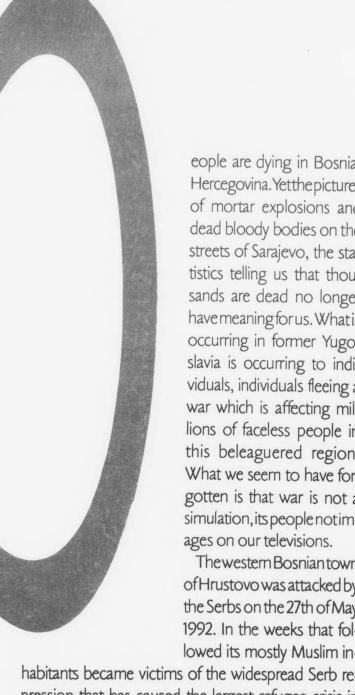
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lowed its mostly Muslim inhabitants became victims of the widespread Serb repression that has caused the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Five Muslim families from the Hrustovo district recently arrived in Fredericton as part of Canada's refugee assistance program. We spoke to them during their brief stay at a Fredericton hotel.

During our first meeting it was clear that these people were still experiencing the terror of Serb ethnic cleansing. When asked for their names they hesitated, fearing a Serb reprisal here in Fredericton. Four men agreed to speak to us, and in keeping with our promise we will not use their full names. Although we wanted to interview the women, we noticed that the men spoke for them, even providing "eye-witness" accounts for events they had not seen. Because of the delicate nature of questions dealing with

the mistreatment of Muslim women, we decided not to press the issue. We asked each of the men to recall the events before, during, and after the Serb attacks on Hrustovo. They told us of Serb controlled radio and television using propaganda to instill fears in the Serb population. Tales of rape and wholesale slaughter committed by the Bosnian army were heard on a daily basis. This must have caused fears among the Croats and the Muslims; why were these stories reported and what would be the repercussions?

What is so irrational and disturbing about this war is the relationship between its combatants. The Hrustovo district was an ethnically-mixed community, located between Croat and Serb villages. People came to Hrustovo on a daily basis to shop. They saw each other every day, grew up together, went to school together, played soccer together, and drank together. Two of the refugees, Hikmet and Enver, told us of conversations with Serb friends shortly before the attacks. Hikmet had been in a bar, Enver driving a cab. Neither believed any harm would come to the residents of Hrustovo when the Serb army ultimately arrived. The Serbs were people they both knew. All of the men, when finally captured, recognized at least a few of their Serb guards. A few were ashamed of their actions; one offered Enver cigarettes. Others only offered insults.

eople are dying in Bosnia- On the 27th the Banja Luka corps Hercegovina. Yetthepictures and the Knin corps could be seen on of mortar explosions and the hills above Hrustovo before they dead bloody bodies on the shelled the village and descended into streets of Sarajevo, the sta- it. Abriefresistance was made by poorly tistics telling us that thou- armed Muslim villagers. There were sands are dead no longer rumours that the killing of two or three have meaning for us. What is soldiers by either a Muslim priest or a occurring in former Yugo- bartender set off the extreme and arbislavia is occurring to indi- trary violence in the town. The Serbs, viduals, individuals fleeing a most of whom were intoxicated, looted war which is affecting mil- and burned at will. When the villagers lions of faceless people in saw the mosque in flames they knew this beleaguered region. that "it was finished."



A memory of better times: A Christian the price of a sheep.

What we seem to have for- Three of the four refugees interviewed peasant and the muslim butcher discuss gotten is that war is not a escaped into the woods only to be

The western Bosnian town the shooting and escaped before the Serbs arrived.

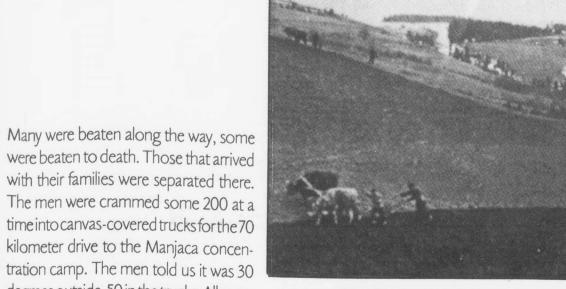
1992. In the weeks that fol- eventually rounded up and shipped off to a micro camp in the nearby city of Sanjski Most. before the prisoners could have a bowel movement. Typhus was widespread. sion of Manjaca made conditions



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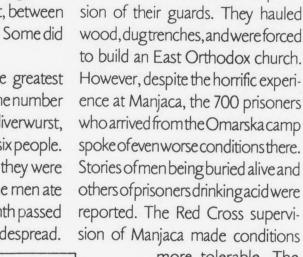
tioned deaths en route.



degrees outside, 50 in the trucks. All men- Western Bosnia: the simplicity and peace of this pastoral setting is something for the Bosnians to reacquire.

At Manjaca the men passed through the "application to the camp." This was During the day the prisoners laa line of Serb guards wielding sticks, pipes, and police batons. Beatings were boured under the drunken supervia nightly ritual, every evening at nine o'clock. According to Hikmet, between sion of their guards. They hauled five and fifty prisoners were called off a list, and taken to the woods. Some did wood, dugtrenches, and were forced not return.

The refugees told us that despite the beatings, food was the greatest However, despite the horrific expericoncern. Before the Red Cross arrived in July, the men could count the number ence at Manjaca, the 700 prisoners simulation, its people notime captured later. Arifwas able to remain in the forest for a full month before finally being taken of beans they ate for lunch. Often their daily ration was 200 grams of liver wurst, who arrived from the Omarska camp prisoner after journeying to Sanjski Most to stay with his sister. Like the others he had heard two deciliters of water, and a small chunk of bread, shared by up to six people. spoke of even worse conditions there. Arif lost 40 kilos, Hikmet dropped from 85 to 60, and sometimes they were Stories of men being buried alive and of Hrustovo was attacked by Hikmet believed that only divine intervention prevented his death. When captured by the so weak they could not stand up by themselves. Arif told us that the men ate others of prisoners drinking acid were the Serbs on the 27th of May Serbs he was going to be killed, but a soldier who knew him let him escape. The men were all the grass at Manjaca. There was so little food that often a full month passed reported. The Red Cross supervi-



more tolerable. The men were given blankets, warm clothes, and three meals a day.

While interviewing the men we could see their pain. As Arifspoke about Hrustovo, Hijmet and Enver sat side by side on the bed and stared vacantly at the floor. The children lay on the bed listening to Bosnian music while their fathers spoke of beatingsand starvation. It struck us surreal that these people who buried their neighbors and suffered at Manjaca should be sitting in a Fredericton hotel watching Hockey Night in Canada.

Todaythereareabout 150 concentration camps in Bosnia, most of which have yet to be investigated by UN observers. There are still 2500 prisoners in Manjaca.

written by: Gregor Golja, Jon Juormain, and Tony Fabijancic

