

ARBUTINA ALOJZ

Sunja
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SUNJA 2

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(This conversation took place in Sunja, in the premises of HVIDRA and
in the apartment of the interlocutor.)

Please introduce yourself.

Alojz Arbutina, Matije Gupca street No. 2, Sunja. I think when we started to talk about Praljak... This first thing remained in my memory, when he came. I was just getting out of the Fire house when he came with Žarko Peša. He was wearing Reithose, this Slovenian trousers...

You saw that? You saw him in that?

Yes. He had these socks, like that, and as they were high, automatically... He did not even have the belt, but a bandage instead of the belt. When we were introduced I told him: I will get you a leather belt tomorrow. You are the commander and you must... So then we started this cooperation. And then it was, for everything I needed regarding the logistics, I always needed his signature...

Let us please return a little bit to the moment when you saw him for the first time. What was his impression on you? What did you think when he appeared like that?

Well, at the moment I did not... I was thinking a little bit afterwards. As appearance, and I am not talking about it because we have remained in perhaps good relations... He was modest. There were not some talks with him that would change a briefing into preaching at somebody. When he took over, when he started to command, each morning there was a briefing, the flag raising – that was also introduced by him. The playing of the anthem took place each morning, we had a bugler who would sound it and then the flag was raised. The commander's office, all who were there were lined up... And everything with him was kept to the point... And it went down the line: The commander of the 1st company – what's new?, this, this, this and that. The commander of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th company, the logistics, and half an hour of the briefing was more than enough. If there was something that needed explanation, then...

In fact you are talking about the phase in which the army started already to function, but previously there was another period, is that so? The period during which there were much more problems?

Yes, there were much more problems because all men were not... They were not... I think some of them did not understand. I was, I had from the

Yugoslav national army the rank of the lieutenant because I had finished the School of the reserve officers, where I used immediately to tell people to make pillboxes...

It was before Praljak's arrival?

Before Praljak's arrival. And it was something that was rarely made by anyone. They made them for themselves in these villages because... I don't know how much you are aware of it, we were in a sort of half encirclement. Sava river was behind our back, where was a possibility of crossing in case – but really we were this... The situation much improved when Slobodan came for the commander. He actually forced people to... Since his arrival and during 15 days, at the most perhaps one month, our front line was reinforced. With the pillboxes, with all that was... I don't know, I think that I brought thousands and thousands sacks of sand from Sisak, construction material, woodenware, all these things that were used to arrange the pillboxes so that the soldiers really could stay in them...

It means, that this was a change?

It was a big change!

How did people react to this change? Did they rebel?

Well... They rebelled a little bit but it was not possible with him... It must be done and that's it! He said at the briefing, for example, for one part towards Greda, "Boys, I go from Gradusa this afternoon at 4 o'clock, I start the rounds of the first line..."

And it has to be finished by then?

These pillboxes must be finished by then. He says : "Those who would not make it would be in big trouble because we shall then..." In confirmity with the law as it should be...

Were men afraid of Praljak?

They were. They were. They had the respect and they complied with him because he strictly asked what had to be done and that was all right in such a system. I knew, for example, in Greda, on several places, *****, where this was next to the first line, when you go towards Sava river on the left side, where people made it on a barn. And then I explained to the people: Well, I will now go into the maize, there is the manure behind the barn, and next to the manure there is the maize. It means the vista, what he can see is 30-40 meters, but 20 of it is covered with the maize. It means that the person who will come crawling cannot be seen, because when he comes out of the maize you cannot see him, he can come out of the maize and do what he wants, throw bombs and all this... When men understood that it was like that they obeyed...

Well, I started about these signatures, once I told him: "Sir, commanding officer, it is ridiculous for me to come to you for... I am commanding with the logistics and now you sign me for three bags of potatoes, ten kilos of beans and so on..." And he says: "Why do you tell me about it? Go there and they will write you that I approve that you sign for the logistics and that I don't have anything to do with it. For me it is only a burden." So that we then *****, while he was, ***** and afterwards when he left. Afterwards I thought why did not I leave it like it was, because later on nobody could draw anything without my signature, but well, that was regular. Normally it had to be like that...

How did you... Excuse me. Say.

I wanted also to say, we are, then it... He asked me also what was my opinion about that... We ferried over, normally civilians went, the stores began to work slowly...

About which time do you speak now? Which period is it?

Praljak's... period.

I know, but when? September, October or later?

Well, it was a bit later. There: October, November, December...

The year 1991 of course?

The year 1991. We initiated, for example, that civilians paid a minimum for ferry-boat transfer. This money went to the treasury in the Headquarters where before the Christmas he gave me a mission. He says to me: "Inquire about the poorest of the poor who are there... without husbands, old women or well I don't know, where there is no some help in the house, and bring me this list". Then I charged with it one girl from the school, Miss Blaža, because she knew more people through children who could give the message how and what and who were such people. And then we put together this ferry-boat money, we made a disposition and distributed this on equal parts...

