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Remembering the 1995 Srebrenica Genocide

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At the Bosniak Institute in Sarajevo on July 8, 2010, BZK "Preporod" ("Renaissance") organized a lecture on remembering the Srebrenica genocide 1995-2010. The speakers that evening were the president of BZK "Preporod" Senadin Lavić and professors Edina Bećirević, Ćazim Sadiković, Šaćir Filandra, Asim Mujkić and Dino Abazović.

Fifteen years have passed since July 1995 in Srebrenica. Many questions have still not been answered. What is our life after that event? Where is our existence headed fifteen years after this terrible crime? What is our future after the unconscionable genocidal suffering of Bosnia in Srebrenica? What kind of people have we become? Inevitability, Srebrenica emerges as the place of the horrible crime of genocide and as an encompassing symbol of the much sufferings in Sarajevo, Mostar, Livno, Nevesinje, Prijedor, Višegrad, Foča, Goražde, Bijeljina, Brčko, and the other places in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The barbaric invasion of the Belgrade regime which initiated the Greater Serbia project with fire and sword was rounded-off and finished in Srebrenica. Srebrenica became the centre point of the crime map and the network against Bosniaks. Are we after fifteen years aware of what happened and what is happening to us now? Do we still have the strength to think in our post-genocidal existence? Do we have the will to overcome the status of victim in which we are detained? It cannot be that our lives¬¬––profaned by petty politics––are reduced to the fate of victims without any hope; we need to live and build our future. What are our memories today, fifteen years after the consummation of a genocidal aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina?

The Nazis wanted an ethnically pure Germany. To achieve this goal, they exterminated all who were not a part of their national identity. The Bosnian Serbs, most but not all of them, encouraged by the Greater Serbia policy of Belgrade, from such people as Dobrica Ćosić, Mihailo Marković, and others, realized that the only way to create a homogeneous, compact, and politically confined territory was to carry out ethnic cleansing and genocide. The path of the crime was realized through careful planning. In the early nineties, Ratko Mladić, the indicted criminal for genocide and war crimes who is now "hiding" in Serbia, publically admitted that the project of the Bosnian Serbs could be realized and achieved only through genocide. This openly stated admission tells us that the aggressors against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina knew what had to happen in order to achieve the "six strategic objectives" of a

Greater Serbia expansionism.

The Srebrenica genocide in July 1995 represented the completion of a criminal process against Bosnia and its citizens resulting in the establishment of a “pure” Serbian territory project within Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is clear that this process could not have been implemented without the regime of Slobodan Milošević in Belgrade. The Belgrade authorities today are successfully transferring the main responsibility for the genocide in Bosnia to the Bosnian Serbs, who themselves continually turn to the Dayton Peace Agreement as an effective means of destabilizing the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, the irresponsibility we as intellectuals and human beings show towards the suffering of Srebrenica and genocide, deprived of our humanistic hopes in such a cynical context, surpasses one’s darkest forebodings. We have not honestly considered what is happening to us, as if the genocide happened somewhere on Mars, to someone unknown, some long time ago. We still have not precisely identified the events surrounding us, and we do not have, it seems, a clear sense of what is currently happening. We should not transform Srebrenica, as a symbol of suffering and a place where genocide is shown in its most horrible form, into a story about the number of killed, a dispute about numbers, because the content of Srebrenica cannot be reduced to statistics which, of course, has a place in recounting the crime of genocide. Nor can the Srebrenica genocide be reduced to a means for political purposes and manipulation in a struggle for political power by Bosniak politicians, on the one hand, nor can it be totally denied for such purposes, on the other hand.

We need to fight against the genocide against Bosniaks in Srebrenica being turned into an annual funeral at which the religious representatives of the Bosniaks fulfill a religious obligation toward the innocently killed people and pray to God to stop the terrible suffering of the people due to the Greater Serbian expansionist project. It is, likewise, inhuman to submit the suffering of the people to the courtesy condolence speeches of so many domestic and foreign politicians, as if the burial of the remains of Srebrenica’s victims were for them. Dare we admit that the Srebrenica genocide should not and cannot be reduced to an annual funeral and a set of statements from political party representatives on how they will never forget what happened? That is not enough because it distorts and hides the content of the terrible crimes. Is the thought so unorthodox that we emphasize that the genocide against the Bosniaks in Srebrenica is beyond any funeral, which is, of course, a religious obligation for the Bosniak victims, which must be met, and that we emphasize that the genocide is an integral part of the European world in which it became possible to kill people in such a manner? All those who reduce the genocide to a religious act and a set of long speeches by politicians on July 15th are helping us, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, in not seeing and understanding what happened in Srebrenica and what is happening to Bosniaks as a community.

We need to start thinking about Srebrenica. This is the only established basis upon which to prevent renewed assaults on Bosnia and Bosniaks in the name of Greater Serbia. The genocide against Srebrenica’s Bosniaks does not only concern Bosniaks; at the end of the 20th century, this genocide also became a part of the European consciousness and conscience. Taking into consideration the situation in which we find ourselves, Dino Abazović advises that the issue of genocide is a question of

humanity, humanity's human face. Genocide offends every human being in the world. The whole drama about the genocide should be seen from the European and world level, within international law, UN Charter, European Union, and not reduced to a funeral that concerns only the families of the victims and those who sympathize with the innocent people killed. Can we save Srebrenica from ourselves, i.e., from profanity, misunderstandings, and manipulations? Srebrenica is the direct result of war crimes carried out to create a Greater Serbia and the direct result of international irresponsibility for which people need to be held responsible. Who allowed the genocide in the "UN safe area" Srebrenica? If we are humans, it can still be found out.

