

Srebrenica: The Sacred Lie

by Nebojsa Malic, July 10, 2010

In February 1991, Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic declared, "I would sacrifice peace for a sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina." He was true to his word; his government's declaration of independence in March 1992 sparked off a civil war, pitting Bosnia's ethnic communities — Serbs, Muslims, and Croats — against each other over the following three and a half years.

The timing of Izetbegovic's statement was particularly interesting, and often overlooked. He was promising a war to get an independent Bosnia at the moment the U.S.-led coalition was launching Operation Desert Storm to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqi invaders. Initial reluctance of the Western public to back the operation was transformed into an eagerness to "get Saddam" through reports of Iraqi atrocities, such as the one of babies being thrown out of incubators and killed. Though it turned out much later that the story was a complete fabrication, it had already served its purpose.

This lesson was not lost on Izetbegovic, who hired the same PR agency that launched the "incubator babies" hoax, and decided to fight the war not in the trenches, but on CNN. The goal was simple: through real, imagined, or exaggerated suffering, the Muslims would attract external military intervention. Just like in Kuwait. So the manufacturing of myths began.

Weapons of War

One after another, the claims came in: the war was "aggression" from Serbia, intent on "genocide." There were Serb "death camps" in western Bosnia. Serbs were systematically raping Muslim women. The siege of Sarajevo was worse than Leningrad and Stalingrad combined. Some 300,000 Muslims alone had been killed by 1993. Izetbegovic's Foreign Minister, Haris Silajdzic, and UN Ambassador Muhamed Sacirbey tirelessly repeated whichever message of the day was on the agenda, to whoever would listen. Bereft of an enemy in the aftermath of the Cold War, the West ate it up. So did Islamic militants, after the end of the Afghan jihad.

Eventually, however, the myths were exposed. The total death toll of the war was just under 100,000, and included many Serbs and Croats. The war in Sarajevo, however brutal, was exaggerated and manipulated for propaganda purposes. There was no evidence of mass rape, let alone its alleged systematic nature. The "death camps" were a hoax.

In 1993, the Izetbegovic regime sued Serbia before the International Court of Justice, alleging aggression and genocide. Francis Boyle, the American lawyer who wrote the lawsuit, asserted in 1995 that, "the claims of the Bosnian People for genocide will be vindicated for the entire world to see and for all of history to know." Yet in 2007, the ICJ rejected every single claim from the lawsuit.

The sole exception was Srebrenica, where the ICJ took for granted the decision by its bastard cousin, the ICTY, that "genocide" had been committed there. Srebrenica thus became the last remaining myth of the Bosnian War, and the foundation on which the entire war "narrative" came to rest.

Facts and Fiction

The story officially espoused by the Muslim government is that, following the capture of Srebrenica in July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces separated men and boys from the civilian refugees and summarily executed them. The exact number of victims is never specified, ranging from 7,000 to "over 8,000." Though vague and riddled with inconsistencies, this story has been accepted unquestioningly by the Western media and the ICTY, and is repeated ad nauseam. When the Bosnian Serb troops entered Srebrenica on July 11, 1995, they did so unopposed. Some 5,500 Muslim soldiers, members of the 28th Division of the Bosnian Army, had abandoned the town — and their families — and set off on a march towards Muslim-controlled Tuzla. The civilian population sought shelter at the UN compound in the hamlet of Potocari. Serb forces provided them with food and water, then commandeered buses and trucks from the surrounding Serb areas to evacuate them to Muslim-held territory. Today the Dutch UN peacekeepers are accused of "complicity" while the Serbs allegedly massacred Muslims before their very eyes. But nothing of the sort happened. UN investigator Henry Wieland, who in July 1995 spent a week interviewing the Muslims evacuated from Potocari, reported, "we have not found anyone who saw with their own eyes an atrocity taking place."

That the "genocide" memorial and cemetery were built on the site of the UN compound in Potocari is an act of supreme cynicism and manipulation.

Neither Corpus nor Delicti

Advocates of the official story point to a number of verdicts by the ICTY, thousands of bodies found in mass graves, and the confessions of executioners, and demand that the entire world accepts the Srebrenica "genocide" as "judicial fact." This type of approach is typical for PR, where what matters is what people believe. In law, however, what matters is what one can prove. Yet when it comes to proof, both the ICTY and the advocates of the official story consistently come up short.

The crown witness, on whom the entire case hangs, is a liar. Other witnesses have been exposed as serial perjurers. The ICTY's own forensic evidence, gathered over the past fifteen years, has yielded 3,568 autopsy reports, but fewer than 2,000 actual bodies. Only 442 bodies in the mass graves have ligatures and/or blindfolds, strongly suggesting execution. The DNA evidence allegedly collected by the International Commission for Missing Persons (a quasi-NGO run by the U.S. government) has not been shown to anyone — including the ICTY prosecutors and judges! Even so, DNA evidence can only identify the bodies; it cannot prove the manner of death. Yet the ICTY maintains that the DNA evidence collected by ICMP somehow "proves" these people were executed. Genocide is defined by a 1948 UN Convention as actions "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such" (emphasis added).

No proof of such intent was ever produced by the ICTY. Instead, the intent was inferred based on the bodies recovered, whose final number itself was inferred back from the alleged genocidal intent. If this sounds like circular logic, that's because it is.

But who are the dead, then? Overwhelmingly, members of that 28th Division column mentioned earlier, who abandoned their families and set forth towards Tuzla. Reports and testimonies of those who survived, along with the combat logs of Bosnian Serb units, paint a picture of a harrowing trek through minefields, under artillery fire, and constant skirmishes with Bosnian Serb units pursuing them or seeking to bar their path. Some people just gave up and died of heat ex-

haustion, hunger, and exposure. And as the forensic evidence mentioned indicates, a number of them were captured, bound, and shot. This was clearly a war crime, and should be prosecuted as such. But to call it genocide requires stretching the definition of the act beyond recognition.

Politics of Genocide

This approach fits, however, into the pattern of PR propaganda concerning Bosnia. From the very beginning of the war, the Serbs were presented as the new Nazis. Croats and Muslims were presented not as combatants, but as innocent victims. James Harff, of PR firm Ruder Finn, explained the purpose of this to a French journalist in a 1993 interview:

"...the Croatian and Bosnian past was marked by a real and cruel anti-semitism [sic]. Tens of thousands of Jews perished in Croatian camps. So there was every reason for intellectuals and Jewish organizations to be hostile towards the Croats and Bosnians. Our challenge was to reverse this attitude. And we succeeded masterfully."

By cynically manufacturing false parallels to the Holocaust, then exploiting them to gain support in the Western public, the regimes in Zagreb and Sarajevo were not just demonizing their current enemy, but whitewashing their own past. Meanwhile, some Americans have tried to use Srebrenica (and subsequently the equally imaginary genocide in Kosovo) as justification for the American Empire, the only force capable of "stopping genocides" that were apparently commonplace all over the world — in what one commentator dubbed the "weaponization of human rights." The tears shed by Imperial officials at Srebrenica commemorations are supposed to wash their consciences clear of their own murders in Iraq and elsewhere. Such are the politics of genocide.