

Sefer Halilović: open letter to Alija Izetbegović

You betrayed Srebrenica

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Sefer Halilović, former Chief of the Main Staff of the Army of BiH¹, yesterday sent an open letter to Alija Izetbegović, in which he accused him that he had “betrayed and sold Srebrenica”. These days, it’s the 8th anniversary of the tragedy in Srebrenica (11 July 1995), which you and your trabants² betrayed and sold – said Halilović at the beginning of the open letter addressed to Izetbegović.

Halilović yesterday reacted to an open letter from Izetbegović, dated 28 June 2003. In that letter, Izetbegović reacted to claims of Slobodan Milošević, former president of SR³ Yugoslavia, who stated before The Hague Tribunal that he, as the BiH Presidency Chairman, had offered him in 1993 the exchange of Srebrenica for Vogošća. In the public letter, Izetbegović claimed that Milošević had extracted the statement from Sefer Halilović’s testimony at The Hague.

Denying that he had given testimonies about any other matter but the crimes in Grabovica, for which he is charged under command responsibility by The Hague Tribunal, in yesterday’s letter, Sefer Halilović told Izetbegović:

You tied me up well with this cuckoo in the nest at The Hague, so I did not have time to reply to you sooner. I have decided to react because your letter has several statements in relation to my name and in its entirety it implies a morbid lie that I am responsible for the tragedy that happened in Srebrenica in 1995, even though I was removed from the Army by your decision on 26 October 1995 after several days of abuse and brutality of the services of state and military security – Halilović explained that his testimony given to The Hague investigators exclusively concerned the issues of crimes in Herzegovina, and not those in eastern Bosnia.

He also mentioned “secret agreements” that Izetbegović signed.

If you have forgotten due to years or old age, I am reminding you now that on 16 September 1993 together with Momčilo Krajišnik you signed in secret a Joint Declaration on the dividing of BiH into three ethnic republics, in Article 5 of which it states “that we shall form a work group for specific issues regarding the territorial demarcation between the two republics in the future BiH union, including eastern Bosnia”, and two days before that, together with Tuđman you signed a Declaration on Bosnian-Croatian Demarcation. In both those documents that were signed in secret it stated that the Republic of Srpska and HR⁴ Herceg-Bosna, after two years, could vote on a referendum and decide whether they wanted to stay in BiH or join Serbia and Croatia – stated Halilović in his letter, and reminded Izetbegović that he could send him the two documents he had signed.

Former ARBiH⁵ general also reminded Izetbegović of the holding of Bosniak Congress in Sarejevo in September 1993 “where a Bosnian Republic – a Bosniak National State without Srebrenica – was to be proclaimed”. Halilović says that Izetbegović offered the delegation of nine members Srebrenica an

¹ Translator’s note: Bosnia and Herzegovina

² t/n: historical name for an attendant or a bodyguard, especially in the Middle Ages,

³ t/n: Socialist Republic

⁴ t/n: Croatian

⁵ t/n: Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

exchange of Srebrenica for Vogošća, referencing to the testimony of Hakija Meholjić who confirmed that the delegation had refused that offer by Izetbegović.

Besides Hakija Meholjić, an American, David Rodhe, wrote in his book about how you “neutralised the defence of Srebrenica” by getting Naser Orić out of that town – Halilović wrote and mentioned the statements and writings of Richard Holbrooke and Muhamed Filipović on “negotiations about selling Srebrenica”.

Halilović emphasised that under his command, the Army of BiH had liberated Srebrenica in 1992 and defended in it in 1993, after which the “blue helmets”⁶ arrived:

And instead of using the period from 1993 until 1995 to bring new people to Srebrenica and Žepa and to transfer larger amounts of armament than your loyal fat generals had done, together with them you did everything to forget that area so the responsibility would fall on the international community, and you would not be held responsible – Halilović stated categorically.

He dismissed accusations that he had disarmed Srebrenica himself, adding that after the demilitarisation of that town, several brigades and battalions were formed, as well as a repair garage and a war hospital. Halilović illustrated that with data that in Srebrenica, at the time, there was a “division of 12,000 men, and that in the moment of Srebrenica’s fall, there was a total of just 6,000 soldiers”:

You will have to respond to the children of Srebrenica why you refused my proposal to form the 8th Eastern Bosnian Corps, why after my removal from the ARBiH you proclaimed half of the soldiers of the 28th Division redundant, why you delivered less weapons in two years than I did in two months during the offensive on Srebrenica in 1993 – said Halilović in the letter addressed to Alija Izetbegović.

⁶ t/n: UN peacekeepers