

TUGOMIR GVERIĆ

TUGOMIR GVERIĆ

**Zagreb
January 2006**

The conversation is recorded, the record kept under designation

Gvericdr

29.9 MB

The conversation took place in Zagreb in the interviewee's apartment

We are switched on, and I would ask you to introduce yourself to me at the beginning, well, your first and last name, date and place of birth, occupation, and abode?

O.K. Tugomir Gveric, surgeon. Born 23.05.57 in the city of Virovitica. I am working in the Sveti Duh Hospital. And...that is that.

Do you live in Zagreb?

I do live in Zagreb.

Dr. Gveric, tell me if you please, how did the war start for you? Where were you? What did you do?

Well, the start is 89., 90., turmoil in Croatia. I joined the Croatian side. The end of 90.ies I was still in the fourth year of surgery specialization. When the Croatian Medical Corps was formed, the surgery units were formed, we placed ourselves respectively at disposal to Crisis Centre Medical Corps Croatia and we would go to war voluntary. Year 1991 when I joined, then that was the Police, Police Reserve. And as the chief of the mobile surgical unit of the Sveti Duh Hospital, where there were two units. Chief of one was doctor Trajb, and I of the second. There were doctor's surgeons, anaesthesiologist, medical technicians, nurses, the instrumentalists and the drivers. The beginning of the war, during the war in Slovenia, I was in the Medical Corps up at security of Martin Spegelj, at Tuskanac. After that, as it happened **** this ... massacre of the police at Borovo Naselje, then I went with first Unit to Vukovar, as it was starting. There I served for some time with Dr. Njavro. After that I went to Kutina. There I established War Hospital in Kutina. After that to Novska...until they came to the town limits, than we evacuated to Lipovljane, and came back to Novska. In general that was very long. Than Pakrac, Lipik, the entire time until the liberation of Lipik. That was the Fall, Fall – winter 1991. Year. Beginning of the year 1992 in Pakrac

was formed, ... really, separated from police into separate premises the ambulant, a clinic was made. And then the UNPROFOR came and it quietened a bit. When it started ...

But you didn't like quietness so you went on, right?

I liked it quiet, because I was thinking then: Well now, I'll ...because practically a year I was in Croatia. Enough of the uniform, everything, war. It's like, let's go now to a bit of civilian life to, work in my profession. When in reality the war was starting in Bosnia Hercegovina in Ravno and around Kupres, it was done the same way as in Croatia – and it was necessary to provide Medical Corps in Bosnia Hercegovina. In Tomislavgrad were doctor Bagaric and doctor Sarac. They were in the Parliament of Bosnia Hercegovina as representatives. And they were the people who should have organized the Medical Corps in such a way that it could be able to reorient itself in case of some escalation of the hostilities, into a War Medical Corps. As they were younger physicians, who only started their medical practice, they asked Croatia to send them help...That went through some body in the Ministry, don't know who. Generally they asked for somebody with some experience. Doctor Kolak was with me in Garesnica and Pakrac and he had certain experience, but not as much as I did. Dr Kolak went to doctor Barisic, who was in the Headquarters all the time, and two of them asked me if I would be willing to go with them to Hercegovina to help form the Medical Corps. I had war experience, and as far as evacuation and front lines and so on. Normally one has to go. They are ... we are physicians without borders. And I said "I'm going for a short period of time, to point out what is possible, and what is not..."

You thought you will stay a short period?

Yes. For a short period, yes.

So on 06.03.1002 we left with one vehicle. We were doctor Kolak, doctor Barisic, myself and doctor Radic. Now he is neurosurgeon in Vinogradska Hospital. There was doctor Jandel, now he is a gynaecologist in ... he is still in the Croatian Army. He is from Bugojno, I think,

Generally, this single unit together with the instrumentalist Aleksovski Bob and ... there were more, I don't know it was long time ago.

*****?

There was about ten of us who went there. We came to Tomislavgrad, a strange small place, and there we formed ...we met with Sarac and Bagaric, and then formed Medical Corps.

That means the headquarters of Medical Corps?

The Headquarters of Medical Corps was formed there. In order to approach the organization we had to meet with all the physicians who were from different places jeopardized by Serbian aggression.

Let's dwell this way: How was the Headquarters for Medical Corps conceived? In brief, what it was supposed to do?

