



25th ANNIVERSARY

REMEMBERING SREBRENICA

LETTERS FROM BOSNIA

Dear Friend,

It's spring, end of May, 1992. It's gorgeous. It's sunny. I am not working. The last time I went to work at Omarska was on the 22nd of May. I am sitting and drinking coffee while Boris is playing some music. The only thing that was disrupting this beautiful, idyllic, life was in the distance. Somewhere far over there we could hear the thunder of tanks, shelling and shootings. This was more than disruption; it was war. From the direction of Kozarac, we saw flames, tanks. The earth under our feet was shaking from the attacks of cannons and tanks. The war started, 6 kilometers from us.

The next day, from Borik, down the hill emerged women, children, elderly and some men - shaken with fear in their eyes running from death, from the Golgotha...we became part of the war.

July, 1992, Omarska. It happened. In the middle of the night I woke up with pain and cramps in my stomach. I've realized that the water that we have been drinking in the concentration camp is not as healthy. I am turning and would love to scooch together but there is no space. I have to go to the toilet. The last time I went to the toilet was 27 days ago at Keraterm. 27 days ago, during a different life. I stand up. I hurriedly walk towards the toilet. I enter. "Uh, it's good!" I am not alone, about 5-6 other detainees are there and one guard, Kvočka junior, the younger brother of the Deputy Chief Commander of the concentration camp. He's guarding the situation, looking out for "hygiene." There is no water in the toilet. A barrel of water is filled on the sink and used to wash the toilet.

One detainee warned me to leave the barrel for later. The warning came too late. Kvočka has already seen me. Not even a minute later, the door of the toilet is knocked by foot and the Balijska mother is being cursed while hitting my head with a baton. I ran out of the toilet cabin while being hit in the head. I am screaming from pain. At the door, another guard emerges with a thick electrical cord, he joins in with the beating. My painful screams have awoken the vultures. The third and fourth guard came in. They are beating me; the hitting continues on my back, legs, head. I am screaming, God can hear me, the pain is unbearable. My screaming does not help, they keep hitting me. There's reinforcement; the fifth, sixth and seventh guard came. I recognize, among them, Svarka - it was yesterday that I spoke to him.



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I can't scream anymore, my mouth is full of blood and broken teeth. Every breath is like a sharp knife. The eight guard came in, Prcac the Manager of the shift. He starts to beat me with his foot.

I am not screaming anymore. I am choking and barely breathing.

Then something unexplained happened: I see how the batons, boots, cable cords, and baseball bats are hitting my unprotected body and how slowly I am fading away...The last thing that I heard, before I faded in peace, were Prcac's words: "Enough, he's gone..."

My friends, acquaintances, relatives and strangers ask me why I write about my horrific, sad and painful stories. There is only one answer: I need to and I have to. I write for myself and for those that are no longer with us and who can't write their own story; they deserve to be remembered. I write in hope that it will never happen again. Despite the fact how hard these stories can be, they are a reminder and a warning.

Sincerely,

Anto Tomić

Omarska