

BACKGROUND AND CHRONOLOGY OF THE CRIMES COMMITTED BY THE ARMY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN THE VILLAGE OF TRUSINA ON APRIL 16, 1993

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The authors analyze events that have occurred in the municipality of Konjic throughout the March and April of 1993. Special emphasis was placed on crimes committed against the Croatian population of that municipality. In the early morning of April 16, 1993, Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) committed a war crime in the northern Herzegovinian village of Trusina, where 22 Croatian civilians and captured Croatian Defence Council (HVO) soldiers were killed. This crime was the result of a previously planned attack by the Army of BiH on the Croatian population and the HVO in the Konjic municipality, which began on April 14, 1993. The main attacking forces of the Army of BiH on the village Trusina on April 16, 1993, were members of the Zulfikar Special Purposes Detachment. They were under the direct command of the Supreme Command Staff (SVC) (i.e., General Staff of the Army of BiH) from their formation to just a few days before the crime in Trusina was committed. They have then become an integral part of the 1st Corps of the Army of BiH based in Sarajevo. As an integral part of the 1st Corps, members of the Zulfikar Special Purposes Detachment became the main perpetrators of a previously planned attack and war crime against the Croatian population of Trusina.

Keywords: Trusina, war in BiH, Army of BiH, war crimes

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Introduction

Shortly following the death of Josip Broz Tito, the leader and lifetime president of Yugoslavia, in May 1980, the country found itself in an all-out economic, political and social crisis. The crisis was the result of the incompetence of the Yugoslav communist political elite to resolve the key problems which had existed during Tito's time, but Tito had managed to keep the political, social and economic deviations in the complex multi-national state under control through his influence and military fame. In the mid-1980s, the accumulated economic problems which led to the country's financial collapse and the unresolved national tensions evident in the 1981 Albanian unrest in Kosovo enabled the expansion of Serbian nationalism under the leadership of Serbian communists who saw the solution to the crisis in a new distribution of relations.¹ The Serbian communists laid the blame for the difficult state of the country on the existing Constitution of 1974. Namely, the Constitution gave expansive rights to the republics within Yugoslavia, which weakened the federal authority in Belgrade. In 1987, on the wave of the dissatisfaction with the existing relations in Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević assumed the leadership of the Serbian communists, intensifying the existing criticism of the Yugoslav Constitution.² Milošević's political activities deepened the political and national crisis in Yugoslavia, and his opinion that it was necessary to provoke a political crisis in order to resolve the existing problems eventuated in the beginning of the end of the Communist Party at the beginning of 1990, the only allowed political party in Communist Yugoslavia.³ Slobodan Milošević very quickly became the primary Serbian nationalist leader by espousing his theory on the threatened state of Serbs in Yugoslavia. As the Serbian political leader in Yugoslavia, he offered political support and other types of assistance to Serbs in other Yugoslav republics and autonomous provinces. This support enabled the rebellion of Serbs in Croatia in the summer of 1990, who deemed the establishment of a non-communist, democratically elected government in Croatia unacceptable. All of this led to the deterioration of relations between Croats and Serbs in Croatia, which were further strained in the first half of 1991 with a series of armed incidents between the Croatian police and the rebel Serbs who were supported by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), the federal Yugoslav army.⁴ After the short and unsuccessful war in Slovenia at

¹ Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji 1945.-1991.: od zajedništva do razlaza* [Croatia in Yugoslavia 1945-1991: From Unity to Separation] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006), pp. 489-498.

² Ibid., pp. 548-552.

³ Ibid., p. 547.

⁴ Davor Marijan, *Domovinski rat* [Homeland war] (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Despot infinitus, 2016), pp. 68-69.

the end of June and beginning of July 1991, the JNA directed the majority of its forces to an open offensive on parts of the Republic of Croatia. By the end of 1991, the JNA in the role of “Serbian army” had caused heavy war casualties in the regions of Croatia it occupied, enabling the establishment of the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina under the control of the rebel Serbs.⁵

The signing of the Sarajevo Agreement between Croatia and JNA at the beginning of 1992 ended JNA operations in the regions of Croatia it had previously occupied, with them withdrawing and leaving the territory to the rebel Serbs. The focus of the crisis was transferred to Bosnia and Herzegovina where hostilities escalated during March and April 1992.⁶ The Serbs and JNA were on one side, and on the other were Croats and Muslims (Bosniaks), who under the threat of a common enemy established a fragile alliance.⁷ This Croat-Muslim alliance ended in January 1993 with the outbreak of hostilities between them in the nationally heterogenic region of Central Bosnia.

Croat-Muslim relations in the first few months of 1993

Croat-Muslim relations gravely deteriorated in the first months of 1993, making it seem like the only viable option in resolving those relations would lead to war. To be more exact, more serious political and military tensions between Muslims and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their military organizations: the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine* – ABiH) and the Croatian Defence Council (Hrvatsko vijeće obrane – HVO), grew their roots from the last months of 1992, when, after several months of joint action against Bosnian Serbs, the first major Croat-Muslim conflicts in central Bosnia and northern Herzegovina took place. However, these conflicts were successfully stopped after several negotiations due to restrictions on only a few municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and due to the still existing threat Serbs represented.⁸ Nevertheless, the resulting tension in Croat-Muslim relations threatened to repeat and escalate the conflict if there was no agreement regarding the two fundamental issues that have burdened them.

⁵ Davor Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1992. do 1994.* [The War between the Croats and the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 till 1994] (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2018), p. 15.

⁶ Ibid., p. 85

⁷ Ibid., pp. 102-103.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 200-207.

The first of these was the issue of military subordination, i.e., superiority, seeing that in the ethnically mixed areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Croats and Muslims lived in the majority, their previously mentioned military organizations were organized. Finally, the inability to reach an agreement on the issue was accompanied by a disagreement between Croat and Muslim political representatives over the internal administrative and political structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state. A very confirmation of the mentioned issues was evident in January 1993 regarding the attitude towards Vance – Owen's peace plan which was supposed to stop the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). While the Croatian side fully accepted its content, the Muslim wanted to change it by accepting only one part of the plan.

True consequences of being unable to reach a stable and mutual Croat-Muslim agreement were evident during January 1993, through new conflicts between ABiH and the HVO which broke out in the area of Gornji Vakuf. That very conflict was caused by the ABiH's intention to establish control over the area of Gornji Vakuf. With achieving success in that little town, HVO's Detachments in central Bosnia would be completely cut off from the rest of the HVO forces in Herzegovina.⁹ The conflict soon spread from Gornji Vakuf to central Bosnia, where the ABiH had succeeded in capturing the area between Busovača and Kiseljak until the end of January 1993., and from that moment that then unique area was separated into two enclaves; Lašvanska and Lepenička. During these attacks, on January 26, the ABiH committed the first major war crime against the Croat population in the village of Dusina near Busovača.¹⁰

The aforementioned January attack by the ABiH on the HVO in central Bosnia was stopped after intense political and military negotiations between Croat and Muslim representatives at the end of January 1993. However, despite having declared political agreement to end the conflict, the tensions between the ABiH and the HVO have threatened to repeat and spread in the

⁹ Hrvatski memorijalno dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata Zagreb (HMDCDR) [The Croatian Memorial-Documentation Center], Zapovjedništvo zbornog područja (ZZP) Tomislavgrad [Military district Tomislavgrad]: Republika Bosna i Hercegovina (R BiH) [Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina], Hrvatska zajednica Herceg Bosna (HZ HB) [Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna], Hrvatsko vijeće obrane (HVO) [Croatian Defence Council], Brigada dr. Ante Starčević, Gornji Vakuf, Izvješće, str. pov. bez broja (br. primitka 02/2-229 od 20.1.1993.) od 19.1.1993. 21.50 [Brigade dr. Ante Starčević, Gornji Vakuf, Report, Strictly confidential, from January 19, 1993]; HMDCDR, HVO, Glavni stožer (GS) HVO [HVO Main Staff]; R BiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 19. 1. 1993, str. pov. bez broja od 19. 1. 1993. [HVO Main Staff, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for January 19, 1993]

¹⁰ Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1992. do 1994.*, pp. 209-210.

future. That was also evident by the order on the elaboration of war plans of the 1st, 3rd and 4th Corps of the ABiH issued on February 6, 1993, by the Chief of Staff of the ABiH Sefer Halilović, which was drafted precisely for the purpose of conflict with HVO.¹¹

With such severely strained relations between the ABiH and the HVO, in mid-March of 1993 at the latest, the Muslim political and military leadership in BiH began with the process of creating the preconditions for taking full control of the Konjic and Jablanica municipalities. This process was initiated at the session of the Presidency of BiH, at which Safet Ćibo was appointed the new President of the War Presidency of the Municipal Assembly of Konjic and Jablanica at the proposal of the President of the Presidency of BiH Alija Izetbegović.¹² At the same time, the legally elected presidents of the Konjic War Presidency, Rusmir Hadžihusejnović, MD and Nijaz Ivković, the president of the Jablanica War Presidency, were removed from these positions. Shortly afterwards, a meeting between the representatives of the ABiH and police was held in Konjic to discuss the attack on the HVO in Konjic. Shortly afterwards, in late March, the ABiH attacked Croat villages in the southwestern part of the Konjic municipality in the Klis area, killing several Croat civilians. Finally, on April 4 1993, completing all previous agreements, the Commander of the 7th Brigade "Suad Alić" of the ABiH in Konjic issued an order to attack the HVO, which was to be carried out in the following days. This was the last known command before the beginning of the general attack of the ABiH on the HVO and the Croat population of the municipality of Konjic, which followed soon after.

The population of Klis and the geographic position of Trusina

The village of Trusina is one of the group of villages in the municipality of Konjic, historically known as Klis.¹³ The area of Klis as such includes the area between the northern shore of Lake Jablanica in the south and the slopes of Mount Zec in the north which continues to the mountainous area of Bitovnja and the river Kraljušćica, which form the north-eastern and eastern border

¹¹ Ibid., p. 214.

¹² Predsjedništvo R BiH, Sarajevo, Odluka o razrješenju predsjednika i članova ratnih predsjedništava skupština opština, br. 02-111-130/93 od 13. marta 1993. [Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Decision on dismissal of the president and members of the war presidencies of the municipal assemblies, number 02-111-130/93, March 13, 1993]

¹³ In the area of Klis there are three Catholic parishes Solakola Kula, Podhum-Žitače and Obri.

of Klis. Unlike them, the mountain area of Bokševica and its northern foothills form the western border of Klis towards the area of the neighbouring municipality of Prozor – Rama. The area of Klis is characterized by hilly and mountainous terrain with great number of smaller rivers and streams, the largest river being Neretvica. Such a terrain conditioned the development of the largest settlements and villages of Klis in the immediate vicinity of rivers and streams, and it also affected the creation of some main roads of the area. In terms of traffic, that was the exact reason why the area of Klis was the main area that connected the roads and paths, connecting the area of northern Herzegovina with the area of central Bosnia, which became extremely important for both Croats and Muslims with the escalation of the war in BiH in 1992.

