

Ovčara case
Trial for the war crimes against the war prisoners
War Crimes Chamber of the District Court in Belgrade, Serbia
Number of case: K.V. br.1/2003

Trial Chamber: Vesko Krstajić (the presiding judge), Gordana Božilović-Petrović (judge) and Vinka Beraha-Nikićević (judge).

Prosecutor: Deputy War Crimes Prosecutor Dušan Knežević.

Defendants: Miroljub Vujović, Stanko Vujanović, Jovica Perić, Ivan Atanasijević, Predrag Madžarac and Milan Vojnović, Serbs from Croatia.

Report: Nataša Kandić and Dragoljub Todorović, victims representatives

24 January 2005

At the beginning of his testimony, witness **Jovan Novković** pointed out that during the fighting in Vukovar he had been an assistant in charge of morale in a unit of the Kragujevac brigade, Light Artillery Division of Anti-Aircraft Defense, under the command of Jan Marček. In his words, fear and the lack of discipline prevailed in the unit and the only active service soldier was the commanding officer, Jan Marček. Upon their arrival at Vukovar, they were first stationed in an agricultural cooperative and then, some five, six or ten days later, they were moved to Ovčara. In the immediate vicinity of their command headquarters, in a building at Ovčara, there was a kitchen and, it was possible that in the vicinity there also was an anti-aircraft battery. In the words of the witness, there were a number of warehouses (hangars) there, all of them some 100 to 200 meters far from their command headquarters. Novković pointed out that the only activities occurring in front of the hangars were those connected with the arrival, by buses, of the prisoners. Namely, a day after the cessation of hostilities, around noon, buses with prisoners arrived at Ovčara, and a group of soldiers was there as well. Out of curiosity, the witness started toward the hangar and stopped some 20 to 30 meters from the hangar. He saw the prisoners getting off the bus and entering the hangar. In his words, with the group of soldiers there were some members of the regular army, a group of officers and a group of drunken persons, wearing "non-military" clothes. At one time, the witness was called by the commanding officer, Marček, who had already gone into the hangar, and was told to go on with the making of the list of prisoners from the hangar which a soldier had started making. To make the list of the prisoners, he called them, one by one, to approach him while a soldier wrote their names down. After some time, one, two or three hours, his colleague arrived and Novković returned to the headquarters. Continuing his testimony, Novković said that he thought that the commanding officer of the 80th motorized brigade, lieutenant colonel Vojnović, had been at Ovčara as well. In his words, armed persons who were not members of the regular army threatened and behaved improperly toward the prisoners. Novković added that in the hangar there were between 150 and 200 persons, that the door of the hangar was open and that the name Mirko Gavrilović meant nothing to him as names slip his mind. Witness Novković pointed out that Marček had ordered him to make a list of prisoners and added: "Man, had they not called me, would I have come here?" Continuing his testimony, Novković said that he had learned about the shooting of the prisoners the next day, but that the people were not ready to talk much about it. At that time one could hear the sound of shooting all the time, people were celebrating or firing their rifles for no particular reason so nobody paid any attention to the sounds of shooting. The witness then said that he had met the defendants only after the war, in Vukovar, at the celebrations of the liberation where he had driven lieutenant colonel Vojnović. He met Vujanović and other company commanders at those celebrations. The witness Novković further said: "The ones I met in Vukovar, they were high society." Then he added that he could not say whether he had seen any of them at Ovčara and

that he, simply, could not tie them with Ovčara. Upon arrival of the military police into the hangar, there remained in the hangar only the members of the military police and the prisoners. Marček took the witness "under his arm" and asked him to go out with him. Describing the clothes of the people of "non-military appearance", Novković pointed out that "they looked like chetniks", and added that there were between 20 and 30 of them, that they did not have military hats, that they had rifles and long hair and beards. The witness said that there was a woman in the hangar, but he did not know her age as she was facing the wall. In front of the hangar there was one, or two or three buses. In his words, at the moment he took over the making of the list of prisoners, the names of five or six prisoners had already been written. At Ovčara, there were military vehicles, in the background, where the kitchen of his was, and added that there also were some civilian vehicles, guarded by the members of his unit. He added that he had not worn a hat at that time and that he only wore it with his civilian clothes.

