

IVAN GREGER

March 16, 2005
Hrvatska Kostajnica

Sound recording and the transcript of this conversation are on CD marked
SUNJA 3RD

Sound recording of the conversation is under the mark

gregerivan1

2,70 MB

duration: 8:26

and

gregerivan2

4,21 MB

duration: 13:11

This conversation took place in Kostajnica in the local district premises.

gregerivan1

I am switching on and, please, introduce yourself first of all.

My name is Ivan Greger, I was born on July 4, 1956 at Hrvatska Kostajnica.

Greger?

Yes.

Well, it means, that you were born at Kostajnica and I suppose that the beginning of the war caught you somewhere here?

It caught me here, at Kostajnica, and so I started as all my friends did with these sentries and all that and so forth until we did not... I was connected to a company in which I worked and I had to report there. In the meantime, when we escaped from Kostajnica, I mean I escaped for the first time on July 31, and since then I did not come back to Kostajnica, so I did not know what happened at Kostajnica until September 12, because I was not present there. On December the 5th we got call-up papers and ****at Žažina, and from Žažina we...

But, tell me, when you got call-up papers you were in Zagreb, is that so?

I was in Zagreb.

And from Zagreb you start to Žažina?

For Žažina. So we gathered at Žažina.

What was the exact name of this unit?

The first our unit that was formed was named the Independent company "Zrin", and on the basis of it when we all got together and when we saw all who were there, and we knew that we... We had one man, and it was this Ivica Pandža, called the Hurricane, who was already then in the war***those Croatian National Guards, in the defense of the then sovereignty he was at Komarevo, and my wish there was that he be our commander, and according our wish we chose him.

It was the very beginning, it means, he came, he accepted it, and it was there. At this beginning the political representatives came to us at Žažina, on the level of the county or the community of Sisak, what was that? Or of the town? They were with us, we talked, and then we, here was also Mr.*****and then we asked him to provide us somehow with uniforms and arms, so that we would not go just naked to Žažina and so. All that was respected, and then in the time when we were released, we gathered in 2 days time, we saw what number of people came, how many responded. We came there, we had already distributed the commanding duties, who will be the commander, this one, of the squad and all that, and that the commander of the company be Pandža Ivica, the Hurricane. And that was it. We came on the 17th, to Žažina, a few days earlier, we got uniforms, we dressed, we signed for weapons and we started for Sunja. We moved in the afternoon and evening hours, so that this moving and communicating among these places and all that would be less seen. We came to the ferry-boat pass between Kratečko selište, so we call this***ferry-boat pass. Mr.Praljak met us at the ferry-boat and then, according our number condition he deployed us. He said how many soldiers should go to***, how many to the Railway station on the front line, and that this part should remain over Sava river. I was the commander of this platoon who went to Žreme. We were 19 people who went to Žreme. When***we crossed Sava, on the other side there was a van waiting for us, belonging to the fire brigade of Sunja or I don't know what, with a driver who drove us to Žreme. There was a small advenutre: The doctor came with us and, well, when he came...

Your doctor, or this doctor from Sunja?

The doctor, what was his name – not this one from Sunja, but our doctor who worked here at Kostajnica, but he lived at Dubica. What is his name? Because he was famous as a doctor, and not as a soldier and then... He was not trained, but he came in the last moment and he took these his things. And then Praljak asked him: “Why are you standing here? Whose are you?” “Well, I came with this people from Kostajnica, I am a doctor!” “Well, stand then there! So, you are a doctor? You stand here, you will be with me!”

Yes?

And then afterwards he went with Praljak and he was somewhere in the Headquarters and all that.

It means that Praljak took him in the Headquarters?

He took him as a doctor to be... (Somebody is entering into the room.)

Well, it means that he took away the doctor...?

What was the name of the other, our doctor? Peršić Boris.

And what was his duty later on?

His duty was to be doctor together with the doctor Eido in Sunja, and he fulfilled this duty there where he was assigned as a doctor. Further...

