

**Draga Mastilović**

## **MASSACRES OF THE SERBS IN SREBRENICA IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

According to the 1931 census, Srebrenica County had 35,210 inhabitants, of whom 17,766 were Orthodox Serbs, 17,332 Muslims and 103 Catholics.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Orthodox Serbs constituted the majority, more precisely, 50.54 of the total population, Muslims 49.22, whereas the percentage of the Catholics was negligible. Srebrenica County was divided in the municipalities of Faković (3308 Serbs and 1520 Muslims), Kravica (3308 Serbs and 2230 Muslims), Skelani (3784 Serbs and 2112 Muslims), Bratunac (2882 Serbs and 3423 Muslims), Osatica (1582 Serbs and 2925 Muslims), and Srebrenica (2808 Serbs and 5122 Muslims).<sup>2</sup>

The first units of the German army entered the area of Srebrenica in mid-April 1941 and took control of it. Shortly after them, the first detachment of the Home Guard came to Srebrenica, under the command of Captain Slijepčević, a former Yugoslav army officer who had previously served in the town of Bjelovar. The Muslim population in Srebrenica gave a ceremonial welcome to the Home Guard, and a welcome speech was delivered by a local mullah, who, among other things, said “Muslims groaned under the regime

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<sup>1</sup> *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 31. marta 1931. godine*, Vol. II, Beograd, 1938, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

in Yugoslavia for 20 years, but now it was time for them to be free again.”<sup>3</sup> The official welcome was attended by the former deputy Ismet Bektašević. An official welcome was staged for the Croatian Army in the Municipality of Bratunac, and the then Mayor Jusuf Varlešević delivered a speech.<sup>4</sup> For a short period of time, the Croatian authorities took power throughout Srebrenica County; since there were only about a hundred of Croats, the new government relied on the local Muslims.

Ibrahim Lakišić was appointed Prefect of Srebrenica County, with Sakib Uzunović as his deputy. In the Municipality of Skelani, Avdo Delić was appointed Mayor, with Huso Junuzagić as Deputy Mayor.<sup>5</sup> Redžo Halilović became Mayor of the Municipality of Faković,<sup>6</sup> and Hasan Hasanović became the first Mayor of the Municipality of Osatica after the Croatian authorities took power.<sup>7</sup>

Immediately upon the arrival of the Home Guard, an Ustasha camp led by camp commander Muhamed Đozić was formed. Apart from him, Jasar Ibrahimović, Safet Abdurahmanović and others became members of the Ustasha camp.<sup>8</sup> After that, the Ustashas distributed arms to the Muslim population, mostly to younger people, and formed the Ustasha-Muslim militia. Meho Temin, also called “Mostarac” [a man from Mostar, t/n], became the commander of the Ustasha municipal camp in Bratunac, and the members of the camp were: Ethem Efendić, Osman Verlašević, Resko Efendić, Osman Đogaz and others.<sup>9</sup> In the Municipality of Skelani, Omer Mustafić became commander of the municipal Ustasha garrison, with Kadrija Softić and Nezir

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<sup>3</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Archives (hereinafter: AB&H), Collection: State Commission to Investigate the Crimes of Nazis and Their Allies (hereinafter: ZKUZ), box 2, envelope 40, item 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56396.

<sup>6</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56392.

<sup>7</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56393.

<sup>8</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56384.

<sup>9</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56385.

Tić as his closest associates.<sup>10</sup> In the same way, the Ustasha-Muslim militia was formed in all other municipalities of Srebrenica County.

Instantly after the establishment of the Croatian authorities in Srebrenica, torture of the Serbian population began. The first targets were the Serbian Orthodox Church and its clergy, followed by the most reputable Serbs. All Orthodox Christian churches in Srebrenica County were closed, and all activities of Serbian priests prohibited. The Parish House in Srebrenica was converted to the Ustasha Club, and during the first days of the rule of the NDH, the Ustashes ordered the Serbs from Srebrenica to demolish the memorial commemorating a World War I hero, Major Kosta Todorović. Even if church service had not been prohibited, soon there would have been no one to perform it, as the new government zealously carried out orders to arrest all Orthodox priests and send them to concentration camps or to exile them to Serbia. Thus, for instance, on 11 May 1941, Dragoljub Jolović, a priest in Srebrenica, received a written order from the Croatian authority from Srebrenica to move to Serbia within three days.<sup>11</sup> Fortunately, Jolović immediately obeyed the order and headed for Serbia, though robbed and without property, but alive. Other priests from Bishop's Governorship of Vlasenica and Srebrenica were not that fortunate; they were imprisoned, tortured and taken to the Caprag camp, with some of the priests killed in the most horrible ways. Priest Blagoje Đurić managed to escape to Serbia after being imprisoned and tortured, whereas Srbislav Blažić, a priest from the Municipality of Kravica, and Marko Katić, a priest from the Municipality of Faković, were arrested on 12 July, taken to the Caprag camp, and later banished to Serbia. In late July 1941, after sadistic torture, the parish priest of Jeremići Drago Miskijević was killed. Srbislav Blažić saw the mutilated corpse of the priest Miskijević with his own eyes and said: "I saw the corpse of the late priest Miskijević. It was dreadful. His eyes had been gouged out, his ears cut off, and the skin of his back flayed."<sup>12</sup> Apart from priest Miskijević, other priests from the Bishop's Governorship of Vlasenica and

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<sup>10</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56396.

<sup>11</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, item 2.

<sup>12</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, item 1.

Srebrenica that were killed in the first months of the reign of the NDH were: head-priest Dušan Bobar, Miloš Savić, Ljubomir Jakšić and Marko Savić.

