

Academic Network South-East Europe  
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(412-VSa) MPS/DAAD, WS 2005/2006

**„Srebrenica, Who Cares? Genocide, Who Cares?“**  
Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg  
IFSH ([www.ifsh.de](http://www.ifsh.de)) Nov 2005



Participants:

1. Djoković, Jelena
2. Geise, Torsten
3. Gey, Tanja
4. Hyseni, Ilire
5. Inoyatova, Nodira
6. Łatwińska, Iwona Agnieszka
7. Misselwitz, Margarete
8. Piras, Alice
9. Sokolowska, Patrycja
10. Tsukev, Aleksandar
11. Wagner, Thomas Karl
12. Bandov, Goran
13. Dudaš, Boris
14. Mehmedbegovic, Naida
15. Reininghaus, Frank

Lecturers: Prof. Janja Bec-Neumann, Dr. Patricia Schneider

Program:

Date	Time	Theme/Topic
Thu, Nov 03	10.00-10.15	Welcome
	10.15-12.00	„Triumph of Evil“ – Sense documentary (Film)
	12.00-12.15	<i>Break</i>
	12.15-13.15	Input by Janja
	13.15-14.30	<i>Lunch break</i>
	14.30-15.45	Discussion
	15.45-16.00	<i>Break</i>
	16.00-17.00	Preparation of Seminar in Croatia
Fri, Nov 04	10.00-10.15	Welcome
	10.15-10.30	“42 1/2” (Film)
	10.30-10.45	Comment by Janja
	10.45-11.00	“First paycheck” (Film)
	11.00-11.15	Comment by Janja
	11.15-11.30	“Ten Minutes” (Film)
	11.30-11.45	Comment by Janja
	11.45-12.00	“Scorpions” (Film)
	12.00-12.15	Comment by Janja
	12.15-12.30	<i>Break</i>
	12.30-13.30	Presentations
	13.30-14.30	<i>Lunch break</i>
	14.30-15.45	Input by Janja / discussion
	15.15-16.00	<i>Break</i>
	16.00-17.00	Evaluation

## Minutes of the block seminar

Taken by:

Frank Reininghaus, Iwona Latwinska (Nov 03)

Frank Reininghaus, Patrycja Sokolowska, Thomas Karl Wagner (Nov 04)

Coordinated by: Frank Reininghaus, Dr. Patricia Schneider

Fotos: Naida Mehmedbegevic

**November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005**

### 1. Preparation by students:

Short presentation/statement to one out of four theme complexes (see Presentations)

Intensive reading of provided material by coordinators:

1. GENOCIDE LIVE (PD Dr. Janja Bec-Neumann, Granada, April 2003)

2. FROM HATE SPEECH TO HATE SILENCE: BANALITY OF INDIFFERENCE ( PD Dr. Janja Bec Neumann, foreword in: SREBRENICA: FROM DENIAL TO CONFES- SION, editor Sonja Biserko, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Bel- grade, 2005)

### 2. Introduction:

Both coordinators took the opportunity to address the students; they created the appropriate sensitivity for the documentaries, facts and discussions to come about genocides during the following two days of the seminar. Dr. Bec-Neumann pointed out the importance of prevention of genocides versus the punishment of the perpetrators and the difficulty to prove intent in what the defendant had done. As an example the students were introduced to the documentary "Triumph of Evil", which docu-



mented the trial against General Radislav Krstic at the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal For The Former Yugoslavia) at The Hague in the Netherlands.



### 3. Documentary I: Triumph of Evil ( Sensa, author Mirko Klarin )

Documentary I showed selected sequences of the trial, including General Radislav Krstic's denials and eyewitnesses' testimonies along with several minutes of video footage and Serbian State TV clips; in some of those clips Krstic (see picture 1) was shown accompanying General Radko Mladic (see picture 2), who is charged by the ICTY as

well. The clips were originally used for propaganda purposes in the Serbian State TV, in July 1995 but in the trial they were used as evidence against General Radislav Krstic, who at the end of the trial became the first person to be convicted of genocide at the ICTY; he was sentenced to 46 years imprisonment.

**Evaluation of Doc. I / Discussion:**

The background information given after the film by Dr. Bec-Neumann underlined the failure of the international security mechanisms in the case of Srebrenica; the area had been declared safe by the UN Security Council Resolution 819 (dated April 16, 1993, more than two years before the massacre) and has been secured by Dutch military in a UN mission.



<p>General Radislav Krstic</p>	<p>General Radko Mladic</p>	<p>Bodies exhumed in and around Srebrenica</p>

Dr. Bec-Neumann also mentioned the existence of “hate speech” (commonly understood) and “hate silence”; this term led to a few inquiries by the students. The explanation that “hate silence” means the absence of public discussion in high level environment was not unilaterally agreed upon.