You are*?**

We went to Žreme. It means that my platoon went to Žreme and there we immediately made the deployment with a person called the Cook. I don't know now exactly how, he was from Žreme there. We inspected the front line, we immediately placed people for this night watch, it was a little bit too soon for us and all that – but having no choice it makes it easier. We came there, made this deployment and all this, so that our men could take positions as soon as possible. There was a shortage of men then on this part, we kept three positions with six men, six men on each position, two were in relief, two resting and two preparing themselves for the relief. In each moment after that we had****my contact was with the commander Pandža, and why I don't say, we did not have***visitors. The commander Pandža came in inspection, and a gentleman, the commander of Sunja, Mr. Slobodan Praljak. I think that then he had a rank, as a matter of fact he did not have anything.

What were these his visits to the positions like? How did it look like?

It was mostly that he came to see whether we were on the positions at which we should be. He would always advise us to take care of ourselves and to look after ourselves, not to dissipate the ammunition, because the situation was such as it was, we were a young country starting into

something and we had to obey to the commands of our leadership – that we obeyed in any case: From the first soldier, through the commander***and the captain. If you are attacked, return the fire, and if you are not attacked and not threatened, don't shoot and don't spend the ammunition in vain, protect your life, but as well don't fire at something you don't see... There were no unceratin terms...

Now we shall record the interruption of the conversation and continue later on.

OK, you know better.

The interruption of the conversation with Mr. Greger.

gregerivan2

This means the continuation, Mr. Greger.

Yes.

You told me that Praljak did not permit the shooting, is that so?

Yes. I mean that the ammunition be insanely dissipated and so all that. Mainly it was always, I did not have many contacts with him, because everything went through my commander, the Hurricane, who brought to us his commands. All these were mainly very reasonable and correct commands towards the soldier and the man. I must also mention here that a little bit, not a little bit but enough big problem was the man who came from the civilian life into the uniform. We had to make a soldier of him. The most of it, I must tell sincerely, that we – as commanders of the platoons and the commander of the company Pandža, Ivica the Hurricane, worked very hard on it.

Which were the greatest problems you had to cope with?

The problems we had mostly to encounter were to find this civilian-soldier, and the people who fulfilled their obligations until this moment

and from the moment when he came with the draft, that is when he dressed the uniform and got the weapons, so that he should know how to conduct himself. I did not have any excesses in my platoon, we did not have a single case that somebody pointed the gun on somebody, that somebody quarrelled, or that there were some fight or something... In this part I must say it was like we were brothers to each other.

Did you ever have a conflict situation with Praljak?

I had never any conflict situations or anything with Praljak. I attended one meeting where he said a little bit joking... With Pandža is***he would fail to come, and I went like his deputy, I was the oldest commander of the platoon and I had some ranks from the previous army and so, now it is not the point, so they always forced me to go to this meeting – and then some pillboxes had to be built, renewed a little bit and all this and then Praljak said: “Gentlemen, you have the sand there, you know where to obligate for the sacks and you should renew these pillboxes, and you do it during the night so that it is less seen. It means if there is by chance a shooting at that moment – you don’t do anything, you will be sheltered in these pillboxes, or on the places you have to be.” And then there was a little joke: ”If you don’t want to obey to me, I will bring my brother, you see how big I am” he says, ”and he is 10 cm higher than I am and*** stronger.” So these are the adventures, we laughed at that a little bit, and after that mainly, on the order, everybody went according his task to the duty and to the place he was assigned to.

I know that one of Praljak’s characteristics was that during the shooting he would incessantly walk on the front lines to be with the boys. Did you have a chance, in some of these fire-fights, to be with Praljak?

As far as this part is concerned I was not with him concretely, he was with one of my squads***he is the commander***Davorin, he used to drop by because there were several people from the First Guards brigade or***. They were on the same position,***** , because that was enough, it was not far from B-52, I don’t know what was the exact name of this position, did it have a special name or not, but there were mainly deployed in this house some ten, twelve people who accomplished

their duties and this***. He used to come here to see what was happening as well mainly***from these his***** heard anything negative – that Praljak would yell at them, bawl, shout or whatever.

*****positively***?**

Positively, mainly he always advised them to watch, to take care of themselves, to stay in shelter during the fire, but when they had on specific areas the field-glasses view on those who fired and that we informed about it the command and so***that the artillery could fire on this position, Mr. Praljak never said to fire at anyone. He says: “If you are attacked, you are free to open the fire and defend yourself, your positions and the people because of whom we came here to defend this Croatia***** ”.