According to the last pre-war census in BiH from 1991, the municipality of Konjic, as the administratively largest municipality in BiH, which also included the area of Klis, had a population of 43,878 inhabitants. Of that number, 23,815 were Muslims, 11,513 were Croats, 6,620 were Serbs, 1,358 were Yugoslavs, and only a small number were considered “others”, which represented members of other “nationalities” or national minorities. The majority of the total Muslim population in the municipality was also reflected in the municipal centre of the same name, the town of Konjic.¹⁴ The same majority of Muslims also prevailed in a large number of villages in Klis.¹⁵ Of all the villages in which Croats made up the majority or a noticeable number of inhabitants (Buturović Polje, Obri, Bukovica, Gornje and Donje Višnjevce, Trusina, Bare, Crni Vrh...), slightly more than 400 Croats lived in Kostajnica, which was the largest inhabited Croatian place in Klis as such.¹⁶

Unlike Kostajnica, the village of Trusina, located in its relative vicinity, was a nationally mixed village in which the number of Croats was only slightly

¹⁴ Republika Bosna i Hercegovina (R BiH), Državni zavod za statistiku R BiH, Statistički bilten, Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava, stanova i poljoprivrednih gazdinstava 1991.; Nacionalni sastav stanovništva (Sarajevo, prosinac 1993. Godine) [Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central Bureau of Statistics of R BiH, Statistical Bulletin, Census of Population, Households, Dwellings and Agricultural Farms 1991; National composition of the population (Sarajevo, December 1993)] pp. 63-66; Sources for which the place of storage is not specified are in the personal possession of the authors of the paper and as such are available for inspection.

¹⁵ Of the slightly more than 9,100 inhabitants living in the Klis area, 59% (or 5,399 inhabitants) were Muslims. The remaining 40% of the population (or 3722 inhabitants) were Croats. See in: Tabular overview of the national structure of the population in the municipality of Konjic according to the April 1991 census. Signed by Ante Krajinović, Head of the Office of Social Affairs of the HVO Konjic

¹⁶ R BiH, Državni zavod za statistiku R BiH, Statistički bilten, Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava, stanova i poljoprivrednih gazdinstava 1991.; Nacionalni sastav stanovništva, p. 65.

higher than the number of Muslims.¹⁷ The distribution of the existing mixed population in Trusina was very specific. Most of the familial and other residential buildings owned by Croats were located in the central part of the village, “on a certain hill”.¹⁸ Due to the specific geographical terrain and layout of the houses, the village consisted of several hamlets (such as Gaj, Kamenica etc.).¹⁹ Most Muslim residential buildings, i.e., family houses, were located “below” but also “above” Croatian houses in Trusina.²⁰ That is why the control over the nearby hills above the village (such as Križ hill) provided the ABiH and Muslims with an insight into the situation in most of the village as well as the important roads leading to Trusina.²¹ After the start of the war in BiH, a number of refugees arrived in Trusina in 1992, and they were housed with the local Croat and Muslim population. The refugees included some Croats who fled from Sarajevo, as well as Muslims who fled from various parts of BiH, who, according to local residents, were partly housed in the homes of local Croats.²²

Introduction into the planned attack of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ABiH) on the Croats of Konjic

Local Croat-Muslim conflicts escalated into open war in March and April 1993. The war, in the true sense of the word, began with the attack of the Muslim ABiH on the HVO and the Croat population in the municipality of Konjic in April 1993, and lasted, with some minor interruptions, for almost a year.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 66.; According to the census, Trusina had a total of 309 inhabitants, of whom 155 declared themselves Croats, 152 Muslims and two who declared themselves Yugoslavs.

¹⁸ Međunarodni centar za prava čovjeka (MCPČ Zagreb) [International Center for Human Rights Zagreb], Iskaz – Milka Drljo, oznaka Konj – 978 od 5. 7. 1993. [Statement – Milka Drljo, mark Konj – 978, July 5, 1993]

¹⁹ MCPČ Zagreb, Čitluk, Iskaz-Dragica Drljo, oznaka Konj – 991 od 2. 7. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights Zagreb, Čitluk, Statement – Dragica Drljo, mark Konj – 991, July 2, 1993]

²⁰ MCPČ Zagreb, Iskaz – Milka Drljo, oznaka Konj – 978 od 5. 7. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights Zagreb, Statement – Milka Drljo, mark Konj – 978, July 5, 1993]

²¹ Sud Bosne i Hercegovine (SuBiH), Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K00336910 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015., [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015], p. 109.

²² Čitluk, Iskaz, svjedok: D. D., žensko 57. god, šifra iskaza: ko005 od 5. 8. 1993. [Čitluk, statement, witness: D. D., female, statement number: ko005, August 5, 1993]; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0RnfRuLQyoQ>

The start of the war and the undoubtedly planned attack by the ABiH on the HVO and Croats in northern Herzegovina can be connected to several important political and military events that preceded it. It was important for the Muslim leadership to end all relations with those whose loyalty and commitment to political and war goals they doubted prior to the attack. Especially with those who cooperated with Croats and avoided conflicts.²³ This way, one can observe the dismissal of the local Muslim leadership in the municipalities of Konjic and Jablanica, headed by Rusmir Hadžihusejnović, MD and Nijaz Ivković. An unprecedented political precedent was set on March 13, 1993. During that day, the BiH presidency, led by Alija Izetbegović, appointed Safet Ćibo, MD, to replace Hadžihusejnović and Ivković, despite having no political affiliation with previously legally elected local municipal structures.²⁴ In fact, before being appointed to the mentioned position in Konjic, Ćibo returned to Sarajevo from Goražde, where he has been working as a doctor-surgeon at a local hospital since September 1992. He confessed that his trip to Goražde was organized by Alija Izetbegović.²⁵ Therefore, Ćibo's personal acquaintance with Izetbegović dates back to the mentioned precedent, and his appointment to political office in Konjic and Jablanica, where he was not elected. Ćibo's appointment confirms that Izetbegović did not accidentally carry out a political alternation in Konjic. Namely, the imposition of a well-known and obviously loyal collaborator on key political positions in Konjic and Jablanica should have resulted in the creation of Muslim political Detachment as a key precondition for future actions.

A few days after Ćibo was appointed, a meeting was held in Konjic on March 20, between representatives of the ABiH and the BiH Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) from Jablanica, Konjic and Hadžić areas.²⁶ The main topic of the meeting was the discussion of the issue of relations with the Croatian side in Jablanica and Konjic, which on that occasion was accused of working to establish a parallel government.²⁷ The general conclusion about the negative actions by the Croatian side was described through nine points, which basically included an attack on HVO Detachments and Croats in Konjic and Jablanica. The successful implementation of such a plan was based on the real relations between the distribution and number of forces of the ABiH

²³ Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1992. do 1994.*, pp. 214-217.

²⁴ Predsjedništvo RBiH, Sarajevo, Odluka o razrješenju predsjednika i članova ratnih predsjedništava skupština opština, br. 02-111-130/93 od 13. 3. 1993.

²⁵ Ševko Hodžić, "Takav narod mora pobijediti" [Such a nation must win], *Oslobođenje* (Sarajevo), March 3, 1993, p. 4.

²⁶ Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1992. do 1994.*, p. 258.

²⁷ Emin Zebić, *1992.-1995. Moja priča [1992 - 1995 My story]* (Jablanica: Štamparija Fojnica, 2018), p. 183

in relation to the HVO in the Konjic municipality. Namely, in Konjic and Klis, the ABiH had deployed two local brigades. While the 7th brigade “Suad Alić”, renamed the 43rd Mountain Brigade of the ABiH in April 1993, was based in Konjic, in the Klis area operated the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH (former “Neretvica” Brigade). Unlike the two mentioned brigades of the ABiH, members of the HVO in the municipality of Konjic were gathered in the 1st Battalion “Klis” and the 2nd Battalion “Konjic” within the HVO Brigade “Herceg Stjepan”. And while the 1st Battalion was deployed in the area of the same name in Klis, the 2nd Battalion “Konjic” was on the defensive lines towards the Army of the Serb Republic (VRS). The mentioned local forces from the two brigades of the ABiH in Konjic and Klis were, in total, three times in number than the members of the HVO in that area.²⁸

On the other hand, the Croatian side was informed about the agreements reached by the Muslim side at a meeting on March 20, 1993, in Konjic, two days later. That is when the members of the HVO in Klis stopped and searched the cars of the Muslim delegation from Konjic and found the minutes of the aforementioned meeting with Jasmin Guska, the Muslim police chief from Konjic.²⁹

In the days following the Konjic meeting, Croat-Muslim relations in the Konjic municipality got disrupted to the extent that some minor clashes between members of the ABiH and the HVO in some villages of Klis, as well as the HVO blockade in Konjic by the ABiH on March 23, 1993 escalated into

²⁸ HMDCDR, HVO, ZP Mostar [Military district Mostar]: Brigada “Herceg Stjepan”, Pregled popune ljudstva brigade “Herceg Stjepan“, bez broja od 27. 11. 1992. [Brigade “Herceg Stjepan”, Review of the brigade members, no number, November 27, 1992]; HMDCDR, Armija RBiH, 4. korpus [4th Army Corps of the ABiH], Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH, IV. korpus, Brigada “Neretvica”, Brojno stanje jedinice, str. pov. br. 02-869-3/93 od 5. 3. 1993. [ABiH, Brigade “Neretvica”, Numerical condition of the unit, strictly confidential, number 02-869-3/93, March 5, 1993]; RBiH, Armija RBiH – 4. korpus, 7. brigada “Suad Alić” Konjic, Spisak brigade, str. pov. br. 01/01-742 od 9. 3. 1993. [ABiH, 7th brigade “Suad Alić” Konjic, List of brigade members, strictly confidential, number 01/01-742, March 9, 1993]; HMDCDR, Armija BiH, 4. korpus Mostar: Armija RBiH, Komanda 4. korpusa Mostar, Dostava elemenata mob. Razvoja RJ 4. korpusa, str. pov. dj. br. 3-2683/93 od 7. 4. 1993. [Command of the 4th Corps of the ABiH Mostar, Elements of mobilization development of RJ units of the 4th Army Corps of ABiH, strictly confidential, number 3-2683/93, April 7, 1993]