Dr. Bec-Neumann further reported about the headlines “taking our hero to court – for what?” in Serbian newspapers when Krstic was arrested; these papers also expressed their opinion that “all sides did the like”, stating that it was unfair to accuse only the Serbian generals. It is part of the process of relativization in Serbia regarding war crimes and genocide.

An emotional and controversial discussion followed. Topics covered were the different perception of people experiencing a war, the official version versus the private stories, the ability of some war victims to use art as a way to express and to handle traumatized experiences, and the position of victims and perpetrators, with a special focus on Srebrenica.

Dr. Bec-Neumann also introduced the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), office in Sarajevo and its Podrinje Identification Project (PIP) which highlights an exceptionally significant course of action of the team of experts who have been persistent in their noble mission for years, working on identifying the victims of the genocide committed in the UN Safe Area of Srebrenica in July 1995 The Srebrenica genocide must be seen as an organized, planned and coordinated action to extinguish the Bosniaks in the Drina valley; comparisons can be made with the Holocaust,

the Armenian, Cambodian, Rwandan, Guatemalan genocides, and with South Africa, Argentina, Chile.

## November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005

After the welcome, the second day of the seminar „Srebrenica, Who Cares? Genocide, Who Cares” started with three short movies shown by Ms. Bec-Neumann. Those shorts basically dealt with the war respectively the legacy of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and were mainly made by young directors and actors from the Balkans.

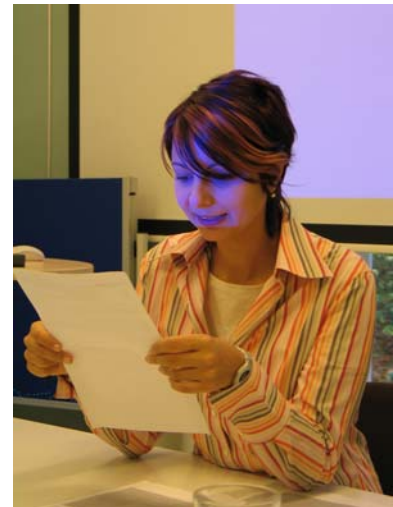
### 4. Movie II: 42 ½ ( director Slobodan Leman ):

This movie was situated in Sarajevo after the war and happens in parallel cuts: a man from the city and a man from the mountains meet in the hillsides of Sarajevo to talk, drink and try on a pair shoes that one of them has just bought. One pair of shoes – size “42 ½ “ (hence the title), which is as well the percentage of alcohol contained in the bottle the friends enjoy in the hills – is sufficient for the two as they both lost a leg, obviously in the battles of Sarajevo. The morale of the story is that even this war, in which they were enemies, did not destroy the friendship they have had before the war. Both have suffered the same fate of being physically disabled in the war and of being unemployed after the war.

### Evaluation of Movie II / Discussion:

After the movie Dr. Bec-Neumann gives the students basic information on the horrible siege of Sarajevo which was the second longest after Leningrad, lasting around 1450 days. In the course of these battles more than 11 000 people lost their lives. She pointed out the importance the siege had for the later genocide of Srebrenica as well; Srebrenica did not “just happen” out of nothing but was only the last step in a fatal chain of events. The two men of “42 ½ “ however, though they had obviously been “enemies” in the battles, remain friends as before the war. Empathy and solidarity prove to be stronger than the hate the war spilled over the whole region.

No discussion



### 5. Movie III: First Paycheck ( director Alen Drljevic )

The second movie shows a cynical and merciless kind of “gladiator spectacle”, organized by a totally unscrupulous and avaricious mafia-like “businessman”. In his boundless greed he pays a poor young man for riding a motor cycle through a mine-contaminated area somewhere in the post-war hills near Sarajevo in order to amuse the crowds that can place bets on the driver’s chance of survival. After having survived the “death show” the young man returns with his “first paycheck”. He buys food for his family and is warmly welcomed at home. His father advises him to be honest and decent in the new “company” – he doesn’t know what his son really “works”. Because of this new income the family manages to live like humans – but their living like humans is only possible due to the absolutely inhumane “work” the son has to bear.



### **Evaluation of Movie III / Discussion:**

After the movie some of the shadows of war are discussed: weapon trade, prostitution, organized crime, trafficking. Dr. Bec-Neumann refers to the horrible social pathologies, lack of perspectives and inhumane living conditions of many post-war communities. The effects of war are still at work while the fighting itself has ended already ten years ago.

Short discussion and few questions about the characters shown in the spot.