In reality it had to be an overlooking organization uniting Medical Corps and according to the military situation, war situation, to organize evacuation routes of the War Surgical Hospital and to echelon the entire Medical Corps in the Bosnia Hercegovina, because there was none until now. In Croatia the echelon system was working, the echelon on the first line, the echelon immediate next to first line. They were War hospitals that provided... second echelon in reality provided shelter up to the transport to some larger centres for third, fourth echelon accommodations of the wounded. That was the way in Croatia.

We do not have any documentation here, but do you remember how many places, hospitals, and centers did such a Medical Corps contain in the organization sense?

Uh... many. Well it covered from... on North of Zenica, Travnik, Jajce, Zepce, over central Bosnia, all the way to South to Neum.

Such was the plan?

Yes, yes.

But as it seems they were the areas where the Muslim population had majority?

Yes. Yes.

Does it mean, there was no?

No, there was no difference in the medical treatment, in the forming of the War surgical hospitals, respectively second and third echelon, who was supposed to be near combat lines with Serbian aggressor. Nobody ever thought about separation between Muslims and Croats. They were the same. They had exactly the same treatment...

It means they were equals...

Completely.

... Included in that plan?

Completely, identically treated...I'm not from that part of the country, and to me that was all the same, also to the boys who were there, who lived with Muslims and with Serbs. It was the same in that moment in that 92. year, nobody even dreamt to make some division between ones and the others. So as we came there, on 12.03 meaning as we came second Sunday after ...I believe it was 12th, yes 12.03. year 92. we called all the physicians from all the hospitals, and Health Homes, and ambulances respectively to report, to come to the meeting organized in Tomislavgrad, where we pointed out what is to be expected. I told them what kind of bloody war is looming over Bosnia Hercegovina. Because according to what I've heard it was obvious the physicians were not aware of what was happening in Croatia.

Where was that meeting?

In Tomislavgrad.

Was that some kind of hall?

That was a hall...yes, that was a large hall. I'm not certain there may have been firemen, or... or Town Hall. Not the Town Hall, The Town Hall is up. That was a large building, Elektra, it seems, or something like that, I believe it was Elektra.

How many physicians replied to your call, approximately, how many came to that meeting?

Over ninety. The hall was full.

And what problems did you encounter?

We realized ...the first problem was they didn't comprehend what's to come. It means they were not aware that a real war could come. In reality nobody among us could dream, two years would ... 89. will be war. 90. will be war. To nobody. 91. here, after Revolution of Logs it was visible it started. So that they were in worse situation than Croatia was in 1991. Much worse, no comprehension, as to what can happen, and preparedness. They were completely unprepared. Here an anecdote in the entire conversation: doctor Barisic, now late Vjeko Barisic, doctor of gynaecology from Mostar, and another one of his, I think ***** it's about***** because they are of the same age, they were saying in case of evacuation of the wounded from Mostar, the helicopters would come, land in Mostar and take out the wounded. I couldn't believe. Because, already a year, the war was in Croatia, and then I explained to them what's going on in Croatia, and is expected in Bosnia, the first things that were fired on were ambulances, that had those beautiful white markings with red cross – ideal to shoot down. In Croatia we already had to take down, paint etc.

Did you have the feeling at the time that they could understand you? Did you succeed...?

As far as I could gather, they didn't understand me completely; they didn't grasp the seriousness of the situation. Later, they would be thinking it over, in some intimate conversations, while I expressed details, some of things that were happening, things I lived through. Then they would comprehend the seriousness, and the facts they were in a very bad situation. Now when it was clear, they would talk: "Alas, would you come to our locality, well come to Prozor. Well come up to Travnik. Come to Zenica. Well, come to Vares, well, come ..." I don't know all those places, who would remember to count them all. "Come up. A Medical Corps was established, to see how we ..." Understandably, we accepted invitation.

And then, follows the period of your visitation of the terrain?

Well, and then follows the period... really what happened? That was the year 1992. Then it happened... We were in Tomislavgrad. That was third month, to the end of third month. I went for a short period, home to Zagreb, when the conflict happened in Kupress. The same moment we went back. By then everything was in full swing. The war started.

You are returning again, where? Tomislavgrad?