Were your colleagues who had been on this position in a fire-fight with Praljak?

All I can say they were once or twice, he came along just when this fire-fight was on, and he was there with them, well I cannot now name any of these men*****who could say more, he was the commander of one of my squads and he could, he is***because of his demanding brigade, this point was attacked by our enemies on this single position***, there on the Railway station was the 2nd***was the 3rd. These were some points***which were most often attacked and the other parts were also under the fire but mostly at random and thanks God...

*******have you been somewhere else?**

I was at Žrmen during December 17 – January 17, when there were replacements, we went to substitute our colleagues of the previous***** who was the commander of the platoon who went across Sava on a sort of the rest, and we came with our men on this first line from B-52 to Žemičke(??), the Railway station and the hotel.

You were there in which period?

We were there from January 17, and I stayed two months and a half...

Praljak was already gone?

Praljak was already gone and Mr. Peša came and so.

Were there some difficult situations? Did you have losses?

During this time, thanks good Lord, we did not loose a single man. There was only one who was, but this was after Praljak left, he was fine, he was not hurt, but he was***in the moment when this house in which they were positioned was hit, it was real luck that they were not on the upper floor*****so they were not hurt, only if the brick dust fell on somebody and so*****.

Do you know what Praljak undertook and how did you generally react in the situations when someone who wore the Croatian army uniform would enter the deserted houses and took away some others people property, white goods, that was there?

Well, hear, I must say this honestly, like that... We did not have much time to walk around Sunja, we did not know where there was something, if somebody from the previous enemy side, when they left their homes, left something inside. I was always telling to my colleagues in the platoon and to the others; “Don’t go to these houses.” I must say that a lot of them, most of them, obeyed, they did not walk around to misappropriate something from the people who had left their homes, because there were also some Croats who had left these houses. By a combination of circumstances, I was in the neighboring house of this uncle***, we had there a sort of the guard’s post – and I did not have an opportunity to see that somebody carried away something from these houses. All that was there – by that time several shells had fallen inside and there was anything anymore, all the things were damaged and there was nothing to be taken out from this house*****. Well, I must say sincerely that we did not have the cases – neither on the side of our commander Pandža that he would punish somebody for taking some things or something from somebody of these houses. We simply had one our task, we were in these houses and then we knew that***until on guard day and night, the guard works every two hours***circulated.

*******used any discipline measure, punished somebody – or there was no need for that?**

As far as I know in the frame of this our platoon, neither did the Hurricane, or Mr. Praljak.

It means that nobody finished in the jail, there was not**?**

From my platoon surely not, but whether he punished somebody from some other part –I don't know. I could not have seen and known everything. I was not that big , how should I say? The commander of a big***. I did not see Praljak every day... We saw each other maybe each week.

Did you attend the morning briefings?

I went to Pandža's briefing every morning, and only twice I went to Mr. Praljak's briefing as second in command.

It was this with raising of the flag, with the salute to the homeland?

Yes, yes, yes... It was there by the Fire-station, we did it there I should say in a very quick way.

When you came the first time you saw the raising of the flag, the lining up, the salute to the homeland – everything that had preceded the morning briefing... You saw it for the first time then?

Well, I must say frankly that I saw it for the first time and my heart swelled in delight. It cannot be described in words. For me it was something special.

Try, try. Perhaps we can describe in words... How did you feel? How did it look like?

To me... For me it was something like that I never experienced... To be standing at attention under the Croatian flag, watching the raising of the flag and so. It is one experience that you live to see, that is one of the very impressive things for me. Then when there were these takeovers, when we got from Mr. Stipetić the flags of the units – then I took also part in it. I got the flag from Mr. Stipetić. And the third thing: When we went to this... When this march-past was organized at Jarun.

I am not the participant of the march-past, but I did***in preparations, and I did it with great pleasure and delight so that we could show who and what we were and so.

Did we forget something?

Well, I don't think that we forgot anything, mainly this part we worked off with Mr.Praljak – that was OK. I say, I cannot say anything negative, because there were no real negative things, but otherwise the step between Mr. Praljak and me was Mr. Pandža the Hurricane who transfered all this to us...

May, 2005