You distributed the money or...?

The money, we distributed money to these poor people, and there were some very sad situations, when these old people cried of luck, because the army however took care of them and that they were not neglected and forgotten. And then, there were some other donations, we made packages for children on St. Nicolas. And we used to get this artificial milk and we gave it to those who had young children... I don't know... It was somehow changed, many things were changed at our place.

And Mr. Međimorec, together with the commander Praljak, we were visited by some music groups, there were "Golden Ducats" and the singer Đimi Stanić, I think also that the theater "ITD" or "Kerempuh" came, - well don't take me at my word – also the actors gave performances. It was more alive, it was somehow...

Although we suffered terribly, especially sometime after the New Year until the arrival of UNPROFOR. The shelling was frightfull. One person, who was the secretary of the community, he took notes of it as he could, and he registered more than 30.000 to 40.000 shells during this period...

In the time from to?

In the time from July 27 and so until the April.

Of the year 1992...

Well now, you mentionned: We have a ferry-boat, the collecting and the distribution of the money to the poor people, or there are packages, St. Nicolas, children. Is that so? I am interested to know whether you have got an estimation of the number of the households,

**of the old people households about which you needed to take care?
Approximately.**

Well, I think they were about some thirty-odd. But I wanted only to add... That was not every year. When there was money we always helped as much as possible this people with money... But we also took care of those of Ortodox religion who stayed with us.

**That is what I wanted to ask you about. These old people households,
were they Serbs? Croats?**

There were some, but not many as far as Serbs are concerned. Those who were there, they were older people. Others, who did not cross the railway, as we used to say, to the other side, but who stayed here. And those who were there, nearer to the Station, they had to leave because there was no chance that they woke up without the shooting. Up there were only the soldiers. But we also took care of these Serbian population so that they got food, bread and so... Just in this Vladimir Nazor street*****an old man and his old woman. Where I was, just on the command of Praljak, where he said: "If you have got such cases, we shall always find food enough so that nobody would starve." Because there were no shops, nothing....

**If I understand correctly: You took care of this people on the
Praljak's command?**

Yes, we did.

**When we say "you took account of" – what does it really mean?
That the soldiers brought food? Is that so?**

Those who distributed it to the normal soldiers, at the points, because we had points. It went to five directions. For example, we went to: the Ljudevit Posavski street, then up to the Railway station and through the Vladimir Nazor street we came back – it was one circle. For Sunjska Greda it was a second point. Žremen-Krivaj was a third one. Bobovac-Bistrač was the fourth point where the food was transported.

It means, within these points were...

In these streets, within these streets, were some families of Serbian population and to them...

You distributed to them?

There we gave to them also.

Tell me in this way: Were there single cases, excesses, rudenesses, problematic relations towards this people? Well, did it happen, were there any tries that to this people...I don't know, well let's say that you would not give them the food? You would not help them? To make their life more difficult?

As far as I know, not. And if it was, it was a little bit, individually, but... It did not escalate into some...

Were these individual cases solved then? And if they happened – how were they solved?

It was solved by interrupting it. But, what happened? It was very difficult for us at the beginning because all we had was this company of the guardsmen and there was this Sunja independent company, then we had the police reservists who used to come from Zagreb. One part of them were of great help to us there – they were really well armed. Perhaps it was easier for them to justify the consumption of the ammunition... It was normal that they were in charge of as much as they had, the fighting set one or two, or three, for weapons they had, automatic or pistols, and bombs and grenade launchers... They rotated every fifteen days, so these guys would always leave one part of it to us because... they could justify it. They fired and spent it... So that we had it also at the beginning**** I want to say that we, when there was the first attack on July 27, on the second or third day we had this also organized by the Crisis headquarters. I was assigned for this logistics, we called it in the time the rear, the rear and the logistics, where we formed immediately a kitchen and we started to cook and all this together. I had one Johnny, who was a military cook and almost every year he was the Yugoslav federal army reservist, but he was really there as the cook. And when they asked "Who would cook?", and when I assigned him, some people complained. They said "He had problems with the police, he likes to play cards" and I said "I know who I engaged, people. He knows how to cook. A woman can cook for her family, but for 2000 people one must know how and what."