### **6. Movie IV: Ten Minutes ( director Ahmed Imamovic )**

Similar to movie II, this movie depicts the events during the ten minutes in war in Sarajevo, framed by a typical tourist ten minutes on the other side of the Adriatic Sea, in Rome. In harsh contrast the students are thrown into the dark abyss of the siege of Sarajevo: gunfire, burning houses, explosions, dead corpses, starvation, horror and fear. A young boy, sent out to get some water and bread for the family, happens to escape a mortar and sniper attack only to find his parents mortally wounded on his return to the already shattered building. In the same ten minutes the tourist in Rome waits for his photos to be done.

### **Evaluation of Movie IV / Discussion:**

Dr. Bec-Neumann remarked after the movie that the one who survives war is privileged, she draws the attention to fact that since WW II only poor countries are struck by war, there are around 25 local wars or conflicts in the moment because weapon industry needs minimum 25 “local wars” to be profitable. She mentions the dominant cultures of punishment and increasing indifference for those who suffer that do not contribute to the prevention of war and killing.

### **7. Documentary V: Scorpions**

This video footage of the execution of six Bosnians during Srebrenica genocide was shown publicly in Belgrade and in many TV programmes around the world throughout May 2005, now it is in ICTY evidence.

### **Evaluation of Doc. V / Discussion:**

After a long silence Dr. Bec-Neumann gave some more background info: the “Scorpions” have been a dead squad since 1991; their standing in the Serb population (probably especially after Srebrenica) can still be called highly respected, as Dr. Bec-Neumann explained citing an example of one of the commanders of the Red Berets being invited to a talk show last month in Belgrade to talk “against Serbian traitors and to call for lynch.” The public reaction to this appearance was very positive, quote: “he is a hero”, “he tells the truth”, “he let the world know what nobody else dares to say” etc. After having received these background info, the students asked Dr. Bec-Neumann: “How is it possible that Srebrenica could happen?” –We will try together to understand the roots of evil in the next four months. Judge Robert Jackson said in Nuremberg Trial “ We have to prove incredible crimes with credible facts, so we here have to try to understand incredible crimes with credible, limited knowledge. But we will try. “

Dr. Bec-Neumann described two very remarkable reactions of persons who were concerned in an extremely personal way by this evidence: One young man, Mido

Salkic, survivor from Srebrenica, now student in Australia, recognized in TV programme one of the victims as his own father. After this extreme confrontation with what has happened he decided to tell the truth about the murder of his father to his mother and sister. He also described the wish to meet the murderers. One of the perpetrators on the other hand was recognized by a Serbian girl to be her father. She was extremely shocked as she knew her father as a “good person”. Her empathy for the victims, her tears were described as a “hope for healing”. Moreover it was discussed that very few perpetrators actually confess themselves, though testimonies of that kind should help to prevent such horrible deeds not only in Bosnia but anywhere in the world. Alas, remorse is rare and many perpetrators are not afraid of showing up in public or are even celebrated as “heroes”, like a famous death squad leader who was recently invited to a TV talk show in Serbia or Ratko Mladic before his disappearance. One often feels helpless: Even if a war criminal is sentenced, the judgement is ignored and there is little reaction in the media of the country, as seen in Serbia in the case of Krstic. It was discussed that the trails are very important as they may give the victims a chance to speak about what had happened. Ms Bec - Neumann mentioned the case of a Bosnian housewife, witness in ICTY, where she met three perpetrators to ask them why all this happened despite all the good relations in the neighbourhood before. How could Srebrenica happen? One has to try to



really understand and avoid simplifications. Mrs. Neumann pointed out that single answers are dangerous as the reality is very complex. So this course is only meant as a first step of preparation, a first chance to think about it. She considers films to be a useful tool to face the increasing level of indifference. The “Scorpions”-tape is sick not only that it has happened in Srebrenica 1995 but because in the very same moment in Darfur, or in Chechnija the same is happening again.

## 8. Presentations:

The presentations, which had been prepared by the students, dealt with four topics proposed by Ms. Bec-Neumann:

1. The Bystanders in Srebrenica 1995 and Today
2. The guilt of the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica (Karl Jaspers model)
3. Genocide Convention Revisited
4. Where are Srebrenica, Darfur, Rwanda? Is it so far away?

The topic “The Bystanders in Srebrenica 1995 and Today” was chosen by Jelena. As bystanders she identified the Dutch battalion which was incapable to intervene because of a lack of soldiers, equipment and adequate mandate. The Bosnian army did not focus on Srebrenica but gave everything to the Dutch; and the Serbian church that protected criminals and said nothing to judge their crimes. A bystander can also be anyone who helps war criminals today not to be discovered.