Aside from the clergy, the Serbian intelligentsia and prominent farmers came under the attack of the new Croatian authorities. They were the first to be arrested and, after being tortured and abused, were held as hostages and then released after the ransom, then imprisoned again and later killed or taken to the Caprag camp. That exactly is stated in a document of the State Commission for Investigating the Crimes of Nazis and Their Allies: “As soon as the Muslims formed the Ustasha militia and armed themselves, they began persecuting the Serbs. Service in the Orthodox Christian Church was prohibited, along with all other ecclesiastical activities. The arrests of hostages began, which culminated before St. Vitus’ Day. On the night before St. Vitus’ Day, the Ustashes captivated Serbian students and took them to Sarajevo: it is not clear what happened to them. Among the arrested was the theologian Mito Blažić. The Ustashes arrested the Serbs, torturing them harshly in prisons and releasing them after getting ransom. The Ustashes often entered villages, arresting prominent Serbs and supposedly detaining them as hostages, whereas at night they would take them out of goal and kill them. In the village of Drinjača, seat of a Croatian company, the Ustashes slaughtered 8 distinguished Serbs from the village and surrounding area over a barrel, in the storeroom of an agricultural cooperative.”<sup>13</sup> The aforementioned priest, Srboljub Blažević, who managed to escape from the Ustasha prison, stated the following: “I watched their clotted blood in the barrel and their common tomb, from which bones protruded, still containing some flesh on them.”<sup>14</sup>

Apart from abusing adult men, the very first days after the establishment of the Croatian authorities in Srebrenica began the molestation of children in Serbian villages and the massive looting of Serbian property. These activities were mostly performed by the notorious Muslim militia. A document from the State Commission describes the events as follows: “They would break into the Serbian houses under the pretext of searching for weapons and the Chetniks, but they would carry away all items of value: money, rings,

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<sup>13</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, item 6.

<sup>14</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, item 1.

watches, clothes, shoes, and food, in a word, everything they liked. The Ustashas also raped Serbian women and girls, especially in the villages. Ustasha Ibro Pašalić and miller Jašar, both from Srebrenica, were well known for these misdeeds.<sup>15</sup> The looting was followed by cruel and brutal murders, even of old people and women. Thus, for instance, by early August 1941, the notorious unit of the Muslim militia formed and led by Jašar Ibrahimović from the locality of Pasmolići killed around 30 Serbs in the village of Podravnje, among whom there were many old people, women and children. The Ustashas captured victims in their homes or intercepted them on roads. According to witness accounts, the key motive for murders was the robbery of property. The terror of the Ustashas in Srebrenica County reached its peak the night before St. Vitus' Day 1941, when a great number of the Serbs were arrested.<sup>16</sup> According to the documents of the State Commission for Investigating the Crimes of Nazis and Their Allies, 110 Serbs were killed in Srebrenica County during July and August 1941.<sup>17</sup> The scariest place of execution of Serbs in eastern Bosnia, and thus in Srebrenica, was the cooperative warehouse in the village of Drinjača. When the insurgents entered Drinjača on 14 August, they eyewitnessed a horrible scene, which the commander of insurgents, Pero Đukanović, described as follows: "The entire room, including the ceiling, was spattered with human blood. In the corner of the warehouse stood a rather large oak barrel, which was open and contained about 150 liters of human blood. The victims were detained in the large rooms of the attic of the cooperative warehouse. From that place, they were taken to a special empty room, where they were undressed and then taken downstairs and slaughtered over the barrel. Some victims were tortured by the executioners beyond belief. Thus, the victims had their hands, feet or other parts of the body chopped off, I guess to stuff the barrel, because they were drunkenly talking about sending a present to their leader Ante Pavelić in Zagreb."<sup>18</sup> Apart from the warehouse, the insurgents found the mass graves with more than 100 corpses.

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<sup>15</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, item 6.

<sup>16</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56403.

<sup>17</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, item 53

<sup>18</sup> Zdravko Antonić (ed.), *Zapisi Pere Đukanovića – Ustanak na Drini*, Beograd, 1994, p. 66.

More crimes against the Serbian people were stopped by the uprising, which broke out in Srebrenica County on 5 August 1941. In just two months of fighting, the Serbian insurgents regained Vlasenica, Srebrenica, Zvornik and Kladanj County.<sup>19</sup> However, this situation did not last long. In January 1942, eastern Bosna was swept by a German-Home Guard-Ustasha punitive expedition, which brought new suffering to the population, but all this was a prelude to premeditated mass slaughters that soon began. Namely, for the needs of the Eastern Front, the Germans had to withdraw the 342<sup>nd</sup> Division; instead of it, the infamous “Black Legion” under the command of Jure Francetić occupied the territory, and in cooperation with some German units, started a new offensive in Eastern Bosnia. The insurgents, ideologically split into the Chetniks and the Partisans and warring against each other, were not able to put up joint resistance to the new Ustasha offensive. After the clash with the Chetniks and on the order of Josip Broz, the Partisan Proletarian Brigades were withdrawn from Eastern Bosnia, and the Chetniks, disoriented first by the German-Ustasha and then the Partisans actions against them,

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<sup>19</sup> Aware of the bleak prospects awaiting them under the patronage of the new Croatian authorities, the Serbs of Srebrenica began abandoning their homes and hiding in the woods as early as June. With the Ustasha maltreatment intensifying, more and more Serbs took refuge in the woods, where they formed the first rebel units. A peasant from the village of Kravica near Bratunac called Petar Đukanović proved the most prominent figure and organiser of the uprising of the Serbs from Srebrenica County; he was a Salonika volunteer and holder of several decorations, one of which was the Order of the Star of Karađorđe with Swords. He was also arrested by the Ustashas in late June and detained in the Ustasha prison in Drinjača, but during the night between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July 1941, he escaped from prison and fled to the woods. Afterwards, he began gathering people in the villages of Kravica Municipality and posting village guards, followed by an open rebellion against the Ustasha terror in Srebrenica County, launched on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1941. In the meantime, incursions were made by the “highlander” rebel unit headed by Aćim Babić from the village of Kusača near Han Pijesak, who liberated Han Pijesak as early as 8<sup>th</sup> August, and then started collaboration with the rebels from Mount Romania, with the intention of liberating Vlasenica. By mid-August, the rebels had liberated Han Pijesak and Vlasenica, and Đukanović and his rebels defeated substantial Home Guard forces in Konjević Polje after the fights for Vlasenica, and liberated Nova Kasaba, and also Drinjača the next day, 15<sup>th</sup> August. Major Jezdimir Dangić arrived in Drinjača around then and took command over the rebel forces in Eastern Bosnia. Srebrenica was liberated on 18<sup>th</sup> August, and the day after Bratunac was also free of the Ustasha presence. (*Zapisi Pere Đukanovića – Ustanak na Drini*, p. 20; Zdravko Antičić, *Ustanak u istočnoj i centralnoj Bosni 1941*, Tuzla, 1983, p. 165).

