

DAMIR GORŠA

Sunja

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The sound recording and the transcript of the conversation were recorded on a
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SUNJA 2.

The sound recording of the conversation is registered under the code

damirgorsa

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duration

01:07:14

The conversation was held in Sunja, in the collocutors house

I turned on the dictaphone and at the beginning I would like to ask you to introduce yourself to me.

Damir Gorša.

When and where were you born?

25.5.*8 in Sunjska Greda.

In Sunjska Greda. You grew up in Sunja, is that right?

Yes.

And the war events caught you here. What were you doing before the war? What were you engaged in?

I worked in the Student centre in Zagreb. I was learning a trade there and studying. I graduated theology. I studied there and worked, I paid for my own studies so I had to work. It wasn't worth working through student employment agency because you always wait for that money for a long time, so I got a job in the Student centre as a fire-fighter and I ripped tickets, worked as bouncer in a disco club and so on.

And there you***?**

Then in May I became eligible for my degree finals and in July I got married. I returned here to Zagreb, a brigade was established, a professional brigade here in Sisak and I was there ***** technical high school in fire-brigade because I worked ***** shifts here I was in war. The war caught me here, here, exactly in this house, in August I moved here.

In Sunja it starts on 27.7., is that right?

On 27.7. the first shells were dropped on Sunja.

The day before that Serbs ran away?

Well, that night.

That night?

I haven't noticed that. We had guards. As we went I took my children down during the night, and Stevo his up. He was on guard somewhere over there, I was on guard here and so it was normal that we greet each other. All is known, everybody is quiet and that that night they probably also left. We haven't noticed that it was on such a mass scale, so that you could see that something was wrong. And I think many of them ran away when those shells were dropped, so people went into hiding and then...

And there was no information, indications that they will leave and that it will start that day?

No, no one could predict that. I was up there, in Leteća tvrđava (Flying fortress) we found a hidden room, there were many small cloths where the rifles were cleaned. Yes, and the house next to it, from the same owner. He came the day before, the day before. He came, he went on a tractor, and he stopped with a car in front of my house. He took my old man, they drove to the river Sava, they loaded gravel ****. So it wasn't possible for him not to know what was going to happen when he was already cleaning rifles. Never the less, the day before he went to Sava. Maybe he went to see what is there and what is not, and pretended to need gravel. And he also took my father with him...

And what about those cloths? He was cleaning himself or was it some kind of group?

I don't know, there were many cloths. Later that first day, the second day near Aličić we also went to look for something, there was shooting, this, that, then we found minutes – it was a meeting of SDP (Serbian Democratic Party) so some kind of list was left in a notebook. Only then we realized that something was going on there after all. Although I had the task to follow but I didn't, I didn't know.

You hid the kids?

Yes.

And then you stayed?

My wife with children and the mother-in-law went across the river Sava. She was in some kind of school for two days and then in the end she ended up in Samobor in her aunt's house. I had no idea where she was, I only knew that she was safe, and then...

You stayed here?

Yes, yes.

Tell me, please, what was going on during the time before Praljak arrived – and Praljak arrives at the beginning of September 1991.

Yes.

Until the beginning of September – what was going on?

I first went with the police to Kostajnica, at the beginning of July and came back. There was that police that was later the 2nd guard unit. Then I came back here on July 25th or 26th and *** continued with the guard. They went to Sisak. They arrived when the shells were dropped, the second day, I think they came here on the 28th. The guard unit came and I was all happy. Many of them came, they brought a mortar **** a cannon they brought here. However, during the night they left a few people here and during the night they left. It was a show; they drove around Sunja with men and weaponry. This – that, they disappeared and left little here. We had 13 machine guns and we had 66 men. So, with 13 machine guns and hunting weaponry.

66 men?

Yes, and then there, during these days came Peša. He came and brought 30 policemen from Samobor, and they were in a garage. I asked Peša who he was, he said “I’m Žarko Peša”, “No, that wasn’t what I meant, I asked about your occupation” because we don’t have anyone who will, who had any military schooling. He said: I’m an inspector. Good. I took them to the firehouse. In 15, 20 minutes they came back and he said fuck all of that, we’ll create our own headquarters now.

That was July?

July, maybe 27.7.

So this was happening as soon as it begun?

Well, the shells were dropped on the 27th, now it was all still cooking. It’s still passing here, there.

So Peša came as soon as the attacks started?

Yes, yes and he brought this group of policemen.

Good, Peša was here in July, August comes...

That’s right.

And what was happening here at the time? Were the lines established at the time?

I say, it was all very unserious. And that was the biggest merit of Praljak. The biggest merit of Praljak was that he really made us, and by force, and in any way to fortify ourselves.

Does that mean that at the time when Praljak arrived that hasn’t been solved yet?

No, absolutely! We, since we had those first points, those guards, when the attack started we appeared, hid in those stations, in houses. No one put a single sack of sand anywhere.

And Peša what?

Well, Peša started fortifying: now we will put pillboxes under those houses, here, there, this, that, and it was all unsteady until Praljak came.

Were there any problems with obedience?