Again I am returning to Tomislavgrad, because the headquarters are Tomislavgrad. And then we established the Hospital. War Surgical Hospital in Suica, essentially an emergency centre, since Kupres has fallen. We had to do ... The greatest numbers of wounded were coming there. Then we would decide, sent to Tomislavgrad, to Split, wherever was necessary, to Grude, where another War Surgical Hospital was established. Generally, in that period around 3rd month till the fall of Kupres, we established in Prozor, up on Sid Lake, where there was a factory of diskettes, don't know what computer factory, we formed War Surgical Hospital in Grude, in Neum. We went to Neum; because we expected the front line at Slano would ... The entire area had no hospital. Metkovic, Neum they were...Metkovic had some Health Centre. There we also formed War Surgical Hospital for reception of all those wounded from this area. We came to Neum. In Neum we...they had absolutely nothing. They thought Split would be able to handle. However, when we looked at the maps, what happens if they cut us off at Neum, there will be no evacuation to Split, nothing doing. Something has to be done in Neum. I remember precisely, this Bender was president of the County; he led us into a house. He said he has War Hospital. When we came to that house, that basement. That was some warehouse JNA full of some wooden boxes. And in those boxes there was no equipment for treatment. Only DDT. So I said:" Well, now you will get rid of lice, but not a single wound would you dress." See, somehow the memories come back.

“Does it mean, this the beginning?”

This is the beginning. And then Kupres was, what I said would be Suica. And then when Kupres fell, the Headquarters remained... That was fifth month, fifth month, year 1992. And then we approached the summer...What was really happening? The times are mixing up on me. Yes at that time Mostar was occupied. Right. Mostar was really surrounded. One couldn't enter Mostar. On St Anthony's day 13.06 we went to Mostar. After all we were the commanders of the Medical Corps. We had to enter to offer our support. To see what is necessary, what can be done? We descended at night. There on foot, what do I know ... mountains. We came down. We've seen everything is functioning there. Because that was a hospital functioning in its own way, where generally workers were Muslims and Croats. And now we have seen something else, in that area, that was... I have somewhere a picture of those psychiatric patients, who were directly under the blow of the Serbian aggressors.

When did you see them?

It was then I've seen them for the first time. Well, they were taken care of there, in the same way like the other wounded. In general, there starts the story for what happened subsequently. Generally everything was functioning. Mostar was functioning. In the mean time until Mostar got liberated we went through Central Bosnia, where we visited Novi Travnik, Travnik, Zenica, Vares, Kiseljak, Zepce, all those places that were there. And there in those places we formed War Surgical Hospitals, respectfully Hospitals of the second echelon.

Would you please tell me in detail: What are War Surgical Hospitals?

War Surgical Hospital of the second echelon is a hospital, respectively an in patient clinic, close to line of fire, up to two kilometres from the line of fire where the wounded are taken, where a mobile surgical unit with a surgeon, an anaesthetics specialist and middle cadre exists, where the wounded are stabilized, and readied for transport, and eventually held for few days, depending on the possibilities of immediate transport into third echelon. That means the Hospitals which have the Surgery, who have everything else. Those hospitals for central Bosnia were Split, Zagreb and that's it

Yes. And that's it. So much so, that Split bore heavy load of Bosnia. Normally, Zagreb too. That was very difficult.

With Split, you cooperated quite well?

And how? Split had open hands towards Bosnia, there was no holding back. There was doctor Dodig, who was Director of the Hospital, we cooperated with him very well, and he would send us everything we needed, material, whatever they had. All of that went to Bosnia. And then we would distribute at Headquarters. Whenever there was a donation, whatever came, Headquarters distributed according to need in Bosnia.

War Surgical Hospitals?

Yes, War surgical Hospitals.

Does that mean all requests of the War Surgical Hospitals came to you? And then from you to Split. Is that right?

Yes.

And when Split would send again, firstly it would come to you,***?**

And we would then, as much as it was, as much as we got. They would not now ask for 5 cars and they get one if it was necessary. And so on, that was the assessment. We have calculated on the fighting situations, who and how are they suffering. We would not allow one side to keep a warehouse of medical supplies, and some other side to be without. That was the distribution system of the Headquarters, who distributed and ordered, which mobile surgical unit would go somewhere, where is the priority for evacuation. That's what we were organizing there.

Were the places with majority Muslim population included in that chain of distribution, relative to accepting the orders and forwarding of necessities?

Yes.

They were?

Yes.

Let's say, which places were they?

If you were to kill me, I never paid attention.

All right.

Neither I know, nor did I care, nor do I care now. So if...if that was a Muslim majority village, or place, or Croatian, for me... to me it was all the same.

All Right. What happened when the shooting started between Muslims and Croats?

