



25th ANNIVERSARY

REMEMBERING SREBRENICA

LETTERS FROM BOSNIA

Dear Friend,

Whenever I think about my life before the war, I get smile on my face and tears in my eyes at the same time. I lived in a small village called Likari, municipality of Bratunac. My family lived a happy life, my brothers and sisters and our parents. I was the eldest. We had the most loving parents and every day was a happy day. As every family we had our issues but we were never apart. I had many friends and relatives in the village which was always filled with children, their screams and laughter.

However, that happiness did not last long. In 1992 we were already at war because Serbs did not want us all living together in one independent country. We fled to Srebrenica and stayed there until July 11th 1995, when Ratko Mladic's army took the town. I was 22 years old and I knew that things will not end well for me or my brother. We decided to go through the forests and across the mountains, in hope to reach free territory in Tuzla, which was 120 km far. Later we will call this march towards the free territory 'a death march'. More than 15 thousand men and boys tried to escape from a certain death on this march, however less than 6000 had the luck to survive.

I was among those who had that luck but my younger brother Hasib was not. We ran into an ambush in the woods and my brother was severely wounded. Everyone in the group told me to leave him behinds because he will die in the matter of minutes. However, I couldn't , I simply couldn't. He was younger than me and my mom begged me to take care of him. I decided not to leave him and with the help of some men I carried his body for 22 kilometers, that is the distance between us and the free territory. He lived for 9 hours before he passed away. That moment will stay with me in the deepest part of me as long as I breathe. His soul left him while his head was on my lap. I will never forget his words before he left forever. He said he was sorry because he will never see my son again, who was toddler at the time, and to tell our mother when I meet with her again, that he was not suffering. He tried to open his eyes once more before he closed them forever. He was 20 years old.



My brother is the reason enough for me not to stand aside and just watch, not to mention 8371 other reasons. To be silent about what happened would be my greatest sin. I passed the truth to my children first, who don't remember, because I want them to know what kind of people they must never become. To hate someone because he is different than you, doesn't have the same view of life as you do, to have prejudice towards others because of their religious beliefs that are different than your own, is something I want my children and all others to see as the greatest threat to humanity. I see all said as the root of every bloodshed.

As for myself I cannot be silent because that would mean I approve the evil that happened. We must try to pass on the truth and nothing but the truth. The only truth is that Serb army committed genocide in Srebrenica in 1995 killing in the most brutal way more than 8000 men and boys. As one of the means to preserve and pass on the truth I recently wrote a book about my survival and the death of others. We must write, we must speak because that is the only way we will have peace in the future, and we won't have permanent peace as long as we have genocide deniers and children who learn from them about the war. Our biggest 'teachers' are the ones whose remains are in the Potocari Memorial, they are the witnesses of the truth, killed only because of their ethnicity, religion and their names. Their gravestones remind us every day that we must never stop fighting for the truth to be heard! Their gravestones remind us that this must never happen again!

Sincerely,

Hasan Hasanović

Bratunac