There were problems with everything. I will tell you one thing now: when Praljak came and when Čuka asked dad to go, that he has a tractor, to go get gravel, to fill the bags, he asked: “And who will pay me for that?”. You understand, if no one will pay, he will not drive! He is charging! And then Praljak came up there to see us, and he said “Come on guys, that’s for your good”, do this, do that... well he was polite. He didn’t use force or something. Well now, when that didn’t work – then he also used to shout. And we fortified here and he connected the old Sunja with Palanka, Palanka with Krivaja, Krivaja with Žerme, Žerme with Bobovac, this right side he connected Sunja, Greda na Gradusu up to Sava. We somehow received some mines, so I and one, Cvajguz we called him, we scattered a bit – not a mine

field but a row. Mine to mine. In a line, only that many. Later the police came. People registered in the town. Some of the locals also came back, and that, more and more people. Mortars came, and came also this, and that, and it was already... so that when on one occasion they, let's say, tried a more serious attack – they were punched back. Easily.

That was when they entered the Station?

Let's say that was the second attack, and there was another one, the third. They tried it using exactly this road and they haven't really succeeded. They had that day, I heard that, 18 or 19 dead around the entire Sunja. People said that it was on the television, and their funerals. There were no more serious attempts of infantry takeover, well they won't, no way. As Praljak said when he was asked if Sunja could fall: "Everything could fall, depending how much force you have. I don't think they have that much force" and that's how it was, they didn't dare because they were also abandoned. They made war also in Bosnia so they *****. I say, they left here those home guardsmen, the Serbian ones, who were not really ready to charge – just don't you charge on us and...

Damir, what were your obligations when Praljak was there? Did you have any specific obligations?

Yes, before Praljak came I disbanded the scouts. I disbanded them, signed for the Guard and went to the Leteća tvrđava with the late Kosta. And Kosta also signed for the Guard and we were up there. He was some kind of commanding officer. I was, we were colleagues of trade, we lived together. We were like up there the commanding officers, but all the questions were directed to Kosta and he answered. Then, after that I was tired of being up there. Then with Pepi, Repustić, I created mines – I did that and I slept up there. I didn't want to stay on guard up there, to shoot yes, but the guards... It wasn't for me... We had Cipelić, he was a warehouseman, he guarded our mines. We made ourselves some kind of bed in the school, in Bistrać, we brought a television, then somehow my wife also appeared, she came to the mother-in-law's uncle with children – so I moved around Sunja, went up there to Leteća, fixed mines. Very soon I parted with Cvajguz. We arranged: I will keep guard in the town and the station, you will hold the home guardsmen and so.

What was actually your job? What did you do exactly?

That! I put mines and maintained those mine fields, where a mine explodes I replaced it, where it fell down I fixed it. That was mine.

What was the situation like at the time, did you have enough necessary means at your disposal?

There were some mines but not so many that you could be arrogant, they should have been arranged very rationally and very cleverly. I more or less placed the tripwire activated mines so that they could be seen, and anti-tank mines I placed so that they could be seen. So that they could see it. So that they can see they are there, because you can not camouflage them with quantity so if they come upon it, they come upon it. So that they could see and that they do not even try. We had one, that FAP 13, from the post office. There were also some mines in it those that we saved where it will be necessary to put some explosives. There were those tripwire activated mines that were captured from the YPA (Yugoslavian People's Army) – there were no fuses so they were made somewhere in the Ironworks, those fuses. Those fuses

when they get wet by the rain they get rusty and then they will not work, but that doesn't even matter. It matters that they can be seen, that they know they are there. What do they know if it has a fuse or not and what it's like!?

Did you also place a sign “careful, mines”?

Yes, yes! It was psychological...

Did you go with those emergency groups when they had to go somewhere?

Yes, one time we had to, but there was a lot of moonlighting, we had to go with the emergency group, some bridge or something like that. And then it was all ready, however the moonlighting was so bright like in the middle of the day and they gave up. And so, I didn't go.

Let's get back to our Praljak....

Let's.

Praljak, one he came, had to make a lot of effort to put the defence in order, to make pillboxes...

That's right, exactly.

Were you present when he tried that, when he demanded?

Yes, yes.

How did people react to a stranger who came and started...?

Good, good. First, Praljak had that huge quality, he knew how to recognize people: who's like this, who's like that, he figures it out quickly. Let's say, exactly that late godfather and that team, well even I belong there, he had a different relationship with us: more fatherly, more friendly. With some he had a business relationship, and he even there, in Greda, slapped a man – just like that! Because that one started like what he will do, that this, that that... He slapped him so that the man sat down.

Why, why?

You know, he came, now he was getting to know the front line, the people, and there some old guy murmured, started like what he will do, this, that.... He slapped him and the man sat down! You know, because now there is no – if you allow it then everyone will start like that. He is strict, he was tall, corpulent. People said that he finished three universities and it means something to someone. He was fair, a big man, he did not ask something that he couldn't, nor did he ask impossible things, or mistreated someone just because he was bored so he goes to invent something just like that.

We can now, after everything, conclude that he did some things well...

Which? Well he did everything well!

...however I know from these conversations that I lead that there were many disputable situations. People thought that they were right with their cows, corn, with their reasons why they shouldn't build pillboxes. Simply, they didn't understand. Between Praljak and them there was that clash of worlds.

Look, here on my territory, I know that bets and I know that all villages are not the same, but the village...I will not mention names...

Com on, tell me!

Well my birthplace, Greda! There are many philosophers here. They are all philosophers. Every one of them has three university degrees, philosophers! So there was, for example, like why I'm putting mines here and where will his cows graze? I don't know, you go now and ask Praljak. I received an order to place a mine there and you now, what don't you understand? And could the mine be moved a bit? Well yes, it could, it could! It can be moved a bit, of course, we can always agree. On Bobovac there was a problem with corn, to remove some corn so that it could be seen. Well, but why exactly mine? And then there was about the building of pillboxes: and why exactly mine? Then it was, I placed some mines, on electricity, a day before Bobovac was attacked. We didn't know but it happened exactly like that.

