Part of the Sarajevo Film Festival’s Dealing with the Past programme, this is a unique event that connects filmmakers with organisations who are documenting and researching the Yugoslav wars of the 90’s. Nine cases that have not yet been the subject of films or TV productions will be presented, followed by one-on-one meetings between filmmakers and organisations. The aim is to create an “open source” where they can meet and collaborate, with the aim of bringing these important stories to the wider audiences, using the urgency and power that cinema can offer.

**STORY 1: A BOSNIAN TURNED MUJAHIDEEN THEN TERRORIST**

Source: Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), Bosnia and Herzegovina

The three-and-a-half-year-long war in Bosnia and Herzegovina attracted numerous foreign fighters, who came to join all sides of the conflict. Some of these volunteers came from the Arab world. Although no official figures are available, several hundred Arabs are estimated to have fought in the war as part of the Euasat unit. A number of these fighters stayed on after the war, mostly in Central Bosnia, settling down and starting families. During the war, some Bosnians were so impressed by the religious dedication of these fighters that they embraced their hard-line brand of Islam, thus sowing the seeds of the Salafist movement in the country. While no official figures are available, several thousand Bosnians are believed to be members of the movement today, including some who live in isolated village communities such as Osve and Gornja Maoca. More than 200 members of the movement have left Bosnia for Syria and Iraq to join the wars there. Around 20 of them who returned to Bosnia were put on trial before national courts and sentenced on charges of terrorism.

**STORY 2: FROM WAR DESERTERS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MOST NOTORIOUS WAR CRIME**

Source: Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), Bosnia and Herzegovina

The July 1995 massacre in the eastern Bosnian town of Srebrenica remains the worst crime committed on European soil since the Second World War. More than 8,000 men and boys were killed, and 40,000 women, children and elderly persons were expelled from Srebrenica. According to rulings by two Hague-based UN courts and several courts in the Balkans, these events constitute genocide. The courts have found various military, police and political leaders of the Republika Srpska guilty of this crime against humanity.

However, it is not widely known that a group of former police officers from Republika Srpska who were found guilty of the genocide had been deserters. These men were arrested in Serbia, where they hid after fleeing the war and were forced to return to Bosnia. The young men who refused to fight in the war were forced to go to Jahorina, or risk prosecution. They were trained to use weapons, then dispatched to Srebrenica. There, they first secured the roads to prevent anyone from fleeing, then hunted down those who had flown in the surrounding forests. Finally, some of them participated in the execution of survivors in Kravice. Some of these former police officers confessed to their crimes after being arrested in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were sentenced to five years in prison after agreeing to testify against others, among them the commander of the Jahorina Police Training Centre.

**STORY 3: PROFILE OF A MERCENARY SOLDIER – MAKING MONEY OFF THE WAR OR CRIMES**

Source: Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the Bosnian War, all armies included mercenary soldiers. People of questionable morals, usually with a criminal record, joined the side that paid them. The Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) hired mercenaries from Serbia, Ukraine and Russia; the Croat Defence Council (HVO) had mercenaries from Croatia; and the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AB&H) had mercenaries from some Arab countries. These soldiers for hire often committed the worst crimes of the conflict. Franc Kos might be the most representative example of a war mercenary in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Having served prison time for robbery and attempted murder before the war, Kos first fought with the HVO, then with the AB&H, and finally with the VRS. While serving with the AB&H, he participated in the destruction of bridges in Bijeljina used by VRS soldiers. After that, he joined the 10th Sabotage Detachment, an elite VRS unit under the direct command of Ratko Mladic, during which time he participated in the Srebrenica genocide. Kos was prosecuted after the war and is currently serving a prison sentence. It is possible to interview him in prison if approval is secured from the Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**STORY 4: CONCENTRATION CAMP MAMULA**

Source: Centre for Civic Education (CCE)

A Second World War concentration camp on the island of Lastavica, popularly known as Mamula, was dissolved 73 years ago after Italy surrendered to the Allied forces on 14 September, 1943. Ever since, an annual gathering is held on the island in September to commemorate the victims of the crimes committed there. The camp was established on 30 March, 1942, on the orders of 6th Italian Army Corps Admiral Renco Dalmaz. Its purpose was to hold anti-fascists, prisoners of war and political prisoners from Montenegro, eastern Herzegovina and southern Dalmatia. At the time, Campo Numero 11 – as it was officially known – and another prison camp in Pevlaka held 2,332 prisoners, among them 50 who died of starvation and a further 80 who were sentenced to death and executed.

The camp, which could only be accessed by sea from the East, held among its prisoners 110 women and children, the youngest being an eight-day-old baby. In February, 2015, the government of Montenegro granted a 49-year lease of the island and the fortress to the private company Oraskom the price of €1.5/m² of land and €9.90/m² of waterfront area. Oraskom plans to invest €15 million to turn the island into a holiday resort. Some in Montenegro, including those at the Centre for Civic Education, strongly oppose this decision, insisting that Mamula should be preserved in its current form to commemorate the camp victims.

Mamula is just one of many places in Montenegro where crimes were committed during the Second World War. Its history should be studied in schools, with the histories of other places of suffering. Visits to the island should be organised only as part of a special educational tourism offer. This would serve the purpose of a culture that respect human rights, while enabling visitors from other countries to learn about history of anti-fascist resistance in this part of the world.

Established in 2002, the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) is a non-governmental educational organisation. Its vision is one of Montenegro as a democratic society of responsible citizens. The mission of the CCE is to contribute to the development of civil society and participation of citizens in policy shaping and decision-making through the education of various actors in the fields of democracy, human rights and European integration.

