



25th ANNIVERSARY

REMEMBERING SREBRENICA

LETTERS FROM BOSNIA

Dear Friend,

It is hard for a seven year old boy to remember times before the war. However, I do remember the first days of school very well. I was proud to go to school because I felt very important. Every Friday my grandmother or my father would wait for me in front of the school. It was a great feeling and those were the happy days of my childhood. We were all healthy, together, my parents were working, others were going to school too, life was good. I tried so much to be the best student in my class because I liked the attention and the gifts I got whenever I got a good grade. I would usually get a bar of chocolate or a lollipop. Those were some of the happy memories that are unfortunately totally suppressed due to the period that was at the door.

‘Men on one side, women and children on the other’, are the words that even today, 28 years later , are the reason I sometimes wake up at night. The sound of the police whistle, guns clicking, three men, I dare to call murderers, who go by the line of people with some sort of a bat and hit randomly every person they want and how hard they want.

All of this happened on June 1st 1992., when the Serb army surrounded around 5000 civilians from the collection of villages in the valley of Sapna river, a place called Klisa. From this site we were supposed to be transported to the territory under the control of ‘your balija* army’ as they called the Army of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was an incredibly hot day, at that moment I thought it was 40 degrees. We were escorted by the paramilitary formations armed to the teeth to a place called Bijeli Potok. They ordered us to line up two by two in a line that was a couple of kilometers long. Then they said those words above mentioned: ‘Men on one side, women and children on the other’. Those were the words a person can never forget. Of all those soldiers I remember three of them being the most brutal. They were young, in their early thirties. While passing by the line of people they would hit whoever they wanted. They would push people in the stream by the road, sharpening their knives and pointing under the throats with them, and then they would pick people up and return them in the line, ordering some of us to make gestures as if we were Christians. Some of the people due to the fear and pain would wet their pants. There were so many things they did that I can never forget as long as I live. That day, when we were walking in that line was the day we all saw our fathers, uncles, grandfathers, neighbors, relatives for the last time.



Today when someone asks me why talk about it, why not forget?

I can only answer metaphorically when you get bitten 11 times by the same snake and we forget that we were bitten, then we deserve to be bitten by that same snake as long as we live. However, we must keep on living and keep building better life standards but we must never forget. So whenever, one gets a chance to speak up about those atrocities that happened in the city of Zvornik, in Bratunac, Srebrenica, Prijedor and so many more places, one should use that chance because those who did those atrocities will keep on living their lives peacefully as long as we are silent. That silence must be broken for the future generations who need to learn from our past what they must never do in their future.

'History is the teacher of life'- I believe that this sentence says it all.

(*balija- a word used only for Bosnian Muslims, offensive manner)

Sincerely,

Elmedin Bosnjak
Zvornik