That, when they sneaked in with the cows?

Yes. And they didn't bring accumulator so that they could set it as they should. If they had set it there wouldn't have been any attack, I think. If they had done it as they should have in the first place. Around that house around which they were emerging there were some 6 mines, guiding, that I have placed. And they didn't bring the accumulator! They didn't bring it that day, but the shift will bring an accumulator. I made the ignition station, everything, marked them, which mine is where, it is all known – all you need is the electricity! But no. they didn't bring it! Ahh, there were always philosophers. And Praljak did impressing...

Good, so how did you deal with all of that? This one is a philosopher, this one is like this, this one won't give his corn, everyone thinks he is right.

Well look, either with a nice word or with shouting. On command.

And was it more often with a nice word or with shouting?

Well look... Let's say if I was in Praljak's place... I don't know... I would burn out! I would have to fight so much and shout that in the end I wouldn't do anything. However Praljak played that... He knew the psychology of people and very soon the stopped getting into conversations like that with him. Some people did complain, grumble, they weren't happy but no more...

So Praljak solved that?

Yes, yes he solved it. So good, he established the military police, and the medical personnel, and the kitchen, and the restaurant, and work platoon. All that was needed. Like we wanted to load bags!

Were you present when Praljak threatened to kill cows?

What?

That he will kill cows.

Well that's the story with that Mačak. I drove the cows down, from Glavanac, when the cows stayed down, Serbian and our cows, they did not retreat. I, when I went down to place mines, I drove the cows. Now I'll tell you. They did not enter a mine field. They were not injured, and I chased them into a street – and the one up there jumped and didn't let the cows enter. "What's wrong with you man, what are you doing?" He says: "Those are not our cows!", "And so what, now they will stay on a field just like that?" And then Mačak took them into the football field, then into a truck in order to sell them, to buy guns, this, that. And then the shit started and Praljak here, I was not present exactly when he said that, but I know the whole story. He did not threaten to kill the cows but like that "I will kill now all those cows, to hell, where is the money?, where is everything"... In the end that one sold the cows and didn't give the money. And now someone should write here, Gajski, that he defended Sunja.

What's with that Mačak today?

Well he has here some kind of store. CDU (Croatia Democratic Union) won in Sunja with 60%, CPR (Croatian Party of Rights) had 40%, this little independent, here, got one vote. And Mačak got two votes: probably he and the wife voted for themselves... And it's good that it's like that. He has a store here, he pretends that he is some kind of gentleman in a suit, something irrespective. Oh, a fool! I had a quarrel with him in 1993. There was some kind of party here and I came wounded, I came on crutches. As soon as I came he told me: "Fuck, you have more ranks than I don't know who". I lost control immediately and said: "Fuck you, you will ask me where I earned my ranks? You are in civilian clothes, it is war and you are in civilian clothes and ask me where I earned my ranks?!" And I barely survived! If it weren't for Praljak.... Praljak saved my leg!!! (he cries)

Praljak, as far as I understood organized life quite well?!

Oh it was impressive, nobody was hungry, nobody was thirsty. Everything functioned: the post office, telephones, electricity, water as far as the army was concerned. The entire kitchen for the entire Sunja, civilians, they had a job, all of that functioned.

Did Praljak take care of the Serbs who stayed, i.e. who were in the army?

We alone took care of our Serbs.

I believe that's important. Let's talk about that a bit. In what way did you take care of them? How was that organized?

Well look, let's talk like this, about two Serbs. One is a postman. One is a teacher. None of them came to the army. Both had carbines and they gave them up.

What did they have?

Carbines, hunting ones, and they gave that. The one that was a teacher...

Radović, is that right?

That's right. He was the president of the hunting society. He continued working in the school; it was summer, school break... he works today in the school. And Dule worked in the post office.

And works there even today?

That's right. Drives mail, delivers. When there is shelling, he hides. When there is an attack, he hides – and later delivers mail. The post office functioned normally in the war conditions. Lojza is a Serb and he had a high function and duty. There were some pro-Yugoslavs, Yugoslavian oriented Croats, bastards from the mixed marriage. All of them had their place. Who wanted. Who didn't want they left, or across, or to Germany, or to Sisak, they went somewhere. The ones that stayed functioned in the most normal way. We didn't ask at all... it was, there were always some, Serbs, this or that, but nothing, without any problems. And especially Praljak as a good commanding officer – he also had to take care of that segment. So that someone wouldn't mistreat anyone and especially, God not permit, a Serb – because that isn't good. It isn't good for the entire thing.

He took care of that?

He took care of that, of course.

I have the information that Sven Lasta also had his role in that. Sven was also here connected with Praljak, so they enlightened these younger people, guys in the sense of Ustasha signs, explained them what are Ustasha and so on – and that they had a special relation towards this.