When the shooting started between Muslims and Croats, I paid some attention, and only to which are Muslim, and which are Croatian places, majority – minority. But again as far as taking care of, or necessity for evacuation, either civilians, because there were civilians – because we evacuated also the civilians, we didn't care only for the army, far from it, civilians were under our patronage – in as much as ... I couldn't disregard. Here again what I said before we were under Hippocratic Pledge, which is much broader and more important for doctors, than anything else. Besides ...I just remembered: when it started, when those clashes were with Muslims, or perhaps even earlier, we printed leaflets which were distributed to the army, HVO, there were instructions how to deal with prisoners, how to deal with wounded.

Is that so?

Yes. They are leaflets size of a half sheet A-4, smaller, there were pictures: prisoner or wounded, dress the wound, or pass him on to medical personnel.

What made you print those?

Medical Corps, did as IDP at one time, they were... always with such things, we kept to this custom, more because of Hippocratic oath, then Geneva Convention. Well, this was according to Geneva Convention, we printed the leaflets, we gave them out, and they had them in their pockets. And we made rounds; we provided education on First Aid to all possible units which were established. Nobody knew anything from anything, it went as some village would remember, and made its troupe. Then we saw the stupidities were happening, they didn't know, how to cauterise a simple blood vessel, where somebody can practically perish

from a banal wound on an extremity. We made rounds, gave talks as to what to do, how to do. One more thing, we brought the students from Zagreb. Students are like students, they think like academics, and everything should be on academics level, so they even brought those dolls for reanimation. So they were showing those. Well, I see...

When was that?

92.

And where did they go?

To all the places. I haven't got a clue. They went...Got a car, got somebody ...

How many students were they?

Well, they were about four, five. And they were with the cars with those dolls...Eva was the name of the doll, I think...

Doll?

The doll's name is Eva, yes. And they would go... Now they were instructing how to reanimate how to free the breathing passages, how to re-instate the circulation, how to redress, how to immobilize. We also organized all of that. How smart we were.

Sounds ideal.

It sounds phenomenal. Yes. Well, the experience from Croatia, arrival to ... when one come to a terrain which has absolutely nothing, then it' easiest to organize. When there is an organized part of Medical Corps or something, then everybody is smart and all of them are commanders. That has no chance to organize. And this way when one...

What with did you have the largest problems? Then, that means it is already middle, end of 1992. What problems surface then? How do you remember that period?

Well, that period I remember by all the possible rounds, thousands of kilometres. By the fact there are not enough medical vehicles. That is number one. Because everybody thinks the most important thing is to load up a person in the vehicle and drive him. Well, now, drive him; move him off the first line of fire, the further the better just as if that is the smartest thing. It is not.

It was necessary to drive the point. It makes no sense if the victim is one kilometre away from the line. Should be stabilized, enabled to remain there five, six days, and then be sent for evacuation when the opportunity is there. The largest problem was inside peoples heads, as always. Meaning the wounded or sick should not be under force taken far from the area where the things are happening. We were successful, thanks Lord. With War Surgical Hospitals from the second echelon which were formed in... let me remember, Travnik had a hospital. Accordingly Travnik didn't need it. In Novi Travnik it was necessary, because we were expecting possible by Jajce a break. In Zenica we talked with the Head of Medical Corps. Don't know any longer what his name was. Then we were in Vares, then in Konjic.

You said Vares?

Vares.

Vares.

Vares and what was the name? Kakanj? Was it Kakanj?

There is a Kakanj.

There where the scythes are well sharpened and this... I don't now any longer what was the name. There central Bosnia... Practically the entire central Bosnia. Everyplace where some town exists, we were there. Or larger village, there we made...Also in Vakuf. In Vakuf we made that. Also in Prozor, and down entire Hercegovina. Livno. That part. We did...all was made for those War Surgical Hospitals. Well, I think somewhere round twenty, twenty War Surgical Hospitals. Yes. And with that to...well now we are coming to that period of summer year 92. After the liberation of Mostar, Mostar was liberated somewhere in sixth, seventh month, something like that, we had excellent cooperation with territorial Defence of Bosnia Hercegovina. Wherever we came, we had to speak with commanders of the cities, places. Always there were some parallel, either there was HVO and Territorial Defence, or they were mixed or were... I dint know. In general they were ... At the time there was no Army of Bosnia Hercegovina. In Novi Travnik we had exceptional cooperation with one, with

The chief of Territorial Defence. Also in one of the factories, some their large place, he went with us personally, to show us. Because we thought we would make there a War Surgical Hospital.

What is the name of that man?