²⁹ RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, VOS [Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina (RBiH), Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna (HZHB), Croatia Defence Council (HVO), Military intelligence (VOS)], Mostar, Zabilješka sačinjena na temelju originala dokumentacije koja je oduzeta od Jasmina Guske načelnika SJS Konjic, str. pov. br. 03-356/93 od 14. 4. 1993. [A note made on the basis of documents seized from Jasmin Guska, the chief of police in Konjic, strictly confidential, number 03-356/93 from April 14, 1993].

wider conflicts that lasted several days.³⁰ One of those attacks on Croatian villages and hamlets in Klis, escalated with the members of the ABiH killing four elderly Croats in the village of Orlište, after which they looted the village and burned it for the most part.³¹ Further spread of armed conflict was halted on March 25 when a high-level military-political delegation from the ABiH, the Party of Democratic Action (further: SDA) as the main Muslim political party, and the HVO from Mostar arrived in Konjic from Mostar. Their arrival in Konjic helped reach an agreement to end the conflict and return the banished people, mostly Croats from the area of the village of Klisa. Also, it was decided that the reached agreement and its implementation should be monitored by a commission composed of representatives of the ABiH and the HVO.³²

The commission was burdened with a complicated task of restoring the lost interethnic trust, which was evident through the large number of killed Croatian civilians and HVO soldiers. A total of 21 people were killed in the above-mentioned multi-day clashes at the end of March, 15 of them being Croats, five Muslims and one Serb. Among the killed Croats, seven of them were civilians, while all those killed on the Muslim side were members of the ABiH.³³

However, the reached agreement regarding armistice, which was supposed to begin on March 25, 1993, in the area of Klis and the rest of the Konjic mu-

³⁰ HMDCDR, HVO, Zapovjedništvo zbornog područja (ZZP) Tomislavgrad; RBiH, HZHB, HVO, Brigada "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Izvješće o stanju u Klisu, 23.03. 1993. u 02.00, bez broja (br. primitka u OZ SzH 02/ 2-813 od 23. 3. 1993) od 23. 3. 1993. [HVO, Brigade "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Report on the situation in Klis, number of recieved report in Military district Tomislavgrad 02/ 2-813, March 23, 1993]; HMDCDR, Armija RBiH, 4. korpus, Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH – IV Korpus, 7. brigada "Suad Alić", Naredujem br. 01/01-910 od 24. 3. 1993. [ABiH, 7th brigade ABiH "Suad Alić", Order, number 01/01-910 from March 24, 1993]; Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1992. do 1994.*, p. 258.

³¹ HMDCDR, HVO, Uprava Sigurnosno izvještajne službe (UP SIS) [Security Information Service Headquarter]: Hrvatska Republika Herceg Bosna (HR HB), Ministarstvo obrane (MINOB) [Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna (HR HB), Ministry of Defence (MINOB)], Centar SIS, [SIS Centre] Mostar, Saznanja-prilog 6, str. pov. br. 02-98-2-282/96 od 5.2.1996. [Information – Annex 6, strictly confidential number 02-98-2-282/96, February 5, 1996]; MCPČ, Zagreb, Iskaz – fra Gabrijel Tomić, oznaka Konj.-1301 od 26. 10. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights, Zagreb (MCPČ), Statement – friar Gabrijel Tomić, mark Konj – 1301, October 26, 1993]

³² The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY): Konjic, Zajednički sastanak bez broja od 25. 3. 1993. [Konjic, Joint meeting, March 25, 1993]

³³ Mirsad Tokača, *Bosanska knjiga mrtvih: ljudski gubici u Bosni i Hercegovini 1991.-1995.* [*The Bosnian Book of the Dead – Human Losses in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-1995*], Vol 1/3 (Sarajevo: Istraživačko dokumentacioni centar Sarajevo, 2012), pp. 593 – 626.

nicipality, did not calm the tensions in the days that followed.³⁴ Thus, minor clashes between members of the BiH Army and the HVO, as well as shootings near the Croat-populated village in Klis continued on a daily basis.³⁵ Consequently, until the end of March and in the first days of April 1993, minor conflicts did not allow the return of previously banished Croats. The Muslim side, i.e., the BiH Army, lacked will to end the conflicts, and it culminated on April 4, 1993, when the commander of the 7th "Suad Alić" Brigade of the BiH Army from Konjic, Midhat Cerovac, signed a direct order to attack the HVO Detachments in Konjic. The order contained, in detail, all HVO positions in and around Konjic that Cerovac planned to occupy during the general attack on Croats in Konjic.³⁶

The order to attack the Croatian side in Konjic indicated the character of the future activities of the Muslim side in northern Herzegovina, which considered that the option of going to war was the only way to resolve existing relations with the HVO and Croats. Given the current circumstances in the relations between the ABiH and the HVO in central Bosnia and Herzegovina, the option of war as the only possible way to resolve disagreements could not be adopted without the support of the political level. And that shed the light on the true purpose of appointing Safet Ćibo to a key position of political Muslim representative in northern Herzegovina. Namely, at the end of March and in the first days of April 1993, Ćibo, with the help of some local police and political representatives of the Muslim government, established control over the municipal government structures in Konjic and Jablanica.³⁷ This takeover took place despite the appeal of the removed president of the Konjic War Presidency, Rusmir Hadžihusejnović, regarding the illegality of him being removed from his position.³⁸ In conclusion, Ćibo's takeover of Konjic and Jablanica in the first days of April 1993 made it possible to speed up

³⁴ HZHB, HVO, brigada "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Redovito borbena izvješće za 26. 3. 1993., str. pov. bez broja (br.) od 27. 3. 1993. [HVO, Brigade "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Regular combat report, strictly confidential, March 26, 1993].

³⁵ HZHB, HVO, brigada "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Redovito borbena izvješće za 27. 3. 1993, str. pov. bez br. od 28. 3. 1993. [HVO, Brigade "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Regular combat report from March 27, 1993]

³⁶ RBiH, Armija RBiH – 4. korpus, 7. brigada "Suad Alić" Konjic, Borbena zapovjest za napad na „U“, str. pov. br. 02-239/93 od 4. 4. 1993., u potpisu Midhat Cerovac [ABiH, 7th brigade "Suad Alić" Konjic, Order to attack on „U“, strictly confidential, number 02-239/93, April 4, 1993, signed by Midhat Cerovac].

³⁷ Zebić, 1992.-1995. *Moja priča*, p. 196.

³⁸ HMDCDR, HVO, GS HVO; RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 4. 4. 1993., str. pov. bez broja od 5. 4. 1993., 3. [HVO Main Staff, Mostar, strictly confidential, Consolidated report report for April 4, 1993]; ICTY: RBiH, Opština Konjic, Ratno predsjedništvo, Konjic, Uput o vezi s odlukom RBiH br. 02-111-130/93 od 16. 3. 1993., br. 01/1-012-

the preparations for the final showdown with the Croatian side in that area, after examining the HVO forces in Konjic at the end of March. Therefore, the events that took place in the next few days in the municipal areas of Konjic and Jablanica were the result of coordinated political and military activities of the Muslim side in the area of northern Herzegovina. The mentioned planned attack by the ABiH on Croats and the HVO in Konjic marked the end of a months-long period of locally limited conflicts, as well as the beginning of a new phase in Croat-Muslim relations, more precisely, the open war between the ABiH and the HVO.

The situation in Klis and Trusina in the days following the plan of attack on Croats in Konjic

Since the first days of April 1993, the members of the HVO in Klis area have been in an extremely difficult situation being surrounded by numerous members of the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH.³⁹ On April 4, 1993 it was evident that the previously agreed upon armistice was not respected, when several members of the ABiH attacked the small Croat population in the village of Donji Prijeslop, and banished them from the village afterwards.⁴⁰ On that same day, members of the ABiH attacked the improvised barracks of the 1st Battalion "Klis" "Goran Stanić" in the area of the village of Seonica, which was located in the village primary school. That attack was not coincidental. The Army of BiH (ABiH) used it to examine the readiness and reaction of HVO members in the area of Seonica, which was the junction of some Croatian villages in the northern part of Klis with Trusina, Obri, Buturović Polje and Kostajnica in the south. Although HVO members failed to provide a greater reaction to the mentioned attack, a joint military commission of the ABiH and the HVO in Konjic, which was in charge of maintaining peace, was informed about the event of that day.⁴¹

95/93 od 25. 3. 1993.[War Presidency of Konjic Municipality, Inquiry regarding the decision, number 01/1-012-95/93, March 25, 1993]

³⁹ HMDCDR, Armija BiH, 4. korpus Mostar: Armija R BiH, Komanda 4. korpusa, Mostar, Dostava elemenata mob. razvoja RJ 4. korpusa, str. pov. dj. br. 3-2683/93 od 7. 4. 1993. [ABiH, Command of the 4th Corps, Introduction to the elements of mobilization development of war units, strictly confidential, number 3-2683/93, April 7, 1993]

⁴⁰ Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1992. do 1994.*, p. 260.

⁴¹ R BiH, HZHB, HVO, Brigada "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Klis, Izvješće, str. pov. bez br. (br. primitka u GS HVO; br. teleg. 1806 od 4. 4. 1993. u 23. 55) od 4. 4. 1993., [HVO, Brigade „Herceg Stjepan“ Konjic, Report, strictly confidential, telegram number in HVO Main Staff 1806, April 4, 1993]; R BiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 8. 4. 1993. [HVO

However, Esad Ramić, a high-ranking officer of the 4th Corps of the Army of BiH and his representative in the leadership of the mentioned Commission, did not pay attention to the mentioned protests of the Croatian side. This was evident from his April 4 report to the Commander of the 4th Corps of the ABiH, Arif Pašalić, in Mostar. In it, Ramić reported that there were no incidents in the Konjic area on that day, noting that “peace was respected”. Ramić also pointed out that, at his request, the commander of the HVO Brigade “Herceg Stjepan” went to Prozor where he was to dissuade the members of the HVO Brigade “Rama” in Prozor from getting involved in the conflicts between the ABiH and HVO in Klis.⁴² The content of Ramić’s report showed that the Muslim side tried to shift the responsibility for the disturbed interethnic relations in Konjic and Klis to a small number of HVO members. In an effort to shift the blame for the conflicts to the HVO, Ramić completely ignored the basic facts, including that the conflict in late March 1993 took place in parts of Klis where it was impossible to send any kind of help to HVO due to a blockade by the ABiH.

