eurozine

**Slavenka Drakulic**

# Triumph of evil

Radislav Krstic, General of the Republika Srpska army and Deputy Commander of Drina Corps, was the first war criminal sentenced for genocide by the ICTY. He was sentenced to 46 years of prison for ordering the deaths of over seven thousand Muslim men were executed, in the UN safe area of Srebrenica, between 13 and 19 July 1995, while 30,000 people were forcibly deported. Slavenka Drakulic witnessed the trial and traces Krstic's biography.

General Radislav Krstic looked worried as he entered the courtroom limping slightly; he, too, had paid a high price in this war, when he lost his leg stepping on a mine in December of 1994. He is a slim man of fifty dressed in a dark jacket with his grayish, thinning hair combed over his bald head –– a visible sign of his male vanity.

Seated hunched behind his desk he cast nervous glances at the judges, a worried frown furrowing his forehead As I looked at him, everything about him told me that he felt uneasy in this place, with lawyers and judges dressed up in black and red costumes like actors in a theatre But here, unlike in the theatre, the action is for real and deadly serious. From the very beginning of his trial, that lasted more than a year, Krstic wore an expression of weariness on his face. And since the very beginning, he looked to me like a trapped man, a weak man, a man full of fear.

As I sat there, I remembered a scene from a documentary on television about the Republika Srpska army entering Srebrenica in the afternoon of 11 July 1995. In that short fragment, one could see General Ratko Mladic, Commander–in–Chief of the RS army, ordering his soldiers to attack the enclave. What struck me was that General Mladic, Krstic's direct superior, summoned him not by his title or his surname, but by his nick–name, Krle, as if they were at some kind of private party. "Krle, come here!" he barks. It sounds as if he is calling a dog to heel. Looking at the ground in front of him, Krstic follows him, but not very willingly. This image has stayed with me as a symbol of their relationship: an aggressive domineering master and a submissive servant; a relationship that Krstic would pay for with a 46–year jail sentence.

In his opening statement, the prosecutor, Mark Harmon, said:

> This is a case about the triumph of evil, a story about how officers and soldiers of the Bosnian Serb army, men who professed to be professional soldiers, men who professed to represent the ideals of a distinguished and Serbian past –– organized, planned, and willingly participated in genocide or stood silent in the face of it. The authors of these foul deeds have left a legacy that has stained the reputation of the Serbian

people and has disgraced honourable profession of arms.

But things were not so clear–cut when the trial started. When I first saw Krstic the way he talked, the tone of his voice, the consideration he showed when he listened to victims, and the air of naiveté about him –– he didn't look like a man who could have taken part in such horrible deeds. All I could see was that he looked anxious and frightened, but not like a vicious bully poisoned by hatred and hungry for revenge. In the documentary, he stood dressed in his uniform next to General Mladic in Srebrenica, but he didn't look like a military man, in the same way that Mladic did; he didn't even look like an aggressive person. He was too silent, too withdrawn and too intellectual; perhaps more of an army bureaucrat, a person who would prefer to shuffle papers at his desk than lead soldiers into battle. The image he wanted to convey to the tribunal was that of a person with integrity, a professional soldier, but this is another matter.

Krstic reminds me of my father. He ended up as a professional soldier after WW II ended. To become an officer in Tito's victorious army was a good career opportunity, better than demobilizing and going back to being a carpenter. But I always thought of my father as more of white–collar man, with an appetite for elegant clothes, good food and dancing at the Officer's Club –– things that would make a true soldier soft. At the end of his military career, he was indeed shuffling papers but because of bad health he had to take early retirement. This is exactly what Krstic would have done, if it hadn't been for the war.

As Krstic sat there, I wondered if his uniform had the special smell. My father's uniform always smelled of a mixture of a tobacco and vinegar. It was in the early fifties and he probably had only one uniform. I remember, my mother would press it every Sunday afternoon on the kitchen table, while my father listened to a football match on the radio, his head bent close to it. Mother would first pour water into a metal bowl and add a few drops of red wine vinegar. "That will freshen–up the colour", she would say. Then she would dip a thin piece of cloth in the bowl, wring it out and smooth it onto the trousers on the table. We did not have an electric iron yet. She would heat up the heavy black iron on the stove and then press it firmly onto the cloth causing a cloud of steam to rise, hissing, from the table. Father's uniform was always pressed perfectly, but every time I kissed him I would smell this pungent odor.

