

VIEW FROM THE HAGUE

NOW WE CAN COLOUR BRATUNAC BLUE

"...It is difficult to live with the memories of everything that happened, with the feeling of shame and embarrassment.... When I realised what really happened in Glogova, and I understood that for the first time completely when I was here listening to certain testimonies of survivors in other cases, I decided without much thinking to admit my guilt because what is my life in relation to the lives of those innocent victims?"

These are the words of Miroslav Deronjić explaining why he chose to plead guilty to the persecution of Bosnian Muslim civilians that occurred on 9 May 1992 in the village of Glogova in Bratunac Municipality, Bosnia and Hercegovina. At the time he committed this crime, Deronjić was President of the Bratunac Municipality Crisis Staff. He later became the Civilian Commissioner for Srebrenica Municipality in July 1995 and in 1996, the vice-President of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) under Radovan Karadžić.

After he was arrested in July 2002, Deronjić initially pleaded not guilty to the six counts against him. However in the autumn of 2003, he pleaded guilty to persecutions of Bosnian Muslim civilians in Glogova and agreed to cooperate with the Prosecutor's office out of a desire to help establish the truth of what later happened in Srebrenica with his testimony.

To date Deronjić has testified in the cases relating to crimes committed in Srebrenica against Vidoje Blagojević, Dragan Jokić, Momir Nikolić, Dragan Obrenović and Radislav Krstić, as well as in the cases against Slobodan Milošević and Momčilo Krajišnik.

In rendering its Judgement on the 30 April this year, the Trial Chamber of the Tribunal established the following facts: at the Crisis Staff meeting of 8 May 1992 Miroslav Deronjić gave the order to attack the undefended and disarmed village of Glogova, burn it down and forcibly displace its Bosnian Muslim residents. The forces participating in this attack were members of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA), the Bratunac Territorial Defense, the Bratunac police and other paramilitary forces.

Deronjić pleaded guilty to being present while these attacking forces systematically set fire to Bosnian Muslim houses, buildings, fields and haystacks and loaded the surviving women and children on buses and expelled them to Muslim held territory. As a result of this attack that Deronjić ordered, co-ordinated and monitored, a substantial part of Glogova was razed to the ground and no Muslims were left in the village.

In its Judgement the Trial Chamber stated that the ...attack on Glogova was not an isolated or random event, but a critical element in a larger scheme to divide Bosnia and Hercegovina and create Serb-ethnic territories." The Judgement states that the Bosnian Serb leadership held a number of preparatory meetings between April and December 1991, which created the idea of a "Greater Serbia", cleansed OF all other ethnicities.

At a meeting held on 19 December 1991 and presided over by Radovan Karadžić, Karadžić declared that a state would be formed, a Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Presidents of the SDS municipal boards, including Miroslav Deronjić, were given "strictly confidential" written instructions under the title, "Instructions on the organization and operation of Serbian organs in Bosnia and Herzegovina in extraordinary circumstances."

The Judgement further states that Deronjić was invited to Pale, the seat of the Bosnian Serb leadership, to report on the events in Glogova one or two days after they occurred, on 10 or 11 May 1992.

Radovan Karadžić, Velibor Ostojić and Ratko Mladić, among approximately 50 other participants, including the presidents of the crisis staffs from other municipalities were present at the meeting. On the wall behind them were maps that identified the ethnic composition of areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina in various colours.

Serb areas were designated in blue. After having given his report and having shown his municipality on the map, Mirsolav Deronjić was applauded and Velibor Ostojić, the then Minister of Information, in the Government of Republika Srpska, commented: "*now we can colour Bratunac [sic!] blue.*"

The Trial Chamber stated that it agrees with the Prosecution that "the events in Glogova on 9 May 1992 are a classical case of ethnic cleansing, and precisely the reason why the Security Council established this Tribunal."

For the crime he committed against the people of Glogova on 9 May 1992, the Trial Chamber sentenced Deronjić to ten years in prison.

The Judgement in the Deronjić case deals with only one event in the many crimes committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia but the Tribunal's task is to establish individual responsibility for these crimes through the process of justice. This process of justice is also a process of revealing the truth. As Deronjić recognised in his personal statement;

"In the years that are behind me, during many sleepless nights, I kept asking myself the same questions: How is it possible that we did this to each other? How is it possible at all that we agreed to something like this? ... A lot of time has passed since then, and I haven't found the answers to those questions. But I know one thing: If the truth cannot save us, then really nothing can save us."

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