So we formed the kitchen and when all this started... The baker, I and my late dentist (???) persuaded him to stay and to bake,**** they were the only one because**** The civilians were evacuated from Sunja, on the other side in Kratečko, when there was the attack on the 27th, until this was a little bit stabilized, to avoid the chaos. They would bother. You know when it comes and... when it comes to these things people does not take care, they are running around in circles... To avoid more victims. So we did it all together, and when this Johnny would call me: “Chief, what shall we cook tomorrow?”, I told him: “Take a knife and a sack, I will do likewise, you go on this side of Gupčeva street, and will go to the other side – and we shall find something in the gardens.” Some sorts of cabbage, this and that... Well, yes. And we had meat, because cattle was left, these porks. Unless we did it, the catle would be lost, ruined, because there was nobody to feed them... We saved, I shall add immediately, from “Vajda” surely some 10.000 tons of game and poultry, because we did all... It was transported to the refrigeration plants to Sisak, to be saved. For the rest that could not go to Sisak, I gave command in agreement with Peša, that it be distributed to the households, so that it would not be lost, to be distributed over Sava river, from Čigoč, Prelošica, down to Lonja, as well here****, to save all that can be saved. We opened shops, because there was no electricity for several days and there were refrigerators with smoked and cured meat, so that it would not be lost or would spread the infections. I took care of that, not because I was the commander, but I terribly took care of it. And at dish washing I always demanded more than it was due regarding the norms of the detergents for dish washing and...

Did Praljak support it?

Praljak supported all this and he gave me a free hand. I worked****all that I could to improve it. And if something got stuck he could help me... And it was always like that if he could do anything... However he has connections in Zagreb and some friends where something can be done. So we would get some donations. We meant to improve things. These soldiers, were not only on the pillboxes, but... We really tried to show them that there was always some improvement, and talks with them, and what would they and how would they... Well, there are black sheep in every fold. Somebody says: It was not like that, it was not like this – but people must be aware that they had meat three times per day. Because it you eat the salami in the morning – that is meat, there was meat in cooked meal – pork, beef, the supper was again...

We cooked at the beginning, but later on we stopped with suppers and we had dry (solid) food. Maybe nobody had it. The richest people did not have it.

One of the things that was introduced as the new way of the behaviour and the organization of the army was the pillboxes building. Were you connected with it when Praljak came?

We started to make them then. Something was made, but when Praljak came it was intensified and in twenty days - one month, all the pillboxes were built.

Were there any problems with these pillboxes?

No, there were no problems. But you know people! They thought that they did not need it. And when Praljak proved it to them...

How did he prove it to them? In which way he tried and managed to prove it to them?

Well, the best way to prove is, and according to the war tactics, that it was always 1:5 regarding the defense and the attack. Because if you attack, you will always more*****than the one who is in the pillbox, because he is protected.

(Continuation of the conversation, in the apartment of Alojz Arbutina, on January 20, 2005)

Where did we stop? I have forgotten...

I retained that you should also mention this event with "Ducats". Well, the event with "Ducats": What was it like? We mentioned it but it would be a good idea to remind a little bit of it.

Well, generally speaking, they were not the only who made guest appearance for us. Also other people came to us...

I know, but now I am interested in them.

And now, as far as “Golden Ducats” are concerned it was phenomenal. That is, at our place, as much people as our hall could accommodate...

It was which hall? Where was it?

In the Cultural hall in Sunja. And now this hall is named after our old legend Sven Lasta, that is now the name of our hall. It was an important event for us, the soldiers who were in defense of Sunja and all that together. He gave one part of his contribution, encouragement, energy and all that. And then, towards the end there were some short songs, those, to say briefly, those that smack a little bit more of Ustashi sympathies. They started to sing it, but the commander Praljak interrupted it and said: “Enough, men! Those boys have cheered us up and now we go to our units and on our positions.” – So that it...

What else did Praljak say in the fact? Praljak stood up, is that right?

He stood up and...

He was in the audience?

Yes, in the audience. He was in the audience and... We were close to each other, he made two steps... and he stopped it.

Why did not he tolerate it?

Well, I think that he did not permit it... So that it would not exceed the limits that should not be exceeded. But I don't know...

Was he angry then? You say that you were close to him. Was he angry?

Well, he was not that much angry, but I must be sincere, it was not pleasant to him and he saw that it could go to... I think, the hall was so full of people that one cigarette could not fall on the floor. In this, how should say, in this rapture and that, anything could have happened. All men were predominantly armed. Well, they did not have long rifles**** maybe somebody had a bomb, this , that, maybe in such a moment it could have happened... Maybe he would not even consider it, maybe he would set of a bomb, thinking that he would throw it out... Anything could have happened.

Well, but can we presume: A group came to entertain people, it should have been like that, and then they started to sing.... What? Ustashi songs? Which songs did they sing?

To be honest I cannot immediately remember, only I know that they were, but as much as I could****we prepared afterwards a snack to these boys, a little supper in DVD – in the Fire station. At that moment, when Mr. Praljak interrupted it, I saw on them too – but they had to submit... I think all this mass and all this together. Neither they did not feel very comfortably...

What? They were not pleased to sing that songs or...?

