

UNIVERSITY OF NOVA GORICA
GRADUATE SCHOOL

**The United Nations Peacekeepers and Local
Population of the United Nations Safe Area
Srebrenica:**

(De) Construction of Human Relationships

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

In this dissertation I address the recollection of Dutch UN peacekeepers and the local Bosniak population of Srebrenica UN Safe Area, focusing on the period of 17 months preceding the Srebrenica genocide of July 1995. This dissertation's framework is purposefully not centered on the war or the genocide (alone) but extends its interests toward many other aspects of the memories; in particular it looks at the various relationships, which developed in this particular time and space. Despite a number of existing oral histories on the topics, no similar research has attempted to combine the recollections of Dutch UN peacekeepers and local Bosniak population of the Srebrenica UN Safe Area until today.

This doctoral research addresses recollections of 16 Dutch UN peacekeepers and 13 Bosniak people of Srebrenica UN Safe Area. They were recorded both in Srebrenica in July 2009, 2010 and 2011, respectively, and in the Netherlands in September 2011. The oral sources focused on bringing to light the memories of each other's interactions, perceptions and encounters during the UN Safe Area period.

This dissertation not only offers a comprehensive look at different relationships that developed between the Dutch UN peacekeepers and the local Bosniak population of the Srebrenica UN Safe Area, but also shows they began and continued 17 months before the genocide, and continues to this day, despite the genocide. It provides a unique interpretation of specific time and place in war-time Bosnia and Herzegovina and gives a voice to Bosniak survivors and Dutch UN peacekeepers alike.

Keywords:

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Srebrenica, genocide, United Nations, United Nations Safe Area, Dutch, peacekeepers, Bosniak, The Netherlands, relationships, memory, oral history

Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not be possible had the 29 people – the narrators as I call them - who opened the door to their past not been so kind, brave and forthcoming and shared their memories of the difficult months preceding the Srebrenica genocide of July 1995. Their stories are the heart and soul of this research.

Many people have helped me during my postgraduate studies. I would like to thank all of them for their patience and support. I feel an immense debt of gratitude to Dr. Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik who has given me so much guidance, insight, and encouragement at every stage of my doctoral research at the University of Nova Gorica and Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Slovenia. Her deep understanding of both the Yugoslav wars and oral history made her a perfect mentor. Everlasting gratitude goes to the New York University (NYU) Near Eastern Department which awarded me the FLAS Fellowship in 2004/05 and the Graduate Assistantship in 2005/06. I am especially grateful to Dr. Ilana Feldman whose class “Anthropology of Intervention: Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development” was greatly beneficial to my thinking. It is for her class that I first wrote a paper on Srebrenica and my curiosity for the subject grew from there. The new concepts that she introduced me to profoundly changed the way I view the world around me. During my studies at NYU is also when I became fascinated with the “history from below” and study of humanitarian intervention. It was while still a student at NYU that I first visited Srebrenica and became captivated by the subject matter and the people I have met. This thesis would have been of considerably lesser quality without the contributions of a number of people. Dr. Peter Valenti, Master Teacher at the NYU College of Arts and Sciences, was the dissertation’s outside reader and helped me to refine my thesis and pointed out weaknesses in organization, structure and transitions. Matea Jakin and Justine Evans edited my work and addressed issues related to language and grammar. In particular, they eliminated problems that plague all of my work, considering that Slovenian is my mother tongue. Their valuable criticism was largely responsible for the success of the final version.

I am also thankful to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia who funded a considerable portion of my PhD tuition in 2008/09 and 2009/10. Without the help of this funding, I would not be where I am today.

This dissertation would have been of much lesser quality had I not attended the First and the Second International Graduate Students' Conference on Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the Strassler Family Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts in 2009, and 2011, respectively. At the two conferences, I presented two papers: Unintentional Results of UN Military Intervention: The Case of Srebrenica, the UN 'Safe Area', and 'Oral History: UN Peacekeepers and Local Population of the UN Safe Area Srebrenica'. As well, at Clark University I was able to speak with leading genocide scholars and refine my research papers.

Similarly, in July 2011 I participated in the Srebrenica Summer University at Srebrenica – Potočari Memorial Centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I was one of 15 PhD students from around the world invited to conduct research on topics related to genocide, transitional justice, post conflict studies, and human rights, with a focus, but not limited to, Bosnian genocide. I participated in the last day of the annual Marš Mira - Peace March retracing the walk the fleeing Safe Area men took in July 1995, including the passing of execution sites as well as primary and secondary mass graves. I attended presentations with international and local representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina in regard to the Srebrenica genocide. However, perhaps most memorable were the visits to the International Commission for Missing Persons (ICMP) office in Sarajevo and the Podrinje Identification Project (PIP) in Tuzla, which was specifically created to assist in the identification of persons missing from the 1995 fall of Srebrenica and where the remains of these victims are examined and stored until final identification. The first office, ICMP, demonstrated where they receive, submit for processing, archive, and match all blood samples collected from relatives of missing persons and all bone samples from exhumed mortal remains. I saw first-hand how they are bar-coded to ensure anonymity of the samples and how ICMP's laboratories do the DNA analysis to find possible matches. In the second PIP Office we were able to see first-hand the work of ICMP forensic experts in making a final determination of

identity of the genocide victims. None of these visits have been easy, but it helped my research. Talking to the living, one must have the courage to face the dead.

Finding the right resources was crucial in writing a good piece of academic work. Thank you to all the people who have helped me in my quest for written material. My father, Rado Rozman, pointed me to a myriad of relevant documents and websites. Dion van den Berg of IKV Pax Christi directed me to a valuable paper written about the process of returning peacekeepers, while Željko-Pučo Danilović, also an IKV Pax Christi employee, kept me informed of the process of returning peacekeepers in great detail. During my five years of working on the doctoral research, I had many unofficial talks with friends, acquaintances and colleagues that have profoundly helped in my thought process. These include Lorie Cohen, a fellow Srebrenica researcher, whom I have met at the Srebrenica Summer University, and Jagodica Bobica, PhD researcher who stayed in Srebrenica in 2010 and helped me get important local contacts, my fellow PhD student Elisabeth Archambault, and Azra Hromadžić, Assistant Professor at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University.

I wish to thank my translators Leila Mirojević and Marcela Rilović. The first translated portions of narratives, which were too hard for me to understand. The latter helped with certain Dutch words, which the UN peacekeepers used when they couldn't find an appropriate English equivalent.

Two dear friends have been so kind to accompany me during the field research: Matea Jakin (2009 and 2012) in Srebrenica and John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5) in 2011 in the Netherlands. My two daughters Izabela and Sofia were both born during the course of this research. I wish to thank my husband Nathan and my parents, Rado and Polona Rozman, who looked after my children during my five trips to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Netherlands when conducting field research, while at conferences in the US, and while writing this dissertation. Being a young mother proved to be an immense challenge - the topic of which could fill an entire new dissertation. On the other hand, being a mother made me more dedicated to see this dissertation through completion, and has profoundly affected my perception of the atrocities that occurred in Srebrenica.

The additional number of people that have contributed to both my personal and academic life during the last few years is too long to list, so rather than risking forgetting anybody, I would just like to thank all of you.

Notes on Transliteration

Transliteration

Throughout my thesis the words in the Bosnian language are written in italic (excluding parts with narrative). The letters that do not appear in the English alphabet are pronounced as follows:

ć	ch as noch
č	ch as cherry
đ	g as ginger
dž	dzh as gin
nj	ny as onion
lj	ly as million
š	sh as shoe
ž	zh as measure

Translation

All narrative recordings of the Bosniaks were done in their native tongue – the Bosnian language. I have translated the transcripts and attempted for the translations to be as literal as possible. In a few instances Leila Mirojević translated the transcripts.

English as a second language

All narrative recordings of the Dutch UN peacekeepers were done in the English language and not in their native tongue. No alteration to their narratives was done in the written text, which represents an exact transcription of the recordings (excluding grammatical errors). The level of knowledge of the English language varied

considerably among the peacekeepers. While some had no problem speaking in English, others stumbled and often paused to look for a correct word.

Narratives done individually and in pairs

While most of the narratives were done with individual persons, two of the recordings were done in pairs of two. This was done at the request of the Dutch peacekeepers who, I believe, felt more comfortable remembering the difficult past with a fellow peacekeeper by their side. In these instances it happened that two peacekeepers would bounce off each other's memories of events, thus making the narrative a mixed expression of two individuals. These pairs are: Rene Scholing (Narrator 13) and Marcel de Boer (Narrator 14), and Johan de Jonge (Narrator 20) and Patrick Eerdhuyzen (Narrator 21).

Foreign words

<i>Akomulatrka</i>	<i>nickname for the Battery Factory that was turned into the UN compound in Potočari</i>
<i>Bombon</i>	<i>candy</i>
<i>Bubreg</i>	<i>kidney</i>
<i>Demarkcija zone</i>	<i>borderline of the Srebrenica UN Safe Area</i>
<i>Desni</i>	<i>right</i>
<i>Idi</i>	<i>go</i>
<i>Kaman</i>	<i>stone</i>
<i>Krompiruša</i>	<i>Bosnian potato pie</i>
<i>Levi</i>	<i>left</i>
<i>Nema</i>	<i>there is no</i>
<i>Rakija</i>	<i>home-made brandy</i>
<i>Šargija</i>	<i>long necked chordophone used in Bosnian folk music</i>
<i>Šljivivica, slivo, šljiva</i>	<i>home-made plum brandy</i>
<i>Sužna kesa</i>	<i>lacrimal sac</i>

List of Abbreviations

ARBiH	Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine)
APC	armored personnel carrier
CANBAT	Canadian battalion
DUTCHBAT	Dutch battalion
EC	European Community
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GM	German Marks
HDG	Humanitarian Policy Group
HQ	Headquarters
ICMP	International Commission for Mission Persons
ICTY	The International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia
IDP	internally displaced person
IFOR	Implementation Force
IRC	International Red Cross
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIOD	The Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (originally Nederlands Instituut voor oorlogsdocumentatie)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (New Rotterdam Paper)
NYU	New York University
ODI	Overseas Development Institute

OP	Observation Post
OSCE	Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe
PIP	Podrinje Identification Project
PTSS	Posttraumatic Stress Syndrome
SDA	Party for Democratic Action
SFRY	Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia
UN	United Nations
UNCIVPOL	United Nations Civilian Police
UNCRO	United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation
UNDPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for the Refugees
UNMIBH	United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina
UNMO	United Nations Military Observers
UNPA	United Nations Protected Area
UNPF	United Nations Peace Forces
UNPREDEP	United Nations Preventive Deployment Force
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSA	United Nations Safe Area
US	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAF	United States Air Force
VRS	Army of Republika Srpska (Vojska Republike Srpske)

Map of Yugoslavia prior to disintegration:



Source: ICTY website, retrieved on 27 May 2011

Map of former Yugoslavia as of 1 January 2008



Source: ICTY website, retrieved on 27 May 2011

Map of areas of control in Bosnia and Herzegovina, September 1994



Legend:

VRS = Army of Republika Srpska (Bosnian Serbs)

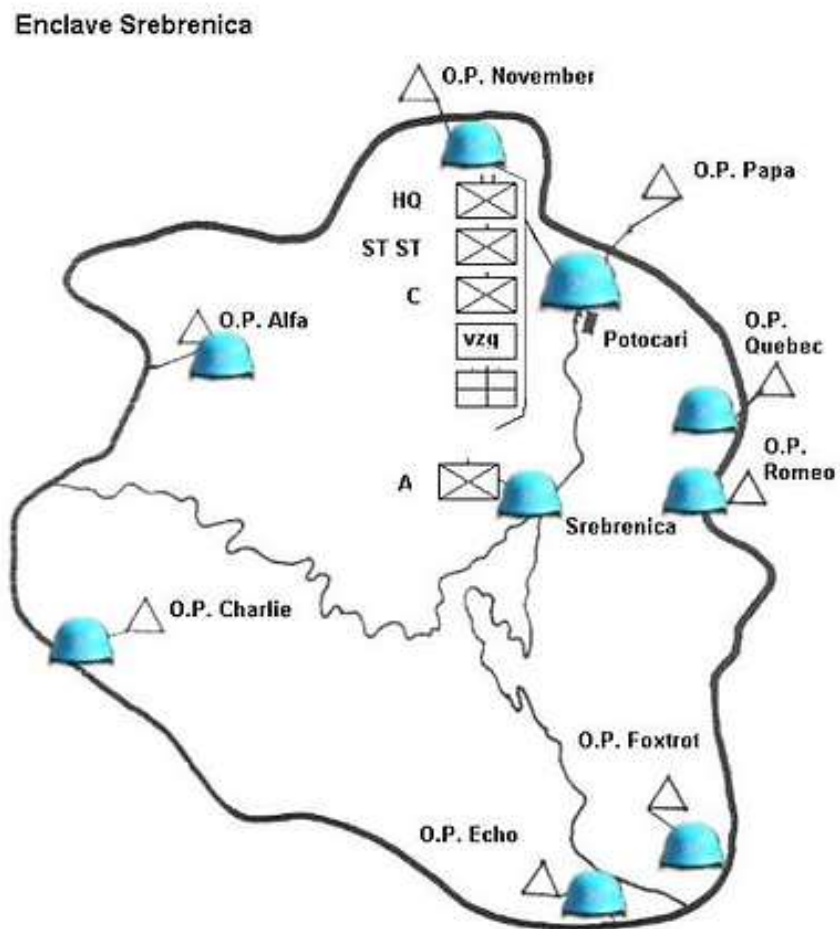
HVO = Croatian Defense Council (Bosnian Croats)

ARBiH = Army of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosniak)

Source: "Balkan Battlegrounds", 2002, retrieved on 13 May 2012

Map of the United Nations Safe Area Srebrenica

The map below shows the key observation posts (OPs) and location of the Dutch headquarters (HQ) in Potočari (Source and image courtesy of Saskia Jongma, DUUTCHBAT I, narrator 6).



Preamble

The motivation for this dissertation grew from my work with the Bosniak¹ people who stayed in Slovenia as refugees in the mid-1990s. Since those times, I have stayed connected to the region through my professional work and academic research. In 2004, when I began my M.A. studies at the New York University (NYU) Kevorkian Center, I spent one summer working as an intern at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Sarajevo Office. While in Bosnia and Herzegovina,² the online human rights magazine *Voices Unabridged* where I worked as a freelance journalist sent me on an assignment to Srebrenica to write an article commemorating the 10th anniversary of the genocide. I returned two weeks later to visit the people I met during my first stay and to connect with them on a more intimate level, without the ruckus that was surrounding the 10th anniversary. In retrospect, these two initial visits had a profound effect on my life. During the first trip I saw 600 people being laid to rest, and thousands of family members emotionally crushed. It left me wondering how an act like that was even possible during my lifetime. I had lingering questions about the responsibility and the role of the United Nations (UN) and over how this could have happened in the country where I was born. During the second visit I befriended a Bosniak woman, Fazila Efendić (Narrator 27), a genocide survivor who rebuilt her home and returned to live in Srebrenica. Both her teenage son and husband were murdered in July 1995. I stayed in her house and during our long conversations I learned more about her experience in the UN Safe Area. She spoke of the UN peacekeepers, in particularly the DUTCHBAT, and showed me photos of them visiting her home. I listened to her stories of peacekeepers helping her son get new prescription glasses on occasions when they were able to get out of the Safe Area and travel to the Netherlands on leave. She was especially thankful that they photographed her family, developed the films when on leave in the Netherlands, and brought the photographs upon return. The latter gesture was something she still cherishes as those photos are the last physical images of her son and husband.

¹ The term Bosniak refers to the Bosnians of Islamic background, also called Bosnian Muslims. In 1993, BiH Assembly adopted a decision to call Muslims in BiH, Bosniaks. Today the term 'Bosniak' has replaced 'Bosnian Muslim' almost entirely.

² Bosnia or "Bosnia and Herzegovina" will be used throughout interchangeably.

I also walked through the UN compound in Potočari, documenting graffiti written on the UN compound walls by individual peacekeepers that often portrayed the locals³ in derogatory terms such as: “My ass is like a ‘local’ it’s got the same smell”. Another graffiti: “No Teeth...? A mustache...? Smel[ls] like shit...? Bosnian Girl!” The peacekeepers had written this on the wall of the UN compound; it can still be seen in Srebrenica today. These many examples of graffiti seemed to suggest the uncaring sentiments by some of the Dutch UN peacekeepers.



Photograph 1 (a, b) Graffiti by unknown Dutch UN peacekeeper (Photo courtesy of Tea Rozman-Clark, August 2005, UN compound, Potočari)

Fazila’s stories of the peacekeepers visits in her home and the graffiti seemed to represent two very different, even opposite views. How come there seemed to be such a wide gap between the UN peacekeepers that interacted and helped the Bosniak, and the derogatory, anti-Bosniak sentiments the UN peacekeepers wrote on the walls of the UN compound? They were both representative of the Dutch peacekeepers. I returned to New York and the following year at NYU took a class called “Anthropology of Intervention: Development, Human Rights and Humanitarianism” and wrote my first paper about the UN Safe Area Srebrenica. Wanting to be closer to the source of possible information I took an internship at the UN Headquarters (HQ) in New York during my last semester at NYU. I was stationed at the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Best Practices Unit.

After 2005, I followed the Srebrenica story closely, took an interest in the progress ICTY has been making, particularly the captures, consequent indictments and prosecution of war criminals. By early 2007 Carla Del Ponte, a long-time Chief

³ Terms 'locals', 'local population' and 'Bosniaks in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica' will be used throughout the dissertation interchangeably to represent the Bosniak population that lived in UN Safe Area Srebrenica.

Prosecutor at the ICTY, announced her intention to resign. Twelve long years passed since the Srebrenica genocide of July 1995, and the three people presumed to be responsible for the genocide, Radovan Karadžić, Ratko Mladić and Goran Hadžić, were still at large. This was the time when I began to doubt that justice would ever be attained for the genocide survivors. Furthermore, at this point, both the UN and the Dutch government who played a role in enabling the genocide were not taking responsibility for the atrocities.

In October 2007, I read an article stating that a group of Dutch veteran UN peacekeepers had returned to Srebrenica after 12 years. Frankly, their visit was the last thing I expected. I began to wonder about these women and men whose return to Srebrenica seemed to contradict the portrayal in the international media of uncaring Dutch peacekeepers who failed to protect the local population of Srebrenica.

During my time of reflection, I remembered Fazila's stories and wondered what the relationship between the Bosniaks and the Dutch UN peacekeepers was really like. Reading about the peacekeepers' return, I became interested in how the relationships between the Bosniaks and the Dutch UN peacekeepers were being defined. Many additional questions such as what was the motive for their visit, and how close their relationships were during the war, arose in my mind. Overtime I developed a desire to address this blind spot among the existing scholarly as well as non-scholarly works.

This lasting curiosity guided my academic interest and in 2008 I decided to continue my academic studies on the Srebrenica genocide. After receiving funding from the Slovenian government in 2008, I began my PhD studies at the University of Nova Gorica and Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Slovenia. Conveniently located in the former Yugoslavia, an eight-hour-drive from Srebrenica, I was determined to do an oral history with both the Bosniaks and the Dutch UN peacekeepers.

In the summer of 2009, four years after my initial visit, I returned to Srebrenica, this time as a researcher. There, I addressed and re-examined some of the questions raised above and recorded first oral testimonies. I went back in 2010, 2011 and in 2012. I recorded testimonies of people who served in Srebrenica as UN peacekeepers, and

local people – Bosniaks who were trapped in enclave. I decided to limit the scope of research to DUTCHBAT I, II and III UN peacekeepers, and Bosniak population of UN Safe Area Srebrenica.

Introduction

The role of the United Nations' failed humanitarian intervention in Srebrenica and the consequent genocide of over 8,000 men and boys sparked discussions in various settings, ranging from governmental to the academic. Because of the international community's involvement and subsequent failure in preventing the Srebrenica genocide of July 1995, Srebrenica United Nations (UN) Safe Area is "out of all of the 'safe areas' [...] perhaps the best-documented" (Yamashita 2004: 86). Several governments and international organizations (UN 1999, French Parliament 2001, Dutch NIOD 2002, Dutch Parliamentary Inquiry 2003) as well as a Pulitzer prize winning journalist David Rohde (Rohde 1997, 1998) and academic researchers (Honig and Both 1996, Westerman and Rijs 1997, Matton 2006) have dug deep to search for causes of both the genocide and the failed peacekeeping mission. However, the dominant way of talking about and researching the Srebrenica UN Safe Area has been a macro-level analysis predominately focusing on its fall. The few oral histories on Srebrenica that exist offer a micro-level analysis, e.g. *The United Nations on the Srebrenica's Pillar of Shame* (Association Women of Srebrenica, 2007), *Leaving the Emptiness Behind Us* (Leydesdorff, 2009) and *Memories of Srebrenica* (Praamsma, Peekel and Boumans, 2005), and leave the recollections divided between the Srebrenica genocide survivors and the Dutch UN peacekeepers.

Furthermore, the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY), made all the hearings electronically available. The NIOD Report also interviewed many of the individuals involved and had accounts of their personal experiences. In addition, two other works (Nuhanović 2005, Suljagić 2006) were published, in which the authors portray the perspective of the locals. On the other hand, little has been written about the experience of the UN peacekeepers, apart from the book published in 1998 by the DUTCHBAT III commander Thom Karremans with the curiously mixed title of *Srebrenica, Who Cares? Een Puzzel van de Werkelijkheid* or entirely in English *Srebrenica, who cares? A Puzzle of Reality*. The basis of his book was his personal records at that time, kept in six notebooks, which he "refused to share with

the Tribunal, the Dutch parliament, or the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, NIOD”, but argued all of its contents are in his book.

Placed in the academic discipline of cultural history, the scientific approach on the research is broadly interdisciplinary and merges cultural and sociological perspectives and interpretations dealing with the memory of human relationships in a particular historical context. The subject matter of the research encompasses the continuum of interactions occurring in the course of Srebrenica UN Safe Area mandate or more precisely from February 1994, when the Dutch UN peacekeepers entered the ‘safe area’, up until July 21, 1995, the day they left. The main purpose of this research is to shed light on the particular historic period in its entirety, focusing on a specific set of processes and relationships between the Bosniaks, and Dutch UN peacekeepers in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. In particular, it is concerned how a ‘safe area’ – a method that is being used for an increasingly large number of humanitarian interventions today⁴ – may have shaped human relationships in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. The UN Safe Area should have been an environment where both the peacekeepers’ well-being and their ability to perform in the mission, and local population’s welfare, would be met. But here it had failed terribly. An internal UN report described the Srebrenica UN Safe Area as “a closed IDP camp of 50,000 persons without adequate facilities for more than about 15,000” (Heidenrich 2001: 169). Moreover, the UN Safe Area was surrounded by Bosnian Serb territory making its lifeline in the hands of the Bosnian Serb forces that were at war with the Bosniaks. What is clear today is that the Bosnian Serb forces, which enclosed the UN Safe Area, systematically, over time, brought the majority of the Safe Area dwellers to a breaking point.

In addition to the nature of historical events and processes, concepts such as culture, identity, power, attitude, and perception are examined in this dissertation to

⁴ Jan Pronk, a Dutch politician, and a Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission for the United Nations Mission in Sudan from 2004 - 2006, signed a “Plan of Action” with the Sudanese government on August 5, 2004, with an aim to create ‘safe areas’ in Darfur. International Crisis Group (ICG), Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch all raised their concerns in this regard. Namely, ICG has written a report where they state that “causes for concern [exist], in particular the government’s obligation to ‘identify and secure safe areas’ for the internally displaced in Darfur” (ICG Africa Report 2004: 4).

understand the by-products (often unintended) of countless human choices in a particular historical period. The working hypothesis that inspires this research is that the implemented humanitarian intervention, Srebrenica UN Safe Area, constructed a complex set of relationships between the UN peacekeepers and local population. Relationships, which were initially based on notions of need, care and protection, over time gradually transformed into a complex story of contempt and betrayal in a particular historical context. In-depth examination of the records and narrative descriptions of past interactions between UN peacekeepers and local population of the Srebrenica Safe Area builds on this hypothesis, and explores the following questions:

(1) What were the different factors - including individual and collective attitudes, culturally and socially influenced behavior, actions and interactions - that influenced the relationship between Dutch UN peacekeepers and the local population in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area?

(2) What was the role of the 'safe area' concept and mandate in the formation and transformation of these relationships?

(3) What were the major challenges and demands the peacekeepers faced, and how did this affect their relationship to the local population?

(4) What expectations did the UN peacekeepers and the local population have of each other and to what extent were these expectations met?

(5) What were the key events that mark the nature of the relationship between the UN peacekeepers and the people of Srebrenica?

(6) How have local people in need of protection and the global providers of protection dealt with problems of communication, trust, and cooperation?

(7) What kinds of relationships were built and why?

(8) What had happened to these relationships since the fall of the enclave?

I have primarily drawn from the material I have gathered myself, however, the analysis of various publications (books, academic and newspaper articles, and reports), various websites and blogs (such as Srebrenica Genocide Blog), graffiti, photographs, documentaries, and ICTY hearings has also been conducted.

Chapter One gives the wider political and historical context surrounding the backdrop of the Bosnian war, the UN peacekeeping and its mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the mandate of the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. Much is covered here and by

putting all these topics in 60 pages I could not help but to somewhat oversimplify the context but hopefully not to the point of distorting or omitting key facts. The first chapter also explains who lived and operated inside the Srebrenica UN Safe Area: (1) local Bosniak population, (2) Canadian UN peacekeepers (3) Dutch UN peacekeepers, (4) UNMO and CIVPOL, and (5) humanitarian aid agencies. Chapter Two later examines the relationships between two groups of people: The Dutch UN peacekeepers and the local Bosniak population by using the testimonies collected from 16 UN peacekeepers and 13 local Bosniaks. The chapter describes different factors that influenced their relationship, and outlines different patterns. Chapter Three explores the relationships that persisted or emerged since the 1990s.

During my field work, I was particularly struck by how strikingly different the stories I collected have been from the existing narratives in the aforementioned oral histories. While my research initially focused specifically on the UN peacekeepers and their interactions with the Srebrenica local population (from April 18, 1993 up until July 21, 1995), my fieldwork showed that the narrators felt the need to speak of the relationships that persist or emerged in recent years, more specifically after 2007. For that reason I address these recent relationships in a separate chapter, Chapter III. Given that oral history often tells us as much about the present as the past, this finding should not have been a surprise. But it was.

Theoretical Framework:

Memory Studies

Around the time of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, memory has become an area increasingly studied in history, geography and sociology (Middleton and Edwards 1990: 3-5). After a long interest in an individual history a turn toward cultural memory took place making memory studies novel way to think about history. Moreover, in recent years, memory studies have become somewhat central part of historical studies. So it comes as no surprise that a number of oral histories have been published soon after the Bosnian war 1991 - 1995.

Although memory studies were able to establish themselves as a distinctive field of study and brand new way of conceptualizing history, they are also a controversial. Memory doesn't operate like recording equipment. Rather it involves a dynamic process where information is acquired, encoded, stored, and ultimately retrieved in a form of recalling, if one wishes to use it. All of these processes are rather complex; many different factors impact how individuals retrieve memories. It is important to bear in mind, research on memory as many experiments globally consistently demonstrated, involves individuals who (can) construct their memories in any stage of the memory process. This happens in cases when they are provided with misleading information, when they repeatedly imagine actions or events that they have never experienced or when they are under tremendous pressure or stress.

Memory had become increasingly prominent, particularly in Holocaust studies, as the war receded into the past (Peitsch, Burdett, Gorrara 1999: 122). One thing that we have learned from holocaust studies is that memory has shelf life. As it became increasingly clear that with the last survivors of the Holocaust gone, we will be left with secondary memories and textual sources only, the more urgent it became to record the testimonies for the generations to come. So despite the fact that Elie Wiesel has described the modern age as the age of testimony (Wiesel 1977: 9) Shoshana

Felman and Dori Laub (Felman and Laub1992) showed the myriad of setbacks and obstacles the victims faced, including forgetfulness and reliability of memory.

Paul Connerton, addressed the issue of forgetfulness in his 2008 essay “Seven Types of Forgetting,” where he offered a preliminary taxonomy of forgetting, and of its various functions, values, and agents: repressive erasure; prescriptive forgetting; forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity; structural amnesia; forgetting as annulment; forgetting as planned obsolescence; and forgetting as humiliated silence. Louisa Passerini adds another important factor: “people’s memories of their own lives , what they remember and what they forget, are shaped by their own expectations for the future, and also by whether they have children or young people for whom they care and who may outlive them” (Passerini 1992: 12). Finally, Omer Bartov writes that the “difficulty of articulating the unbearable memory of destruction is compounded by an even more disastrous lack of memory, an emptiness, a void, which the imagination tries in vain to fill with borrowed, fantastic, at times monstrous images” (Peitsch, Burdett, Gorrara 1999: 259).

Unlike in the greatest genocide of the WW II – the holocaust - the oral history projects dealing with the greatest genocide after the WW II seemed to be happening much sooner and at a much faster rate. This is on one hand because the oral history as a science is much more developed as it has been just after the WW II, and on the other hand because of the technological advances of today’s age. Another reason is that oral histories of subordinate groups became recognized for their value in adding an important historical dimension to the historical record. Paul Connerton, for example, states “the oral history of subordinate groups will produce another kind of history: one in which not only most of the details will be different, but in which the very construction of meaningful shapes will obey a different principle” (Connerton 1998: 19). In oral histories different details emerge because they are interested in different things than those patterned by the individual’s or institutional’ agenda. However, they too, are hardly free from unexamined blind spots; most problematic is the context of veterans’ and survivors’ memories. Recording narratives of members of one group alone, normally carries a degree of partiality. Finally, Wulf Kanstainer points to limitations of groups such as veterans or survivors as they only are able to “shape the national memory if they command the means to express their visions, and if their

vision meets with compatible social or political objectives and inclinations among other important social groups, for instance political elites or parties” (Kanstainer 2002: 187,188).

Barbie Zelizer argues that “no single memory contains all that we know, or could know about any given event, personality or issue. Rather memories are often pieced together like a mosaic” (Zelizer 1995: 221 - 4). To illustrate Zelizer’s point, I would like to use a regular event that occurred daily in the UN Safe Area, and one that most of the narrators recalled: begging children. I used an excerpt of narrative done by two peacekeepers (one was a medic), a Bosniak woman and a Bosniak man, who was a child at the time.

Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1), DUTCHBAT III remembers:

On patrols the children were walking next to you saying: “Mister, bombon”. My pockets were full of candy. But it was not always without danger. When we walked on the demarkacija zone, where the trenches were, there were possible mines. In those situations, I didn’t want to have children around, so I told them to go away in Bosnian: “Idi, idi, don’t walk here, it’s dangerous.” The children went, so it worked. Now I know it’s not a polite way to say it. But back then I had grenades in my trousers, two tank grenades. And children ran after me, asking for bombon and started pulling on my trousers. ‘Nema bombon, but boom, boom!’ I told them in my plain Bosnian, but misunderstanding was very, very easy.

Kada Hotić (Narrator 2) remembers:

In early 1995, the Canadian troops were replaced by the Dutch. Although a large number of them were supposed to arrive only around 400 showed up. We waited in vain for more soldiers that could really protect the Safe Area Srebrenica. They did not come. Not only that, they behaved extremely arrogantly towards the local population. Children, who got used to seeking bombon from the Canadians, were laughed at, laughed at to tears. All the excess food they had, they threw it in the trash. Then the people would run after these vehicles, knowing they could find some cabbage, frozen chicken, a jar of honey or jam – all things that were considered very precious in Srebrenica. What they did was laugh and take pictures with a camera. [At the

garbage field], they would observe the people fighting for garbage as if they were an attraction of some sorts. To Dutch soldiers this was fun, their entertainment, while for us it was extremely demeaning. But, a hungry person lets himself be humiliated.

Ynse Schellens (Narrator 3), a medic, DUTCHBAT III remembers:

Children were really open, honest and glad to have us around. That was my feeling, especially at the gate. They would often come to us and we would teach them English. They would also walk with us saying: “Hey Mister [can] you [spare some] bandage? Hey mister you got bonbon?” There were only a few things they could say, but we could interact with them and that was nice. At one moment I wrote to my parents about this and I said: “Hey, can you send me some things, so I can give out to the kids?” My father was a bank manager in the Netherlands and he sent me a box of pens from the bank. So when I was on patrol or on the compound, I had pens in every pocket and could just hand them out to everybody.

Azir Osmanović (Narrator 4) remembers:

We did not know what chocolate and candy were. We asked for them to give them to us, constantly. Frankly, once it was time to leave and they went into the transporter, then they threw little chocolates toward us”.

I chose these four narrative excerpts to show how “memories gain resonance only when they are pieced together beyond the group that engineered their construction” (Zelizer 1995: 225). Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) recalled “children begging” in connection to the potential danger; Kada Hotić (Narrator 2) recalled it in connection to the dehumanization she has felt as a member of the local population; Ynse Schellens (Narrator 3) remembered it as a positive and intense interaction that made him want to help the children further, finally, Azir Osmanović (Narrator 4) recalls being deprived as a child and recalls peacekeepers throwing chocolate at him. Clearly, each narrator talked about an event the way it was understood from his/her own perspective. Additionally, they all spoke of the event in a way to limit their own accountability. Finally, they developed a specific justification *vis-a-vis* the other. Of course, none of these narratives, standing alone, are neither inaccurate nor entirely valid representations of past events. However, each recollection “worked for its [shaper] because the memories played a central role in upholding their dignity”

(Zelizer 1995: 226). In my opinion numerous different memories, pieced together like a mosaic, add to clarity of past events that would otherwise be left divided between the Bosniak survivors and the Dutch UN peacekeepers. Without intermingling the recollections, the history of each group pertaining to the Srebrenica genocide of July 1995 would be left narrow and thus misleading. As Halbwachs puts it so skillfully in a rhetorical question: “as we recall together various circumstances related to the same events, recollections that may not agree, haven’t we managed to think and remember in common [...]?” (Halbwachs 1980: 23). Important to note, there is “a subtle but decisive confusion of the difference between the ‘collected memory’ and the ‘collective memory’” (Ollick 2002, Kanstainer 2002: 185). The first is an aggregate of individual memories, while the latter is held and passed on by a group. In order to better understand how the two are related or interconnected, we will look how both are formed, developed and where they intersect. Additionally, “individual memory cannot be conceptualized and studied without recourse to its social context” (Kanstainer 2002: 184), and thus a considerable portion of this research (i.e. Chapter One) is dedicated to the illumination of the political and sociological context in which the narrators were recalling.

The Narrative

The term narrative has been engaged by researchers with a variety of meanings. In an article titled “Rise of the Life Narrative”, Ivor Goodson suggests that “grand narratives” are a thing of the past and that there is “consensus at the moment that we live in ‘an age of narrative’ whereas the scale of those narratives, that is, their scope and aspiration, has dramatically changed. In fact we are entering a period for particular kinds of narratives: life narratives and small-scale narratives” (Goodson 2006: 7). I would also add that material advances of non-elites (i.e. myself), affordable and greater ease of travel, fast and simple communication channels (social networks, electronic mail) and technology (digital recorder, computers) made it possible for researchers to reach a very wide spectrum of research topics.

In the main chapter of his book titled “Narrative Configuration in Qualitative Analysis” of a book titled *Life History and Narrative* (1995) Donald Polkinghorne

suggests a distinction between two types of narrative: paradigmatic type of narrative, between analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. To clarify, in Polkinghorne's opinion a research that makes use of "narrative analysis as distinguished from analysis of narratives, the result is an emplotted narrative" (Hatch, J. Amos and Wisniewski 1995: 12). In other words, a purpose of a narrative analysis is to produce stories as the outcome of the research, e.g. account of an historical event, happening or episode of a person's life in a storied form, while paradigmatic type is usually already in the form of a story. In the first, Polkinghorne states the researcher's task is to "configure the data elements into a story that unites and gives meaning to the data as contributors to a goal or purpose. The analytic task requires the researcher to develop or discover a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating in the [conclusion]" (Hatch, J. Amos and Wisniewski 1995: 12). In a narrative analysis, the researcher begins with questions such as "How did this happen?" or "Why did this come about?" whereas in the case of my research I ask "How was the relationship between you and the locals/peacekeepers?". The researcher then "searches for pieces of information that contribute to the construction of a story that provides an explanatory answer to the questions. The information can come from various sources, including interviews, journals, public and personal documents, and observations" (Hatch, J. Amos and Wisniewski 1995: 15). The type of data gathered depends on what the focus of the research is.

In the context of this dissertation, narrative refers to an individual recollection. I have used the common elements of the narratives to primarily describe the relationships. The research gathers "events and happenings as its data and uses narrative analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories" (Hatch, Wisniewski 1995: 5).

Time, Space and Intervention

Time and space are two issues that are central to the study of memory. I have added the third – intervention – as it is particularly central to my research.

The period of time the narrators were asked to recall was a particularly difficult period comprised for the most part of “bad” memories as they liked to call them, and a few “good” ones. Therefore, not only is it important to clarify what period the narrator is remembering and in what circumstances, but it is also very important to establish when in time the act of remembering has taken place (i.e. six months or 16 years later). Additionally, we need to acknowledge the role that the Srebrenica genocide of July 1995 has played in the recollections. Obviously the genocide had a profound effect on how the narrators recalled the period 17 months beforehand. If I had recorded a narrative with Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7), DUTCHBAT I peacekeeper, in June 1994 when she had just returned from the tour in UN Safe Area Srebrenica, her recollections would probably had been much different. The genocide hasn’t yet occurred at that point. But instead, I recorded it in September 2011, well after it was clearly established that many of the locals she had had encountered during her stay perished in the atrocities. It was also well after it was clearly established that members of her Battalion (DUTCHBAT III) had failed to prevent the genocide.

In terms of historical chronology, July 1995 was a significant marker to the personal life stories of the narrators. The reason being that memory is not fixed, but rather an ever-changing process in which a significant event (i.e. Srebrenica genocide), that carries such an emotional weight, plays an important role in how the persons recall the past from that point forward. For the genocide survivors, the event presented such a significant marker, that many times the memories of 17 months (January/February 1994 – June 1995) preceding this event were sparse and he/she had a very strong desire to anchor other memories around the period around July 11, 1995, and recall only memories directly or indirectly connected with July 11, 1995. Many Bosniak narrators recalled the felling of betrayal and abandonment by the UN peacekeepers. Thus their recollection of months preceding the genocide was time and again overpowered by their recollection of July 11, 1995 and the intense feelings that it has stirred in them. Important to note that those narrators who had experienced especially traumatic events during those days, had consequently recalled and interpreted their memories of 17 months preceding the genocide through those horrible days of July 1995.

To explain this phenomenon, I refer to Roger Brown, James Kulik in their article “Flashbulb Memories” (1977), who talk about the type of memory recall in “circumstances in which [a person] first learned of a very surprising and consequential (or emotionally arousing) event” (Brown, Kulik 1977: 73). They use people’s memory of what they were doing when they heard President John Kennedy had been shot as the prototype case; another more recent example is the 9/11 attacks. Thus, flashbulb memories are very clear episodic memories of very emotional and exceptional events. For the Dutch UN peacekeepers serving in Srebrenica, this event was hearing the news about the genocide. Almost everyone could remember, with precise clarity, where he or she was when they heard, what he/she was doing at the time, and how he/she found out, what was the immediate aftermath, how he/she felt about it. This experience has transformed the way they have remembered their time in the enclave and relationships they have formed with one another 17 months prior to the genocide.

When analyzing the narratives, I took a closer look at the importance of this event on the basis of the theory of flashbulb memories. The majority of narrators had felt the need to tell me where they were on July 11, 1995, what their role was and how they felt about it. In a way this helped me to ground the narrators’ recollection.

Place is the other central issue to the study of memory. Here too, the significance is two-fold. Firstly, I wish to relay the place in which events recollected occurred (i.e. humanitarian space). The second significance deals with the space and its connection to the memory. Namely, space incarnates tangible traces of the past and helps individuals to ground their memory. The following two paragraphs look at these two significances in detail.

Firstly, there is the context of humanitarian space (Weiss 2000, Duffield 1996). Mégevand-Roggo (2000: 39) defines humanitarian space as a concept in and through which impartiality and non-partisanship govern the whole humanitarian action. In the context of the UN Safe Area Srebrenica, impartiality and non-partisanship were written on paper but never implemented. This has been skillfully illustrated in the comparative study *Humanitarian Space and International Politics: The Creation of Safe Areas* (Yamashita 2004), which brought to the forefront interesting questions

dealing specifically with 'safe areas'. Yamashita makes a very clear conceptual distinction between three models of 'safe areas': conventional, homeland and shelter model. He makes a valid point in showing how the Srebrenica Safe Area followed not one but two incompatible models. Thus making the Srebrenica Safe Area a "contested space from the start" (Yamashita 2004:99).

Secondly, there is space as it pertains to memory. For the UN peacekeepers the place grounded in their memory is the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. I argue that this is one of the reasons why so many peacekeepers feel such a strong desire to go back. When back, they spend hours visiting the Potočari UN compound, a visibly dilapidated structure that has been left untouched since the war and where the Memorial Centre is located. When back, they climb up to the OP Foxtrot, a location near which Raviv van Renssen was killed, and where a plaque commemorating his death stands today. These sites are very important in their process of recollection and piecing together their past experience. For them it is clear that "memory attaches itself to sites" (Nora, 1989: 22). Pierre Nora would argue that *lieux de mémoire* or so called memory sights are "simple and ambiguous, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration [...] from such natural, concretely experienced *lieux de mémoire*, as cemeteries, museums and anniversaries" (Nora 1989: 19, 22). LaCapra, who I mentioned earlier, argues that "memory site is generally also a sight of trauma, and the extent to which it remains invested with trauma marks the extent to which memory has not been effective to coming to terms with it, notably through modes of mourning" (LaCapra 1998: 10). Located across the street from the former UN compound in Potočari is the burial site of the July 1995 genocide victims (both areas constitute what is today known as the Potočari Memorial Centre). The burial site in Potočari is the *lieux de mémoire* for the Srebrenica genocide survivors. The Potočari Memorial Centre represents a great example "in which space has assured memory preservation" (Zelizer 1995: 223). Moreover, the UN peacekeepers, too, especially those who return(ed) to Srebrenica find it important as well. As Zelizer underscores, "traumatic event has its greatest and it clearly unjustifiable effect on the victim, but in different ways it also affects everyone who come in contact with it: perpetrator, collaborator, bystander, resister, those born later" (LaCapra 1998: 9).