Krstic also reminds me of my father because, without his uniform, my father was a different man, divest of power. Suddenly, he was smaller, somehow weaker, quieter. Sitting there in the courtroom dressed in a dark blue blazer, Krstic, without his uniform, also looked lost. His uniform was his identity and it must have been so humiliating for him to sit there dressed as a simple civilian.

Because he reminds me so much of my father, it was some time before I realized that Krstic is, in fact, is of my generation, not my father's. When I heard that he had been arrested in 1998 by SFOR, I did not realize this immediately because I did not know anyone, from my generation, who had joined the army. It was not an occupation that the young men I knew would ever think of. We were city kids, studying fancy subjects like art history, psychology or philosophy at the Philosophical Faculty of Zagreb.

It was different if you were born in a remote Bosnian village. Becoming a professional soldier was often the only way out of the village, especially if your parents were poor peasants. There were three kinds of uniforms that a peasant boy like Krstic could choose from: a soldier's, a policeman's or a priest's uniform. Any of these uniforms would guarantee him clothes, a pair of shoes and free lodging and one mouth less to feed for his parents. But even if peasants didn't need the money there was an enormous respect for a uniform in a village. A uniform, any uniform, means power, and power is respected and feared. And even if Yugoslav society was supposedly egalitarian, to become an officer meant a rise in social status.

There were many reasons for the young Krstic to become an officer. Besides getting out into the world, an officer can count on a decent wage and, if he marries, an apartment. This was a huge advantage from our point of view. As superior as we considered ourselves we had to live with our parents in their apartment –– even when we got married and had babies –– because we could not afford to rent something for ourselves. To have one's own apartment was beyond our dreams. But in spite of these advantages, we knew that, under their uniforms, Krstic and the like were still country boys, out of place in the city. And, although Krstic's wife certainly ironed his uniform with an electric iron, he somehow seemed to belong more to my father's generation than to mine.

But there were other things that did make him part of my generation: the cult of Tito's personality, the glorification of the Partisan's struggle against fascism, a communist revolution during the WW III, and most importantly the ideology of brotherhood and unity. From that point of view, Krstic's childhood and youth were probably not so different from mine. To grow up in the city or in a small village means to be worlds apart. But some things were the same. In Vlasenica and Han Pijesak, where Krstic went to school, he learned from almost the same school textbooks as I did. We both grew up hearing stories like the one about young Tito cooking a smoked pig's head for his little brothers and sisters (who got diarrhea afterwards), and the one about Bosko Buha, a boy who was a partisan courier. We both would have learned all partisan offensives by heart. I am sure that, in the early sixties, Krstic would have gone with his class to visit the monument to the battle of Sutjeska at Tjentiste, as I did, and that they would also sing "*Po sumama i gorama...*" Whole classes of school children used to see obligatory movies about the partisans –– *Neretva, Kozara, Desant na Drvar*. On 25 May, the Youth Day and Tito's birthday, Krstic would have watched the celebrations in a sports stadium in Belgrade. He would have watched a relay race held in Tito's honor followed by a spectacular gymnastics display. Later on, he and his family probably also enjoyed the TV–serial, "*Pozoriste u kuci*" laughed at *Ckalja* and ate *sarma* on New Year's Eve. Even without knowing for sure, I can guess that his first car would have been a little Fiat 750, nicknamed *Fico*, and that he spent his summer holidays in Brela or Makarska on the Adriatic coast.

And neither he or I ever thought that things would be different one day. Yugoslavia seemed so safe. Brotherhood and unity seemed so real. We grew up together, went to school together –– Serbs and Croats and Muslims –– befriended each other, got married, had children, never thinking that nationality would ever split us apart. The only exception were the Albanians. The few of who lived in Croatia mostly worked as goldsmiths or in ice–cream parlors. In Serbia, they did the dirtiest and most poorly paid jobs. It was difficult to mix with them, not only because of the language barrier –– they all spoke Serbo–Croatian –– or because of their low social status, but because they came from a different world altogether.

