to her but was beaten back by the soldiers. Pale and tearful, Rijad turned to Sabaheta and said simply: "Mama, please go."

Potočari Memorial Centre, 'Memorial Room'



Potočari Memorial Centre, 'Memorial Room'



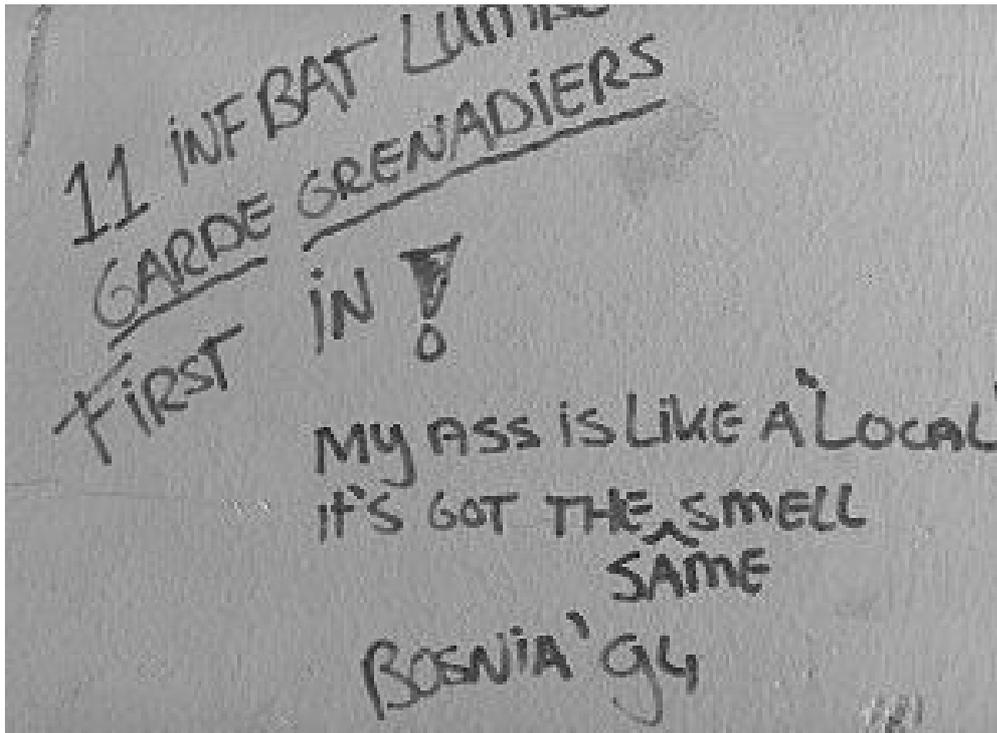
Graffiti painted by Serbian soldiers after taking over Potočari army base



'Dutchbat' graffiti as found in the army HQ in Potočari (now adjacent to the Potočari Memorial Centre)



Ynse Schellens - 'Dutchbat 3' soldier - standing next to a graffiti of Beavis and Butthead he drew in 1995



Infamous 'Dutchbat' graffiti by a yet unnamed author, as found in former 'Dutchbat' headquarters in Potočari



Former 'Dutchbat' HQ as it stands today and view from inside over the cemetery



Remains of the still unburied victims of Srebrenica's genocide, as displayed at the ICMP compound in Tuzla



At the start of the three-day 'Peace March' in Nezuk, 08 July 2011



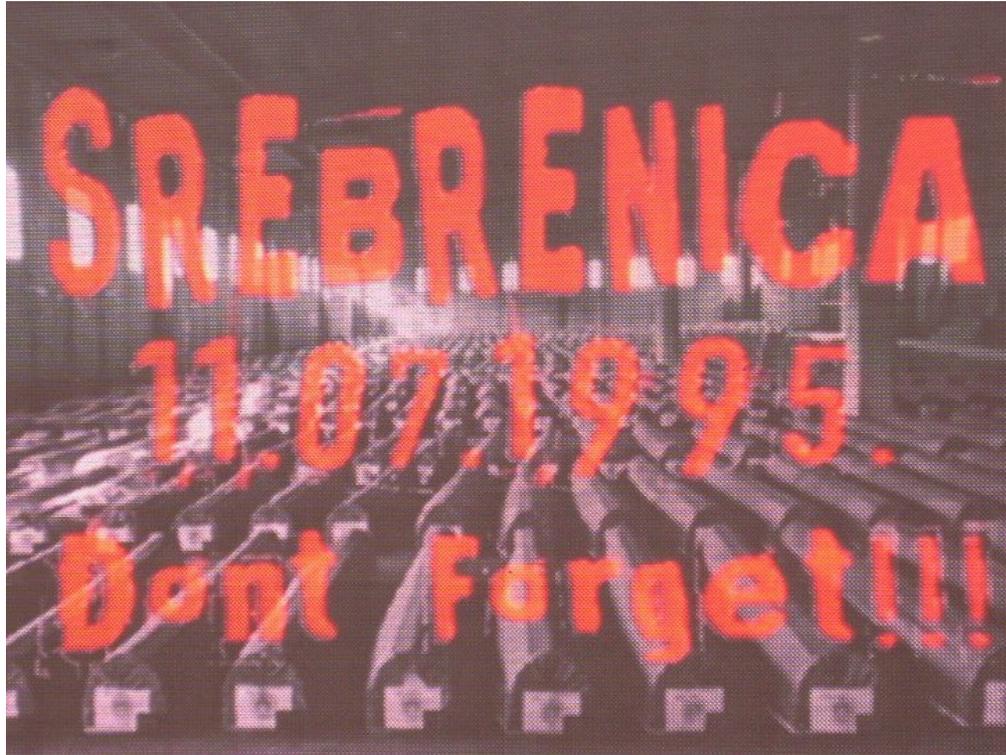
Along the route of the 'Peace March' on the first day, 08 July 2011



Mass grave as encountered on the route of the 'Peace March' and SUS participants at the end of the first day of the March, 08 July 2011



Arrival of 'Peace March' participants in Potočari in the afternoon of July 10th, 2011



Images from the 16th commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide, 11 July 2011



Images from the 16th commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide, 11 July 2011



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