In addition to the concepts of time and space, there is the third and final issue particular to this subchapter: intervention. It was the intervention, which set the tone and defined the roles of members of the groups in the UN Safe Area. Ever since the 1990s there has been growing scholarly interest in the study of humanitarian interventions (Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1996, Wheeler 2000, Finnemore 2003, Holzgrefe 2003). “Justifying intervention on humanitarian grounds by the UN, and its authorization to use force to ensure continuation of humanitarian activities” (Wierzbicki 1994:1) posed a number of difficulties, which are important to explore in order to better understand the memory of the relationships. By endorsing the creation of a ‘safe area’, the Bosnian government “admitted its own failure to protect its citizens against threats to their lives [and] on the basis of this admission allowed a creation of a space potentially beyond its sovereign control (Yamashita 2004:114). Moreover, by signaling this admission, “the creation of the ‘safe area’ [...] raise[d] the sense of humanitarian obligation on the part of the humanitarian community” (Yamashita 2004: 114).

In this context, the associations between a raised sense of humanitarian obligation, and a concept defined by Giorgio Agamben as “bare life” come to mind. For over a decade, Italian philosopher Agamben's and his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) have received wide attention from political and social theorists. As he argues in this book, “in gesturing to the condition of the modern concentration camp as a paradigmatic case of what he calls ‘bare life’ - human subjects [are] reduced to a naked depoliticized state without official status and juridical rights”(Agamben 1998 in Lee, 2010: 1).

As a group, the Dutch UN peacekeepers had been given clear passage to safety during the first year of their stay in the Safe Area. During this period they were allowed to go home once their six month tour came to an end. They were allowed two short or one longer visit home during this time period. Their freedom of movement did get considerably limited during the last six months of the Safe Area, but once the take-over of the enclave took place, all were given safe passage. Quite contrary, the Bosniaks had to stay put. April 1993 evacuation of civilians was the last chance the

enclave dwellers were given to leave⁵. After, the Bosniaks' only option was living in a modern concentration camp, remain in danger and ultimately subject to genocide. I noticed that the majority of testimonies given by the peacekeepers, showed strong feelings of individual and collective, and direct and indirect "survivor" guilt. These feelings were shown by peacekeepers regardless of the time of their deployment which suggests that the stark contrast between the Bosniaks' "bare life" condition and the peacekeepers' more protected status and freedom of movement. Therefore it comes as no surprise that Lee, who is extending upon Agamben, states that "critical migration scholars have recently taken up his conception of bare life to delineate the plight of refugees [...], who live in an indefinite and suspended state of noncitizenship" (Rajaram and GrundyWarr 2004; Salter 2008 in Lee, 2010: 1).

Field Research

The research combines the approaches of oral history to look at sociological interpretations of historical experience. I utilized the following methods: narrative and content analysis. I recorded and interpreted individuals' recollection, focusing on relationships. I have chosen oral history, a method I found to be most suitable as it "collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance" (Ritchie, 2003: 20). Instead of doing structured or even semi-structured interviews, as is the case in many oral histories, I choose life narrative.

In my research, I explored memories of both the Dutch UN peacekeepers as well as the local population of the UN Safe Area Srebrenica, through their personal accounts and experiences. To date no research has attempted to combine the recollection of both groups. I strongly believe that in a study of this kind, people are at the heart of the matter. This is why I have centered my research around people's memories, attitudes, perceptions and ultimately their well-being, their needs, wants and desires all of which profoundly affected their recollection of each other's relationship.

I conducted a total of 29 recordings with people who were the local population and Dutch UN peacekeepers in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. The material gathered

⁵ It should be noted that a few well-equipped individuals, including Naser Orić, did escape to the Bosniak free territory well before the fall of the UN Safe Area Srebrenica.

consists of over 200 transcribed pages of vivid recollections. Alessandro Portelli, points to the fact that “oral sources tell us, not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did” (Portelli 1991: 50). As such, spoken oral testimonies “breathe life into history” (Thompson 2000: 21). Thus my framework was purposefully not centered on the war, which is a self-evident setting, but extends its interests toward many other aspects of the memories, predominantly focusing on relationships, individual and family contexts, interpersonal aggression and/or affection, collaboration, etc. A war-time period is always a period of rapid transformation on all fronts, and nowhere has this transformation taken place with such velocity like in the war time Safe Area in Srebrenica. In war-time Srebrenica human conditions of local people (and to some extent peacekeepers) disintegrated with enormous rapidity. Thus, I was very interested how the concept of a safe area might have shaped the relationships between locals and peacekeepers. As Halbwachs rightfully states: “by putting together remembrances of several people (or even one) may be able to describe very accurately facts or things” (Halbwachs 1980: 24). So in a way individual recollections helped to reconstitute circumstances in which the local population and Dutch UN peacekeepers found themselves during those long months in 1994 and 1995.

Field research was done in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the Netherlands over the span of three years (2009 – 2011). I traveled to Srebrenica in July 2009, 2010 and 2011, respectively, and on each occasion stayed between seven and 12 days. My visits were always on and around July 11 when the commemoration of the 14th, 15th, and 16th anniversary of the genocide took place. This period was chosen on purpose. Since 2003, when the Potočari Memorial was first created, approximately 600 victims of genocide are concurrently laid to rest on July 11. On this day approximately 50,000 people come to Srebrenica to attend the commemorations. Among them are thousands of survivors, normally scattered throughout the world – some there to bury their family members, others to pay respect to the victims and survivors. From 2008 onwards, the Dutch UN peacekeepers, too, have made their regular appearance in Srebrenica during this period. During my first year of research (in 2009), Fazila Efendić (Narrator 27) introduced me to Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) who she met back in October 2007. Henry was in the first group of UN peacekeepers that have

returned to Srebrenica since 1995. He helped me get in touch with several UN peacekeepers.



Photograph 2 Henry and Fazila meeting for the first time in 2007 in Fazila's souvenir shop in Potočari (Photo courtesy of Henry Van Der Belt, October 2007, Potočari)

However, after three trips to Srebrenica and 15 recorded testimonies with the locals and only eight with the UN peacekeepers, it became clear - the numbers of Dutch peacekeepers traveling to Srebrenica during this time are diminishing. In the summer of 2011, I decided to travel to the Netherlands that fall to conduct further research. I soon realized my research in the Netherlands would be necessary, as well as beneficial. In the Netherlands, I had a chance to collect recollections of the UN peacekeepers that cannot, are unwilling, or afraid to go back to Srebrenica.

In August 2011, with the help of a former Dutch peacekeeper John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5) I contacted 58 former Dutch UN peacekeepers. In the electronic letter I introduced myself, explained my research and past recordings I did in Srebrenica in 2009, 2010 and 2011. I also explained what oral history was and what life narrative meant. John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5) translated the letter into Dutch and added some of his personal experiences, being one of the people who, back in 2009, let me record his testimony. Within the first couple of days I received six confirmations; two more followed while I was already in the Netherlands. While a lot of former peacekeepers said they didn't feel like it, or were not ready for it, didn't have the time in that period, or lived abroad (like in Curacao, south Caribbean), there were also those who told me

that they didn't have contact with the local people, not even the locals that worked on the UN compound. Nonetheless, I was happy that many people were prepared to talk. The second electronic letter was sent soon after. In it, we requested their contact information (address, phone number), and when they would be available to meet. On September 11 2011, I flew to the Netherlands to meet with eight Dutch UN peacekeepers - seven who served in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area and one who was a part of the DUTCHBAT III but served in Simin Han. I flew to Amsterdam, where I met with John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5) who accompanied me during the entire trip. We traveled first to a military base in Havelte, continued to Hardervijk, Enschede, Terborg and Tilburg where we met with Dion van den Berg and Željko-Pučo Danilović (IKV Pax Christi), went on to Dordrecht, Rotterdam, Wijk en Aalburg, and then headed north to Friesland and then back to Amsterdam, traveling over 1200 kilometers.

My last trip to Srebrenica was in July 2012. I met with most of the Bosniak narrators in person, gave them copies of the transcripts for their review and asked them to sign an oral history agreement. Once I revisited the narrators with their transcribed recollection and a form to sign, many were first taken aback. Some have been pleasantly surprised, perhaps, that I have followed through and brought the materials for their review. Others have realized that their oral recollection is now a written document and as such carries more weight. Milharčič Hladnik states that “when a person decides to tell her [or his] story, she [or he] enters an interactive situation with the listener (researcher), although she [or he] is aware the audience later will be a lot wider and unknown to her” (in Lukšič-Hacin, Mlekuž 2009: 116). For the narrators their “story coming out” really only became reality once they were asked to sign a release form. I mailed a copy of the transcripts to all who were not available to meet me in person. I attached a personal letter where I asked each narrator to: review the transcript, decide whether entire testimony can be included, and choose how they wish to be identified (i.e. First and last name, only first name, or initials) in the dissertation. I received majority of the signed agreements and corrected transcripts, while a couple UN peacekeepers found it too difficult to revisit their past experiences.

During my last trip to Srebrenica (July 2012), I participated in the annual Peace March and walked the entire 110 kilometer distance from Nežuk to Potočari. The

fieldwork and dissertation writing process ended up being a much more emotional experience than I had anticipated. Completing the Peace March thus had a very positive and even cathartic effect. The March helped me adequately address and experience emotions, which I had repressed or ignored during my work as a listener/researcher.

As a researcher, both in Srebrenica and across the Netherlands, I attempted to be professional, well-prepared, supportive and non-intimidating. Initially I let the narrators give their accounts as freely as possible, and only later asked them to tell me more in depth about certain recollections which they shared with me (and which interested me as a researcher). Paul Thompson writes “researchers have reported that simply to ask ‘Tell me the story of your life’ produced results, which were generally disappointing” (Thompson 2000: 228). The formation of my request ‘Tell me about your relationship with the local population/UN peacekeepers?’ produced similar results. In many instances people simply didn't know what exactly I was interested in. This meant that I had to give broader clarification, but steered away from any leading questions. After our initial discussions, “a dynamic relationship, with interpretation developing through mutual discussion” developed between the narrator and me, the listener (Thompson 2000: 212). The narrator normally introduced himself/herself with name, occupation, family background and place or role in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica. Interestingly, if the narrator cried during the recollection of the horrible past, I of course, sympathized with him/her, but I believed that tears were also healing. As a listener, hearing tragic stories from a narrator who showed no emotions was what was really difficult for me. Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik, who recorded memories of Slovenian immigrant women in United States, had a similar experience when a narrator told her a tragic story without exhibiting any *pathos*. It led her to break the fundamental rule, which is to listen without interrupting. She writes “afraid the tears would get the better of me this time, I started to ask her questions, which of course cut the stream of her narration” (in Lukšič-Hacin, Mlekuž 2009: 115). This happened to me time and again and I wish I had been better equipped to listen to this type of non-emotional recollections.

When a narrator starts a sentence with ‘I remember’ he or she normally refers to his or her own first-hand experience. In my research, I was interested primarily in those

types of memories; to hear from people that have not been heard. However, when I started recording the narratives, it became evident that group identification was very strong. I realized that individuals had been recalling the past events to one other. This is a very normal experience in the veterans' and survivors' groups I found out later. Recollecting in group is easier, moreover "great many of our remembrances reappear because other persons recall them to us" (Halbwachs 1980: 33). Therefore I asked the narrators to try to limit their verbalized recollection to what they themselves have experienced, and tried to steer away from what they thought the whole group was experiencing (to try to move away as far as possible from oversimplification and generalizations). In practice, this meant that I asked them to speak in first person "I" sentences. But it was very difficult for a number of them⁶ making it hard for me, at times, to differentiate between one's memory and collective memory.

Prominent oral historians Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini, and Paul Thompson argue that "it would seem common sense, given the sharply differentiated life experiences of men and women in most human societies, and the very widespread tendencies for men to dominate in the public sphere and for women's lives to focus on family and household, that these experiences should be reflected in different qualities of memory" (Leydesdorff, Passerini, Thompson 1996: 2). The authors suggest that "the language with which narrators told their stories was fundamentally different: men would place themselves at the center by using the active 'I', the grammatical first person, while women tended to speak through the collective 'we' or plural 'nous'" (Leydesdorff, Passerini, Thompson 1996: 2). I did not find this to be true in my research. Certain narrators I interviewed avoided the active first person and instead used the plural form referring to the "the Bosniaks of Srebrenica" or "Dutch UN peacekeepers", respectively, thus suggesting 'plurality' which Hannah Arendt has used to describe as "a basic feature of the human condition" (Arendt 1961 in Leydesdorff, Passerini, Thompson 1996: 2).

I noticed a great deal of diversity in the way how the narrators recalled their memories. Certain narrators (i.e. Henry Van Der Belt, narrator 1) made extended use of direct quotation, dialogue, and reported speech, while others liked to follow storytelling

⁶ Halbwachs argues that in cases when a person "evoke[s] an event that had a place in the life of [a] group, it might be granted that we can speak of collective memory because [the person] once envisaged that event [...] for the viewpoint of this group" (Halbwachs 1980: 33).

concept. Certain narrators (i.e. Emir Suljagić, narrator 11) conveyed the gist of the relationship in a well-articulated, summarized recollection, while others were often searching for the ‘right’ words. Finally, other narrators (i.e. Mehmedalija Ustić, narrator 29) began the recollection by providing the entire family background dating back to when their ancestors first settled in Srebrenica, while other sparsely spoke of their personal lives. But I found no correlation between gender(ed) recollection in terms of either the accuracy or the vividness of their memories although. I did however find a strong correlation in the different type of events the men, women and children were recollecting (more in Chapter Two).

Lastly, during my fieldwork important developments were underway that affected what and why people wanted or refused to participate in the research. Namely, lawsuits filed against the Dutch government on behalf of Bosniak survivors of genocide. Much media attention was given to these lawsuits and people were careful who they talked to. For these reason, gaining access to UN peacekeepers to conduct the study was not easy. Here I would like to bring attention to another important aspect – cooperation. Milharčić Hladnik describes “narration and listening are based on the principle of cooperation” (in Lukšič-Hacin, Mlekuž 2009: 115). I too experienced that, especially when working with the UN peacekeepers while in Srebrenica. They were a smaller, tight-knit group weary of anyone asking questions. The first Dutch peacekeeper I spoke to was Henry Van Der Belt⁷ (Narrator 1) and he met with me “because I was a friend of Fazila [Efendić, narrator 27] and he trusts Fazila,” he said. Over the years, we found ourselves in an interesting interactive situation. I believe he sympathized with me and understood that I will not be able to reach out to the Dutch, as easily as I could to Bosniaks, without his help. He was willing to be my unofficial spokesman and told a number of his former colleagues about his own interview experience with me, and encouraged them to talk to me and find out more about my research. In this group of peacekeepers (that Henry Van Der Belt, narrator 1, introduced me to) was also John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5), who likewise wanted to assist me in finding a sufficient number of Dutch narrators. Once I

⁷ Henry was the very first peacekeeper that agreed to have his narrative recorded. It was the morning of July 11, 2009 and we met at the Restaurant Misirlije. He spoke for four and a half hours stopping only once to smoke a cigarette. Ultimately, his narrative was 36 pages long and excerpts are used throughout this research.

realized, I will not be able to find 15 former peacekeepers in Srebrenica, I decided to travel to the Netherlands. Consequently, he helped me with the organization of the recordings in the Netherlands. He sent out mailings, drove me to all eight visits with the narrators throughout the Netherlands and accompanied me everywhere. Their cooperation opened many doors for me. On the other hand, I had a relatively easy access to the Bosniak population who lived in the Safe Area. Many were willing to tell their story. There was also the fact that I spoke the Bosnian language and came from what used to be our joint homeland, Yugoslavia.

Thompson writes that most narrators accept a recorder with very little anxiety, and quickly lost any immediate awareness of it. Moreover, he states that an audio recorder can even help the listener/researcher. "While it is on, people might be a little more likely to keep to the point and other members of the family to stay out of the way" (Thompson 2000: 232). This was also my experience which frankly surprised me somewhat, thinking that narrators would have aversion towards it. But they didn't; almost all said everything on record. Only in one instance, when the recorder was switched off, a final statement was given. This statement was powerful and hateful and the fact that the person didn't want to go on the record with it made me think that he wanted me to know his true feelings but off the record.

In this process, I have followed the general standards of conducting narrative recordings as well as principles for dealing ethically with the narrators. But as is with any other oral history project, the process has been very dynamic, so the final method that I have chosen reflects the goals that I hoped to achieve and resources that were available to me at the time.

After I recorded the stories, I transcribed and manually indexed all the narratives. For the purpose of my research, only portions of whole interviews were used. Photographs related to the narratives were also used in the research and are included in this dissertation.

Writing a reliable piece of research by using only 29 narratives meant that I had to choose the narrators carefully. Thompson stresses that "concern for representativeness is essential if oral history is to realize its potential" (Thompson 2000: 152). However, he also emphasizes that one of the greatest lessons of oral history is the uniqueness

and at the same time representativeness of every story. That is something I kept in mind throughout the research. Once I started listening and recording, I was amazed at how special, inter-connected and utterly vivid the stories were. They demanded recording and publishing. Thompson writes that there is something about “the use of human voice [that is] fresh, personal, particular [which] always brings the past into present with extraordinary immediacy” (Thompson 2000: 21).

The choice of narrators was guided by the representative sampling method. Therefore the men and women recorded have similar characteristics to the people who lived in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area (over 40,000 local people, and over 1,000 Dutch UN peacekeepers) from February 1994 up until July 1995. This was done in an attempt to represent a balanced cross-section of the various narrators. However, at this point it must be acknowledged that no matter how balanced I wanted to make my sample “the self-selected group will rarely be fully representative of a community” (Thompson 2000: 22).

For my research, I recorded five men, five women, and four men and women who were at the time of the Safe Area children – younger than 18 years old. They are all Bosniak representatives of the local population of UN Safe Area. I also recorded 16 Dutch UN peacekeepers, one female and 15 male, to represent the UN peacekeepers. All them were members of DUTCHBAT I, II and III. All served in Srebrenica UN Safe Area, with the exception of one, who served with the DUTCHBAT III Alfa Company in Simin Han.

The first group of Bosniak people was selected to be as representative as possible and represent the UN Safe Area population as a whole. This small sample needed to account for gender diversity, and additionally had to balance:

- between the IDPs and Srebrenica town residents
- locals who worked for the UN and those who barely had contact with the peacekeepers
- locals who were members of ARBiH and civilians
- those who lost immediate family members and those who didn't

The second group, the UN peacekeepers, attempted to balance among those who:

- served for different DUTCHBAT tours (I, II, and III)

- were located in different DUTCHBAT locations (Alfa Company - Simin Han, Bravo Company - Srebrenica and Charlie Company - Potočari)
- Served in different functions (i.e. cook, driver, medic, surgeon, warehouse manager, moral counselor, etc.)
- were or weren't diagnosed with PTSD
- were drafted or were professional soldiers
- who served in other missions before Srebrenica (e.g., Busovača) and those who didn't
- who have been back to Srebrenica since 1995 and those who have not



Photograph 3: Areal view of the UN compound in Potočari (Photo courtesy of Ramon Timmerman, narrator 9, July 1994 - January 1995, Potočari)

“Forgetting the past is difficult, remembering it is worse” goes the famous quote. I have seen it. Many tears were shed in the process of remembering; many sentences left unfinished, because the pain of saying it out loud was too much to bear. Not wanting to cause further pain, my attention was focused on only the memories the narrators could articulate, and those narrators who were willing and able to talk. I was aware that recording only the willing might mean taking the risk of “recording only the exceptionally confident and articulate” (Thompson 2005: 149). But nothing can be

further from the truth as absolutely all had experienced hardship remembering the difficult past and many searched for words to describe what they saw, felt, and lived.

Media technology has been constituted as an aid to the act of recollection by virtue of the fact that it facilitates access to memory. But the study of memory calls into focus another use of media – its function as storage. Storing information about the past provides “a means of marking, memorizing, and registering events” (Le Goff 1992: 60). Thus, it did not surprise me when many of the peacekeepers, after some time, suggested they get their Srebrenica photo album to help them remember the past events. On the other hand, members of the local population did not have this aide. None had a camera; there was only one exception – Fazila Efendić, narrator 27) who had photographs from war-time Srebrenica, but they too were photographed by the UN peacekeepers. While there are definite benefits to having visual records of past event, there is also a downside. When the UN peacekeepers were called upon to recall the events, almost all who did, referred to and produced photographs that were related to the memory they were recalling. Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) referred to the photograph 30 when he recalled:

They were very nice girls working there. Also you could have a very nice conversation with them. I can remember when we were almost out of food and the women who had been working with us for three months and had to stop working in the middle of our rotation, heard we had really bad food to eat brought us home-made cookies and nice sweet stuff on a plate. I sit there eating with my friends and talking with them. Afterwards, we were sick because the water they made cookies from was bad. I have a nice picture of it still. I liked them; you know they did my laundry.

Interestingly, he even makes reference to it in his testimony. The picture clearly shows them having good time and depicts the cookies he was remembering. This photograph has undoubtedly assisted Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) in keeping this memory. However, there are also visual records that do not carry such nice memories and make people who are called upon to recall the past very uncomfortable. This was the case of one and only photograph Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) has of her friend Amir, who she fears died in 1995. For her, looking at the photograph has meant considerable emotional impact when accessing the memories connected to the boy.

Going further, it seems certain visual records often bring up memories too difficult to bear, thus there are certain photographs that I know exist but have not been used by the narrators (when recollecting) because of their graphic presentation of traumatic memories. Thus, it should be duly noted that the UN peacekeepers that looked at the photographs while recollecting, might have grounded the narrative of their past recollection around the photographs they have kept, while the local population couldn't.

In summary, theoretical framework outlined main concepts that underline dissertation, mainly: history, memory, oral history, and different factors affecting these concepts. Using examples from my field work, and theoretical basics of memory studies, I argue that memory is an on-going active process in which an individual chooses to recall certain memories and ignore others, and by doing so he or she reinforces their collective identity. In the next chapter, I will outline the socio-political context which the narrators experienced and explore the context in which the memory of these individuals is grounded.

CHAPTER ONE: The Socio-Political

Context

1.1. The United Nations Peacekeeping

The period after the end of the Cold War witnessed an expansion of the international role of the UN and the use of military interventions on an unprecedented scale. During the four decades – from the time the UN Peacekeeping Department was first established (1948) until the end of the Cold War (1989) – the UN embarked on 15 peacekeeping missions. Since 1989, no longer paralyzed by the Security Council veto, this number has quadrupled bringing the total number of missions to 61.⁸ Before 1989, “only 26 countries had participated in UN peacekeeping operations, but by the end of 1996, 110 countries had become involved” (Malan 1998: 2).

The concept of peacekeeping operations and their conduct has evolved dramatically over the past 50 years. Peacekeeping operations have changed in structure, scale, and dimension and in their objectives. New purposes and principles have emerged as a product of experience on the ground, which has been adjusted incrementally according to evolving circumstances. From an initial slow start to the fast expansion (in the post 1991 period) and now with the subsequent contraction of UN missions.

United Nations peacekeeping initially developed during the Cold War era as a means to ease tensions and help resolve conflicts between two or more countries by deploying unarmed or lightly armed military personnel from a number of countries, under UN command. In the beginning, the UN peacekeeping goals were primarily limited to maintaining ceasefires and stabilizing situations on the ground, so that efforts could be made at the political level to resolve the conflict by peaceful

⁸ www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.html (25.6.2012)

means. Missions consisted of military observers and lightly armed troops with monitoring, reporting and confidence-building roles in support of ceasefires and limited peace agreements. In this initial framework, peacekeepers were not expected to fight fire with fire. As a general rule, they were deployed when a ceasefire was in place and the parties to the conflict had given their consent. UN troops observed from the ground and reported impartially on adherence to the ceasefire, troop withdrawal or other elements of the peace agreement.

Since 1989, the nature of conflicts has changed dramatically. Most of the new “low-intensity” conflicts targeted civilian populations and no longer follow the classical pattern of warfare. To step up to the challenge, UN peacekeeping was thus redirected towards helping to end internal conflicts. Although originally developed as a means of dealing with inter-state conflict, UN peacekeeping was thereafter applied to intra-state conflicts and civil wars. In addition, the “Security Council also began to react, not only to requests for assistance in ending internal conflicts, but also to international demands to intervene in a number of 'complex emergencies' which have created humanitarian crises of immense proportions: genocide, starvation, displacement and IDPs” (Malan 1998: 1).

Because of the newly emerging complex nature of operations, UN peacekeeping began to change dramatically. Its field operations evolved from “traditional” missions involving strictly military tasks, to complex “multidimensional” enterprises designed to ensure the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements and assist in laying the foundations for sustainable peace.

Analysts have made a broad distinction between 2nd and 3rd generation peace operations when describing peace operation since 1989. Second generation peacekeeping is understood as having comprised of “multifunctional operations have been associated with the end of proxy Cold War conflicts through negotiated settlements, in which the UN or other multinational organizations guided the adversaries to political settlements based on compromise (Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique and Angola)”(Malan 1998: 2). In these places, peacekeepers were deployed after signed comprehensive peace agreements followed by ceasefire. Once on the ground, the UN became involved in ending internal conflicts through multidimensional processes which included activities such as: the separation of

combatants; the disarmament of irregular forces; the demobilization and transformation of regular and irregular forces into a unified army; assistance with reintegration into civil society; the establishment of new policing systems; and the monitoring of elections for new governments (Riza 1995: 17).

On the other hand, as Malan explains, “third generation or 'middle ground' operations have been precipitated by the resurgence of more primordial animosities which had been suppressed, rather than addressed, during the Cold War freeze, and which led to conflicts marked by the most despicable abuses of human rights in the midst of anarchic conditions” (Malan 1998: 2). In these cases there was a strong international desire to support humanitarian assistance efforts while attempts are made to find a political solution to the conflict. However, peace agreements were non-existent or not respected by the warring parties and international law and conventions were openly flouted. In these cases, the peacekeeping mandates focused solely on providing humanitarian relief, rather than brokering a comprehensive settlement. Examples of these missions are Somalia, the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. These missions have been recognized as obvious failures that have shaken the traditional concepts and principles of peacekeeping to its core as well as led to a growing number of calls for reinvention of the concept of UN peacekeeping.

In their first ever meeting in January 1992, the heads of state of the Security Council commissioned the new Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to produce “an analysis and recommendations on ways of strengthening [...] the capacity of the United Nations for preventive diplomacy, for peace making, and peace-keeping”.⁹ Later that year the Secretary-General presented a landmark document, *An Agenda for Peace*.¹⁰ When asked to compare the pre-Cold War peacekeeping operations to second generation peacekeeping Canadian General Lewis Mackenzie, a former UN commander in Former Yugoslavia stated: “The UN would be presented with a nice little conflict where the belligerents had decided to end the conflict and had pledged to keep the peace [...but] the UN avoided civil wars because they were much too nasty to get involved in” (MacKenzie, 1993, in Slim H.: 4). But since peacekeeping has

⁹ www.un.org/Docs/SG/agpeace.html (25.6.2012)

¹⁰ *Agenda for Peace* set out the main principles by which the UN intended to take the lead on preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building. At the heart of *Agenda for Peace* is the policy that increased use of UN military force should play the major part in implementing these new strategies.

entered a whole new stage, civil wars became an acceptable environment for UN military intervention.

1.2. The United Nations Safe Areas

After the Cold War, peacekeeping operations have changed in structure, scale, dimension and in their objectives. In response, a variety of humanitarian bodies, concepts and different activities emerged. According to Hikaru Yamashita, “the 1990s saw a flurry of measures whereby areas were vaguely designated as ‘safe areas’” (Yamashita 2004: 1). In the absence of a standard legal definition, a “safe area”, has been also known as “safe haven”, “humanitarian area”, “protection zone”, “protection area”, “refugee zone”, and “safety zone”, to name a few. These terms are used “to cover a wide variety of attempts to declare certain areas off limits so far as military targeting is concerned” (Roberts 1999: 33). At its core the safe area is “a sanctuary of sorts, a place where persecuted people can go to survive” (Heidenrich 2001: 169). Moreover, the reason for inventing such a space can also be attributed to the fact the wealthier countries were creating too many refugee camps crowded by asylum-seekers. For them making a detour and having this problem “be solved by creating havens within a war zone” seemed like a good idea. But as the example of a failed haven like Srebrenica has shown, not everything was well thought out. Consequently, a “correlation between the deterioration of the concept and the loss of U.N. credibility” emerged (Weiss 1996: 145). Finally, the term safe area or haven as often referred “should not be romanticized” because it is only a “little more than a benign form of ghettoizing” and certainly “not a place where the people can live a normal life ... For the conditions inside are almost always abominable” (Heidenrich 2001: 169).

During the Congo crisis, which lasted from 1960-1964 and saw the largest deployment of peacekeepers, many UN actions remained controversial as “only about 50 peacekeepers could be spared to watch over a safe haven containing over 75,000 IDPs from the Congolese Baluba tribe” and “until a UN platoon of guard dogs was brought in, many IDPs were routinely robbed of their food rations by youth gangs” (Heidenrich 2001: 169).

Another 'safe area' was created a couple of decades later, this time in the northern, Kurdish region of Iraq.¹¹ In the late 1980s, Saddam Hussein tried to annihilate many Iraqi Kurds by attacking their villages with poison gas bombs and massacring them on the ground; perhaps as many as 100,000 died, including women and children and in mid-1991, soon after the Gulf War, about half a million Iraqi-Kurds were attacked by Hussein's Republican Guard and chased northward into Iraq's mountainous frontier with Turkey (Heidenrich 2001: 172). The safe area was created in 1991 in order to ensure that the Kurds¹² would be protected from further attack while receiving aid to meet their humanitarian needs.¹³ In the Kurdish case, following a failed revolt, large numbers of civilians attempted to flee beyond the reach of Iraqi government violence or by leaving the country altogether. Some crossed into Turkey, others were held back on the Iraqi side when Turkey closed its borders. According to Human Rights Watch, this amounted to a humanitarian crisis and the loss of an estimated 1,500 lives as the displaced were trapped in the mountainous border area in cold winter weather without food, shelter or health provisions. Human Rights Watch further states that the "safe area" was created in order to ensure that the Kurds would be "protected from further attack while receiving aid to meet their humanitarian needs".¹⁴ UN's experimentation with the 'safe area' concept in the 1960s, in Congo, and in the 1980s, in Kurdish Iraq, must have been perceived as a viable option that "inspired similar practices in different parts of the world" (Yamashita 2004: 77), namely in the 1990s, in Rwanda, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 1992 a number of 'safe areas' were created in BiH. They were operational until the end of 1995. During this time period, in 1994 to be precise, a 'safe area' was also created southwestern Rwanda, and monitored by the French military forces under the UN mandate titled Operation Turquoise. In Rwanda and Bosnia 'safe area' concept did not 'save' the population; on the contrary, both suffered genocide.

¹¹ Peacekeeping force consisted of some 5,000 personnel consisting of substantial numbers from the RAF and Army (both British), and 1,000 troops from the Netherlands that included 400 from the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps. The task was defined to be a cross between humanitarian aid and the provision of security for the Kurdish people (<http://britains-smallwars.com/RRGP/SafeHaven.htm>).

¹² Kurds are a non-Arab ethnic group who live in communities scattered among Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria.

¹³ www.hrw.org (Human Rights Watch)

¹⁴ *ibid*

It is fair to assume that the idea to create 'safe areas' in Bosnia came from their successful implementation in the case of Iraqi Kurds, while undermining a number of important differences that are evident. First, in the Kurdish case the "safe area" consisted of newly-built refugee camps built by the humanitarian apparatus and the UN and not of already existing cities and villages, which may or may not have been surrounded by a hostile force. Second, the Kurdish case was multinational involving Turkey, a separate sovereign state. Third, the Kurdish "safe area" had all the necessary resources - military, as well as humanitarian - because Turkey, backed by their strong ally, the US, had a vested interest in keeping the Iraqi Kurds outside their borders. Bosnian 'safe areas' as well as the Srebrenica UN Safe Area in particular, will be addressed in greater detail in subchapters 1.5. through 1.8. where further reference to the Kurdish case will be made.

1.3. War in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1991 – 1995

Far from the UN headquarters, around the same time as the Agenda for Peace was created, a country's existence was coming to an end in the worst possible way. Yugoslavia began to splinter after Croatia and Slovenia, two out of six Yugoslav republics, declared their independence on 25 June 1991.¹⁵ Bosnia and Herzegovina was a multi-ethnic Yugoslav republic and when various nationalist movements were born across Yugoslavia it was only a matter of time before fighting for control of territory would ensue among the three major ethnic groups: Bosniak, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. While the Bosniaks wanted to maintain a united Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Serbs were laying claim to the territory that forms what they call Greater Serbia. Meanwhile, the Croatians who were aspiring to create a vaster Croatia were also claiming that land. In May 1992, the Bosnian government headed by Alija Izetbegović (Bosniak) proposed the referendum for independence of Bosnia. The

¹⁵ The situation had finally reached a boiling point in 1991 when a new president could not be selected to assume the presidency in the rotation. The next candidate, Ante Marković who was a reform-minded Croat, saw his candidacy blocked by one of the other Serb members. While the presidency was debating an end to the leadership crisis Croatia and Slovenia were taking their own approaches to the crisis. Both countries feared Milosevic's possible designs for Yugoslavia. They were worried that he would simply extend his policies in Kosovo to the rest of the SFRY and reduce the two republics' autonomy even further.

Serbian minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina (which amounted to 31 per cent of the population) boycotted the referendum. Soon, an armed struggle broke out to determine which ethnic group would control the republic. On 6 April 1992, BiH's declaration of independence was formally recognized by the European Community (EC) and the United States, a day later. Thereafter, the Bosnian Serbs began "ethnic cleansing" the territory, which they believed was rightfully theirs. Approximately two million people, mostly Bosniaks, were internally displaced or had to flee abroad.

In February 1992 the UN stepped in and created UNPROFOR and sent in peacekeepers and a variety of observers to try and restore peace. In September 1992, the UN imposed an arms embargo on the entire former Yugoslavia. The embargo was intended to limit access to weapons and help stop the fighting. The terrible blindness of this logic was due to the fact that Serbia already had a stockpile of weapons from the Serb-dominated Yugoslav National Army and Croatia was able to acquire a large number of arms from its supporters in other countries. In reality, the embargo only affected Bosniaks, who had no way of arming themselves. The embargo tied the Bosniaks' hands, while Serbian forces were attacking from all sides. Enforcing a policy of ethnic cleansing, the well-armed Bosnian Serbs set out to "cleanse" the country by expelling and killing Bosniaks.

1.4. United Nations Peacekeeping in Bosnia and Herzegovina

According to the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO),¹⁶ the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was established in February 1992 in response to the war in Yugoslavia, with Zagreb, capital of Croatia, as its headquarters. UNPROFOR's jurisdiction stretched from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) to the Republic of Macedonia. In its final stage, in March 1995, its strength was 38,599 military personnel, including 684 UN military observers; the Force also included 803 civilian police, 2,017 other international civilian staff and 2,615 local staff. During the

¹⁶ http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unprof_p.htm, more in the BP at http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unprof_b.htm(28.5.2012)

period of time they were located in BiH, 167 (three military observers, 159 other military personnel, one civilian policeman, two international civilian staff and 2 local staff) of UNPROFOR members lost their lives. Estimated expenditures from 12 January 1992 to March 31, 1996 was \$4,616,725,556 net [includes UNPROFOR (February 1992 - March 1995), UNPROFOR (March-December 1995), UNCRO, UNPREDEP and UNPF-HQ]. On 31 March 1995 the Security Council decided to restructure UNPROFOR, replacing it with three separate but interlinked peacekeeping operations: UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina (March-December 1995), United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNCRO) in Croatia and United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the Republic of Macedonia. United Nations Peace Forces (UNPF) assumed the coordination, command and control between UNPROFOR, UNCRO and UNPREDEP.

UNPROFOR was “initially, established in Croatia as an interim arrangement to create the conditions of peace and security required for the negotiation of an overall settlement of the Yugoslav crisis”.¹⁷ In June 1992, as the conflict intensified and extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNPROFOR's mandate and strength were enlarged in order to ensure the security and functioning of the airport at Sarajevo, and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to that city and its environs. In September 1992, UNPROFOR's mandate was further enlarged to enable it to support efforts by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to deliver humanitarian relief throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to protect convoys of released civilian detainees if the International Committee of the Red Cross so requested. In addition, the Force monitored the "no-fly" zone, banning all military flights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the United Nations "safe areas" established by the Security Council around five Bosnian towns and the city of Sarajevo.

UNPROFOR was authorized to use force in self-defense in response to attacks against these areas, and to coordinate with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the use of air power in support of its activities. UNPROFOR monitored cease-fire arrangements negotiated between the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serbs forces, which entered into force on 1 January 1995.

¹⁷ http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unprof_p.htm (28.5.2012)

On 20 December 1995, for the period of one year after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, a NATO-led multinational military force called Implementation Force (IFOR) took over the UNPROFOR mandate in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

There were numerous problems early on with the administration of the UN effort. UN report, published on 23 January 1994, “alleges that some UNPROFOR troops and some of their civilian personnel in former Yugoslavia have been conducting a black market trade in fuel, coffee, cigarettes and alcohol.” (Jeffries 1996: 563) “Troops were associated with prostitution in Sarajevo and other areas, although there was no evidence that they ran brothels. There was abuse of UN identification cards and press passes. There was no widespread or organized corruption and serious violations declined in mid-1993. Twenty-three UN peacekeepers, from Ukraine and Kenya, had been sent home to face disciplinary action and seven locally recruited civilian employees have been dismissed.” (Jeffries 1996: 563)

Code of Conduct, is a term used to describe a set of rules outlining the responsibilities of or proper practices for an individual or organization. UN peacekeepers have one, too. Compliance with the Code of Conduct is particularly important because the UN peacekeepers are normally awarded diplomatic status. This special status means they are not susceptible to lawsuits or prosecution under the host country's laws (although they can be expelled). In addition to their diplomatic status, mission members are in a position of power especially in terms of money, in relation to the local population, which often suffers from acute poverty, unemployment and poor living conditions. For these reasons, the potential for abuse is high and responsibility of correct behavior in an exemplary manner is extremely important.

Peacekeepers represent the organization – the UN as well as their country and national government, “not only during working hours, but also during their free time” (Valenius 2007: 8). In practice, this is very hard to ensure, because the peacekeepers are involved in local civilian life, but they are not super-humans either. Nonetheless, “cultural awareness and sensitivity to gender issues is required, especially in the regions where sexual violence has been used as a method of warfare” (Valenius 2007: 8).

In the past, various members of international missions (e.g. UN peacekeepers) have

attracted media attention because of various types of misconduct, in particular sexual (prostitution). It had been a well-known fact that prostitution¹⁸ and sex abuse increased wherever humanitarian intervention was installed. This has in some places soiled the image of the United Nations and eroded confidence and trust the peacekeepers attained in the respective country. Betrayal of trust can have a lasting deteriorating effect on the relationship between the peacekeepers and the local population and can even jeopardize the overall achievement of the peacekeeping mission.

Thomas W. Britt and Amy B. Adler in what is now a fundamental book when comes understand peacekeeping *The Psychology of the Peacekeeper* point to an important distinction between peacekeepers and soldiers, and argue that peacekeepers face “completely different key challenges. In war, soldiers face a clearly defined opponent and use all force available to prevail on the battlefield through the application of violence, [while on the other hand peacekeepers] are not supposed to participate in the conflict. Instead they are supposed to use persuasion and their diplomatic skills to contain or limit violence and seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict” (Britt and Adler, 2003: x). The psychologists say “this is not an easy task, and it poses a different set of demands - especially psychological demands - on the individual peacekeeping soldier” (Britt and Adler, 2003: x). In a peacekeeping mission with a limited mandate, soldiers trained to use power, are ordered that power is not to be used. We can conclude that in a harsh environment, this contradiction exacerbates

¹⁸ Initially, the UN pinned the abuses on “the few bad apples,” which later proved wrong. The problem was more wide-spread as thought initially and thrall reform has been need since to archive lasting changes. For these reasons, the UN eventually dealt with this issue with extreme care and conviction. In 2005 Report on the UN Reform Kofi Annan (A/59/2005, 31) wrote: “I am especially troubled by instances in which United Nations peacekeepers are alleged to have sexually exploited minors and other vulnerable people, and I have enacted a policy of “ zero tolerance ” towards such offences that applies to all personnel engaged in United Nations operations. I strongly encourage Member States to do the same with respect to their national contingents.” What Annan was referring to was that these rules apply to UN employees only, not to peacekeepers, who to this day are under the jurisdiction of their own national government and military commanders. The ground-breaking 1996 report *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, which drew global attention to the devastating impact of armed conflict on children states that “children may also become victims of prostitution following the arrival of peacekeeping forces[...] In 6 out of 12 country studies on sexual exploitation of children in situations of armed conflict prepared for the present report, the arrival of peacekeeping troops has been associated with a rapid rise in child prostitution ” (Machel 1966: 24).

their feeling of powerlessness.

Additionally, experts argue “not only do they confront traditional stressors associated with being deployed to foreign locations (such as family separation and the chance of being wounded or killed), but peacekeepers must also deal with stressors specific to the mission of peacekeeping, such as remaining impartial when dealing with members of the former warring factions, and refraining from aggression when being taunted or ridiculed” (Britt and Adler 2003: 3).

1.5. United Nations Safe Areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina

According to the DPKO website, in the year 1992 “UNPROFOR's mandate was to ensure that the three United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Croatia were demilitarized and that all persons residing in them were protected from fear of armed attack. In the course of 1992, UNPROFOR's mandate was enlarged to include monitoring functions in certain other areas of Croatia (‘pink zones’); to enable the Force to control the entry of civilians into the UNPAs and to perform immigration and customs functions at the UNPA borders at international frontiers; and to include monitoring of the demilitarization of the Prevlaka Peninsula and to ensure control of the Peruća dam, situated in one of the pink zones.”¹⁹ In the winter of 1992, the idea of creating “safe areas” for the Bosniak population of Bosnia and Herzegovina was first proposed by Cornelio Sommaruga, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva (Honig and Both 2004: 99). By 1993, at the same time that the UN was launching their Agenda for Peace (1992), the Bosnian Serbs controlled 70 percent of the Bosnian territory. All hope seemed to be running out for the Bosniak population when the UN finally realized that Bosniaks had limited weapons to defend themselves, thanks to the embargo they themselves had imposed. So when Sommaruga suggested setting up “safe areas” to save the few remaining Bosniaks who had not yet fled or been killed, they agreed.