I don't know, I don't know, I know he was replaced. Because, after, after summer, when UNPROFOR started coming somewhere in the fall, then we went again into control to see all those war Surgical Hospitals. That has to be controlled. Nothing is happening. Everything is stagnant, and somebody leaves it to decay. The anaesthetics machine, which was readied, well somebody bumped it and disconnected, what do I know, somebody was touching the instruments. The instruments were not sterile. In general, everything had to be on stand by, so the moment a patient enters work could begin. But one never knows what can happen. To get to that time, the fall, when UNPROFOR was coming, when it was going towards Sarajevo, where did you get... Then the rotation came, there was no longer Territorial defence, but Army of Bosnia Hercegovina and that man was no longer there. I remember him on the corridor. I am asking him let's go forth and see what should we do, and he said: "Don't tell me anything, I have been replaced. In general, I have no jurisdiction here. The Army of Bosnia Hercegovina came and some other cadres, JNA" He said that to me. Well, that I can't forget. And that is ...

Well, and for you practically...?

For us that meant something else. The co-operation decreased.

Well, I am interested in that. How did you feel about this change of cadres?

We have noted this is not the same, Hi, sit down, would you like coffee, let's now solve and see what and how we shall do. But it was very official, cold. It wasn't yet visible... but the intolerance showed.

Would that mean, the fall...?

That is the fall of 92, year.

The fall of 92.year.

The fall 92.

By the way, are you wearing the same insignia?

Well, we have...Yes. When we departed for Central Bosnia, it was 92. Year, summer. We had on the berets ... we were the first one who had red berets, before the 4th of Split. We in Medical Corps had two badges: the chequered our Croatian – clearly, modified like the one of Bosnia Hercegovina, part of Herceg Bosna. And we had blue Lilies, the same kind of badge on the berets. One and the other. Because we wanted to show to the places where we were entering – because we were entering in the places where the Muslims were exclusively, where the Croats were exclusively, and where they were mixed. We have entered into such places. Now if you are entering into Muslim territory, and you want to do something, but you have only Croatian emblem, that's already bad.. And what I said before, to me it was the same who is who and who is what. Because I have my Hippocrates Pledge. And we would always wear those two badges. Medical Corps wore them. And we have formed Medical Corps everywhere in all those hospitals. Well, yes. The matter in Jablanica I forgot to mention...

When was that?

Doctor Suko ... That was summer of 92. year. Everything was happening somewhere 7th 8th month year 92. Those rounds and forming, we formed...

How did you say, doctor...?

Suko.

Suko?

Suko! I remembered him, one of the few I remembered. Faces I remember, but the names, that is very difficult. He is the one; otherwise I know he had a bar in Capljina. He was in charge of Medical Corps in Jablanica. We would always place somebody in charge of Medical Corps. To have a man who ...

Contact Person?

Contact person, who should have work hard to form what was requested of him. We couldn't have, but those were the home boys and the hospital was formed after two weeks, that was 8th month, somewhere there, year 92. I know it was summer, it was hot as much as in Bosnia, up there could get hot. Two or three weeks after he reported there is some sign posted on that

Hospital READING: To dogs and HVO entrance forbidden – or Croatians?, now I don't know correctly. He was moved and shocked just as we were. I asked him what did you do? He took it down.

At the time there is no conflict in Jablanica?

No there is not, no, no, not even near the conflicts.

Would that mean at the time there were no conflicts, at that time you are working together...?

Together!

You are trying to make...

We are trying to prepare defence together...

...conducting the education, organizing the Medical Corps...

Everything, everything.

...administering help*- and, you say, that incident happens?**

That, yes. This incident happened in Jablanica, which means 8th month year 92. Maybe I am missing two or three weeks, maybe it was beginning of 9th, but surely 8th, 9th month.

Were you surprised when you heard about it?

I was aghast; because not even in madness ... I say I had no idea, no interest, I never thought a conflict could happen between Muslims and Croats, Never.

And doctor Suko who reported to you?

Doctor Suko was also aghast. He said: "Listen Gveric, it happened this and that. I think what shall we do now?" I said: "take the sign down. What can you do now! There are always fools, and they will be. He did so. Further I don't know there was ...

Later you went up again?

After that we didn't go to Jablanica any more. We didn't go to Jablanica, because partial peace came. In as much as we had reports that some didn't want what...Really that it happened as it did... I would not comment, they were gossip. I couldn't confirm because I didn't see, hear or experience any of it.

That is year 1992, right? At the end of 1992 the fall of Jajce happened.

Well, yes. Jajce is surrounded Firing...