were unable to provide effective resistance.<sup>20</sup> Francetić's Ustasha reached the area of Srebrenica County in early April and within a month committed a terrible massacre of the innocent Serbian population, most of whom were the elderly, women and children. The problem was that a great number of the Serbian population, mostly children from the area of Romanija and Rogatica, Vlasenica and Kladanj County, were fleeing in front of the Ustasha. Together with the population of Srebrenica County, they were trying to cross the Drina River, and thus find salvation in Serbia. However, while crossing the Drina River, many of them were caught by the Ustashas, who slaughtered everyone they seized. Witnesses described horrible scenes that took place on the bank of the Drina River. "Stabbed and mutilated victims were thrown into the river, which was full of corpses," reads a document of the State Commission for Investigating the Crimes of Nazis and Their Allies. The exact number of the Serbian population killed on the banks of the Drina River and during April and May 1942 was never determined, but the estimates range from 4,000 to 6,000.

As soon as Francetić's Ustashas appeared, the units of the Muslim militia were activated in Srebrenica County. So, the units led by Meho Arpadžić and Osman Verlašević<sup>21</sup> participated in the massacre of the Serbian children on the banks of the Drina River. In this massacre, Francetić's legion was led by Josip Tomić, Francetić's deputy, Rafael Boban, Ante Žižanović, an émigré Ustasha, Karlo Siber and Ante Caratan. The few Serbian soldiers tried to slow down the advancement of the Ustashas and to protect the crossings over the Drina River. It should be noted that they were assisted by Nedić's border guards, as well as peasant from the villages of Serbia along the border, who protected the people crossing the river with their machine-guns from the right bank of the Drina River. Thus, for instance, villager Ljubo Jović from the village of Podnemić managed to protect a lot of people from the Ustasha dagger at a crossing near the village of Bjelovac, defending them with a machine gun he had taken during the April War.<sup>22</sup> According to the

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<sup>20</sup> Zdravko Antonić, "Zločini nad Srbima i Jevrejima u Istočnoj Bosni 1941-1942," in: *Genocid nad Srbima u II svjetskom ratu*, Proceedings of the International Conference of the SANU held 23rd-25th October 1991, Belgrade, 1995, p. 423.

<sup>21</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56385.

<sup>22</sup> *Zapisi Pere Đukanovića – Ustanak na Drini*, p. 179.

testimony of Pero Đukanović, in April 1942, around 45,000 of Serbian children from Srebrenica, Kladanj and Zvornik County managed to cross the Drina River and reach the grounds of Serbia.<sup>23</sup> According to some witnesses, the killings at the crossing in Skelani were terminated upon an effective intervention of German soldiers, who, together with Nedić's soldiers, crossed to the left bank of the Drina River to see what was happening. Under the order and supervision of the German officers, two barges transported Serbian, women, children and elderly at Skelani all night, while the Ustashas took 56 men and brought them to Faković, where they were killed and buried in several mass graves, whereas a second group, with 58 men, was taken to Skelani, where they were slaughtered at the local military barracks and their bodies thrown into the Drina River.<sup>24</sup> As claimed by some witnesses, the German officers who were watching the massacre on the left side of the Drina River fired at the Ustashas upon seeing the Ustashas killing children with bayonets and throwing their bodies into the river. On that occasion, a German soldier killed an Ustasha across the river.<sup>25</sup> A lot of children did not manage to reach the Drina River as the Ustashas caught up with them, killing them mercilessly. Thus, for example, in the village of Faković, the Ustasha imprisoned over 200 people in a tavern, whom they captured between the Drina River and Faković, and the same night they killed them brutally. The Ustashas slaughtered fifty-six of them in front of the house of the priest in Faković, and threw their bodies into the Drina River. With their machine guns, the Ustashas killed the remaining 179 victims and buried them in two previously prepared pits in Faković.<sup>26</sup>

During Francetić's raid on Eastern Bosnia, which took place in the spring of 1942, a great number of the Serbian population from Srebrenica County was killed, mostly those who did not manage to escape across the Drina River or those who did not want to flee at all, and thus stayed in their homes, believing nothing would happen to them, for surely they had done nothing wrong. Those people were usually slaughtered at their homes.<sup>27</sup> The Ustashas

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>24</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56397.

<sup>25</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56387.

<sup>26</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56392.

<sup>27</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56385.

entered Srebrenica County on 10 April 1942, looting all Serbian houses and killing the people. At the time, Aleksa Bakotić and his wife Julka, Đoka Tomić and others were slain at their homes, but no mass slaughter occurred in the town of Srebrenica at that time.<sup>28</sup> In the villages of the Municipality of Skelani, a large number of people were slaughtered in their homes or on the banks of the Drina River, and some were taken to the Ustasha camp in Skelani, where they were brutally tortured. For them, the Ustahas prepared special and thitherto unheard of methods of torture. Namely, the prisoners were forced to eat a quarter pound of salt every day, all in order to enable the Ustahas to easily flay strips of skin off their heads and necks. Danilo Marinković was an eyewitness of these atrocities, who himself had to eat three pounds of salt for several days, but managed to escape from the torture chambers in Skelani.<sup>29</sup> Twenty-four Serbs from the village of Kostolomac alone were killed either in the village or on the bank of the Drina River, along with another 13 from the village of Božići, 5 from the village of Bujaković, and so on.<sup>30</sup> While passing through the village of Brežane, the Ustahas took Mirko Marjanović and Despot Balčaković from the village of Brežani, and Jovan Gligić from Zvornik as their guides, then they butchered them, stripped the skin off their faces and left their mutilated and disfigured bodies on the road.<sup>31</sup> Only some women, elderly and children were left in the village of Brežani, and “upon the third day of the departure of Francetić’s legions, the village of Brežani were stormed by the armed Muslims from the surrounding villages near Srebrenica, ravaging all the houses in the village Brežani, driving cattle off, taking food, clothes and all farming equipment. The Serbs had to watch calmly the raiders taking away their propriety, for they did not dare to confront them, because some Ustahas were with the Muslims. In the village, these robbers killed three old men and a boy of 14.”<sup>32</sup> Advancing along the Bijelo Polje – Bučje line, on 3 May 1942, the Black Legion opened mortar and machine-gun fire on the villages of Podravno and Palež, which prompted people to start fleeing towards the Drina River.