¹⁹ http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unprof_p.htm (28.5.2012)

On April 16, 1993, the UN Security Council passed resolutions 819 (Srebrenica), 824 (Sarajevo, Tuzla, Žepa, Goradže, Bihać, Srebrenica) and 836 and declared these six areas as “safe areas” to be protected by UN peacekeepers.²⁰ But “ironically, there was probably no place in the Balkans less safe than the safe areas” as they were never “actually guaranteed security from outside aggression” (Weiss 1996: 145). Out of six Bosnian safe areas, three - Goradže, Žepa, and Srebrenica – were “filled with Bosnian-Muslims but deep in Bosnian-Serb territory, completely depended on the consent of the surrounding Bosnian-Serb forces to even exist, let alone fed by the road bound food convoys of international relief agencies” (Heidenrich 2001: 169). Two out of three (Žepa and Srebrenica) were ultimately overrun; its inhabitants left unprotected and are today known as “former UN ‘safe’ areas”.

The concept of a protected zone, safe area, safe haven, secure zone, or whatever one chose to call it, inherently appealed to the UN. It seems to offer a viable solution to the enormous humanitarian tragedy “that attended the siege of each city as its indigenous population was multiplied by thousands of IDPs who have fled or been expelled by advancing Serb forces” (Ingrao 2005: 2). However, putting such a concept into practice presented the international community with a new problem as the Srebrenica UN Safe Area was very different from the Congolese, Iraqi or Croatian situation.

It is known today that when then “UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali requested 34,000 UN troops to man the [five] safe areas [in Bosnia and Herzegovina], no nations was willing to contribute the troops to carry out the ambitious plan” (Rohde 1995: 1). After re-evaluation, the UN Secretary General submitted a new request and the Security Council eventually authorized 7,300 troops. Ultimately, “only, 3,500 troops were deployed” to protect all the safe areas (Rhode 1995: 2).

Politics also interfered, both local as well as international. To the Security Council, the havens represented its own commitment to the opposition “ethnic cleansing” and

²⁰ Unlike the other 5 Bosnian Safe Areas, Srebrenica UN Safe Area was to be “protected” as well as “demilitarized”.

“to the Bosnian-Muslim government, the havens of Gorazde, Žepa, and Srebrenica represented its own land claim upon Bosnian territories otherwise occupied by eastern Serbs” (Heidenrich 2001: 169).

Ultimately, the safe area concept of protecting was not met with sufficient measures to achieve its purpose. The UN came to the realization then, although eager to help in a conflict, it did not have its own army and relied on its members to contribute troops. In such conditions the success of any mission was highly questionable. The UN Safe Area Srebrenica was the last ‘safe area’ directly authorized by the Security Council resolution.

Following a signed resolution, other organizations, apart from the UN peacekeepers, a number of the UN aid organizations and NGOs rushed into the enclave.

1.6. The United Nations Safe Area Srebrenica

Between the years 1991 – 1995, perhaps the most affected war-torn area in Bosnia was the Central Podrinje Area in eastern Bosnia (along the border of Serbia). There the Bosnian Serbs declared the territory to be part of the Serb Republic. The Bosnian Serbs drove Bosniaks from their homes, subjecting them to mass rape, confinement in concentration camps and murder. Serb forces gained control of Srebrenica for several weeks in early 1992, killing and expelling Bosniak civilians. However, by May 1992, Bosnian government forces recaptured the town. According to Daniel Toljaga “from April – June 1992, 296 villages in the region around Srebrenica (municipalities Srebrenica, Bratunac, Vlasenica, Rogatica and Višegrad) were destroyed by Serb forces, forcibly uprooting some 70,000 Bosniaks from their homes and systematically killing at least 3,166 Bosniaks (documented deaths) including many women, children and the elderly” (Toljaga 2010: 1). Many Bosniaks from the above-mentioned towns, as well as Foča and Zvornik, sought refuge in the enclave of Srebrenica -- a town which had a prewar population of only 6,000 people. According to Daniel Toljaga “IDPs were not registered, but it is estimated that by December 1992, around 40,000 people were crammed inside the enclave” (Toljaga 2010: 1). Through this entire time, Srebrenica remained an enclave, “never linked to the main area of Bosnian-held land

in the west and remained vulnerable island amid Serb-controlled territory” (ICTY, Case No. IT-98-33-T, 2001: 5).



Photograph 4 Internally displaced people looking for refuge in town of Srebrenica (Photo courtesy of Serge Jessen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

According to the witness testimonies recorded by ICTY “between April 1992 and March 1993, Srebrenica town and the villages in the area held by Bosnian Muslims were constantly subjected to Serb military assaults, including artillery attacks, sniper fire, as well as occasional bombing from aircrafts” (ICTY, Case No.: IT-03-68-T, 2006: 39). By early February 1993 the Bosnian Serb Army launched a major operation and by “March 1993, the size of the Srebrenica enclave was reduced to less than 20 kilometers in diameter” (ICTY, Case No.: IT-03-68-T, 2006: 40). In other words, the Srebrenica enclave was reduced to 150 square kilometers from its peak size of 900 square kilometers (350 square miles) as the Serb forces captured more surrounding villages. This meant that even more IDPs fled to the Srebrenica town while the territory grew smaller. The size alone no longer provided enough sustenance to feed the large population.

On March 1993, General Philippe Morillon of France, Commander of UNPROFOR, visited Srebrenica with a small group of peacekeepers with two APCs. They had originally planned to stay for only 7 days, but were held up for a total of 40 days. Some 1,500 women and children blocked Morillon from leaving the city. According to NIOD “the UNHCR saw the blockade [...] primary as an act of desperation” (NIOD, Part II 2002: 37). By then the town was overcrowded and siege conditions prevailed. The advancing Serb forces had destroyed the town’s water source; people relied on makeshift generators for electricity, and food, medicine and other essentials were extremely scarce. Before leaving, General Morillon²¹ told the panicked residents of Srebrenica at a public gathering that the town was under the protection of the UN and that he would never abandon them. Between March and April 1993 several thousand Bosniaks were evacuated from Srebrenica under the auspices of the UNHCR. However further evacuations were opposed by the Bosnian government in Sarajevo as contributing to the ethnic cleansing thus putting an end to all evacuations in April 1993.

In a *New York Times* (April 1993) article by Chuck Sudetić, written around the time Srebrenica was declared the UN Safe Area, Dr. Nedret Mujkanović, spoke of a surgeon he witnessed for the past 9 months in the Srebrenica hospital. The hospital staff struggled with a lack of medicine such as: antibiotics and anesthetics, bandages and other medical supplies and “started using baby diapers to dress wounds.” The surgeon “estimated that during his nine months in Srebrenica about 10 to 15 percent of the 4,000 patients brought to the town's hospital died” including “all the diabetics and heart patients who needed special medicine.” When the town cemetery was full, “new graveyards in the hills above the town” needed to be opened. He remembered the distressing situation of IDPs who “had no family members there to bury them ...sometimes the dead would lie in the streets for two and three days. Often no one knew who they were or where they were from”. In the same article, Dr. Mujkanović said in the three short winter months 1992/93 “about 20 to 30 people were dying daily from pneumonia and other diseases worsened by long-term hunger”. An internal UN report described the Srebrenica UN Safe Area as “a closed refugee camp of 50,000

²¹On Sept. 3 2010, while on a private visit to Srebrenica, Morillon was expelled from Srebrenica Memorial in Potočari by the survivors of the Srebrenica genocide.

persons without adequate facilities for more than about 15,000” (Heidenrich 2001: 169).

On April 16, 1993, the United Nations Security Council passed two resolutions concerning the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. Resolution 819 (only dealt with Srebrenica) and 824 (dealt with Srebrenica as well as other five Bosnian Safe Areas). Additionally, two more resolutions, 836 and 900, declared these “safe areas” to be protected by UN troops. In regard to Srebrenica, resolution 819 stated that “all parties and others concerned treat Srebrenica and its surroundings as a ‘safe area’, which should be free from any armed attack or any other hostile act”.²² Resolutions 836 and 900 state that “the safe areas should be considered of temporary nature and their primary objective is to prevent the combatants from attacking civilians and allow displaced people to return to their homes in peace” (Quénivet 2000: 18).

On April 18, 1993, a total of 175 members of CANBAT II entered Srebrenica to relieve the eight peacekeepers that had been there since Morillon’s arrival in March 1993. Two other UN organizations, which operated under UNPROFOR, the UN Military Observers (UNMO) and the UN police officers (UN CivPol) also, sent their staff. Various humanitarian relief agencies such as Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and International Red Cross soon followed. Nine months later the Dutch UN peacekeepers (DUTCHBAT) relieved the Canadian peacekeepers (CANBAT II). The following chart illustrates the international humanitarian and military presence in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica during its 27 month life span.²³

²² <http://www.nato.int/ifor/un/u930416a.htm> (25.5.2011)

²³ Shashi Tharoor, a special assistant to the UNDPKO chief Kofi Annan, later wrote about the predicament that peacekeepers were faced with: The Security Council resolutions on the safe areas required the parties to treat them as “safe,” imposed no obligations on their inhabitants and defenders, deployed United Nations troops in them but expected their mere presence to “deter attacks,” carefully avoided asking the peacekeepers to “defend” or “protect” these areas, but authorized them to call in air-power “in self-defense”—a masterpiece of diplomatic drafting, but largely unimplementable as an operational directive (Shashi 1995 : 60). In practice this meant that the local population, UN peacekeepers and other international presence “could only be fed, supplied and maintained through Serb territory and with Serb consent” (Heidenrich 2001: 171).

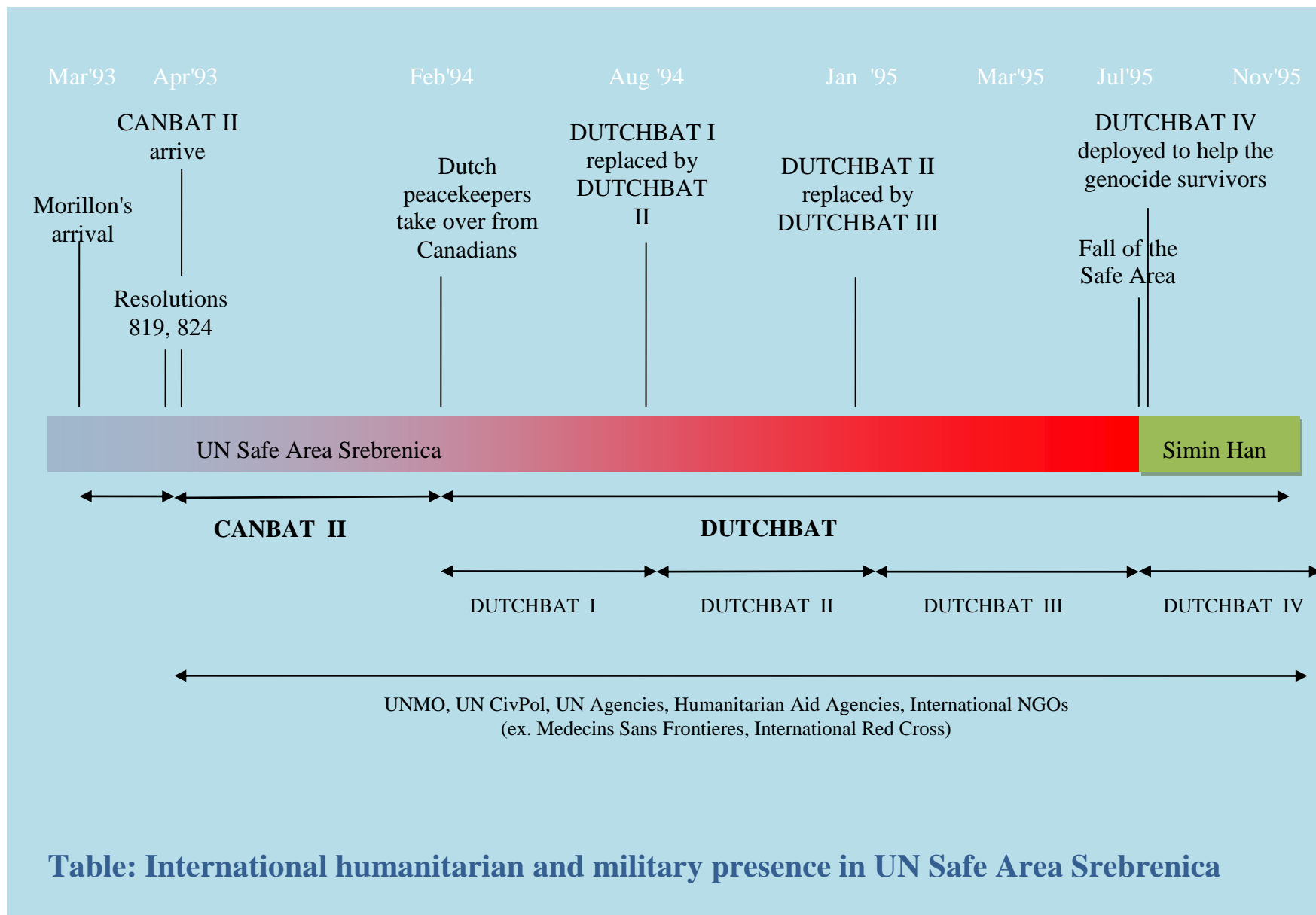


Table: International humanitarian and military presence in UN Safe Area Srebrenica

The following four subchapters (1.6.1. – 1.6.5.) look closely at the different international and local actors who operated and lived in the Safe Area. They all had very distinct roles and specific context in which they operated, so it is of high importance that clear distinctions are made. The shock was one thing most of them experienced when first encountering disturbing state of human conditions in the Safe Area. The people in the enclave - the majority of them IDPs had lost all of their worldly belongings - were trapped in a town that was being referred to as “UN-safe hell” (NIOD, Part II 2002: 78).

1.6.1. Local Bosniak Population

According to UNHCR, the local population of the UN Safe Area Srebrenica was comprised of the enclave’s original 11,000 residents and 32,000 IDPs from the surrounding villages and towns of Podrinje Area of Eastern Bosnia. The IDPs came in two major waves. The first wave came in 1992, while the second started arriving around the spring of 1993 when the VRS occupied Cerska and Konjevič Polje. Initial IDPs found large buildings, empty houses and flats, many of which were damaged by war. The ones who came later had to sleep in schools and other community buildings. IDPs lived in wretched circumstances, on top of each other and in “cellars, garages, or even containers and automobile wrecks” (NIOD, Part II: 61).

The local population of the Srebrenica UN Safe Area was predominantly comprised of men, women and children. There was great diversity – people came from all walks of life. Two groups of Bosniak people were considered to be more privileged as they had access to food: a portion of them worked for the UN or humanitarian agencies while others were members of ARBiH Command, or worked for local municipal authorities or police. All the rest, the vast majority of the population, was preoccupied with one thing alone – food – worrying each and every day if they will be able to get sufficient amount for themselves and their loved ones. There were enormous disparities between the original inhabitants of the Srebrenica enclave (Srebrenica town, surrounding villages and countryside), and the IDPs. The latter were desperate people who often came to the enclave with only the clothes on their backs. Most had

seen the atrocities of war firsthand and lost all their worldly possessions. They also had no land or farm animals, which meant they depended entirely on aid organizations for survival. Despite their large numbers, the IDPs had no representatives in the Municipality, which represented the local authority at the time. So, it is only understandable that they wanted to leave the enclave, which was, of course, not possible. They were trapped. What's more, they were being eaten alive. The IDPs that came in 1993 and resided in community buildings and schools suffered from scabies or lice, or both. MSF tried to help, but there was constant re-infection as the only sufficient eradication "would have been to burn the blankets and mattresses, wash all the clothing and move the population of Displaced Persons to a new location with new mattresses and blankets" (NIOD; Part II: 71).

In his book "Postcards from the Grave" (2005), Emir Suljagić (Narrator 11), a former interpreter for the UNMO describes hunger, destitution and death, as well as constant physical and mental humiliation of the Bosniak people trapped in the enclave. There was one humanitarian aid organization the Swedish Rescue Services Agency that did attempt to solve the IDP housing problem by introducing the so called Swedish Shelter Project, which included building 288 prefabricated and furnished houses with primary infrastructure. "Originally about 30 Swedish workers of Swedish Rescue Services Agency were involved and 80 local labourers [...] provided by the local authorities [... which were] paid no salaries, [only] one nutritious meal a day [...] and occasional bonuses now and then, in the form of rubber boots for example" (NIOD, Part II: 73). However, there was one major problem with the newly built 'village'. It was located in a completely inappropriate place (considering there was no transport infrastructure) – far from the town and right next to the separation line. There were constant shooting incidents, which made it unsafe for the IDP population. The DUTCHBAT had to send over peacekeepers to deter attacks on regular basis.

1.6.2. The Canadian United Nations Peacekeepers

The first group of UN peacekeepers deployed to the Srebrenica UN Safe Area were members of the Canadian Battalion (CANBAT) – an integral part of the UNPROFOR from the very beginning of the war in the Balkans. CANBAT I was home to 800

peacekeepers from the Royal 22nd Regiment, the famous "Van Doos" from Valcartier in Québec and they were stationed in Croatia. Their second deployment, CANBAT II, on the other-hand, was stationed in Visoko (30 km northwest of Sarajevo in central BiH). CANBAT II had some 825 members of all ranks.

On April 18, two days after the Resolutions 819 and 824 were signed, less than a quarter of the CANBAT II peacekeepers, a total of 175 members to be exact, left Visoko and entered UN Safe Area Srebrenica. Despite such a small deployment and a signed agreement, "the Canadians were stalled at numerous checkpoints [by the Bosnian Serb Army]" according to Dawn M. Hewitt, an expert on Canadian peacekeeping in Bosnia, who adds that once they finally arrived in Srebrenica "it was an emotional welcome. The crowd cheered and threw flowers. The Canadian soldiers were hugged and kissed" (Ingrao 2005: 2). But soon after their arrival, Canadian peacekeepers realized their new temporary home in Srebrenica is very different from Visoko. The NIOD Report states Canadians were "shocked by the state of the town and its inhabitants. They saw 'human skeletons' dressed in inadequate, dirty and threadbare clothing, who often walked the streets without shoes. There was stench; bodies of dead animals were lying in the streets, and the mountains of household rubbish lay in heaps in the river and the streams" (NIOD, Part II: 59).

Hewitt writes "the Canadian commander was well aware that 175 soldiers were not going to be able to demilitarize the entire enclave" (Hewitt 1998: 83). Most of the Bosniak soldiers left the town for the nearby hills, while they handed over two tanks (for which there were no gas or shells), 23 artillery pieces and mortars and 270 small arms (Hewitt 1998: 83). That was all. As far as the evacuation plans were concerned, they did not account for the people of Srebrenica while "helicopters would be flown in [for Canadians]" (Hewitt 1998: 83). Additionally, the Canadians' equipment made a tempting target for thieves, Bosniak as well as Bosnian Serb. The unpleasant situation for the Canadian peacekeepers continued as the Bosnian Serbs did everything to restrict the movement of convoys and keep the UN peacekeepers from sufficient supply. Hewitt noted that "Canadians could not receive their mail, fuel, or food [and had to] spend much time on combat rations [and] without ever taking leave" (Hewitt 1998: 84). The Canadian government soon realized that an insufficient

military force had been deployed to fulfill the mission assigned and called to other nations to pledge troops for Srebrenica.

A day before the UN entered Srebrenica general Morillon and Wahlgren (representing the UN) met with the ARBiH's General Safer Halilović and the VRS's General Ratko Mladić at Sarajevo airport to discuss implementation of the resolution. After 14 hours of negotiation it was agreed on the 17th of April that:

1. a ceasefire would begin at 0500, April 18
2. a company of CANBAT II could enter Srebrenica at 1100
3. within 72 hours the ARBiH in Srebrenica had to give their weapons to CANBAT II
4. 500 wounded could be evacuated by helicopter (Hewitt 1998: 82).

The agreement simply stated “demilitarization of Srebrenica”. It did not define Srebrenica, which was an *opština* (county), enclave, and a town (Hewitt 1998: 82). On 11 April 1993, a total of 143 Canadian peacekeepers entered the enclave. The heaviest weaponry they brought with them was a 50 mm machine gun. Their headquarters were the commercial premises of the factory called Vezionica in the town itself. However, Nijaz Mašić, author of *Srebrenica - Aggression, Resistance, Betrayal, Genocide* (1999) describes a gross mistake was made at that point: “instead of first removing the aggressor’s weaponry at least 1,5 km from the borderline of the Safe Area, just as the agreement Halilović-Mladić 8 May 1992 proposed, the Canadians first begin disarming the defenders of the town” (Mašić 1999: 157). Mašić also explains that “Canadians did not accept the situation on the ground as it was on 18 April 1993, but narrowed the area considerably” (Mašić 1999: 157). Bosniaks in Srebrenica had difficulty accepting these types of actions thus their view of the UN peacekeepers began to deteriorate soon after their arrival.

When the first group of UN peacekeepers arrived to Srebrenica, the number of the town’s original 6,000 residents had “multiplied by thousands of IDPs who ha[d] fled or been expelled by advancing Serb forces” (Ingrao 2005: 2). Furthermore, “for the next two years Srebrenica’s population, stretched to about 42,000 by the continuing influx of "ethnically cleansed" Muslims from elsewhere in the Drina valley, lived in ghetto-like misery without running water, electricity and adequate medical facilities.

Supplies came first via NATO air drops, then from U.N. convoys and the black market” (Mousavizadeh 1996: 118).

The people were malnourished, badly clothed and had problems with hygiene; “illnesses, especially skin disease, were rampant” (Honig and Both 2004: 131). Many people were sleeping and wandering without any occupation or purposeful activity on the streets, which were also used as toilets (Yamashita 2004: 100). The ‘safe area’, situated in a steep-sided valley not more than 15 km from the Drina River and Serbian border, was also surrounded by well-armed Bosnian Serb troops. From the very beginning the “safe area” agreement and ceasefire were violated by both parties in the conflict. Only sporadic food convoys made it through to the enclave (Honig and Both 2004: 133).

John Heidenrich, author of *How to Prevent Genocide: A Guide for Policymakers, Scholars, and the Concerned Citizen* wrote “Srebrenica was not a fortress; indeed, aside from some trenches, it was almost indefensible. In the original safe haven plan, it was supposed to have between 1,200 and 5,600 UN troops, but it never did. The most that it ever held were 570 Dutch UN troops beginning in March 1994, deployed as replacements for about 140 Canadian UN troops who left, utterly exhausted” (Heidenrich, 2001: 170).

1.6.3. The Dutch United Nations Peacekeepers

The Dutch battalion also known by its military short term DUTCHBAT was deployed to the Srebrenica UN Safe Area to replace the CANBAT II in February 1994. Like the rest of the UN peacekeepers, DUTCHBAT was under UNPROFOR command. It was formed out of the emerging Air Mobile Brigade of the Royal Netherlands Armed Forces to participate in the peacekeeping operation in former Yugoslavia. This was a first-ever brigade of this type “intended as a component of a NATO rapid-deployment force, but tailor-made for politically attractive peacekeeping operations” (Runia 2004: 302). Obviously a lot of money went into its formation and it seemed that people were eager to see it put to use. DUTCHBAT deployment in former Yugoslavia saw a total

of four tours DUTCHBAT I (February – July 1994), DUTCHBAT II (June 1994 – December 1994/January 1995), DUTCHBAT III (January 1995 – July 1995) and DUTCHBAT IV (July 1995 – November 1995) roughly deployed between February 1994 and November, 1995.²⁴ According to multiple sources, each tour consisted of about 450 troops; although the lowest number was present during the fall of the enclave, when at that time there about 280 peacekeepers present (120 peacekeepers were prevented from returning to the enclave after their leave and were stranded in Zagreb for weeks). Each battalion was divided into three companies:

- Alfa (stationed in Simin Han)
- Bravo (stationed in Srebrenica)
- Charlie (stationed in Potočari; in Potočari was also the HQ of the DUTCHBAT)

The DUTCHBAT was assigned the role of safekeeping the UN Safe Area Srebrenica. In accordance with the UN mandate of UNPROFOR, the armament was personal weapons and machine guns. As previously stated in subchapter 1.4, the UNPROFOR was authorized to use force in self-defense in reply to attacks, and to coordinate with NATO in the use of air power in support of its activities. Soon after their arrival the Dutch UN peacekeepers (like the Canadians before them), with their limited strength, were incapable of implementing Resolution 819. Thus, both parties to the conflict violated the ‘safe area’ agreement and ceasefire that was mandated. The Bosniaks didn’t disarm and the Bosnian Serbs continued with the attacks. The Dutch “felt they could, in effect, do little more than watch, count, and log and report violations” (Honig and Both 2004: 6).

The DUTCHBAT, unlike CANBAT before them, had its headquarters in an old battery factory in a village of Potočari 7 km from Srebrenica on the very edge of the UN Safe Area Srebrenica. They used 30 observation posts (OPs) throughout the enclave. This was the first mission for the Dutch, who once in former Yugoslavia became a part of UNPROFOR, an organization much different to NATO, the one they have grown a custom to.

²⁴ From July till November 1995 DUTCHBAT IV served and mainly dealt with IDPs from Srebrenica at Simin Han, near Tuzla.

Toward the end of the Safe Area period, the Dutch battalion was well below their optimal strength militarily. By April 1995, it shrank by over one hundred UN peacekeepers as all who went on leave were refused to return to the enclave by the Bosnian Serb forces. At the end of May 1995, commander Karremans sent out a letter informing his UN superiors that he had not been re-supplied since February 18, 1995, his troops had 16 percent of the ammunition they needed, and he was unable to carry out his mission (Rhode 1995: 3). By early July 1995, there were just 429 Dutch soldiers left in the enclave. Only half of those were infantry, the rest support and medical troops (Honig, Both 1996: 6).²⁵

Myriad of questions still persist: Why did the Dutch government send its peacekeepers to Srebrenica? Should the Dutch, based on the Canadian experience, not have realized that the UN's 819 resolution was something they could not implement? The spectrum of answers is wide, ranging from the genuine calls to help the people who the Dutch public had seen suffering on their TV screens to the more premeditated ones. While Madeleine Bunting, journalist for the *Guardian*, claims that "the naivety was evident across the entire Dutch political culture: parliament, the media and the country was swept along by a morally outraged public opinion" (Bunting 2002: 2). Others disagree; Phillip Corwin, the former chief UN political officer in Bosnia discussed these questions in his book called *Dubious Mandate: A Memoir of the UN in Bosnia*. In his opinion European states intervened in the war in former Yugoslavia to stop streams of IDPs from coming to their countries: "The interest was neither altruistic nor genuinely humanitarian. He claims humanitarian intervention was motivated by the domestic and racist concerns. He writes: "They cared little if one million Muslims, or Croats, or Serbs moved from one part of Former Yugoslavia to another part, no matter how catalytic that move might be, as long as those IDPs didn't try to enter their countries" (Corwin 1999: 212). Regardless of how a person interprets the debate, it's important to note that Yugoslav emigration did increasingly reduce after the UN intervention. Nonetheless, over four million people became displaced because of the war (Duffield 1994: 2).

In December 1993, Dutch generals told then-Minister of Defense Relus Ter Beek that stationing a Dutch battalion in Srebrenica was an assignment "full of honor: not simple, but doable." It was only after the massacre that Dutch voices began to emerge saying that Srebrenica was a "mission impossible" from the start (Gerstenfeld 2001: 6).

Nonetheless one thing remains clear. While the Dutch peacekeepers might have been well prepared technically, they were very poorly equipped with the knowledge about the situation in Srebrenica. Some Dutch UN peacekeepers had a set of stereotypes about the Balkan people and the Bosniak, in particular, prior to their arrival in Srebrenica. Each DUTCHBAT deployment required a three-month preparatory training. The three different DUTCHBAT fact-finding missions (also reconnaissance mission) were sent to Srebrenica UN Safe Area, prior to the actual deployment. However, they did little to help the Dutch UN peacekeepers better prepare for the mission. The first two missions were sent in September and November/December 1993, before it was even clear that Srebrenica UN Safe Area was a serious possibility of deployment for the Dutch. The third fact-finding mission, sent at the end of January 1994, was allowed to enter much too late. Their findings were never really included in the preparatory training, and did not help the DUTCHBAT I peacekeepers prepare for the mission. During the following training for DUTCHBAT II and III, in an effort to recreate the situation in the enclave, “veterans of the previous DUTCHBAT dressed up as the local population and the military: the ‘Muslims’ wearing long white dresses and turbans and ‘Serbs’ wearing Russian fur hats” (Keulemans 2005: 41). The reality was nothing like that - there were no turbans, white dresses, nor Russian fur hats.

The Dutch UN peacekeepers serving in Srebrenica were also a very diverse group. While majority represented infantry, there was also a lot of support and medical personnel. The Netherlands switched to a professional army only in 2002. We have to take into account that some peacekeepers were conscripted, while others were professional soldiers. The DUTCHBAT peacekeepers were predominantly men, although a handful of women served in each deployment. Peacekeepers’ experience serving in other UN missions was limited.

DUTCHBAT had a number of peacekeepers wounded and ultimately lost two peacekeepers: Jeffrey Broere and Raviv van Renssen. Both served with the DUTCHBAT III. According to multiple sources, the first was killed on 29 March 1995 by VRS artillery fire, while the second was killed by a Bosniak man who panicked as he saw the UN abandoning the OPs allowing the VRS free entry to the Safe Area. Raviv van Renssen was killed on July 8 1995 by a grenade thrown at the APC was driving.

1.6.4. UN Military Observers and UN Civilian Police

Apart from UNPROFOR, United Nations Military Observers (UNMO), and United Nations Civilian Police (UN CivPol), all part of the UN, had their presence in the Safe Area, in addition to the UN humanitarian agency called United Nations High Commission for the Refugees (UNHCR). First representatives of UNMO came with the Morillon before the UN Safe Area was even created. One of the narrators, Emir Suljagić (Narrator 11), worked as an UNMO interpreter.

1.6.5. Humanitarian Aid Agencies

Humanitarian aid agencies addressed the humanitarian aspect of the mission. Stationed in Srebrenica were: Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), International Red Cross (IRC), UNHCR and Swedish Rescue Services Agency. First representatives of UNHCR and MSF came to Srebrenica UN Safe Area the very first time international presence was allowed in Srebrenica (during Morillon's visit). UNHCR in particular "became the largest supplier of aid goods [... and] organized an average two to three food convoys a week [... but] had no influence or control over local distribution, which was in the hands of local authorities in Srebrenica. The UNHCR had no personnel in the enclave most of the time, and consequently control was almost impossible" (NIOD, Part II 2002: 66). MSF were very active in providing medical assistance to the local people. Because many illnesses were directly related to the poor living conditions, especially those of the IDPs, they introduced and maintained a series of preventative measures mainly connected to the improvement of hygiene and the water supply. However, constant lack of water, soap and cleaning products made their efforts inadequate even though they did important work in the Srebrenica hospital, small clinics, and with garbage collection, etc.

The Swedish Rescue Services Agency concentrated their efforts on the IDP housing problem by introducing the so-called Swedish Shelter Project. Initially, it included 288 prefabricated and furnished houses with primary infrastructure, which were complete by mid-1994. They also repaired schools and other buildings used by IDPs.

IRC came in as the UN Safe Area was first formed and helped with evacuation of the wounded. Later the work focused primarily on the postal services as approximately 25,000 letters a month were processed by the IRC local staff.

Over time these aid organizations tried to make the besieged town tolerable for the local population of the UN Safe Area. Although, great efforts were made by certain individuals it should be duly noted that not even one foreigner made it in the enclave longer than a year.

1.7. The Fall of the United Nations Safe Area Srebrenica and the Aftermath

By early 1995, the Bosnian Serb leaders had “acquired a reputation for violating agreements” (Heidenrich 2001: 170). Having ‘no clearance’ was the way this was understood in practice. It happened gradually and no one paid serious attention to it initially. But with such a large number of people in the enclave, shortages appeared to the point that peacekeepers as well as the local population, were literally starving.

In July 1995, when the VRS, headed by General Ratko Mladić, started operations to capture Srebrenica UN Safe Area, Dutch UN peacekeepers abandoned the OPs, allowing the VRS entry and ultimate takeover of the UN Safe Area. Approximately 30 Dutch peacekeepers were soon taken hostage “as their still uncaptured commander pleaded via radio for a NATO-flown air strike” (Heidenrich 2001: 170). But help was “too little, too late” according to Tom Karremans, commander of the DUTCHBAT (Silber, Little 1996: 358). Abroad, Holland's defense minister also called for a halt, fearing a repeat of what UNPROFOR had faced earlier that year, when several hundred UN troops had been taken hostage after NATO's air strikes near Sarajevo, later handcuffed by the Bosnian-Serbs to potential bombing targets and withdrew to their base, taking with them a couple of thousand women, children and men (Heidenrich 2001: 170). As a result, an estimated 10,000 – 15,000 Bosniak people (mostly men) tried to flee on foot – some alone, others in small or large groups. Many were killed in the woods by the VRS, other were captured and later executed on

various sites around Srebrenica. The remaining 25,000 Bosniak people fled to the UN HQ in Potočari in hopes that the UN peacekeepers will be able to protect them. Only a few thousand managed to get inside the compound. The rest were scattered in front and around the compound. When General Mladić reached the UN HQ in Potočari he promised that the people that remained in Srebrenica UN Safe Area will be provided safe passage to the Bosniak territory. Busses were soon brought in and Bosniak people started boarding the “some 300 buses, which the UN peacekeepers did not escort” (Yamashita 2004: 112). However, soon thereafter the VRS soldiers insisted that the men and boys (older than 11 years of age) get separated from the women, elderly, and the remaining children, and board different busses. What should have been obvious at the time, was that the men captured in the woods, and the men and boys separated from their families – in front of the UN HQ and in view of the UN peacekeepers – will be and also were all executed. There is no doubt in my mind that the “passivity by internal bystanders (members of the population where the violence is occurring) and by external bystanders (outside groups and nations) encourage[d] perpetrators” – a result of which was a shockingly-short five-day mass execution of approximately 8,300 boys, men and elderly, abandoned by the UN and the world (Langholtz 1998: 33). The final days of protecting the inhabitants of Srebrenica UN Safe Area have gone into history books as some of the darkest days of UN history and “the worst massacre on European soil recorded since the Second World War” (Heidenrich 2001: 170). Concurrently, it is seen as one of the biggest failures of the UN peacekeeping force.²⁶

On 13 July 1995 the last busses deporting civilians out of Srebrenica left the UN Safe Area. The Dutch UN peacekeepers remained in the UN HQ in Potočari till July 21, 1995 when they were permitted to travel to Zagreb, Croatia. With the UN Safe Area under Bosnian Serb control, the DUTCHBAT III left the enclave. The DUTCHBAT arrived in Zagreb to heroes’ welcome by Defense Minister Joris Voorhoeve and Crown Prince Willem-Alexander (LeBoer 2006: 123). They went out and partied. By

²⁶ It is known today that CIA U-2 spy planes followed the operation and took pictures of mass graves being dug by the Bosniaks. These pictures, now available, were made public only much later. So, in addition to UN’s passivity, why did the US, which seems to have known as events unfolded via its spy planes, do nothing? This is also one of the questions that remain unanswered.

their second day in Zagreb, the story of genocide broke world news. By then the first Bosniak men – who escaped through the woods – made it to the Bosniak-controlled territory. The men witnessed use of poison gas, torture and mass executions. All the media attention was turned to the UN peacekeepers that had been in Zagreb. Footage from the party in Zagreb from the previous day, was later put on YouTube (has since been removed) and consequently picked up by TV stations worldwide. These images are something that troubles many survivors till this day.

In the Netherlands, an official “independent” investigation by The Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (originally Nederlands Instituut voor oorlogsdokumentatie or NIOD), lasting six years, was published April 10, 2002. It included 3,400 pages. The report criticized the political and military High Commands of the Netherlands. Six days following the report, the Prime Minister of Netherlands Wim Kok, who was Prime Minister at the time of genocide, resigned. The resignation came less than one month before the Netherlands held its general elections. The fact the resignation coincided with the end of his eight year term in office (he was Prime Minister from August 22, 1994 until July 22, 2002) left Bosniaks with no clear reassurance that his resignation had been well-intended and sincere, but rather practical. Moreover, the fact that the end of Kok’s second term and the NIOD report coincided made it seem that the writing of the NIOD report was intentionally delayed and stretched over the period of six years.

Taking into account the time allocated to writing it, the quality of its researchers, funds available and vast area covered, it would be hard not to have this be first-rate scientific work. But there is much doubt if it is in fact independent. Critics, especially from the Bosniak side, say it is not as objective as they expected it to be and that it was the Netherlands’s attempt to wash their hands of direct involvement in the Srebrenica genocide. The report does have a number of inaccuracies with names, length and the area covered is too vast. One of the researchers, Ger Duijzings later stated publicly he found some information unreliable, while his fellow researcher found it reliable. One thing is clear; the report came much too late.

Few months after the NIOD report was published (end of 2006), Minister of Defense Hemk Kemp gave a decoration to the UN peacekeepers of DUTCHBAT III. This award was severely condemned by survivors and relatives of Srebrenica genocide

victims. Many had trusted the UN peacekeepers and counted on their protection in their hour of need. A medal on the chest of the UN peacekeepers felt like a slap in the face to those who believe the UN peacekeepers failed to protect so many innocent lives.

A year later (October 2007) an interesting event occurred. Twelve former DUTCHBAT UN peacekeepers (members of tours I, II and III) returned to Srebrenica for the first time in 12 years. The visit was organized by Kamp Westerbork Memorial Center and IKV Pax Christi, two Dutch humanitarian organizations. The UN peacekeepers expressed their desire to meet and talk with the genocide survivors living in Srebrenica. Van den Berg, IKV Pax Christi employee, states: “at first glance, Srebrenica survivors and DUTCHBAT soldiers might seem an unlikely combination. A meeting between the two groups would appear to be fraught with difficulties” (van den Berg 2010: 13). But it ended up being the first step in the right direction. Both sides started talking and many good things came out of the visit. Certain survivors began making clear distinctions between different DUTCHBAT UN peacekeepers (i.e. DUTCHBAT I, II and III), realizing not all were in a position to do much more than what they did.

According to van den Berg, the Dutch UN peacekeepers “see themselves as victims of bad politics both at UN level and in The Hague. In their view, a weak mandate and a lack of firepower prevented them from doing what they wanted to do. Generally, they were also dissatisfied with the Defense Ministry’s aftercare and felt manipulated by the Debriefing Report (November 1995) which distorted their statements by quoting them incorrectly and out of context. Many of them are critical of Commander Karremans and his deputy Franken as well, but most of them refuse to go on record with this (van den Berg 2010: 13).

In 2008, a group of Srebrenica survivors took up legal action seeking compensation from the UN and the Dutch state in the civil lawsuit. They lost. But in the year 2011, three individual cases won, creating a precedent. One should expect that many more lawsuits will follow.

CHAPTER TWO: Relationships between the Dutch UN Peacekeepers and Local Population in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica

In the Chapter Two, I look to testimonies of the people – 16 Dutch UN peacekeepers (all members of DUTCHBAT I, II and III; 15 deployed with Bravo and Charlie Company inside the Safe Area and one deployed with the Alfa Company in Simin Han) and 13 Bosniak residents of the UN Safe Area Srebrenica – to better understand the relationship between two groups of individuals. I have narrowed down the scope of the research to approximately 17 months – beginning with the February 1994, when the Dutch UN peacekeepers first arrived to the enclave and concluding with the final days of the Safe Area, more precisely July 11, 1995.

First half of the Chapter looks at different factors hypothesized to have influenced the relationship, namely (1) confinements imposed on the relationships between the UN peacekeepers and the local population by the UN mandate and widespread deprivation in the enclave, and (2) restrictions imposed on the relationships between the UN peacekeepers and the local population by the DUTCHBAT Command. The Chapter later goes on to focus on accounts where memories of individuals from these two groups intersect and where human relationships take place. The place where they intersect is where they come in contact with one another. Contact or interaction includes anything from an intimate, distant contact or/and continuing or one-time contact. Relationships are formed after single or multiple contacts or interactions occur. The second part of the Chapter Two describes three different types of relationships between UN peacekeepers and: Bosniak children, women and men, respectively. The analysis looks at different circumstances and events that formed or altered these relationships.

2.1. Confinements Imposed on the Relationships by the UN Mandate and Widespread Deprivation

When the UN peacekeepers – the initial group from Canada – first arrived to Srebrenica UN Safe Area, they received an emotional welcome, they “were hugged and kissed” (Ingrao 2005: 2) and by many locals, they were seen as saviors. However, this was only the initial phase and the situation gradually grew worse over the course of their stay. The Dutch peacekeepers who arrived to replace them soon realized they “were involved in a task there that had little humanity left in it” (NIOD, Part II 2002: 131).



Photograph 5 The fence surrounding the UN compound (Photo courtesy of Serge Jessen, January - June 1994, Potočari)



Photograph 6 DUTCHBAT I travelled via Split, a Croatian coastal town (Photo courtesy of Serge Jessen, January - June 1994, Croatian Coast)

Many Dutch narrators spent time recollecting the initial arrival to the Safe Area and the shock they experienced. John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5), who served with the DUTCHBAT II, described his arrival to the enclave in the following manner:

When I first came to Srebrenica, I didn't know what to expect. We flew into Zagreb airport. Than we were put into busses, travelled through Hungary and then through Serbia, entering Bosnia and Herzegovina at Zvornik and then went on to drive to Bratunac and then to Srebrenica. On the way I saw people and thought to myself: "O, well ok, this is what you are going to see when you are there." But it wasn't. People in Hungary were different from people in Srebrenica. People in Zvornik and Bratunac [Serb controlled towns near Srebrenica, op.p.] were also different from people in Srebrenica. Zvornik and Bratunac were populated areas! There were shops, people could buy things there. Here in Srebrenica there was nothing. People had a lot of money, but they could not spend it, because there was nothing for sale. When we arrived to the "goat" path - path with no asphalt or bad road - it took us long time to pass through. "OK, we are close now, this is 15, 20 km" I told myself. When we entered the enclave it was totally different from the kind of people we saw in Zvornik and Bratunac. This is how people are here? My expectation was to see similar people like in Zvornik and Bratunac. It was shocking when we entered the enclave and saw that people were skinny, have in-fallen faces, that they look tired and exhausted. Of course you saw them as equal to yourself, it never crossed my mind to see someone as less than we are ourselves. I saw them as completely people, as equals. Even doe they are from totally different culture, they have complete different background and complete different life-time experience. Everything is totally different but it doesn't make people less a person. Of course, there were a lot of people standing by the road and asking for food. When it was possible we always gave them something. Because, you are not only a soldier, you are also a human being. If they were standing by the road and were hungry and then we came and we had enough food -- in perspective to the food, because the food in DUTCHBAT II was not always enough -- we left some food for them when we could. It was ok. Because people were good to you, so you try to be good to people, too. That's the view in my mind what comes back. There were a lot of skinny people. People were without shirts and you could see their bones. It was terrible.