On the other hand, it was on April 4, 1993, on the southern approaches to Klis, in Ostrožac area, that the members of the ABiH blocked a checkpoint near an important bridge and thus prevented the Croat residents from passing. That move was justified by the alleged attempt to stop the departure of the Croatian population from the Klis area.⁴³ However, in the form of a travel ban, the ABiH actually blocked areas of Croatian villages and HVO members in the area of Klis. The ban on the passage of Croats from Klis was carried out on the day when members of the joint commission were in Ostrožac and the nearby village of Falanovo Brdo, in order to control the existing defensive positions of the ABiH and HVO.⁴⁴

Main Staff, Mostar, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for April 8, 1993], str. pov. bez broja od 9. 4. 1993., 3; RBiH, HZHB, HVO, Brigada “Herceg Stjepan” Konjic, Izvješće za dan 8. 4. 1993., str. pov. bez br. (br. primitka u GS HVO; br. teleg 1868 od 8. 4. 1993. u 20.30) od 8. 4. 1993. [HVO, Brigade “Herceg Stjepan” Konjic, strictly confidential, number 1868, Daily report for April 8, 1993].

⁴² HMDCDR, Armija BiH, 4. korpus Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH, Komisija za pregovore, Konjic, Izvještaj, str. pov. bez br. (Zapovjedništvo 4. korpusa br. 01-2629/93 od 6. 4. 1993.) od 4. 4. 1993. [ABiH, Negotiation Commission, Konjic, Report, strictly confidential, April 4, 1993].

⁴³ HMDCDR, HVO, GS HVO; RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 4. 4. 1993, str. pov. bez broja od 5. 4. 1993., [HVO Main Staff, Mostar, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for April 4, 1993] 3.

⁴⁴ HMDCDR, Armija BiH, 4. korpus Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH, Komisija za pregovore, Konjic, Izvještaj, str. pov. bez br. (Zapovjedništvo 4. korpusa br. 01-2629/93 od 6. 4. 1993.) od 4. 4. 1993. [ABiH, Negotiation Commission, Konjic, strictly confidential, Report, April 4, 1993].

In the days that followed, the position of key Muslim representatives on the aforementioned Peacekeeping Commission continued to move in the direction of accusing the HVO of obstructing the ceasefire. This is not surprising, especially if we take into account the fact that, in addition to Ramić, Safet Ćibo was actively involved in the work of the Commission. On April 5, 1993, it was Ramić and Ćibo who informed the Command of the 4th Corps of the ABiH about HVO representatives not participating in joint meetings between the Commission and international representatives. They also declared the lack of participation of Croatian members of the Commission as arrogant behaviour, which was assessed as a consequence of the statements of “Boban and the Government of the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna on the subordination of ABiH to the HVO”.⁴⁵ In fact, the reality was quite the opposite, which was partly confirmed by the April 5 report, in which Ćibo and Ramić concluded how they were forced to make “decisions regarding the preparation of BiH Army for events prepared by the HVO”.⁴⁶ The quote makes it clear that Ćibo and Ramić worked together in preparing for the attack of the ABiH on the HVO.

At the time of writing the April 5 report, Ćibo had already successfully established control in Konjic, preparing to finally take control over the civilian government structures in Jablanica on April 6.⁴⁷ On April 7, Mirsad Mahumtćehajić, assistant commander of the 4th Corps of the ABiH for Logistics, confirmed Ćibo’s successful takeover in Jablanica, in a statement sent to the BiH Ministry of Finance.⁴⁸ According to what was previously mentioned, three days after the order of the commander of the 7th Brigade “Suad Alić” to prepare an attack on HVO Detachments and Croats in the municipality of Konjic, and less than three weeks after the removal of Muslim political leadership in Konjic and Jablanica, a strong Detachment of Muslim political authorities under Ćibo’s supervision was established. That confirmed the claim that assigning Ćibo as a key political figure in Konjic was carried out solely to create the conditions for the forcible removal of the HVO from Konjic municipality.

⁴⁵ HMDCDR, Armija BiH, 4. korpus Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH, Komisija za pregovore, Jablanica, Izvještaj, str. pov. bez br. (pečat Zapovjedništvo 4. korpusa br. 01-2628/93 od 6. 4. 1993.) od 5. 4. 1993. [ABiH, Negotiation Commission, strictly confidential, Jablanica, Report, April 5, 1993].

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ HMDCDR, Armija BiH, 4. korpus Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH, Komanda 4. korpusa, Mostar, Izvještaj po aktu broj 05-050-682/93 od 7. 4. 1993. [Command of the 4th Corps of the ABiH Mostar, Report by act broj 05-050-682/93, April 7, 1993].

Given the previously mentioned plans of the ABiH to attack the HVO in Konjic, the Muslim side was looking for an opportunity that would allow them to justify their planned action. In that sense, it does not seem unexpected that the reports of the ABiH in Konjic very often contained descriptions of negative actions of the HVO, which was accused of regulating “engineering” positions around Croatian villages and “at certain heights”. Such an accusation implied that the HVO was preparing for a conflict, which is why the command of the 7th Brigade “Suad Alić” of the ABiH believed that any provocation by the Croatian side should be retaliated against “with all available means.”⁴⁹

The situation of Croat-Muslim relations in Konjic was completely reflected in the situation in the villages of Klis. An attempt to reach a more quality agreement at a meeting of representatives of the HVO Brigade “Herceg Stjepan” and the “Neretvica” Brigade of the ABiH held in the village of Parsovići on April 7, 1993, was unsuccessful. After the meeting, the Croatian side of Klis felt that the command of “Neretvica” Brigade (45th Mountain Brigade) had not shown interest to actually end the incidents and conflicts.⁵⁰ Therefore, the representatives of the HVO Brigade “Herceg Stjepan” in Klis were convinced that the attack of the ABiH is inevitable and that it will follow in the period of Easter and holidays.⁵¹ An additional contribution to this conclusion was made by HVO representatives, keeping in mind that the additional forces of the ABiH are being sent in the direction of Klis, as well as the local brigade of ABiH brigades from Konjic and Jablanica, which actually just waited for an order to attack Klis.⁵² Until April 10, members of the anti-sabotage detachment (PDO) of ABiH from the area of Gornji Vakuf were sent in the direction of Klis.⁵³ That was a clear confirmation of the aforementioned HVO information regarding the gathering of ABiH forces arriving in the Konjic area from other municipalities. Unlike the ABiH, HVO could not send similar re-

⁴⁹ HMDCDR, Armija BiH, 4. korpus Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH – 4. korpus, 7. brigada “Suad Alić” Konjic, Konjic, Operativni izvještaj br. 02-245/ 93 od 6. 4. 1993. [ABiH, 7th brigade “Suad Alić” Konjic, Report, number 02-245/ 93, April 7, 1993].

⁵⁰ HMDCDR, HVO, GS HVO; RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 7. 4. 1993, str. pov. bez broja od 8. 4. 1993. [HVO Main Staff, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for April 7, 1993].

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² HMDCDR, HVO, GS HVO: RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 8. 4. 1993, str. pov. bez broja od 9. 4. 1993. [HVO Main Staff, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for April 9, 1993].

⁵³ Esad Ramić, Fuad Zec, *Gornji Vakuf grad heroj; ratna hronika april 1992.- juli 1993*. [Gornji Vakuf city hero; war chronicle April 1992-July 1993] (Gornji Vakuf: Organizacija porodica šehida i poginulih boraca Gornji Vakuf, 2016), p. 275.

inforcements to Konjic and Klis. Therefore, HVO Detachments in Klis found themselves in an extremely unfavourable situation, forced to independently resist the numerous forces of the ABiH.

The previously mentioned predictions by the Croatian side about an imminent attack by the ABiH were based on the new incidents and conflicts that followed. For example, on the night of April 7-8, the ABiH again attacked improvised HVO barracks in the village of Seonica. The mentioned barracks were more seriously damaged in that attack, while five members of the 1st Battalion "Klis" from the HVO Brigade "Herceg Stjepan" were wounded.⁵⁴ Despite these events, the Staff of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces of BiH (ŠVK), which was basically a more resonant name for the General Staff of the ABiH, did not mention the attack on HVO in Seonica in its daily review of April 8, 1993. However, the General Staff of the ABiH accused the Croatian side, which allegedly threatened to attack Konjic, of the current state of disturbed relations in the Konjic municipality.⁵⁵

The report shows that the supreme military body of the ABiH was informed in detail about the situation in the area of Konjic. Despite this, smaller HVO forces in Konjic and Klis were portrayed as a serious threat at several occasions, which was all for a certain reason, i.e., it was necessary to create an atmosphere for the implementation of the prepared plan on the attack on HVO forces in the municipality of Konjic.⁵⁶ However, the fact of unrealistic threat to Konjic by HVO members was evident by the deployment of forces in the municipality, which undoubtedly benefited the ABiH.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ HMDCDR, HVO, GS HVO: RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 8.4. 1993, str. pov. bez broja od 9. 4. 1993., 3. [HVO Main Staff, Mostar, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for 8th April 1993]; Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1992. do 1994.*, p. 261.

⁵⁵ RBiH, ŠVK OS, Sarajevo, Informacija o toku borbenih dejstava na teritoriji RBiH za period od 24 sata dana 08. 04. 1993., str. pov. br. 02/1-99 od 9. 4. 1993. [Supreme Command Staff of the Armed Forces of BiH, Sarajevo Information on the course of hostilities on the territory of RBiH for a period of 24 hours on April 8, 1993, strictly confidential, number 02/1-99, April 9, 1993]

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ HMDCDR, HVO, ZP Mostar: Brigada "Herceg Stjepan", Pregled popune ljudstva brigade „Herceg Stjepan“ bez broja od 27. 11. 1992. [Brigade "Herceg Stjepan", Review of the brigade members, November 27, 1992]; HMDCDR, Armija RBiH, 4. korpus, Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH, IV korpus, Brigada "Neretvica", Brojno stanje jedinice, str. pov. br. 02-869-3/93 od 5. 3. 1993. [4th Army Corps of the ABiH, Mostar, Brigade "Neretvica", Numerical condition of the unit, strictly confidential, number 02-869-3/93 from March 5, 1993]; RBiH, Armija RBiH – 4. korpus, 7. brigada "Suad Alić" Konjic, Spisak brigade, str. pov. br. 01/01-742 od 9. 3. 1993. [7th brigade "Suad Alić" Konjic, List of brigade members, strictly confidential, number 01/01-742 from March 9, 1993].