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<sup>28</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56384.

<sup>29</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56396.

<sup>30</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56397.

<sup>31</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56402.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

However, the Ustashas intercepted a large number of refugees, mostly women and children, who were not able to move fast and were massacred. Only in one place called Široki Do, in the village of Podravno, 40 men, women and children were killed at once.<sup>33</sup> In the villages of Kravica, a horrible massacre of Serbs occurred in April and early May in 1942. In the village of Banjevići, over 100 children from various counties, who had tried to escape terror, were killed with machine-guns. There were about 50 men, women and children from the village of Banjević.<sup>34</sup> Twenty men, women and children from the village of Konjevići, Srebrenica County, were killed there.<sup>35</sup> In the village of Lipenovići, the Ustashas killed every single Serb they found at home. Nineteen men, women and children were killed. In the village of Mratinici, 24 Serbs were killed. The most terrifying massacre in the Municipality of Kravica befell the village of Ježestica, of which the documents of the State Commission say the following: “In the village of Ježeštica, the Ustashas committed the biggest massacre, in terms of the number of victims. During the day, the Ustashas took people from the village, and at night they brought them to the stream and killed them. The victims were previously tortured. They slashed women’s breast and other parts of men’s bodies, slaying them afterwards. The Ustashas slaughtered the people of this village on several occasions, always taking them to various locations by the stream, where they committed their atrocities. In one such massacre, a 75-year-old woman was stabbed by the Ustashas and rolled into the river; incidentally, she remained alive for the next 24 hours, during which she witnessed the massacre and could describe it afterwards. In this village, the slaughter was done by the local Ustashas, the so-called Šunjarska Legion, led by Mustafa and Atif Ademović from the village of Šušnjari.”<sup>36</sup> In the village of Brana Bačić, the Ustashas killed 15 people at their homes, along with 12 in the village of Opravdići, and 5 in the village of Šiljkovići.<sup>37</sup> In the villages of Lipovac, Palež and Slatina, Srebrenica Municipality, around 50 Serbs were

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<sup>33</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56403.

<sup>34</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56386.

<sup>35</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56401.

<sup>36</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56386.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

murdered, and the villages thoroughly looted and burned.<sup>38</sup> In the villages of the Local People's Committee in Toplica, which belonged to the Municipality of Osatica before the war, 85 men, women and children were slaughtered.<sup>39</sup> The family of Živko Milošević from the village of Beširovići, the Municipality of Osatica, were killed at their doorstep by their neighbours Redžo Salkić and Šaćir Mehanović, and by Hasan Pitić from the Municipality of Rogatica.<sup>40</sup> Hasan Mehić, head of the village of Beširovići, and Rašid Opić, from the same village, took the thirty-three-year-old Živojin Radojčić from the village of Barbišići and killed him after ten days of horrible torture, and then returned to the house of his seriously ill father and killed him too.<sup>41</sup> Milan Lazić from the village of Gladovići, Municipality of Osatica, and his two relatives Milovan and Obrad Veselinović were killed by their neighbours from Osatica, Beširovići and Sulica, the Municipality of Osatica. They were Ibrahim Alić, Ibrahim Džinović and Suljo Nuinović. They raped Milan's wife Radojka for days; even after seven days, her neighbour Asib Mehić and his friends came to rape her. The unfortunate woman eventually died in agony.<sup>42</sup> In the village of Žedanjsko, the Ustasha Jašar Ibrahimović killed the whole Spasojević family, with all its 30 members.<sup>43</sup> Also, in the village of Ježestica, the Municipality of Kravica, the whole family of Stanoje Stjepanović was killed: wife Ruža (21 years old), daughter (2), mother Jovana (50), daughter-in-law Angelina (27), cousin Bosko (8), brothers Peter (17) and Aleksa (9) and sister Darinka (14). The Ustashes took them out of the house and 500 metres farther by a stream, slaughtered them all with knives. Apart from them, another 13 Serbs from the village of Ježeštica and three refugees from Vlasenica County were slain at the same place. Stanoje's mother Jovana lived a few days after the massacre, which was enough for her to tell the story about the terrible tragedy that had befallen her family. She managed to recognise some murderers. Those were Mujo Alispajić, Đamil Cvrk,

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<sup>38</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56403.

<sup>39</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56393.

<sup>40</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 33737.

<sup>41</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 33736.

<sup>42</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 33734.

<sup>43</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56403.

Muharem and Ibro Zukić, and other people.<sup>44</sup> Bekto Imširević and Mujo Spajić invited their neighbour Savo Maksimović from the village of Krnjići to come out of the house and slew him at his doorstep, in broad daylight.<sup>45</sup> Amdija Džinić and a group of Ustashas stabbed Goja Mirković (39) from the village of Opravdići, the Municipality of Kravica, 18 times, so she spent the next four hours dying.<sup>46</sup> In the same village, Osman Đogaz and a group of Ustashas fiercely killed Jefta Perić (60), Cvija (52) and Todor Dragicević (40). There were hundreds of similar executions across Srebrenica County, since anyone could kill and torture the local Serbs as they pleased. In the village of the Local People's Committee in Blaževići, the Municipality of Skelani, around 40 people were slain at their homes or on their way to the Drina River. A dozen of them were murdered at the very river. In the village of Karina, the Municipality of Osatica, the Ustashas captured 15 people, tied them together and slaughtered them in one stream near the village.<sup>47</sup> Apart from other monstrosities, the Ustashas immolated fifteen children in the house of Vujadin Kostijerović in the village of Zelinje. The Ustasha unit responsible for these crimes was under the command of Mujo Omerović from the village of Glogovo. In the village of Zelinje, he took Milinko Avramović, Vujadin Avramovića, Mislisav Avramovića, Joco Simić, Ilija Milić and other Serbs, and after torturing them sadistically, killed them in the village of Drinjača.<sup>48</sup> In the village of Žlijebac, the Municipality of Faković, the Ustashas slaughtered the whole families of Tomo Balmazović (8 members), Spasoje Vasiljević (8 members), Milovan Savić (10 members) and many others. Thirteen members of the family of Ljubo Jokić were slain in the village of Jaketići.<sup>49</sup>

After the ravages done by Francetić's legion, the Serbian villages of Srebrenica County remained desolate, for the people had either been killed or escaped to Serbia. In the majority of the villages, only children remained, with few adult men who kept hiding. Thus, for instance, in the village of

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<sup>44</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 13139.