The following narrator, Peter van Daalen (Narrator 6), who also served with DUTCHBAT II, experienced shock as well as excitement upon arrival. He was happy to be able to serve, and help the Bosniak people who were in dire need. Here is how Peter, recalled his first arrival to Srebrenica:

I also remember traveling from Zagreb. It was a very hot hot trip. We went through Hungary because we were not allowed to cross the border with the Serbs, so we had to travel for 52 hours in one piece in a bus with no air conditioning. But we didn't care because we wanted to go to Srebrenica. We were all happy to go even after 52 hour. When we finally arrived at the compound; it was a very hot day, because it was in the summer, June, and I also remember all the happy faces of our colleagues [DUTCHBAT I] – because when we arrived, it meant they can go home. We were very very tired, starving, because of the bus trip. The other guys [DUTCHBAT I] went to the bus and left. We didn't have good sleep and they didn't have enough food for us. We had to work immediately. It was very hard. But it was good because we were trained to work hard and we were also driven. So we didn't care, it was nice. On the first night I lay on my pillow and was out till the next day, I was so tired. There were a couple of cooks of the other team and they were still there and they told us how everything worked. That was also so nice.

The next recollection is by the only female UN peacekeeper - Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) - who agreed to partake in the study. Saskia served with the DUTCHBAT I, while her father served with the DUTCHBAT II. Saskia clearly remembered coming home from her deployment and telling her father about the situation on the ground and the widespread deprivation among the local population and as well as the peacekeepers. But once she conveyed her own experiences to her father, who had just undergone a three-month preparatory training, he was clearly confused at the contradicting information about the place he was about to be deployed.



Photograph 7 Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) DUTCHBAT I, posing with her father, DUTCHBAT II (Photo courtesy of Saskia Jongma, date and place unknown)

When I came home I told my father my stories, but he wouldn't listen. Then I showed him my photos from Srebrenica he said: "Oh, but they told us other things." Just before my father's departure we both attended an event [in the Netherlands] where this general gave a speech where he said: "DUTCHBAT II, you don't have to think that you will be coming to a perfect situation." I stood up and walked out. My dad was shocked to see what I did: "Sas, the, general, the general." But I didn't care, I was so angry. Afterwards, I stayed and spoke with some of them. They [DUTCHBAT II] were told we [DUTCHBAT I peacekeepers] had lice and that's why all the men had to shave. I said: "No, it is not true. Where did these stories come from?" I asked and each time got a response: "They told us ... They told us... They told us..." I told them: "No, that's not true." They asked: "How do you know?" "Yesterday I came back from this area!" I answered. My father was told that there is everything there and that we have everything there. "No, dad," I told him: "There is nothing, you get nothing, and you have nothing." I left the mattress I was sleeping on for my father as

well as two boxes of different washing materials, including a clothes hanger. Later he said, if I hadn't left him this stuff, he would in fact had nothing.

Three testimonies above, describe in the widespread deprivation in the enclave and the shock the UN peacekeepers experienced when they first arrived. However, their morale in the beginning was positive and they were eager to help the population. After the arrival, the UN peacekeepers soon realized that they, too, will be feeling some of the shortages as there simply were no stores, where one could buy basic necessities such as laundry soap. Confined to the compound alone, the living conditions left little room to maintain physical fitness. There were also practical problems confronted by peacekeepers (i.e. limited phone conversations, limited leave, etc). DUTCHBAT deployment occurred before the wide-spread usage of internet, which left regular mail – letters and packages – as the only method the peacekeepers could connect to their home and the outside world. Additionally, everybody in Srebrenica, the UN peacekeepers and the local population alike, battled extremely cold winters, where they had to resort to burning firewood to stay warm. The Safe Area was subjected to a constant violation of a signed peace treaty. Parts of the treaty were unclear or were unable to be fulfilled (e.g. disarmament). This left many UN peacekeepers very frustrated, and feeling unable to achieve the goals they were responsible for. The following testimony by Bart Hetebrij (Narrator 8) provides an insight to what kind of implications this had on relationships that were forming. Mr. Hetebrij worked as a moral counselor (also called humanistic chaplain) during the DUTCHBAT III deployment. He was stationed in Srebrenica town as part of the Bravo Company and lived in a building that used to be a wood factory. He arrived in January 1995, went on leave in April and was not allowed to return by the VRS. Those three months in Srebrenica are very vivid in Bart's memory. He recalled:

I had a lot of contact with the soldiers because this was my job. I visited the soldiers on the OPs south of the enclave, designated the Bravo Company. I didn't have much contact outside of the compound, because most of my job I did on the compound. I talked with soldiers; we held the service.

Sometimes we talked to [local] people, and they asked for cigarettes, and they were also curious to get some outside information and a cigarette, of course. The prices were scary – for one kilo of sugar they had to pay 60 GM and the salt was also very

expensive. The Dutch soldiers in the OPs had contacts with the local people, because did exchanges of goods - they got bread and the locals got salt.

On Dutch patrols they also saw young [local] men, walking with guns. It was not allowed, of course. One of the tasks of the DUTCHBAT was to get the weapons, but they could never catch them. So, there was a lot of frustration built up by the Dutch soldiers towards young [local] guys, ages anywhere from 15 to 25. Sometimes they saw them with arms, and wanted to catch them, but they were too quick. Later they saw them in town, but they didn't have weapons on them anymore. We also saw one right wing expressions written on walls of the compound. That was also more of less encouraged by the Battalion leader and the other commanders.



Photograph 8 Wounded girl with shrapnel in her leg that prevented the proper growth of her leg. (Photo courtesy of Ramon Timmerman, January - June 1994, Potočari)

We also had a lot of colored soldiers, coming from our former colonies, Moroccan soldiers, some from the Dutch Antilles. They had some trouble with the atmosphere because of the right wing things. Also a few staff sergeants were clearly showing their admiration of the Third Reich. Maybe it was play, but sometimes you could hear it on the radio. Some made T-shirts that said: Nema bonbon and a Dutch soldier choking a child. When we heard about it, we stop it. They could not wear those T-shirts.

It was my first mission; it was the most impressive mission because of the situation the local people were in. Not only because of the physical condition, but because of moral condition. What they would do to each other. I always wondered why some people act different than others. Some people tried to maintain their human dignity and show interest in each other help each other. But a lot of people are just there for themselves. That is what happens, when you have this kind of situation.

According to Bart's testimony, it would be accurate to conclude that individual UN peacekeepers disliked Bosniak people because they saw them with weaponry despite them knowing full-well they should have been fully disarmed. Others – as we will see in the next testimony – behaved indifferently towards the locals despite the extreme hardship they were exposed to. The following narrative is by Ramon Timmerman (Narrator 9). Mr. Timmerman was a corporal first class, stationed in Srebrenica and Potočari from July 1994 until January 1995. Prior to coming to Srebrenica, Ramon did a tour in Busovača in central Bosnia. In Ramon's narrative it soon became clear, his first deployment taught him to develop a thick skin, if he wanted to remain in the military (which he did) and not empathize with the local population. He recalls:

You met them all – people who liked us, those who didn't like us; a little child with a bullet in his leg, an elderly men with a bullet in his arm. Some want candy, others don't want candy. Some of the older people I knew were nice; some of them just didn't care. The children, they were all like happy, but happy in the situation they could be there. I didn't have any confrontation with anybody. Personally, like I said I didn't ask [many questions] because one, it was not my job to do that, and second, sounds harsh, but I didn't really care 100%, because I knew that after a few months I go home. I didn't want a relationship for three or four months and then go and you never know what happens to them.



Photograph 9 Wounded girl with shrapnel in her leg that prevented the proper growth of her leg. (Photo courtesy of Ramon Timmerman, January - June 1994, Potočari)

I don't know. I just tried to do my job and be friendly to them inside the rules that were given to me. Because they told us how to interact with the locals. I saw the bad things they have been through. But for me, it was not the first time. I was in Busovača and I saw those things there also. There were Bosnian Muslims against Bosnian Croats and here were Bosnian Muslims against Bosnian Croats – for me it was still people.

In Busovača, I had a really good contact with a hairdresser and his wife who was the clothes-washer. I was really good with them, you know, he brought me pictures of his children and I showed him things of mine. After a while the Croatian police told him, he cannot work there anymore, and if he did, they were going to kill his wife, because they didn't want him to work for the UN. He went to our senior officer and he said this is the situation: "We can't leave the Camp, we have to stay here." But they said: "No. You can stay, but your wife has to go, we have space only for you. We let your wife come here unofficially to help, so she is safe a little bit." They made her go home every night. After a few weeks they killed her, and he went out [of the Camp] and then they killed him also. After that I felt, how do you say, fucked up, or bad. I said, next time I am not going to connect to these people anymore because it's going to hurt my feelings too and then I am going to do other things [as oppose to those that] I am supposed to do here. And that I took that experience to the Srebrenica you know so I took a lot of yeah, I don't want them to come to me with the good or bad stories affecting my own personality doing my job there. Personally, I didn't need to talk to all the people to know that are in the bad situation and I see people loose family, yeah, I was a soldier at that time, and I thought different. If they killed me there, nobody of them would say ... they would think the same about me – it's just another casualty. It's harsh to say but that's how I thought about it at the time, I still do. Be professional and could not easily make contact or build a relationship with a local with a place where I am only temporarily because of a job and I have a job to do, because people can come into your mind and "fuck you" or change you and I don't want that because you are representing one, yourself, your country, and the things you do and the political aspect – it's not for you to think in that moment is it good or is it not good. Because there I have to do a job, you don't think should I do this? You signed, voluntarily and you don't ask these questions, also I am not in the position or have power to change things, other people have to do that.

In Ramon's case we can see clearly how his past deployment influenced his relationships (or lack of them) with the Bosniak people in Srebrenica. The past experience and familiarity with the local population and the depth of the relationships seemed to have played a major role and an individual's decision to engage with the local population or not. So far we saw examples of antagonistic attitudes as well as impartial. Now we will look at some of the cases where UN peacekeepers were very supportive of local population, despite the confinements' imposed on the relationship by the UN mandate and widespread deprivation. A great such example is provided by the following narrator: Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10). Dr. Kremer was a 42 year-old father of three, when he went to Srebrenica in February 1995. Not only he had more life experience, he was also a surgeon and worked closely with the Bosniak doctors – learning their language, culture and history along the way.



Photograph 10 UN compound in Potočari: The UN peacekeepers had the most advanced transportation vehicles, but not enough fuel. They relied on local horses to carry some of their burden when on patrols or resupplying the OPs (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

They [UN peacekeepers] were afraid of them [the locals]. It was a very weird situation, the context. If you went as an 18-year-old boy and you didn't know what happened here and you are brought to a country where you didn't know the language, where the culture is totally different than you felt uncomfortable and you didn't make contact so easily. A great deal of them did and could do that, because they were educated, because they were intelligent or because they were socially equipped. But

there were lots of these boys, who didn't know what to do and they were observed by the locals and criticized, of course, for what they did.

I was in a situation where I could speak languages well and I studied very much [so I could speak] a little bit of Serbo-Croatian. I offered my help to the people, if they were sick or wounded or whatever. It was a totally different situation for me, compared to those boys. It was easier. But doctors differ a lot also. Where one doctor wants to help, another doctor might not want to. I took my successor to the [Srebrenica] hospital and he said: "Oh, what a dirty mess it is here; I am not going to work here." It's unbelievable. He understood he was a doctor for the Dutch soldiers [only]. I was a doctor for everyone that needed me. That was the difference.

Dr. Kremer brings attention to the vast inconsistency among the UN peacekeepers – from young inexperienced “boys” to middle aged, highly trained professionals. However, as suggested by Dr. Kremer, profession alone doesn't determine the nature of the relationship, the individual's interpretation of the mandate does. While Dr. Kremer actively sought opportunities to help the locals, his fellow surgeon (who refused to work in the local hospital) followed the rigid orders despite the wide spread deprivation among Bosniak population, and obvious disparities between the two groups – especially in the medical field.

The last two testimonies in this subchapter are by two Bosniak men. The first is by Emir Suljagić²⁷ (Narrator 11), who worked as an UNMO interpreter. In his role he worked with various UN peacekeepers and encountered constant lack of clarity brought forward by the UN mandate. He recalled:

I worked for the UN peacekeepers as a translator from April 1993 till the end of July 1995. Because of my work I was in contact with them which included daily communication not only to the UN peacekeepers but also to other form of foreign presence who were in Srebrenica from '93 till '95. Foremost, the elementary problem was the unclear mandate. I believe for the most part even the commanders of, let's

²⁷ Mr. Suljagić was born in 1975 in Bratunac and had to flee his home in 1992 when the Serbs took over his home town, killing his father among many others. He, his mother and sister initially fled to Srebrenica, where they lived with relatives. In April 1993, the two women left for Tuzla on a humanitarian convoy, while Emir stayed behind with maternal grandparents (grandfather's remains found in a mass grave near Zvornik in 2003). Soon after the Srebrenica UN safe area was declared, Emir found work as an interpreter working for the UNMO.

say, Dutch Battalion, if we are speaking of the UN presence in Srebrenica, didn't know exactly what their mandate was. Later, a lot of problems came from that; ultimately their passivity during those July days 1995.

The other even more explicit recollection was recorded with Amir Kulagić (Narrator 12), Amir was born in Srebrenica in the 1960s and worked for Electric Distribution Company before the war. He was 32 years when the war started in 1991 and like many of his neighbors decided to stay and defend his hometown by joining the ARBiH. After UN peacekeepers' arrival, the Bosniaks like himself struggled to understand what this new "protection" meant in practice. They experienced the atrocities committed by the VRS in 1991, 1992 and 1993 and knew what capabilities of the VRS were. They felt the UN force was too small to deter an attack; their concern grew stronger once they saw the UN peacekeepers allowed themselves be subjected to humiliating practices by the VRS. In his recollection, he clearly remembered three different occasions when he had contact with the Dutch UN peacekeepers.

I tried to get the information out of them, but they didn't want to answer my questions, which were manly: "Why is there so few of you? What do they do things a certain way? Why don't they protect themselves?" They were badly mistreated by the Serbs! When the peacekeepers were supposed to go home on leave, they went out to the runway to wait for the busses; for the whole day they would let them wait there and the Serbs would not let them pass. If they did let them pass, than they would stop them in Bratunac and search their belongings. They would do searches and take their things. When they were coming back, again - the same thing. They had a very vassal type relationship towards them. So I asked them bluntly: „Why do you allow them do this to you? “ Their response was: It is not up to us, but the command, higher politics.”

Azir Osmanović (Narrator 4), originally from Ljeskovik, a village near was in his early teens during the war-time enclave. Azir's family house in Ljeskovik was burned down, and his family found refuge in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. He spent his war-time days watching over cattle near OP Foxtrot where he experienced VRS shooting at him numerous times:

During the war the only thing that ensured your survival was livestock like a cow. If you had a cow, you had milk. There was no food in Srebrenica. But it wasn't easy; the members of VRS would often shoot at us. We were right in front of the UNPROFOR but they [UN peacekeepers] never undertook any action to protect us. At times we would tell them: "They were really shooting a lot!", and all they would tell us, was to move to the side.

Mr. Kulagić (Narrator 12) remembered feeling a great concern once he witnessed that not only would the UN peacekeepers not use force to protect Bosniak civilians; they wouldn't even use it to protect themselves. This type of behavior exhibited by the Dutch peacekeepers was part of the UN mandate and it clearly put a strain on the relationships. Another major problem that continued with the arrival of the Dutch peacekeepers was Bosnian Serbs tampering with the aid convoys. The Serb army habitually obstructed both the military convoys as well as the aid convoys. The ICTY Trial Chamber possesses evidence of a deliberate Bosnian Serb strategy to limit access by international aid convoys into the enclave. Situation got completely out of control during the deployment of the DUTCHBAT III. Colonel Thomas Karremans, the DUTCHBAT III Commander, testified that his personnel were prevented from returning to the enclave by Bosnian Serb forces and that equipment and ammunition were also prevented from getting in. Essentials, like food, medicine and fuel, became increasingly scarce.

By January 1995, the situation in Srebrenica deteriorated. Fewer and fewer supply convoys were able to make it through to the enclave. The already meager resources of the civilian population dwindled further and even the Dutch UN forces started running dangerously low on food, medicine, fuel and ammunition. Eventually, the peacekeepers had so little fuel that they were forced to start patrolling the enclave on foot. After February 1995 the convoy containing fresh and frozen foods for the peacekeepers ceased to arrive. For a time hot dinners consisted of rice and a variety of Indonesian peanut sauces (Honig, Both 1996: 133). By May 1995, the Dutch UN peacekeepers had to go on combat rations.



Photograph 11 UN peacekeepers riding on motocultivator or *freza* (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

Dr. Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10), one of the most vocal DUTCHBAT peacekeepers, who have consistently called for an investigation into the decisions made by the DUTCHBAT III commanders, provides a disturbing testimony below.

We were running out of medical supplies because there was no supply. The Serbs stopped everything. There was nothing coming in. I went there in February and I weight 98 kg. We played volleyball and did some fitness there and we did some sport a little bit but there was no running (I am not a runner anyway). But I went home with 82 kg. I lost 14 kg in the period of 5 and half months. Once, in June [1995], I was able to buy some fresh bread, eggs, and a kilo of blackberries and it felt as if I was eating in a five star restaurant. Eating a piece of bread was like 'bacon and eggs'! It was like being in heaven; it was incredible. By then, we were already on these crackers and there was Canadian pate and that was all we got. In the evening, we got a can of French food, so fat, and so terrible. Everybody [peacekeepers] had diarrhea and I went to the boss [Karremans] and I said to him: “You have to do something because these guys they are losing weight; and they are starting to get diarrhea more frequently. Under the microscope, I already saw some amebiasis in the feces. It’s dangerous because if we get an epidemic, than I am lost because I cannot treat it.” And then he said to me: “Well, until the teeth are not falling out of the mouth, and there is no scherbag²⁸, than we can do some steps back.” It was so dreadful. I had

²⁸ English name is “scurvy” and refers to a disease which results in humans with Vitamin C deficiency (in humans Vitamin c is required for the synthesis of collagen). This disease often presents itself initially as symptoms of malaise and lethargy, followed by formation of spots on the skin, spongy gums, and bleeding. A person with scurvy looks pale, feels depressed, and is partially immobilized. As scurvy advances, there can be open wounds, loss of teeth, jaundice, fever, neuropathy and death.

responsibility. I was a doctor. I went to the boss because I was concerned about the health situation of the men, and gave him advice. Than he determined [based on] his own middle-age principles on what is 'healthy' and 'sick'. Crazy.

Sometimes we smuggled. There were some transports and they [Dutch peacekeepers] smuggled some medications onto the busses. When there was a general coming or Prince Willem Alexander they [Dutch peacekeepers] smuggled some medications and gazes and drugs on the busses, but for the rest [of medical supplies] there was not enough [room].

Therefore let us conclude that the confinements of the UN mandate and the widespread deprivation had a profound effect on the relationship between the local population and the UN peacekeepers. Initial testimonies by the John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5) and Peter van Daalen (Narrator 6), show the shock the UN peacekeepers experienced when arriving to the enclave. Amir Kulagić (Narrator 12) and Emir Suljagić (Narrator 11) conveyed the confusion and a strain put on the relationships made by the unclear UN mandate. The testimony of Bart Hetebrij (Narrator 8) shows how the situation grew from bad to worse and how the peacekeepers' inability to fully disarm the local population, made some of the UN peacekeepers demonstrate "us vs. them" attitude. On the other hand, the widespread deprivation made some UN peacekeepers feel solidarity with the locals. Yet some UN peacekeepers reached out to the Bosniak individuals and others didn't. Then there were some peacekeepers like Ramon Timmerman (Narrator 9), who intentionally didn't want to get too close to the locals because of negative experience during the past deployment - suggesting that individual's past history of deployment also played a role. Finally, the widespread deprivation wasn't limited to the local population alone. This is especially evident with the narrative recalled by Dr. Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10) who recalled the physical as well and moral degradation of the DUTCHBAT III peacekeepers.

2.2. The Restrictions Imposed on the Relationships by the DUTCHBAT Command

When the initial Dutch UN peacekeepers, DUTCHBAT I, came, they brought along medical supplies and toys. They did regular social patrols and had frequent contact with the local population. However, as the relationships deteriorated, various orders were put into place to bring the contact with the local population to a minimum. Peacekeepers in the following two tours, DUTCHBAT II and even more so DUTCHBAT III, were prohibited to have any individual contacts with the local people. However, this did not prevent individual contact from occurring. Regulation and reality are two different things. In addition some peacekeepers were more inclined to respect this rule, while other weren't.

Ramon Timmerman²⁹ (Narrator 9) of DUTCHBAT II, was in charge of radio communications between UN HQ Potočari and ARBiH Srebrenica. He did a tour in Busovača, central Bosnia, before being sent to Srebrenica in July 1994. He recalled:

I didn't go into much of a relationship with them; as much as I did, I can say this about it, because I was trying to be professional and didn't try to get involved too much with these people. For them it was the other way around. They had to get in touch with us because we were their only ticket out; any which way. [In Busovača] we had two [local] translators and in the end [of the tour we hid them] in the trunk of a car, took them past the checkpoints and into Holland. Afterwards, I read some friends [fellow peacekeepers who participated in the transport of the local translators] had troubles with the Dutch Army. For them [the locals], we were their ticket out. They [the locals] would do anything to get out. I knew that really well. If you are rich, your friends don't like you; they come to you for your money. Here, they [the locals] came to you, just to survive. For them [the locals] it was a different kind of relationship. I knew, if I make a phone call, I go home. They [the locals] didn't have that.

²⁹ Ramon Timmerman was a member of the Dutch professional army and ultimately ended up serving a total of 12 years before finally retiring.

On the other hand, there were peacekeepers that actively searched out close relationships with the locals and enjoyed developing friendships and helping in any way they could. One of those peacekeepers was Ynse Schellens (Narrator 3) from Leeuwarden, Friesland . He was a medic who served with the DUTCBAT III. He remembered:

I was a medic so I was closer to the local people than the other soldiers. It's a different type of person: a medic or a hardcore soldier. It's really a different type. Because when you are a medic you are trained to help people; when you are a soldier you are trained to fight, or keep peace in a way. You go there with a different mindset. We had the Red Cross markings on our uniform and they called us 'doctor'. I wanted to be outside of the compound and meet more people, so I volunteered to walk the patrols. I had a red cross; I was easier to talk to for a lot of kids. I didn't have a big gun on my back; I had a little pistol that you could barely see. I was not that aggressive for them or scary and I am a nice guy. When you can do little things like handing out a pen or helping or teaching them a little bit of English than it feels good.

There were a number of peacekeepers, like John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5), a driver for DUTCHBAT II, who took military orders very seriously and followed them unfailingly when it came to having contact with the local population. John stated:

It was not allowed to get close to the local people but it was allowed to talk to them, have a chat, be friendly, be a human being. However, you always had to keep in mind that you should be objective and that you are neutral and that too close friendship, could lead to not fulfilling your task the way you should do, because the UN was not related to any of the fighting people. In DUTCHBAT II it wasn't that strict. There were rules, but not that strict as in DUTCHBAT III. If we were - a soldier and someone from around here – it would be able to talk with you like this. It happened a lot. Because then you get to know people. They also are willing to tell you what the people want you to do around here. If they say, well, school is damaged and we want to educate our children. And you know that. And you tell that at the compound. And they make a plan. Ok, can we fix the school? Can we make it water-proof? Can we get

the heat working so that it's warm in the winter? Then they make a plan and they make it happen. So contacts are good and also important.

Military orders pertaining to contact between the local population and peacekeepers were more stringent for the DUTCHBAT III. In the spring of 1995 Lieutenant Colonel Karremans of DUTCHBAT III explicitly forbade any contact with the local population. This was an order with which a number of the narrators included in this study strongly disagreed. As public, open contact with the Bosniak population became increasingly limited, only a few individual contacts persisted. Segregation fueled stereotypes and it has proven not to be effective for a number of different reasons. In various different settings, different groups when segregated form harmful stereotypes and social behaviors. Srebrenica UN Safe Area was no different. Moreover, stereotypes in combination with ignorance tend to fan animosity, and this is precisely what seemed to have happened in the Safe Area.

Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1), a DUTCHBAT III peacekeeper, described himself as a person who is very social and likes other people. He admitted he was not happy following such an order despite the fact he was a part of the professional army. He remembered:

We had orders from battalion for zero to limited contact. I didn't like that. You couldn't walk without having contact. You need contact. A friend of mine got a fine, because he had contact. He must pay 50 guilders because he had given a child some socks and shoes. It was world on its head when you think about it now, but back then orders were orders. If you got fine, after a fine, after a fine, they can send you back and you can get lots of problems in Holland. Every Saturday, when I was a watch commander on the compound, I always brought some shoes or shirts, gave them to a friend of mine to throw over the gate. Because I was a watch commander I would not report him and he would not be fined.



Photograph 12 Henry Van Der Belt, Narrator 1 (Photo courtesy of Henry Van Der Belt, winter 1994/95, Potočari)

Rene Scholing (Narrator 13) and Marcel de Boer (Narrator 14) served with both DUTCHBAT II and III. They are friends and have been back to Srebrenica many times since 1995 (their narrative was recorded together). One could immediately get a sense how deeply they care about the Srebrenica people. During the war, Rene's responsibilities included driving a jeep to the OPs and maintaining generators, while Marcel was a mechanic for APCs. Marcel was one of the young conscripted and rather inexperienced men who were deployed to Srebrenica. Traveling to Srebrenica was the first experience he had on an airplane. They remembered:

We were very lucky because we spent time outside of the compound. So we made a lot of contact with the local people over here. When we were on our way we stopped and tried to talk to people. They called out Mr. Bonbon, so we took a lot of candy with us.

UN peacekeepers such as Kevin von Cappelé³⁰ (Narrator 15) remember having contact through work as a medic with Lima 6, especially during the first half of his

³⁰ He first contacted me in July 2009 after reading about the oral history project on the DUTCHBAT III website. I was finally able to sit down with him in September 2011 in his home in Rotterdam, which he shares with his young family. When we sat down in the late evening, we briefly talked about his infant baby and later on about his father's opinion that Kevin might be suffering from undiagnosed PTSD. He never completed his medical studies, and in his father's view, his Srebrenica experience might have been the cause.

tour. Kevin was based in Potočari UN compound from November 1994 till July 1995. He remembered:

Contact with the local people became more difficult after April [1995]. We couldn't operate anymore, so there were no patients - but it was also that we were not allowed to speak to local people at the gate. The leading people – Franken, Karremans, said we couldn't go to the fence anymore. They restricted the way we were to behave in an already small place. Well, we did not like that very much, especially not after May [1995] because we were supposed to go home than and we were still trapped in the compound in Potočari. But before that time, I used to talk to some children at the gate, and traded some chocolate for bread. It actually wasn't allowed at all, but I didn't care.

In this subchapter I showed how the military order pertaining to contact between the local population and UN peacekeepers in the spring of 1995 explicitly forbade any contact with the local population. It had been made evident that the “no contact” order brought about a lot of frustration. A number of the narrators strongly disagreed with the order. Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) spoke of the fines issued when caught having contact and the consequences that had especially for the UN peacekeepers that had a desire to remain part of the professional army. Therefore, it can be concluded that the order drastically reduced the number of open contacts, although some individual contacts and relationships continued despite the order.

2.3. Three Different Types of Relationships

Investigating memory of human relationships is by no means a simple task because of multitude and interrelatedness of different types of contacts. It is perhaps because of this complex nature of relationships that I became aware, shortly after I began recording personal narratives, that relationships between the UN peacekeepers and the Bosniaks in UN Safe Area Srebrenica depicted in media and the majority of the books, as ‘uncaring selfish betrayal’ was for the most part “a one dimensional historical myth rather than a deeper social understanding” (Thompson 2000: 212). Thus, choosing the

oral history methodology made sense as “one of the great advantages of oral history is that it enables the historian to counteract the bias in normal historical sources” (Thompson 2000: 145). When transcribing and later indexing the narrative I was quickly able to discern patterns of social relations and identify human dimensions that collectively or individually influenced the relationships in the enclave. The following subchapter describes three different types of relationships between UN peacekeepers and: Bosniak children, women and men, respectively. The analysis looks at different circumstances and events that formed or altered these relationships.

2.3.1. The Relationship between the UN Peacekeepers and the Children in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica

Out of 29 narrators, almost all have devoted a significant portion of their recollections to the local children’s interactions with the UN peacekeepers. One possible reason for this was that schools were not in session due to violence³¹; later when the UN Safe Area was declared there was an attempt to reopen some schools, but this proved to be difficult as they housed the many IDPs. Consequently many children “would be hanging around the main gate [to the UN compound], even at night under the arc lights, regardless of weather and season” (Suljagić 2005: 125). UN peacekeepers were the source of much sought after attention among the children, whether the attention came in the form of material goods (candies, pens), educational advancement (learning English) or pleasure (playing chess, soccer, etc.). For the UN peacekeepers, making contact with the children was easy and for the most part non-intimidating. The Dutch also felt regretful that children had to live in such horrible circumstances. When the situation became very dire the relationship between the Srebrenica children and UN peacekeepers, in a number of cases, turned into one of mutual benefit. Children, for the most part boys, and the UN peacekeepers began utilizing barter, a method whereby goods were directly exchanged for goods without using a medium of

³¹ On 12 April 1993, elementary school in Srebrenica was shelled by the VRS, killing as many as 62 children. The massacre is one of the crimes with which General Ratko Mladić has been charged under the 24 July 1995 indictment issued by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

exchange such as money or the Srebrenica wartime currency - cigarettes. Subsequent subchapter highlights how different narrators recalled this relationship.

2.3.1.1. Peacekeepers as a Window to the World

Nirha Efendić (Narrator 16), a daughter of Fazila Efendić (Narrator 27), was 33 years old at the time of recording. She grew up in Potočari and lived there till 12 July 1995. She belongs to the generation of Srebrenica children who spent the early part of their teens in war-time enclave and second part of their teens as IDPs in one of the Western European countries. She and her mother returned to live in Bosnia where Nirha received a postgraduate degree at the University of Sarajevo. She has no desire to live in Potočari again. She currently lives in Sarajevo, is married and has three children. During her time in the UN Safe Area, Nirha saw the Dutch peacekeepers as “her only window to the world.” Her feelings of betrayal were mixed with gratefulness to one individual UN peacekeeper that helped her brother get new prescription glasses. Both her father and teenage brother were killed by the VRS forces after the fall of the enclave. She recalled:

I was a girl of 14 or 15 years old when the soldiers of DUTCHBAT II came and visited us here at home. During the war, school was closed down and my brother and I studied languages in the town library on our own. To us and our parents, spending time with the Dutch troops meant we were able to experience the language in practice; that we were able to talk English to them. You see, the needs to speak English appeared when they arrived. Conversation to the Dutch peacekeepers was the only window to the world. Because we were in a total isolation, the media, in any way. We were detained here in this small area that looked like and the ghetto or concentration camp. The only difference was that we were able to move freely in this space. We are looking for a window to the world, we searched for contact with people who had escaped from Srebrenica before the war and the only way that was possible was through contact with the soldiers. I am not sure what they were told by their superiors? But one could feel their reservation. I understand it now. Back then, we saw them as someone who has come here to protect us. I as a little girl, in particular, I experienced them as saviors. That's why the feeling of betrayal is greater and more

tragic. But for the most part our conversations served and practicing English and perhaps being able to send a letter abroad to let our family members know we were still alive. They were going back and forth all the time.

The narrative of Nirha Efendić (Narrator 16) mirrors her inner battle – while on one hand trying to be faithful to her brother and father both killed by VRS after the fall of the UN Safe Area, she could not help but to remember acts committed by the peacekeepers for which she was grateful. She explained that since the UN peacekeepers were the only people who were able to get out of the Safe Area, and return, they asked them for help. “My brother, he needed new pair of prescription glasses. His eyesight worsened significantly and he made an estimate of his prescription.” One of the UN peacekeepers when on leave contacted Nirha's aunt who lived in Germany as a refugee to buy prescription glasses so that her brother could read. Nirha explains: “I am not sure how many months it took, long time I remember, but in the end he got them and we got it in the end. In that sense we were grateful to them.”



Photograph 13 Serge Jenssen, a UN peacekeeper who also befriended a teenage girl. (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

2.3.1.2. *Small Acts of Kindness: Candy, Pens*

With food being so sparse it quickly became clear that only those with livestock (i.e. cows, goats or sheep) would be able to have enough food. Thus many children instead of going to school spent their days as herders. The children understood that their parents are not able to buy them candy, chocolate or pens, so they looked to befriend those UN peacekeepers that seemed keen on having a relationship with them.

The following narrator, Azir Osmanović (Narrator 4) of Ljeskovik near Srebrenica spent his war-time days watching over his grandfather's cattle near OP Foxtrot where he communicated with the UN peacekeepers and translated for other children, as well. "He would always give me a ball-point pen" he said, as he remembered one UN peacekeeper, a driver named Peter. Azir has a tragic family story. During the final days of the UN Safe Area he lost his older brother (16 years old at the time) who didn't make it through the woods in 1995. He later lost his younger brother who committed a suicide due to war trauma. This soft-spoken man remembers the children *"did not know what chocolate and candy were. We asked for them to give them to us, constantly. Frankly, once it was time to leave and they went into the transporter, then they threw little chocolates toward us"*. Azir clearly remembers "often translating for kids that came to ask for things." And for this, the peacekeeper - when other kids would leave - "would secretly give [him] a pen and some other stuff also to give to others. He knew I was a good student. I always carried a notebook with me to study." Azir has since completed a degree in history and returned and to live in Srebrenica where he works as a docent at the Memorial Centre.



Photograph 14 A Boy, his mother and a cow. Having a cow meant a family would survive (Photo courtesy of Serge Jossen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

On their patrols and their OPs, peacekeepers were almost always surrounded by the children. Honig and Both write that the peacekeepers were awoken each morning with cries of “Hey, Mister bonbon” (Honig, Both 1996: 132). However, not all UN peacekeepers liked the constant attention – that was evident from a recollection by Bart Hetebrj (Narrator 8) in subchapter 2.1.



Photograph 15 Graffiti in the UN compound in Potočari depicting a poor child begging for candy from a UN peacekeeper (Photo courtesy of Tea Rozman-Clark, August 2005, UN compound, Potočari)

2.3.1.3. Children Represented a General Risk

Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1), DUTCHBAT III, remembered that being around children wasn't always safe. He recalled:

On patrols the children were walking next to you saying Mister bonbon. My pockets were full of candy. Some colleagues said: Damn children, they are bothering us. I said: Yeah, they are bothering you, because they have nothing else to do, but walk with you. But it was not always without danger. When we walked on the demarkacija zone, where the trenches were and so there were possible mines. In those situations, I didn't want to have children around, so I told them to go away in Bosnian: "Idi, idi, don't walk here, it's dangerous." The children went, so it worked. Now I know it's not a polite way to say it. But back then I had grenades in my trousers, two tank grenades. And children ran after me, bonbon and started pulling on my trousers. 'Nema bonbon, but boomboom!' I told them in my plain Bosnian, bit misunderstanding was very, very easy.

John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5) of DUTCHBAT II remembers some members of the DUTCHBAT "went to schools to hand out some pens and papers. Not much, but I know we did it". Ynse Schellens (Narrator 3), a medic for DUTCHBAT III tells a similar story:

Children were really open, honest and glad to have us around. That was my feeling, especially at the gate. They would often come to us and we would teach them English. They would also walk with us saying: "Hey Mister you bandage? Hey mister you got bonbon?" There were only a few things they could say, but we could interact with them and that was a nice. At one moment I wrote to my parents about this and I said: "Hey can you send me some things so I can give out to the kids?" My father was a bank manager in the Netherlands and he sent me a box of pens from the bank. So when I was on patrol or on the compound I had pens in every pocket and could just hand them out to everybody. They were very glad with just such a small thing, so grateful for everything.



Photograph 16(a,b) Peacekeepers on patrol giving candy to children (Photo courtesy of Serge Jessen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) remembered his Srebrenica nickname given to him by the local people, Mr. Mustache, and recalled: *Having all those children at the gate was also a risk. One day 5 would be there, the next day 10, and in a week a 100. It was a big problem than.* “This was a problem”, recount Rene Scholing (Narrator 13) and Marcel de Boer (Narrator 14) who used to trade and hang out with Hazim, Mirela and Venesa – three local children. The girls had a baby brother, too, they recalled and explained:

A small group of children; their temporary situation with a people here in a big ghetto, the whole thing, it touches you, so you feel for them. If there was just the three

of them, it was ok to give. If there were too many kids, you could not do anything. We were afraid that once we gave them toothbrush and toothpaste or some clothing or candy from the rations, they would walk 100 meters further and be attacked or robbed by other children or even the elderly. So it was always little, hush, hush.



Photograph 17 Children bringing flowers to the UN peacekeepers in hopes of getting some food or hygiene items. (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

However, some UN peacekeepers such as Frank van Waart³² (Narrator 17) didn't recall encounters with Bosniak children fondly. He recalled he had a really bad encounter with the children in Srebrenica in 1995. Going back to Srebrenica in 2009, was part of an effort Frank made in order to make amends with his past. His wife and two children came with him. In 2009, when I sat down with him at Fazila's blossoming flower garden, he told me his recollections and the troubles he faced once he got back home.

When I walked on the social patrol and I went a few times to Auto Fontana for sodas and beers something happened to me. We had lot of stuff with us like pens, paper to

³²Frank, born in 1970 and came to Srebrenica to serve with the DUTCHBAT III. In the spring of 1995, he went on one of the last leaves that were allowed for DUTCHBAT peacekeepers. He was never allowed to return to Srebrenica, once his leave was over. He had to remain at the Zagreb Airbase for six weeks, and later was finally redeployed to the Netherlands.

draw on, small colored books, but they approached us, me, in such a manner that I found it too confronting and I didn't want to go out after that. I know that they didn't mean it like that but I did feel ambushed and I could not cope with it. The only other times I left the compound was to go on leave and once to go to the bakery.

That same ambushing feeling I still suffer from it now. I realized I had a problem when I went with my 2 children to the Sinterklass parade and freaked out. My kids were there and so were a bunch of other kids and they were trying to get the candy from Sinterklass's hand and I couldn't cope with that. I panicked, I freaked out, I got angry and I wanted to flee. But I fled with my kids who were disappointed that their father took them away. My wife didn't understand it. Three years ago, when I went into therapy, I figured it out what was the issue was, piece by piece.

Today, Frank is able to let his children have fun in the parades, but he himself needs to keep distance from crowds.



Photograph 18 Children at the gate (back side of the main gate) where a lot of locals fashioned self-made generators and produced electricity (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

The harsh, war-time environment made many children psychologically unstable. Children could be polite to someone, only to be very mad a short moment later. In 2011, I spoke to Peter van Daalen (Narrator 6), a soft-spoken man, who still seemed overwhelmed by his experience in Srebrenica in 1994. He recalled memories of

children in those days and one could see a myriad of puzzling questions still trouble him. He also recalled an accident in which his fellow peacekeeper killed a small boy. Here is what he remembered:

What I remember were the children. When we drove [from Potočari] to Srebrenica, they ran after the truck in the hope that we had food for them. I don't know, where all the children come from, but they came from everywhere. First time I was thinking, it's sweet what they are doing. But after some time, they became annoying and very brutal to us. That was very strange. I asked myself: "Why were they so brutal and why did these children see us as bad? I don't know." In the beginning they wanted candy, food and they were sweet to you. Once they saw you are a nice guy and after a little while they just turned. I have no idea why?



Photograph 19 UN convoy accompanied by children (Photo courtesy of Serge Janssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

Their parents? Their brothers or sisters? Did they tell them those things³³? I don't know, but that was very strange. I was on a compound, when I heard that my colleague killed a little child. The child ran under his truck and that was in the beginning [of my tour]. Maybe that was the reason why all the children saw us as bad people? That could be the reason. When I hear it, I feel very miserable and a little bit sick in my stomach. It could also happen to me. It was just an accident; he could not

³³ Refers to the car accident, he talks about later on.

do anything about it. It was the last time that I heard from him. He went back to Holland and nobody knows where he went, what became of him. Nobody of the officers told us why he was transported to Holland [right after the incident]. When we came back in January 1995 nobody told us where he was or what happened to him. It was very strange.



Photograph 20 A Bosniak child inside the UN compound wearing a UN helmet and flak jacket with a lollipop in his mouth (Photo courtesy of Serge Janssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

2.3.1.4. Special Friends, Delivery Boys and Exchanges

Some UN peacekeepers developed very close, genuine relationships based on care and mutual respect. One of those relationships is the friendship between Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) and Amir, a Bosniak boy. Sitting down in her kitchen and sipping coffee in Terborg, a village in the eastern Netherlands, it is hardly imaginable that Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) or Sassie – now a single mother of two – was a UN peacekeeper stationed in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica as part of the DUTCHBAT I, back in 1994 as a 21-year-old girl. She choked up and began to cry after her first sentence, which took her back to 1994. She did not fight off her tears, however, but let them run down her face, as she continued with her narrative. She spoke of her ‘special

friend' called Amir, who she continues to think of every day. Her fear is that he is one of over 8,300 men and boys killed during the genocide.

