

Case: Branko Grujić *et al* – ‘Zvornik’
War Crimes Chamber
Belgrade District Court, Republic of Serbia
Case number: KV.5/05

Trial Chamber: Tatjana Vuković, Trial Chamber President, Vesko Krstajić, Judge, Trial Chamber Member, Olivera Anđelković, Judge, Trial Chamber Member

War Crimes Prosecutor: Milan Petrović

Accused: Branko Grujić, Branko Popović, Dragan Slavković a.k.a. Toro, Ivan Korać a.k.a. Zoks, Siniša Filipović a.k.a. Lopov, and Dragutin Dragičević a.k.a. Bosanac

Report: Nataša Kandić, Executive Director of the Humanitarian Law Centre (HLC), and Dragoljub Todorović, Attorney, victims representatives

13 June 2006

Examination of witness Z

The witness is a Bosniak from Divič. On 26 April 1992 Kula grad fell and Divič came under shell fire from the nearby village of Sakar in Serbia. That day’s shelling lasted about two hours. About the attack on Divič, the witness said, ‘Next day they resumed the shelling, from about two o’clock to four or five o’clock, so we who were in the shelter had no chance of seeing them as they entered the village in tanks and blocked all the approaches to it.’ ‘They found us in the shelter, the soldiers introduced themselves – we’re the JNA, we protect people, civilians, come out – and we obeyed. We went out and they asked for weapons, they said those that had them were to hand them over. After eight o’clock no one was to leave the house, you were no longer permitted to go even to Zvornik.’ The blockade of Divič lasted until 25 May and in the interim soldiers looted property, beat villagers and entered houses at night. None of the Divič residents worked any more and a curfew was in force. Various units in green camouflage uniforms entered the village, searched it for weapons, and beat and arrested those who said they had none. That month under blockade the village had a Bosniak population of 350.

On 25 May a man by the name of Mirsad Halilović, who kept in touch with Major Marko Pavlović, informed the residents that they would have to leave Divič in buses and head for Olovo [in Bosniak-controlled territory] the next day. On 26 May 10 buses arrived in the village and everybody got on carrying a little food and the barest of necessities. They arrived at Han Pijesak about noon, waited two hours there, and were returned to Milići where they spent the night in the buses. On the morning of 27 May they were returned to Zvornik, spent an hour outside the SUP building, and were driven in the direction of Tuzla over Mount Crni Vrh. The buses were under army escort, with two soldiers in each bus. On Mount Crni Vrh they waited two hours and were then returned to the Zvornik football stadium. At the stadium the men aged 16 to 60 were separated and the women and children taken, the witness learned later, to Kalesija [in Bosniak-controlled territory].

The men spent the night at the stadium and were next day marched in a column to the building of the former Novi izvor company. The building lies some 500 metres from the stadium. All the 174 men were crammed together in a completely bare room upstairs. The men stayed there three days and were given food.

The first night they were visited by Branko Grujić who brought some paper and a pencil and asked them to write down their first names and surnames. A total of 174 men signed their names. Although the witness did not hear this personally, he heard from those standing nearer Grujić that he demanded their loyalty and readiness to fight in the Serb army. The first day, the guards asked for volunteers to help search houses in Divič for weapons. Eleven men volunteered and they did not return. The bodies of ten of them were found at the cemetery in the village of Glumina in 1999 and the body of the 11th is still missing.

The war crimes at the Čelopek Cultural Centre

On 29 May the men were transferred from Novi izvor to the Čelopek Cultural Centre in two buses. The prisoners received no food the first three days and slept on a concrete floor. A light bulb shone all the time. The windows were high and there was no tap or lavatory inside. The prisoners had to use the lavatory in the yard.

On the evening of 9 June, several soldiers entered the Cultural Centre and beckoned with their fingers to Nurija and Husein Hadžiovdić without calling their names. Next thing, the witness heard two shots. The soldiers then ordered two prisoners, Haso Efendić and Ismet Kuršumović, to come out. On their return to the room, the two said they had put the bodies of Nurija and Husein into the boot of a Stojadin [Zastava 101] car and the car drove away.

That day Repić appeared in the doorway of the prison room and told the prisoners that they were going to remember Bairam. Next day, 10 June, on the eve of Bairam, five or six soldiers burst into the Cultural Centre including Repić, Pufta, Toro, and Zoks.

That day the soldiers cut off Izet Hadžić's fingers. Asked by the Trial Chamber President how he knew those nicknames, the witness replied that since the soldiers in question used to sit in a restaurant next to the Cultural Centre the prisoners heard them address each other thus. They also learned the nicknames from the guards.

That day the soldiers murdered the following prisoners: Fikret Jahijagić, Šaban Bikić, Damir Bikić, Alija Atlić, Hasan Atlić, Salih Hadžiovdić, Zaim Pezerović, Sakib Kapičić, Suljo Kapičić, and Himzo Kuršumović. Sakib Kapičić, Pezerović, and Šaban Bikić had their throats cut and the rest were shot from rifles, with Repić shooting Damir Bikić. The soldiers ordered five prisoners – Hasan Halilović, Sead Džihović, Salih Zahirović, Husein Salihović, and Nesib Okanović – to load the bodies. They did not return and their bodies were found in a mass grave on Mount Crni Vrh. The last to be found, three months ago, was the body of Sead Džihović. The witness saw Repić shove the muzzle of his rifle into the mouth of 17-year-old Damir Bikić and heard him ask Damir's father Nurija whether he had any other children. When Nurija replied that Damir was an only child, Repić said, 'You're not going to have him either' and pressed the trigger killing the boy.

On 15 June two other prisoners were killed: Omer Okanović and Alija Mustafić. The witness could not say who killed them and only knew that the guards had taken them out.

The witness knew that the group of soldiers who entered the prison on 15 June cut off Enes Čikarić's ear and forced him to eat it. Repić's men cut off Zulkanein Efendić's sex organ and tried to force him to eat it; he could not do it, so they made Ismet Kuršumović to do it.

On the same occasion the soldiers carved crosses on Ibro Okanović's palms and hands and repeatedly punched Ismail Okanović, Ilijaz Okanović, Mirza Okanović, and Meho Hadživdić.

The witness said that that day the soldiers searched them and took their money and valuables such as rings and chainlets.

The prisoners were left alone from 15 to 28 June.

On 28 June Repić burst into the facility and killed 20 prisoners. The witness said that during questioning on 28 April 2005 he handed to the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina a list containing the names of the Divič residents murdered on 28 June.

On 29 June the remaining prisoners were transferred to the detention facility in the Misdemeanour Court building in Zvornik. They stayed there until 15 July 1992 when they were transferred to Batkovič. The witness was exchanged on 21 July 1993.