That is right.

We are looking, they are firing. There are reports from those doctors Barisic Josip. That is Josip, not this doctor Barisic. That is Doctor Barisic Josip who was in charge of Medical Corps in Jajce. And as I said doctor Sehalic, that was the name of the director of the hospital, surgeon Sehalic, yes late. He was director of the Hospital, and this one was like the military one, who moved about and provided whatever was needed for Medical Corps, vehicles, and all other donations that went up there. We got a report, nothing can get to Jajce, neither army, nor civilians, neither to Jajce, nor from Jajce, because Jajce is totally surrounded. It is possible only through some secondary roads through woods, at night, without light, because the road is directly on the path of Serbian artillery and infantry and everything. And in some places Serbian formations are 500 meters from that passage, from those roads. And now, as in that hospital there was constantly...

When was that? Which month is that?

Ninth month 92.

Ninth month.

Ninth month year 92. ... The hospital is bombarded directly by Serbian planes and artillery. We were thinking of what to do, how to help. And what is important is the hospital in Jajce is really third echelon hospital, having Surgery. Have internists. Has X-rays. It has everything it is supposed to have, because that is a normal hospital which functions normally in peace times. But now oriented to war happenings. However, the wounded should be evacuated. Because for the moral of the army is far better if the wounded is evacuated, if he knows: I'll be wounded, there I'll get first aid, I'll survive, then I'll be evacuated to some institution where is that... where I'll recover in peace. We found out there is an armoured transporter, an armoured auto bus, armoured medical corps auto bus, in Borongaj in Zagreb. Well now, as we were much younger than now, big hearts, small brains, so we said: "Let's take that armoured bus "we didn't count what, bus like a bus. Sit down and drive, we'll manage... who would drive? Well who drive? I drive everything from scooter to airplane. I drove everything. And now we have decided

Let's somehow get the bus in Zagreb, so we will try to pass at night up to Jajce and pull out the wounded. And in this manner we will really show this is possible. We will not go every day, every second, third day. Then somebody else would go further on. It is essential somebody goes first, to show how it's possible. When that's done, then others would want to do it. And so by the end of ninth month, middle of ninth month, we came to Zagreb, If Kolak was with me I don't remember. Generally, at the time this Prodan was in Medical Corps. Praljak was also there somewhere. I know those two would be asked. Well, now, in general there was no problem. With Praljak we made noise, we yelled, talked, Jajce will fall, Jajce will not fall. How shall we accomplish this and that? Accomplish. And that', that.

What did Praljak say then?

Praljak? "Do it as well"

What did he expect from you when he heard your plan and when... Firstly, did he support that plan?

Well, at that time in conversation with Praljak we were under impression somebody is still working on the termination of the conflict around Jajce. Jajce should really be open...should not fall, the occupation should not take place. However, Praljak is not naïve, he new, and he said: "You go and evacuate" Let's move. Nobody at that time, what was essential in that moment, we were fighting together, in as much as there were signs of conflict between Muslims and Croats. There were tense times. There were some sporadic clashes. But all of that was on the level as if two or three people in the village were quarreling , so now one is saying one thing, and the other, something else. Generally at no time was there any talk about evacuation, because they were fighters of Territorial Defence and fighters of HVO.

In that hospital?

In that hospital. And in defence of Jajce. They were fighting together against Serbs. But practically they were three Armies. One was Territorial, one was HVO. We were as Medical Corps Headquarters of Croatian Council Defence, respectively Herceg-Bosnia, who again worked with Territorial Defence. For me, that Herceg-Bosnia

and Bosnia Hercegovina was Croats and Muslims. They were all together. And at no time was it said we will pull out ours, and not Muslims. Neither did anybody ever request it. Praljak didn't... there was no conversation about it at all. He said: Go there. You know your job; you know who should be evacuated. You have your Hippocrates Pledge. You know whom you will evacuate. Evacuate" That's the way it was. Prodan then signed that I should be given permit to drive the bus. When I came and saw 35 Ton bus, Mother of God! With a small window. We said: "In theory there is no chance" Then we found at the fuel pump in Borongaj. One Beslic or Besligaj, a Muslim, and we asked him>"Can you drive a bus?" He said: "Which one?", "this one", "I can of course I can drive" So I said: "Would you go now to Jajce with us?" The very same second he... He is Muslim. That driver. He said: "Of course yes, when mine are there." Then we looked for permission to exclude him...

How he happened to be at Borongaj... and is leaving with you...?