There was one boy; his name was Amir. I was among the very few women there and he was the first who recognized I was a woman. When I walked around the compound, the children would start screaming: "Mister, Mister Bonbon!" For three weeks it was the same every time and I didn't react. I thought to myself, I am not a mister, so why should I respond. Amir was the one, who saw I wasn't reacting and one time finally yelled: "Madame, Madame Bonbon!" I began laughing, looked up and said aha, he knows! After that he would come to the fence by the warehouse where I was working. Every day. Every day for five months. He would come and see if the door of the warehouse was open. If it was open, he would whistle and based on the whistle, I knew if it was him or not. I would look up and he would say: "Hello Sassie!" Every day for 5 months he was there. He showed me his baby brother; he said: "Sassie look, my brother." He asked me to get him some books for children in German or English. They learned German in Potočari Elementary school. In Srebrenica Elementary school they learned English. I spoke German to Amir. When I drove my truck, his eyes were wide open by surprise: "What is she doing? Is she ok? What?" and when I took off with the truck, he would be running after me. He brought me wild strawberries in a jelly jar. "Sassie für dich." When I was on the other side of the compound, walking around, he would recognize me from the main gate. He would whistle and yell: "Hello Sassie!" I thought to myself that we all look the same and it was at least 500 meters from the main gate to where I was walking, but he recognized me.



Photograph 21 The only photograph of a boy called Amir taken by Saskia Jongma, narrator 7 (Photo courtesy of Saskia Jongma, January - June 1994, Potočari)

Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) goes on to explain that she never got to have her leave: *“I was the last shift and we were supposed to go in May, but the Serbs didn’t let us go, so I waited one week, another week, and another week. End of June arrived, only 4 weeks before the end of my tour. At that point, a decision was made I would be going home, without having to return to Srebrenica again. That was the end of my rotation. I had to tell Amir that I would be leaving the compound and not coming back. He didn’t understand. I had to tell him a second time and a third. He asked: “Can you bring me books?” I answered: “No, once I go, I will not come back.” He had a special wooden box made for me with an engraving that read: “Gift from Amir from Srebrenica for Sassie from Holandy.”*

Other peacekeepers such as Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10) developed so called ‘special friendships’. While turning pages in his war-time-Srebrenica photo album, Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10) pointed to a picture of Jasko, and a number of other photographs of children who hang around of the Srebrenica Hospital. He said:

This is Jasko. I don’t know if he is still alive. These were also the children [who hang] around the hospital every time we came there. He [Jasko] would say: “Hey, Kremer,

you are my special friend.” So then I brought him some candies or presents or soap or shampoo or whatever. Jasko was my special friend.

In Srebrenica candies, chocolate, pens, notebooks, and books were difficult to come by. Some children soon realized that, when lucky, they could get some if these items from the more generous peacekeepers. So they liked to be around them. They also tried to earn some money by selling souvenirs, which UN peacekeepers took home - when they went on leave or left altogether at the end of their rotation. Various objects made out of wood could be fashioned in wartime Srebrenica, and sold. In high demand were the violins, Bosnian *šargija*, a long necked chordophone used in Bosnian folk music, as well as wooded boxes made with personal engraving. At one point anyone who could work with wood was making these objects, causing the supply to swell and prices to dwindle. The peacekeepers would pay as little as 25 GM for one *šargija*.



Photograph 22(a,b) Local boys selling *šargija* (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

With irregular supply of food, the relationship between some Srebrenica children and UN peacekeepers turned into one of mutual benefit through barter, a method where goods were directly exchanged for goods without using a medium of exchange such as money or Srebrenica war time currency cigarettes. These were children, for the most part boys, with whom the contact was established earlier. Items that the

peacekeepers crave were baked goods such as bread, baked pastry called *pita*³⁴ as well as fresh produce such as eggs, vegetables and fruit. Azir Osmanović (Narrator 4) who I introduced in the beginning of the chapter, recalled peacekeepers asking him, if he could provide them with some *pita* in exchange for some candies. *Pita* can be filled with cheese, meat or different vegetables. *Pita* filled with potatoes is called *krompiruša*. Azir explained:

They too have had no food. Once they asked me if my mother would bake krompiruša for them. They told me they would give me a big bag of candy for it. I told them it wouldn't be a problem. My mom did bake it. When the day came, they arrived to our house, at the front door we brought out the krompiruša and they gave me the bag [of candy].

In the absence of any regular or legal market, it is not surprising that the black market flourished in Srebrenica just like it did in other Bosnian towns during wartime. The goods were much more expensive than legal market prices as the products were not easily available and very difficult to acquire. A cigarette was a wartime currency and nowhere was it as evident as in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. In Srebrenica, both Canadian and later Dutch, UN peacekeepers participated in the black market. The Dutch had a monthly ration card and access to the military store, also called cantina, on the compound. One carton of cigarettes (ten packs) cost 20 German Marks (GM) in the military store on the compound, which were available for sale to UN peacekeepers only. One pack was going for 20 GM – a price ten times higher - on the market in Srebrenica town. Additionally, the DUTCHBAT I and DUTCHBAT II³⁵ peacekeepers went on leave once or twice during their six month tour. While on leave they were able to buy various items and bring them back into the enclave. These items were later gifted, exchanged or sold to the Bosniak. Some Dutch UN peacekeepers exchanged or sold products that were in high-demand – military equipment and weapons. De Grave, Dutch Minister of Defense “published a report in December 1999 of the debriefing of the DUTCHBAT unit by a special team from the Ministry of Defense in autumn 1995. The report made clear, *inter alia*, that several Dutch soldiers

³⁴ *Pita* is made of thin flaky dough known in Bosnia as *jufka* (phyllo dough) and is a very common and popular part of Bosnian cuisine.

³⁵ Majority of the DUTCHBAT III peacekeepers who went on leave were never allowed back to the enclave.

exchanged weapons and parts of their uniforms with both Serbs and Moslems. Some sold combat boots for \$150-\$250” (NRC Handelsblad Dec. 22 1999 in Gerstenfeld: 11).

All the people, whose narratives I recorded, spoke of participating in the barter of goods; however, no one spoke of participating in the black market in order to profit. There was never any mention of barter using weapons or parts of uniforms. The vast majority exchanged clothes for food. The locals exchanged bread, eggs, and fresh fruit for civilian clothing and shoes. Durable winter shoes were especially in high demand. Some of these items did eventually make it into the black market and were sold for large figures. Barter was especially popular during the DUTCHBAT III, when there were extreme shortages of food, especially fresh produce and bread. But all of this activity was strictly forbidden by the DUTCHBAT command, so the UN peacekeepers had to resort to doing it in secret through middleman or so called delivery boys. These were children, who were hanging around the main gate or fence of the compound, regardless of weather or time of day, and whom the peacekeepers trusted.

According to Suljagić “the older boys quickly understood they could not count on the sympathy of some generous soldier to survive, so they started trading with them” (Suljagić 2005: 126). So, it seemed to be mutually beneficial. Here I turn to the recollection of two DUTCHBAT III peacekeepers, Rene Scholing (Narrator 13) and Marcel, whose narratives I recorded in 2010 on their second visit to Srebrenica. Rene and Marcel put it bluntly “*we traded our personal belongings so we could eat again*”. They spoke of their delivery boy called Hazim with warmth and gratitude:

We had our own delivery boy. I think he was about 15. His name was Hazim. Every day he came to the fence and brought us food. The last two months we didn't have anything to eat. At night, over the fence, we traded our personal belongings: sport shoes, civilian T-shirts and other clothing given to us by our colleagues. We did it so we could eat again. When I went there, I weight 75 kg, when I went back I was 59 kg. I was starving. With Hazim we had really good contact. He was always around. He knew exactly when and where we would start our night guard. That's when the trading would start. After February nobody was coming back; they all went to Zagreb

on leave but nobody was coming back. We were here with 280 men and no food, and no diesel fuel for the generators. In the morning we had one or two vitamin pills. For lunch we had two crackers or biscuits with a vitamin pill and a cup of water. In the evening we got a French Army tin. I don't know what was in it. Some undetermined stuff. We were very lucky to have Hazim who brought us bread. We really became close to Hazim. He was a clever guy. I think he traded the stuff we gave him on the black market. Well at least I never saw him wear those shoes.

The following narrative was recorded with Hasan Hasanović³⁶ (Narrator 18) born in 1980. Hasan was 12 years old when the war in BiH started. He lived in Bratunac with his family at the time, and managed to escape to Srebrenica UN Safe Area. His father was one of many IPDs who worked with the Swedish NGO building homes. I sat down with him at the newly opened Alić Hotel and Restaurant the center of Srebrenica in 2010. Hasan's sharp memory was able to recall, in great detail, his experiences with the Dutch peacekeepers and a relationship that he developed with one of them, Peter, who he "would like to see again":

I never asked for anything from them. I was already a teenager, I was a bit older than the others and so probably I had a guard against [becoming too friendly with the peacekeepers]; knowing that I can't do what the smaller children can. If I got something from them sometimes, it was maybe a couple of cigarettes, which I took to my father because there were no cigarettes, in Srebrenica. But I never got anything, and I didn't ask. I know other children were in a situation where they had to ask and beg. My father worked for a Swedish NGO that was building houses for IDPs. They rebuilt secondary school and, I think, the primary school in Srebrenica. My father worked for them in the IDP settlement Slapović in order to be able to buy new clothes for me and my brother. In Srebrenica at that time, if you had new clothes [everybody asked]: "Where did you get that?" Diesel jeans or a good T shirt - that was unbelievable! I know a lot of children who were on the fence non-stop, day and night. There was one kid who was called Suke he knew maybe 50 English words, but he

³⁶ When VRS forces entered the UN Safe Area, Hasan was on the way to the UN Compound in Potočari, when he met up with his father who persuaded him to run off to the forest instead of seeking protection with the UN peacekeepers in the Potočari. Hasan made it to the Bosniak territory after seven days. His father and twin brother perished. Today, Hasan works for the Potočari Memorial Centre and is a proud father.

managed to translate everything. Whenever some of the civilians needed something, he was there; he was always at the fence. It is really funny how a child with such a small vocabulary of English words managed to say all that, even using his hands and feet and gestures.

We didn't go to school from the beginning of the war until 1993, and then we went to school for seven or eight months I think. I know there were these sand bags at the school entrance. We couldn't go to school. The school was completely destroyed. When they were rebuilding the school, we didn't go the entire year. Some of the children, I'm not saying all of them, but a certain number of children who were with the UNPROFOR were Roma children, mainly refugees from this entire area of East Bosnia, from all municipalities. It is difficult to say now where these children came from, probably from all these places. You know that these children hardly go to school even in peacetime, let alone during war. So this kid, Suke, he was one of them. Of course, a number of children did go to school. I think the primary school was open longer, while the secondary school worked just under one year. I remember my younger brother went to the 5th grade in Bratunac, and then he went to the 6th, 7th and 8th grade in Srebrenica – so three years. This means the primary school in Srebrenica worked almost the entire time. There was a school down in Potočari and here in town of Srebrenica. Because the secondary school was destroyed, we couldn't go, and probably it took time to find the staff, and to consolidate the staff. The secondary school is something more serious after all. Much more serious compared to primary school. Anybody, well not anybody, but anybody with college education could teach in the primary school, but secondary school was somewhat different after all.

2.3.1.5. Internally Displaced Children

Srebrenica was a grim, miserable, unsanitary, overcrowded town-turned-city whose local leaders and criminal elements routinely exploited its hapless population, especially the IDPs. [...] Tensions are mounting between the majority IDP population and minority local population” (Heidenrich, 2001: 169). These were brought to a boiling point with the arrival of the second IDP wave in 1993 as there was no proper housing left in the enclave. On the other hand, local residents had their own houses full of their belongings (clothes, dishes, furniture, beds, mattresses, good sanitary

conditions), land, where they had grown vegetables and fruit, and kept chickens and other small animals. This made them – relatively speaking- better fed, healthier and less dependent on foreign hand-outs. Besides, the local original residents comprised the majority of the civil and military authority in the enclave, which was also in control of the food aid distribution. So to put it bluntly, they could not and did not adequately understand the IDP situation due to the vast differences and power relations. Woman, children and elderly IDPs, who were the most vulnerable, often relied on the generosity and kindness of UN peacekeepers. (Heidenrich 2001: 169).

The following narrative is by Serge Jenssen (Narrator 19) who served with the DUTCHBAT III. Mr. Jenssen told me one the most touching stories of an internally displaced girl from Konjevič Polje that he befriended and who gave him two letters, which he has kept and was willing to share with me. Serge Jenssen (Narrator 19) remembered:

We stayed at the weapons collection point for 24 hours and there we talked much with the locals. All day long there were a lot of children there from the 4 years old until 15, 16 years old. They always talked with me. I had a name Karlo. Every day they were looking for me; they would always say “Hey where is Karlo?” and I went to speak to them. Sometimes they asked for bonbon, other times they just wanted to play chess or



Photograph 23 Serge Jenssen (Narrator 19) playing chess at the weapons collection point (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

other things (Photograph 23). We had a lot of conversations. They were a little bit distant, but they liked to have contact with Dutch army guys. They told us about what was going on in the enclave, about the shootings, and about the situation they were in. One of the girls who was always there was called Azra (Photograph 23). We talked at the defense wall and she gave me some letters.



Photograph 24 Photograph taken of Azra in 1994 in Srebrenica by Serge Jessen, narrator 19 (Photo curtesy of Serge Jessen, January – June 1994, Potočari)

SREBRENICA

MARCH 31th 1994

Hello Karlo!

How are you today!

I'm very well

My name is AZRA Muminović, my birthday is 20.09.1979 so, I have 15 years

Please write me how much years you have and do you married

Also write me your adres and if you have your pictures here send me

I dont have anyon my pictures here everything are stay in my house and my house is nit here my house is too far from Srebrenica I'm wealy sorry for this

Now I must stop please write me back

"Your bosnian friend AZRA"
xxx

Dear Carlo

05. IV. '94

How you feel today

I'm very well

I learn english in school 4 month and I know something

I ~~learn~~ learn and german in my school but I dont know nothing because what learn german 2 week

You say to like to be in Bosnia but I dont like because what is war and I'm not in my house

I hated people from Srebrenica ~~because~~ because what are everybody too awful

I'm write you me adress here in Srebrenica

My adress in my house is: AZRA MUMINOVIC

sl. URKOVIĆI

75422 KRAVICA

KONEVIC - POJE

This is everything for now

BYE - BYE

greetings and k.o.s.s from

AZRA

P.S. Thank you for your letter

2.3.1.6. Children at the Garbage Field

Malnourishment was a serious problem in the enclave. Every day, eager Safe Area dwellers would impatiently wait for the dumping of the peacekeepers' garbage in search of edible garbage or other usable items. Those having first pick naturally had the highest chance of finding something useful, so timing was everything. Children frequently jumped on the moving garbage truck in search of usable items.

Johan de Jonge³⁷ (Narrator 20), a medic born in 1973 served as a medic for DUTCHBAT III while Patrick Eerdhuyzen (Narrator 21) was one of the few peacekeepers who served in both the DUTCHBAT II as well as III. They decided to have their narrative recorded together. We sat down in Fazila's home in Srebrenica in July 2010. They remembered how children were exposed to great danger in an attempt to get the first pick. The threat did not come from this dangerous activity alone, but from the local police, too. Here is what they remembered:



Photograph 25 UN peacekeepers on patrol, always surrounded by local children (Photo courtesy of Serge Janssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

Half way on the road to Srebrenica was local police. They watched to make sure nobody climb onto the truck. You had one choice: you took them out or the [local] police took them out. When the police did it, they did it very hard with a big wooden stick, so it is was better that we took them out. So for us there was only one option: I take them out. The times I went with the garbage truck, the police did it and I've got

³⁷ Johan, and was one of the peacekeepers taken hostage during the final days of the enclave.

some problems with it. Children in the garbage field, was not a nice feeling; it was terrible to see. But what could we do?



Photograph 26 Children in the garbage field (Photo courtesy of Henry Van Der Belt, January - July 1995, Srebrenica UN Safe Area)

Mujo Buhic³⁸ (Narrator 22), a father of two, spent the war years in the Safe Area with his mother, while his wife and two children found refuge in Macedonia. His house was (and still is) located in a small village called Džogaze, spread on the small hills just behind what used to be the UN compound in Potočari (not far from the OP Papa). He had frequent contact with the peacekeepers. He recalled:

I had a power station down there [next to the UN compound], so we were frequently in contact. They put up a barbed wire fence around UN compound; right next to the river where all the power stations were. The fence was all cut open down there [so we could have access to the river. How could they come and put up a fence on my land and tell me what I can do and where? So, that barbed wire was all cut. There was a power station every 100 meters on that little river; as many as 40 of them in total.

I knew all the soldiers there, not by their names, only faces. We asked for cigarettes, because a pack of cigarettes was selling for 20 KM. We fought for our bare lives. So, we went there and talked to them. It was the children mostly, who talked. The children translated for us and that's how we got to know each other. They used to come here to

³⁸ When the Safe Area fell, he and a group of men went south (the opposite way of the majority) to Žepa, crossing the Drina river, and traveling through Serbia to reach Macedonia, six months later. In 2002, he was among the handful of Bosniak men who were among the first to resettled in their homes in and around Srebrenica seven years later.

Sinjani, too. I am still in contact with them a lot [since 2007 and] they say they remember patrolling here, coming to have rakija, a lot of them remember my mother, too. Some spoke German, others spoke English. But it was mainly children who made contact, and I was around the children. Children learn foreign language fast. [But the times were such], you basically could not give any order to a child. [Child] could take a gun and kill you. Nobody was held accountable. Nobody could give any orders to anyone. Everybody was on their own. You went to fetch food for yourself, and you brought food for yourself. You ate what you brought. If you didn't get the food, you didn't eat. So some things that happened were really horrible. They can't be explained in words. I don't know how to explain, because it can't be explained.

2.3.1.7. Watching Children Die

The peacekeepers working at the gate to the compound had various encounters with the local people; among others were wounded people. This was particularly true for the people who were from the southern part of the enclave where Potočari was located. For them walking to the Srebrenica hospital meant a long seven kilometer-long hike uphill. So it became accepted that the Dutch medics - within a limited capacity - attended to the local population. Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1), DUTCHBAT III recalled one of the most disturbing recollections:

Wounded would come to the gate. If you could, you would treated them and call the UN compound hospital. There would be a medic who came and took it further if necessary. But I had to decide to let them in or out. Some people came for aspirin. I knew we didn't have any, so I told them we don't have aspirin. But some were wounded or they cut themselves in the leg while cutting wood. But then there was also my most horrible experience. I was sitting on guard and down came a man with a child in his arms. Immediately I saw something was seriously wrong. So I called to the UN compound Hospital so that a medic would be here right away. In the meantime the men arrived at the Gate and I ordered to let the men in. He held a child of 3 years, a little girl, who has fallen off the roof. I told the men to wait and said the medic is on the way with equipment. I thought because the child had fallen down, we should move it as less as possible. We laid the child on a stretcher and I was sure they

will be here within one minute. I checked her breathing and heart beat it was very shallow. I laid her down and prayed for them to come quickly. I looked at my watch it was 5 minutes. I ran to the phone again. "Where are you? You must hurry! On the other side: "I am coming, I am coming." I went back and I started to reanimate the little girl because the breathing was falling away. Between the breaths I shouted to one of the guys, go get them. I was afraid to pick her up and rush her to the Hospital, because I thought something was wrong with the neck. I said they must come quickly with a neck brace for a child. I was busy for 10 minutes and then I walked around and looked and saw him! My colleague he did not hurry he just walked, walked slowly. I got very very angry at him and I said I would kick his ass, if he wasn't next to me in one minute and then he knew it was serious, started running and when he got there, one look was enough for him to pick up the child, put a brace on and rushed her to the hospital. I just sat there and waited. Everyone was quiet, all big though men, all quiet. You were prepared for everything gunshot wounds, but grown men, not a child. Later, I saw the father carrying a wrapped green DUTCHBAT blanket, walking through the Gate, crying. He waived to me and then I smashed some things because the child was dead, and I smashed some things. 5 minutes later, 5 minutes later, a psychiatrist stood next to me on the tower! "Hi. How are you doing? You may cry. It's not a problem, you may cry," he said. I kicked him off. I grabbed his throat and I pulled him down "Go away! You can be here for me in 5 minutes; why does a doctor need 15 minutes for a child?" I said. They immediately pulled me off the watch. I had to go to debriefing. In the next days I was in the state of killing someone, so angry I was.

Experiencing the death of the three-year-old Bosniak girl was something that he could not let go easily. When he returned the Netherlands he spoke to an independent doctor who assured him that the girl evidently suffered the type of skull fracture that made her death inevitable. But I believe, the reaction of his fellow peacekeepers was what troubled Henry the most. He could not understand how an injured Bosniak child would not get equal attention as a wounded Dutch peacekeeper. He carried this unsettling feeling for many years. Henry was in the first group of peacekeepers that returned to Srebrenica in 2007 and keeps on going back. On one of his subsequent trips to Bosnia he looked for the girl's relatives who showed him her gravesite. He visited her final resting place to pay his respect.

In one instance a Dutch peacekeeper was directly responsible for the death of a Bosniak child, a boy. This story is well-known and many DUTCHBAT II peacekeepers made reference to it. John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5) DUTCHBAT II recalled it this way:

In the morning he went to Srebrenica to pick up the local people who worked at the compound and to pick up the bread from the bakery. We gave candy to some of the children, but there were more children than there was candy. One child hid behind the wheels at the end of the truck and when the guy drove off, he drove over the child who didn't survive. He went under the truck. It was very shocking when we noticed; when we heard. That was terrible. It's something that should not happen to a little child. The guy who was driving, he still has problems with that. I know, because he was working in my platoon. There was so much starvation and hunger and people did everything to get something to eat.

The peacekeeper that has accidentally killed a child was sent back to Holland in the days following the accident. The peacekeepers explained that the commanding officers feared for his safety; the whole incident also further effected already very poor Bosniak-UN relations.



Photograph 27 Children's mixed expressions (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

2.3.1.8. Children and the Enclave's Final Days

On July 8 1995, the Bosnian Serb attacks accelerated and on July 11 general Mladić walked into the UN Safe Area practically without resistance from the UN peacekeepers. The majority of the Bosniak men fled to the woods, while children women, elderly and a few men sought protection in and around the UN compound. In those few days children of Srebrenica experienced some of the worst horrors of war. Many have been separated from their loved ones, never to see them again. Those children, who thought that the friendly foreigners with guns will help them, realized some wanted to help, but could not, and others simply would not.

Nirha Efendić (Narrator 16), a native of Potočari lost both her father and older brother during the enclave's fall and the subsequent genocide. She recalled:

We didn't have any excessive expectations, except for them to protect us. You know what our geographical position in relation to Serbia and Bosnian Serb territory was. The only thing we could do it wait for the moment when something will happen. Apart from dear God, these people, who came here to protect us, were the only one we could rely on. Everything was so uncertain. How long? How long can it go on like this? When will the war stop already? When will the roads be opened again? When are we going to be able to reunite with our loved ones outside the safe area? Our days were consumed with uncertainty, anticipating the end of enclosure and leaving the ghetto. You know uncertainty is the only thing worse than suffering?

When the attack started in July '95 we weren't completely aware of what was going on, because Ratko Mladić and his troops entered the enclave from the north; the UN compound was the very last stop. We became aware of the situation when we saw the river of people going down towards the UN compound and then my mom and I joined them. We sought our rescue among the armed Dutchmen because for 3 years we lived in misleading notion that they are protecting us and that they will protect us because we were the safe zone. I had hoped and that's why we went there to the UN compound, following your instinct you went where people have weapons and will protect you, because you surrendered your weapons. The men decided they will be going through the woods, because we saw they were killing everything in their way. We saw Chetnics were entering and nobody was stopping them. Nothing could be done

anymore. In that moment we were aware of the betrayal, but we could not have done anything at that point. On the 10, 11, 12, July we were faced with treason. Not for a split moment I believed I will survive. When we arrived to the battery Factory we were among the first who came there to ask for help and were let in. There were so many people who lived further away in the villages and were left outside. Horrible things were happening, things I could hear, but didn't see. I was there for three days. There I had contact with the Dutch soldiers. I wasn't afraid of them; was more in expectation to see what they will do to those of us there since they did not protect as a whole. Because by then we have grown accustomed to these soldiers and their blue helmets. But we were very scared of the Chetnics, always. The fear of being captured alive and be face to face with your worst enemy, who has been killing constantly for the past three years. Although I felt betrayed by the Dutch soldiers I seem to have consciously delayed my feelings towards them. So in comparison, I did feel a little bit better around the Dutch soldiers, because to me it looked that they too were subdued, it looked as if they too were in some sort of danger. But I saw them as people.

It is hard to describe all of those feelings mixed together: betrayal, exhaustion, starvation, fear, general madness. Could they have done more, we believed that they could have. In those three days I still didn't know they will just brutally hand us over to the executioners that there is no control and that nobody will monitor our departure from UN compound in Potočari to Tuzla. They handed us over to those, who have continued to kill us up until this day. I was sure, I will not live. That is when that feeling of betrayal really intensified. That moment when we exited the factory halls and saw we were handed over to them, from that moment on my feeling towards one and the other were the same. Especially when I saw men, ages 15 – 70, captured, standing in line, their belt taken off. We knew they are taking them to be shot. They told us too: We will do the same to you." It was 80 kilometers to get from the factory to the neutral territory. It took 4 and a half hour. We were stopped, mistreated and each time the truck was stopped, I was sure this is it, they are coming and taking us to the shooting. Each time. That meant even at the very end when we came to Tič or Tij, I heard screams and was sure than now for sure that are taking us to be shot. It was only after I entered the tunnel that saw BiH Army I realized I have survived. I was pinching myself; was it possible? How did it happen? It was dark already and I remember it was noon when we left the Factory.

As the time started to unravel, I started to listen to stories, that they come to a realization of what they could have done, but didn't. Somehow this has pacified my feelings towards them. However despite this, I will not be able to ever forgive the Dutch soldiers, who have made a party after the job done. Those who have celebrated [in Zagreb]. They knew what they have done.

Nirha is one of the people whose loss of father and brother left her with deep, unhealed wounds. For her, the role of the Dutch peacekeepers in those final days, casts a shadow on the whole period of their 17-month-long stay in the UN Safe Area. As she talks about the peacekeepers one cannot but not to feel the deep level of betrayal, which extends to the very core of being.

Dželaludina Pašić³⁹ (Narrator 23) expressed similar feelings of betrayal. Ms. Pašić was born in 1984 in Srebrenica to a family of four daughters. She was the youngest. During the enclave's final days she was eleven years old. She remembered clearly her father was working at the UN compound (in the kitchen) in Potočari at the time. Although she remembers that his job there meant that he would occasionally "bring a piece of fruit or from time to time a piece of chocolate" her narrative surrounds the feeling of betrayal she felt as a young child during the final days of the UN Safe Area. Her feelings of betrayal are prompted by constant reassurance given to father's work colleagues – the UN peacekeepers – that this will be fine. She also remembered her father had an ailing leg, so Dželaludina, her mother, father and three sisters all sought protection in the UN compound in Potočari (her father didn't think he could make it through the woods because of his leg).

Because my father worked for UNPROFOR, he befriended these people whom he had worked with. On July 11 we went to the compound. The majority of the Srebrenica residents and the IDPs were left outside of the compound; they were not allowed in. Because my father worked for them we were let in. I think he thought his chances were better to go to the compound, because he had worked for them, than to go through the woods. We stayed there for two nights. The third day we left the

³⁹ During the first Serbian assault, her family's house was set ablaze. Her family found refuge in their neighbor's attic for a while until returning to the family house, which was roofed by the Swedish Shelter project in 1994.

compound. We were among the very last to leave. From time to time they would stop by my father and give him water and other things for our family. They were not saying anything bad in fact they were positive, telling us we will be able to leave safely and that father will be with us. That's why I felt reassured believing that they will make sure our father will come together with us. However, when it was time to leave the compound and walk towards the busses they all withdrew, suddenly none of them were around anymore. We just saw one UNPROFOR soldier and my father asked again if everything will be ok and he gave him a pat on the back saying: "Don't worry, everything will be ok." I was a child and was happy when I heard that; I really thought my father will be with us. When we started walking towards the busses there were Serb soldier very where. I could feel the fear. There was not one UNPROFOR soldier there; I started to feel betrayed and scared. They betrayed me as a young child who has just started to live life; they betrayed my father who was their colleague. I realized no help with come for their side. I can't say I felt they were against my father, that they didn't want to save him, maybe if they had a chance they would have saved him. I am not sure. When we approach the bus, my father was about to step onto the bus when they said: "You go on this side." they put my father to the side. At that moment I began to scream, I wasn't aware of my actions, was completely lost. My father only managed to say: "Children listen to your mother and we will see each other shortly." According to my mother I completely lost it, she had to slap me on the face so that her hand hurt in order to make me stop yelling and sobbing. After that I calmed down and fell asleep on the bus and did not wake up till we reached the free territory. I cannot possibly erase this event from my memory. It had such a profound effect on my life and that's why every July 11 is so hard for me. The UNPROFOR didn't protect us. It didn't matter my father had worked for them. In that moment they left him helpless.

The final testimony is by Rene Scholing (Narrator 13) and Marcel de Boer (Narrator 14), the two UN peacekeepers who chose to recall their memories together, remember the final days and their 'delivery boy' and friend called Hazim:

We had long conversations with Hazim, too, about the situation here. In those days we were still very much convinced that once something would happen, not the United Nations, but the UN as the military, would defend and support us. If he had listened to

us, our opinion, he would have come to Potočari⁴⁰. He is dead, if that is the case. So I hope that he calculated the situation and realized he shouldn't have gone to Potočari because there was nothing we could do. We were all left here to rot. [When it came close to the fall of the safe area] we lost touch. I think the boy fled. Certainly, he would have been look for us [if he had been in the compound]⁴¹.

2.3.1.9. In Sum

In summary, the subchapter exploring the relationship between UN peacekeepers and Bosniak children shows the relationships were very frequent. A significant number of Bosniak children were hanging around the UN compound practically all the time. Peacekeepers felt they could make contact easily, and on occasion developed deeper relationships. A couple of peacekeepers (i.e. Peter Van Daalen, narrator 6 and Frank van Waart, narrator 17) recalled children weren't always nice or very polite. It was war time and it would happen quickly that children would grab UN peacekeepers' pockets, which meant danger (i.e. grenades). UN peacekeepers for the most part felt sympathy for the children, and tried to play with them, teach them, engage with the, give them candy, chocolate or ball pointed pens. The children, too, for the most part had fond memories – especially when they were able to establish deeper relationships or so called 'special friendships'. The DUTCHBAT put in place strict rules as to how the UN peacekeepers were to behave toward the Bosniak women (no conversations allowed, socializing, etc.). During the last six months of the deployment, the UN keepers used the children as middlemen to exchange various good such as personal belongings, cigarettes, candy or packaged food for fresh produce and baked goods. Barter seemed to have mutual benefits. A number of UN peacekeepers were able to developed genuine deep friendships. Two stories stand out in particular the friendship between a boy named Amir and Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) and friendships between Serge Jenssen (Narrator 19) and a girl called Alma. To a number of children (i.e. Nirha Efendić, narrator 16) UN peacekeepers represented a sense of an outside world, where one could get information about things that happened outside the enclave (the

⁴⁰ They were referring to the fall of the enclave on July 11, 1995.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Safe Area had no electricity which meant no TV; not any kind of news). Many Srebrenica children were left without schools to go. It was that unstructured time, thirst for new knowledge, boredom as well as material and emotional deprivation that made children desire building relationships with the UN peacekeepers. The children and the UN peacekeepers played chess and other games, taught each other's languages, and mutually helped one another (i.e. barter). Many of the UN peacekeepers were eager to interact with children, too. They liked being able to help fulfill at least a few of their material (i.e. treats, books, pens, etc.) as well as emotional needs.

2.3.2. The Relationship between the UN Peacekeepers and the Women in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica

After the last permitted evacuation of women and children, which took place in March 1993, "the number of men was higher than that of women, with a ratio of approximately 4 : 3" (NIOD, Part II: 60). Normally, in wartime the men are fighting, while "the burden falls on women to hold the society together" (Kaufman and Williams 2010: 40). In actuality, regarding this issue, the UN Safe Area Srebrenica was unique because men's roles became redefined once the UN peacekeepers arrived. Bosniak men who had been fighting for over a year had to disarm and forfeit their role of defending the enclave. Thus, instead of standing on guard on the frontlines, the men were very much present in the community, although their role or purpose was somewhat unclear. NIOD report describes "walking around was the primary activity for the men, children and young people [... while] women were often the only ones working and trying to keep the household going" (NOID, Part II: 79). They would stand in line for food, work in the gardens, and attend to children's needs, hand-wash clothes and cook using wood. A number of them also worked for the DUTCHBAT: cleaning, washing, serving and cooking.

In the local community the power – much more than in peace-time – was in the hands of the men (local municipality, army, and police). They upheld the formal – and much of the informal – power. However, it's important to state that women did hold

informal power. Yet to the UN peacekeepers the women represented a clear civilian component of the local population and were as such much less intimidating than any other strata of the population. While the men were seen as de facto members of an army on one side of a conflict, women were seen as less of a threat in their supposed role as mere companions of men and/or mothers.

The role of women in Srebrenica during the UN Safe Area period varied. Some of the very active female community members created a Women's Association⁴², which organized activities for women and children. They had a number of different tasks. As early as the spring 1993, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and International Red Cross (IRC) together with a handful of local doctors opened twelve small health centers throughout the UN Safe Area Srebrenica to address the pressing medical needs. Yet, as NIOD report underscored, there were great problems because "they were staffed by untrained personnel, mostly members of the Women's Association, who had been instructed by the MSF. ... were given no salary; the municipality was expected to give them a meal every day, and such things as flour and sugar every month" (NIOD, Part II: 70).

There were strict rules about contact between local women and the UN peacekeepers put in place by the Dutch military authorities as well as the local community. The Dutch military authorities instructed the male UN peacekeepers "to avoid eye contact [...], not to speak openly with them [...], nor shake hands with them" (NIOD, Part II: 226). These instructions came from a poor understanding of the Islamic practices of Bosniak people. On the other hand the local men saw the role of the local women in war-time Srebrenica primarily in the household. Firstly, men had concerns over the safety of women due to potential war violence. Secondly, men viewed women as the ones responsible for household chores. It took tremendous effort to take care for a household without running water (all washing was done by hand) and electricity. With very limited food items, the women's primary concern seemed to be making something edible out of the available provisions. Moreover, they were the ones that

⁴² On July 11, 1995 another NGO called Mothers of Srebrenica Association was established which deals with the missing persons, while Association »Mothers of Srebrneica and Žepa Evclaves« was established already during war-time and continued with its activities till the resent day.

would normally wait in line for humanitarian packages. Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) DUTCHBAT I peacekeeper, remembers her encounter with Srebrenica women:

Once I had to bring flour to the bakery so they would make bread for us. There were many women around me. They approach the truck and began collecting the tiny amount of the flour dust lying on and around the truck. I was 21 years old and my superior said: “Show them your gun, so they don’t touch the truck.” That was the first time that I thought “What am I doing there? What am I doing there?” I had to keep the truck closed and women still stood there and were hastily collecting the tiny amounts of flour and quickly putting them in their pocket.



Photograph 28 Local women (Photo courtesy of Serge Jessen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

2.3.2.1. Local Women Working for DUTCHBAT

The locals, predominantly women, worked for the DUTCHBAT in 6-month rotations, although there were some exceptions and we will see later that one woman worked even longer. Their rotation would begin in the middle of the DUTCHBAT 6-month tour, which meant that they were in contact with a particular group of peacekeepers for only 3 months at the time. Local municipal authorities created the list of people eligible to work at the compound. It included women who had lost their husbands in the war and those who had underage children to support. It also included pregnant women. Food was so scarce that women with small babies were in particular danger as their daily intake of food wasn’t sufficient to keep them healthy while breast-feeding the baby as well. The NIOD Report makes a note of the fact that MSF “gave

the mothers small packages with babies' bottles, baby shampoo, and baby soap" (NIOD, Part II: 70). The following recollection is of Peter van Daalen (Narrator 6), a UN peacekeeper who served with DUTCHBAT II as a cook. He tells a detailed account of his interaction as a young cook with the local staff members. According to Peter not only MSF but the DUTCHBAT, too, began giving similar packages for the local women with babies who had worked for them. Here is how he remembers his interaction with his local co-workers:

When I was in Bosnia I was 23 years old. I had to cook for all the people in Potočari HQ. Sometime I came out of the HQ to go to the bakery to collect bread for every day. I didn't speak so much with the people over there. We just came there, picked up the boxes, said hello and goodbye, picked up the boxes and left. The Serbs were all around us and we had to take care [be cautious]. When we were going somewhere we had to keep it short and we didn't have time to talk to the locals. Sometime I had to pick up the locals who worked for us in the kitchen. They cleaned for us. It's too long ago for me to remember. It a real shame, I wish I remembered every word that we said to each other. Because they didn't know English so well, talking with the locals was very difficult for me and my colleagues. We didn't talk a lot, just a little bit, using Bosnian words that we learned from them over there. It was just a few words, but so much that we could have a conversation. And when we talked it was with our hands and feet. We had two local women in my kitchen they also had short hair, just like us, had to wear hairnet. We always wore long-sleeved clothes, never T shirts. What I remember, is that I had to make a box for a local woman that worked with as cleaner in the compound kitchen. She had delivered a child, a baby, and I had to make a box for her on regular basis. Inside I put things for her baby such as baby milk as well as sugar, tea, some food and coffee. She was the only one with a very little baby at home, so my boss told me to make a box every three days for her as a kind of compensation. Well, she got money, too, but things were hard to get and so we gave her milk for the baby, sugar and other things.

Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) of DUTCHBAT I, who worked as the warehouse manager, remembered that apart from food, toiletries were in great demand with the local population. Her recollection shows, the UN peacekeepers were aware of the degrading living conditions the Bosniaks were subjected to without running water.

Moreover, the fact that many Bosniaks were willing to risk such a lucrative job by smuggling one cookie out of the compound, made the peacekeepers conscious of the extreme food shortages that the local population was subjected to. Saskia in her own words:

They had to take a shower first before they started working. That was mandatory. They were not allowed to speak to the men. I knew the local women who washed our clothing. They would come to the warehouse to get some washing powder and brushes they used for washing the clothing. I could only give them Ajax, it's all purpose detergent, and we had no washing powder. When they were finished with the work for the day, they had to take another shower and then went home. At the control point, they inspected their bags every time. If there was an apple or cookie they didn't work again.

Raska (Narrator 24) was one of the local women who lost her husband in the early days of the Bosnian war. She lived in Potočari with two children, a girl and a boy. She worked at the UN compound for eight and a half months from 16 August 1994 until 1 May 1995. In the following recollection she describes how the work was organized, the type of communication and the different tasks performed. She recalls she was able to bring some food out occasionally and there was DUTCHBAT staff that helped the local staff smuggle food out (recollection of Peter van Daalen, narrator 6, in the following chapter). Raska recalled:

I had no problem whatsoever. I had a nice time there. They were fair. Of course we didn't speak the same language, but if you needed to tell them something they would get the translator and he would translate. When I was there they would give me a shirt and pants to wear while working; my hair was covered. We were not allowed to speak to the soldiers. On Sundays you could be in the big hall and watch television. They had mass in their church there. There was one captain. He made pancakes: one batch, second, third, filled with all sort of things. One day I worked in the bar, the next day a different women did. Locals were allowed to work at the compound for six months at the most. I stayed past six months because three or four women were let go just at the time my six months were up. They did some stupid thing like taking photos with some of the men. The Dutch requested that I get another six-month term but the

Municipality wouldn't allow it. They mostly wanted me to train the new girls because they saw I was an honest worker. I knew right away the municipality would not allow it. At first there were all kinds of food, everything you can imagine pretty much. They gave me candy and said I could take them to my children. But later, starting in March 1995, the Chetnics wouldn't let their convoys with food to pass. Sometime they [Bosnian Serb Army] would let them pass, other times again they wouldn't. There were times when they wouldn't have enough food and be starving, too. They [the Dutch UN peacekeepers] were imprisoned by the Serbs.

F. N. (Narrator 25) is another local woman who worked for the DUTCHBAT. She was pregnant at the time. She began working for the UN peacekeepers in May 1995 and worked there till the fall of the enclave. She tells an interesting story of how she got the job. As Fatija had mentioned, unexpectedly three or four local female workers had been let go for taking photos with the UN peacekeepers and she was asked to fill in their place:

They didn't treat me poorly. When it was time to leave sometime there was shooting, grenades falling and we would have to wait a while and only after it stopped we would go home. That was happening mainly in July. By then there was only so few of them. They went and no new one came. But honestly we did not know it will happen like this in the end, that we will be betrayed like we were. Our working hours were from 7 till 3. When you arrived to the compound you had to put on different clothes, so you didn't have to worry about clothing which was good. My task was mainly to wash the dirty dishes, if there were any. Because for the most part -- we prepared dry food - not cooked -- so we actually had good time. We were divided into different groups: some did laundry, and others cleaned, then some operated machines for laundry. There were five of us working in the kitchen. But as I was assigned to be in the kitchen I wasn't allowed to go somewhere else. I was only allowed to be in the kitchen and work there. I had a good time there. I was just recently married and a few months pregnant, I gave birth on 9 December 1995 in the free territory. We could eat their food; we only weren't allowed to take any food out. Let's say if you got a piece of fruit like an apple, pear or banana with your meal and you didn't want to eat it there than you could bring it home with you. But if there was leftover food, they didn't allow you to take it out. They preferred to see the food scattered than for us to

take it out. I remember I got only one month salary and they never paid me the second because of the fall of the enclave. When we arrived to the safe territory they looked for me and paid me the salary they owed me. I don't even remember how much I was getting paid. I was mainly doing this so I could get fed and to bring home an orange or a lemon from time to time. I remember they had those little jams, and cheese. I know they had to pay some money to the municipality.

Photograph 29 (a,b) F. N.'s DUTCHBAT ID, number 43, issued in 1995 and valid till 1 November 1995 (duration of six months); she was assigned to work in the kitchen in the UN Compound in Potočari. (Photo courtesy of Tea Rozman - Clark, July 2011, Potočari)



Both, the UN peacekeeper Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) and the Bosniak woman F.N. (Narrator 25) convey that local population had to adhere to strict rules in order to keep their job in the compound. Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) tells us that members of local population would be let go, if a piece of food such as cookie or fruit, was found on them as they were leaving their workplace. In addition, F.N. (Narrator 25) tells us that the local workers had been let go for, presumed, inappropriate behavior such as having their photo taken with the UN peacekeepers. These types of employment termination reasons suggest that the DUTCHBAT Command was aware of the severe desperation the Bosniak women that were employed by them, found themselves in.

Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) expressed throughout his narrative the frustration he had felt for watching the local population in such an inhumane situation. Moreover, he seemed to be disbelieved that certain UN peacekeepers did not only refuse to help the local population, but also made fun of them. He remembers one transgression for which the UN peacekeepers were held responsible but in his opinion with an inappropriate type of punishment. The local staff, majority of which were women,

was transported back and forth from Srebrenica to their workplace in the Potočari UN compound. Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) remembered:

Once the guys who drove them tried to lap the fastest time - to drive as quickly as possible. And then someone--after hearing that someone did it in ten minutes and someone did it in eight minutes—said [to race when the] women were sitting in the back. They were sanctioned but I suppose with a speeding ticket. [They competed] for fun, they were bored. Even if you drive the lorry here with a broken down road you jump in all direction. Some guys were too young to cope with it and they behaved like the lunatics. I heard that kind of stuff happened with the transport of the local women. But they did it to me, too. When I was in the back of the lorry, they would lap time, too! But then again these were ladies [and to treat them like that was inappropriate.]

Ironically, due to women's traditional role as housewives (doing chores such as cleaning the house, cooking and preparing food, washing laundry, etc.), a significant number of women had work opportunities with the DUTCHBAT - more, it seems, than men. This meant that a number of these women interacted with the UN peacekeepers on daily bases and got to know the life these men and women led behind the fence. On occasion they developed friendships, but they had to remain hidden from the public eye as contact between the two groups was not encouraged at all – especially between the local women and the UN peacekeepers inside the UN compound.

2.3.2.2. Thin Line between Intimate Relationships and Prostitution

Throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina there was a rapid increase in prostitution after the peacekeeping forces moved in. So to find out that certain level of prostitution activities existed in Srebrenica and among the UN peacekeepers coming from the Netherlands is no surprise. A number of written sources as well as first-hand accounts point to the fact that some Dutch peacekeepers had intimate contact with the Bosniak women who they were paying for sex. Emir Suljagić, author of *Postcards for the Grave* (also narrator 11) spends a good deal of his book explaining how such

relationships happened. When the UN peacekeepers first arrived, the women, just like the children, came to the main gate and offered their oral sexual services for a pack of cigarettes which then could be used as a kind of currency. According to Suljagić their English comprised of a few sentences such as “Me fuck you!” or “Me fuck your dick!” (Honig and Both 1996: 129). Suljagić notes that in some cases a number of peacekeepers had sex with the local girls. Suljagić also writes that initially the local women were coming without middlemen and “later, when rumors that one girl got knocked unconscious and that some others were never paid, the girls got a middle man (pimps) who arranged the price, location, etc. Locations would be ranging from the nearby house inhabited by an old woman, who would get two to three cigarettes for each ‘visit’ to the observation tower” (Suljagić 2005: 127). Kada Hotić (Narrator 2), the vice president of the Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa, sat down with me on 10 July 2010 in the Potočari Memorial Centre, where her NGO keeps an office. She has lost numerous members of her family including her only son, husband and brothers. A former textile factory worker, who lives in Vogošća these days, she has spoken to numerous women who were trapped in war-time Srebrenica and recalls:

There were cases of oral sex in exchange for cigarettes. They [UN peacekeepers] considered the women to dirty to have normal sex with them. A young woman told me this; she has died from cancer since the end of war. She worked at the compound and had two children. She told me this with tears in her eyes. She was in real pain, when she was telling these things.

These practices are hard to understand. But the following narrators do a fine job explaining and shedding light to the time and plane these events were taking place. The following recollection is by Ramon Timmerman (Narrator 9), a UN peacekeeper who was most candid about the intimate relationships happening between the Bosniak women and the UN peacekeepers. He tells a disturbing story in which a young UN peacekeeper who fell in love with a Bosniak woman and fathered a child ultimately found himself in a very unfortunate situation where he was willing to put himself in harm way to be sent back to the Netherlands. He recalls:

Very young, these guys, half of them are drafted, because the first time I was there it was the last time you had a draft of these people. They could have instead of 12

months they could do eight to six months in Bosnia and two months training. And they had eight months, get a lot of money but some of these young guys they went crazy. They went to the fence, they met a girl, this girl puts her ass across the fence and she gets pregnant and he thinks he is in love, he found a woman. After two or three weeks when she is pregnant, the family comes and they want money or a ticket home. And he went crazy; he sat on a bunker with this hood, he was trying to get shot and at the end he got shot in his foot and they sent him home. He tried to be responsible, but she just wants to go to Holland, away from here and he got the girl pregnant and afterward I heard they gave her 20,000 marks⁴³ to settle that. But they had their own money here. Because the people came to our gates there with packets of money just to buy cigarettes. You paid 100 marks for one carton of cigarettes. They would do anything to go out.

Fazila Efendić (Narrator 27), a Bosniak woman and one of the very first women I was able to speak openly about this taboo topic, didn't put the blame on the UN peacekeepers. She expressed the need for understanding the special war-time circumstances. People, UN peacekeepers and locals alike were confused, scared and uncertain of what tomorrow will bring and for the most part were just waiting around for something to happen. She recalled:

I personally didn't feel the need to get to know these soldiers. I knew they were on a task. They needed to go about doing their business. I was aware that they didn't have a particular need to have contact with civilians. However, some of the soldiers did help local residents a lot. But what could they do really? The best case they could give some candy to those starving children. There were some with poor morals, too, who took advantage of girls. You had that, too. But I cannot tell you, if it is true. I never saw it with my own eyes. But even if there was something, I cannot put the blame on them alone. In that case it was also the girls' fault for trusting them. The men were young and when you are young you do things to pass the time; the girls also did things to pass their time.

⁴³ Approximately 10,000 euros or 13,000 US dollars.

But Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) explains that peacekeepers and Bosniak women, especially those who worked for the UN peacekeepers, also developed genuine friendships and “it’s possible that they liked each other”. Henry was one of those people who found love in war-time Srebrenica. However, he fell in love with a fellow UN peacekeeper who he later married. He discussed the possibilities of relationships at the time:

The women worked in closed areas like in the laundry room and kitchen. You could talk with them. There was possible contact between the cook who is working early in the morning and some of the ladies who are coming to cut the bread. It’s possible. I am not saying it’s not possible. They were very nice girls working there. Also you could have a very nice conversation with them. I can remember when we were almost out of food and the women--who have been working with us for three months and had to stop working in the middle of our rotation--heard we had really bad food to eat, brought us home-made cookies and nice sweet stuff on a plate. I sat there eating with my friends and talking with them. Afterwards, we were sick because the water they made the cookies from was bad. I have a nice picture of it still. I liked them; you know they did my laundry. They brought nice stuff for me. I sometimes gave them something for home. But I never had sex with one of the local women but maybe if I was intending to do it, maybe I could.



Photograph 30 Former local DUTCHBAT workers bring cookies to the UN peacekeepers after they heard they had no food (Photo courtesy of Henry Van Der Belt, Spring 1995, Potočari)

To best explain the nature of the intimate relationships and its possible connections to prostitution I turn to the recollection of Abdulah Purković (Narrator 26)⁴⁴. His deep understanding of the subject matter amazed me time and again. The multi-talented Mr. Purković had worked as a culinary instructor before the war. After the war started he became the one in charge of the logistics at the Srebrenica Hospital. When the MSF took over the running of the hospital, he became one of their local employees. This type of position exposed him to having many encounters with the Bosniak as well as Dutch population of the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. He explained:

Love does not choose the place or time. It is in women's nature to be a bit selfish, egoistic, in search of prosperity. If you were seeing Rockefeller right now, you would probably consider marrying him, despite the fact he was too old for you, because he would give you a certain amount of security. You probably would not put too much emphasis on whether he is particularly handsome, but instead that he would provide for you in a material sense. Now imagine war time! Women won't admit it or tell you, but the fact was that "falling in love" with a peacekeeper meant getting not only a certain amount of security, but food! So she wouldn't starve to death. Remember, there is genuine love and materialistic one. But these things were not war-time-Srebrenica specific; these stories are 100 thousands of years old - happened throughout history, and to all kinds of different peoples. I don't mind it. Really, as long as it is not forced. If things go in a natural current between two normal people, consensually, but not in a deceitful way, of course.

Bosniak women that worked in the UN compound had a chance to (potentially) get close to some of the UN peacekeepers. DUTCHBAT command put in place strict rules as to how the UN peacekeepers were to behave toward the Bosniak women; strict rules were put in place for the Bosniak women as well (i.e. certain style of hair, clothes, no conversations allowed, etc.). Nonetheless, while working there some Bosniak women developed genuine friendship with members of the DUTCHBAT. There were also intimate relationships that developed between the Bosniak women and the UN peacekeepers in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. Some were motivated by the youth, others by idleness, and both were most certainly incorporated in the emotions

⁴⁴He has returned to Srebrenica in 2005, where he lives today. He owns a small hotel and restaurant called Misirlije. His hotel is one of the favorite spots to visit for the returning UN peacekeepers.

war-time uncertainty. Some Bosniak women seduced the UN peacekeepers in hopes to advance her hopeless situation; others even resorted to prostitution to survive.

2.3.2.3. Hostesses

Apart from intimate relationships described in the previous section the Bosniak women and the UN peacekeepers developed relationships of another type. I believe these types of relationships are important to bring to light as they tell us that both the UN peacekeepers and members of the local population had a genuine attempt to get to know each other, maintain good relations, learn about each other's cultures, and mutually help one another. Fazila Efendić (Narrator 27), a mother of two teenage children, who lived just across the Potočari Elementary school, where *on "Fridays Doctors without Borders operated their mobile clinic where working alongside the DUTCHBAT II peacekeepers. She remembered:*

I really wanted my children to get close with these people. Mainly so they could talk and exchange opinions. For my children to have contact with them, meant they would have contact with the outside world. For three and a half years we did not have a phone nor a radio, let alone television and electricity. We were without any information from outside world. It was like living a large camp. I didn't pity myself. But I did feel very very sorry for my children. I knew a girl who worked at the MSF as a translator and I told her to bring the group over to my house for dinner because that was the only way they would come to my house and for my children to have conversation with them in English. They really studied English a lot, but that was from the books alone and I knew that wouldn't do. They needed to practice speaking it, too. That's what I wanted, I wanted for my children to feel nice with these people, for a moment. They didn't have that many friends really. When the war started many of the Srebrenica town fled and IDPs from surrounding towns and villages arrived. We didn't have much food, but I knew how to make something out of nothing. They came a few times after that and when it was their time to leave, I remember my husband and my children saw them off. They gave them small gifts, small notebook with addresses, signatures.

When they would come they would take photos and those war photos mean so much to me. I told myself, if I survive I will show to the outside world how me and my children looked like when inside a camp for three and a half years. That was really a nice gesture on their behalf. When the enclave fell and we had to leave the house there was so many things that I should have taken with me, but I didn't, I only took these photographs.

The UN peacekeepers didn't only visit the local families who were in the nearby Potočari village or Srebrenica town. They went on regular foot patrols and visited many farms scattered all over the rural area of the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. In those occasions they met with rural local women with whom they had good yet superficial contact. As remembered by one of the UN peacekeepers below, the Dutch knowing of the hardship the local population was going through were very happy to help out the local population with supplying them with food. It was actions like these that made the UN soldiers really feel like their work there was making a difference.

The following recollection is by Jarno Douwsma⁴⁵ (Narrator 28), a DUTCHBAT III UN peacekeeper who served with the Alfa Company in Simin Han. He was one of the men who distributed food among the local population while going on the foot patrols. What struck me as interesting is that he said that he never saw any man around, only women and children. He discussed how the foot patrols and interaction with the Bosniak people looked like:

I remember I did foot patrol with the backpack on, not the helmet on, only the beret. I think I had like 20 kg of rice in my backpack. We went to Simin Han. It is really beautiful; with hills. I clearly remember is handing out rice and other stuff like oil for baking to the poor people and that felt really good. What I remember is the people were really poor. We came at the door and gave them some rice and they invited us inside and when we got inside the people were so nice. We saw they didn't have anything. But they took out a bottle of šljivovica from somewhere and they asked me if I will have some, and I said of course. The people were so friendly even if they had such a hard time they were so friendly. I felt the contact was good. The people were really nice to us; they appreciated us being there, in Simin Han.

⁴⁵ I visited him in the town of Harderwijk in the Netherlands in September 2011.



Photograph 31(a,b) Jarno Douwsma (Narrator 28) on patrol, surrounded by children, and in good spirits

2.3.2.4. Women's Health

The dire situation was especially problematic when it came to women's childbearing ability. There were practically no contraceptives and this brought all sort of problems – from undesired pregnancies to various diseases and infections. Hollingworth writes that “due to lack of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, many women stopped menstruating, which was sometimes traumatic for them. Some of them thought they were pregnant and others thought they will never be able to get pregnant again” (Hollingworth 1996: 137). The MSF reported⁴⁶ that “the high number of abortions and related complications were later a source of great concern [and that] an average from three to four were performed each day [in Srebrenica hospital, where] the abortion cost 100 GM” (NIOD, Part II 2002: 64). Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10), surgeon of the DUTCHBAT III, who did much more than the job required of him, explains that:

I was brought for the first time for the army and I remember that we took over from my colleague; the work was already started so we went to the hospital in Srebrenica every Monday. There we saw a lot of patients and decided if people had to be operated upon or not, and if we could do this operation in the Srebrenica hospital

⁴⁶ In June 1994, the MSF received 15,000 condoms which were distributed through the gynecological department of the hospital and outpatient centers (Thorsen 1994 : 80-82)

where the material was less of a quality or we do it in Potočari compound. When we did the operation in the compound the people were called upon, they came into the military compound and were taken care of by the nurses before they were operated and they were taken care of after the operation as well, and then they went home. Every day we did one or two operations. So we did have very close contact to the population. One of the interpreters taught me also a good number of local words: kaman, bubreg, desni, levi, sužna kesa ... all kinds of things like that. There was one lady we treated for almost seven weeks in our intensive care. Her husband was there almost every day; we had a very intense contact with him. She was pregnant and she tried to remove her egg with a needle and then she got an infection and sepsis and we tried to treat it and after a long time she died.

He also remembers relationships he had with Bosniak doctors, including a doctor named Fatima Dautbašić who was in charge of women's health at the Srebrenica Hospital.

There was also Fatima Dautbašić and if I talk about that I still get the shivers again about the intensity of the contact I had with those people. And last year, at the [Peace] March, I saw Fatima again and it is unbelievable how emotions appear when I see those people and meet those people. But there are a lot of people from the hospital that I remember that were very nice; from some who died, some who still survived. I remember, just before it ended, there was a delivery that would not go on very well and Fatima said: "We have to do Caesarian section, so would you like to do that?" Because I already said that I have never done that - I have done a lot of other things but never did a gynecological operation like this - she said: "Come on, you do it". And then we did it, and I did it and I never saw that child again, but must be 16 now, somewhere living...

Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10) and Kevin von Cappele (Narrator 15) both remember the case of a wounded woman who was brought to the compound, where it was decided she would not get medical care. Kevin von Cappele (Narrator 15) recalls:

In July, a local woman was shot, and me and Bern Gerritzen went to get her. I believe Bert saw a lot of fire, but maybe I just went there and ran across open parts. I shut off

everything around me. I didn't really notice, but what the Serbs sometimes did, was they tried to scare the DUTCHBAT personnel. They shelled and then we saw one explosion about 300 meters away, and then one 200 meters away and then 100 meters away – you know in the straight line to where we were, and then they just stopped. I wasn't scared. I had the idea already that the Serbs didn't want to hurt the UN personnel, and they just tried to scare us. But, well, I guess it could work on a lot of people. When we got back to the compound, the surgeon - not Garry Kremer, but another surgeon - said we had to lay her down in the factory hall. That struck me as very strange because there were no patients at all [in the UN compound field hospital], so why did she have to go to that dark, dirty hall and lay down in there, instead of a bed? Later I heard they didn't want to spend any medical supplies on her. [Even] later I heard from Kremer that it would have been possible to use limited supplies and just do an emergency operation. But the new surgeon didn't allow it. Because I spoke a little bit of Croatian, I could talk to her a bit, but she didn't say back much. I sat there for about two hours and after they transported her to MSF Srebrenica Hospital – like they didn't have much on their hands already. When Srebrenica fell to the Serbs, the medics from the MSF came to the compound and I spoke with one doctor and he said she died and that it wasn't really avoidable because she had multiple shot wounds and she probably bled to death, which wasn't necessary in my opinion.

During my research, I noticed that on a few occasions two persons were recalling the same event. I found these types of recollection especially valuable. The following recollection is by Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10) who also remembered the unfortunate Bosniak women and an incident with a Dutch surgeon who refused to treat the woman despite her critical condition. Dr. Kremer recalls:

A woman was shot in her belly and in her leg. They brought her in. I was not in charge anymore because there was a successor who took over the responsibility who came in on 6th of July, so I was not in charge anymore. He decided not to treat the woman because he didn't have enough material and I started to argue with him about that and he didn't want to listen. I said that even after the war he will have to take the responsibility for his decision. He even refused to give her morphine for pain and that was a very very very sad situation, which I am very much ashamed of. They brought

her back to the hospital in Srebrenica, where Ilijaš Pilaf was up to his ankles in blood because he had to operate people with thorn arms and thorn legs. He had to do amputations and he asked Major Franken if we could take over 2 wounded [local] people and Major Franken refused also. I didn't know anything about it. After he (Ilijaš Pilaf) was very angry at me because he thought I made the decision. Now he knows it wasn't. But it was my successor in with cooperation with Major Franken decided not to get these wounded people in. And because he did not want to threat that woman and [sent her] back to the hospital in Srebrenica where Ilijaš had also too many shit and that woman died in the next night. It was a very sad story. I asked for an investigation for the military inspection and later it became an investigation of the civil inspection of health care in Holland.

The above testimonies show, how in one instance, the UN peacekeeper Dr. Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10) and a local woman Dr. Fatima Dautbašić, both doctors, have not only worked together as colleagues, but have been each other mentors and teachers. The subchapter on women's health shows that on occasion a genuine was made to help the local women (i.e. the woman with infection that later died), yet the final story underlines, again, the difference between the individuals—where some had helped the local population, other refused, declined or followed orders from their superiors. The last excerpts also show that although the wounded woman was clearly considered a civilian, wounded by an enemy fire, the DUTCHBAT surgeon did not attempt to save her life, despite knowing that the time lost on transport to Srebrenica Hospital, would significantly diminish her chance of survival.

2.3.2.5. Women and the Enclave's Final Days

On July 11, 1995, when the VRS General Mladić, walked into the UN Safe Area Srebrenica, majority of the male population was gone. The only people who remained in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica were Bosniak women, male and female children and male and female elderly people – approximately 25,000 thousand in all (there were some men – a few hundred - who did not flee to the woods but rather remained in and around UN compound for various reasons; this particular group will be addressed in the following chapter). All of them went to the UN compound and sought protection

in and outside the DUTCHBAT base. Those who came first were placed inside the compound, which soon became too full to admit any more people. Thus, the rest of the Bosniak women, children and elderly sat on the road in front of the UN Potočari compound. The following section will tell us more about the Bosnian women and their relationship with the UN peacekeepers during those final days of the Srebrenica UN Safe Area.

Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1), also a DUTCBAT III peacekeeper, remembers the time right after the Bosnian Serbs forces entered near Zeleni Jadar (north of the Safe Area) and a river of people, mixed in with the fleeing UN peacekeepers from the OPs and Bravo Company, all headed towards the UN compound in Potočari:

Lorries were driving to the compound, all full of women, children, and babies. By then, it was decided to abort the airstrikes. I don't know who decided it. I don't know. But at that moment, I thought it was the right decision. At that moment. Because if they wanted airstrikes, they had to do it a month earlier. They surely, had seen a buildup of [Serbian] troops around. I don't know where it all came from, so much, so much bombs. All the people in panic. We helped people get off the lorries, and inside the factory. Serbs said we didn't want refugees inside the UN base, saying: "You must be neutral, you must be neutral." First lorries came through the main gate. We helped the wounded get inside and out of view from the Serbs who were at the Budak at that the time. (cries)



Photograph 32 (a,b) July 10 1995, Bosniaks start arriving at the UN compound in Potočari (Photo courtesy of Henry Van Der Belt, July 1995, Potočari)

Shock went through all of us. A colleague of mine Van Dike was filming. You saw the lorries go by, people shouting, and crying. I looked at him, and saw he dropped his camera. That image is still on television, when he drops the camera. It took a few seconds, a few minutes in fact before we got into action. It was horrible, horrible. Suddenly everyone acted. Everybody did something. No orders were needed. In those days no one was telling you what to do. You looked around; you saw what you needed to do. The baby was lost. You picked the baby up and you brought it in the room where all lost children were sent. If a woman said: "I lost my baby" you sent her here where all lost children were. Women who gave birth were put together. So there is not one woman giving birth here, one there, but all together. It was terrible, terrible, terrible, and it didn't stop. People were coming, coming, coming, coming. There was a girl, 15 or 16 years old; she was ill. Her mother was sitting next to her. I said: "What's wrong? Can I help?" "You cannot help", she said. She had diabetes. There were no medicines and she went into a coma. Later that day she died. And her mother was relieved so she could not have been raped. And I was happy for her, too. At that moment I knew no one is going to help us. We were all alone. We and them. We are alone. We've lost. We've lost.

Later, I was talking to a lady, who has lost her child. I didn't speak Bosnian, but a little boy translated for me. I stopped the kid and said "What was she asking?" He translated and I saw tears in his eyes. She said "You must help me, because I left my child with my sister in Srebrenica. I was working at the moment the real attacks started." She said: "You must come with me to Srebrenica to look for my child." I said "I can't. I must stay here. Everyone who is now at the compound cannot leave anymore, you must stay here also. Every time one of our vehicles left the gate, the Serbs would shoot mortars. Shrapnel would be flying, so you can't go out anymore. It's impossible. "

I felt guilty for that boy [who had to translate]. I said "It's ok." I gave him a little cup with a clip that opened; I gave him my pocket knife (cries) I gave him everything, just to see him smile again. Later, I realized that I should not have had that child translate. But at that moment I wanted to help out, and I didn't know what the woman was going to ask me.

The second recollection is by Raska (Narrator 24). She worked for the DUTCHBAT for a period of eight and a half months and had stopped working two and a half months before the final assault. What was so striking about her recollection is that Raska had befriended many of the UN peacekeepers, but had not reached out to them for help. During the final days, despite having had an (old) UN card and personal contact with the UN peacekeepers, she refused to go inside the UN compound. Later Raska even declined an offer to get into the compound. This is how she recalls those difficult hours; decisions she made and reasons why she made them:

When the enclave fell, one of them [peacekeepers] looked for me and told me to get into the compound. But I didn't want to go. I preferred to be out on the street, outside the compound, where the majority of the people were. I didn't want to go in, because I was afraid they would make me leave my children behind. Serbs, Chetnics, were not afraid of them [peacekeepers]! The Serb army completely disarmed them [peacekeepers]. They took everything from them [peacekeepers]. They had no power whatsoever. I made it to Kladanj safely with my children. My boy was 15 years old, and I had a girl, too.

Just like the majority of the Bosniak men, who fled to the woods rather than the UN compound, Raska didn't believe the peacekeepers would be neither able nor willing to protect her. She was right. Her ability to protect her and her children (especially the boy) would have significantly lessened had she sought protection in the UN compound. Raska felt she was safer outside the compound with the majority of the female population. At that point it was also clear the DUTCHBAT was no longer in control. Many people were wounded and the Dutch medics were nowhere to be seen. There were a few exceptions, however. The following is a recollection by Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10), who recalled a total chaos in and around Potočari compound in those final days then the tinny area was filled with approximately 25,000 terrified individuals. With a help of individual Dutch peacekeepers and Bosniak nurses he helped the wounded and even delivered babies. Here is how he recalls July 10 1995, the day before the VRS entered the Srebrenica UN Safe Area:

In the last days--when elderly people died, when babies died during birth or just before--there was a woman who had to deliver a child, who is living now in Australia, I think I am not sure. I said: "Come on, let's go in the operating theater in the bunker." I took the nurse from the new team and her mother was also there and it was breach-birth [legs first and then the head], so it was a very difficult birth, but somehow I managed it. I don't know how, because I never did it before. I said to myself: "Jesus, how should I do this?" but my fingers, my hands were doing things as if someone from above was guiding me through the process. It went fantastic. In this weird situation where people died--a lot of misery; in a factory that stank like hell; with 5000 people inside; war; fear; misery--a baby was born and somebody was happy because her baby is healthy and you are happy because you delivered the child healthy and you put it on the breast of the mother to give it to drink. Very weird situation, but you can imagine that this gives my contact with the population a very special depth, because these were the things I did in that war. It was only nice and good and helping people, operating people.

Dr. Gerry Kremer was one of the few DUTCBAT peacekeepers who defied the order and helped the local population in the last days of the fall. Majority of the UN peacekeepers seemed to have complied with the demands of their superiors. However,

Kevin von Cappele (Narrator 15) was also among those who wanted to help the population rather than go to the bunker. He remembered clearly how the medical team was ordered to go to the bunker during the final days of the Safe Area. But he too defied the order and decided to get out and help the local people. Here is what he remembered:

In July the enclave fell to the Serbs. There was a bunker where a lot of people sat. At a certain point, when they were still dropping bombs and shooting, I saw a lot of people from other parts [non-medic] of the DUTCHBAT go outside to help people. We as the medical part of DUTCHBAT were still sitting in the bunker, so I decided to go out anyway and I helped a few people get to the compound. That was really weird experience. When I got a few kilometers ahead of the bus station, I was given some people to transport than back to the compound. For example, one woman was inside a wheelbarrow and she was really messed up, maybe from something it happened before the war already. I remember, I drove her back to the compound and a soldier was coming to me, and when he went by, he said we have to watch out because her feet are at the ground. Her feet were not in a natural direction at the ground, and I was moving her, so either her feet were already broken or it was ... But she didn't say anything. So, I didn't know that I was transporting her in a wrong way, you know. She was one person that I helped to get to the compound and some other people that could hardly walk.

With only less than 300 UN peacekeepers in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area during those final days, the enormity of work must have seemed overwhelming. Dr. Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10) and Kevin von Cappele (Narrator 15) were some of the few DUTCBAT peacekeeper medics who defied the order and helped the local population in the last days of the fall. Majority of them seemed to have complied with the demands of their superiors. What is perhaps the most controversial part of the role of the UN peacekeepers is their active participation in the separation of the women from their male children who were older than 11 years. Kada Hotić (Narrator 2) remembered this difficult time:

It was July 11. The Serbs shelled us that night; not the factory grounds, but around it. Therefore, we were calm. Nobody could have escaped anyway. The following day, events unfolded in a way, it made it look to me as if it was all orchestrated in advance,

and making sure we were all kept inside. When July 12 came, Mladić came here unleashing his butchers upon us. Some were our neighbors, some of them I knew. It was horrible. It felt such tremendous fear that my feet became heavy, making it impossible for me to walk. I found a place and sat down. The sun was hot, it scorched. I didn't feel the sun. I just observed what was going on. My brother Ekrem was there with me, and so were my husband as well as two sisters-in-law, two nieces and eleven-year-old nephew. My son, one of my brothers and a brother-in-law had already left through the forest near the gas station. Mladić's Chetnics called upon my brother Ekrem and took him to the house known today as "the White House". This all happened before any deportations have taken place yet. Many more things happened there on the 12th .

The Dutch soldiers patrolled around us, they didn't do anything, they didn't help anybody, and they didn't offer anything to anyone. There were pregnant women. Births were taking place. Were the births induced by fear these women experienced? Was that it? It was all out in the open. They helped no one, only watched in silence.

I expected them to call for help, so that maybe NATO bombers would come to bomb the Serb positions and prevent that massacre. Nothing happened. They began to separating the men who were there - those who did not decide to go to the woods.

On the 12th, in the afternoon, several vehicles took a number of people, mainly women and children. The men were singled out and put to the side. They [The Serbs] put up a road block. The soldiers of the Dutch battalion and Serb Army stood together at the roadblock letting some people pass on to the deportation vehicles. Whomever they wanted to set aside, they did, including my husband, brother and eleven-year-old nephew. The child was screaming, his mother – my sister-in-law – was screaming as they were tearing him from her arms. All of a sudden, a guy came over. He said: "Let the child go« and after a few slur remarks, he let the child go. At that moment, this man was a man and not a Chetnik. He let the child live. The boy had since grown up, completed his high school diploma and went on to study at the University.

As far as the Dutch soldiers are concerned, I have to say, they have not put in the slightest effort to help us. Not in any way. On contrary, they had water packed in plastic bags at that roadblock. Just when I approached the barricade, they would show you the little bag, and make it look like they are trying to toss it to you, and then they return it to themselves. And they smiled. Grins this big. One of them, he had very big teeth. He grinned with a big smile. He lifts that bag again. Then he returns it

again. Then he sometimes does toss it. Then ha, ha, ha, ha. He was so pleased. Something was funny, or whatever.

They never ever helped us in any way. Sometimes I had a feeling - I don't want to condemn – they had their superiors. Whatever their superior told them, they listened to the order. I don't blame all the soldiers of the Dutch Battalion for not doing their job, not caring, for betrayal, handing over the people they were supposed to be protecting. However, I do blame Tom Karremans, their commander, who was here, and the Dutch Minister of Defense. They must have had a connection to the Ministry of Defense in the Netherlands. They [, the DUTCHHBAT,] must have had a connection to the UN in Zagreb as well as other UN leadership. They should have reported about the situation on the ground as it really was. They must have known how many people would get killed. They must have known that there would be genocide.

2.3.2.6. In Sum

In summary, the subchapter exploring the relationship between UN peacekeepers and Bosniak women shows the relationships formed are complex and multilayered. A significant number of Bosniak women had worked in the UN compound (something that was not practiced during the CANBAT II deployment). The DUTCHBAT put in place strict rules as to how the UN peacekeepers were to behave toward the Bosniak women (no conversations allowed, socializing, etc.); strict rules were put in place for the Bosniak women as well (i.e. certain style of hair, clothes, no conversations allowed, mandatory showers, etc.). Yet, regardless, a number of women were able to develop genuine friendships with members of the DUTCHBAT. Of course, there were also intimate relationships that developed on occasion. There is also no doubt, that a small number of Bosniak women “made themselves available” to the UN peacekeepers in hopes to advance their hopeless situation; in few instances women even resorted to prostitution to survive. On occasions, women had a chance to host the UN peacekeepers in the homes, which can be seen as a genuine attempt, on both sides, to get to know each other, maintain good relations, learn about each other's cultures, and mutually help one another. For example, UN peacekeepers that missed the family home environment were very happy to be invited to the homes of the Bosniak people,

experience their hospitality and try the home-cooked local dishes. On the other hand, the Bosniaks were eager to find out about the outside world, practice a foreign language, and maintain contact with the extended family outside the UN Safe Area Srebrenica (with the help of UN peacekeepers who were able to leave and return to the enclave regularly).

2.3.3. The Relationship between the UN Peacekeepers and the Men in the United Nations Safe Area Srebrenica

Out of 29 narrators, very few spoke of their recollections of relationships with the local men. For the UN peacekeepers, making contact with the Bosniak men was not easy and at times even confrontational. The Bosniak men who represented the local municipality, army and police cooperated with the UN peacekeepers. However, it would be fair to say that they were not fond of them. Many also felt UN's ability to provide protection was weak, while the promise of providing sufficient amount of food and other goods was continuously broken.

The majority of the narrators spoke about various issues the locals had with the UN peacekeepers and *vice versa*. Firstly, upon the UN peacekeepers' arrival, their first job was to disarm the Bosniaks (a job that was in large part competed by the CANBAT II). 8th Operative Group Srebrenica Headquarters of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ABiH) (later renamed to the ABiH 2nd Corps 28th Division) under the command of Naser Orić, therefore had to disarm. Once the UN peacekeepers disarmed the one-time defenders of Srebrenica, those men "walked around, aimlessly" (Heidenrich 2001: 169). Secondly, there were many newly arrived IDPs. The internally displaced men found they were unable to provide for themselves and their families. Their situation was even more difficult as opposed to those who already resided in the Srebrenica town and still had their houses, land and livestock. Those with no relatives or friends in the Srebrenica town were literally on their own and remember the town as a "living hell" where "those having no house begged for food, blankets" (Wilson 2004: 228). Others would out of desperation walk in small groups to the surrounding Bosnian

Serb villages in search for food. Thirdly, the report details how “the distribution of aid goods [...] led to problems with the local council, which demanded complete control” (NIOD, II part: 77). Thirdly, the report also outlines how the DUTCHBAT and other humanitarian aid organizations were the cause of a lot of apprehension and frustration for a number of the local men (municipality authorities, army and police), which “accused the aid organizations and international community of doing too little to improve the situation in Srebrenica” (NIOD, Part II: 76). There was a constant tug-of-war as the local authorities showered the DUTCHBAT and NGOs with a myriad of requests for various goods, materials, and tools, which they could not provide. With no one else around, these international actors were the only ones to whom the local authorities could express their grievances. However, due to these persistent pressures for aid, international workers began to resent the local authorities. Situation reports of the NGOs and DUTCHBAT referred to the local authorities as “‘the mafia’ or [as individuals using] ‘mafia practices’” (NIOD, Part II 2002: 210). Fourthly, many UN peacekeepers had stereotypes about the Bosniak men. NIOD report describes men were mostly wondering around “as if on an ordinary street market and tried to kill time” (NOID, Part II: 79). However, the fact of the matter is that many of them spent their time cutting wood for winter or in line for humanitarian food hand-outs. Lastly, contact between the Bosniak men and UN peacekeepers was strongly discouraged by the DUTCHBAT command as it was seen as bridge of principles of impartiality/neutralty. They feared that by developing personal contact they would not be able to maintain impartial.

In this subchapter I will highlight how different narrators recalled their interaction with the Bosniak men.



Photograph 33 The main street in Srebrenica (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, January - June 1994, Srebrenica)

2.3.3.1. Local Men Working for DUTCHBAT

A number of Bosniak men worked for the DUTCHBAT as part of the locally employed personnel (i.e. translators, kitchen staff, and one handyman, plumber, electrician, and hairdresser). Mehmedalija Ustić⁴⁷ (Narrator 29) was the hairdresser working for the UN during the entire time of the UN Safe Area. This meant he started working for the CANBAT II and later continued working for the DUTCHBAT.

We were in a difficult situation here in Srebrenica. We didn't have enough of anything, not food or clean water, or electricity. Like in medieval times. People tried to get by any way possible. With my job, I was somehow able to provide for myself and my family. However, I made a very modest income in the beginning, when my service was paid only one GM. Whether this was stipulated by the UN or not, doesn't matter. Later, after a year, it [salary] improved and I was very satisfied. I also got one meal.

⁴⁷ After the genocide, he got a job at the NATO Base in Butmir. His father Ahmed opened the first salon in Srebrenica. A few years ago, his son Enez returned to Srebrenica to continue with the family tradition.



Photograph 34 (a,b) Mehmedalija Ustić in July 2010 helping in his son's barber shop in Srebrenica; here he is cutting the hair of Ynse Schellens (Narrator 3) after 16 years (Photo courtesy of Tea Rozman – Clark, July 2011, Srebrenica) and Mehmedalija Ustić doing his job at the UN compound in Potočari (Photo courtesy of Henry Van Der Belt, January - July 1995, Potočari)

We did communicate; we used to joke, and play football. There were such moments, like breaks. They used to come from the foot patrols, tired, and they would get a two day break to rest and after we would play football. I have a completely different opinion about these people than the official policy [meaning: DUTCHBAT's failure to prevent the genocide]. Why? I think they were not in position to make decisions. Their number was reduced to a minimum here. In the beginning, there were many more of them; I know that because of my job. But they were not in position to make decisions in decisive moments when they could have helped these people. I also believe that in a certain moment, they were in the same situation as we. Look at the appearance of General Mladić in The Hague. What kind of arrogance and what kind of appearance is that? As if he still has authority and power in his hands. I had no special relationships with any individuals. I was correct to all of them as much as the situation allowed. I was aware that I could not talk to them, tackle topics about their work and my work, so we talked about every day, family topics. But I noticed that they always had a dosage of sorrow and sadness for their country and their families.

During the conversations, I could notice that there were good people and bad people. There were some people who couldn't or didn't want to understand our situation in Srebrenica.



Photograph 35 Foot patrol, using horses and donkeys (Photo courtesy of Serge Janssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

Although, their actions were limited by the mandate, we probably expected that they could help us a bit more. For example, I saw they threw away a lot of food that was leftover; bread, a lot of food. They mainly threw it away. They probably didn't want to do it [give away food], because the other side [Serbs] controlled the entire area and they could directly see what was being done and watch what was going on. Maybe they could have been a little bit more determined in maintaining the borderline where their checkpoints were located. They probably gradually abandoned them, and probably there was provocation. Especially, as the end approached, the Serbs – Chetniks – were increasingly arrogant and blatant, they shot at them and blackmailed them and didn't let them pass. They stopped convoys in Bratunac when humanitarian convoys would come.

So, we shared a common fate here in Srebrenica. Maybe they could have done more? But no, because I stayed with them, and was always aware of the situation. I knew what amount and capacity of weapons they had. I knew what they could do with them. They could have shown some resistance for a day or two, if there was any conflict. They were limited in fuel and everything else, especially fuel that was essential for their functioning. [They allocated some] fuel for the checkpoints. A number of people were doing their job [at the checkpoints], but here they were limited with fuel, and

food. There were times when we [locals] built small power stations on the creek, and would give some electricity to the UN compound. You can believe me, it was defeating. In the first year they used to come to pick us up. Very often, I walked every day six kilometers down the hill, and six up. I never knew who will cross my path.

Peter van Daalen (Narrator 6) the cook remembers working with local men in the kitchen. He had very fond memories – stating that they worked very hard. On one occasion smuggled some coffee out of the compound to show his appreciation for the hard work.

I didn't go to the OPs nor did the guard shifts. We were only in the kitchen and sometimes we were out, to Srebrenica and Potočari. But other than that, we never saw anyone. When we did, we were [communicating] with hands and feet, and words we learnt. We worked in two shifts – breakfast shift, dinner shift. They already start to work when I came to the kitchen. When they were working, they didn't talk to us, only to each other. When they had to do something for us, we pointed to it and we spoke with our hands and feet and English and they understood it, mostly. At the gate people [UN peacekeepers] searched their bags and when they found something, they were fired. So, the people would ask us to bring something out, like salt, coffee and other stuff. Sometimes they [UN peacekeepers] would look in the cabin of the truck. Coffee and salt were very expensive in Srebrenica, but we had a lot of coffee when I was there. For the people working hard, it was a hard rule, because they saw all the food everywhere and they weren't allowed to carry it with them. So, they [various Bosniak employees] asked me a couple of times to bring something outside of the gate and I did it [once]. He [The Bosniak man] was working very hard for us and I thought to myself "Why not?" Just that one time I bring something out for him and I succeeded; they didn't find it at the gate. It was a packet of coffee.

Some Bosniak men, like Abdulah Purković⁴⁸ (Narrator 26) worked for a humanitarian aid agency. Thus Mr. Purković had contact with the DUTCHBAT through his employer – the Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF). In addition to having foreign doctors and nurses, which rotated on a regular basis, MSF employed a dozen of locals who worked as interpreters, chauffeurs, cleaners and cooks. Mr. Purković worked as the Head of Logistics for MSF. He recalled:

I had contact with the DUTCHBAT soldiers, just as I did with the Canadian soldiers, who came first. Some of them spoke a bit of German, so I managed to communicate with the soldiers as well as their superiors. Sometime after their arrival, the Dutch soldiers established contact with the hospital and MSF. The DUTCHBAT surgeons would come [to Srebrenica hospital] often. First and foremost because they didn't have any injured persons to take care of, but also because they had extremely well equipped laboratories and excellent professional staff. So their doctors sometimes came to the MSF, who were working in the Srebrenica hospital. They helped our doctors, and took part in the operations and treatment of the injured and sick people. The people I had contact with were the doctors and other medical staff [DUTCHBAT medical team, who were also part of the DUTCHBAT UN peacekeepers]. I had no contact with the DUTCHBAT soldiers [UN peacekeepers who were not surgeons or medics]; only later in 1995, when Srebrenica fell, I had some contact with the soldiers. As far as the doctors are concerned, Dr. Kremer made a very positive impression on me, he had a big heart, as well as Dr. Andrei and some other doctors, who worked for the DUTCHBAT, who did as much as their commanders allowed. Most of these doctors showed a humanitarianism, i.e. they responded to the Hippocratic Oath which is obligatory for doctors.

Interestingly, when I visited Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10) in Drenthe in the northern Netherlands in September 2011, he also spoke of Abdulah Purković (Narrator 26). Dr. Kremer had since retired from his military career and now lectures at the University Medical Center at Groningen. Dr. Kramer remembered Mr. Purković fondly:

⁴⁸ Mr. Purković left Srebrenica with the MSF and the wounded following the fall. He received a lot of media attention because of a statement he gave to Bosnian Serb journalists on 12 July 1995, which was coerced. The video of his coerced interview can still be found on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHWg8euGFGU>

In Srebrenica Hospital Abdulah Purković would make a wonderful meal every Monday. We were there almost all day and at noon we got our fantastic food from him. He had a wood burning stove and made the most fantastic things. Really incredible how he managed to do it. He was a culinary instructor before the war, so theoretically he knew a lot. But practically, he was one of the best I have ever seen! I had the honor to see that after the war again because we were staying a few times in his hotel where we had food also. Anyway I think that his son runs it now, but he was fantastic.

We had frozen turkeys on the compound and he asked me to take one because he wanted to make a special meal for us on one day [of the week]. So I went there with a frozen turkey for him: the meals with Purković were very special and he cooked fantastic and I had a very good relationship with him, but in the period around 10 and 11 of July he was panicking. He wanted to kill himself, we wanted to hang himself, he wanted pills and he wanted to kill himself. This was not so nice. And I didn't do it, of course. And then he went with us – but I was gone already by the 15th – and then later on he went with the rest to Zagreb and then he went back. And one month later I visited him in Tuzla with a camera team from KEO [meaning unclear] and we were very emotional then [August 1995] and the times I saw him [after 2007] back [in Srebrenica] also ... very special. [During my deployment in 1995,] I went in some weekends with the military police in the enclave to visit places and then sometime in the south of the enclave we visited people in their homes and we were asked in for coffee and they very nice, they very generous and then, of course, we had šljivovica and it was very cozy and they were very generous because there was nothing.

