

# the white house

by Peter Pelz and Donald Reeves

## Summary

The book is a narrative. It starts with something ghastly and ends with a handshake.

Over a thousand men and boys, mostly Muslim, were murdered and many more tortured in the killing camp in the Serb administered iron-ore mine of Omarska between May and August 1992 during the Bosnia War. Ten years after the war ended Mittal Steel bought the mine. Survivors and relatives of the victims demanded a memorial. The Serb administrators refused. The Soul of Europe was called in to mediate between Muslims and Serbs. This book tells the story of this process, talking to victims and perpetrators and achieving the first steps towards acknowledgement of crimes committed and agreement to cooperate on a memorial which is still to be built.

The writer Jeremy Seabrook calls *the white house* 'an enthralling narrative' and said this of the book:

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'I am really speechless with admiration for what Peter Pelz has written. It is an extraordinary account of engagement with intractable and murderous hostilities, of the energy generated by hope. It doesn't require some ostentatiously 'successful' outcome: the practice speaks for itself. What the Soul of Europe has achieved in its sensitive intervention in Bosnia serves as a model of patience, tolerance and magnanimity - qualities without which reconciliation is a hollow aspiration. It is an extraordinary story, a thrilling narrative of those who learn to overcome the injuries done to them and those embittered beyond grief.

I think it is a stunning book.

I am more than happy to recommend it.

What I particularly like is the way in which the symbol of establishing a memorial itself became the catalyst for so much work of rapprochement and humanity - I think it is partly the way in which the material emblem of suffering was turned into a transformative experience that makes it so moving.'

Jeremy Seabrook