It seems so... My impression was that they were not pleased to... In fact, those which they sung, some of them... But... I don't know I must be such a type. I was literally pleased that he interrupted it because everything could have happened.

Did Praljak interrupt it so that it would not come to the shooting, or did he interrupt it because he did not agree with singing of these songs?

I think that he interrupted it because he did not agree with it.

Did he utter it at some place?

He did not. I don't know, I don't know. I think, do you know what? The man a little bit... When you return the film, it is however a long period, year 1992, and now it is year 2005, that is 13 years. The man cannot remember every detail... But I am most sorry... I got lost somewhere... I had a little diary of mine dating before the war. It was always in the pocket of my uniform. People used to laugh at me.*****

What was in this diary?

I had everything in it, many things were written down. And what was the most? It was what I had to do regarding the logistics. Because then, there occurs an conversation at the briefing, and when you put it down, sometimes they perhaps forget to put it down, and when I get ready for the travelling, then***** I put it down, so I would not forget. It was such a time, particularly this first time, at the beginning.

You mentioned Mr. Lasta as your friend. You cooperated, you were friends, is that so?

Yes.

I know that Mr. Lasta also explained in his own way and as much as he could, to these young men with whom he was what really meant this Ustasha movement, in other words he pointed out that there was no need to magnify it. Is that correct?

I think that it is, as far as I know. This is one thing but the other...

That in a way he educated them...

...and I will tell you something else... I think I was very good with a great many of these young men from the Second Guards brigade who were there. I don't know whether you saw it on TV, there was a reportage about Sven Lasta in Sunja. Well, I was also in it, and people in Sunja teased me that I became a television actor. We, who took part in this conversation, but mostly there were young men from this guards brigade. A lot of people used to say: "What he, what is he acting there?" These young men told me that he was like a father to them. He was always on the Railway station. In the morning he took his... What did he have? One small Winchester with sniper, he was always carrying it around. He always went on foot to the Railway station. As I was transporting the food, we got acquainted at the beginning because I gave him a ride several times and we got more and more connected and then we became real friends. These young men used to tell me, the food was transported there, but they opened tins and all that, and late Lasta would tell them: "Boys, it is not good for your health, you must eat some cooked food."

He was to them, to say in short, father and mother. Boys were very happy with him and they always obeyed him, all that he told to them... It is normal that he gave wise councils and never some stupid things... So we became friends then. Later when it was, we went to***** Posavina (Sava river valley) where he was wounded. Later on he went to service in Zagreb, he was in the office of the President Tuđman*****. Then we had it in Zagreb, it was "Sunja to Croatia – Croatia to Sunja" in the "Vatroslav Lisinski" concert hall, we gave a program and it was very well attended.

There was also an exhibition of the pictures from Sunja about these martial...

The exhibition of the photographs?

Yes, photographs. I forgot the street in Zagreb where it was, and then we met. We exchanged greetings, normally we kissed each other as the old warriors and then he started about my chin and said: "Ha! Mr. Louie, it is shaved 2 mm under the skin", and I said: "I came to Zagreb, there might be some girl." He was like that... very funny.

I must tell you about one event! Peša procured a dog. It was a Šarplaninac (named after the Šar mountain), but he was black. He was young, three or four months, and we called him Medo (Teddy bear). He was like a real bear, he was terribly fond of me, I mostly took care of him and my sister as well, she fed him and all this. I don't know who, but I think Peša procured some three luxurious German cars, with convertible roof *****, and Sven Lasta drove one of them. We were here, down in Palanka, there was Medo also, he was also in the Headquarters***** . So we protected one part, nobody could look inside, during summer time there was a table in the yard, and there was no need that everybody from the road stared in it. And when Sven came, he went inside the Headquarters and I heard some rustling. I said: "Well, is that Medo? Is a nylon bothering him?" When I looked at the rear seats, they were already torn up - and I did not anything else but I turned my heels. And we met the next day. "Well, what did I say?" I said: "I don't know about what?" "Well, this Medo. There is no crazier dog in the world. Did you see that*****he decorated the back seats of the car?"

What? He ate the back seats?

He tore them up. It was this leather or sky and he tore it up.

All right. Let us come back to this... I am trying to connect: Praljak's reacting to the singing of Ustashi songs; Lasta's efforts to direct the soldiers and to explain it to them and so on. Can we connect all this in a way and conclude that there was a systematic effort of a certain group of people, who had the occasion to educate these young men, to explain them certain things, and to rectify in a way this, let us call it, uncritical point of view of Ustashi 's ideology?

Yes. Maybe there were after these, individual, some stupid declarations for my point of view – but not after that, after this concert, after these singers “Golden Ducats”, there was nothing in larger proportions. In this moment these emotions happened, and the second day these emotions deflated and...

