

Spirit of Bosnia / Duh Bosne

An International, Interdisciplinary, Bilingual, Online Journal
Me?unarodni, interdisciplinarni, dvojezi?ni, online ?asopis

A Face From Widely Circulated American Magazines

Faruk Šehić

as we walk through a forest tunnel
above us hangs the unmoving December sky
the stars squint through the braided treetops
at seven o'clock in the evening
cold needles on the ends of a hornbeam's branches
they fall off and break on the aqueous foliage
the southern wind blows
I remember The Damned Yard
the dementia of ghosts in the air
branches rub on each other
they creak like the jaws of skeletons in a house of terror
under greasy uniforms
my body is a sweaty bedspring pressed down by gravity
and fear
we go on a patrol of a fire-swept zone
the swamp grass is moist and its long blades
lick our fists which squeeze dark metal guns
a burst of glimmering bullets goes behind a hill in a large arc
like a necklace of serially connected falling stars
I do not think they will make my wishes come true
in a dull body that thinks of the heat of a fire, cigarettes and food
of Azra's face that I cannot put together in my thoughts
of 89 Marshall Tito Street from which I was driven
of a half-liter bottle of beer that I often dream of
like a metaphor for freedom
we have come to the embankment of the railway
the stones are coated with a soft frost
my watch post is right there
anonymous and meaningless by the wooden tie
I watch the surface of the Una rippled by tiny waves
thick darkness of water
it is war, they say, revolution in the purest form
my grandpa Be?o Šehić founded a chapter of the Communist Party in Bosanska Krupa
together with his brother Ismet he spent two years at Jasenovac
they were both partisans

my other grandpa, Almas Sedi?, fought with the Red Army on the Srijem front
I am in a bad war
a hundred of my fellow soldiers, whose faces I still remember, were killed
the dead are a pile of unknown names and surnames on wooden grave markers
in an exceedingly bad war
none of them will remain eternally young
like Che Guevara
a face from widely circulated American magazines.

Translated by Sara Elaquad – © 2007 Sara Elaquad

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