

VIEW FROM THE HAGUE

“HORROR FILM” IN VIŠEGRAD

The Head of the Republika Srpska's Special Police, Dragan Lukač, recently expressed revulsion at the crimes committed by Serb paramilitaries in the Drina River town of Višegrad. Lukač likened accounts of the killings to a “*horror movie*.” “*Everybody in RS*,” he said, “*must distance themselves from such things*.”

The Tribunal has indicted three men on charges stemming from just some of the crimes committed in Višegrad. The indicted men are Milan Lukić and his cousin Sredoje Lukić, both of whom are still at large, and Mitar Vasiljević, who was tried and convicted by the Tribunal and sentenced by the Appeals Chamber to fifteen years in prison. Milan and Sredoje Lukić are relatives of Sreten Lukić, a ranking police official in Serbia, whom the Tribunal has also indicted on charges stemming from war crimes committed in Kosovo during 1998 and 1999.

The Tribunal indicted Milan and Sredoje Lukić for murdering, beating, torturing, terrorizing, and unlawfully detaining Bosnian Muslims and other persons who are not Serbs. The Tribunal indictment charged Milan Lukić and Mitar Vasiljević with shooting seven Bosnian Muslim men on the bank of the Drina River on 7 June 1992, killing five of them. Milan Lukić alone has been charged with shooting and killing seven other Bosnian Muslim men on the banks of the Drina River on 10 June 1992 and with killing a Bosnian Muslim woman in Višegrad's Potok neighbourhood during the same month.

The indictment further alleges that on 14 June 1992, Milan and Sredoje Lukić forced approximately 65 Bosnian Muslim women, children, and elderly men into a house on Pionirska Street in a neighborhood of Višegrad known as Nova Mahala. Once these people were barricaded inside, the house was set afire and Milan and Sredoje Lukić fired automatic weapons at persons trying to save themselves by climbing out the windows of the burning building. The indictment alleges that they killed almost all of the persons locked in the house during the incident, including seventeen children who were between the ages of two days and fourteen years.

According to the indictment on 27 June 1992, Milan and Sredoje Lukić forced approximately 70 Bosnian Muslim people into another house in the Bikavac quarter of Višegrad, blocked the exits, and activated several incendiary devices. Only one person survived. The list of the known victims, which is attached to the indictment, includes the names of two babies, a five-year old girl, and three children between eight and eleven years of age.

In addition to the charges related to these incidents, the Tribunal also charged Milan and Sredoje Lukić with the beatings of Bosnian Muslim men who were detained at the Uzamnica military barracks from August 1992 to October 1994. Together with members of a paramilitary group under Milan Lukić's command, they repeatedly struck the detainees with their fists, rifle butts, and wooden sticks and kicked them with their boots.

Milan Lukić is not only wanted by the Tribunal: Serbian judicial authorities are also seeking the arrest of Milan Lukić. In September 2003, the Belgrade District Court tried and convicted Milan Lukić *in absentia* for direct involvement in kidnapping and murdering 16 Muslims from the town of Sjeverin in 1992.

On 29 November 2002, the Tribunal found Mitar Vasiljevic guilty of participating in the killings on the Drina River on 7 June 1992. In its Judgment, the Trial Chamber wrote that the Muslim men were forced to line up on the bank of the river and were shot from behind while pleading for their

lives. When it appeared that one of the victims was still alive and lying in the water, one or more of the gunmen shot the man at close range. Two of the men escaped across the Drina after pretending to be dead. The Trial Chamber acquitted Vasiljević of involvement in the killings on Pionirska Street after finding that Vasiljevic had presented evidence that he could not have been present at the scene of the crime at the time the killings took place.

The Head of the Republika Srpska's Special Police, Dragan Lukač, expressed his shock with the accounts he had heard of the killings in Visegrad with these words: *"I was in the war and I saw a lot, but the information and stories about the Lukićes were such that even I was appalled by the things they did during the war. Nobody talks about the fact that these men killed hundreds of innocent men, women, children, and who knows who else, in a cold-blooded and brutal way."*

The initial indictment against Milan and Sredoje Lukić was issued in October 1998. They are still at large.

Outreach Programme

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