<sup>45</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 34839.

<sup>46</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 13141.

<sup>47</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56394.

<sup>48</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56400.

<sup>49</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56395.

Zelinje, which had previously counted 137 Serbian households, only a fifty-year-old woman remained.<sup>50</sup> The tragedy of the Serbian people of Srebrenica County did not stop after the torture of Francetić's legion, since the Muslim militia stayed in the villages, and their only job was to capture the surviving Serbs or those who were trying to return from Serbia, and to kill them. The unit of the Muslim militia led by Omer Mustafić was especially notorious. His aids were Ahmed Džinić from the village of Dobrok, his deputy, Jusuf Jusufović and Jusuf Bakić from the village of Karačići, Mustafa Smailagić and Redžo Hukić from the locality of Osmač, and Suljo Ibrahimović from the village of Krnjići.<sup>51</sup> During 1942, this infamous unit committed many crimes, slaughters, murders, rapes and pillage against the surviving Serbs of Srebrenica County. Thus, for instance, in the village of Karin, they tied the family of one Cvijetin Gagić, took them to a stream in order to slay them, while beastly torturing them on the way to the stream. They stabbed them with knives, beating them all along, and also burned Cvijetin's hair at the back of his heads. Cvijetin somehow managed to untie himself and escape, while his family, that is, three women and one child were slaughtered in the stream.<sup>52</sup> In June 1942, in the village of Srpski Pribidol, the Ustasha patrol led by Abid Smailović from the village of Peć, the Municipality of Skelani, slaughtered the fifty-year-old Milka Škrnjić, who lived alone in her house. In late June 1942, in the village of Ježeštica, the local Muslim Ustasha from the village of Blječeva, one of whom was Ibrahim Muratović, captured Milojka, Anica and Radojka Đukanović and her little child and slaughtered them in a stream behind the house. Only Milojka managed to survive the massacre, who, after being stabbed and mutilated, managed to reach the Serbian village of Suvo.<sup>53</sup> In July 1942, the Muslim civilians from the village of Turski Pribidol, Smajo, Daut, Mustafa and Suljo Aljić, brought the Ustasha militia to their Serbian neighbours, and together they took Mlađo Janković and his son Boško, as well as Radosav Mitrović, and detained them in the basement of Fata Begić's house in the village of Pajići. After an abundant dinner at Fata's,

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<sup>50</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56400.

<sup>51</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56394.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 33677.

they sadistically murdered the three men.<sup>54</sup> Also, in July 1942, seven Ustashas came to the village of Radoševići, Municipality of Osatica, and slaughtered Maksim Mitrović (75), Gospava Jevtić (55), Obrad Mitrović (83), Stevanija Petrović (85), Stoja Mitrović (50) and a girl, Đurđija Todorović (12), a refugee from Vlasenica County who failed to cross the Drina River, and thus stayed in the village. Jevto Jevtić, who watched the massacre while hiding in the crops, recognised four of the seven killers. Those were: Ramo Torlak from Osmača, brothers Suljo and Smajo Ibrahimović from the village of Urisići and Orhan Hadžić from the village of Ljeskovik, all from the Municipality of Osatica, Srebrenica County.<sup>55</sup> In September 1942, the Muslim militia led by Mujo Omerović found four Serbs in their homes in the village of Polom, Municipality of Kravica, and killed them brutally.<sup>56</sup> This killing spree of the Muslim militia continued in 1943. The documents of the State Commission describe the raids on the village of Brežani during 1943 in the following way: “Armed local Muslim Ustashas killed Serbs while they were working in the field or in their houses, and the killing was always accompanied by plunder. The raids of the Muslim militia continued in 1943. During this frequent looting and raids, the local Ustashas managed to eventually burn down the village of Brežani, while the villagers had already been murdered. They immolated twelve people, including the host, in the house of Gligor Stevanović, and also 10 men, women and children in the house of Vujica Jovanović. Eight women, girls and children were burned in the barn of Gligor Stevanović. All this was done by the local Ustasha under the command of Ramo Torlak and Omer Skeljan.”<sup>57</sup> On the order of the Ustashas, the land of the killed or expelled Serbs was cultivated by their Muslim neighbours and some Catholic people the Ustashas brought from other places, for which they were given half of the what the land yielded.<sup>58</sup>

Part of the Serbian population of Srebrenica County who escaped to Serbia were killed while trying to return to their homes in order to farm the land. The Ustasha patrols kept vigil at the crossings, capturing the returnees and

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<sup>54</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 53738.

<sup>55</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 33693.

<sup>56</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 13140.

<sup>57</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56402.

<sup>58</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56386.

brutally killing them. Thus, for example, four women of the Perić family, Smilja, Radmila, Velinka and Zorka from the village of Ratković, Municipality of Faković, were entrapped and slaughtered on the left bank of the Drina River, while returning from Serbia. Milorad Pavlović was killed in the same way, slaughtered in a boat on the bank of the Drina River.<sup>59</sup> In the following year, 1943, the Ustashas kept on capturing returnees from Serbia and killing them without remorse. In January 1943, while returning from Serbia, six members of the Ivanović family and six members of the Jevremović family from the village of Kostolomci were slaughtered, along with Milan Filipović from the village of Božići.<sup>60</sup> In July 1943, the Petrović family and Ilić Zorka were slaughtered while trying to cross the Drina River. The family included the following members: Desimir, Simeun, Mitar, Dragoslav, Tomislav, Stojka, and Stoja Ilić.<sup>61</sup> This crime was, among others, committed by Halmo Ramić and Salko Muratović from the village of Zapolje, and led by the Ustasha commander Šefik Pasagić from the village of Tegare.<sup>62</sup> In the village of Rajkovina, Municipality of Skelani, 30 mutilated corpses of Serbs returning across the Drina River, of whom 8 were girls, were found in a tank next to the military barracks. The girls' braids, which the Ustashas tore off them while they were still alive, were retrieved from around the water tank.<sup>63</sup> It goes without saying that before slaughtering them the Ustasha brutally raped those young women, teenage girls, even the really young one. Julka Mitrović from the village of Jaketići was slaughtered together with her two children as soon as she crossed the Drina River. Jovanka Simeunović and her six-year-old daughter Lenka managed to reach her home in the village of Jaketići, but there they were both captured by the Ustashas there, who took them to Faković and cruelly slew them.<sup>64</sup> In order to describe all the individual crimes committed against the Serbian people in Srebrenica County during 1942 and 1942, volumes of book would have to be published. Not even that would suffice to describe the horrors those

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<sup>59</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56391.