At the beginning, in almost first six months, starting in 1991 and until the arrival of UNPROFOR, we had three doses per day: For breakfast, for lunch and for supper they shot at us. There was not an enormous shooting, but around fifty, between 50 and 100 grenades, all sorts of their arms used to fire on us*****

Come on, tell me what were the reasons of your quarrels with Praljak?

I can tell you that we did not quarrel.

You did not quarrel because of anything?

It was once, at the very beginning, when he came he said how this street lighting was on. Our these “Elektra” people, from the power plant, I do not praise them because I myself worked for “Elektra” until I went to the disablement pension in 1988 – but it was... I told him “It is not a mistake, nobody turned it on.” He says:” Well, I know better, I learned about it.” I said: ”I know that you learned about it, but I am the electrician and I guarantee that it was caused by shooting and this, the phase wire must be broken by shooting and it fell on the wire*****and the light was on day and night.” And it was eliminated. And that was our biggest...

And you got well along further on?

We got along very well. Whatever I suggested regarding the logistics – Praljak gave me open hands. I could not do what I wanted but I could plot as much as I could to obtain what I needed for our soldiers in Sunja.

Come on, tell me how did you plot with the beer cans, Coca-Cola cans... How was that?

Ha! It is not, I collected them in Sisak, around coffee bars...

Well, why? Why did you collect it?

Well, we made... We made... Because there were no bombs. There were no bombs and we made them by ourselves.

It was year 1991?

1991. And we did it. We would put inside some short sticks and we would put dynamite inside and whatever we found: Small pieces of iron and all this...

It means, you went first around pot-houses and collected these tins...

Tins and that...

And then you put in the tins – what?

We put explosive.

Explosive. And? Metal?

Metals.

And what did you do further on with it?

*****It was also manually, but the young men acquired some catapults. And then they threw them with catapults.

Did it function?

It was awful. I did not...I think, I heard from these young men who were at the front line, from these guardists*****what Ustahas invented, what was that now. They were afraid. It was a powerful explosion, and especially*****there were pieces of iron. If there were some small balls it was good, but this was more dangerous because these were pieces of shrapnel, pieces that had edges, points, peaks and all that. And all that until we did not*****

Consequently, a part of your job was to provide these tins. What else did you do? I'm talking about supplying – of all that had to be acquired for the functioning here, in the conditions that were here?

Well, I can tell you: From A to Z. Whatever they needed. When horses came I had to provide the straw and the hay for the horses. And then I was there with a cavalry officer from Zagreb, we got these different*****as it was the front line, regarding this here, that is concerned*****on the Sava river and to the Station, and also this part to Žremen, Krivaj – Žremen was accessible. But for example the line Žremen –Popovac was...*****three kilometers away where were the pillboxes. So we had these horses and that, we had even a wagon for transporting wounded persons. We organized us like that. We had it for some time and then afterwards it was revoked*****there was no need for that. Then we modernized. We worked and we acquired everything.

Then, for us the logisticians, already afterwards, there were mostly arrangements and meetings in Sisak, and later on in the Railway company Zagreb in Zagreb. Then I met with my colleagues from the other units and we complained to each other. That man said that he had this and had not that. It happened once that we learned... Praljak was the commander. We learned that in Vinkovci there were grenades for ZIS-es but they did not have these artillery pieces. And we had them. Then this Zane, who is 100% military invalid wounded in the Storm,*****went there and this travelling in both ways took five days. We had to go via Osijek and all, we could not go that way, from Novska on the highway, so that we managed in different ways. I had that ammunition but I did not have arms for that, so we went to exchange it. We got from those who had a surplus. It went like that. That was the situation.

Tell me like that... We are talking about a time at the end of 1991, sometimes from September 1991 until springtime 1992. How did function the care for the people who remained in Sunja? First of all I think on Serbs, that is Orthodox people who were there. Did you take account of their needs, food, all other things, how much did Praljak participate in it and in which way?

He participated very much in that...

Of course the question is related as well to the Moslems who were there...

To all, to all. He did not think only on Orthodox people and Moslems... We did not have much of them. There were several Moslems and they

were active in the Croatian army. And there were Serbs who remained here and they were also in the Croatian army. The rest of them who stayed... The difference at the beginning... And it was like that. It was regarded: He is a Serb, but he stayed. He did not cross the railway – how we used to say then. They did not leave. Because on the 27th there was the first attack, in the morning they started with the mortar fire. And from 26th to 27th, those who were there and knew that they would not stay in Sunja – they left.

And what happened then with those who had stayed?

We took care of those who had stayed.

How?

For food and also for... Well, at the beginning there were perhaps some... Maybe somebody made a remark to someone, but it was minimal. Praljak said to stop with it, and we took care regarding this supplying with the food....

