

## **Chapter 5: Post Mortems of Slaughter: The Autopsies**

I'd been so upset that the world turned a blind eye to the realities of this war that I felt compelled to relate, in some detail, the details of my observations--and to provide photographic evidence to accompany it. The presented pathology reports are summaries and only represent what was most typical for the victims of the slaughter. I will limit myself only to the most salient features of the pathology. Other incidental pathological findings, such as associated heart disease or ovarian cystic tumor, which one patient had, will not be commented upon.

I didn't know what I was looking at in the first photos handed to me. I stared at them for several minutes until it dawned on me that the amorphous mass, with a pair of legs protruding from it, were the charred remains of what was once a human being. The legs were festooned with heavy linked chain that tied around to what appeared to be a finely carved table or chair leg.

From the deep recesses of my mind I recalled what a professor said during a lecture in forensic pathology class from my medical school days--and what I gleaned from past discussions with pathologists about burn cases. "Even the most jaded pathologist cringe when they have to work on burn victims." The mass of carbon bears no resemblance to human beings as it brings into question the examiner's entire value system and morality. What had been a living being, with hopes and dreams of a future, was now reduced to chunks of carbon. Correlating the photos with the chemical analyses from what tissue was left, revealed the victims were indeed alive, and therefore aware that they were being burned. Usually burn victims die of smoke inhalation long before the body actually starts to burn. But these human beings continued to live and breathe as the temperatures destroyed them.

I tried to imagine the agony they went through while they were still conscious and when they started to smell the odors as their own flesh was being barbecued. These particular victims were chained to chairs, and if the other bodies found in Vocin is any indication, they were probably tortured before being killed. They were apparently burned in increments, since the lung tissue was devoid of smoke particles.

Tomislav Martinkovic ( #28 )

The pathological examination revealed a carbonized torso lacking arms and the head. All that remained of Tomislav Martinkovic was the left pretibia and the lower part of the right pretibia (shin.) A large linked heavy chain was wrapped loosely over the right thigh and a wooden leg of a table or similar type of object. The thighs were totally carbonized but some muscle and bones were preserved. In examining the thorax and abdomen the left side of the heart was conserved and sent for analysis. Because of the amount of carbonization it was impossible to establish if any wounds occurred during life. Spectrophotometric qualitative method of the presented sample of heart muscle proved the presence of carboxyl myoglobin. This result established that Mr. Martinkovic was alive when the flames enveloped him.

Katica Martinovic ( #29 )

All that was left of her remains that could be identified as something human was a part of one shin and foot. Tied around the shin was a large linked chain loosely tied to a wooden leg of a table or some similar object. The head and torso were completely carbonized. Both arms were missing. The only tissue that was found intact in the carbonized mass during the examination of the thorax and abdomen was a sliver of the left side of the heart. Everything else was totally carbonized. That tiny piece of heart muscle was analyzed. Spectrophotometric examination found the presence of carboxyl myoglobin, which established that Mrs. Martinovic was still alive at the time of contact with the fire.

Marija Simic (#22 ) 57 years old.

Four, almost identical appearing lesions were found on the scalp ---all were straight, with extremely sharp regular borders. The apex of the wounds penetrated the skull bones and extended deeply into the brain tissue; all the underlying bones in their pathways were fractured. They were located on the crown (on top of the parietal region) in a transversal pattern. Immediately below those wounds was another similar appearing lesion, nine centimeters in length. Inferior, but closer to the temporal region, a 3.5 cm. wound was found. The fourth lesion, in the right temporal-parietal area, was 9.5 cm. in length. When the skin of the calvarium was removed, multiple fractures of the bones on the vault of the skull were found. The fragments extended deep in the brain cavity. Subsequent removal of the bony fragments left a defect approximately the size of a man's fist. Without going into details, the brain tissue findings were compatible with extravasation of blood (hemorrhages) and destroyed tissue. I agreed with the pathologist's conclusion that each wound by itself could have resulted in death. Clearly the wounds were inflicted by an ax.