<sup>60</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56307.

<sup>61</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56390.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56387.

<sup>64</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56395.

experienced by those misfortunate people as they waited to be slain by the Ustasha dagger.

The very town of Srebrenica, as well as some Serbian villages that belonged to the Municipality of Srebrenica, that is, those nearer the town itself, were less destroyed in the first massacre of the Serbs in Srebrenica County. Pressed by the Germans, the authorities of the NDH were forced to create at least a semblance of law and order in their clerical and fascist establishment. Thus, the new Prefect of Srebrenica County, Nikola Mladenović, by the order of the NDH authorities, tried to enforce the “policy of internal pacification”, and ordered to open all Orthodox churches in Srebrenica County,<sup>65</sup> forgetting that there was not a single priest in the County. In his report of 12 June 1943 to the Great Vicar of the Great Parish of Usora and Soli in the town of Tuzla, he claimed that thanks to his policy of pacification in Srebrenica County, a number of Serbian refugees had returned since he guaranteed for their safety. Still, despite the good intentions of Prefect Mladenović, he himself could not control the Muslim militia, especially the forces located in the remote villages of Srebrenica County; as we have already seen, they continuously committed crimes, murders, rapes, pillage and other forms of robbery. However, the misleading hope of the rest of the Serbs in Srebrenica that their lives would be spared did not last long. Lieutenant Josip Kurelac, the infamous commander of the 29<sup>th</sup> active battalion, which took control of the town of Srebrenica after Francetić’s offensive, made plans on how to exterminate the remaining Serbs in Srebrenica. He was assisted by Mayor Suljo Hajdar and Vera Franz, commander of the Ustasha county youth camp. This decision was made at a meeting in the town of Bratunac.<sup>66</sup> A perfect opportunity for the killers emerged on 11 June 1943, when the Partisans attacked Srebrenica in the afternoon, took command of it and drove the Ustashas out. That morning, Kurelac left Srebrenica for Bratunac due to some official activities, thus, he was not there when the Partisans entered Srebrenica. However, the Partisan left Srebrenica after three days, so by 14 July there was not a single Partisan in Srebrenica. The same day, a messenger notified Kurelac about that, who immediately set out for Srebrenica from Bratunac with his battalion. Under his order, the messenger said no resident

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<sup>65</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, item 4242.

<sup>66</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, item 2990.

must leave his or her home before he arrived.<sup>67</sup> With one part of his battalion, Kurelac went straight to Srebrenica, sending the second part of it, led by Pavao Španić and Mile Domazet, over the hills across the area of Čauš and Obod, to the village of Zalazje. Kurelac's battalion entered Srebrenica without resistance, without firing a bullet. However, Kurelac's Ustashas blocked the city on all sides, and launched a massacre of the Serbian civilians. According to the documents of the State Commission for Investigating the Crimes of Nazis and Their Allies, the massacre happened in this way: "On the second day of the Orthodox Pentecost, 14 June, the Ustashas headed by Capt. Kurelec entered Srebrenica. Then, they blocked all the entrances, intersections and streets around Srebrenica, and went around from house to house killing the Serbian men, women and children. The Ustashas killed the victims in various ways, using firearms, axes and knives, and on this occasion, 98 people were killed... The houses of the killed were later robbed and clothes, footwear and jewelry removed from the dead bodies. Sometimes, the Ustasha would cut off fingers and ears of the victims so they could easily snatch their rings or earrings. At that time, the Ustashas killed every Serb they encountered on their way."<sup>68</sup> On this occasion, the Ustashas killed the senior officer of the court in Srebrenica, Muhamed Aganović (34), and his entire family: his wife Zlata<sup>69</sup> (31) and his three children, a son (7) and two daughters, one 5 years old and the other only 13 months old.<sup>70</sup> Aganović's wife was a Serb from the Tricković family from the village of Bela Palanka. The Aganović family was killed by Kurelac himself. He also killed Džemal Plisk, a postal clerk, who was accused by an Ustasha he had attended the execution of an Ustasha by the Partisans in front of the post office. In addition, Kurelac and his Ustashas launched a search for Ibrahim Tančica, a municipal official, whose only crime was the fact that he was married to a Serb. Luckily, Tančica and his

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<sup>67</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56384.

<sup>68</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56384.

<sup>69</sup> The victim list assembled by Judge Vejsil Hadžibegić claims Ljuba, not Zlata, as the name of Judge Aganavić's wife. However, the name of Zlata is stated in this paper because that was the name used by her father, Živojin Tričković, in his report of the stated crime to the relevant body of the State Commission for the Crimes of Nazis and Their Allies (AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 7186/1).

<sup>70</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 7186/1.

family had managed to escape from Srebrenica on time.<sup>71</sup> Three Jews were also killed in the spree targeting the Serbian population of Srebrenica. An Imam from Srebrenica informed M. Hfz. Raif Ulem Medžilić, that is, Effendi Hafiz in Sarajevo about the massacre of Serbs. “On 10 June, I went to see some Muhajir around the village of Drinjača, and entered the District of Zvornik. On the same day, which was Thursday,<sup>72</sup> the Partisans unexpectedly entered Srebrenica. After heavy fighting, they occupied Srebrenica and stayed there until Monday, when they retreated to the hills. The same day, our Ustashas entered Srebrenica and committed a horrible bloodshed. All Serbian women and children were killed, including the remaining male Serbs. Then they killed an officer of the court, Muhamed Aganović, together with his wife and children, as well as the postal clerk Džemal P. from Sarajevo. After that, they went to the villages to kill the rest of the Serbian population. Srebrenica was robbed again and experienced a Golgotha again. I was informed that my family was alive. I do not believe that we should stay in Srebrenica any more, since there will be retaliation against the Muslims for this bloodshed.”<sup>73</sup> After the massacre of Srebrenica, the Ustashas headed for the nearby village of Brežani, which had already seen torture and destruction during Francetić’s offensive. They detained the remaining 17 Serbian men of the village, took them to Srebrenica and the following day, on 15 June, slaughtered them in a tavern near a bridge.<sup>74</sup> All victims of the Srebrenica massacre were buried in two mass graves, which were located 500 metres from the town, near the bridge by the former Austro-Hungarian military barracks.

