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Memorandum

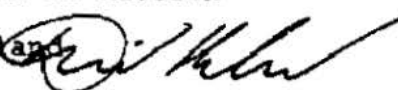
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Maj-Gen Gobilliard
Acting Commander UNPF

Damaso Facci
UNHCR Chief of Mission

From: David Harland 
SCVAO

Date: 20 July 1995

Subject: Negotiations on Zepa

Update:

At about 10:00 am this morning General Mladic passed a message to UNPROFOR asking for an immediate meeting on an all-for-all prisoner exchange, including all the military age men in Zepa. The meeting was held with representatives of both sides and an agreement in principle was made. There was no signature, however, because of a dispute about the lists of prisoners taken in the recent Serb attack on Srebrenica. The Serbs made it clear that they wanted the evacuation of Zepa to begin immediately, but that they would continue attacking Zepa until the Bosnians agreed. The sides said that they will meet again at 11:00 am tomorrow in an effort to finalize the agreement.

At about the same time, representatives of UNPROFOR and international agencies made contact with the Bosnian civilian authorities in Zepa, who apparently agreed to evacuate the pocket. The Bosnian military commander in Zepa, however, insisted that he will not allow any evacuation to take place until he received direct orders to that effect from the Sarajevo authorities.

Later in the day CVAO Bezrouchenko and CVAO Joseph met with General Mladic, who repeated his conditions for the evacuation of the enclave:

- i. Agreement on an exchange of prisoners throughout Bosnia on an all-for-all basis.
- ii. Evacuation of the pocket by the wounded, the young, the old, and the women.

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iii. Surrender and registration as POWs of all men between the age of 18 and 55, in the presence of ICRC and UNPROFOR.

Mladic stated that his forces would resume their attack on the pocket at 7:00 pm this evening if the Bosnians had not agreed his terms.

At 6:30 pm I called the office of Prime Minister Silajdzic and explained that the Bosnian commander on the ground required authorization from him before he would agree to the Serb terms.

Just after 7:00 pm I received a message from Zepa that the Serbs had resumed a heavy bombardment of the enclave, and that the UN team on the spot had been told by the Serbs to return to Sarajevo. The convoy which General Gobilliard had sent to help with an evacuation of the wounded was also turned back.

At 8:30 pm I received a message from Prime Minister Silajdzic who said that "if Zepa was completely quiet tonight, they could implement the first phase of the all-for-all exchange tomorrow." I passed this communication on to the Serbs, who said that "all will be quiet in Zepa when Sarajevo orders Palic [the Bosnian commander in Zepa] to hand over all weapons."

At about the same time the Ukrainians in Zepa reported that Bosnian forces had begun to attack their compound with small arms, heavy machine guns and rocket propelled grenades. I called the office of Prime Minister Silajdzic immediately thereafter and warned him that such an attack could only harm the interests of Bosnia (especially in light of tomorrow's meeting in London).

Assessment:

It is my assessment that the Serbs do not want to make a final infantry assault on Zepa. Due to the nature of the terrain, there would inevitably be substantial casualties. Their approach will be bombard-and-negotiate. Similarly, the Bosnians in Zepa would like to come to some arrangement to evacuate without falling into Serb hands. Sarajevo, however, has no particular interest in letting the Serbs take Zepa without paying a price (a military price in terms of lost lives, and a political price in terms of the fallout from the 'cleansing' operation).