The Croatian side considered the latest attacks by the ABiH on members of the HVO in Seonica as a serious announcement of the beginning of wider war conflicts, i.e., a repeat of the events of late March 1993 and the beginning of mass persecution of Croats from the area.⁵⁸ Although there were no similar incidents or clashes after the attack on the HVO in Seonica, ABiH Detachments in Konjic informed the 4th Corps Command in Mostar that there were no “signs of improvement and progress” regarding the relations with the HVO, concluding that “the tendency of strained relations “is expected.”⁵⁹ Therefore, the existing relations were such that a new conflict was expected at any moment. The development of the tense situation in Konjic and its surroundings could not be influenced by the previously mentioned joint Commission of Representatives of the ABiH and the HVO, which visited the area of previous conflicts in the villages of Klis on April 11, 1993.⁶⁰ The ABiH used the absence of major conflicts on April 12 and 13 to accuse the HVO of abandoning positions on the Serb side. The accusation was forwarded to the 4th Corps Command in Mostar, which requested a statement from the HVO General Staff (GS).⁶¹

Following the accusation of collaborating with the Serb side, on the night of April 13 to 14, 1993, the members of the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH (“Neretvica”) attacked HVO members and the Croat population in the village

⁵⁸ RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, VOS, Mostar, Dnevno obavještajno izvješće br. 226/93 str. pov. br. 03-340/93 od 9. 4. 1993. [HVO Main Staff, Military intelligence, Mostar, Daily intelligence report number 226/93, strictly confidential, number 03-340/93, April 9, 1993].

⁵⁹ HMDCDR, Armija RBiH, 4. korpus, Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH – 4. korpus, Bataljon Vojne policije, Dnevni operativni izvještaj, br: 01/P-0-16/93 od 9. 4. 1993. [4th Army Corps of the ABiH, Military Police Battalion (MP), Daily report number 01/P-0-16/93, April 9, 1993].

⁶⁰ HMDCDR, Armija RBiH, 4. korpus, Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH, Zapovjedništvo 4. korpusa, Mostar, Redovni obavještajni izvještaj, str. pov. br. 06-2867/93 od 11. 4. 1993. [Command of the 4th Corps of the ABiH, Mostar, strictly confidential, Regular intelligence report number 06-2867/93, April 11, 1993].

⁶¹ HMDCDR, Armija RBiH, 4. korpus, Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH – 4. korpus, 7. brigada “Suad Alić” Konjic, Operativni izvještaj, str. pov. br. 02-258/93 od 12. 4. 1993. [ABiH, 7th brigade “Suad Alić” Konjic, Report, strictly confidential number 02-258/93, April 12, 1993]; HMDCDR, Armija RBiH, 4. korpus, Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH – 4. korpus, 7. brigada “Suad Alić” Konjic, Operativni izvještaj, str. pov. br. 02-259/93 od 13. 4. 1993. [ABiH, 7th brigade “Suad Alić” Konjic, Report, strictly confidential number 02-259/93, April 13, 1993]; HMDCDR, Armija RBiH, 4. korpus, Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH, Komanda 4. korpusa, Mostar, Obavještenje o napuštanju prve linije obrane, str. pov. br. 01-2975/93 od 13. 4. 1993. [Command of the 4th Corps of the ABiH, Mostar, Notice of leaving the defense position, strictly confidential number 01-2975/93, April 13, 1993].

of Bušćak in Klis.⁶² This very attack on the HVO and the Croats in the area started a continuous war between Muslims and Croats.

The mentioned attack corresponded to the actions of local Muslim political representatives in Konjic, as was evident from the events of April 13, 1993. On April 13, the President of the Konjic War Presidency, Safet Ćibo, made a decision to establish a new local municipal government, according to which the existing structure of the Croatian political government within the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia was declared illegal.⁶³ This decision was made in the atmosphere of Ćibo's extremely active public engagement. On April 12, 1993, Ćibo, as a guest on the Radio Konjic program, rudely denied the existence of the constituency of the people of BiH, emphasizing that they were, in fact, "Bosnian" people with different denominations.⁶⁴ His publicly transmitted statement further exacerbated the already severely strained interethnic relations in Konjic and Klis.

The open Attack on the Croats in Konjic; the crime in the cillage Trusina on April 16, 1993

The conflicts between the ABiH and the HVO in Klis area began in the morning of 1993 with an attack led by the members of the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH on the village of Bušćak. The village was attacked from several directions in order to prevent the withdrawal of a small number of members of the HVO brigade "Herceg Stjepan" that were defending the village.⁶⁵ The attack on the village was preceded by the killing of an unarmed HVO member from Bušćak. In the evening of April 13, 1993, he was invited

⁶² HMDCDR, Armija RBiH, 4. korpus, Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH, Zapovjedništvo 4. korpusa, Mostar, Izvještaj, str. pov. dj. br. 02-2360-14-1/93 od 14. 4. 1993. [Command of the 4th Corps of the ABiH, Mostar, Report, strictly confidential number 06-2867/93, April 11, 1993].

⁶³ RBiH, HZHB, HVO, Brigada "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Izvješće za dan 13. travnja 1993. godine, str. pov. bez broja (br. primitka u GS HVO; br. teleg: 1957 od 13. 4. 1993. u 22.50 od 13. 4. 1993.) od 13. 4. 1993. [Brigade "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, strictly confidential, Daily report for April 13, 1993].

⁶⁴ RBiH, HZHB, HVO, Brigada "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Zapovjedništvo, Saznajni odjel, Saznajno izvješće za 12/13.4. 1993. str. pov. bez broja (br. primitka u GS HVO; br. teleg: 1978 od 15. 4. 1993. u 15.45) od 13. 4. 1993.[HVO, Brigade "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic Command, Intelligence Department, strictly confidential, Intelligence report for April 12 and 13, 1993]

⁶⁵ MCPČ, Zagreb; Marko Majić, Iskaz, br. 1183 Konjic od 11. 10. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights, Zagreb (MCPČ), Zagreb, Statement – Marko Majić, number 1183 Konjic, October 11, 1993].

by local Muslims to a joint gathering where he was killed.⁶⁶ Given the attack by the ABiH, the members of the HVO in Bušćak were unaware of his death. The attack on the village was ended by the ABiH in the afternoon of April 14, when all HVO members, in fact villagers were captured, after the deaths of two of their own members. About 27 HVO members, along with civilians from Bušćak and Solakova Kula, were then taken to a makeshift prison located at the Parsovići primary school, which housed the command of the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH.⁶⁷ The success of the mentioned attack of the ABiH on Bušćak was also confirmed by Esad Ramić, who, in the capacity of a high-ranking officer of the 4th Corps of the ABiH, and a member of the then already disbanded mixed commission, informed the Corps Command in Mostar.⁶⁸

Apart from the village of Bušćak, the members of the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH also attacked other Croatian settlements in Klis; Ljesovina, Buturović Polje, Kostajnica, Obri, Vrce and Falanovo Brdo.⁶⁹ The grave attack on the majority of Klis surprised the HVO General Staff (GS), which, despite previous information, did not expect major attacks by the ABiH and the

⁶⁶ MCPČ, Prozor; Zorka Majić, Iskaz, bez broja od 22. 7. 1993. [MCPČ, Prozor, Statement – Zorka Marić, July 22, 1993].

⁶⁷ MCPČ, Zagreb; Marko Majić, Iskaz, br. 1183 Konjic od 11. 10. 1993. [MCPČ, Zagreb, Statement – Marko Majić, number 1183 Konjic, October 11, 1993]; HMDCCR, HVO, MINOB, PU MO: Odjel obrane, Sektor za zdravstvo, Glavni sanitetski stožer (GSS), Odjel za informiranje i istraživanje, Izvješće o događajima u području Konjica, br. 02-5/1-42/93 od 4. 5. 1993. [HVO Department of Defense, Sector for healthcare, Department of information and research, Report on the events in the area of Konjic, strictly confidential, number 02-5/1-42/93, May 4, 1993]; HMDCCR, HVO, UP SIS: HR HB, MINOB, Centar SIS, Mostar, Saznanja-prilog 5., str. pov. br. 02-98-2-282/96 od 5.2.1996. [Ministry of Defence, SIS Centre Mostar, Intelligence information – Annex 5, strictly confidential number 02-98-2-282/96, February 5, 1996].

⁶⁸ HMDCCR, HVO, MINOB, PU MO: R BiH, PNSS ZA ONP 4. Korpusa, Esad Ramić [Assistant Chief of Staff for General Affair of 4th Corps of the ABiH, Esad Ramić].

⁶⁹ HMDCCR, HVO, GS HVO: RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 13. 4. 1993, str. pov. bez broja od 14. 4. 1993. [HVO Main Staff, Mostar, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for April 13, 1993]; HMDCCR, HVO, ZZP Tomislavgrad: HZHB, HVO Konjic, Brigada “Herceg Stjepan” Konjic, str. pov. bez broja (br. primitka u OZ SzH Tomislavgrad, 02/2-1056 od 14. 4. 1993) od 14. 4. 1993. [Brigade “Herceg Stjepan” Konjic, strictly confidential, Report, April 14, 1993]; RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, VOS, Mostar, Dnevno obavještajno izvješće 230/ 93., str. pov. br. 03-347/93 od 14. 4. 1993. [HVO Main Staff, Military intelligence, Mostar, Daily intelligence report number 230/ 93, strictly confidential, number 03-347/93, April 14, 1993]; HMDCCR, HVO, GS HVO: RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 14. 4. 1993, str. pov. bez broja od 15. 4. 1993. [HVO Main Staff, Mostar, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for April 14, 1993, April 15, 1993].

expansion of war to northern Herzegovina.⁷⁰ Due to the unwillingness and inability to send human aid, the members of the HVO in Klis received less assistance in the form of artillery support from members of the HVO Brigade “Rama” from the neighbouring municipality of Prozor.⁷¹

Due to the attack in Klis, the HVO blocked the roads leading to the town in Konjic and its wider surroundings. This justified move by the HVO served as an excellent excuse for the ABiH, which informed the 4th Corps Command in Mostar that it had been forced to defend its positions due to the blockade.⁷² Such an explanation was very quickly taken over by the command of the 4th Corps of the ABiH in Mostar. In a press release from the same day, it pointed out that its members in the Konjic area had resisted the HVO attack, concluding that they would continue to do so “in the future as well”.⁷³ The move by the 4th Corps Command showed that the ABiH attack in Konjic had planned media support shifting the blame for the conflict to the attacked HVO.

Due to the attack of the ABiH on the village of Bušćak and the rest of Klis, an extraordinary session of the HVO was held in Mostar on April 14, 1993. HVO representatives concluded that the new attack by the ABiH was caused by the intention to completely conquer the Konjic municipality, which, according to the previously signed international Vance-Owen plan, was part of the majority of a Croatian province. Accordingly, the HVO accused Alija Izetbegović and Safet Čibo as key culprits for the existing attack. Therefore, the HVO issued conclusions also announcing sending military aid to the attacked areas of Konjic municipality.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ HMDCDR, HVO, GS HVO: RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 14. 4. 1993, str. pov. bez broja od 15. 4. 1993. [HVO Main Staff, Mostar, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for April 14, 1993, April 15, 1993].