In his opening remarks at the tribunal, speaking about his life Krstic confirmed that, "Never had there been any incidents, anything that would have been caused by national intolerance. Quite contrary. We all went to school together, we socialized together and we had a great respect for each other. This applied also to the elderly population of the village, but it applied in particular to the younger generation." I know what Krstic meant; I would have said the same. I remember my school pals from Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia, with their strange names and strange dialects. There was an awareness of differences, of course, but that it did not bother us at all.

Apart from school, the army was one of the main instruments of creating brotherhood and unity. Young conscripts were sent far away from home to get acquainted with their country. The Yugoslav National army was considered to be the people's army and was seen as "the biggest school of brotherhood and unity", one of the very guarantees of unity. It is truly a terrible paradox of this war that the same army that was so important for building brotherhood and unity among the peoples of Yugoslavia, turned into the main instrument against it.

The urge to overcome national divisions was revealed in a census held in 1981 in which some 1,2 million people declared themselves to be "Yugoslav". This made this group the sixth largest "nation" in Yugoslavia at that time. These people were mostly of the post–war generation, often urban, professional, or from mixed marriages. This could have been the beginning of a Yugoslav melting pot, but it did not last long.

When he spoke about his past, especially his years in Sarajevo where he lived from 1972 to 1981, General Krstic sounded nostalgic, almost romantic. He had married, had a daughter and lived in his own apartment. "Those were beautiful years of my life." said Krstic. But, he said, there was something else about Sarajevo that he especially appreciated, something that other cities in Yugoslavia did not have. "This spirit of unity was particularly pronounced in the town of Sarajevo. We never inquired about each other's ethnic backgrounds. We all felt like residents of Sarajevo" he said, perhaps for a moment forgetting that he was in a court room and that his words might sound unconvincing to the judges and to the public.

In 1991 the war started, first in Slovenia, then in Croatia. The break up of Yugoslavia was painful and horrible for Krstic as well, as he himself told at the tribunal. Indeed, it must have been distressing for him to see how everything that he believed in went down the drain. In those years I thought a lot about my father and how this would have affected him. He was already dead by then; he died in 1989. "Just in time" I caught myself thinking during the war in Croatia. I would not want him to see Yugoslavia falling apart because of the nationalistic forces that he fought against all his life. I would not want him to see a partisan general turned pro–fascist leader, like Franjo Tudjman, coming into power in Croatia. This must also have been confusing and frightening for Krstic. He was not a man of politics and, as he said himself, he had underestimated the role of politics in bringing the war about.

But Krstic still believed that Bosnia would not succumb to war. He, together with the majority of Bosnians, was convinced that war could not occur in such an ethically mixed country. Here I agree with him. I was in Sarajevo too and I felt the same relaxed, tolerant atmosphere there. When the war in Croatia started, people in Sarajevo used to say: "Nobody could divide us, Muslims, Serbs and Croats live here on the same floor". Nevertheless, even though there

had been no ethnic clashes in 45 years and one third of the children were from mixed marriages, in April of 1992, war broke out in Bosnia.

The year 1992 finds Krstic in Pristina. Around him officers of non−Serbian nationalities were leaving the Yugoslav National Army corps. Finally, in mid 1992, after Bosnia proclaimed independence, Krstic understood that it was his turn to choose where he wanted to live, in Serbia or Bosnia. As he was born there, he chose Bosnia. But when he arrived in Bosnia, he saw that it had become a deeply divided country. He was a Serb, and perhaps for the first time Krstic was in the position to fully realize the implications of this. For him, as for so many others, his nationality became his destiny. So, in June 1992 with the war already in full swing, he joined the Republika Srpska army.