I can again tell you about a case where we really young ones... I can't say, I was one of the older ones, I was 33 years old. And what to say then about Sven and Praljak? He could be a grandfather. But see what it's like when you don't know. We were up there in Leteća tvrđava. There were no clothes, there were no t-shirts, it was summer, hot. And a man comes in the evening, 70 or 80 years old and he says that he was Ustasha in the Second World War, that he was here, that he was in Sunja during the war, Maks Luburić Crni, this, that, he lives in Australia now, he couldn't come until now, he wasn't allowed to come back. And he gave us t-shirts: black back, big U. Understand? Some fifteen t-shirts. As you don't have clean t-shirts, at least 8 people put the t-shirt on right away. In the morning they came out of Leteća tvrđava with the t-shirts on – and CNN was already there! And now you think who that man was? Did he tell us a story? They just recorded it all of the sudden and zoom - there you have Ustasha on CNN television?! We are not Ustasha, nor pro-Ustasha, we are not anything, understand? According to that you can't be Ustasha because you have to swear on that Ustasha... you have no one to swear to. The same way that Šešelj pretends that he is Chetnik, but a duke ***** another duke *****. That's not now the last duke ***** died and is not anymore. There can't be Chetniks. One can say that you are a Chetnik but that is not that ***. No Ustasha oath to be according to something and then you can call yourself Ustasha. That was a different **** story to them is ***** all of them like I said, pretend to be Chetniks, Ustasha, partisans – that's the storage room of the history. Nothing comes out of that.

And how was the problem of wearing Ustasha signs solved in Sunja in 1991?

Look, there was a man who came from Switzerland, and he was a respectable and industrious man in his village, and everything, and he was leading there some kind of team from the

village. He had a U on the hat and I personally, personally was there three times when Praljak said “Take that off!”. “I will, I will” – and he didn’t. And then the third time in front of Praljak he took it off. “Oh, fuck you, this, that, this is mine, I do not receive a salary!” “But you can’t do that!” and he had to take it off.

So Praljak asked him to take it off? Praljak personally?

Personally, yes! When he twice...

Who is that man?

Well, that Mika.

Mika? The one that is now in Switzerland or somewhere over there?

Yes, I think he is at home right now.

So, that was him?

And he made him: now, take it off right now, right now, here in front of me! Take it off – or: come on, you know where Sava is and you can’t be here anymore.

So, Praljak was radical here?

Yes, yes, well he had to be. You have to. Well. I mean, it’s stupid, so it costs us. The important thing is to make war, to fight, but the commanding officer has to take care of the fact that someone from outside will come. There, my neighbour here across, there, when he was six years old he was in Jasenovac. His mom and two brothers stayed there. How can I now here, in front of him, wear that? That’s not good. There, this what happened in the example with the CNN? It turned out that Ustasha were here.

But that story with those t-shirts is so synchronised... It’s hard to believe that it’s a coincidence.

Of course not! You see that it isn’t, that it’s fixed! Fuck, it was really set up because it was supposed that at least one t-shirt can be seen. And that there was only one man in that t-shirt they wouldn’t film the other 10 but only that one... They would frame him like that. Of course. And that’s not good. You have Serbs who are local here, and that associates them like... Besides, we are really not Ustasha! But that didn’t happen often, no it didn’t...

I know that Praljak came and introduced the institution of prison.

Custody!

Custody, that’s right, custody. Until then, I don’t know it there was any – but even if there was, it wasn’t really a very serious threat. With Praljak’s arrival it became serious. I would like to know what were really the sins, what is the top ten of sins that caused people end up in prison during Praljak?

Shooting, shooting...

Shooting, like on...?

On restaurants, all around. Shooting at random. When you are drunk – especially that! Then some kind of disobedience in the sense that a man goes and then does not come back, or simply leaves, drinks and is gone for three days, understand? Then for theft.

The theft of what?

For theft of everything. Anyone they caught, in any kind of theft: he stole the socks from the guys, bullets, frames or thefts in houses, or anything – the person who was caught in theft was, I think, in prison for 15, 20 days. Later he also realised that it was good to be in prison – and then he introduced a work obligation. Then the prisoners had to work. Well, then they didn't like the fact that they had to collect garbage, to dig, to do this, to do that, so they were a bit more careful.

Was this measure successful?

Yes. He was able to do that when he got the real police.

What was the situation with what you call “stealing in houses”?

Well look what situation... it was, it wasn't anymore theft in the sense to steal and take it somewhere. It became destruction. You come there and eat from the plate and then instead of washing that plate you throw it through the window. Because there are other plates. But in three months there are no more plates or spoons. They were not stolen, but they are gone. All ended up somewhere: pots, this, that, we ripped up sheets and cleaned guns with them because we didn't have cloths. Here was, for a long time there was a store here with agricultural machines... Long, long time after the New Year. All that was exposed to rain, got rusted so it was listed, already the control was introduced. The military police had a room full of all kinds of drills, drill that they were taking on the ferry. Praljak blocked there. He blocked the ferry, there, first because of that and later so that alcohol could not be brought in. Then he opened a canteen so that again that was under control.

But alcohol also went by a wire!

Ahhh! It went, it went. We had our own boat. We had everything.

I heard that he sunk the boats, kept all that under a lock?

Well yes, down there, but those were our people. A litre or two were brought. It wasn't charged or that someone made a business out of it since he is here... I think that this irritated him – when this one closed a restaurant and opened a garage and sold litre by litre. But then he prohibited it, that it can't be done, and opened a canteen, and gave Ljilja a job there, the one whose husband died not long ago. Go and work, she was a waitress before and she worked in a canteen.

So, Praljak opened a canteen, controlled the drinking and ...

Yes, well listen, the drink is always a problem. I still remember from that army: people who never drank did it there.

Good but some people told me that...