The same day Kurelac entered Srebrenica, the second part of his battalion, under the command of Španić and Domazet, approached the Serbian village of Zalazje. Before them, Commander Jusuf Đozić entered the village with his unit, summoned the local people and told them soon the numerous Ustasha troops would come, but no one would hurt the locals so there was no need to leave the houses or the village. Since they knew Đozić from before, the

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<sup>71</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, envelope 40, item 4242.

<sup>72</sup> The Partisans entered Srebrenica in the evening of 11th June, and not on 10th June, as stated in the letter.

<sup>73</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, envelope 40, item 4236.

<sup>74</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56402.

Serbian locals believed him, waiting peacefully the entry of the majority of the Ustasha army. However, as soon as Španić and the rest of the Ustashes entered the village, he gathered around 39 men, women and children in front of the house of Manojlo Maksimović and ordered that they be killed with machine guns. Then the Ustashes went from house to house, slaughtering everyone they found. A total of 105 men, women and children were killed.<sup>75</sup> After that, Commander Đozić and his unit went to the Serbian village of Vitlovac and slaughtered an entire family there, that is, Milivoje Jovanović (30), his wife Mileva (25) and their four children, followed by Ruža Marković and her son Božo (12) years, and a sixty-year-old woman.<sup>76</sup> Whole families were killed in the village of Zalazje. For instance, 14 members of the family of Stojan Rakić, 8 members of the family of Živojin Rakić, 10 members of the family of Manojlo Maksimović (Manojlo and his son were wounded and thus survived), 8 members of the family of Mato Dragičević were murdered, and so on.<sup>77</sup> The victims of the massacre in the village of Zalazje remained unburied until the next day, when an Ustasha patrol came and ordered some Muslims from the village of Likari to dig some pits and bury the dead. At that moment, Timotije Lazarević approached the pile of the dead people, searching for the corpse of his wife. One of the Ustashes asked him what he was doing and if what had been done was any good. When Timotije replied that nothing was fine and that those acts were sins, the Ustasha brutally fired a bullet through his head.<sup>78</sup> During the funeral of the slain people, two infants were found still on their mothers' breasts, protected by their bodies and thus saved from a certain death. Strangely enough, the Ustashes did not finish their bloody feast of the infants and the children survived the war.<sup>79</sup>

As an order to suspend the mass killing of Serbian civilians was issued by the NDH, Colonel Lukić, Commander of 3<sup>rd</sup> Home Guard unit, demanded the investigation of this crime. On 17 June 1943, the Gestapo arrested 32 members of 29<sup>th</sup> Battalion and imprisoned them in the town of Tuzla. The

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<sup>75</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56388.

<sup>76</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 13, no item number (The list of victims of the slaughter made by Vejsil Hadžibegić, the investigating judge).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56388.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

investigations were conducted by Vejsil Hadžibegić, who happened to be a Home Guard captain but who illegally kept in touch with the Partisans. Hadžibegić carried out the investigations in a very detailed manner. He exhumed the bodies from one mass grave and made a record of each excavated corpse. Moreover, he made a separate list of the victims and, at his request, a list of all the Ustashas from 29<sup>th</sup> Battalion who took part in these massacres was submitted too. It was also very significant that Hadžibegić created all documentation during the investigation in triplicate, keeping one copy for himself, which he concealed and submitted to the UDBA (The State Security Service) after the war.<sup>80</sup> Although his investigation was hampered in various ways, Hadžibegić completed the indictment with all evidence, but the Court Martial of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Military District in Sarajevo, headed by General Prohaska and Judge Dr. Osman-beg Firdus acquitted the criminals and made a decision that all proceedings concerning the matter were being suspended and that the case was no longer valid.<sup>81</sup> The decision was justified by the fact the Ustashas who committed the massacres in Srebrenica, Brežani and Zalazje had been provoked by the killing of about twenty Ustashas, who perished in a clash with the Partisans, one of whom was Lieutenant Kurelec's brother. The Ustashas also reacted to the fact the Partisans had allegedly mutilated some bodies, as well as to the fact the Serbs joyfully welcomed the Partisans, took them food and ironically enough for the Ustasha court, put on the traditional Serb cap while hoeing the corn. Therefore, even if it were so, according to the Ustasha judges, this was quite a sufficient and legitimate motive for the massacre. As for Judge Aganović, the fact that he went fishing in the direction of the place which the Partisans had come from was sufficient proof he was a follower of the Partisans. Such were the judiciary and justice in the Independent State of Croatia.

According to the list of victims made by Judge Vejsil Hadžibegić, a total of 196 people were killed and 8 people wounded in Srebrenica, Brežani and Zalazje on 14 and 15 June.<sup>82</sup> However, this list is obviously not exhaustive, which is evident from the fact Judge Aganović's youngest daughter, who was only 13 months old, was not on the list. Moreover, 16 victims were registered

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<sup>80</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 60361.

<sup>81</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, envelope 53, item 4358.