Up to this point I could follow him, I could see how his life unfolded and I could understand his disappointments, confusion, his naiveté, his fear. I can also understand his trust in politicians, as in a communist country politicians are supposed to solve problems. Krstic was convinced that the politicians must find a solution, and in this he was not alone. But this was precisely part of the problem. People placed so much faith in a political solution that they did not see through a politician like Slobodan Milosevic. The country was falling apart and his only goal was to stay in power; even if the price for that was war. The Serbian media whipped up nationalist fervour, spreading propaganda until the people were completely convinced that they really were threatened by "others". The Croatian and Bosnian media followed suit in this frenzy of nationalism. Vukovar was already destroyed by the Serbian army, Dubrovnik was shelled, Sarajevo was besieged but Krstic had always harbored some naïve hope that there could be a political solution to the Bosnian situation.

While I look at him in the courtroom there are moments, I admit, when I feel sorry for him. I think about what he said and what he did not say but I especially think about something that nobody asked him, the most important question: How is it possible that a person who grew up without ethnic prejudices, a professional officer who was educated in the JN Army in the spirit of brotherhood and unity, could end up being accused of genocide of his Muslim neighbours? If he was really so ethnically non−biased, if he enjoyed ethically mixed Sarajevo so much, why did he support the nationalist politics of Republika Srpska? How do you find yourself in the position of ordering the killing of people whom, only yesterday, you were protecting? How could anyone with any integrity do that?

Perhaps Krstic acted against all his instincts, behaved contrary to everything he had ever learned and loved −− in effect he denied his very being. But surely this would have cost him his sanity. Or he must have truly convinced himself that in joining the RS army, he would save his own life and that he would be acting in defense of his own people.

His situation was dramatic, but it was not any more dramatic than anyone else's. Once the war started, people had to choose, they had to take sides. Sometimes this meant splitting up families. If people were not prepared to take sides they often had to leave the country. There were many such cases. But there were also people of different nationalities who continued living together throughout the war, especially in Sarajevo. Yet, the majority did take sides. Krstic was a professional soldier, for him this meant joining the RS army.

At this point, at the beginning of the war in Bosnia, Krstic, who loved Sarajevo so much, chose not to go back to the city. Perhaps this was because the city

was besieged, but also because he felt no longer a Sarajevan. Having a peasant background he preferred a village, he felt safer there. Sarajevans used to say that the war in Bosnia was a war of peasants against citizens –– led by people like Radovan Karadzic from a small village in Montenegro –– who did not understand city life, who never really fitted in, who felt looked down on by city–dwellers and now were in a position to take revenge.

Once Krstic decided to join the Republika Srpska army, the rest more or less was determined by circumstances. During the next three years he was promoted several times, the last time a month before Srebrenica, when he become a Lieutenant–General and a deputy Chief of Staff of the Drina Corps. In July 1995, the Drina Corps was given an assignment in Srebrenica and Zepa. At the same time the Chief of Staff of the Republika Srpska army, General Ratko Mladic, took over command in Srebrenica. For Krstic this was a definitive moment, a moment when his compliant character 'allowed' him to choose the wrong side, when he "agreed to evil", as a prosecutor Harmon said. A moment when he should have resisted the forces of circumstance: that is if we assume that Krstic was against deportation and extermination of Muslims. But, in fact, Krstic could not resist the force of circumstance, he did not have strength for that. Krstic was an opportunist, he went with the tide. In the three years after he joined the RS army, he slowly arrived at the point where he could no longer refuse to obey orders of General Mladic. But, in Srebrenica he must have been aware of the consequences.

I do not think that Krstic is an evil man, a pathological case who hates Muslims and wanted to destroy them. On the contrary. But he does strike me as a man who is struggling with his own personality. He is a weak man, a man who is afraid to say No to a higher authority. But, as happened to millions of others, it was a "policy of small steps", of everyday decisions and concessions, of collaboration on a small scale, that built up to the situation where Krstic either had to obey or oppose Mladic's decision to kill the Muslims from Srebrenica. He could have disobeyed Mladic, he could have resigned or he could have issued a counter–order. Instead, he decided to do nothing as to oppose Mladic could prove to be too costly for him.

He tried to explain this to the tribunal: "...not in my wildest dreams was I able to undertake any measures. We weren't allowed to talk about anything like that, let alone take steps against a commanding officer, regardless of my knowledge that he or somebody else had perhaps committed a war crime." But he did not offer any reason to the judges, other than his own cowardice.