Well, what did Praljak expect, what did he asked for? Which were his commands regarding the care of this people? What did you do?

His command was that we took care of it, that there would be no complaints, that nobody would come to complain to him that this was not done.

Well, it was...

It was supplying them with food and the care about them. Because, I think, they were all older people. There was also one family, near by Sokolana as we call it, but later they left, we let them go, and they went to the other side. We don't know what happened to them. There were also two old people, they were born here, at Strmen, but both they died here in the war. We took care of them and always when the food was distributed I would say "Don't forget those two." Mostly they were not hungry, they had always bread and there was always the same that the army had, they got it. They ate what the army ate.

It means that there was the same for everybody?

Yes.

Tell me... Rinčica (The ear-ring)? You knew that man? The wedding of Rinčica in the church, later he was killed at the railway...

Ha! I know. Yes. He was later... It was organized in the Hall, we prepared it for him according our possibilities. The wedding-feast was in the Hall...

I put here some marks and let us see how you can help me, what do you remember and of what you were the witness? Can we?

All right.

Gorša. The event with Gorša. Were you the witness of this event?

What was that? When he shot in the Hall?

Yes, in the Fire station, I think of that.

He shot and then he disappeared.

How did he disappear? What does it mean "disappeared"?

He was then a little bit... He took shelter and hid himself until it settled down a little bit. Until the situation calms down. They are several brothers and so.

I think at Damir Gorša. Praljak brought him in for something, is that so?

Yes, he did. But later they let him go.

It means that is all? You don't know anything else about Gorša? You were not the witness of this event?

No. When I was in Fire station it was by accident. And I ignore further development. He was brought in, and released, I know there was something. And what happened in the Headquarters that will perhaps... Blaža, she will probably know about that.

OK. Let us continue. This way... There was an event with the ferry-boat, that is with the ferrymen to whom the working hours expired, as they said. Well, it was necessary to ferry somebody over and they said that the working hours were finished and they did not want to ferry over... Do you know something about this event?

I could not remember this. I think, I don't know. Maybe there was something, but I really cannot remember.

Good.

I could not remember this, but I know.... I think, I don't know for the others, but when I was... There was not the question of the time. And there were no working hours. That is why I am surprised by that.

That is why I ask. Tell me further on, like this: The event when the father in law of Mustafa Nadarević was killed... The father in law of Mustafa Nadarević... Do you know something about it? Do you maybe remember of this?

Where was he killed? Here?

Yes.

What was his name?

I don't know his name, but I know that he was killed... He did not want to leave his house. He was in the house, he thought that nobody would shoot at him, you supplied him with food. He was killed. He was brought dead here in a handcart.

No.

You don't know anything about it?

No. I try to remember. The father in law of Mustafa Nadarević, brought in a handcart?

Yes. He was killed. They told him to leave the house, but he did not want...

It was in 1991?

Yes.

Yes, but... I think... I know for my manager, he was my former manager, Tomo Karanović. He and his neighbor were killed in Vedro Polje. Chetniks killed them and*****and they were transported in the morning to*****where our guards were, they both were brought dead.

On wheel-barrow?

Yes, they were brought in wheel-barrow, in hand carts.

And which were the names of these two men?

This one is Karanović, but the other one... I cannot remember. But I can see about it later on.

It was in which village?

They were in Vedro Polje. This continuation towards Dubica, just where is that little bridge over the brook Krivaja, that is the continuation of Vedro Polje. Up to the railway and a little bit over the railway, and further on is the continuation of Donji Hrastovac. But I don't know whether this is it.

I have this incident written down. Without names.

I don't know for anything else.

Did you witness to this one? Were you present when this happened?

No, I didn't...

Some of them were supplied with food. Did you bring the food to them also?

Well, they were at home.

I know, but did you bring the food to them or

No, no, no, not. We did not go there but I was... Just several days before that, this Karanović Tomo, I was here with him, we were in front of "Elektra", we met by chance and I asked him: "What, you stay up there?" He says: "They came to my house." He mentioned several of them who told him: "That not a hair of his head would be touched, that he did not have to be afraid." After some... I don't know were that two or three days later and they killed both of them. They killed first this Karanović, and afterwards this neighbor... He worked at the railway, and there was a time when he worked with us in "Elektra". He was our warehouseman and then he left us. Yes. And he says: "Men, what are you doing?" and then this one that was shooting turned around and shot and killed him too.

Who were these people who shot?

Supposedly it was a man from Kostajnica. Some Blajo. But don't take me at my word. Because there were several versions, that them, that they were, but... I don't know exactly.

Good. I have here another recorded event: In the neighboring Serbian village remained the father of one fighter, his son was in our army. This son requested that we went to get his father, and that we pulled him out. Then we organized the operation of pulling out. Do you know something about it?

Yes.