Witness **Marko Crevar** pointed out that on 1 April 1991, together with 12 Serb colleagues, left the police after the conflict between the civilians and the police in Borovo Selo. After some time, which he spent in Negoslavci, he returned to Vukovar in August 1991, to Petrova Gora street. In his words, he, with the rest of the Serbs from Vukovar, was in the unit known as TD Petrova Gora, and added that the unit was under the authority of YNA. The witness Crevar pointed out that, in the beginning, there were between 70 and 80 of them and that the number had increased later on. Members of TD went with the army, as the army was unfamiliar with the terrain, and the witness himself was with captain Lukić and had maintained communication between the two units. Later on, he went to the headquarters of the YNA brigade, to major Tešić. In his words, members of TD were under the command of Dušan Jakšić whose immediate superior had been Tešić, and then Mrkšić. TD company commanders were the defendants Vujović and Vujanović. After the cessation of hostilities in Vukovar, on 18 and 19 November 1991, activities were undertaken to establish a police station, and the witness was at Velepromet at the time and was trying to collect information on the missing Serbs from Vukovar. Because of that, witness Crevar pointed out that on 18 and 19 November 1991 he had talks with the people who were driven to Velepromet and added that he had done it on his own initiative, that nobody had ordered him to do that. The witness pointed out that, beside himself, the talks at Velepromet were also conducted by Žigić who, before the war, had been a crime inspector in the Secretariat of the Interior in Vukovar, so he had had a larger number of talks. Explaining the procedure applied at Velepromet, he pointed out that people used to come to Velepromet from the center of the town by bus and that, after some time, from Velepromet, they were transported to Serbia. The witness talked with them in the courtyard, but also in the office he was using. In his opinion, several thousand people were there at the time. He pointed out that there were many soldiers at Velepromet. The witness stated that he knew that the people from the Vukovar hospital had been transported to the barracks so, out of curiosity, he had gone there, to see who they were. In his words, the prisoners were in the buses, guarded by the soldiers and nobody could get off or on any of the buses. He spoke with no one and the only thing he heard were bad words. The witness pointed out that he knew the defendants, who were from Vukovar, and added that he thought that he had not seen anyone of them near the barracks. The witness then said that a year or two later he learned that the prisoners from the hospital had ended at Ovčara, where their corpses were uncovered later. In his words, the Secretariat of the Interior in Vukovar has never started an investigation of these events. The witness pointed out that a couple of days before the fall of Vukovar, Jakšić told him that he had been dismissed from the position of the commander of TD and that, as early as the next day, he heard that Jakšić had been replaced by the defendants Vujović and Vujanović. In his words, he later heard that it was major Šljivančanin who had dismissed Jakšić, but he did not know whether it was true or not. When he was shown a part of his statement given during the investigation, where he said that a triage was carried out at Velepromet and that some persons suspected of having committed the crimes have been taken to hangar No. 2, the witness said that that was correct and that Žigić and he had decided who would go to that hangar and that, after the talks, those persons were transported to Serbia. The witness pointed out that he had had an argument near the hangar No. 2 with a lieutenant colonel who

wanted to know why the prisoners from the hangar were separated. The witness said that a member of TD, Pero Miljanović, had murdered two prisoners from Velepomet. After that, the witness confirmed the part of his statement given during the investigation concerning his conversation with Šljivančanin near the barracks. He said: "Šljivo, these are not the hospital personnel." thinking about the prisoners from the hospital who were inside the buses, whereupon Šljivančanin told him that those prisoners would be returned to Serbia and that they were the responsibility of YNA, and not of TD. The witness pointed out that he had not seen Vujo at Velepomet lately as Vujo had been wounded toward the end of October and that he, personally, had visited him at the MMA in November.

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