

Face to face

RAPE AS WAR CRIME

WHAT I WENT THROUGH IS WORSE THAN DEATH

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Among the first indictments written by the prosecutors in The Hague Tribunal was the one against a group of war criminals from Foca: Dragan Gagovic, Gojko Jankovic, Janko Janjic, Radomir Kovac, Zoran Vukovic, Dragoljub Kunarac, Radovan Stankovic and Dragan Zelenovic. They were accused of committing war crimes against civilians, but they were also indicted for rape as war crime, which was the first time ever to have this deed brought to court. Their victims repeated their testimonies also in front of the judges in The Hague, which revealed why this was done and revealed all the monstrousness of the crime committed by these war criminals.

Black night acts

"I was born in Foca in 1973. We lived in a small village when the war broke out. We were immediately cut off from the town and we only heard rumors about terrible crimes in Foca. The people gathered and wandered aimlessly through the woods, hiding in caves during the nights. My family was in the group hiding at the slopes of Zelengora Mountain. Nobody knew where to go, because we were fully surrounded. Small children were crying, old people were helpless, the grownups were in panic... this is what I remember from these days. And then, on July 3, 1992, the Serb soldiers caught us and took us to Foca", this is how one of the raped women starts her story.

She described what followed: " They took us to the gym Partisan, which is hardly 30 meters away from the Police headquarters. The room in which we were locked was overcrowded. The number of women was changing, but there were some seventy of us. Was it an accident, or God's punishment? I would not know... What I went through is worse than death. I lost everything. The number of my humiliations, the number of my still open wounds - this I cannot tell anyone, because it is far too big."

She remembers the first rape: "Dragan Zelenovic hit my head with a gunstock. I lost consciousness. When I regained my consciousness, I saw that my clothes were torn. He raped me, and than he was persistent in carving a cross on my breast with a knife."

She told how they took her by night with a few other girls into flats where groups of Serb soldiers were raping them for hours. That alone was not enough, so they were constantly thinking of new ways of cruelly enjoying themselves and humiliating their victims. For what she went through, this girl is accusing primarily Dragan Gagovic who at that time was the first man of the police in Foca. She said Gagovic himself was taking her to flats of Munib Kovacevic and Dzafer Zupcevic. "In Dzafer's flat was Borka, his wife, who engaged in black night acts with the Chitins."

A frightened girl

Serbian soldiers were coming by night in police and military vehicles to take the girls and women locked up in Partizan. They would take them to the Hotel Zelengora, the Centre of Secondary Schools (used as the military headquarters), and to Velecevo (a settlement near Foca where the most modern jail for women in former Yugoslavia was built) which also served as one of the headquarters. One of them described what was happening there: "A group of Chetniks would take turns on us in the cruelest ways. They were enjoying themselves over women and girls, which were practically unconsciously lying on the floors. They were drunk, with bloodshot eyes. They were drinking alcohol and some pills, saying this cheered them up, because it was not easy for them to slaughter people every day."

The girl who in The Hague Tribunal was testifying against Janko Janjic Tuta, Zoran Vasiljevic Gica, Dragan Zelenovic Zelja, Jasko Gazdic and Zoran Matovic, said: " I remember five girls, of which the oldest was 27, and the youngest 15 years. For twenty long days they were taken away and brought back. All of them suffered from internal and external wounds. They were constantly bleeding... We just stopped seeing them. We supposed they were killed, because they did not 'need' them any more."

The group under Gojko Jankovic's command caught a group of 60 civilians during "cleansing" Foca's

villages and brought them to the object Buk Bjela. The object consisted of prefabricated barracks built before the war. The group consisted mainly of women, children, and old men. They lined up the men by Drina and were taking them away for interrogation one by one. They separated the women from the children, threatening to rape and kill them if they would not tell them where their husbands were.

While interrogating a woman Zelenovic told her that he did not believe her a thing, and then called the guards who took her into a room with a group of soldiers. They raped her once, twice, three times... It lasted for hours. After the tenth rape she was unconscious. They would pour water over her, and then rape her again...

A fifteen-year-old girl who couldn't speak out of fear Zelenovic was also accusing of not wanting to tell him the truth. Three soldiers took her away. All of them raped her.

You will give birth to good Serb children

In mid July 1992 a captured Muslim girl was taken to a house in Aladza, a settlement in Foca. There were 14 volunteers from Montenegro, and then came Dragan Zelenovic with another eight soldiers. Zelenovic took the girl into one room, threatening to slaughter her, and he raped her. After him, in came the second soldier, the third, the fourth... Zoran Vukovic was the sixth one to rape her. While he was raping this poor girl, Vukovic bit her nipples. Her breast was bleeding. The next one came in, and continued to torture her by pinching her breast. She fainted because of pain...

Only a few days later, this very same girl was once again the victim of a group rape: Zelenovic with a group of soldiers took her to a house near the Partizan hall. They raped her and forced her to watch how they were raping other girls. On that July 23, 1992, Zelenovic told her: «You will give birth to good Serb children». That very night, after they returned her to Partizan, Janko Janjic and Zoran Vukovic came to take her and raped her again... Because of what she went through, this girl will never be able to have children.

Justice

In the Centre of Secondary Schools in Foca was one of the camps in which the girls and women of Muslim nationality were kept. All of them were raped many times. It was "Cosa's guards" who came most often, among which were also Gojko Jankovic, Dragan Zelenovic, Janko Janjic and Zoran Vukovic. Women who would have tried to resist or were opposing were severely beaten, and after that they would experience group rape. Many of them, because of such torture, were facing severe mental problems afterwards. Some of them became suicidal, others defended themselves by indifference, and the majority was depressed.

In the night between July 6th and 8th 1992 Dragan Zelenovic came to the Centre of Secondary Schools. From the group of captives he separated four girls. He took them to the neighboring classroom, where a group of soldiers was waiting, and then he made the "plan" as to which soldier was to rape which girl.

One of the raped girls from Foca said at the end of her statement in front of The Hague Tribunal: " Some of us experienced as much as 70 rapes. No normal human being can even imagine this torture. Please, do tell this to everyone. Tell everybody that here, with us, there are such monsters. Whatever they will get as their sentence, justice cannot be served."

Because of these crimes committed in Foca Dragoljub Kunarac was sentenced to 28 years in prison (he is serving his sentence in Germany), Radomir Kovac to 20 years (in a prison in Germany) and Zoran Vukovic to 12 years (a prison in Norway). The trial against Radovan Stankovic is going on in the court of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Dragan Gagovic was killed during arrest. Gojko Jankovic activated a bomb during the attempt of arrest. Dragan Zelenovic was recently arrested in Russia, his extradition to The Hague Tribunal is awaited, and Bosnia-Herzegovina has asked that he stands trial in Sarajevo.