Crnković conducted this operation.

From the Second guards unit?

Yes.

No, I don't know anything about it.

Then further on... What was the name of the radio-station that worked here?

Well, at the beginning it was "101".

Its name was "101"?

Yes, at the beginning, but afterwards, after some time, I think one year later... We had then, when Bjonda came, then we had our radio-station in our regiment.

Good. When did start to operate radio-station “101”?

They started to operate immediately.

Approximately when?

At the beginning. I think that it was transmitting already in August, September. And then afterwards...

But the station was hit, wasn't it?

Yes. They were in the infirmary.

When were they hit? It was which date?

Who would know the exact date... I know that immediately after it I organized to fix the roof, because the roof was hit.

Were there wounded persons?

No, there were no wounded, only the roof was... By accident they, I think that they even got out because they had in the basement...Above they had the equipment that was smashed, but nobody was hurt.

Was it summer, autumn?

It was warm weather. I think that it was autumn.

Then they stopped to work?

I think that they stopped because there was something, once... There was something once... Some damn shame. I entered by chance and felt a terrible smell. Then I learned what it was. Those slaughtered a cat and this blood... it smelled terribly.

Who slaughtered the cat?

Them, those who probably used to come to them, what do I know, I don't know.

Where did they use to come?

To the radio-station. There were at the beginning all sorts of euphoria... Listening of the songs, maybe there were some drugs... I heard afterwards that allegedly this was also there. And now, when they left, I would not know. Later on we had the radio-station. Even we got some things and we had our TV-station... But it was already in 1993, 1994.

It means, this station was...

Yes, it was, but all that evaporated a little bit. Here years went by. Because I think, to be honest, my duty as it was, as the logistician, was terribly difficult for me. Because, as they say, it looked like I brought you in one room and said: Here !– But you don't have anything in this room. Maybe it should not be said, but it was like that. All this together, this founding, I mentioned it all before...

I don't know, I would like to add to that we talked before. For me... I don't know, I think that this with what they charge the general referring to the Bosnia, I cannot understand it at all. Because I know him from here. Well, I cannot tell that we were some big friends, but we were close, we cooperated well, when I would suggest something he would always take my advice and he agreed with me that it was all right. When we were alone and discussed some things and that. And his behavior and all together... I think now if I was today like that, and now I left Sunja and came to Sisak, and now in Sisak I am changed 100%...

Yes, that is why we make these conversations, to show what was the general like in these circumstances...

I think that no one can that to me, no one can that to me... Because even after the general had left Sunja, if I needed something, when he was in the Headquarters, if I got stuck with something or if I could not do something without bad conscience, I called him and asked for help – and in everything there was, whatever I asked for the needs of the army, there was no problem for any things.

Tell me... Does the name Narančić mean anything to you? Nara?

Certainly. He was in the Second Guards unit. He is famous. And I was in very good relations with him.

But he had some problem. Something happened to him. He finished in jail because of something, is that so?

I don't know about it.

It is some incident... It was some taking things from the shop...

I don't know.

(arbutina2 100205, .wav)

Well, I mentioned Nara because there follows an incident I am interested in. I think on solving the problem of the possessions, the things from the broken shops, there is a war. We have already mentioned this incident, but I would like to complete it. Then the general made this auction, is that so?

Yes.

A sale of these collected things. Do you remember this?

Yes, yes.

Well, let us go about it, tell me a little bit about it. How did it really happen?

Here, this, that was the auction of the furniture and everything from the shops. I think that at the very beginning I arranged it with Peša because the shops were locked. These shops did not have electricity and it was normal that I... These shops had refrigerators and what do I now with that smoked and cured meat and this stuff. I was afraid that an infection could develop, and with the commander Peša, who was at the beginning, and afterwards with Praljak, we agreed that... We did not break these locks but with the boring machine so that we could remove food from these shops. We did as far as it was concerned... I don't know whether I said this the last time... We removed from "Vajda" tons and tons

of game, poultry and we sent it to Sisak, and when the refrigerator plant could not take any more, we distributed it to the people. And this went here, we made a sale.

Were you present at the sale?

Yes.

How did it look like? Who was in charge there? Who called the prices?

I think that there were these boys from the military police.

They called the prices?

Yes, they did.

And how many buyers did gather? Approximately?

They were about twenty, thirty, by waves...

And people did buy?

The people bought it. I think that this money went also for the humanitarian purposes, but to be honest, I don't know, I don't know. I don't know 100%. This was only so that it cannot be misappropriated. And this concerning the shops... The shop-windows were broken by shelling, so when somebody passed by he took and ate something. Chocolate and these things were mostly gone.

This people from "Jedinstvo", the director even said that wherever were the refrigerators with ice-cream, that boys should eat them, so they would not be wasted and thrown away.