<sup>82</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 13, no item number.

in Brežani, while there were in fact 17 of them. The strangest thing was that Hadžibegić recorded only 74 victims on the list of the victims of Srebrenica, when he himself exhumed 78 bodies during the exhumation of the above-mentioned mass grave on 20 June 1943 in the town of Srebrenica. The second mass grave was not opened, of which there is a record too.<sup>83</sup> Truth be told, according to Judge Hadžibegić's records, over 30 bodies exhumed from the mass grave could not be identified during the exhumation. In addition, some witnesses said there were 96 victims, while others claimed it was as many as 98 victims who were massacred in the town of Srebrenica.<sup>84</sup> In the village of Zalazje, Hadžibegić recorded 100 killed and 8 wounded people, but we have seen others say 105 people were killed that day, including Timotije Lazarević, who was killed the next day. However, according to the list of those killed in the village of Zalazje (Obadi), which was created by the Sase Local Committee in 1946, 119 people were killed by the Ustashas in 1943.<sup>85</sup> In any case, it is certain that more than 200 Serbs from Srebrenica, Zalazje (Obadi) and Brežani were slaughtered on 14 and 15 June of 1943. Thanks to Judge Hadžibegić, who asked to be provided with a list of the members of the 29<sup>th</sup> Battalion who took part in the massacre, the names of the members of the Ustasha units who committed the atrocity became known. According to the list, most of the 29<sup>th</sup> Battalion personnel which entered Srebrenica were mostly Muslims. The Command company and all the four companies of the 29<sup>th</sup> Battalion comprised 125 Muslims and 108 Croats. The command of 29<sup>th</sup> Battalion included 13 Croats and 2 Muslims.<sup>86</sup>

The torture of the Serbs in Srebrenica County did not stop after this massacre. It has already been stated that during the entire 1943, the Ustasha Muslim militia continued killing individual Serbs, sometimes even groups of Serbs, throughout Srebrenica County. People returning from Serbia were

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<sup>83</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, envelope 57, item 4237.

<sup>84</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, envelope 53, item 56384.

<sup>85</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 13, envelope nos. 1-2, no item number. Interestingly, the list contains the name of a single victim from the village of Zalazje (Obadi), killed before the 1943 slaughter, Stoja Josipović, killed on the Drina River in 1942. Unlike the other Serbian villages in the Srebrenica County, this village was spared the Ustasha atrocities until the slaughter committed on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1943.

<sup>86</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 2, envelope 53, item 4234.

mostly killed; troubled by various hardships, especially famine, those people tried to come back and at least partially farm their land. In 1943 and 1944, some parts of Srebrenica County were under Partisan command, and others under the Ustashas; sometimes there was even a switch between the authorities, which led to more persecutions against the population. Some parts of the County were controlled by the Chetniks, and in their occasional clashes with the Ustasha and the Partisans, the civilian population suffered again. The Serbs from Srebrenica County and other parts of Eastern Bosnia could only expect even greater torture, when in 1943 the Ustasha Colonel Stipković was killed while hunting, and was replaced by the famous cut-throat and pathological killer, Franjo Sudar, who became the commander of one part of the Black Legion in Eastern Bosnia. According to the atrocities he committed, the documents of the State Commission describe him as “the most cruel and bloodthirsty war criminal.”<sup>87</sup> Numerous individual and group killings were committed on the territory of Srebrenica County by Sudar’s Ustashas and Muslim Ustasha militia in the second half in 1943 and in 1944. The Decision of the State Commission proclaiming Franjo Sudar a war criminal provide the following description of the crimes committed by his Ustashas in the villages of Srebrenica County: “In February 1944, an Ustasha unit, members of the Black Legion, entered the village of Stanatovići, Srebrenica County, during the night and killed the family of farmer Radiša Simić in his house. Using machine guns, the Ustasha killed Ikonija Simić, Radiša’s wife, Simić Julka, a housewife, Vojislav Simić, a boy, Jovanka Simić, a girl, and the baby Mitar Simić. The same evening, the Ustashas slaughtered 5 members of the Jović family in the village of Mlečva, Srebrenica County, while in the village of Mandre they killed the fifty-eight-year-old housewife Obrenija Subašić... In June that same year, Sudar and the Ustashas came to Srebrenica, where they carried out forced mobilisation and committed killings in the nearby villages. The Ustashas raped and tortured one Vida Prodanović from the village of Slapašnica, who eventually died from the injuries. In villages of Opravdići and Brana Bacić, Srebrenica County, the

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<sup>87</sup> Savo Skoko, Milan Grahovac, *Zločini Nezavisne Države Hrvatske i nemačkog okupatora u Hercegovini 1941-1945. godini*, Document Collection, Vol. I, edited by Draga Mastilović, M.A., and Gordana Mastilović, Beograd – Gacko 2011, document no. 22, p. 141 (Decision of the State Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Crimes of Nazis and Their Allies no. 1873, Pronouncement of Franjo Sudar as a war criminal).

Ustasha slaughtered and immolated 80 men, women and children. These villages were later robbed and set on fire. The Ustashes killed four people in the village of Radonjić, three people in the village of Pepovac and one person in the village of Zagon.”<sup>88</sup> As one can see, even during 1944 there were mass killings of the Serbs in Srebrenica County, for instance, the massacres in the villages of Opravdici and Brana Bačić. The slaughter in these villages was done by the Ustasha unit under the command of Mujo Omerović.<sup>89</sup> A large number of individual or group crimes committed in 1943 and 1944 in Srebrenica County were not even recorded in the previously-mentioned Decision proclaiming Sudar a war criminal; however, they were noted down in other materials of the State Commission. Thus, for example, the crimes in the village of Blažijevići committed by one Ustasha unit under the command of Omar Mustafić included the torture and killing of seven people in Lazar Stevanović’s barn, some of whom were children, and some shepherds found around the cattle.<sup>90</sup> In 1944, the Ustashes committed crimes or individual murders in almost all Serbian villages in Srebrenica County.

According to the documents of the State Commission for Investigating the Crimes of Nazis and Their Allies, in the period from 1941 to 1945, the Ustashes killed 1076 adult men, 546 women, 210 elderly and 430 children in Srebrenica County, which amounts to a total of 2262 victims.<sup>91</sup> Apart from a few exceptions, all victims of the Ustasha terror were Orthodox Serbs. This means that in Srebrenica County during World War II, over 2200 Serbs were killed. Still, this figure is not final, because not all the victims have been listed, especially those children or infants who had not yet been given a name, therefore, they are not on the list of the victims. Out of the total number of victims (3281) in Srebrenica County during World War II, the Orthodox Serbs made up about 68 , which means more than two-thirds of all victims. Most of them were killed with firearms – 1129 of them, while 9 were hanged, 663 slain, 348 abused using various methods of torture, 95 died from torture,

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

<sup>89</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56386.

<sup>90</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, item 56389.

<sup>91</sup> AB&H, ZKUZ, box 204, no item number.

and 18 were killed in the camps.<sup>92</sup> Undoubtedly, these figures speak for themselves and ask for no further comments.

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*