I believe that the time has come to approach seriously the issue of genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its causes and consequences, and this indicates the responsibility of all scientists and the intellectual public, all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regardless of their religious or ethnic designation. Researching the genocide in Podrinje, Edina Bećirević warns that Srebrenica is not an "out-of-region entity"; it is located in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the genocide against Bosniaks took place. At international meetings and conferences Srebrenica is discussed, but not located in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The impression people get is that Srebrenica it is an indeterminate place outside of Bosnian territory. It is said that the ignorance, irresponsibility, and incompetence of individuals and international institutions are the reasons for undermining the heroic defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and humiliating the suffering of victims. This, though, helps the aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina retroactively become a "civil war" in which "all were killing" and in which "all were equally guilty."

We have known for a long time who carried out the Srebrenica genocide. Do we also know about the responsibility of numerous political parties who have been actively turning the verdict of the International Court of Justice in The Hague on the Srebrenica genocide into a dead letter? Do we have to remind politicians and rulers who swear by Bosnia that the verdict serves to seek and respect the law and the verdict seeks justice and this is what the pro-Bosniak representatives of political parties must work on? The results of the Bosniak ethnopolitic the past twenty years have been catastrophic, and it is determined by the irresponsibility and inadequacy to a political situation which produces a sense of powerlessness, defeatism, and anomie in the social system. The complexity of the issues of genocide, according to Šaćir Filandra, requires us to speak and act on multiple levels, and one of them, the artistic and aesthetic-poetic, is extremely important in order to unlock the suppressed information about the genocide committed against Bosniaks. Art is a medium that, besides the theoretical analysis and presentations, unblocks the facts and information about the genocide––about who committed the genocide, who the victims of genocide are, in which country the genocide was carried out, and what the objectives of the genocide were.

Republika Srpska entity institutions, its army and police, according to the verdict of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, committed genocide against Bosniaks. Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats in the institutions of the Dayton governments must now comply with the verdict, because the verdict of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, February 2007 is superior to all legal, political, and parastate forms of action. The battle for Bosnia and Herzegovina must follow the respect of the rule of

law and recognition of the importance of international law, where UN member states protect against barbarism, aggression, and the Greater Serbian project that stems from expansionist nationalism. In the Republika Srpska entity, preserving the results of the genocide after Dayton is the main political and cultural objective of its policies. Since 1995 Bosnia has become the prisoner of the entity's subversive, anti-state actions that undermine irredentist efforts. The genocidal creation that is now called and sanctioned as Republika Srpska is, we must realize, a Chetnik, anti-Bosnian project that perverts the governmental structures that fight for the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is not a matter about being naive and ignorant; it is a matter of the insolent inadequacy of semi-literate imposters! The Republika Srpska entity presents itself as the guarantee of the genocidal atrocities with which the creation of a "Serbian state" in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina was prepared. This is the continuation of war in the political realm after a war!

Within the contemporary political scene, according to Asim Mujkić, in the wake of Keith Doubt and Richard Rorty's ideas, genocide and evil are hitting the very foundations of the society. It is clear that a lack of ethical responsibility which would involve a willingness to admit our mistakes collectively hinders our realizing a democratic society and its values. The Dayton project implicitly questions the very state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and frames us in an anti-Bosnian Constitution (Annex IV) as if we were savages who had no state (the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina) or Constitution. Thinking about Srebrenica is thinking about Bosnia. Being trapped in ethnopolitics does not mean that there are no other possible forms of political action. Without this insight we would have no hope. Bosniak politics and representatives of political parties, who are supposedly caring for the interests of the Bosniak people, did not show a universal perspective in understanding the genocide that was carried out on the inhabitants of Srebrenica and the Drina valley, i.e., in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By this ignorance, first and foremost, but also by other means, Bosniak politicians allowed the sanctioning of genocide on the soil of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This raises the question of responsibility that we can no longer hide under the carpet. We must begin to critically and with responsibility deliberate on the political, religious and scientific dead-end of the Bosniak political representation in the last twenty years (1990-2010). Before us lies the question of why the Bosniaks are not devoting the required attention to the Greater Serbia program of ethnic cleansing and genocide, which existed through history for two centuries and is directly related to Bosniaks as an obsessive object in the area of today's Serbia and Bosnia. The Republica Srpska entity is the result of this historical program. It is with Srebrenica that it became perfectly clear that genocide was the primary means of creating a Greater Serbia – a region ethnically and religiously "cleansed" of non-Serb population.

The international community must participate in answering the question of whether genocide is a legitimate tool in achieving political and cultural objectives. It is a question for local politicians as well. Is the verdict that genocide was committed in Srebrenica by the military and police of the RS entity as a culmination of crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992-1995 sufficient to yield the rights of victims and achieve justice? The question now is whether it is now possible for the act of genocide to continue to stand on the land of Bosnia and Herzegovina? Ćazim Sadiković believes that the conclusion of the Dayton Peace Agreements would be totally different if the genocide executed by Greater Serbian aggression had been

recognized earlier. Today, the matter needs to be addressed in the context of constitutional changes because law cannot be drawn out of genocide. Social order cannot be fashioned where benefits and unquestionable categories by certain people are established through genocide. The crime of genocide created Republika Srpska on the soil of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it is essential that this act and its perpetrators be judged in front of the international institutions of law by the principle of justice.

We must not turn the genocide against Bosniaks in Srebrenica into “events marking the genocide” and do nothing on the side of law and justice. The act of genocide must be prosecuted to give lasting content to the constitution and structure of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Humanity, people of the world, cannot allow genocide to sustain the political and social activities of a certain people as if such were a normal course of events.

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