⁷¹ HMDCDR, HVO, ZZP Tomislavgrad: RBiH, HZHB, OZ SzH, IZM Prozor, Prozor, Izvješće IZM za dan 14. 4. 1993. str. pov. br. 01-200/93 od 14. 4. 1993. [HVO, Northwestern Herzegovina Operations Zone (OZ SzH), Forward Command Post Prozor (IZM Prozor), Report for April 14, 1993, strictly confidential number 01-200/93, 14 April 1993]; HMDCDR, HVO, GS HVO; RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 13. 4. 1993, str. pov. bez broja od 14. 4. 1993. [HVO Main Staff, Mostar, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for 13th April 1993, April 14, 1993].

⁷² RBiH, Armija RBiH, Komanda bataljona „Lisin“, Bradina, Borbeni izvještaj, str. pov. bez broja (br. primitka u 4. korpus; 02/1-3169/93) od 17. 4. 1993. [ABiH, Lisin Battalion Command, Bradina, Combat report, strictly confidential (received number in Command of the 4th April Corps of the ABiH 02/1-3169/93), April 17, 1993].

⁷³ RBiH, Armija RBiH, 4. korpus, IPS Služba, Saopštenje za javnost, bez broja od 15. 4. 1993. u 16.00 [4th Corps of the ABiH, IPS Sector, Public announcement, April 15, 1993]

⁷⁴ Mostar, Zapisnik sa izvanredne sjednice HVO HZHB, bez broja od 14. 4. 1993. u 12. sati [Mostar, Record of a HVO urgent session, 14 April 1993 at 12:00 p.m.]; “Izetbegović potpisao

The intensity of the existing fighting was extended on April 15, 1993 by a new attack by the ABiH on HVO members stationed in the urban and suburban area of Konjic and other settlements in its immediate vicinity. After a short break, on that same day, the members of the ABiH managed to capture the HVO headquarters building in Konjic, where they captured Croatian civilian political representatives of the Konjic authorities along with HVO members. In addition to the attacks on the premises where members of the HVO were, the members of the ABiH arrested a large number of Croat civilians on charges of military action against the ABiH in Konjic.⁷⁵ The mentioned attack led by the ABiH detachments on the urban and suburban area of Konjic on April 15, extended the war conflict with the HVO to the entire municipal area.⁷⁶

The attack on the HVO in Konjic did not weaken the intensity of the ABiH attack on Croatian villages in Klis. Due to a series of new attacks, most of the command of the „Herceg Stjepan” Brigade, which was located in the area of Klis, more precisely Kostajnica, asked in dire for more men, emphasizing the need for their actions in the direction of Mount Bokševica. However, the HVO Detachments from Prozor could not fulfil that request, which is why on April 15, the requested assistance was again reduced to throw grenades to the position of the ABiH in the Klis area.⁷⁷ However, such artillery action made by the HVO did not have much of an impact on the cessation of attacks by the ABiH in Klis.

On April 15, the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH received new reinforcements to assist in further attacks on HVO members in Klis. The majority of the newly arrived reinforcements were members of the special offensive forces of the ABiH, including members of the Special Detachment for Special

Karadžić izoliran” [Izetbegović signed Karadžić isolated], *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), March 26, 1993, p. 1.

⁷⁵ RBiH, Armija RBiH, Komanda bataljona “Lisin”, Bradina, Borbeni izvještaj, str. pov. bez broja (br. primitka u 4. korpus; 02/1-3169/93) od 17. 4. 1993. [ABiH, Lisin Battalion Command, Bradina, Combat report, strictly confidential (received number in Command of the 4th Corps of the ABiH 02/1-3169/93), April 17, 1993].; HMDCDR, Armija BiH, 4. korpus Mostar: RBiH, Armija RBiH – 4. korpus, Bataljon Vojne policije, Dnevni operativni izvještaj, str. pov. dj. br. 01/P-0-22/93 od 15. 4. 1993. [4th Army Corps of the ABiH, Military Police Battalion, strictly confidential, Daily report number 01/P-0-22/93, April 15, 1993].

⁷⁶ HMDCDR, HVO, GS HVO: RBiH, HZHB, HVO, GS HVO, Mostar, Zbirno izvješće za dan 15. 4. 1993, str. pov. od 16. 4. 1993. [HVO Main Staff, Mostar, strictly confidential, Consolidated report for April 15, 1993], 3.

⁷⁷ RBiH, HZHB, HVO, OZ SzH, IZM Prozor, Prozor, Redovno borbeno izvješće sa stanjem do 21.00, str. pov. br. 01- 201/93 od 15. 4. 1993. [HVO, Northwestern Herzegovina Operations Zone (OZ SzH), Forward Command Post, Prozor, Regular combat control, strictly confidential, number 01- 201/93, April 15, 1993].

Purposes at the Supreme Command Staff (SOPN – Detachment) “Zulfikar” and members of the police (MUP BiH). Although founded in June 1991 as the “Detachment for Natural and People’s Rights of the Republic Bosnia and Herzegovina Sandžak and Kosovo – Zulfikar”, the Detachment has been active since the beginning of April 1992. In January 1993, the Detachment was re-named as the “Special Purpose Special Detachment” (hereinafter the Detachment). From that moment on, the Detachment was under the command of the Supreme Command Staff, i.e., the General Staff of the ABiH, commanded by Sefer Halilović. The commander of the “Zulfikar” Detachment was “Zulfikar” Ališpago aka Zuka, with Nihad Bojadžić as his deputy. In the period from January 1993 until the beginning attack of the ABiH on Konjic and Klis in April 1993, the members of the Detachment “Zulfikar” as a special Detachment of the General Staff of the ABiH were in the area of Mount Igman with their headquarters being located in the local hotel “Mrazište”.⁷⁸

On April 12, 1993, the “Zulfikar” Detachment was attached to the 1st Corps of the ABiH, i.e., to its Operational Group (OG) “Igman” whose commander was Salko Gušić. This act completed in full the request that the Deputy Commanded of the 1st Corps of the ABiH from Sarajevo, Vahid Karavelić, sent to the Chief of the General Staff of the ABiH, Sefer Halilović. Karavelić requested Halilović to subordinate the “Zulfikar” Detachment to the 1st Corps of the ABiH. According to the further plan, by transferring the “Zulfikar” Detachment to the Igman OG, the Detachment Commander was to become the Assistant Chief of Staff for Anti-Aabotage Operations.⁷⁹ Accordingly, there is no doubt that the “Zulfikar” Detachment was attached to the 1st Corps of the ABiH, specifically its OG “Igman”, solely due to previously planned attacks on the HVO in Klis and Konjic.

⁷⁸ Komanda OG „Igman“, Igman, Dnevni borbeni izvještaj, str. pov. br. 03-592/4 od 16. 4. 1993. [Operations Group (OG) Igman Command, Daily combat report, strictly confidential, number 03-592/4, April 16, 1993]; SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K00336910 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015], p. 98.

⁷⁹ Komanda 1. korpusa, Prijedlog, str. pov. br. 05/7-203 od 6. 4. 1993. U potpisu Vahid Karavelić [1th Corps Command, Suggestion, strictly confidential, number 05/7-203, 6 April 1993]; RBiH, ŠVK OS, Sarajevo, Pretpočinjavanje jedinica ŠVK OS, str. pov. br. 14/75-40 od 12. 4. 1993. [Supreme Command Staff, Sarajevo, Subordination of units of the Supreme Command Staff, strictly confidential, number 14/75-40, April 12, 1993]; Operativna grupa Igman, Bradina, Naredba, str. pov. br. 01/3 od 22. 4. 1993. U potpisu Salko Gušić [Operations Group (OG) Igman, Order, strictly confidential, number 01/3, April 22, 1993. Signed by Salko Gušić].

After the subjugation, the members of the “Zulfikar” Special Detachment were transferred from the Igman mountain area on April 15, 1993 to Bradina, north of Konjic, where they remained for most of the day. That same day, a meeting of high-ranking officers of the ABiH was held in Bradina. Apart from Esad Ramić as a representative of the 4th Corps of the ABiH and a representative from the “Igman” Brigade, the meeting was attended by Commanders of the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH from Klis and “Zulfikar” Detachment Hasan Hakalović and Zulfikar Ališpago Zuka, but also the President of Konjic and Jablanica Safet Ćibo. Seeing the list of people attending the meeting, there is no doubt that the main topic of discussion was the existing as well as new attacks on the HVO in Konjic and Klis and Jablanica. That was evident immediately after the meeting, when one part of about 40 members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment, led by Deputy Detachment Commander Nihad Bojadžić, was sent in the direction of Klis, while the other part of the Detachment was sent to Konjic.⁸⁰

The note sent to the commander of OG “Igman” on April 15, 1993, at the time of arrival of the Detachment “Zulfikar” in the area of Klis made it evident that further actions and attacks on the HVO in Konjic, Klis, but also Jablanica, were planned. The note was sent by Enes Kovačević, commander of the 44th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH in Jablanica. In it, Kovačević asked Gušić to send new forces to Bradina, which would then be made available to Esad Ramić, who was to add them to a coordinated action with the commanders of the brigades of the ABiH in Konjic and Klis.⁸¹ In his note, Kovačević praised Gušić for “his engagement in common goals”, which confirmed the extremely important role of OG “Igman” and the 1st Corps of the ABiH in the planned attacks of the Konjic area.⁸²

⁸⁰ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K00336910 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015], pp. 120; 136; 144; 146; SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K010294 12 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Džeko Edina, Presuda od 25. 8. 2014. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K010294 12 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Edin Džeko, Trial judgment, August 25, 2014], p. 43; p. 144.

⁸¹ RBiH, Armija RBiH, Komanda 44. brdske brigade, Jablanica, na ruke g. Salke Gušića, Igman, str. pov. br. 02/ 392-2/93 od 15. 4. 1993. u 23.00 [ABiH, 44th Mountain Brigade Command, Jablanica, to Salko Gušić, Igman, strictly confidential, number 02/ 392-2/93, April 15, 1993].

⁸² Ibid.