The following is a recollection by Bart Hetebrij (Narrator 8) a moral counselor who served with the DUTCHBAT. His primary job has to talk to the UN peacekeepers and provide moral guidance. Mr. Hetebrij recalled befriending a Bosniak interpreter, who worked for the DUTCHBAT, who seemed to be really struggling and needed someone to lean on. The following is a good example of how two men – a Bosniak and Dutch – bonded and kept in touch.

I had a good contact with the local interpreter and I recorded his story for the [internal newspaper] article. He was an interpreter for DUTCHBAT I, II and III. He was a guy who studied in Sarajevo before the war and he had relatives in a small

place somewhere near Srebrenica. He told me: "I was visiting the relatives and suddenly there was war and I couldn't go back. Now, I am in a small prison located in a bigger prison." That was how everybody felt. He was very depressed about it. "I can't see any way out" he would tell me. Before I went on leave he asked me for a book; it was an English dictionary. I gave him that book, he was very surprised, and wanted to pay me for the book. Later, I heard he was very frightened because he was recognized by the Serbs when they entered the enclave. He was more or less saved because of a Dutch officer. I also met him on the 24 July 1995 in Zagreb, because I flew back to Zagreb to meet with all of the soldiers, and he was also there with the other interpreters. I received one postcard from him, much later. I heard later he went to Canada or America. I felt very sorry. I could feel the depression when we talked at the bar. "I am like a book" he would say "if the commander needs me, he takes me out of the shelf." He felt there was no respect for him as a human being.

2.3.3.2. Stereotypes, False Perceptions, Mistrust and Confrontations

A number of UN peacekeepers arrived to Srebrenica with preconceived ideas about the Balkan men or the Islam. Others formed stereotypes through partial observation. Emir Suljagić (Narrator 11), an UNMO interpreter, saw first-hand how these stereotypes were formed and how poor behavior of a few Bosniak men was projected onto the local population as a whole. He expressed great frustration felt when confronted with the UN peacekeepers that made generalizations. He discussed this issue by explaining:

In part, a problem arose as a result of politics and the international community's general policy in Srebrenica UN Safe Area. They acted as a third party the whole time! Like there were two sides to this conflict, and they were the third. This, in my opinion, was not in line with the mandate which they had; which they came here with. Their mandate was to protect the unprotected population of Srebrenica. [But instead] they started to project all the stereotypes they had about [Naser] Orić and other people who led the defense of Srebrenica and who had a say in Srebrenica, on the rest of the population very soon after their arrival. All of a sudden, we were all criminals; all of a sudden, we were all bad. I think this was a serious problem.

In July 1995, when the town fell, I think their behavior and their desires were mainly based on some of the things I mentioned. From this battery factory up to here somewhere [village of Donji Potočari] there were 20,000 to 30,000 [Bosniak] people. It was unbelievable; but you know what was really unbelievable, that the Dutch saw them as a burden. They saw them as an obstacle to their own exit out of Srebrenica. Actually, they came to the verge of complicity [in the genocide] with their inaction. They all wanted to leave Srebrenica safe and sound, even if it meant doing what they did. When it came to separating the men from the rest of their families, helped facilitate the plans of the Serbs! They would do that only in order to get away from here as soon as possible. Generally in those days, they put themselves before others and primarily took care of themselves. I think, in the days around July 11, 1995, when Mladić's troops came into Srebrenica, no one [of the UN peacekeepers] remembered what their original and primary purpose [in this town was.] Nobody remembered the mandate they came with was to protect the [local] population.

Hasan Hasanović (Narrator 18) was 14 years old when the DUTCHBAT arrived to Srebrenica. Originally from Bratunac, he and his family were IDPs without a roof over their head (his father was one of many IDPs who worked with the Swedish NGO building homes). When asked about his relationship with the UN peacekeepers, Mr. Hasanović spoke candidly about what his perception of the Dutch peacekeepers was. Like many, he was stunned that some UN peacekeepers seemed to place high importance on their appearance, while the people they were protecting had no running water, electricity and basic hygienic sanitation. In one case, however he was able to look beyond that and befriend a UN peacekeeper called Rut.

The Dutch came in the end of January 1994. Firstly, I think, they were more disciplined [compared to the Canadians]. But from what I could see, and I did socialize with them, they looked more like fashion models [than the peacekeepers] with brand name sunglasses, toned bodies and nicely-smelling perfumes. These guys were sunbathing as if they were on a beach somewhere! All the time I had the impression that they came here for some kind of vacation. A lot of them were young, very young. They taught us some basic words in Dutch like: "Hello, go away, come". I didn't have any negative experiences. Many of them were very pleasant, nice people, and I would like to see some of them again, although I didn't know them that well. I

remember one soldier, his name was Rut. I don't know his last name now, I can't remember, it didn't matter at that time. I spoke to him a lot and I think we were already like some kind of friends. He was very good. Was he bored, I don't know? We talked about all sorts of things. He never came to Srebrenica [after 1995] or perhaps he did, but I wasn't there at the time. I would really like to see him. I'm not sure whether he was here in 1995. He was in the first or the second rotations of the DUTCHBAT.



Photograph 36 Sunbathing (Photo courtesy of Ramon Timmerman, June 1994 – February 1995, Potočari)

A number of the Bosniak narrators recalled on their days off the UN peacekeepers were sunbathing just outside of the UN compound. They would be seen in full gear - wearing their swimsuits and reading leisure books. This type of behavior left the Bosniaks quite perplexed and confused. “These men are here to protect us?” they would ask themselves. In the months before the fall of the enclave, the idle UN peacekeepers (especially the medics) would be outside even during their work hours. For one, there was the ‘no contact order’ that forbade them to interact with the locals, which meant they couldn’t go out; secondly, by early 1995 the medics had run out of supplies and were told to do nothing according to Kevin von Cappelé (Narrator 15).

Kevin was a medic with the DUTCHBAT III and he was not happy with having nothing to do. His memories vividly depict the feelings of boredom, feelings of being enclosed and cut off from the world, and feeling of being worthless. He wasn't happy following rigid orders from the command. He recalled:

From April till July [1995], there wasn't much for us to do at the bandage post [walk-in clinic located on the UN compound]. The weather was good and so we sat a lot in the sunshine in front of the Bandage Post [building]. It is a good memory for myself; but I can understand that somebody who saw that thought: "But what are they doing?" But we didn't have anything else to do. We had to do something. Yeah, you could sit inside and play [board games] like Monopoly or Risk. Well, I used to do that, too, a lot and I use to work out in the gym. But I couldn't work. That was kind of frustrating too, because I was trained to do something there and I was very much an idealist – very fanatic about helping people in Bosnia. But when it wasn't possible anymore due to medical supplies that were limited then there wasn't much else that I could do. I couldn't do anything else but sit in the sunshine and enjoy my life there. I would have much rather worked! Much rather. Because I always liked the contact with the locals, to help them; to heal people has always been one of the things I enjoyed most in life. I could have done something else like go on patrol, but all patrols were carried out by infantry and they had limited spots for medics; every patrol could only have one. I would have rather been outside of the compound, but it wasn't allowed. It was more like some prison, where you had to make the best of it. That's why we were sunbathing and playing games a lot after April 1995.

The following narrative of a Srebrenica native, Amir Kulagić⁴⁹ (Narrator 12), provides us with a very useful insight the type of work Bosniak men were involved in after they disarmed and took off their uniforms. Contrary to perceptions they didn't "simply walked around, aimlessly" (Heidenrich 2001: 169). Some of them, like Amir,

⁴⁹ When I spoke to him in July 2010, he had just completed his work as the Head of the Research and Documentation Center, Srebrenica Office. He is currently serving his term as a vice president of the Municipal Assembly of Srebrenica and is one of the most active members of the Coordination Council of the Coalition for RECOM, a regional project, which numbers over one thousand members and embraces many human rights organizations, victim associations, youth organizations, veteran associations, the media, religious groups and individuals with an aim to assist governments in forming a regional commission to establish the truth about war crimes in the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2001.

were involved in publishing a paper as well as teaching. Many men also participated in unarmed surveillance. They simply didn't trust the UN peacekeepers are doing their job well. Amir recalled:

Srebrenica was declared the UN Safe Area by the Security Council, and unlike the other Safe Areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was supposed to be protected and demilitarized. We initially didn't understand what that meant. But it meant that we had to surrender all of our weapons and pull the troops back from the front line, and UNPROFOR would come here and set up OPs. We understood that in return for surrendering our weapons, they would keep our territory safe and protect the local population as well as the territory. That they would take over that responsibility. Additionally, we were told that they would regularly maintain and keep our weapons, meaning small arms, a few mortars, APCs, and tanks. On 18 April, 1993 we were informed of the arrival of the Canadian Battalion. The moment they arrived, we pulled back from the front lines and began surrendering our weapons, which we didn't have a lot of to begin with. Then we didn't know what we do would do [from that point on]. The very beginning of [our collaboration] was not clear to us. It was a time of misunderstandings; no one knew what needs to be done; no one knew anything. However, we were captured in a way. We never knew what the exact area they needed to protect was, and this caused a lot of bad feelings. At that time we did not have any people at the frontline because we had no weapons. But we did put a few - you can call them, observers - unarmed men, here and there. Because I lived in Srebrenica town, a group of my friends and I began actively participating in the Srebrenica Association for Culture and Arts. [We] began to publish a bulletin "Srebrenički Glas" [or The Voice of Srebrenica.] Later on we participated in reopening the Srebrenica high school and I taught a few classes there. However, all this time I was also in the ARBiH.

Many Bosniak men didn't trust the UN peacekeepers. They knew the mere presence of the UN will not be a deterrent strong enough to stop the VRS from taking over the Safe Area. Ramon Timmerman (Narrator 9) described the foresight the Bosniak men had about the situation in the Safe Area and its future prospects.

All the children that I saw were always happy, more or less. Always happy. Also because we helped the locals. I always played soccer and they were there and you see there is still some life, some energy in these people. But older people, you can see that they knew, you knew they knew that one day this safe area, enclave, is going to fall. You saw it in them and that reflected their actions towards us too. Because they came to our camp and asked: "Hey, ok, but they have tanks and they have this ... and you only have only tatata [small arms] ... you know! Yeah, I don't know how negotiations in these meeting went but I can imagine... Because if I turned around and I was them, I see this UN, ok, we were Dutch but could have been the Germans, the French or whatever they put there. I would also think, you are only with the sidearm!? How do you call it machine gun, mitraliez? Because they walked through the bushes there and they saw the Serbs were with the tanks and big guns and they knew we will not be able to protect them. You know. We also knew that the air support will not be coming if they [Bosnian Serbs] hijack a bus full of UN people. That happened, I think, when they came into the enclave - they hijacked a bus full of [UN] soldiers. Because the protocol of UN is not to bomb when there is hijacking. So he [General Mladić] knew that, so it was just ... I saw that the people - they knew; the elderly people. That's why some of them - they don't like to talk to us, because you cannot save us [they would say]. "You say you are here to save us, but I know you cannot save me." At that time I didn't understand that in the way I understand it now, because there I said: "I am here for you." You are a soldier and there is a bunch of "easy" [unprofesisonal] soldiers from the [BiH] army and five of them all in different uniforms. We thought they are not organized, you know. That's how I thought at that time. But now I know that they already knew that we are not going to save them. And the children they didn't see that. They knew it was war and this guy is dead. But when I saw them they were always trying to be happy or be happy. That was till age 12, 13, I think. After that they already start to know. Because in these countries people are quickly mature, I think.



Photograph 378 During times of peace, sports tournaments were organized to boost the morale of the enclave dwellers (Photo courtesy of Saskia Jongma, January - June 1994, Srebrenica)

Amir Kulagić (Narrator 12), ARBiH soldier, corroborated Ramon's recollection recalling his frustration with VRS's attacks on the UN Safe Area. He clearly felt that if the UN peacekeepers were there to keep the area 'safe', the VRS should not have been allowed to fire any weapons. He felt the DUTCHBAT did not adequately protect the local population from the ongoing attacks. This was not a good indicator, especially if the violence was to escalate.

The other problem, which became more significant with the arrival of the DUTCHBAT, was constant attacks by the enemy, which left many people wounded. Many grenades were thrown on the safe area, killing many people, while the Dutch did nothing. I believe the peak was reached during the time of DUTCHBAT II and especially DUTCHBAT III. This could have been perhaps explained by the specific circumstances, namely, the number of peacekeeping troops going down. DUTCHBAT III perhaps only had a little bit over 400 peacekeepers, but a big part of this number was logistic personnel such as cooks, sanitary workers etc. But there was one thing about the Dutch: from the moment they arrived, they kept constant pressure on us, threatening to leave. Since we had no weapons, it would have been a big problem if they had left. The people simply did not trust them; we started to put our observers on

certain locations with hunting rifles or something. What did they do? They often used our children, who were hungry and thirsty. They would give them chocolate or candy [in return for disclosing certain local military information.] It's how they got to our trenches, which they later buried, and seized our guns. It happened that people, in order to escape and save a rifle, ran, fell, and got injured in the process. Every time locals were caught on the frontline, the peacekeepers would harass them.

If they saw someone with a gun entering a house, they would do a house to house search of the entire neighborhood. I was informed, I do not know if it's true or not, for every gun they confiscated, they got 1000 marks of bonus money as well as 15 days of extra leave. But ultimately what really bothered me was their reluctance to protect the territory. The fact they did nothing about the porous borders - making it possible for our enemy to enter, wound and capture people. There was also shelling and they did not do anything about it.

In that sense, I saw their attitude toward us as very incorrect. On one hand they told us we cannot have military activities, but they were not willing to protect us properly. What's more, they harassed us about it [when we tried to do the job ourselves.]

Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10), the DUTCHBAT surgeon recalled how he treated a local man who was shot. His recollection clearly suggests that the Bosniak people were not safe even long before the final assault on Safe Area on July 11, 1995.

Shootings happened a few times. A man was found in the field once with a bullet in this thorax. I drained that with thorax drainage by a tube in his thorax and then it was all right. The Serbs were in the mountains shooting down. Also when we were playing volleyball, they would shoot close to our feet - just for fun, just to show us how they were in power.

Needless to say the Bosniak men felt a lot of frustration – many had no adequate shelter or food, they also weren't being protected by the random shooting. They had justifiable doubts that the UN peacekeepers will be able to hold to their end of the agreement. As the time went by, some Bosniak men openly despised the UN peacekeepers. Kevin von Cappele (Narrator 15) remembers:

What I did do at the time was take a few patrols now and then and when I did, well one of my first patrols I saw an old men saying: "Go home" in Bosnian and that's struck me as very strange, but when I first arrived I thought that those people liked us there, but apparently that man didn't, well maybe it was an isolated case, I didn't really know but well that was one case.

It would be fair to conclude that there were serious trust issues between the Bosniak men and UN peacekeepers that affected their ongoing as well as potential relationships. Without the relationships, the stereotypes grew stronger, which in turn intensified the mistrust. The next two narratives deal with an incident where UN peacekeepers shot at the Bosniak men, who stole from them. As shown in Part One, there were extreme food shortages among the local population. Warehouses where food was stored were continuously broken into. On one occasion UN peacekeepers shot a Bosniak man. Mujo Buhić (Narrator 22) remembered:

You could get into the battery factory from this side of the river. On one occasion, we went into their compound using an underground canal. When we arrived, there was a lot of dust, and all sort of things. We took what we need; flour or whatever else you need. We found beer, we got drunk mate, and then came at 4 o'clock!? Some went to prison, some went somewhere, you know... On one occasion they injured a guy. They shot his leg when he went over the fence, when he jumped over. Then they put him in the hospital in Srebrenica. He got well. I think he is alive somewhere. I don't know where he is. There was a lot, a lot, a lot of hunger, general hunger. There were people who ate cobs, the thing that remains when you husk corn. There was general hunger, there was chaos. Nobody could order anyone where to go, what to do. There were people who went through the woods [outside the Safe Area] to pick corn and they would come back with a bag of corn. There was complete chaos, general hunger. Hungry people, if they don't get food - they steal it; they cope somehow. So there was chaos everywhere.

Serge Jenssen (Narrator 19) recalled the same theft, which Mujo Buhić (Narrator 22) participated in. It was very difficult for Serge to talk about this story. One could tell this recollection brought many unsettling emotions to Serge as he asked for a break right after.

One day there came burglars at night. I saw them from above the defense wall and I reported to my chief there was shooting. The other guys they shoot the burglar down. He was wounded. I heard that he is still alive, but he stole from us and he was not allowed to do that. I almost died by myself in the same incident. But I run away.

The narratives above depict hurt, bewilderment, sadness, disconnection, anger, confusion, worry, rage, frustration many Bosniak men and UN peacekeepers felt about one another. Many of these relationships were tainted by stereotypes, false perceptions and mistrust of one type or another. Bosniak men saw the UN peacekeepers as their problem and their solution; and vice versa. They both possessed misplaced expectations, and were ultimately both disappointed.

2.3.3.3. Cooperation

For the large part the relationships lacked the key building bloc of any relationships – trust. However, a small number of relationships formed between the Bosniak men and members of the DUTCHBAT. This was the case with the Bosniak men who worked for the UN (i.e. Mehmedalija Ustić, narrator 29) and other humanitarian aid agencies (i.e. Abdulah Purković, narrator 26). In these few rare instances a Dutch UN peacekeeper and Bosniak men were able to work together and establish trust, approval, support, commitment, respect and acceptance.

This was the case in a close relationship between two doctors – the Dutch Gerry Kramer and the Bosniak Ilijaš Pilav. However, their close relationship was not met with approval. Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10) remembered their relationship was looked down upon by the DUTCHBAT command as one that should not have been occurring, especially not at the intensity. He recalled:

So there were a lot of people that I had contact with and there were a few people in particular – there was Ilijaš Pilav, the doctor in the hospital who was a general doctor not a surgeon, he is a surgeon now, but he became that after the war. There

were some things he could operate on, but then there were some things that he couldn't.

Trying to do some good, trying to help some and I can assure you that my commanding officers didn't like too much the depth of the contact I had with Ilijaš. Before working as a doctor in Srebrenica, Ilijaš fought for his village. So, he was a combatant before, and they knew it and they were negative about him. But I couldn't give a shit, because somebody who is defending his village, defending his people against murder, is not a by definition a bad man. And he was a doctor. You can say, [a person] who is a professional soldier, who likes to go to war because of his profession – this is worse than he who is a doctor and defends his village. This was a discussion that never ended, and I decided to do my things.

Abdulah Purković (Narrator 26) worked for the MSF as the Head of Logistic. Before the war, he worked as a culinary instructor and was famed for his culinary perfection and war-time ingenuity. On occasion he would prepare special, holiday meals for the MSF staff and their collaborators – the UN peacekeepers. In the following narrative, Abdulah depicts serious problems the UN peacekeepers were facing when they too faced life without electricity. In order to try and preserve food, they had to turn to Abdulah - Bosniak man - for help. Although, nothing much further developed from that one visit, we can conclude that on occasion attempts were made to establish some form of cooperation. He recalled that very interesting event:

It was not usual for civilians to enter the Dutch Battalion compound just like that. But there were exceptions, and I was there because I worked for the hospital and MSF. The DUTCHBAT was facing problems, too, because Serbs wouldn't let them bring in diesel fuel, and they had 400, 500, 600 soldiers, I don't know how many soldiers they had, and all their electricity generators were powered by fuel. They, [the Serbs] often didn't let them transport food to feed the troops. On one occasion, one of the officers, I don't know his name, told me that they have a lot of turkey meat, and the cooling system was down, so they couldn't preserve it any longer, and if the soldiers ate that, they could get sick. So they donated a certain quantity of that food. I had to distribute it fast; give it to the hospital patients and to the doctors. The meat was still a little bit frozen when I got it and I put some blankets to cover it, in order to preserve it as many days as possible. Since they had only a limited quantity, I offered to process that

meat, into cured meat and postpone its consumption, although it was summer. They called me immediately and so I visited the DUTCHBAT on one occasion to discuss that matter. I suggested that we dig into the ground and make cooling rooms the way people used to do. In the old days people used to burry ice in the ground, and it would remain such for an entire year, and since the food items were frozen, if you burry them well and cover them with straw and grass, they could remain frozen for a long time. People used to take the ice out in summer and use it to make ice cream, because there was no technology that we have today. However, they didn't decide to do it. They threw a certain quantity in the dumpster over there next to the exit. Unfortunately people saw that and they were hungry, so people used to go and take that meat, and then the Chetniks noticed people and they shot at that spot whenever people came to get that meat from the dumpster, so many people got killed because of that. They themselves gave up on that idea later. Why, I don't know. I told them, if you decide, I can do it, because they had salt, so it means I could have put the meat in brine, I could have smoked it, to extend its use, but they gave up. Why they gave up and decided to dump it, I don't know. The Dutch had a problem with food. I don't understand why the Dutch government allowed all that to happen from the very beginning. They were not allowed the [adequate] number of soldiers, weapons, anything. I don't understand why the Dutch government didn't react on time through the UN. Had the UN stood up as the major international organization, things could have changed.

Over the course of the stay, the UN peacekeepers developed cooperation with the Bosniak farmers. UN peacekeepers surveilled the fields especially during the wheat harvest time, when VRS shoot at the people working in the fields. The Bosniak owned farming equipment, but required gas to run. On occasion the UN peacekeepers would supply the Bosniak farmers with gas, so that the labor-intense work would not have to be done by hand. According to the John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5) of DUTCHBAT II, the farmers were always happy when the UN peacekeepers came. Here is how John remembered the good times with the farmers:

I did a lot of visits to farmers. But I don't know which farmers we went to. So it is very hard to discover where they live. And if they still are there. That gives me nice memories. Its good memories. When we came there, distributing some fuel to harvest.

They were always happy when we came and a lot of slivovic and food. It was always a little party when we came. We were always welcome. That is a good thing. It's a very good memory.

[The farmers received] 20 liters a day. And the Dutch soldiers made an agreement with those farmers, that they could have the fuel for free, but they had to share that harvest, part or completely, with the people who lived in Srebrenica, so that they wouldn't die of starvation and that the harvest could be harvested.



Photograph 38 (a,b) Peacekeepers on patrol socializing with the locals (Photo courtesy of Serge Jensen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

On the other hand Mujo Buhić (Narrator 22) recalled the UN peacekeepers didn't supply them with gas. They did however provide protection so that people working in the fields – in plain sight – would be more protected. He recalled:

When there was wheat harvest, they provided security so that we could harvest, bring in the wheat, so that they don't shoot, so that somebody doesn't get killed during the wheat harvest. The wheat was here at my place, behind the house, and they secured the harvest. It was mainly women who did that, by hand, with sickles. Then we used to stack it, and a thresher would come along, a tractor with a thresher. I was in Žepa at that time. The first one who crossed over Crni Potok (Black Creek) was me. Petrol was brought from Žepa. You go to Žepa and put 5 liter or 10 liter on you back, and return to Srebrenica. I used to buy it from the Ukrainians and it was a usual thing to do. From the Ukrainians, they used to sell. That is how we coped: you go to Žepa and buy what you need. The Dutch didn't give us any fuel, only people stole fuel from their transporters, from the canisters that were hanging on the back. People used to jump

onto the transporters and cut (the canisters) off. Later they didn't practice hanging the canisters on the back anymore, they removed them, because they didn't want people to steal from them, I guess.

On occasion, some UN peacekeepers were impressed with the ingenuity of Bosniak men. There was no electricity in the enclave, but the town had one lucky break – it was home to the largest battery factory in the country (where the UNPROFOR HQ in Potočari was) so batteries were readily available. Frank van Waart (Narrator 17), DUTCHBAT III remembers the small power stations that the inhabitants of the enclave had built on the river.

My contact with the local people it was the small one. What I saw was their ingenuity that was something that surprised me a lot. They were able to make quite a lot of things with minimal supplies, with minimal apparatus and I watched in awe when they made an energy generator right outside of our supply room. There is a creek in the back and within a couple of days when the snow was melting and the creek was filling up with water, I saw them built an engine wheel. It was surprising to see with for little technology and supplies they could make something work and that was something that struck me throughout the time here. I mean, I was a technology kid and I wasn't prepared to see the poverty among people.



Photograph 40 Small power station (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, January - June 1994, Potočari)

Rene Scholing (Narrator 13) remembered he developed a relationship with a Bosniak man, whose self-made generator provided the bread for the whole UN Safe Area. He recalled a story of how he got spare part for the generator while he was on leave in the Netherlands, despite knowing full well he could have gotten in trouble for it.

I had to go to Srebrenica town. There was a man who had a generator of his own, self-made. And he provided the electricity for the bakery in the city. The deal was with the UN, sent one or two guys with oil and filters for the engine. So when I came here he (the engineer) said you have to go to the engineer with oil and filters for the engine. So they threw it in the back of the jeep and I looked and said: But that's all old stuff, old and used filters. I don't go to the engineer. The man is bigger than me, he knows better, you know, I would be ashamed to give him old stuff. You take it out or you send somebody else. So I had a little bit of an argument with a commanding officer. He said OK, than take new stuff. We went there. We had to take out our bullet proof vest and guns away and we sat at the table, in the morning at 8 o'clock, šljivovica and after two or three cups of šljivovica, I said here are your stuff, I have to go. He was a very nice man, I went there a few times. And even he had some problems with the engine that I had to pick up in my leave to Holland. I went to Holland for 10 days. I had to buy spare parts. We were also not allowed to do that. So I had to hide them and smuggle them. I also didn't see him. So, I think he is dead. His wife was living in Eindhoven in Holland. I brought engine parts for him. He asked me also to bring a letter back to Holland. [But I didn't do that.] There was severe punishment if you did that, so I didn't do that.

A number of peacekeepers helped out their local hairdresser - Mehmedalija Ustić (Narrator 29). While on leave they purchased a number of items one could not buy in the UN Safe Area. These items were various: from female pairs underwear for his family members to perm products for his hairstyling needs.

They also liked to exchange something for some of our products. It was mainly food and drink. They had an interpreter, he spoke good Bosnian, and I communicated with him a lot. We exchanged our opinions. There was a priest in their circles, too. Later we talked a bit and they did favors for me. When they were on a leave, they would bring me back some small everyday necessities. For instance, my wife and daughter

came into a situation, where they didn't have any more underwear, also footwear, for example. Once I asked them to bring me a bottle of a product you use to make a perm. They brought it, such banal things that were very important. They would bring hygiene items, mainly. Toothpaste was something very big! That was welcome, yes. They had a cantina, and when we were in the Base, they allowed us to buy a few things because they were aware, that these things couldn't be bought anywhere else. So at least those of us who worked down there, could buy them. Then they gave us cigarettes. It's a bit touching when I remember it all.

Peter van Daalen (Narrator 6), the cook, remembered Mehmedalija Ustić (Narrator 29) the hairdresser very well. He remembered visiting his home and being honored and validated by his willingness to share food with him and his colleagues. Especially, because Peter knew full well the type of shortages the locals were experiencing and the price of food on the black market.

When I came for the first time in the Base, [Mehmedalija Ustić, narrator 29] the hairdresser, was already there working. [The barber shop] was in the same building, where we were cooking. The 'old' soldiers told us, that he is going to be our hairdresser, so we all went to him. There was only one option: "short". It was very easy; you were done in five minutes. He was a nice, warm person; quiet, and did not have a big mouth; a nice man to talk to. He could not speak English well, but he understood, what you wanted to say, so that was nice.

[Mehmedalija] also invited me to have dinner with his family. That was very strange because they didn't have any food for themselves but they invited us to have dinner. It was me and two other colleagues. We went there with our truck and we had our radio with us to contact the Base. We didn't tell anybody not [even] my sergeant that we were invited. When we arrived there, we turned off the radio. [The plan was] to go eat over there for a couple of hours. When we came back, we heard that a Quick Reaction Force was looking for us. It was very nice to be there with his family to see his wife and his children, to have dinner there, to see what they ate. I was actually peppers and cow's stomach. It was hard, the stomach and the rest of it, but they cooked it very good, the pepper. You did not taste that it was hard – the pepper or the stomach. They prepared it especially for us. With slivovic, so we drank a lot, with bread, so it was just very simple, but it was just good. A good feeling that we were

accepted by them. He told us that we were as a group accepted by the locals that they are proud that we will be there for them at that time [hour of need].

2.3.3.4. War Cruelty

Just months after the genocide David Rodhe, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, wrote in an article that “four Dutch soldiers [...] say they hated some of the Muslim men they were supposed to be protecting” (Rhode 1995: 1). This statement taken out of the context sounds confusing at best. However after recording a number of UN peacekeepers’ accounts of various types of behavior they witnessed, I came to understand what Rodhe’s interviewees might have been referring to. Rene Scholing (Narrator 13) and Marcel de Boer (Narrator 14) remember one such instance when UN peacekeepers witnessed Bosniak children being exposed to extreme cruelty by a few Bosniak men:

We had to guard the garbage truck. They told me: “You drive very close behind the truck and when somebody jumps in the back you honk and then it will stop, because it’s very dangerous to be in the back of the garbage truck.” And I said: “OK.” So, we were just outside the Potočari and what do you know one little boy jumped in the truck so I hit the horn. The truck stopped and there was a big man coming out with a big stick and he started to beat him. I thought to myself: “My God he will beat him to death”. The boy could not get out. He was beating him with a wrench or something. He was some kind of local police with [arm bands on] the sleeves. He hit the boy so hard, that he fell and then ran away, tripped and fell into barbwire. He was all bleeding up and suddenly he was gone. I said: “No matter what, I won’t honk the horn again when somebody jumps in.” Because it’s more dangerous to honk, and [have the person] be beaten by these men, than it is to be [riding] in the back of the truck.



Photograph 41 UN Garbage truck (Photo courtesy of Henry van Der Belt, January - July 1995, Srebrenica UN Safe Area)

When we arrived at the garbage dump I could not believe my eyes. There were at least 200 women and children and men standing there waiting for the garbage truck. This thing backed up just over the side and all these people were under the garbage truck. The garbage truck opened up and a shower of garbage pouring down as the people jumped in and attacked the garbage. There were women running with the garbage, men behind them with stick saying: "Give me back, that's mine!"



Photograph 42 The "shower" of garbage (Photo courtesy of Henry van Der Belt, January - July 1995, Srebrenica UN Safe Area)

Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) honest statement was: “I always tried, tried, to look at them as humans but it didn’t always work.”

Yeah, it was horrible. I just see the garbage trooper drive through the town. It was steered by the local drivers. And behind drove the UNPROFOR truck to make sure no children would jump in the driving truck. They had a porto so when a child jumped in. Hello, there is a child in the back! But he trough that he is going to slow. He pulled a stick and he smacked the child out of the garbage truck. That kid was so scared that he ran into a barb wire. He never made that call again. He was flabbergasted what has happened. They drove through the garbage disposal and there people digging in, some waiting, others eating; fighting for the peace of bread. Later on came an order all bread what you take, there was a fine if you throw away. Because people were getting hurt at the garbage. It was beyond imagination. The first weeks you don't think about people. But I know the driver who drove behind those garbage trucks. On the garbage hills there stood police, local mafia, strong men, They regulated things. You know the human, normal behavior goes away. It's just about surviving. Everything else, it doesn't matter how you smell, how you look, it doesn't matter. You go back to basics. People are animals. But when you see that every day. It's too much. You shut down. You cannot cope with it. I always tried, tried, to look at them as humans. Always tried. But it didn't always work especially when I saw what was happening at the garbage.



Photograph 43 Local people fighting for the UN garbage (Photo courtesy of Henry van Der Belt, January - July 1995, Srebrenica UN Safe Area)

Later on you realize they were fighting for their lives, but at that moment you are just disgusted.

The narratives above depict the dire circumstances Safe Area people found themselves in. People can be raised and taught great morals and values, but if circumstances arise those values can be cast off very likely. This is especially for the people who have been exposed to very dehumanizing events.

2.3.3.5. UN Peacekeepers in the Crossfire

Throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, UN peacekeepers from various countries were persistently attacked. Thus, most lived in constant fear of snipers, and watched comrades suffer or die (Olsson, 1996, Langholtz, 1998: 141). Srebrenica UN Safe Area was no different. On occasion, the VRS shot and injured first the Canadian and later Dutch UN peacekeepers. Mujo Buhic (Narrator 22) remembers how two UN peacekeepers were injured in 1994.

I knew all the soldiers down there, almost all. There were moments when some of them were injured and I went to take them from the front line, so we were in contact. I knew all the soldiers down there, almost all. There were moments when some of them were injured and I went to take them from the front line, so we were in contact. Two soldiers were injured. Serbs shot them, in 1994 I think. Two helicopters landed and people went away. I came five meters away from them, I didn't dare come closer, I don't speak English. One had an 84 [rifle]. Over 30 people went with me to take out these two soldiers. I led them. They crossed the line nearby. They couldn't get out; one was shot in the arm, the other in the leg. There was fear in those soldiers. As we were returning, they all went down on the ground when there was shooting at the front lines, (bullets) were flying around, and there was fear in them. Maybe they didn't see that much of this war. We were here the entire time up to 1995, 300 meters away from the front line. And I lived here all the time. I got used to shooting! They are shooting up there, I think to myself it's a sniper, and you just run down to the creek to hide. I was here the whole time, with my mother, with my mates, my colleagues. And the contact was like, there is contact, you talk, wave your hands, explain. He to me,

me to him: "What is your name?" when they come out. When they came out, they used to come around, there were patrols too. They were young, 18 years old. They were children. They were young, but you get used to everything and then everything becomes clear to you.

Ultimately, two DUTCHBAT III peacekeepers were killed. The first in Simin Han and the second, Raviv van Renssen, in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area. The later event happened on the day VRS entered the Safe Area more specifically on 8 July 1995. Van Renssen was obeying the orders to abandon the OPs – allowing the VRS clear entry to the Safe Area. He was killed by a Bosniak man who threw a grenade at the APC he was driving. All the UN peacekeepers were deeply affected by van Renssen's death. The fact that he was killed by a Bosniak man left the UN peacekeepers baffled and confused. Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) explains:

The day Raviv died, it was a black day for us. I didn't know him personally, but [I thought] it could have been me. That day I felt anger. But just that day. Later on I understood. I told myself: "God damn it, fuck! What's happening now? Now we are fighting, but against who? Who must we fight? We had nothing. Bosnian army knew we had nothing. Bosnian army had also nothing. It was a split second, no longer than one, two hours [that I had these thoughts]. Personally, yes, I was shocked, but then I just put myself in others' situation. I thought, if I was a man here, with my family here, sitting here for a few years in this prison with nothing, nothing, nothing. UNPROFOR comes, Javier or Morillon saying: "We'll protect you, we'll protect you." Then you see an APC pull back without firing one shot. I would stop them, too, I think. I am not saying I would throw a grenade, but I would probably step into the APC and drove it myself. I would tell the guy: "You [Raviv van Renssen], go, I will do it myself." Probably. I am not sure, because I don't know. Better question for someone who was near to Raviv. Some people were affected by [the murder of Raviv van Renssen], but mostly not.

The narratives above represent the dismal, life-death circumstances the peacekeepers were exposed to. When Raviv van Renssen was killed by a Bosniak man many Dutch peacekeepers were left perplexed. The circumstances in which the relationships were

exposed to tested individuals' deepest emotions. Unfortunately, events that followed got even worse.

2.3.3.6. Men and the Enclave's Final Days

Major assault on Srebrenica began on July 9, 1995. At this time, some of the men (i.e. hairdresser, Mehmedalija Ustić (Narrator 1) began leaving the Safe Area. On July 11, 1995, when the Bosnian Serb Commander General Mladić, walked into the UN Safe Area Srebrenica, majority of the male population was gone. Some 80 percent of all Bosniak men (some 15,000) have gone to the woods in an attempt to reach the Bosniak-held territory on foot. Those men were aware that the UN peacekeepers will not be able to protect them. They knew the only truly safe area that was 110 km (approximately 70 miles) away – on the Bosniak-held territory. So, they began the long march through the VRS-controlled territory. The only people who remained in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica were Bosniak women, male and female children and male and female elderly people – approximately 30,000 thousand in all. There were some men – a few hundred - who did not flee to the woods but rather remained in and around UN compound for various reasons. These were: some current and past local employees of DUTCHBAT or other humanitarian aid agencies and their family members, men with type of injuries that prevented them from walking in mountainous terrain for long periods of time, men who believed the UN will protect them, men who refused to leave their families, etc. These men were mixed in with the rest of the local population who sought protection in and outside the DUTCHBAT base. Those who came first were placed inside the compound, which soon became too full to admit any more people. Thus, the rest sat on the road in front of the UN Potočari compound. The following section will tell us more about the Bosniak men and their relationship with the UN peacekeepers during those final days of the UN Safe Area Srebrenica.

The first narrative is by a man, Mujo Buhić (Narrator 22), who fled the Safe Area and reached the Bosniak-held territory after eight months. He recounted the reasons for his decision and gave a detailed account of his epic journey:

I realized something needs to be done or else we'll not survive. So I came to a decision. We [a small group of four Bosniak men] sat down and came to a decision: Žepa, after Žepa we will continue on, slowly... I did not communicate with anybody else except with them [for six months]. I had almost forgotten how to speak. Once we crossed Drina [border between BiH and Serbia], I so badly wanted to hear people converse; to know nothing has changed. [At one point], I started to freeze, because we fell into a creek, I don't know where we were going, I can't explain; only God could see us. We made fire. There was snow, 1995. It was chaos. Three guys, who were my mates, told me they removed my clothes and rubbed me with snow, so that I could come to my senses. I came to the point of freezing. There was no food left; we broke into vacation homes (cottages) to find flour; we took a whole bucket. We made a fire with pine cones and baked bread. We coped somehow - there was no other way. I suffered; I don't know...I could write a book about that trip and what I went through. I can't focus now; I can't believe that I went through all that, that I'm still alive. We went across Serbia, [Kosovo and made it] to Macedonia [where I was reunited with my wife and children]; from Macedonia we took a plane to Sarajevo, BiH. When we landed at the airport [in Sarajevo], there was nothing, everything was destroyed, it was chaotic. That was in early 1996, immediately after the war. There was not a living soul in Sarajevo; there was nobody [at the airport] when we landed. My mother was [living as an IDP] in Tuzla. We went to my mother's icy room, 3x2 square meters; there were five of us there. So later I went to Sarajevo. I was the first returnee to come live in Srebrenica. After the first burial [of genocide victims] in 2002, I returned home along with one of the mates. When I was building this [the house], I didn't see a loaf of bread for seven days. After that more people started to return to their homes. There were more women, and they cooked. My wife came later. It was difficult to go through all that, but they blamed [the DUTCHBAT] for some things, maybe there is blame, I can't explain. Perhaps my mother could have explained it better. I can't figure it out. By the way, I wouldn't have surrendered, but the others [did]. I had gone through the woods. I was knowledgeable enough to realize what would happen if I got captured. I went through the woods thinking, I will see how far I can get.

The following narrative is by Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) who gives a detailed account of what happened to the men who remained in the Safe Area. He talks

about how he feels about these men, about participating in separating men from their families and what his thoughts were through this entire ordeal.

Bosnian army and the people who were civilian military here knew we could not protect them. That's the reason why all the men and boys fled from the enclave. Because I am sure if they thought they were safe with us, they would come to us. They took a chance, they took a chance by sending the women and children in the hope that women and children could be safe and they run for it. But, there were a few men who did not listen to that order and went to Potočari. There I think 99% of them died. From the thousands of men and boys who run for it 30 or 40% survived. And that's why I am ashamed. Because people, who searched for shelter that we had - still, after all this time, still had confidence in UNPROFOR. After all this time they took the chance to not walk [to the Bosniak territory] but went to UNPROFOR. They knew we could not protect them. But I had more confidence in the UN than the people here. [...] Bravo compound was many times hit with direct hits. Lots of wounded, killed people there. Panic there. They got ordered to go to Potočari. Ooooo in between the refugees. Pick up everything you can. The trucks were loaded, people were hanging off of the lorries, babies were pushed between fuel tanks and water, just to Potočari, to safety. Then I think 2 or 3 airplanes came over, I heard them, but they did not hit a tank. In the meantime, all those guys in the former OP, they were in Bratunac at the school, they were taken hostage. There were about 30 or 36 UNPROFOR soldiers there. Ooooo, it was like a flood of people coming to Potočari. Mostly women, old men, you know, carrying blankets. All going to Potočari.

[...]I was later on because all the people in the lorries they get to the compound. They were already in. Later on, the compound, not the compound but the garage was getting full. [He tears a piece of paper and goes on explaining.] All the people came through main entrance, lorries here, people, sick people, wounded people were there, labor place was here and here all the other people get, out of sight, inside the building. Serbs called you must be neutral. We won't allow you to have people on the compound, I heard someone [fellow UN peacekeeper] who said: "Fuck them, get in as many as possible." But it was too provocative to do it that way - in sight of the Serbs - so they cut a hole in the fence here. Here was a line of DUTCHBAT soldiers and in the beginning they let everyone through. They said it was getting full; there were no toilets nor showers. Fights were breaking out. Many guns were discarded

here [by the locals]. Those people were scared that Serbs would come and check them so they threw grenades and pistols over the wall. Then they said no more man, just women and children on the compound. Because they were afraid that some men would attack Serbs from that direction, which would trigger a reaction. It was full and getting fuller. 30 - 45 degrees. No power and so no water supply. We had water from distillation process. Very little water. Than they were ordered just women, no old people, women and children. Yeah (cries). At the end of the day you were separating mothers from babies (cries). But you had to choose, you didn't want to choose, sometime you get someone through but it's not a choice you want to make. That I am ashamed off. But I could not do anything else. [...] And I saw a man and a wife saying good-bye to each other. And it was such kind of good-bye that we looked at each other and we said to each other: That's a good-bye forever. I don't know what is going to happen here. But he is leaving and he just went and he just went and she was in tears. And she went till there and he walked away. And probably through the gate or whatever. If you want to go, you go. You left; they [UN peacekeepers] won't stop you.

And that was the first time that I thought: What a few man are here. I looked around, almost no men. I cannot tell you how many I saw. Because it was a mass of people but it was so little men.

[...] So, I walked to my chief on watch. I said. Now is there news, what must we do? When Chetniks are coming now, in 5 minutes. We have still the old manifest of firing, you know, instructions of violence. Can we ripe it apart, if they start shooting on the people? Do we shoot back? What was the order? What am I doing here? Just walking around? Oooo? How can we protect them? I still was waiting on the answer. Nobody knew, nobody knew what to do, anything. Karremans I didn't see. Yeah, Karremans ... I expected him to just walk through. Although you are maybe sick, although you are scared or whatever. Everyone was scared.