Give them a uniform and that there are no women near – all just hit the booze! Just booze!

But some told me that they stayed on the positions thanks to the drinks they had.

There were also those who had to drink in order to stay on those positions. They stay then because when they are drunk they can't run away. I haven't counted much on such people. Some also drank to get courage. There is something in that too. But you can't be drunk because you are in war after all. There is shooting, people die, there is no "let's repeat the scene"! The person is dead and it's over.

Damir, did you have a chance to be near Praljak during those fiery situations, shootings?

Yes, yes.

How did Praljak react in such situations?

He knew...

But I would just like to ask you for one thing: if you see that the conversation is becoming too difficult for you, that you need a break – tell me.

Oh no, it's not. I am a bit emotional person talking about this but...

It's ok. Those are such emotional stories.

In fiery situations I was with Praljak so that he even used to come to the Station, and to Leteća tvrđava whenever there was trouble...

Yes, I heard that many times.

...he came to see personally what was going on.

He actually came often?

Yes, he didn't, like other, come when there is ceasefire and just to take photos. He came to see us when there was trouble. Later we had a phone, a wire, and then we used to shoot up there and then he called "Halo? What is happening?", and then we lied to him that there is an attack, that this, that that, then he says "Good, I will come to see" and then he comes to see, and looks, and says "And where are the dead? There are no dead?". He always caught us in a lie. He came when there was shelling. He came, he came, looked, to see with his own eyes where is what, to estimate if that's an attack. Probably to know when to bring reinforcement, to add something when necessary. He came. But it was difficult to come, it was difficult when there was shelling like that! We are in a house, but he had to drive up to us – and they fall one after the other. Also my brother, who will come now. When we were all in a pillbox he went to collect the wounded. He was the chief of the medical personnel. They were fantastic: he and the doctor Boki. My brother is a veterinarian and Boki is a doctor. The medical personnel

were made of the two of them. The entire medical personnel were made out of two of them. Doctor is a doctor, brother is an orderly, driver and the chief of the medical personnel. They didn't give up to anyone. They installed themselves in a house and didn't let anyone break in, because they arranged themselves well. Didn't let a third person to get in and break their harmony. They functioned in that way for a long time.

Praljak, allegedly, went all the time with that emergency group.

I don't know that. I can tell you that when we were in Posavina, and when Praljak lead us during the night to a position. We went in a line, stretched out. He was in the front, first. He led us the right way. And then somehow the Bosnians started shooting on us. And since we went by the road, the machine-gun burst hit the middle of the road. He didn't jump. He just stopped. "Fuck you, why are you shooting, you motherfuckers?". Then they saw that it's Praljak and us. You can say that he was brave, you can. If he was some kind of pussy he wouldn't even have come. Or like some: came, saw, left.

We had two: we called them Livno and Duvno. They came. They were old fighters. (laughter because of Livno and Duvno) Fighters, great. We need them. Kosta said at once: give them to me. I need fighters. Shooting just started. The shooting was bad that night. And in the morning they are gone. Not there. Left. You don't know where and how. They left the way they came.

I heard stories that Praljak was careful about and warned the guys all the time not to shoot on civilians. Were you present when he said that and do you know anything about that?

I know. Because he basically... He functioned like that all the time. Praljak.

So, that doesn't surprise you?

No, that was his style. Not to touch the civilians. And a smart man, one doesn't need to tell him that. Why will you shoot a civilian? Who will shoot?

There is some kind of story about civilians from the other side who came to those railroad cars that had grain inside.

Yes, they dressed as women. You don't shoot at women.

What was that? Did you see that?

The first day of war a train with grain passed. Someone from Hrastovac shot at the locomotive. Glass. The engine-driver jumped and came to Sunja. He talked exactly to me. I say: "Come on, drive to the Station." He says: "Oh, no. which way can I go to Zagreb?" Because it automatically stopped and works. And the little Beli, and the engine-driver... Beli went and towed it. And it stayed here. They panicked. Hunger. And there was a sea of wheat here. Few shells, some holes, wheat poured out, they saw. Then they went little by little to steal that wheat, to take. But, we are only separated by that row of railroad cars. Because you don't know who is making noise there during the night. You shoot. Then you see they are women so you don't shoot. Later we realized that men were dressing up as women to steal grain.

So they dressed up as women to steal grain?

Yes to go and steal grain. Like, we certainly won't shoot at women. And at men, you don't know if they are civilians or... But you can't shoot, you can't hit him. He is behind the car. You can't under, you can't above, how will you? It saved us, those cars. They could not shoot directly at the Railway Station with recoilless guns. Nor with a tank or mortars. That was really good.

Yes, that was that story.

I know that civilians died on that side, in some way, I don't know which. That there were dead civilians...who shot...If Praljak by chance heard or found out that someone from here with a sniper or something shot over there, at a grandmother, at civilians – that one would be fucked! Certainly! That created again, like that U, created something... To even things out, that you are now an animal as they are...you are all the same...

Did you go to that concert of Zlatni Dukati?

Where?

In Sunja.

I have no idea.

That's some concert...

What year was that?

During Praljak. So the end of 1991 or the beginning of 1992.

I know that there was a show. I personally took Gregurević... that part from "Đuka Begović" was performed in the Hotel. Down there in the movie theatre. He especially went to the guys up there to the Hotel... There was also a blackout so we lit some candles around the pool table... That part with a whip was performed. I remember that. But if Zlatni Dukati played – I have no idea.