And this for Nara, I cannot remember. All I know that... He was eccentric, this way... Once I came up to the Railway station, I was distributing the food, as I did it at the beginning, until it was organized, and when there were more of us – and then I let it to the others and I went on my business as commander in Sisak and Zagreb for provision. Nara used to sit in front of the gas station at the Railway station, he was nicely sitting, he had a nice comfortable chair, he was reading newspaper and the shells were falling around. I ask him what are you doing and he says I am listening how they fire and I am reading newspaper.

It means that you don't know how was used this money from the auction?

I think that it went for... that it was distributed, but I don't know, I cannot 100%, you will have to...

All right, but we have the continuation of this story about St. Nicolas. About gifts...

Yes.

Where did these gifts come from?

It was the donation of candies and this and that, and it was in the Headquarters. Blaža will tell you more about it, she did it with her sister... Well, I attended it as well. So that... We formed groups and it was tremendous enjoyment, children and that... Especially because the military remembered them...

Fine, but when you were carrying it around, there was firing, wasn't that so?

Well, normally.

It means that you went around under the fire? Your were St. Nicolas who was coming under the fire?

Do you know what I want to tell you? We had, until the arrival of UNPROFOR, sometime in April, May, I cannot remember exactly, we had shelling for breakfast, dinner and supper. Every day. Nobody could know when it would be. We already knew when it was the firing of the mortar, when they shot from Petrijevci, when they shot from Četvrtkovec, we already knew and counted in ourselves between 30 and 38 seconds and we knew from where which is coming. Already we became dull to that. Only if you were outside, you would throw yourself in a ditch or shelter somewhere so that it would not hit you. And the biggest baptism was in April, on 23rd of April. There were over 3000 shells, from 8 o'clock PM, when they started, until midnight. Without interruption. They fired from everything they had, they fired from everything.

We spoke about "Golden Ducats", we mentioned that...

Yes, we did. I only wanted to say something in addition, I don't whether I mentioned it when we talked last time. It should be emphasized. I got from "Siscia", afterwards "Golden needle", that was directed by Stojanović... He has this company even today, I used to go there, I knew him before the war. It is not a secret that I was the party member, and I don't care what people think about that, and he was also the executive secretary in the district committee and so we got acquainted and became friends. I went there for these cut off parts of the textile, that we used for cleaning our arms, and he was very pleased with Praljak and full of the approval for him, and he said that I should bring Praljak to him so that they could make him a nice, elegant suit...

Is that so?

Yes! And I took him, the general and I went to Sisak...

And when it was?

Before he will leave Sunja.

And he got the suit?

He got the suit. They chose the material, first they measured him, he went there for fitting... I think that he has got it at home to this very day.

So...

Well, I wanted to connect it all together. They are up there, and this man and his company and all together remained here – but he is of Orthodox religion, Serb. I think so, that he had so much respect for the general.

What is the family name of this man?

Stojanović.

And the name of the company...

It was "The Golden Needle", the former "Siscia". Afterwards he was... They dismissed him from the post, but he took it over later, this management, it was falling apart and he uplifted it.

And what is his name?

Oh my, I cannot now... It will come to me.

Well, when it comes to you, tell me...

Mičo, Mičo, Milan Stojanović. I know that I used to come there for these cut off parts of the textile and then he always gave them... When I would come and turn to his secretary, he used to have even this foreign customers, German and French, who were buying the goods, but he would leave them because of me, and he would always give me the small bottles of fine perfumes and asked me whether I had women and I told him: "I have got a lot of women, but we cannot give to everyone", and he would always give me the perfumes.

It is convenient what you told me. And now tell me something about the canteen problem. We have already touched it. There was this drinking problem, is that so?

Yes.

Praljak tried to control the drink. The drink was transferred over Sava river in all possible ways, the people managed to get it, is that so?

Yes. We did... It is not right to blow once own horn, but... When we went to open it, I said to the general: "You will...", but he said: "No, no, no, you will cut the ribbon", and then we did it here...

The ribbon? It means that you also had the ribbon for the canteen?

I have even got a picture somewhere, I was taken from the back.

It means that in the middle of the war you had opening ceremony of the canteen by cutting the ribbon?

With ribbon! And it was for coffee, juices, nonalcoholic drinks...

And how did happen this decision about opening of the canteen?

As a matter of fact, we agreed on that... Because then it was not yet... People did not have... Afterwards these inns were slowly opened. It was like that, so that the people could get together and it was nice...

Which were the drinks in this canteen?

All nonalcoholic drinks.

And why nonalcoholic?

It was not correct that the army got drunk.

Aha! And before that the problem was that the men drank?

Well... now...

Before the opening of the canteen, probably the drinking problem was recognized?

Well, yes, this problem was recognized... And with that, there was the chess and the possibility of playing cards...