**STORY 5: DEPORTATIONS OF REFUGEES FROM SREBRENICA**

Source: Humanitarian Law Centre

The fall of the UN’s “safe haven” of Srebrenica into the hands of the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) commenced with the entry into the town of soldiers from the 10th Sabotage Detachment of the VRS on 11 July, 1995. Over the following days, VRS soldiers systematically captured and executed Bosniak men and boys found in Srebrenica, including many who were hunted down while they tried to flee. By 16 July, more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were executed or starved to death, aged to escape and reached the border at the Drina River, hoping they would be allowed to cross into Serbia and find protection there. However, their attempt to cross the border was prevented by the border guards of the
STORY 6: CRIMINAL COMPLAINT OVER CRIMES COMMITTED IN DOBOJ

Source: Humanitarian Law Centre

Today, Radija Bozović works as the chief security officer for the management of the Serbian football club Partizan. Until recently, he worked as a football manager in Montenegro, and for a while he was also the president of the Montenegrin football club Zeta. In 1994, Bozović was a member of Serbia’s state security service. In 1997, he joined the Serbian Interior Ministry’s special operations state security service. In 1994, he participated in deportations, killings, torture and witnessed sadistic, cold-hearted and enthusiastic killings of prisoners by VRS soldiers. As one of the leading NGOs in Serbia, Helsinki Committee (HCRS) examines the situation of human rights in Serbia against country’s overall socioeconomic and political context. Dealing with past is the organization’s landmark program. Through rich publishing and film production, as well as the very new web portal YU historia, the Committee is dealing with the roots of Serbian nationalism, the history of Yugoslavia, as well as the causes of its disintegration and war. HCRS is notably engaged in overcoming Serb-Albanian rancour since 1997.

STORY 7: SERBIA AND KOSOVO: INTERCULTURAL ICEBREAKERS

Source: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia

The art colony Serbia and Kosovo: Intercultural icebreakers is made up of a group of young artists from Serbia and Kosovo. They have worked on joint art campaigns and met artists from both countries, which changed their lives. The participants were children during, or born after, the war in Kosovo, during which they were witnesses of massive violations of human rights. They experienced different traumas during their childhood years. The young artists from Serbia and Kosovo grew up with stereotypes: one another and feared meeting one another. Visiting the country of the “enemy” was a challenging experience for those involved.

STORY 8: ZEHRA

Source: Medica Zenica

In 2014, Medica Zenica conducted research on the long-term effects of wartime rape and the coping strategies of survivors in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The participating Medica Zenica, combined quantitative and qualitative research methods. The qualitative part of the study relied on life-story interviews with survivors of war rape. After publishing the research report, researchers decided to make short films based on the collected life stories. In each of the seven films, a professional actress reads the life story of an interviewee. The short film screening at the Medica Zenica Film Festival is based on the life story of a 54-year-old woman who was 32 when she was raped. Established in April 1993, Medica Zenica is the oldest expert non-governmental organisation that provides comprehensive assistance, support and care to women and children survivors of war-time and post-war violence, including to the victims of war rape and other forms of wartime torture, the victims of post-war sexual and family violence, and victims of human trafficking. Over the past two-and-a-half decades, Medica Zenica has provided more than 450,000 services to its beneficiaries all around Bosnia and Herzegovina, and has published more than 90 publications.

STORY 9: CRIMINALS AMONG US

Source: Association for Social Research and Communications

On October 13, Radio of Bosnia and Herzegovina reported on a prisoner exchange, as part of which the prisoners of the Batkovic prison camp were to be released. At that date, Senija was at work on her new job at Himzo Bajric’s hair salon in Gracanica. She was shaving a customer when the radio reported that 180 men from Brcko had been exchanged and that only Edhem was not among them. A few tears rolled down her cheeks, but nobody at the salon realised what was happening. She did not tell anyone. She thought she might have misunderstood the reporter or that maybe the reporter was wrong. However, in a new report broadcast at 11 am, the reporter repeated that Edhem had been killed, confirming Senija’s dreadful suspicion. “I continued working although it was hard,” she remembers. She asked an apprentice to bring her a glass of water and a bit of sugar to help her calm down, then continued to work. “I did not even consider stopping because I knew I needed that job to feed my two children.” Although her colleagues insisted she take a break, she refused. After work, she went home and shared the tragic news with her daughter Dijana. Dijana started crying, Senija continues her fight for survival. Later she asked the International Committee of the Red Cross for confirmation of Edhem’s death. “Edhem was killed at Batkovic camp, near Bijeljina. Edhem was held prisoner in two camps; first at Camp Luka in Brcko, then Camp Batkovic near Bijeljina. In Brcko, he survived torture and witnessed sadistic, cold-hearted and enthusiastic killings of prisoners by Goran Jelisic, known as the Serb “Adolf.” At Batkovic, Edhem survived mock executions staged by Fikret Smajlovic, known as Pikic, and Dzemal Zahirovic, known as Spazjer. On 114th day, as local villagers and athletes, police and other officials, and local residents, 155 deportees crowded into the Batkovic camp to work on farms. Edhem run to the nearest villager and shouted on the ground, but he gathered strength to raise his voice. “Shoot, you cannot kill me!”

The Association for Social Research and Communication (UDIK) is a regional non-governmental organisation for human rights and international humanitarian law, established in 2013. UDIK has two offices, one in Sarajevo and the other in Brcko. In order to assist in efforts to deal with the region’s brutal past, UDIK researches post-war memorials built in the former Yugoslavia, collects and publishes documents on war crimes committed in the 1990s, educates young people and history teachers, and maps post-war memorials to create a Central Register of Monuments.

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