The fact is that Krstic did not object when Mladic took over command of his troops and started issuing orders; he remained silent when Mladic threatened to exterminate people in Srebrenica. Krstic claimed that he did not know about the mass executions but he probably would not have done anything to stop them anyway. When execution started, it was too late. Mladic was too powerful. As an officer, you don't challenge your superiors; certainly not if you served in the Yugoslav National Army before. Every army is, by definition, an authoritarian institution, but a communist army is even more so. And, although this is no justification for Krstic's behavior, Mladic was not the kind of person one could oppose without fearing the consequences. According to his own words, Krstic was scared of Mladic, both in Srebrenica and later on. Several times in cross–examination he said that he was afraid for his family and for himself, but the judges seemed unimpressed. Obviously, in their eyes that was not an excuse. For them there are such things as laws of war, moral duty, ethics, and an officer's honor. It was his duty to prevent war crimes and, if he

could not prevent this, he should have reported it. He did neither. The fact that Krstic insisted that he did not know about the crimes at the time should not have prevented him from reporting the moment he found out about them. But perhaps this idea of individual responsibility was all too abstract for General Krstic. After all, where could he have learned this? Communist society, as well as the nationalist one that replaced it, is a collective society; there is no such a thing as individual responsibility because there is little individualism.

Yet, one must ask oneself: how does your neighbour become your enemy? How do you internalize the enemy and how long does it take for this to happen? By the time Srebrenica fell, the Serbian propaganda machine, especially the television, had been demonizing the enemy for almost ten years; that is the Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Albanians. Srebrenica was possible only because of a long psychological preparation. By 1995, the Muslims had become non–people –– as happened to the Jews in WW II. When asked why he killed Jews, a member of a German Reserve Police Battalion 101 in Poland answered: "I considered them non–humans." The extermination of Jews was made possible by the preceding ten years of "small steps". It started with little things such as not being allowed to go to the hairdresser or the local shop to buy flowers and moved on to not being allowed to use public transport: "small steps" on the road that would eventually lead to the gas chamber.

In Bosnia numerous war crimes had already been committed before 1995, on all sides in the name of the nation. It seems that the offensive on the Srebrenica enclave was a revenge prompted by an earlier attack of the Bosnian Army on the Serbian neighbouring village of Kravice, when many Serbian civilians were killed. Therefore, killing Muslims may have seemed justified in the eyes of the perpetrators, including Krstic himself. However, the matter is clouded by the fact that what happened in Srebrenica was not just a military operation with some "collateral damage" –– but an attempt to wipe out the Muslim men. More than 7,000 men were summarily executed while 30,000 women, children and elderly people were forcefully deported in order to ethnically clean the Drina valley area. This was done, according to president of the Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadzic, in order to "create an unbearable situation of total insecurity with no hope of future survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica and Zepa." But there is always one person who manages to survive even summarily exacutions. One such man appeared as a witness at the Krstic trial to give evidence on the most systematic killing operation since WW II. "O" was just 17 years old when he experienced the following:

> Some people shouted 'Give us some water first then kill us.' I was really sorry that I would die thirsty and I was trying to hide amongst the people as long as I could, like everybody else. I just wanted to live for another second or two. And when it was my turn, I jumped out with what I believe were four other people...I was walking with my head bent down and I wasn't feeling anything...I saw rows of killed people. It looked like they had been lined up one row after the other... And then I thought that I would die very fast, that I would not suffer. And I just thought that my mother would never know where I had ended up.

While "O" was speaking, the camera zoomed in on Krstic's face. Krstic looked visibly shaken by his words. He did not know where to look. This underlined the impression that he did feel compassion for his victims even more. I had the feeling that it was almost unbearable for him to listen to "O". It was as if this

young man, who had survived by chance, finally brought home to Krstic the reality of his deeds much more than an abstract number of 7,000 men dead, ever could.

This image of Krstic as a weak man with a passive character, a victim of circumstances, lasted until the prosecutor started to cross–examine him. Then the perception of his character suddenly changed.