Just walk to the people, talk to the people, and tell them that you are trying to do what you can. Tell them we have been abandoned by everyone (cries). Just tell them that the people know. Now nobody knows. [Bosniak] people hit themselves with rocks; people were hanging themselves, fighting.... There was nothing ... fear what is going to happen to us now... And we were standing here on this side just walking between all those people. Everything was full here. Everything was full here - here Dutch

soldiers, there Dutch soldiers, on the road above Dutch soldiers with APS and nobody got orders what to do when they now are coming at this moment.

[...] It was over and I was at the compound with the refugees and trying to help there as best as I could. But the water was ... there was no water anymore. No food. From the last food supplies, from cans we made kind of soup. And we... yeah ... we put it out. Doctor said there are going to be disease, people are sick. We don't have fresh water. Urinating fesses everywhere. This is not a situation, this won't last a week or so.

Those days that I saw Karremans again on the compound; a beaten, beaten man. He had an appointment in Bratunac with some refugees who stayed. All that I know now, I have seen on television. There has been some agreements with people of Srebrenica, if they disarm themselves ... all this kind of stuff, UNPROFOR must arrange busses, transport.

I even don't know anymore how many days we were in that situation. I think it's 3. But I really don't know. From my feeling it's much longer, but it can't be much longer. One morning I woke from noise. Trucks and lorries and I haven't heard that in months. So I looked: Our busses? So many busses! All the busses from Bosnia and Serbia. What is that, what is that? How is it possible that UN in such a short term so many busses? First I was happy. I was glad that people get to a safe place, to another place. Not here that they went away. Then I realized - Serb busses. There stood some APCs. So people started walking, not on order. I didn't hear an order. But I must be honest I was here.

People were walking here, people were walking there, people were walking here. So chief said: "Not all entrances, we must make a line." So they made table, with red-white tape. You must go that way otherwise people walked there and there, there. You lost all visibility. And I stood there by. And I helped them. There was an old lady with a mattress on her back. I took the mattress and I took her by her arm. She went to the bus. I walked back to see, if I help anymore. Crazy, ha? You just ... I didn't know it. I just helped an old lady.

But later on a man was separated there, so I ... we walked to the chief. Hey, watch it there are men who are going to be separated. What is going to happen? And it was what I heard a screaming on walk ramp. The Serbs wanted to know who they were and what they have done in the war. And it was a logical explanation for me. Having stayed at the OPs, I knew BiH troops sometimes went out of the enclave and were

killing outside of the enclave and then would go back. It was war and it wasn't just so strange to me that they would question it. They told us they will be treated like prisoners of war; that they would be treated good, but that they will be questioned.

Two officers from DUTCHBAT got into the fight with each other. Because one of them said you must shot the Gate. It's not good what's happening there. You must shot the Gate. And the other one said, ok, then we shoot it and then? Now there are busses here. They must go. We cannot keep them here for five days. They are leaving to Kladanj ... a better place, you know. And he said: "I am not working on separation of person! I am not willing to cooperate with the Serbs."

And he walked to a Serb and started to call him names. He said Nazi to a Serb and I think it's the worse you can call a Serb. The Serb, he said, that people suffered through the Nazi regime. And he said Nazi, Nazi! That Serb was grabbed him and the other pulled them apart. He doesn't know what he is saying, he is Jewish. It was strange, strange happening there. It is all reported.

Another officer walked to the white house where all the passports were lying and other stuff and reported what was happening there. He walked back and saw dead bodies lying there. He made picture of it. I heard him talk about it that he made pictures about it. The photo roll that has disappeared. [...] I felt with the men and hoped. Yeah, war, you know, I heard shooting in the distance and I thought ARBiH is kicking their ass up there. Because all the men were gone and they are fighting. They are not here, they left the women here in our care, in our safety and they are heroes and they are fighting there. But they were not fighting, they tried to run for it. But that you heard later on. At that time I could not imagine what. I just heard gunshots. They are fighting; they are still fighting. We could not fight, but they fight. And then you sit there ... it's quiet ...

Among the men, who remained in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica were a number of local employees of DUTCHBAT or other humanitarian aid agencies and their family members. But not all sought protection in the DUTCHBAT compound. There were a number of exceptions. Mehmedalija Ustić (Narrator 29), the hairdresser decided that by going through the woods he would have a higher chance of survival. Mr. Ustić remembered different elements that contributed to his ultimate choice.

I expected it. I expected 1995. Somewhere in the back of my brain, there was the idea that this could happen. Because we had identical situation in 1993, and when Philip Morillon arrived and calmed the situation down a bit, and with the arrival of international UN troops. But I never felt the safety that somebody among them would protect me. That is why I made the decision – because I had that ID card and all – I could have come and report in. But I decided that when there is trouble, I wouldn't go down. I never gave up the right to defend myself. Never. Because I was active with some other people in organization here in Srebrenica since 1991, we knew what would happen. Very few people knew what was going to come. We got ourselves organized, and I was there, the Patriotic League, I say, we organized ourselves. That was given different names later. When I felt, when I saw what was going on in the field, that some checkpoints were retreated, that the borderlines of the demilitarized zone are becoming narrower, that it was decreasing, that it is already concentrating to a small area, I decided not to go to work anymore. It was Friday. And we left on Tuesday, July 11. The Chetniks were already coming. I stopped going (to work) on Friday. I told some of my colleagues. People, you don't have any safety there. You will not be protected. Because I was aware. I have a weapon, and the one chasing me has a weapon, so whatever happens, it happens. If I survive, I survive. I didn't want to surrender, because everyone who did ended up in the ground.

Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10), despite being ordered to go to the bunker, chose to help the local population. He chose to defy a military order. The following excerpt is Dr. Kremer recollection of how he expressed to the command that we will not comply with the order, and the rationale behind it.

I remember that also that one of the last days, and I think it was the 10th of July there were heavy attacks with rockets on the city of Srebrenica, a lot of people got wounded and they were all put in a truck, trucks, cars and they were brought to Potočari and when all the fugitives from the 5000 went into the factory and these wounded as well they were put in the special room in the factory and on the same day a grenade landed on the territory of the compound and we got the order from the Franken that we had to put our helmet on and our vest on and get into the bunker and there were a lot of wounded people who were not treated and I said I have to go to the part of the factory where the wounded are and do my job and then I got one of my captains from

the hospital groups; “You get now, now, I am giving you a military order to put your helmet on, your vest on, and get into the bunker!” And then I said: “I have my own responsibility and I am going to work.” and then I went to 40 people with broken legs, with bleeding, all kinds of stuff and there was nobody from the medical team, from two teams – we had a double team there – and there was nobody from the medical team that helped me. I was there with one of the commandos who helped me with carrying stuff, but he couldn’t do anything because he was not a nurse and a few local nurses; there was doctor Daniel O’Brien – they said; “He he has to do it, he if from MSF.” And I said: “No, he is not a surgeon, he is not a trauma specialist, he is an internal doctor, he knows about diarrhea, but not trauma wounds, so I am going there. “Stuff up!” And I did plastering an open fracture, plastering a closed fracture; there was a guy with a bandage, very tight, there was no circulation in the arm anymore, because they thought that he had an arterial bleeding and I removed that so I just could save the arm by then but it was open and broken and I had to plaster it by than; two ladies with enormous buttocks wounds, flesh wounds that I had to treat with iodine solution and gauzes and everything – there was a lot of work and being alone there except for the commando that helped me, I felt very ashamed of my own country, because of this, and I still do and I think that such an order, and I was for a week in the building watching with the commandos actions of the Sibs and every grenade they shoot, it was a hit; every boom you saw, we had those spectacles and we saw that once the Serbs put the fingers into the ears there was a shot coming and they said : OK coming down and there was another house going buuuum” So I knew that those rocket on the compound was there to keep us inside - not to harm us or to attack us - but to frighten us off. And I said, again, to these people: “They are not shooting us, they are not attacking us, and they are frightening us because they want us to stay inside. I can do, we can do what we are here for – to help these people because you know I have an oath on medical things on health and wounded people and it doesn’t matter if they are Bosnian or Dutch, nigro or Chinese – everymen is the same and I have the duty to help people – weather is war or people over there, so I cannot go to the bunker, put my helmet on and my vest on and do nothing and that was one of the most difficult decision I had to make, because I had to deny a order from above and I think that my what people of Srebrenica think of me had a great deal came by that happening, because I was the only one that helped them for 24 hours, than the Serbs came in and the shooting was over and we were surrounded and they were able to get

out of the bunker and help and then we did our medical job again, but there was one day that the Dutch medical staff and workers were in the bunker with the helmet on and the vest and didn't do anything. So, I don't know.

In war-time situations obedience of orders is instrumental. In any military setting, soldiers are taught that disobeying military orders jeopardizes the lives of all. Disobedience of an order is also a very serious offence. However, Dr. Kremer believed the order commanding him to stay put in the midst of such ominous need, was ill-conceived and morally wrong. He was one of the few that mustered the courage to object to the military order in those difficult days.

2.3.3.7. In Sum

In summary, the subchapter exploring the relationship between UN peacekeepers and Bosniak men shows the relationships were less frequent and tainted by stereotypes, false perceptions and mistrust of one type or another. Bosniak men felt trapped, powerless, and anxious – anticipating the worst. They expressed great confusion and had hard time grasping how was it possible the UN came to Srebrenica, disarmed them, declare the area safe, while at the same time not providing adequate protection or food. Despite the ceasefire agreement, the VRS continued their assault on the UN Safe Area – wounding the Bosniaks and on some occasions even the UN peacekeepers. The UN peacekeepers thought that their mere presence will deter the attacks. They were wrong. In part the problem was that the mandate allowed the peacekeepers to use force only in self-defense and not to defend or protect civilians. Regardless, the UN did not take the steps to protect the population once it was clearly established the Safe Area was not really safe. The UN peacekeepers simply refused to admit the ongoing threat to the local population. Thus, the Bosniak men quickly realized the UN peacekeepers could not and ultimately did not) prevent or stop an attack. They knew they will not protect them. The UN peacekeepers came thinking they will be dealing with a neutral, almost technical military response. They didn't want to make any political or moral judgment, although roles of victims and aggressor were clear. This aggravated the Bosniak men further. It can be concluded that mistrust and the UN mandate, prevented the UN peacekeepers to get too close to the male

population. The DUTCHBAT command stressed the need for impartial intervention and technocratic execution of the mandate, no matter what the situation on the ground was. The Bosniak men that defended their city for over a year, and took in thousands of IDPs. They have seen the Canadian peacekeepers come and leave. By the time the Dutch peacekeepers arrived in February 1994, the situation was already unbearable and starting to worsen. Each Dutch peacekeeper would be deployed on average six months (including commanders). So the Bosniak men watched as the UN peacekeepers rotated and left only to be replaced by healthy, well-fed men, who were focused to fulfilling their mandate in a very technical manner. The analysis of the narratives showed that the vast majority did not maintain good relations. Adverse dynamic also contributed to the further deterioration of the relations – confrontations, thefts, and dangerous stereotypes arose. For the large part the relationships lacked the key building block of any relationships – trust.

Yet, regardless, in one case of Gerry Kremer, we can conclude that he was able to build a very genuine relationship with Bosniak doctor Ilijaš Pilav as well as Abdulah Purković (more about continuation of these relationships in Chapter Three). A few relationships formed between the men who worked for the DUTCHBAT (i.e. Mehmedalija Ustić, narrator 29) and other humanitarian aid agencies (i.e. Abdulah Purković, narrator 26). Also, moral counselor Bart Hetebrij (Narrator 8) spoke of a Bosniak interpreter who he got close to. However, we can conclude that their relationships occurred because of the specific profession of the UN peacekeepers, they open-mindedness, maturity, seniority and common workplace – the UN compound or Srebrenica Hospital. Other members of DUTCHBAT who were able to developed relationships with members of Bosniak population included the Dutch medical staff (medics) who attended to wounded Bosniak, and DUTCHBAT peacekeepers who kept vigil so that Bosniak farmers could harvest the crops and, on occasion, provided gas for their farming equipment. These relationships, although positive, were rather brief and had to do with the overall food security and humanitarian matters. Certain, empathic, UN peacekeepers admired men's ingenuity for making water engines (Frank van Waart, narrator 17) but never reached out to them. Rene Scholing (Narrator 13) helped out an industrious Bosnian man by bringing extra mechanical parts from the Netherlands so that the bakery could keep operating – providing bread for the Bosniak and the UN peacekeepers alike. On rare

occasions (i.e. story of the hairdresser Mehmedalija Ustić, narrator 29) the UN peacekeepers were invited to the Bosniaks' homes. Whether this was pure generosity in exchange for the goods remains unclear.

There is clear evidence that a number of the UN peacekeepers despised and disliked the Bosniak men - especially those who represented the local militia. They saw them as 'local mafia', witnesses beating of the children, etc. Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) described an incident at the garbage field and stating that he "always tried, tried, to look at them as humans. Always tried. But it didn't always work." During the final days of the enclave, the Bosniak men requested the release of the sequestered weapons so they could defend themselves, but the DUTCHBT refused. It can be concluded that a higher value of life was ascribed to lives of peacekeepers over the lives of the Bosniak men. Ultimately the VRS spread all of the UN peacekeepers, while killing over 8,300 Bosniaks, mostly men.

CHAPTER THREE: The End of UN Safe Area Srebrenica and the Beginning of New Relationships

3.1 The Relationships between the Dutch Peacekeepers and the Srebrenica people continuing post-1990s

A number of UN peacekeepers and Bosniaks have come together and rekindled their relationships with the local people they befriended while in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica. This is where a surprising and unforeseen element of the research came to light – although asked to focus on their recollection of the UN Safe Area period, the vast majority of the narrators felt the need to speak of relationships that have persisted or emerged in recent years. Given that oral history often tells us as much about the present as the past, changes in the way that narrators negotiate and view their own participation in such histories also reflect transformations in respective societies. This comes as no surprise as “memories contain and are contained by a narrative which orders, links and makes sense of the past, the present and the future” (Chamberlain, Thompson 1998: xiii).

“In and oral history it is what gives the conversation its dynamics, creating the particular dialogue and the dialectical tension between past experience and present meaning. This dialectic allows us to build upon the past and make it relevant for today and for the future” (Grele, 1991: 248).

In October 2007, the first group of 12 UN soldiers returned to Srebrenica where they visited the Memorial for the Srebrenica massacre, paying tribute to the victims. The same time, a group of relatives opposed their act, calling it atonement in an open dialogue. In part, the returns are fueled by the growing number of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among the veteran UN peacekeepers - most of them, regardless of time of their deployment, are still troubled by the memories of the time

spent in Srebrenica UN Safe Area, regardless of time of their deployment. Many of the UN peacekeepers felt responsible to protect the Bosniak – which carried an even greater moral ground, because the Canadians and later Dutch UN peacekeepers directly participated in disarming Srebrenica's local defenders – members of the ARBiH. In a nutshell, the Dutch peacekeepers were there to protect the Bosniak civilians who counted on them. Because the UN peacekeepers failed, many felt responsible that they could/did not do more.

In the Chapter 2.3.1.7. I wrote of Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) experience of losing a child. Henry says: *But it never left my mind, never, never. When I returned from Bosnia and my Unit in the Netherlands I moved heaven and earth I wanted medical training. Otherwise, I would quit the army. So I did have medical training. So that would never happen to me again; that I would not know what to do. Never, never, never. Later on the doctor explained to me what probably happened. The little girls had “shelebust fracture.” I don’t know the word in English. There’s crack here and your brain starts to swell up and begins pushing on the nerves responsible for breathing regulation. That’s why she only took a breath four times in a minute, and later three times in a minute and so on. Even if she got to the hospital in one minute, the doctor said: “There would still be nothing you could do for her.” So that was some bit of consolation, but I never forget the face of the father. Never. You know you are soldier, but I am a human, too. I am a human human. I like people, you know.*

Not only were the UN peacekeepers troubled by the events that occurred in July 1995. They were also troubled about events that unfolded during the Safe Area period – which explains why some peacekeepers, regardless of time of their deployment, feel the need to return to Srebrenica, search for survivors, and suffer from PTSD.

In chapter 2.3.1.5., I wrote of Serge Jenssen (Narrator 19) and an internally displaced girl Azra who wrote letters to him. She is now all grown up and works at the radio station in Srebrenik. Serge states: *I didn’t think I will see her again. But after these things in 1995 happened, I was thinking a lot about the locals, about how they are doing, because we had good contact with them. In 2008 I wanted to find Azra again and I went to Bosnia again and I went to Snaga Žena, they help some trauma women,*

and they gave me the address of Azra and I met her again and she was flabbergasted that I was looking for her after all these years. I have found her and spoke and in 2010 I went with her to the memorial to the grave of her father. Here she is looking at her own picture. It's special. This was in 2010 at the graveyard and I found this girl again. I stayed at her mother's place in Bratunac for two days in 2008.



Photograph 44 Serge Jenssen (Narrator 19) and Azra in 2008 looking at the war-time photos (Photo courtesy of Serge Jenssen, 2008, Srebrenik)

The other boy; I want to look for him and I asked some people, but I think he is dead. I am sure he is dead. I don't want to look further for him. It's a bit difficult because, I think he is dead. Nobody knows where he is.

I sat down with Nirha Efendić (Narrator 16) on a sunny day in July 2010. We were surrounded by a beautiful flower garden her mother had planted in front of their Potočari family home. A few hundred meters from us, a convoy of trucks from ICMP's office in Tuzla, which oversaw the identification of the mortal remains of genocide victims, had just arrived. It was two days before the mass burial, and the coffins (*tabuts*) of some 600 genocide victims had finally arrived at the Potočari Memorial Centre. A few years back, Nirha's father was laid to rest in a similar mass burial, while her brother's remains continue to go undiscovered. This is what she said:

I think that they [UN peacekeepers present during the fall of the Safe Area] must first face themselves, and later look in the eyes of the bones, which are arriving. It's absurd to say it that way, but they have to face the tabuts and only then face us, the survivors, later. I have no right, in any which way, to forgive someone. No. Neither, I

carry within me a feeling of revenge, because it would finish me off. No. I simply try to find peace within myself, and with my past. I wish, I could tell them: "Face all of that, and leave me alone." I don't have this type of feeling towards the Chetniks. My feelings towards to the Chetniks are consistently the same: "They murdered, murdered, murdered, and murdered. I think their psyche is absolutely different. A psyche of one Chetnik and a psyche of a Dutch soldier [is absolutely different]. I think that they cannot face [they actions] in the same way. It is totally up to them. My feelings towards them? You know, when you expect something from someone, and it doesn't happen – it is a painful disappointment. [With the Serbs] there was no disappoint. Here [with the UN peacekeepers] you still have that feeling of disappointment. I mean, [disappointment in] the leadership, not in each individual soldier. Because obeying their superiors was a prerequisite. They had to do it. However, what they didn't have to do is celebrate.

In the above narrative, we can clearly see the conflicting emotions many of the Bosniak survivors are confronted with. What I did notice is that the more UN peacekeepers visit Srebrenica, walk the Peace March and interact with the Bosniak survivors post 1990s, the clearer distinction between the DUTCHBAT command and the DUTCH UN peacekeepers is becoming.

Dželaludina Pašić (Narrator 23): Even today, I still don' know what happened to my father. Unfortunately, every July 11 is difficult. No one can understand it until they came to Potočari and see it. They also cannot understand the pain; what it means to lose a father like that; losing a human being that meant so much to you. This loss follows you around everywhere, at any given moment. When you finish elementary school, you do not have a father. When you finish high school, and go to graduation, you do not have him; there is always just the mother. When I remember these events, I cannot help but not to cry. I am just a person. It's difficult. But still I found strength to return to Srebrenica. But today, I am a mother of an infant who will not have a grandfather; will not know what grandpa's love is. I hope that my Lamijica will have a better life. Better than I did. And all the other children, too. But some things are missing; missing a lot. But we have to persevere. I hope and pray to dear God, that something like this doesn't happen to anyone, regardless of the nationality. I think no

child should be deprived of grandfather's, and uncle's love like that. No one deserves this.

The Bosniak survivors like Dželaludina Pašić (Narrator 23) are most puzzled. Her father was locally employed by the DUTCHBAT. In the final days, the DUTCHBAT command chose to protect only approximately 25 Bosniak that worked for them or who were members of their families. Despite finding refuge in the UN Compound, these individuals like Dželaludina's father, were told to leave the UN compound without any protection and were eventually executed by the VRS. In 2011, the Dutch government was found responsible for the deaths of three Bosniak – father and brother of Hasan Nuhanović, UNMO interpreter, and Rizo Musafić, electrician employed by the DUTCHBAT, who found themselves in the same situation as Dželaludina's father. In September 2013, the Supreme Court upheld the ruling, making it subject to further restitution lawsuits.

In the following few pages I will describe a truly unique and deeply profound relationship between Mujo Buhic (Narrator 22) and Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1), beginning with the very first time they saw each other in 2007. Mujo recalled:

I met Henry on the fence, in patrol. On one occasion we were in contact, so I got to know Henry well. Those who were there, you know, I used to see them when we went to Žepa but we didn't have that much contact. The Dutch built that camp next to Jadar, the small houses for as many as five thousand refugees. I don't know where these houses were taken; they [Serb soldiers] took them when they came in. So these houses were taken away. Where and how I don't know, but the Dutch used to work there too, building these houses and settling the people. That was a construction unit that built those little houses. Those were wooden houses that can be assembled.

A lot of people where there; 40.000, I think. When Konjević Polje, Cerska and that area fell, the schools in Srebrenica were full of people. There were 15-30 in one classroom, it was a chaos. There were fires burning outside the schools. People would heat water, cook, bake bread. I don't know how to explain. Then it would rain and everything vanished. When I saw Henry, Adje [Anakotta I remembered them.] I remember people's faces really well; people's names only here and there, if I'm interested in someone I might remember their name. But I can remember a face for a

really long, long, long time. I remember Adje well, and some of these soldiers who were here, but I didn't see them in Holland. I was in Holland once. I went for two or three months. I worked. But I didn't see anyone. So, one evening I saw Henry and his blond wife in the battery factory, when those guys came [back in 2007]. I remembered Henry, Adje, the doctor [Kremer] and some other guys who came here, really well. They were extremely correct people; I don't know what else to say. It would be fair to say, they were not protected well either. My mother was kept in the battery factory too, when Srebrenica fell in 1995. Maybe they were helpless, too? They can describe that moment better. They remember a lot.

Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) spoke of his first encounter with Mujo Buhić (Narrator 22) when he returned to Srebrenica in November 2007:

But I was really scared first 5-10 minutes. Pučo did it very well, because he translated every question. But there were so many questions. So, the anger went down, appease down and there was less tension. But inside that room, when you said a word, every word provoked another question. It was more like a barrage of question. Later on we went outside. Ask me personally, not as a group. Eye to an eye, human to a human, but I can only tell what I did, not what high chiefs did or did not do, did no more and no less. You have to deal with that.



Photograph 45 First face-to-face meeting of Srebrenica genocide survivors and UN peacekeepers in October 2007. Željko-Pučo Danilović, IKV Pax Christi, in the center, interpreting the conversation (Photo courtesy of Henry Van Der Belt, October 2007, Potočari Memorial Centre)

But in that room there was a man. All I saw were just angry faces, people crying, in despair. He stood in the corner. I find this difficult... He was looking at me and smiling. What's this? I didn't understand. He came towards me and hugged me and kissed me. I saw his face, one shining happy face. Pučo was crying he was shocked; women were shocked what was happening there?

But before they could ask any questions, came one woman with red fire in her eyes, she asked me about why didn't I help them, why did I drink with the Serbs, why didn't I kill our commander Karremans. But was something I could not answer. Those type of questions; Why didn't you kill Karremans? Because he is my chief, Karremans. But Mujo had every time his arm around me. And every time she fired a question he ... And that anger turn turned to Mujo and said she said: Why are you acting as if he is your friend? And Mujo said in Bosnian: "He is my friend." And that woman was angry at me and even more at Mujo, and walked away. Nobody expected that of course, that I would get a hug from [a local Bosniak man.]

We stood outside. Everyone was asking me. Who is he Henry? I don't know, I don't know, who he is? He sounds, looks familiar, but I don't know. He looks familiar and the only thing that he said was: "Akulumatore, akulumatore". I was happy, I felt supported, I felt this is the right thing to do, I am not afraid of dying; I am not afraid of pain. But it has to get to a higher level. I will suffer, if it is going to get better. And I suffered, and now it's going better - just the support of one man. If it's just one man, it is ok.

In the meantime very good conversations started and we did make contact with the relatives. The women said: “You may lay flowers at the Memorial Centre.”

Later on that week we went again to Memorial Centre, meeting with the director of the Memorial Centre and his assistant Emra, we talked, and who was coming down the hill. Mujo! Just smiling again, smoking cigarettes. I asked Pučo, to ask Mujo where he was from, but Pučo was busy interpreting. I shook hands with Mujo and I have not seen him [for the rest of that trip.] But he was constantly in my head.

Pučo got the newspapers and we were on the headlines. Also picture of me and Mujo titled “Old friends meet again”. Probably he was my friend, but I didn’t remember. We went on the plane back to Holland. Mostly, I wanted to go back and find Mujo.

Henry continues his memory of his second visit in April 2008:

He was walking on the street, holding a bag of flour in his hand, and one on his head. “Mujo!” I called him. He turned around, he saw me and he hugged me again. O, you are back. He said: Come, come! His son was with him, too. I went to visit Mujo in his house.



Photograph 46 Mujo Buhic (Narrator 22) and Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) in 2008 during Henry's second visit since 1995 (Photo courtesy of Henry van Der Belt, 2008, Srebrenica Municipality)

We sat and drink. He did not let me leave again; I had to sleep in his place. Nothing further but we slept in one bed. I could not get him out. His wife had to sleep on the couch. I slept there and Mujo slept next to me. It was the first time I ever slept with a

man. But it was such a homecoming. When you are so full of pain and shame and all those things, here. And you come somewhere in a house. They don't know me, they don't know me ... He don't know me, Yeah, yeah he probably know me, but how does he know me?

Why, why, why??? I tried to ask him, What did I do to deserve this? He doesn't like to talk about it, but he was probably working in Potočari, outside the gate, where he made small power stations for some houses on the hill. And when we were on patrols we drank coffee in his mother's place. And sometimes I gave him a pack of cigarettes, tobacco. He said you treated me like a human, that's why. But further I don't know, he just said you treated me like a human.

“You treated me like a human” is perhaps the sentence that best describes the power of humanity in difficult chaotic times, and is an integral part of deep relationships. Today, the UN peacekeepers that once expressed the most solidarity with the Bosniak and threatened them with dignity, are welcomed with open arms in Srebrenica.

The second such example is by Dr. Gerry Kremer (Narrator 10). Dr Kremer is fondly remembered by the many Bosniak people I have spoken to over the years. He returns to Srebrenica regularly. He had walked the Peace March (*Marš Mira*) retracing the 110 KM that fleeing Safe Area population, mostly men, took in July 1995 (in the opposite direction). This is how he recalled the greatest honor any Dutch UN peacekeeper could have ever received from Srebrenica survivors:

First time [I did the Peace March] was the best because Dr Ilijaš Pilaf said to me: “Come, we walk together, shoulder to shoulder, in front of the March.” I walked with him together at the beginning of the group. It says a lot about my situation and about my relation with the population and I am very proud of that. So, I don't only have war memories, I have very intense positive feelings for these people because I remember very worm contacts and this is what is for me also a situation where I don't have bad nights or post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS) or whatever. Afterwards, I have been another three times to Former Yugoslavia and two years ago I went to Afghanistan, and I was with Brits in Oman and still I don't have PTSS, I sleep well, because I have a completely different job than other people. And I was a little bit elderly. For the first time when I went to Yugoslavia and I had my surgical training and I can assure you

that the surgical training is also a form of war experience. When I think back, I remember a lot of very nice memories and the shivers and the tears than start to weal up.

Chapter Three covered the testimonies pertaining to the relationship that have continued or started since the genocide of 1995. Interestingly, in few instances, i.e. Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) – Mujo Buhić (Narrator 22) and John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5) – Fazila Efendić (Narrator 27), relationships, which did not exist before 1995, emerged after 2007 when UN peacekeepers began visiting Srebrenica. This in fact should not come as a surprise as “from the view point of contemporary memory studies, remembering is no longer seen as a finitive activity, with an identifiable beginning and end. Rather it is seen as a process that is constantly unfolding, changing and transforming” (Zelizer 1995: 218). The same seems to be true for the relationships.

Conclusion

Intermingling of Memories Matters

When the memories of the two groups intersect and where human relationships take place between individuals of the two groups, memories intermingle. Human relationships are complex. Memories of human relationships are utterly convoluted. Piecing together memories - like a mosaic - adds to clarity of these convoluted relationships. Without intermingling the recollections of the Bosniak local population and the Dutch UN peacekeepers, the history of each group pertaining to the Srebrenica UN Safe Area would be left narrow and thus misleading. By combining recollections of 29 individuals from these two groups present in the UN Safe Area Srebrenica the dissertation shows “different individuals were found to bear different memories, and these many voices and narratives add to the power of a common, complex memory, when they would otherwise have been left divided” (Salvatici 2000: 126). It goes without saying that “it is no longer sufficient to present memory as innocent empirical evidence, but to see it, necessarily, as a multi-authored, textual and contextual event (Chamberlain, Thompson 1998: xiii). By mingling memories from different sides, and contextualizing it, the memory did not only reflect upon itself and its actors, but also came alive “through the perception of others, strengthening both the individual and the collective in their awareness of their own identity” (Salvatici 2000:126). This dissertation is the first piece of oral history research that combined the recollection of both of these two groups. I argue that oral historians that seek truthful representation of the past events ought to intermingle memories of various sides in order to stir away from a strong imposition of a monolithic memory of a particular history.

A Myriad of External and Internal Factors affected the Relationships

The narrative analysis allowed me, as a researcher, to discern patterns of social relations and identify human dimensions that collectively or individually influenced the relationships in the enclave. What were the different factors - including individual and collective attitudes, culturally and socially influenced behavior, actions and interactions - that influenced the relationship between Dutch UN peacekeepers and

the local population in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area? What have recollections of relationships taught us? First, that there were many external factors contributing to the nature of the relationship. Namely, the shortcomings of the mandate, widespread deprivation and restriction regarding contact imposed by the DUTCHBAT command. I argue that the implementation of the UN mandate was not possible. However, the widespread deprivation also had positive effects on building relationships. Some UN peacekeepers feel solidarity with the locals, which are best exemplified by Rene Scholing (Narrator 13), Fazila Efendić (Narrator 27), and Serge Jenssen (Narrator 19) in chapter two. Another example is by Dr Kramer (Narrator 10) who volunteered and served in the Srebrenica Hospital, once he realized that the hospital was in dire need of skilled surgeons. In February 1995, limited number of humanitarian convoys was allowed to enter the UN Safe Area. The Bosniak population as well as the UN peacekeepers were consequently left with insufficient supply of food. As a result, individuals from both two groups suffered from malnutrition, weight loss and related illnesses. In order to survive, they resorted to various forms of barter.

What had contributed to certain individuals stepping outside of the box, help, reach out and bond with members of the opposite group? The analysis shows that individual's past personal history (i.e. Gerry Kremer, narrator 10), including the individual's past history of deployment (i.e. Ramon Timmerman, narrator 19), and level of empathy (i.e. Henry van Der Belt, narrator 1) are just some of the internal factors that played a role in explaining why some UN peacekeepers reached out to the Bosniak individuals and *vice versa*. Another important factor was rank and type of the UN peacekeeper (differently perceived by officers or draftees/recruits/volunteers/medics). Depending on their position, rank, personal characteristics and interest, they developed different types of relationships with the local population of the UN Safe Area.

Plethora of relationships despite various limitations and restrictions

Dissertation's method of inquiry, oral history testimony, provided for a very detailed qualitative description of the relationships formed. The end result is a better understanding of the relationships and how they affected both the UN peacekeepers and local population alike. Analysis of oral narratives shows that some relationships

were initially based on the notions of need, appreciation and admiration (on the side of the locals), and care, help and protection (on the side of the peacekeepers). Yet it was often the case these relationships quickly transformed into a complex interaction based on mutual contempt, as well as feelings of betrayal, frustration, powerlessness, cynicism and discouragement on both sides. In spite of chaos, and uncertainty, a number of relationships were formed because of (1) mutual benefits, which increased chances of survival in a harsh environment, or (2) solidarity and as genuine friendships and collaborations.

In the aftermath of the genocide, the term “betrayal” was often used as the only term to describe the relationship between the UN peacekeepers and local population (either in books such as *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II* by David Rohde, photo exhibitions, i.e. *The Betrayal of Srebrenica: A Commemoration*⁵⁰ by Paula Allen, or documentaries, i.e. *Safe Haven: The United Nations and the Betrayal of Srebrenica*⁵¹ by Ilan Ziv). However, a general analysis of the narratives gathered shows that diverse and wide-ranging types of relationships occurred.

Based on the 29 narratives, patterns of different relationships were discerned and human dimensions that collectively or individually influenced the relationships identified. Because of the nature of the relationships between the UN peacekeepers and the Bosniak men/women/children we can say that that contact between the Dutch peacekeepers and local Bosniak men was the weakest, while the contact with the children was strongest. Peacekeepers felt they could make contact with children more easily; on some occasions they developed deeper relationships. The children and the UN peacekeepers played games, taught each other's languages, and engaged in conversations. The Bosniak children for the most part had fond memories – especially when they were able to establish deeper relationships or so called ‘special friendships’ best exemplified by Saskia Jongma (Narrator 7) and her friend Amir and Serge Janssen (Narrator 19) and his friend Alma in chapter two. To a number of children UN peacekeepers represented a sense of an outside world, where one could get information about things that happened outside the enclave (the Safe Area had no

⁵⁰ <http://www.betrayalofsrebrenicaphotoexhibit.net/> (8.9.2013)

⁵¹ http://icarusfilms.com/cat97/p-s/safe_hav.html(8.9.2013)

electricity which meant no TV; not any kind of news), which is best exemplified by Nirha Efendić (Narrator 16) in chapter two. Many Srebrenica children were left without schools to go. It was that unstructured time, thirst for new knowledge, boredom as well as material and emotional deprivation that made children desire building relationships with the UN peacekeepers. During the last six months of the deployment, the UN peacekeepers used the children as middlemen to exchange various goods such as personal belongings, cigarettes, candy or packaged food for fresh produce and baked goods. Barter seemed to have mutual benefits. I found that both the UN peacekeepers and Bosniak children were eager to interact with one another as both, when together, seemed to feel a sense of normalcy – children, on one hand, because they couldn't really grasp the magnitude of the situation they were in and peacekeepers because they were in a totally foreign environment, had limited language skills and restrictions imposed by 'impartial involvement' stipulation in the mandate. Children also didn't have any substantial demands from the peacekeepers (other, of course, than bonbons).

The analysis of the narratives showed that the vast majority of the UN peacekeepers did not maintain good relations with the Bosniak men as exemplified in the chapter two. Adverse dynamics also contributed to the further deterioration of the relations – confrontations, thefts, and dangerous stereotypes arose. For the large part the relationships lacked the key building block of any relationships – trust. Bosniak men and UN peacekeepers had less frequent interactions; each other's perceptions were tainted by stereotypes and mistrust of one type or another. Bosniak men felt trapped, powerless, and anxious – anticipating the worst. Yet, regardless, in one case of Dr Gerry Kremer, we can conclude that he was able to build a very genuine relationship with Bosniak doctor Ilijaš Pilav, which continued after the 1990s as exemplified in the chapters two and three. A few relationships formed between the men who worked for the DUTCHBAT (i.e. Mehmedalija Ustić, narrator 29) and other humanitarian aid agencies (i.e. Abdulah Purković, narrator 26) and UN peacekeepers. Apart from those, I showed that only the Dutch medical staff (medics) who attended to wounded Bosniaks, and DUTCHBAT peacekeepers who kept vigil so that Bosniak farmers were able to build positive, although rather brief relationships. There is clear evidence that a number of the UN peacekeepers despised and disliked the Bosniak men – especially those who represented the local militia. They saw them as 'local mafia' and

witnesses how they were beating weaker members of their group (i.e. children). Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1) described an incident at the garbage field and stating that he “always tried, tried, to look at them as humans. Always tried. But it didn’t always work.”

Relationship between the UN peacekeepers and the Bosniak women was very restricted and least frequent. A number of Bosniak women had worked in the UN compound, however the DUTCHBAT put in place strict rules as to how the UN peacekeepers were to behave toward the Bosniak women. No conversations were allowed or socializing, which made it very hard to develop any kind of deeper relationships. On occasions, as exemplified by Peter van Daalen (Narrator 6) and Fazila, Efendić (Narrator 27) in chapter two, women had a chance to host the UN peacekeepers in the homes, which can be seen as a genuine attempt, on both sides, to get to know each other, maintain good relations, learn about each other’s cultures, and mutually help one another.

What were the key events that mark the nature of the relationship between the UN peacekeepers and the people of Srebrenica? In the narrative analysis of the UN peacekeepers recollections one major factor was the time frame of the deployment (whether DUTCHBAT I, II or III) as this meant very different atmospheres. Finally, the narrative analysis as well as earlier research has shown, that personal relationships were inextricably linked to and determined by social, cultural, political and economic relationships outlined officially (i.e. required disarmament of local population) and informally (i.e. Dutch medical assistance to local population) by the groups’ highest authority.

Also, shortcomings of the mandate, widespread deprivation, and type of interaction as well as individual events formed and altered these relationships and greatly influenced the memory of individuals and groups. Interesting pattern of social relations seems evident in the analysis. Namely, the relationship between local men, women and children, and UN peacekeepers in the UN Safe Area, varied significantly. From the analysis it is apparent that relationships formed, not only show the diverse lived experiences of the people but also points to the interconnections between gender and age, which I have found to play an important role.

New Relationships post 1990s

What had happened to the relationships since the fall of the enclave? In the narrative analysis I discovered that some relationships continued after 1995, while in few instances, i.e. Henry Van Der Belt (Narrator 1), Mujo Buhic (Narrator 22) and John Nieuwkoop (Narrator 5), Fazila Efendic (Narrator 27) relationships, which did not exist before 1995, emerged after 2007 when UN peacekeepers began visiting Srebrenica. From the view point of contemporary memory studies, remembering is no longer seen as a finitive activity, with an identifiable beginning and end but it was. Rather it is seen as a process that is constantly unfolding, changing and transforming (Zelizer 1995: 218). The same seems to be true for the relationships. The narrative analysis in this dissertation shows how the people on the ground, as active agents, negotiate and transform time, space and relationships. Although asked to focus on their recollection of the Srebrenica Safe Area period, the vast majority of the narrators could not resist not speaking of the present relationships. This comes as no surprise as “memories contain and are contained by a narrative which orders, links and makes sense of the past, the present and the future” (Chamberlain, Thompson 1998: xiii).

Genocide defines what and how people remember

Although the dissertation did not intend to focus on the Srebrenica genocide of July 1995, the role that the genocide played in the recollections was considerable. Srebrenica genocide of July 1995 is a significant marker in the personal life stories of the narrators. For some of the narrators it represents an extremely dramatic shift in the life lived before and after. Because memory is not fixed, but rather an ever-changing process in which a significant event (i.e. Srebrenica genocide) that carries such an emotional weight plays an important role in how the persons recall the past from that point forward. For the Bosniak population, the genocide presented such a significant marker that the memories of 17 months (January/February 1994 – June 1995) preceding this event were often sparse. They had a strong desire to anchor other memories around July 1995 and recalled only memories directly or indirectly connected with it. Thus their recollection of months preceding the genocide was time and again overpowered by their recollection of July 1995 and the intense feelings they stirred in them.

This dissertation shows inaccurate generalizations and poor relationships between UN peacekeepers and the Bosniak men, in particular. New blind spots on the way some of the UN peacekeepers perceived the local population – especially the men – in the final days of the enclave are evident. Have the weak relationships with the Bosniak men affected the UN peacekeepers' action during the final days of the UN Safe Area? The new finding here in the dissertation demonstrate that we still do not know the reasons why the DUTCHAT command failed to protect (at least) the 'locally employed personnel' such as Rizo Mustafic, the electrician, and thus there are still potentials for further research.

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Abstract (in Slovenian)

V disertaciji avtorica obravnava spomin nizozemskih pripadnikov mirovnih enot Združenih Narodov (ZN) in bošnjaških prebivalcev varnega območja ZN Srebrenica s poudarkom na obdobju sedemnajstih mesecev pred padcem Srebrenice julija 1995. Okvir doktorske disertacije namenoma ni osredotočen (le) na vojno ali genocid, temveč je razširjen na mnoge druge vidike spomina; še posebej se osredotoča na različne odnose, ki so jih ti ljudje razvili v omenjenem časovnem in prostorskem okviru. Navkljub številnim obstoječim publikacijam, ki se ukvarjajo z ustno zgodovino te tematike, doslej nobena izmed njih ni poskušala združiti spomine nizozemskih pripadnikov mirovnih enot ZN s spomini bošnjaških prebivalcev v Varnem Območju ZN Srebrenica.

Pričujoča doktorska raziskava tako obravnava spomin šestnajstih nizozemskih pripadnikov mirovnih enot ZN in trinajstih Bošnjakov, ki so prebivali v Varnem Območju ZN Srebrenica. Terensko delo je bilo opravljeno julija 2009, 2010 in 2011 v Srebrenici in septembra 2011 na Nizozemskem. Ustni viri so se osredotočili na obujanje spominov o medsebojnih odnosih in interakcijah ter doživljanju drug drugega znotraj Varnega Območja ZN Srebrenica.

Disertacija ponuja celovit vpogled v paleto različnih odnosov, ki so se razvili med nizozemskimi pripadniki mirovnih enot ZN in bošnjaškim prebivalstvom znotraj Varnega Območja ZN Srebrenica, obenem pa pokaže, da so se začeli in trajali sedemnajst mesecev pred genocidom in, kljub genocidu, trajajo še danes. Prav to zagotavlja edinstveno interpretacijo v določenem času in prostoru med vojno v Bosni in Hercegovini in daje glas tistim, ki so preživeli genocid v Srebrenici kot tudi nizozemskim pripadnikom mirovnih enot ZN.

Ključne besede:

Bosna in Hercegovina, Srebrenica, genocid, Združeni narodi, varno območje Združenih narodov, Nizozemci, pripadniki mirovnih enot, Bošnjaki, odnosi, spomin, ustna zgodovina