



Britannica marks Srebrenica anniversary with new article, interview

Washington Post's R. Jeffrey Smith covers grim history and looks ahead

CHICAGO, July 12, 2010—Encyclopædia Britannica has marked the grim anniversary of the 1995 massacre in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a new article on the event and an interview with its author, the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist R. Jeffrey Smith of the Washington Post.

The massacre, carried out by Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995 in the midst of the bloody ethnic conflicts that followed the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation in the early 1990s, saw the killings of more than 7,000 Bosniac (Bosnian Muslim) men and boys. In the article, "[Srebrenica massacre](#)," Smith, a former bureau chief for the Post and today a national investigative correspondent, recounts in chilling detail how Bosnian Serb forces launched their attack on July 6, 1995, brushing aside Dutch peacekeepers and sowing terror and chaos among the area's Muslim population.

He writes of the events that followed:

"On the night of July 11, a column of more than 10,000 Bosniac men set off from Srebrenica through dense forest in an attempt to reach safety. Beginning the following morning, Bosnian Serb officers used UN equipment and made false promises of security to encourage the men to surrender; thousands gave themselves up or were captured, and many were subsequently executed."

This was just the beginning, however. Systematic executions escalated in the days that followed, continuing at least through July 16, at sites around the country to which the men and boys had been taken by force, most of them blindfolded.

Justice has been far from satisfactory in the aftermath of the massacre. A well-executed cover-up by Bosnian Serb forces required years of painstaking work by intelligence experts,

some of it involving satellite photography, simply to locate and identify many of the victims. A few of the more than 19,000 Bosnian Serbs that the government admits were implicated in the slaughter have been tried and convicted, but many remained in government posts as recently as five years ago.

In [an interview](#) published on the Britannica blog with Heather Campbell, a Britannica senior editor, Smith emphasized that the crimes of the Bosnian Serbs should not obscure the considerable blame shared by the United Nations, the international community, and the leaders in the region for failing to prevent the massacre. And healing has been slow, he said. In a 2000 visit to the area Smith found tension everywhere.

“It seemed as if everyone’s muscles were still clenched, their jaws tight, their feelings guarded, their passions intact but obscured,” he told Campbell. “Unfulfilled ambitions were everywhere, many of them dark and inimical to familiar Western concepts of justice and fairness.”

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