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R1100535

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Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

STATE SECRET

MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR [handwritten and circled number: 8]

SECURITY SERVICES CENTRE

STATE SECURITY SERVICE SECTOR

T U Z L A

\_\_\_\_\_  
/registration number/

\_\_\_\_\_  
/registration date/

Line of work: 02

Operative worker: JM325

No.

Date: 28 July 1995

OFFICIAL NOTE ABOUT AN INFORMATIVE INTERVIEW

SOURCE: RIFET BEGANOVIĆ, son of Avdija, born in 7 January 1953 in Kostjerevo in Zvornik municipality, citizen of RBiH<sup>1</sup>, Muslim follower of Islam, married, father of three children, by occupation a driver, self-employed road haulier, was previously residing in Kostjerevo, house number 96, and is currently accommodated as a refugee in Mačkovac cabin area in Banovići, member of RBiH Army, engaged as a commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon of the 284<sup>th</sup> Brigade 4<sup>th</sup> Company.

The data refer to the condition in Srebrenica before the fall, with the basic causes that led to it.

The meeting was held on our initiative on 25 July 1995 in the source's flat, and it was held from 1400 to 1900 hours.

There were no costs.

The note is submitted on 28 July 1995.

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<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

II

Taking in consideration that the source's recorded statement was about the circumstances surrounding his sufferings during his breakthrough with the RBiH Army units from Srebrenica towards the free territory, the Contact was used with the aim of broadening our knowledge about some occurrences connected to the state in Srebrenica during the period when it was proclaimed a "UN protected area", as well as the basic causes of its fall.

III

At the beginning of the conversation, the source stated that from the end of 1993, i.e. after Cerska and Konjević Polje were occupied, he moved to Srebrenica with his family. He secured them temporary accommodation in Crni Guber Street, in the Drina building, and at the same time he was actively included in the RBiH Army troops. From the period when the UN units under Morillon's command entered Srebrenica, within the "UN protected area" there was relative peace. The activities of the UN units during their first days mainly came down to disarming the RBiH Army units with the aim of creating a "demilitarised zone". After they stored the heavy weapons, the UN soldiers targeted all their activities at taking away the infantry weapons from the RBiH Army members.

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As the source stated, the UN soldiers carried out their duty so zealously that there were situations when they ran through the town chasing after the RBiH Army members who were carrying infantry weapons. After such occurrences, the competent command for the RBiH Army units in Srebrenica issued a ban on carrying infantry weapons in any situation except when in positions. According to the source's findings, that way they saved about 2500-3000 pieces of infantry weaponry, one howitzer, one cannon, and several 60 mm mortars. The fact that that quantity was insufficient to defend the town is shown also by the data that in Srebrenica, according to the source's estimate, there were about 5000 RBiH Army members.

Furthermore, the UN members did not make much contact with the people, and focused only on the contact with the civilian authority in Srebrenica.

As the conversation moved along, the source stated that he managed to evacuate one part of his family from Srebrenica via convoys organised by the UNHCR, and so he stayed with his son and his brother in Srebrenica. Despite the relative peace that was in Srebrenica, the basic problem was the chronic food deficit, despite the fact that the UNHCR delivered the food to the town. The source could not provide more information about the type and amount of food that was delivered by the UNHCR, but he did not hide the fact that almost unlimited amounts of it could be bought at the market from the smugglers in replacement for marks<sup>2</sup>. For those reasons there were often unorganised gatherings of women and children in front of the municipal building, and they were requesting a more even and correct distribution of humanitarian goods. All those gatherings finished with civilian authority promising that "tomorrow they would carry out an additional distribution" during which minimal amounts of flour were distributed. The lack of salt in those distributions was the hardest on the people of Srebrenica, while at the same time one could buy 100 g of salt at the market for DM<sup>3</sup> 10.

As the conversation moved along, the source stated that on one occasion one young man, originally from Vlasenica, whose name the source does not know, tried to consolidate the requests of the gathered and discontent women and pass them on to the civilian authority. The above-stated young man passed the requests to a man called "Mrki Mandža" [underlined in original text] who after that spoke to the women, saying that "if they continued to protest", all subsequent convoys would be unloaded in Potočari, and that "the civilian authority and they would distribute it as they like". Also on that occasion, the above-named said to the gathered women, among other things, that "he had not brought them to Srebrenica, and [asked them] what were they doing there". In the evening of that same day on which the above-stated gathering was held, the aforementioned young man from Vlasenica was found dead. [underlined in original text] The source could not give more information about the above-stated event.