Krstic line of defence was simple. He did not deny that war crimes had been committed by the RS army, but he denied that he issued orders for these deeds. Mladic outranked Krstic when he took over command, and issued orders directly to the battalion commanders. Day after day, during cross–examination, Krstic tried to convince the prosecutor and the judges that he had nothing to do with the entire operation. His strategy was complete denial. He claimed that he did not participate in planning, organizing or the ordering of killing and deportation, and he was not even there at the time. From the afternoon of 12 July he was in Zepa. Moreover, he knew and heard nothing about what was happening. In fact, he first learned of the atrocities at his own trial.

His answer to the prosecutor's questions was usually "I don't know", even when this seemed highly improbable. He must have known. For example, as early as 17 July 1995, an adviser to Radovan Karadzic publicly denied accusations concerning the torture, killing and deportation of Muslim civilians. "The Muslim civilian population was treated well by the Serbs" he said. But press reports about the suspicion of war crimes committed in Srebrenica were already being published, even the Chinese news agency wrote about them on 17 July –– but no, General Krstic had not heard any of that.

What was even more absurd is that when a prosecutor asked him if, when he was driving to Potocari, a UN post near Srebrenica –– he had seen any of the numerous busses and trucks that had been sent to transport people out of the enclave, Krstic said he had not noticed. We are talking here about events happening in an area covering 35 square metre. It would be like me saying that I didn't know that there was a big football game going on in the town of Karlovac, that I did not notice a convoy of some 50 to 60 busses coming into town, or thousands of football fans in the streets, or the traffic jams, and police everywhere...and this while I am, say, a deputy mayor!

As the prosecutor proved, it was simply impossible for a person in his position not to notice what was happening around him. To deport 30,000 people and kill 7,000, that is a very big and difficult logistic operation. These extermination procedures involved the co–operation, knowledge and participation of countless soldiers, as McCloskey pointed out.

> First, it involved the issuing, the transmitting, and the dissemination of orders to all units that participated in the movement, the killing, the burial, and reburial of the victims. It involved the assembling of a sufficient number of vehicles and buses, trucks, to transport the thousands of victims from the location of their capture and surrender to detention centers that were located near the execution sites. It involved obtaining fuel for these vehicles...providing guards and security for each of the vehicles...identifying detention centers that were secure enough and in close proximity to the execution fields. It involved obtaining sufficient numbers of blindfolds and ligatures so these prisoners could be bound before they were

> executed...sufficient men to secure the actual detention facilities themselves, to guard the prisoners for the days or for the hours that they were kept there before they were executed...obtaining transportation...organizing the killing squads and arming the killing squads...the requisitioning and transportation of heavy–duty equipment necessary to dig the large mass graves and it required men to bury the thousand of victims who we were alter to discover.

In September that same year, in a systematic cover–up operation, mass graves were dug up and the bodies were transferred to a variety of distant locations. Even if he himself was in Zepa, General Krstic was fully aware of this and it was his officers and soldiers from the Drina Corps who participated in this operation.

At the tribunal Krstic was obviously lying and unconvincingly at that. But this was his strategy. Not, it seems, in order to get a reduced sentence. For this he need not make an effort to lie, because he knew that he would be sentenced not only for his individual, but also for his commanding responsibility. More likely, he lied in the futile expectation that he could save face and his self–respect, hoping that all the blame for Srebrenica would fall on Mladic. But there could be another reason for his bare faced lies. Psychologically, for him, his responsibility could be proven only if he was caught with the gun smoking in his hand. Besides, in Bosnia or Serbia or Croatia one does not necessarily have to be ashamed of lying. I remember how astonished some Western ambassadors, politicians and envoys were after a meeting with Mladic, Karadzic or Milosevic: they would look straight into the eyes of Lord Owen, Karl Bilt or Richard Holbrok and lie without compunction and would give their word and sign treaties without even thinking twice. It took time before foreigners realized that life in post–communist societies –– as well in communist ones –– is immersed in a culture of lies. There is no moral code that tells you "Thou Shalt Not Lie!" On the contrary, you can see with your own eyes that to lie is to survive and profit, to tell the truth is to be stupid.

