

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

25 May 2006

Examination of witness Fadil Mujić

The witness worked as the chief of the Zvornik SUP criminal police. On 6 April 1992 the SUP split into Serb and Muslim forces. The Serb policemen moved to Karakaj and their Bosniak colleagues stayed in the SUP building in the town.

The arrest of four armed men

In the night between 7 and 8 April, the witness and his family slept in the flat of his mother-in-law. His colleague, Asim Alić, then commander of the police station, spent the nights with them because it was not safe for him to go to his flat in Kalesija. At about 1 a.m. on 8 April, Mujić received a telephone call from the Zvornik SUP chief, Osman Mustafić, who said that he had been told by the duty staff that four soldiers had been brought in and that he and Alić ought to go over to investigate the matter.

Mujić and Alić waited for dawn because it was not safe to move through Zvornik at night. They arrived at the SUP building between 4 and 4.30 a.m. and found four soldiers in camouflage uniforms inside. On a table lay their automatic rifles, pistols, lengths of choke wire and a heap of various passes and personal identity cards. The four were interrogated at some length by Alić. The soldiers said they were heading for the Hotel Jezero in Mali Zvornik but they lost their way, ran into a Bosniak barricade and were arrested. The witness said that two of the four were the brothers Vučković, Repić and Žuća; as to the other two, he did not know their identity but presumed they were JNA soldiers. They were handed over and he never learned their names.

Meanwhile the Zvornik Bosniaks had started assembling outside the SUP building threatening to lynch and kill the prisoners. The witness said the soldiers were due to link up with Arkan in Mali Zvornik. The crowd outside grew large and the witness transferred the four to the comparative safety of his office and asked them to stay still and not approach the window so as not to provoke the enraged citizens.

The surrender of the captured soldiers to Major Pavlović

Sometime between 9 and 10 o'clock in the morning the witness went out of the SUP building in order to transfer his wife and children to Mali Zvornik and eventually to Serbia. He succeeded in this with the help of a technician and returned to the SUP building. The attack on Zvornik started at about 11 o'clock. He received a telephone call from a man who introduced himself as Major Marko Pavlović and asked him whether the four soldiers were still in the building. The witness replied that they were and would have been released had there not been a danger of their being lynched by an angry crowd outside. Pavlović called again and discussed ways of having the four transferred to Mali Zvornik. He suggested using an armoured police van belonging to the Zvornik SUP and bringing the soldiers to the church and the Serb part of the town, but the witness dismissed this as risky because having to cover a whole kilometre through the town would jeopardize their security.

Between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. on 8 April Major Marko Pavlović telephoned the witness repeatedly insisting that the four be released. Calls were also made by a Colonel Bošković from the JNA General Staff military police and by General Sava Janković, the commander of the Tuzla Corps. Pavlović proposed an exchange and said they were holding 60 to 70 Bosniak prisoners. Following several conversations, it was agreed that the four should be permitted to head for the hydroelectric power plant in the same car, a yellow Mercedes 123, in which they were stopped. The car was driven by one of them and the witness was inside. They succeeded in crossing the dam and the witness had his first direct contact with Major Marko Pavlović, whom he described as a man 170-180 cm tall in camouflage uniform. When the witness raised the question of exchanging those 60-70 Bosniaks mentioned previously, Pavlović told him that there were 7,000 Bosniaks at the playing field in Mali Zvornik who had escaped from Veliki Zvornik. The witness's understanding of this was, 'I took that to mean that no selection of Bosniaks had been made and that they could have singled out from that group of several thousand as many as they wished. But they made no selection, that is, no separation of sixty or seventy of them.' This meant that no Bosniaks were handed over to the witness in exchange for the four soldiers.

The Trial Chamber President reminded the witness that witness Asim Alić had said that the witness had taken the four across the dam, in return for which Marko Pavlović had guaranteed his and his family's passage through Serbia on their way to Germany. The witness denied this and said that his family was transferred to Mali Zvornik between 9 and 10 a.m. and that 10 days later he heard from his family in Germany.

The Zvornik camps

During the war the witness stayed in Sapna. People who had crossed from Serb to Bosniak territory assembled there and he learned from them about the camps and the suffering Bosniaks endured in them. In this connection, the witness said, 'Repić [Dušan Vučković, his nickname meaning 'little ponytail'] in particular never changed his appearance at any time from about the time he arrived in Zvornik on 8 April to June or July. He wore that little ponytail all the time and so he stood out in people's eyes. He went down to "Ekonomija" where the civilians were detained, he went to the Cultural Centre in Čelopek, to "Ciglana", to "Novi izvor", the building, and to that part of the town beyond the SUP building towards Divič.'

The witness said he knew no details about the Čelopek, 'Ekonomija' and 'Ciglana' camps because at the time of their establishment and operation he was in Sapna.