

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

26 May 2006

Examination of witness N

The witness gave evidence under this pseudonym for reasons of personal security.

At the beginning of April, the witness went to Karakaj, reported to the Crisis Headquarters to find out about his posting, and stayed with the Crisis Headquarters. As to the circumstances of his posting at the Crisis Headquarters, the witness said, ‘I received no written [assignment] order. But there were a number of people there some of whom I knew, so it was normally, at any rate, easier being there than being sent to the front line or something like that in case war broke out.’ Early in April (5, 6 and 7 April) the Crisis Headquarters comprised Branko Grujić, witness K, Slavoljub Tomašević, Stevo Ivanović, Stevo Radić, the witness and some other men. On 7 April some 40-50 of Arkan’s men arrived and said they intended to put things in order because a great many Serb civilians had left Zvornik to escape the various Serb paramilitary formations, Muslims, and the general psychosis of war. After Arkan occupied Zvornik the town teemed with all kinds of volunteers and paramilitary formations commanded by Pivarski, Žuća, Repić, Niški, a man nicknamed Muflon, and others. The Crisis Headquarters later grew into the Provisional Government, which moved into Zvornik following its capture.

The Čelopek camp

Observer’s notes:

The witness prevaricated and equivocated whenever asked about the expulsion of the Divič Bosniaks and their detention in the ‘Novi izvor’, Čelopek Cultural Centre, and Batković camps. The Trial Chamber President therefore had to try hard to wrest a specific reply from him. Although she repeatedly confronted him with his specific statements made during the inquest, which suggest that he knows rather a lot about the Čelopek camp, he kept avoiding giving details about this camp.

The witness, who said that he knew that some of the Divič Bosniaks had left but could not tell where, recalled recognizing some of his Bosniak pupils as he walked past the prison in the ‘Novi izvor’ building. They asked him for a change of underwear, food and cigarettes and to send them

a doctor. While the witness could not fix the date, he said he brought them clean underwear and food and sent them a general practitioner, doctor Nataša Lugovski. He said that the guards let him and the doctor in and that he gave the prisoners food and clean underwear. He said that he asked Stevo Radić and Branko Grujić why those people were detained and that they replied that the TO was looking after them, that they were better off there than being put at risk outside, and that later they would be transferred to a safe place. Otherwise, the problem of these prisoners was never raised as an item on the agenda of the Provisional Government.

The witness learned of the existence of the Čelopek camp later and had no information about it while it operated. This later information was that Repić ill-treated and murdered people in that camp and generally behaved as a bully. When confronted with the record of his inquest statements, the witness said that people in Zvornik talked that a group of people had been detained, that people whispered about it and that the matter was never discussed by the Provisional Government at its meetings. When the Trial Chamber President further confronted him with his earlier statements made to the investigating judge, the witness said he heard that people were imprisoned there and that he asked Branko Grujić whether he could do anything to have them released; to this, the witness said, Grujić replied that the prisoners were there temporarily, that he could do nothing about it, and that he was waiting for further instructions. On being further confronted with his earlier statement, the witness admitted that the Provisional Government discussed the camp informally, in passing, and that it never figured on its agenda. At that, the Trial Chamber President brought to his attention the fact that the accused Marko Pavlović had submitted a report on what had been going on at the Čelopek Cultural Centre. The witness replied that he believed that Pavlović did submit a report during his tenure as the TO Staff commander, adding that for a time this post was occupied by Zoran Pažin. The witness did not know whence the prisoners had been transferred to 'Novi izvor'. When confronted with the evidence given by Grujić, with Grujić denying visiting 'Novi izvor' and insisting on the prisoners' avowals of loyalty and suggesting that the prisoners might have seen witness N and confused the two, the witness dismissed this as untrue and insisted that he only brought the prisoners clothing and food and asked for no avowals of loyalty.

The 'Ekonomija' and 'Ciglana' camps

The witness said it was only later that he heard that Bosniaks had been imprisoned at 'Ekonomija' and had no information about anything while the camp operated. He also heard later that some men were kept at 'Ciglana' but knew nothing about that at the time.

The witness acknowledged to having known Adbulah Buljubašić a.k.a. Bubica. He described him as a popular man in Zvornik who was well liked by both Serbs and Bosniaks and said that he was the driver of the Glinica manager, Jefta Subotić. The witness also said that Buljubašić was not a fighter at all, that he heard that he had been imprisoned at 'Ekonomija' but had no information as to what happened to him. It was much later, he said, that he heard it say that Buljubašić had been murdered but could not say how and by whom.

The deportation from Kozluk

The witness knew that early on, after Zvornik was occupied, the Kozluk Bosniaks wanted to move out in the direction of Tuzla. In this connection, a meeting was held in Kozluk with Orthodox and Islamic religious leaders and municipal officials and the residents remained. The witness knew that the Kozluk Bosniaks left in buses of the Drina trans company and were taken by train to Hungary via Serbia. He also knew that Serb refugees moved into their houses. Asked

by the Trial Chamber President whether the Kozluk Bosniaks moved out voluntarily, the witness replied, 'I know at any rate that Brano was worried and wanted, as it were, a compromise solution. At any rate, though the Kozluk residents did not feel like moving out, it was better that they did. Otherwise, more blood would probably have been spilled. They at least saved their necks and that's most important. True, they were unable to keep their property, but...'

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