As the conversation moved along, [the source stated] that there was antagonism between the local people and the refugees from Bratunac, Cerska, Vlasenica, and other places, who found protection in Srebrenica. According to the

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<sup>2</sup> t/n: currency

<sup>3</sup> t/n: Deutsche Marks

source, there were frequent confrontations between the two sides due to the selling of agricultural products. As a matter of fact, people from Srebrenica who owned larger farmable parcels sold all their surplus products for marks at the market, and they did not allow even the children to pick a single apple or pear. In order to somewhat lower the level of discontent in refugees, last year the civilian authorities carried out a division of farmable land, owners of which had left Srebrenica earlier and in various ways, with the aim of increasing the agricultural production. According to the source, there were cases where some Srebrenica locals, not counting their own land, usurped as much as 50 dulums<sup>4</sup> of the above-stated lands, and at the same time did not allow the refugees to farm them.

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There were also people among the Srebrenica locals who through their work accused the official civilian authorities for various misappropriations and for the "flourishing" of war profiteering. The source stated that in that group were, among others, Ibran Mustafić, an MP in the RBiH Assembly, and Hamed Salihović, the President of SDA. Just how much the official civilian authority in Srebrenica, led by Osman Suljić, disliked their work and actions can be seen from the information that about twenty days before Srebrenica fell, an assassination was carried out against them. As the source further stated, that happened about 20 m from Kapetanova ćuprija [sic] when a group of armed young men shot from APs<sup>5</sup> and killed Salihović, while Mustafić was seriously wounded. The source is not familiar with the details of the above-stated event, and he was present when a few hours later the UN teams arrived to the scene of the event and took photographs of the trace evidence and the crime scene. As far as the source knows, none of the civilian authorities or the UN commented on the above-stated event.

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<sup>4</sup> t/n: *dunam* or *dunum* - Ottoman unit of area representing the amount of land that could be ploughed by a team of oxen in a day, although the new or metric dunam has been redefined as exactly one decare (1000 m<sup>2</sup>)

<sup>5</sup> t/n: automatic rifle

Also, as the source further stated, there were multiple groups of unrestrained young men in Srebrenica who were carrying out certain tasks for their bosses' needs. They were gathered around "Mrki" Mandžo, Zulfo Tursunović, Osman Suljić, and Hajrudin Avdić.

According to the source, the only just person in Srebrenica was Naser Orić, who, not counting his good qualities in terms of military, was the only one who could stand up to and influence the civilian authority. Since two months earlier, when Naser went to Tuzla, the state in Srebrenica suddenly got worse and, as the source stated, "there was anarchy", which affected the fighters' morale, and the new situation influenced the fall of Srebrenica. Since he spent more time on the combat lines around Srebrenica, the source stated that since the first day after the proclamation of the safe area, the aggressor party had been preparing to continue with the offensive operations. And they did that by making paths towards all trig points under their control and organising their positions in terms of engineering. Such work was especially intense near the UN control posts, and in some places, the aggressor party directly pressured the UN soldiers in order for them to withdraw, with the aim of creating a more suitable position for themselves. That was the case in Pribičevac<sup>6</sup> [sic] above Srebrenica. As far as the source knows, during the attack on Srebrenica, one of the main strikes on the town was from the direction of Pribičevci [sic], and from that direction the aggressor units quickly entered the town.

Despite the intense attacks by the aggressor which followed on 9 July 1995 after they gave an ultimatum, certain defence lines were holding exceptionally well, such as, for example, [the one] above Slapovići and in Zeleni jadar [sic]. However, since the aggressor units entered the town from different directions, the RBiH Army units had to have withdrawn from the above-stated lines.

As the conversation moved along, the source stated that the only true help that the people of Srebrenica received was from the civilian and military authorities of Žepa. Just how unselfishly the Žepa people helped can be seen from the data that there were occasions when in one day 1000 people from Srebrenica went to Žepa to get food, and they all returned with the food in quantity which they could carry. The source is familiar with the fact that campaigns were organised in Žepa to collect food which was given out to the fighters within the 28<sup>th</sup> Division.

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<sup>6</sup> t/n: Pribičevac

At the end of the conversation, the source emphasised that, considering everything he stated, Srebrenica could not have defended itself because, among other things, there were no persons there that would be capable of organising the food for the people much less organising the defence of the town.

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IV

Considering that during the breakthrough, the source's son and brother remained on the territory that is temporarily under the aggressor's control, which was mentioned in the record of this statement, his mental state is poor, and subsequent contacts were arranged with him with the aim of determining and discovering witnesses of genocide against the people of Srebrenica.

We proposed that the above-stated findings be made available to the O2 Department for further processing.

DELIVERED:

1 x O2 Department

1 x OA<sup>7</sup> of Tuzla SDB<sup>8</sup> Sector

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ID59-0332

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<sup>7</sup> t/n: Operative Operation

<sup>8</sup> t/n: State Security Service