On the other hand, on April 15, a few hours after gathering and leaving Bradina, some members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment arrived at their destination in Klis in the village of Parsovići. Following that, the Detachment members were organized in the premises of the primary school (“Ramski partizanski odred”) in Parsovići, where the command of the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH was located, and where captured Croats from the village of Bušćak were imprisoned the day before.⁸³ After they rested for several hours, the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment were lined up in the early morning hours of April 16, 1993 at the primary school.⁸⁴ The line-up was carried out by the Deputy Commander of “Zulfikar” Detachment, Nihad Bojadžić, alongside several commanders from the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH.⁸⁵ During this formation, members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment were briefed in detail with the upcoming task of attacking the area of the village of Trusina. Seeing that the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment did not have a detailed insight into the distribution of the population in Trusina, the members of the 45th Mountain Brigade were to help them attack the Croatian parts of the village as precisely as possible. These guides were tasked with pointing out Croatian houses to the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment, as well as other places that were presumed to be occupied by Croats.⁸⁶ According to some sources, prior to the attack on April 16, a total of 18 local HVO mem-

⁸³ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K010294 12 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Džeko Edina, Presuda od 25. 8. 2014. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K010294 12 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Edin Džeko, Trial judgment, 25 August 2014], p. 45; MCPČ, Zagreb; Marko Majić, Iskaz, br. 1183 Konjic od 11. 10. 1993. [MCPČ, Zagreb, Statement – Marko Majić, number 1183 Konjic, October 11, 1993].

⁸⁴ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K010294 12 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Džeko Edina, Presuda od 25. 8. 2014. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K010294 12 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Edin Džeko, Trial judgment, August 25, 2014], p. 46; SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića i drugih, Drugostepena presuda od 29. 12. 2016. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. Mensur Memić et al., Second-instance Judgment, written copy sent out on December 29, 2016] pp. 62-63.

⁸⁵ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 10 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015], p. 120.

⁸⁶ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K010294 12 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Džeko Edina, Presuda od 25. 8. 2014. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K010294 12 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Edin Džeko, Trial judgment, August 25, 2014], p. 46.

bers were present in Trusina out of the total number of Croat residents. They guarded the lines of defence in shifts at the elevations of Križ and Marevac, which was the only defensive positions outside the village.⁸⁷

According to that, only a few HVO members were always present at the mentioned positions, and they would not be able to resist the larger attack of the ABiH from the direction of the surrounding villages. Another aggravating circumstance was the already mentioned fact that the village itself was of a mixed national character with an almost equal share of the Croat and Muslim population. All of that combined provided the possibility of attacking the mentioned HVO positions from the direction of the village itself. It seems that despite being aware of the attacks of the ABiH on Bušćak area, the Croats living in Trusina did not fear that their village could be affected by more serious conflicts. That did not change even by the non-specific behaviour of the Muslim population in Trusina when “Muslim neighbours suddenly started putting boards on windows and doors”. Nevertheless, due to previous attacks by the ABiH in the area of the villages of Klis, some Croat residents of Trusina did spend the night of April 15-16, 1993, in “basements”.⁸⁸

On the other hand, after their formation at the primary school in Parsovići, the members of the “Zulfikar” Unit headed towards the village of Gostovići, where they received the last instructions before the attack on nearby Trusina. After receiving precise instructions, the members of the “Zulfikar” Unit, alongside several guides, members of the 45th Mountain Brigade, deployed to the previously agreed attack groups. In the early morning hours of April 16, after launching a hand grenade on a Croatian house, the members of the “Zulfikar” Unit, began an attack on Trusina. Most members of the Unit launched an attack directly on the village while the other part attacked the aforementioned HVO positions above the village. Thanks to the leadership of local guides from the 45th Mountain Brigade, members of the “Zulfikar” Unit advanced through Trusina without much resistance, searching Croatian family homes that were previously marked by their guides.⁸⁹ Therefore, very soon after the beginning of the attack, the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment

⁸⁷ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 10 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015], p. 127.

⁸⁸ MCPČ, Zagreb, Iskaz – Milka Drljo, oznaka Konj – 978 od 5. 7. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights Zagreb (MCPČ), Statement – Milka Drljo, mark Konj – 978, July 5, 1993].

⁸⁹ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K010294 12 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Džeko Edina, Presuda od 25. 8. 2014. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number

managed to gain control over the majority of Trusina, capturing a large number of Croatian civilians.⁹⁰ As they advanced through the village, in addition to capturing and looting Croatian civilians, the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment and their guides of the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH killed a number of captured Croatian civilians.⁹¹ Some of the remaining captured civilians, mostly women, children and the elderly, continued to be used by members of the ABiH as human shields when moving around the village, trying to reduce the danger of HVO members from the surrounding hills.⁹²

However, several HVO members from the hill Križ resisted the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment thus interfering with the establishment of full control of the ABiH over Trusina.⁹³ It seems that the impossibility of a quick takeover of the mentioned hill above Trusina was partly caused by the previous withdrawal of HVO members from the neighbouring Seonica, who thus avoided being surrounded by the ABiH.⁹⁴ Having a large number of Croat civilians captured in the village, the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment and the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH sought to use them to force the members of the HVO on Križ Hill to surrender. To that end, members of the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH, who took part in the attack on the village as guides, recognized Milka Drljo among the captured civilians. Namely, members of the ABiH knew that her son, as a member of the HVO, was very likely to be on Križ Hill. Alongside Milka Drljo, her underage son and daughter were captured as well. Therefore, members of the ABiH, threatening to murder her children, as well as the other captured women and children, forced Milka Drljo to go to the HVO position on Križ Hill and demand their surrender. Shortly after her departure to HVO positions, she was recognized by her son, to whom she conveyed the above-mentioned requests of members of

S11K010294 12 Krl Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Edin Džeko, Trial judgment, August 25, 2014], p. 46.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 21; p. 50.

⁹¹ MCPČ, Zagreb, Čitluk, Iskaz – Dragica Drljo, oznaka Konj – 991 od 2. 7. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights Zagreb, Čitluk (MCPČ), Statement – Dragica Drljo, mark Konj – 991, July 2, 1993]; RBiH, HZHB, HVO, Vojna policija HVO-a Konjic, Izjava – Jela Ljubić [HVO Military Police, Konjic, Statement – Jela Ljubić].

⁹² MCPČ, Zagreb, Čitluk, Iskaz – Dragica Drljo, oznaka Konj – 991 od 2. 7. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights Zagreb, Čitluk (MCPČ), Statement – Dragica Drljo, mark Konj – 991, July 2, 1993].

⁹³ Ljuti Dolac, Iskaz, svjedok: J.LJ, žensko 31. god, šifra iskaza: and15 od 5. 5. 1993. [Ljuti Dolac, Statement, Witness J. Lj, female, Mark and15, May 5, 1993].

⁹⁴ HZHB, HVO, Brigada “Herceg Stjepan” Konjic, Zapovjedništvo, Izvješće za dan 16. 4. 1993. u 20.00, str. pov. (br. telegrama 2067 od 17. 4. 1993. u 00.20) od 16. 4. 1993. [Brigade “Herceg Stjepan” Konjic, Command, strictly confidential, Daily report for April 16, 1993, April 16, 1993].

the ABiH. Most of the HVO members present on Križ Hill decided to surrender to protect the captured civilians. Shortly afterwards, four HVO members arrived in the hamlet of Gaj in Trusina and surrendered to the members of “Zulfikar” Detachment.⁹⁵ As opposed to them, several remaining HVO members stationed on Križ hill refused to surrender. Upon the surrender of their comrades, they retreated in the direction of the HVO position to the nearby Buturović Polje.⁹⁶ Consequently, the surrender of the aforementioned HVO members from Križ hill eliminated the only threat for the members of the ABiH in Trusina.⁹⁷ In fact, the narrow area of the village of Trusina, where the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment and their guides from the 45th Mountain Brigade were already stationed before the HVO surrendered, had no military fortifications or organized defence, which was a key reason for the extremely rapid progress and establishment of control over the village by the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment and several members of the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH.⁹⁸

The HVO members who surrendered upon arrival in Trusina were disarmed by the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment, who then began interrogating and harassing them. After that, the members of the ABiH instructed a detainee to search for other HVO members for whom they believed were somewhere in the village. That resulted in two more HVO members who later

⁹⁵ MCPČ, Zagreb, Iskaz – Milka Drljo, oznaka Konj – 978 od 5. 7. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights Zagreb (MCPČ), Statement – Milka Drljo, mark Konj – 978, 5 July 1993]; SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 10 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015] p. 89.

⁹⁶ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 10 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015] p. 89; Ljuti Dolac, Iskaz, svjedok: J. LJ, žensko 31. god, šifra iskaza: and15 od 5. 5. 1993. [Ljuti Dolac, Statement, Witness J. Lj, female, mark: and15, May 5, 1993].

⁹⁷ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 10 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015], p. 136.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 136.

arrived in the hamlet of Gaj in Trusina and surrendered to members of the ABiH.⁹⁹

Before their arrival, the HVO members who had previously surrendered to protect civilians had been placed alongside those civilians. However, this situation changed shortly after the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment were informed of the serious wounding of their two members, including Samir Šemsković aka Samko, the commander-in-chief of the groups that attacked Trusina.¹⁰⁰ It seems that the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment were killed during the shooting between themselves and the HVO members holding positions above the village of Obri in the direction of Trusina.¹⁰¹ After the deaths of the two, the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment and the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH began retreating to the hamlet of Gaj in Trusina, where captured Croatian civilians and HVO soldiers were stationed.¹⁰² Shortly afterwards, six captured HVO soldiers were separated from the rest of the civilians and then gathered around a nearby “barn”.¹⁰³ They were then taken by the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment to an older house where they were placed along a nearby wall. Lined in such manner, they were facing a wall, and then, shortly afterwards, were shot by several members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment.¹⁰⁴ Among them was also Nedžad

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 116; p. 123.

¹⁰¹ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića i drugih, Drugostepena presuda od 29. 12. 2016. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. Mensur Memić et al., Second-instance Judgment, written copy sent out on: December 29, 2016], p. 71.

¹⁰² SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 10 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015., [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015], pp. 18-19; SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića i drugih, Drugostepena presuda od 29. 12. 2016. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. Mensur Memić et al., Second-instance Judgment, written copy sent out on: December 29, 2016], p. 71.