Ivan Simic (# 21), born 12/21/32

The victim was bound with doubled knotted loops of linen cloth on the left wrist and left ankle. There also was a linen cloth noose wrapped twice around his neck that was cinched with a single knot. When the noose was removed during the autopsy, the skin and tissues of the neck showed a deep furrowed impression. Since no information was available of the circumstances in which the body was found, we can only surmise that he was tied. But the cause of death was two small stab wounds at the height of the left nipple, close to the sternum. The wounds, although deadly, had little external bleeding. The autopsy findings showed one of stab wounds perforated the lung with resultant massive bleeding of right lung into the left pleural space. The other, parallel, stab wound penetrated the third intercostal space, pericardium, heart and finished in the left ventricle. He bled internally into the pericardial sac. Since there was minimal external bleeding, the perpetrators apparently were not sure if he was dead ---and proceeded to tighten and garroted him with a cloth around his neck.

Post mortem examination revealed the larynx was crushed, but all pathological evidence was consistent that the damage to the throat tissues occurred after death. The dead person was one of the few that showed no apparent evidence of torture before death. Why he was spared is unknown. Perhaps he was forced to witness the tormentors inflicting torture on others, which is a common phenomena that I found in other documents ---perhaps witnessing torture of loved ones is the greatest torture.

The remains of a married couple, Maria and Franjo Matancic were found in the front yard of their house. They were the bodies seen laying on the ground that CNN showed during my interview. The couple was summarily executed with one bullet below each of their eyes. At first glance the entry wounds seems minor, but the bullets in their pathways turned the brains to mush and exited in the back of the head as a gaping cavern filled with clots of blood, bone, and brain tissue. There can be no doubt this was murder in an execution style--and by no means an "accidental by-product of war."

Marija and Franjo Matancic (# 15 &16)

She was 64 years old when someone held an AK-47 close to her right lower eyelid and fired. The seemingly small entrance wound went upwards and backwards, taking off almost the entire right side of the back of the head. (see photographs) The exit wound measured 10 x 15 cm.

Her husband Franjo (# 15) met with a somewhat similar fate, except the entrance wound was the lower left eyelid. The bullet's direction went upward and toward the right. Once it penetrated the everything in its pathway was destroyed. It exited in the right parieto-temporeal area. The large gaping wound was the twin of his wife's.

Stojan Nenadovic (# 27)

The lone Serbian victim of Vocin, seventy-seven year old, Stojan Nenadovic, was mercilessly tortured by Yugoslav Army soldiers after having dared to intervene on behalf of his Croatian neighbors. Nenadovic had attempted to stop Serb soldiers who were harassing and torturing his Croatian neighbors. When he persisted, the soldiers proceeded to brand Nenadovic on at least 100 places. The uniformity of his lesions and their pattern indicated that lighted cigarettes or a heated metal chain were used to torture Nenadovic. The soldiers also filleted the skin of his lower extremities. Filleting is not a simple procedure, and requires practiced expertise. The skin is cut in a horizontal slit. The blade is then placed tangential into the subcutaneous tissues. In a feathering motion, the blade cuts through the collagen which binds the epidermis and the dermis to the subcutaneous fat. Then the fingers grasp the edge and the outer skin is tugged. The procedure is similar to pelting an animal.

Aside from these injuries, Nenadovic face, as I examined the evidence, showed multiple bruises, which clearly indicated to me that he was beaten by fists of a blunt object before dying. Nenadovic ultimately died of cardiovascular shock.

After examining the objective laboratory analysis, autopsies, and eyewitness accounts, even the blind could see or the most naive would have to agree, that what happened at Vocin weren't byproducts of war but concerted, deliberate murders. The only redeeming feature about Vocin is that it was the first Croatian slaughter which caught the media's attention after 50 previous slaughters had been ignored. A cursory review of the journalistic output regarding atrocities, prior to Vocin, reveals the media were either too jaded to report about them or couldn't or didn't want to believe the Serbs were capable of such acts. But in incidents where the evidence was irrefutable that the Serbs indeed perpetrated human mayhem, the media's take was that the acts were justified. They had completely bought into the notion that present day Croats are to be equated with Nazi bestiality.

In the global context, Vocin may seem insignificant, but the gallons of blood shed there have become part of an ocean of blood the Serbs caused to be shed in former Yugoslavia. The reasons that Vocin was important are they transcended previous injustices and international lies. If the world had paid attention and reacted to the Serbs' wanton acts in Croatia in the way it did to Sarajevo's breadline and marketplace slaughters it would've checked the growth of the horrendous statistics we've seen. I'd like to think the victims of Vocin didn't die in vain.