Yes. He was a Muslim in the Croatian Army at Borongaj. And he... and we had him...We asked immediately to have him excluded, so he can go with us to Bosnia and Hercegovina. Beslic or Beslegaj, by golly, I don't know, but he's there somewhere. We called him Beso. He drove that bus. He brought it down to Herceg-Bosnia. That was a wonder, when we left. When we came to ferry, the ferry sank a bit. We got there. I remember, the rain was falling like the devils, when we started for that evacuation... Everything is taped, thanks Lord. We got Smiljko Sagoj, and his camera man. Because he thought as he said: "What, I was in Sarajevo under fire, under everything...that, OK I'll endure here-there" I am sorry I haven't the raw picture of two and a half hours. This one stands. That raw one in this, Croatian Television. It exists. It should be looked for in the archives. I have abbreviated version. Well, he went wit us. And thanks Lord he did, so everything was filmed. Our entrance to Jajce, our leaving from Travnik, drive without lights, under grenades. The direct bombardment of the hospital. The spot in the hospital where

the wounded were laying, where the wounded men got hurt, where a technician got a direct in the hearth and died in a few seconds. All of that is filmed. It was filmed as we entered...the first night he talked with Sehelic, who was against evacuation ... the commander...

Why?

He refused, like that is not, he is against evacuation, because evacuation is not good for the city, for the place for this and that. I believe that's insane. We tried to explain to him. However, as the hospital got a direct hit then we said: "OK Sehovic, what do you want? Do you... We want to pull out all the wounded. We are not interested who is, what is. But if..."

And did he work on the difference among the wounded?

He obviously worked on the difference. Because when we told him, well, the memories are coming back ?! That's unbelievable. There were discussions. Kolak talked with him at large. I drove a car in front, so I was more tired. In essence, he said he is against evacuation. We said: "We came to evacuate" He said: "Nobody is taking care of Jajce" We said: "look we are here" Meaning somebody does care. And then it came to some verbal skirmish. In the end Kolak said: "What do you want then? We are to take HVO, and the others remain?" Then he mumbled here there. I think it had to come to a... really, it had to come to an argument of opinions in order to complete the task. Because he obviously didn't, for some reason, want evacuation from ...

OK, but what led to mentioning in the discussion these and those wounded?

How did it come to separation of wounded into two groups?

Well, they haven't been separated. We didn't separate them. He separated them He separated them.

That interests me.

He did it, we didn't separate them.

Why did he separate them?

I don't know. I don't know why he separated them. I don't know that. Because we were under impression, it wasn't specifically said, those are...they are, I don't know, three beds TO, two beds HVO. It wasn't like that. They were all inside. You'll see the photos. That is like in Vukovar, that what happened there. That is the same thing. There is no difference. There will... this here was less protected. Mainly, he did... so in a moment you must, you lose it and you have to tell him: "What is up? Don't screw around" I also said to him many things. So what. But the matter is not in the conversation, the matter is in what happened. It happened that the hospital was struck, the people were hurt.

Was the hospital struck when you were there?

Yes it took a direct hit. I was thrown through the air about five meters. Kolak fell on me. He has 120 Kilograms; he almost killed me – not he, this grenade. And mainly in the moment it was clear Sehalic saw there isn't, all will be killed. And then we organized to ... as that bus was standing up in Podmlacje, there by the church. There it was somewhat hidden, so it was possible... Then we organized to drive the bus. That was risky. Because the exit from Jajce is under direct fire of Serbian artillery. So they were running up there bringing the wounded. Nobody was ordering: you are going, you are not going, and you are this one or that one. The physicians who worked in the Jajce hospital made the decisions. That means doctor Sehalic as the commander of the hospital who was a Muslim. He was the first one who ordered which wounded will go. We stayed out of that. So approximately 25, 30 men who were placed in the vehicles, more than half were Territorial Defence. But then, that didn't interest me.

Well OK, you came together to pull out the wounded.

We came, we pulled out those wounded. We took them to Travnik. Well, then they were placed in Travnik, some of them were placed in Zenica, some wanted to Split. Depending on what they desired in reality they were sent. Well, that was...

And that was first pull out?

That was first pullout from Jajce. We did it again... I think later we were again with Praljak. In the meantime, between this, yes and we brought him...Right. We were there again.

Where were you?

In...he was still in Zagreb.

You met later in Zagreb?