If there was ever a chance of Krstic convincing the prosecution, the judges and the public that he was a professional officer and a man of integrity, this was definitely shattered when McCloskey produced a tape–recording of an intercepted conversation between Krstic and his major Obradovic. Before he played the tape McCloskey asked Krstic: "General Krstic, did you ever order the killing of Muslims?" Krstic answered vehemently: "No". When the tape was played it became clear why McCloskey asked him this question.

Krstic: Are you working down there?
Obrenovic: Of course we're working.
Krstic: Good.
Obrenovic: We've managed to catch a few more, either by gunpoint or in mines.
Krstic: Kill them all, God damn it!
Obrenovic: Everything is going according to a plan.
Krstic: Single one must not be left alive.
Obrenovic: Everything is going according to a plan. Everything.
Krstic: Way to go, chief. The Turks are probably listening to us. Let them listen, the mother–fuckers. (Turks is a derrogative name for Muslims)

There was a short pause after the prosecutor played the tape. He looked at Krstic and everyone's eyes turned on him. General Krstic lowered his head and

covered his face with his hands. It was a gesture of sheer despair. It looked as if he would start to cry any moment. It must have been clear to him that this was the end of everything –– of his hope to come out of this trial as a man of integrity and his honor as an officer intact. This was the end of it and he knew it. He was devastated. Sitting in the courtroom behind the table he looked shrunken and vulnerable. I felt pity for him for the second time during his trial, because he had miscalculated so badly...He evidently had not counted on the prosecution possessing such an incriminating piece of evidence.

"General Krstic, did you, on 2 August 1995, tell Major Obrenovic to kill the people he captured that day?" asked the prosecutor. Suddenly, in a dramatic transformation Krstic almost shouted at him: "No, Mr. McCloskey! This is one hundred percent montage! On that day I didn't talk to Obrenovic at all. Second I did not recognize the other participant in the conversation, and especially not my own voice, myself. I repeat: This is a montage, one hundred percent, rigged."

This was the only moment during the entire trial when Krstic reacted strongly, almost militantly. It seems to me that it was a moment when he got really scared that, indeed, he had been caught lying and his actions had finally caught up with him. Krstic had given the order to kill after all. He had actually said the words, gave the order –– even if he denied it. The conversation had been intercepted by two different sources but eventually, the court did not need to take it into consideration in sentencing him –– they had enough other proofs.

By the end of the day, the prosecutor felt pity for Krstic as well. Apparently, after Srebrenica, Krstic signed a document supporting Mladic in the power struggle with Karadzic. At that time, Krstic admitted himself, he was aware that Mladic had committed war crimes. "I had to sign it because all other generals signed it...can you imagine what would happened to me if I had not signed it?" he said, his voice quivering slightly. McCloskey looked at him clearly feeling sorry for him. Then he listed names of five generals who did not sign the document, but who were alive and well. He asked Krstic the question that every single person in that courtroom wanted to ask. "Why didn't you just retire, General, when this all happened?...Was that the right choice, General? Did you make the right choice? " It was a *coup de grâce*. General Krstic, crushed and demoralized, could only reply "I'd rather not answer that question."

The man who entered a courtroom, a naïve man compliant and ready to please but who did not have the guts to confront Mladic, himself a victim of circumstances –– this man was at last exposed for what he was. This trial was evidence of the collapse of a society that had lost its values, of an army that had lost its honor and of a man who had sold his soul when, in July 1995, he agreed to allow evil. Perhaps Krstic was naïve enough to truly believe that, if he could outwit the prosecution, Mladic would be viewed as the only culprit? "But you were there, General Krstic, You heard...You gave orders...You knew...You were there when they began to separate men from the women, children and old people. You could *not* not have seen their physical condition. You could *not* not have heard the screams of the men who were taken to the building called the White House as they were being beaten."

These were Judge Almiro Rodrigues's final words and perhaps this speech best expressed the essence of Krstic's responsibility. Krstic wanted to portray himself as a neutral bystander, but in war there are no bystanders. In Srebrenica, General Krstic was most definitely heavily implicated.

What is extraordinary about this man is that he seems so ordinary. Nothing in his past indicated that he would ever be capable of taking part in genocide. This is why his case makes you wonder: what would I do in such a situation? Would I be a hero, could I say "No" to General Mladic?

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