Concerning Zlatni Dukati there was an interesting story. When they after their usual repertoire started playing some Ustasha songs....

Aaa! Right! Then Praljak got up.

What happened?

Praljak says: "Stop. Stop!" Stop, no. he got up, tall as he was – and stop. No more song. People watch, Dukati watch. That was probably at the same time as that show.

And what happened then?

Stop!

Why? What did he say?

“Stop!”

But, he didn't explain anything?

No. “Stop!”, as far as I can remember. Stop – and they stopped.

What was the song?

Something Ustasha, probably. He wouldn't prohibit normal songs. That was recorded again, that was again... you can't do it like that.

What was it like for you to work with Praljak?

What did I work with him? He was the commanding officer. I did my job. It's true that we... Look, it was cool to us – that is probably the first time he will hear this. It was cool to us, because he didn't let us drink. We all sucked. We all drank. And then the joke was who will get a drink from Praljak. Then I used to come there and be so annoying that he would pour me a cognac and I drink it just so that he could get rid of me. I have the most points because I drank the most drinks at his place. And then we stole booze from him. Once we stole all his beer, the crates. Those cases. We thought it was cool. To have a drink at Praljak's place when he won't allow it. He let us drink coffee. I understand now, then I didn't understand, that I was even unpleasant. And boring. And he again was so polite to me that he didn't take me by the neck and threw me out, or called the military police. He put up with me, he put up with me... Many times I didn't even have a drink! He really put up with me and then he: “Come on, pour him!” Once there were some, I remember like if was today, members of UNPROFOR. They were there, serious things, English, and I came to make a joke... I little. He nothing. I insisted in front of those people... They are looking, don't know who I am. If the commander is putting up with me, I'm probably something? Someone important. Until he let me have a drink. So I got myself into a mess also when Bobetko, Šušak, Agotić and he were there. I set at the table with them and done. Praljak says: “Do not drink!” I ask Bobetko: “Can I have a drink?” Bobetko says: “Of course”. Praljak shouts: “No, don't, don't let him” How? I said, “this is the colonel, this a general, who will I listen to now?” And I had a drink with them. But, if they wanted to talk, I would have moved. I saw the situation, they finished the conversation, came down to eat...

But you had some kind of conflict situation, you and Praljak?

They made that up.

And what happened, come on tell me.

Oh, they made that up.

Who made it up?

I made a mistake. Before. Because I got drunk. Here in Headquarters, not Praljak, but in the Headquarters of VFD (Volunteer fire department) there were some people I didn't like at all. Those locals who talked shit, Lojza first of all, who **** and did all sorts of things. Now I

decided “I’ll go and tell Praljak all they did!” While I was placing those mines before, then I will go to see Praljak – I also got a bit drunk. And I agreed with Praljak that I will come. “Good, you will come and we will talk”. Before that I went to the VFD. And I criticised them. I criticised them a lot – because now I’m going to see Praljak, now you’ll see. And I start going out when Mika came in with the U on the hat. I ask: “And what are you? They are communists. What are you?” Go out, doesn’t go out. I go out on the side, now he comes out... I had to because of them, I had to. No problem, no problem. I go to see Praljak. I came to see Praljak and those bastards let him know that I went mad, that I’m shooting, that this, that that... Praljak was already sick and tired of me. I’m too annoying for him so often... I come to drink. And now he doesn’t have time to fuck with me anymore, he goes crazy... They told a lot of shit, I came there and now he doesn’t want to talk with me. I’m really drunk. He won’t talk to me. He says: “Weapons”... What? I believe that maybe he introduced the rule not to go in his office carrying weapons. I gave my rifle. I gave my gun. And knife, he says... O fuck, he is disarming me!... Now, I’m trying to figure out how to grab my rifle and jump into Sunja, across Sunja and go... well, but I won’t let them disarm me... Like: who will do that to me, it’s below me... However, you took my bombs, you took everything. I still have a knife in my boot. I had a knife in my boot they haven’t seen. And now I see it’s over, everything, he disarmed me. I took that knife out of my boot like this, lift it up and say: “You forgot about this one.” However, he turned around and saw that I’m holding a knife in my hand. He grabbed my arm, and now I – because it’s the last resort for me... I have nothing left besides that – I won’t let it go. He threw me down to the ground, he squeezed me here and wants to take that knife. I won’t give him the knife and now I see... He threw me down to the ground, he thought that I want him... And I no way, absolutely... He understood it all later. We talked it out. But I don’t give a fuck, I was told. *** “don’t fuck with me. You are drunk, you are shooting on people”. Then I realized that it hurts me the way he is squeezing me, that he will take it from me sooner or later and then I let go of the knife. And then he called the police to take me away to get sober. However, I went to lie down in Tvrđava, I took a machine-gun, and a backpack, and ammunition.

That’s when the little Vlado Kretić helped you?

Well, all of them helped me.

And you went to see Ruda, is that right?

My uncle. I ... then the police came. I disarmed them too.

So you managed to run away from the police too?

Yes. No. but then Šestak came. Praljak doesn’t know that, Šestak is my godfather, the commander of the police. He will not take me to prison but he will take me instead to the Leteća tvrđava to get sober. Nothing more. He punished me just to have me under control until I come to my senses, because I was shooting on people – as they told him. Šestak took me to the Leteća tvrđava and now I can see that it wouldn’t end well. I pack and I go on Krč, they can’t get me there, but I have to bring food, cigarettes and that. And as I went out... as it is up there, and there is again the military police to get me. Not here, but to prison, that he is not sure that I will not do some kind of shit on the position. I disarm them...