“Dutch Battalion guilt in Srebrenica, July 1995 following Karl Jaspers model (criminal, political, moral, metaphysical guilt)” was chosen by Alice (in a very emotional presentation) and by Torsten. They outlined the history of the Srebrenica massacre of June 1995 when around 8000 defenceless male Bosnian Muslims were

killed by the Serbian army. The largest mass murder in Europe since World War II happened under the eyes of a Dutch Battalion in a city which has been declared a "safe area" by the United Nations.

The dilemma the students showed was that the defense of the Muslim enclave was not explicitly covered by the UN mandate, thus prohibiting the Dutch soldiers from intervention; the problem of guilt and responsibility is a complex issue. The Dutch troops were acquitted of guilt as they were poorly equipped and had received unclear instructions, whereas the Serbs controlled the situation.

The Dutch Battalion might be accused of moral guilt because they are morally responsible as humans for what they did not do, but to an immeasurably larger extent the guilt lies with the Serbian soldiers, individual guilt (as humans) and collective guilt (as soldiers and forces).

Nodira and Ilire choose "Genocide Convention Revisited?" They explained the roots of the word "genocide", its official definition ("intent to destroy"), history and implications of the Genocide Convention of 1948. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was a century of extreme killings. One prominent critique of the concept of genocide as applied in the Convention is that it is rather elusive and too narrow. Political and social



groups as victim groups are for example not included neither are for instance killings through poisoning of environment. So the Genocide Convention opened several questions: Which groups are protected? And who is responsible for the prevention of genocide? Is it limited to ethnical or political groups, or can it be against homosexuals as well? Can it be called genocide if members of the same group are perpetrators and victims? The big difference that can be pointed out is that genocide always has an intention and a motivation, fueled by hate. How many people have to die before we speak of genocide? How to intervene and stop genocide while it happens?

Another problem is the inflated use of the term "genocide", when it is used in wrong places, for example meaning "murder", "torture" or "rape" - which are all horrible crimes but not of the same kind.

Tanja's, Alexander's and Margarete's topic was "Where are Srebrenica, Darfur, Rwanda? Is it so far away?" Tanja chose a very personal approach to that question, remembering her reactions and thoughts of the days of Srebrenica, Darfur and Rwanda. Consulting her diary she reached the conclusion that in fact these genocides were far away from her experience, they were "distant things". She underlines that even if there is nothing one can do, one has at least the responsibility to know. Alexander talked about the "ignored hell" in Rwanda, the genocide that took place between April and June in 1994. Around 800 000 people died, mostly Tutsis killed by Hutus. A deep silence accompanied the killings and only after the genocide shock,

horror and shame were voiced by several international officials. He pointed out the double standard of international willingness to intervene. The question arises, who is responsible not only for letting genocide happen, but also for the silence of “the others”?

Margarete in turn drew the attention to genocide and the media, she opined that these genocides are not far away from us as we live in a media world and we always take part, we are “bombed with cruel pictures”. It was discussed that “live killings” in the media may contribute to the wrong or right image of what really has happened. But the media can be in wrong hands and used for manipulating public opinion. The importance is stressed that we have to try to understand. Every genocide is both unique and universal.

### 9. Closing remarks:

In the end Dr. Bec-Neumann thanked the students for their participation. Many questions remain open, they form the outlook for the next four months of the lecture “War Crimes, Genocide, Memories and Peace”. Dr. Bec-Neumann stated that after the cold war has ended, the international community is now more ready to intervene and protect peace and security. She explained that we have to go deeper to understand the work of the tribunals in The Hague, ICC and ICTY. It is not only “emotional understanding” but requires a lot of work, knowledge, courage, devotion, patience and a lot of money. Nonetheless, work in this field is always emotional: she stated that she could not teach or study it without emotion.



Finally the students were asked to give brief feedbacks on the seminar, to tell about two things during the two days seminar they liked the most and two they did not like at all. Eleven students said so: “I like films. I like emotions. I like openness. I like to meet Ms. Bec.” “I like films. I like to listen to Ms. Bec’s personal experience.” “I like films. I missed more about genocide prevention.” “I am glad that we learned together more about genocide.” “I like films. I do not like

organization. Too much information, too much dates, I could not follow it at all (oder: follow all of it).” “I like films. I like the way Ms. Bec is doing. I like my research. I do not like too much information.” “I was irritated on the first day. It is a new style for us. Now I know it will be?. I hope Ms. Bec will continue this way.” “I like films. The seminar is different from others, challenging. To focus on only one issue could be better.” “This seminar has no structure. It was just irritating. Ms. Bec – Neumann has broken discussion in the most interesting moments.” “I like to meet Ms. Bec-Neumann. I like that we discussed openly.” “I appreciate that Ms. Bec-Neumann is here. I do not like that she sometimes misunderstands us.” “I like students’ presentations. I do not like two films: ‘Triumph of Evil’ is too long and ‘Scorpions’ should not be presented here. I missed more time for discussion.”