

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

31 May 2006

Examination of witness O

Before the war, the witness was the manager of the General, Legal and Personnel Affairs Sector at the Glinica factory. He was a deputy in the Zvornik municipal Assembly representing the Reform Forces whose president was Ante Marković.

In March 1992, Branko Grujić chaired the first meeting of the Crisis Headquarters held in the changing room of the Čelopek football field, saying that the Green Berets were concentrating near Kula grad and that there was a danger of a repetition of [the] 1941 [atrocities]. At that meeting Vladan Petronijević was appointed commander of the Defence of Zvornik. Another meeting at which the witness was present took place at the Hotel Jezero in Mali Zvornik on 6 April. The meeting was attended by the then municipal chief Abdulah Pašić, the SUP Chief Osman Mustafić, the TO Chief Alija Kapičić, Izet Mehinagić, a former League of Communists official, and Branko Grujić on behalf of the SDS. At the end of the deliberations, Mehinagić formulated 10 or 11 conclusions the gist of which was that an armed conflict must be prevented at all costs even if that entailed dividing the Municipality of Zvornik into Serb and Muslim entities. Grujić and the others approved these conclusions.

The Provisional Government’s information about the crimes

A meeting of the Provisional Government was told that a group of Muslims had been killed and then burned in a village in the direction of Snagovo. The crime was condemned by the entire Provisional Government and Branko Grujić said, ‘Men! Did you ever? A thing like that to happen... We must stop such things.’

The Čelopek camp war crimes

At none of its meetings attended by the witness did the Provisional Government discuss the camp in the Čelopek Cultural Centre. The witness first learned of the men imprisoned there from workers of the Glinica factory, who talked among themselves in half-whispers of the Divič Muslims having been expelled and imprisoned in the Cultural Centre in Čelopek. The witness only learned of these things after the camp was evacuated and closed down.

Rather later the witness heard that members of the Yellow Wasps entered the camp, abused the prisoners and committed crimes, and that the residents of Čelopek were afraid to talk about that out of fear that members of the unit may take revenge. The expulsion from Divič and the imprisonment of its residents in the Čelopek Cultural Centre was not discussed at meetings of the Provisional Government.

The deportation from Kozluk

The Provisional Government did not discuss the expulsion of the Muslim residents of Kozluk either. The witness obtained his first information from Arkan's Major Peja, who called on him at the Glinica factory and commandeered an ambulance car and a fire engine for Kozluk. Peja explained that he had agreed with the President of the local commune in Kozluk, Fadil Banjanović, to provide the residents with vehicles, health care, and a mixed police force, in return for which they would hand over their weapons. The Bosniaks agreed not to move out if these conditions were met. As a result of the agreement, for the village Muslims life returned to normal for a time. Later, however, paramilitary formations started to raid the village more and more often and regular police and army units were unable to guarantee security to the Kozluk Muslims. The witness heard the Serb residents of Kozluk who worked at the Glinica factory say that the Muslims would do well to move out to avoid casualties.

Asked by the Trial Chamber President whether the [Muslim] residents themselves had determined to move out voluntarily, the witness replied, 'Not the residents. No one asked the residents. Why, no one asked the residents' opinion, they're ordinary citizens. No one consulted the Kozluk residents.'

The witness heard Major Peja tell Fadil Banjanović that [the regular army] could not protect them, that the paramilitaries could not be controlled, and that the Muslims should emigrate collectively and would receive passports [from the Serb authorities].