¹⁰³ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K010294 12 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Džeko Edina, Presuda od 25. 8. 2014. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K010294 12 Krl Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Edin Džeko, Trial judgment, August 25, 2014] pp. 56-57.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.; SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 10 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad

Hodžić, who conveyed the order to shoot to the “Zulfikar” Detachment members. The order to shoot the captured HVO members Hodžić himself received from the deputy commander of the “Zulfikar” Detachment, Nihad Bojadžić, monitored the course of action of the ABiH forces in Trusina from a safe distance.¹⁰⁵ However, Bojadžić’s order to shoot the captured HVO members was not the first such message of that day. In the moments of preparation for the attack on Trusina, Bojadžić issued an order to his own members that “no one should stay alive” in the village.¹⁰⁶ Unlike the killing of the six, the seventh captured HVO member was killed before the shooting. Under the pretext that as a former police officer he will be sent to negotiate with the members of the HVO in Buturović Polje, he was first separated from the rest of the captured members and then killed in a house in Trusina.¹⁰⁷

In the afternoon of April 16, after killing captured Croat civilians during the attack, and the advancement through the village, as well as the shooting of six captured and previously one HVO soldier, the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment and the 45th Mountain Brigade of the ABiH forced the remaining captured Croat civilians, women, children and the elderly, to retreat in the direction of the village of Gostovići alongside them. The mentioned civilians were used by members of the ABiH to transfer part of the booty from Trusina to the positions of the ABiH (Marevac hill) in the direction of Gostovići, but also to protect their own withdrawal from Trusina from possible attacks by the remaining HVO members from Seonica and Obar on the other side.¹⁰⁸

Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015], p. 115.

¹⁰⁵ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića i drugih, Drugostepena presuda od 29. 12. 2016. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. Mensur Memić et al., Second-instance Judgment, written copy sent out on: December 29, 2016] pp. 50-51.

¹⁰⁶ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića i drugih, Drugostepena presuda od 29. 12. 2016. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. Mensur Memić et al., Second-instance Judgment, written copy sent out on: December 29, 2016], p. 72.

¹⁰⁷ MCPČ, Zagreb, Iskaz – Milka Drljo, oznaka Konj – 978 od 5. 7. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights Zagreb (MCPČ), Statement – Milka Drljo, mark Konj – 978, 5 July 1993]; MCPČ, Zagreb, Čitluk, Iskaz – Dragica Drljo, oznaka Konj – 991 od 2. 7. 1993. [Zagreb, Čitluk (MCPČ), Statement – Dragica Drljo, mark Konj – 991, July 2, 1993].

¹⁰⁸ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića i drugih, Drugostepena presuda od 29. 12. 2016. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K003369 16 Krž 36, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. Mensur Memić et al., Second-instance Judgment, written copy sent out on: December 29, 2016] p. 71; SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 10 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura

Upon their arrival to the Marevac hill, however, the members of the ABiH decided to return the captured group of several dozen civilians to Trusina, where they then locked them in Croatian houses. The captured civilians were then handed over to Muslim (Bosnian) members of the ABiH from Trusina. The mentioned group of captured civilians was joined by several new captured Croats who informed them in detail about the robberies and murders of a large number of villagers.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, the captured Croatian civilians were very likely aware of the real consequences of the suffering in the village. In addition to the previously mentioned six captured and one separately killed member of the HVO, during the several-hour attack on Trusina, the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment killed a total of 15 Croatian civilians. During the attack, the members of the ABiH wounded four civilians, including two minors.¹¹⁰

The command of the “Herceg Stjepan” Brigade, located in Kostajnica, which was only a few kilometres away from Trusina, knew about the attack of the ABiH on the morning of April 16, 1993. In a report from the same evening, the command of “Herceg Stjepan” Brigade informed their superior HVO commands in Mostar and Tomislavgrad about the attack and the fighting in the village. The commands were then also informed about the large number of the dead in the village, but had no precise information about the names of the killed villagers at that time. Apart from the deaths of a large number of people, “Herceg Stjepan” Brigade Command also reported cases of destruction or burning of local Croatian houses.¹¹¹ The same command re-

Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: 31 December 2015] p. 21.; Čitluk, Iskaz, svjedok: D. D., žensko 57. god, šifra iskaza: ko005 od 5. 8. 1993. [Čitluk, Statement, Witness D. D., female, mark ko005, 5 August 1993].

¹⁰⁹ MCPČ, Zagreb, Iskaz – Milka Drljo, oznaka Konj – 978 od 5. 7. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights Zagreb (MCPČ), Statement – Milka Drljo, mark Konj – 978, 5 July 1993]; Ljuti Dolac, Iskaz, svjedok: J. Lj, žensko 31. god, šifra iskaza: and15 od 5. 5. 1993. [Ljuti Dolac, Statement, Witness J. Lj, female, mark and15, May 5, 1993].

¹¹⁰ SuBiH, Sarajevo, Predmet br. S11K003369 10 Krl, Predmet Tužilaštva BiH protiv Mensura Memića, Dževada Salčina, Senada Hakalovića, Nedžada Hodžića, Nihada Bojadžića, Presuda od 31. 12. 2015. [The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Case number S11K00336910 Krl, Prosecutors’s Office of BiH v. the Accused Mensur Memić, Dževad Salčin, Senad Hakalović, Nedžad Hodžić, Nihad Bojadžić, Trial judgment, written copy sent out on: December 31, 2015] p. 6.

¹¹¹ HZHB, HVO, Brigada “Herceg Stjepan” Konjic, Zapovjedništvo, Izvješće za dan 16. 4. 1993. u 20.00, str. pov. (br. telegrama 2067 od 17. 4. 1993. u 00.20) od 16. 4. 1993. [HVO, Brigade “Herceg Stjepan” Konjic, Command, strictly confidential, Daily report for 16th April, 1993, April 16, 1993]

ported that a part of the civilian population managed to get out of Trusina at the time of the attack. Given the initial allegations that the captured Croatian civilians were used as human shields by the members of the ABiH, it was crucial for the Croatian side to obtain verified feedback on what really happened to the rest of the civilian population remaining in the villages.¹¹²

After all the events and killings in the afternoon of April 16, 1993, the captured group of Croatian civilians from Trusina was returned to the village and locked in a Croatian house supervised by local members of the ABiH. Although the captured civilians were under the control of the ABiH, several women were allowed to go to the rest of the village the day after the crime.¹¹³ During their passage through the village, these women were joined by several other older Croatian women who had not been found and captured by members of ABiH during the attack on Trusina. These women then managed to transfer six killed Croatian civilians to their homes, and then tried to prepare them for a religious burial. However, their preparations were prevented by the members of the ABiH, who then forced the captured civilians along with the rest of the elderly Croatian population to leave the village in the afternoon of April 17. The members of the ABiH forced the Croatian civilians towards the HVO positions in the direction of Buturović Polje after a new gathering and passing through the village, during which they could see other killed villagers. From there, on April 17 and 18, most of the banished Croatians from Trusina were transferred by boat to nearby Kostajnica, where they were finally taken care of.¹¹⁴ Their banishment marked the final placing of Trusina under the full control of the ABiH.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Čitluk, Iskaz, svjedok: D. D., žensko 57. god, šifra iskaza: ko005 od 5. 8. 1993. [Čitluk, Statement, Witness D. D., female, mark ko005, August 5, 1993].

¹¹⁴ HZHB, HVO, Brigada "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Zapovjedništvo, Izvješće za dan 17. 4. 1993. u 01.00, str. pov. (br. telegrama 2070 od 17. 4. 1993. u 01.30) od 17. 4. 1993. [HVO, Brigade "Herceg Stjepan" Konjic, Command, strictly confidential, Daily report for April 17, 1993]; MCPČ, Zagreb, Iskaz – Milka Drljo, oznaka Konj – 978 od 5. 7. 1993. [International Center for Human Rights Zagreb (MCPČ), Statement – Milka Drljo, mark Konj – 978, 5 July 1993]; MCPČ, Zagreb, Čitluk, Iskaz – Dragica Drljo, oznaka Konj – 991 od 2. 7. 1993. [Zagreb, Čitluk (MCPČ), Statement – Dragica Drljo, mark Konj – 991, July 2, 1993]. Centar za prikupljanje dokumentacije i obradu podataka o Domovinskom ratu (CPD), Zagreb, Opatička 10., Iskaz – Marija Anđelić, šifra iskaza: ko009 od 8. 8. 1993. [The Center for documentation and processing data of the Homeland War (CPD), Zagreb, Statement – Marija Anđelić, statement code ko009, August 8, 1993]; Čitluk, Iskaz, svjedok: D. D., žensko 57. god, šifra iskaza: ko005 od 5. 8. 1993. [Čitluk, Statement, Witness D. D., female, mark ko005, August 5, 1993].

Conclusion

The attack of the BiH Army (ABiH), or more precisely members of the Zulfukar Special Purposes Detachment, on the village of Trusina on April 16, 1993, was a direct consequence of the plan of the ABiH from the beginning of April 1993 for general attack on the HVO in Konjic municipality. This plan of attack, which consequently caused the spread of the Croat-Muslim war in the entire area of northern Herzegovina and the rest of BiH, was supported by the forces of the 1st Corps of the ABiH based in Sarajevo. For the purposes of this attack on the HVO in Konjic and Klis, members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment, as an integral part of OG “Igman” from the 1st Corps of the ABiH, were transferred on April 15 from Igman to the municipal area of Konjic, in Bradina. From that place, part of the unit led by the Deputy Commander of the Detachment, Nihad Bojadžić, was sent on the same day in the direction of Klis in the western part of the Konjic municipality.

In the early morning hours of April 16, the aforementioned Bojadžić issued precise instructions and orders to the members of the “Zulfikar” Detachment to attack Trusina. On that occasion, Bojadžić allowed the use of excessive force by issuing an oral order “to kill everyone in the village”, which directly led to the casualties among the Croatian civilians and soldiers in Trusina. It is obvious that this attitude of the key man of the “Zulfikar” Detachment in Klis was the cause of the negative behavior of its members, who killed 15 Croatian civilians during a short attack on Trusina on April 16. Bojadžić’s incitement to kill was repeated in case of seven members of the HVO in the village, who were shot in the hamlet of Gaj in Trusina after they surrendered and were captured. Throughout the two days after the committed crimes, the remaining Croatian population was expelled from the village. Therefore, Trusina was completely ethnically “cleansed” of the Croatian population.

Accordingly, the pattern of crimes and expulsions of the Croatian population of Trusina was the result of a pre-planned operation by ABiH forces launched with the aim of attacking the HVO in the Konjic municipality. The final decision to attack Trusina appears to be made no later than April 15 at a joint meeting of military and political representatives of the Muslim government and the ABiH in Bradina. Apart from the representatives of the ABiH, Safet Ćibo also participated in the work of that meeting, which unequivocally confirms the joint onset of Muslim politics and the army. In this way, the crime committed by members of the ABiH in Trusina was an indicator of the direction in which Croatian-Muslim relations would develop later in 1993.

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