So you already had weapons?

All, I came out, backpack on my back, with a rifle, I'm going. And again Šestak. Šestak winks at me, I wink at him and he says straight away "guys, in order not to provoke shooting now, put away your weapons...leave the guns on the hood" and I take them away. They came in a paddy wagon, the clerk Zvonar is sitting inside, later he was my clerk. Sits and waits, I inside, said: "Drive!" He says he can't drive. He doesn't understand at all what is going on. Says: "I can't drive, something is stuck." "Oh what is stuck?!", and I fire another time at the floor, and he bum, bum "You see that something is wrong?" And here near the cemetery, now he will take me. I will not go on foot. However, we fell in the mud straight away. I went on foot and as I was jumping over a canal, my backpack was heavy, I fell back and got wet. It's winter, I have a Zippo but it doesn't work. Now I know that under no circumstances I should enter the woods without fire. Where will I go, what will I do? Go to Ruda! I waited for him there, Ruda, the situation is like this, "if you will disarm me, tell me straight away, I'll go on". "Don't be crazy, come on." And he made me coffee, and they are looking for me. Shot at the police, shot at VFD, wanted to slaughter Praljak, disarmed the police, took their vehicle and disappeared. Dangerous. Who sees him should capture him, kill...is he completely crazy? No wonder. He's been drinking for a year, he's done. And they are looking for me. However, Šestak figured out straight away where I was. He figured it out straight away and came. We are drinking coffee: "now my boys are looking for you all over. Is everything all right?, good. I haven't found you." And later I say this won't be good. I wanted to take a boat, go across Sava... there will be shit. What we'll do, how we'll do it, nothing. Go to the doctor. Let's go, the Red Cross. Those police idiots are not paying attention as soon as you turn on the rotating lights, straight away ****, they don't check what's inside, some trouble. That's how I passed through in the Red Cross.... To Sisak, oh no, we are going to Zagreb. I have a girlfriend in Zagreb, I will visit the girl, all on the way, ***** to drive straight away to Zagreb. They left me, I think in Rebro hospital, wherever, on the psychiatric ward, I slept there, in the morning I ate and I'm going home. Well now you can't go home. But, here is again a doctor from Greda, the boss, she knows my mom and I tell her everything that happened. Good, everything is all right, she measured, prescribed some pills and go. I leave, go back to Rude, my uniform stayed there... I changed because I was wet. I took my uniform and went to see Praljak. Praljak is looking at me...

Straight to the Command?

Yes, yes, straight away. I brought a confirmation that I got on the sick list for 14 days. If there is any trouble, I got on the sick list and... He says: "Is it all right now?", I say: "Yes"... Cvajguz came at that moment and says: "Fuck everything, no one wants to set mines with me." "Who doesn't want to? I will!" and so Praljak "You will?", I will!...

And then it was solved?

Oh yes, he knew that I wasn't ... like to me in some way he told. He says that they launched it in that way to him.

Yes, he got that information and then he...

And now they are telling and retelling that I really... The ones who are not informed, the ones who don't know... They are writing book or something, that I wanted to slaughter Praljak. There, that's a stupid story. With the name Leteća tvrđava... Later when they came they drew a plane, but it's not about a plane at all. It's about when they came, that sand... we fortified that, because Praljak requested it, and then the late godfather said: "You see, this is

now a fort, no, I told that to him. He says: “yes, yes, flying” And then brother came from America **** and some kind of U was drawn. Than that U, we wrote B 52, we wrote Leteća Tvrđava and later they say ... a plane, we even had a captain. Then the brother was on Radio 101, every fort has its captain, and we have the Bloody captain, this was his nickname before the war, based on a novel. Leteća tvrđava has nothing to do with a plane.

Damir, tell me were you part of the “Storm”?

Yes.

And were you at the time when Praljak came?

Yes.

Please, tell me where that was?

In Dvor. I came in, the last house when you are leaving Dvor was some kind of auto-parts store. Completely destroyed. I haven't had a single drink, and now when everything was over I went inside, I couldn't stand. There was some kind of office desk and a chair. I set there, lifted my legs on the table and I see a small bottle. There was brandy inside. And a glass was there. I washed the glass a bit with brandy and poured myself a glass of brandy and looked at some kind of warehouse receipts and bum – there he is. Through two big windows: Praljak, Međa in the civilian clothes. Praljak, and who else came? Marko Bojović. And three shells, whoosh, whoosh somewhere, over and Praljak says: “All of you go to hell, dismissed, dismissed all of you.” And he came inside the store and I was sitting inside.

He hasn't seen you through that glass?

There was no glass.

Has he realised that you were inside?

When he came in he saw me. I got up, greeted him and he is looking at me, looking, looking at me for a long time. And I haven't realised and instead falling into his arms or something like that – I greeted him like, like some kind of general, I don't know – what he is. He gave me his hand... I had an injured leg, he was saving my leg.

When was that?

That was... on Maslenica. Then I got hurt for the last time with the leg. When he sent the helicopter for me...

Wait, he was in Zagreb at the time?

He was in Zagreb, yes. And here were greeted. Now we are outside. He tells Međa to go away. He was dressed in civilian clothes, I don't know why to go. Peša came with him. I was with Peša. Peša was here. Now they started saying that they will, not Praljak but the others, that they will go to Suva Međa. The night is falling, light rain... go to fight, defend... well I said: I'm not going to die on the last day. I'm not going anywhere. I told Peša: “Listen Peša, this leg is hurting, I'm limping already for so many days, I can't anymore.” **** Then they

went to some... they were roasting lamb. I didn't want to go to eat that lamb, in order not to stay. I went to Sunja straight away. Then he, I don't know... How long did he stay there, Praljak and so.

Well good, now tell me how Praljak functioned during the Storm? Allegedly at the time they were supposed to let some people through, something happened, some civilians?

Civilians were gathering around a school up there, I set the place where they will gather... was with that Majić and Žarko, with Peša, no. Gathered, let them bring some kind of sponges, there was a grandmother with a sore hip. Then we waited for the police to come...

Praljak had some kind of...?

No he still didn't have... he came a little later. When they left I didn't run after them anymore. As I told you, when they left, where they left... I know that later they went to eat that lamb... they were there, I picked up my things, looked for some kind of transportation and found the little Antonija, she went with a van to Sunja, and I caught a ride.

You also mentioned Bosnia. Posavina, is that right? You went there because Praljak called you? How did you get there?

I didn't know at all that Praljak was there, but we went following orders. The code "Dubrovnik" and we thought that we were going to Dubrovnik – until we came to Slavonski Brod. Then some didn't want to go across and they went **** across. And then I was surprised when I saw that Praljak was there.

When was that?

In July 1992, that he was there... And we went so that he could give us our tasks, he took us in the evening to that Žerjavac (??)

What were your tasks?

To connect a line, to give resistance... We dug in until the morning, we slept over there, did our job there, there was a VBR, then Pejo died, and the next day stayed without a leg wounded. And we, since we were there, we were depleted in ranks and as it was over, he pulled us back to the village. And the last night we went to wait for some tanks in case they would go across some canal, but nothing happened. But they filmed us as soon as we came to Bosnia. Filmed, showed on the Serbian news that we are coming, Second Ustasha brigade and that crap – and we had to by force, the Croatian army had to get out of Bosnia. So that we were there for some five, seven days. And really left.

And they when they went down to Mostar? Did you go then?

They had counter-armour means but no one knew how to work with them. And Serbs with tanks, they saw that they can't and with tanks, from the other side, they were shooting at them. Then the boys from Sunja went, ***** however there was no connection, they went with three civilian cars. There really wasn't any room, you couldn't squeeze in. They destroyed straight away some six tanks, something like that. Those retreated and saw that it's something completely different now. And they came back.

And when did Crni loose his leg?

In July, in Posavina.

How?

Tank.

And Mostar was before that, is that right?

Yes. Because he told me: “What is that now? Are you going to Bosnia or not? You fucked me” I said, when did I fuck you? That’s not my style. “The time when you couldn’t go to Mostar, then you fucked me, and now, what now?” And he said nor problem.

Tell me do you think that you could tell me about the time you were wounded?

Which time?

Well how many times were you wounded?

Four. The time when Crni lost his leg I also got scratched on the head. We dug in a heavy machine-gun between a barn and a hay-stock.

We are talking about what time?

We are talking about July, Posavina. On Žeravec. Then we, on 1200 meters from us was like a valley down there, a creek, then again a valley, behind that 1200 top, in our cross hairs. 1200 meters was a road. We controlled that road. Until then they were driving like they wanted. We controlled, from that heavy machine-gun a military vehicle was hit there. We actually cut and they couldn’t go there anymore. Then a tank came. We saw a tank. We had a recoilless gun, we didn’t have optics but mechanics. A little Muslim, he was like in YPA (Yugoslavian People’s Army) knew from **** and, he aimed through the gun, missed that tank, missed it by a few meters. And that tank got lost. He wasn’t anywhere anymore. It was gone. And when the light machine-gun sounded, one more time, the same second a shell hit our machine-gun and passed between the barn and the hay-stock, but half a meter higher. So, it flipped over and hit a plum tree. It was activated on the plum tree. The plum tree was standing somehow near the barn and the house, in the middle, and guys were in the yard. It was summer, still hot. Here *** wounded on his legs, that little Muslim – it broke his tooth, Cetin got – I took a piece of shrapnel out of him because it was sticking out, with tweezers, in the hand, I was hit a bit on the head, Cekija also a bit on the head and Crni had his leg cut off. Those guys from the side were in three houses, they refused infantry. I tied Crni, tied him off, he is moaning. When I asked him if he could hear me, he moaned. Since I’m not a doctor, I looked at him to give him morphine with juice, for the pain and that it’s not pierced and it wasn’t pierced. If I had been a real doctor I would have looked at him from the other side too. Because I haven’t checked him from the back. He was punctured: and guts, and spleen and everything. I gave him 30 drops of that with some juice and he drank it. A doctor from the 1 guard unit came on that defender, what’s the name?, the American one, American Red Cross. He came and he was already ready for transport. I put him, tied off his leg and wrote what I gave him and they took him away. It was critical but he survived. Then Sven was also injured here. A bit on the

back, him I also...patched up, bandaged. It was July and people were sweating, so I changed that for them often. Those bandages. Then I went to the hospital in Bosanski Brod. I had no materials. I lied there that I was a doctor and then they gave me bandages, tweezers, sprays, they loaded so that I had everything. They wanted me to be an orderly, but I didn't want to.

May, 2005