In Zagreb. Yes. Yes. We went, Barsic Josip and me. Right. Praljak set there, as large as he is, behind the desk. And then we said to him: "Those stories of yours about Jajce will something; it is being politically worked... No. We were inside. There is no chance. Finished" He said: Yes I know" Because something was needed, power for this, for that, ask the Almighty, I don't know. I do not go into politics. That didn't interest me. So... what was there? "in general you pulled out" "We pulled out. We did that. Now, others will go. Everything will be evacuated." And everything happened like that. Even if with the fall of Jajce...I did in the meantime ...

Still it went on, by the looks of it?

It still went on, still went on, yes, yes. Yes, they went, every bit they would go there at night with that bus. And mainly...yes, when we were returning, obviously it was reported and it was known we are pulling out the wounded, because they were firing at us all the way. All the way. Now I was behind the bus. When I went to Jajce I was in front of the bus, with this Land-rover of mine, and now I went behind, can't drive fast, but slow. They are firing, and I am behind. And the helmet is covering only the head. Should have covered to the ankles. It was horror. Terrible. Panic. So, well. In general, later the same people and that bus went several times. They pulled out the wounded. So just before the fall of Jajce, all the vehicles of Medical Corps were organized, whatever we had...I wasn't present because I was hurt after one such return from Bosnia, I had broken ribs and was recuperating in Zagreb. Generally at the time in charge of the operation was doctor...Barisic, Kolak, doctor Vujic?, that was the crew there in the Headquarters...Yes, the civilians, patients, children and women and Muslim ...Then ... I think there were also those Mujahedins . I am speaking now

about what I've seen, I wasn't there, I've seen it on the film, they showed me. In all, those people were all pulled out with our Medical Corps, with about 20 vehicles. That was spectacular. You'll see it on the film. It is also recorded. Without difference who and what. Without any difference everybody was pulled out of Jajce. In this way Jajce, I am thinking one ...And this, well with Prodan's support, who gave the bus. That means Croatian Army. Praljak who gave his opinion and permission and insisted everybody gets pulled out. And with a minimal support. Because we at Medical Corps were on our own. The UNPROFOR didn't have a clue, neither the Whites, nor anybody. Because we new if we are going into discussions for this first pullout, if we are going into discussions with the Whites, with UNPROFOR, it would drag out. Jajce would fall sixteen times before they come to the acceptance that the people should be evacuated from the hospital. And how many more would die in the hospital. So we did it, the Medical Corps did it. Understandably, we had to have some kind of logistics here. We had the logistics, those ours.

That was the end of 92.?

The end of 92. yes.

At the beginning of 93. the conflict between Croats and Muslims exist. The tensions are present, is that so?

Yes.

What was happening at the time? In our preparation, before we switched on the Dictaphone, you mentioned that the hospital in Nova Bila gained prominence by which is today...

(disturbance – mobitel)

Possible just a moment?

Possible. Start of the year 93., what is happening?

Start of 93., in reality already at the end of 92. as we formed up all the hospitals in central Bosnia, somehow that church and its warehouse seemed to be good for warehousing of medical supplies which will be necessary in Travnik, in Zenica for that part of central Bosnia, because all the parts are easily accessible.

In reality the hospital in Nova Bila was in the beginning conceived as the warehouse of medical supplies. There was no need. We had a hospital in Novi Travnik, Travnik in Zenica , therefore there is no need.

It means, you in the headquarters of Medical Corps counted on all those centres?

Obvious. Nobody even dreamt ...

That was the plan?

Nobody...Yes part of the plan, part of the plan in all those parts in... when Jajce falls when it comes to Travnik we will then...because obviously as the trend goes, they would want to occupy. We were reasoning here will be the materials warehouse to be distribution centre. However, as the conflicts with the Muslims escalated, we could no longer keep our wounded in Travnik, Zenica...who would send them? There is no chance. They would not be accepted, we wouldn't dare to send them, so...

Tell me, were there situations of direct refusal? Was there refusal of acceptance of the Croatian wounded?

Well, there are stories about that. But I don't know about it. That, I don't know. The stories exist. I think in reality we have to look, one side is the Medical Corps, and other side is everything else. I don't know there are the doctors in the world, who is a doctor, and would not accept a patient regardless who or what he is. Anywhere. There is no mention at all. I think. I'm not like that. Although other kind of stories is heard, all kinds of things were done. But I think those are extremes. And that is very rare. I don't know. So about that I can't speak, where somebody was refused, and somebody was accepted, not accepted, eventually Croatian wounded in Banja Luka and Croatian wounded in Zenica. That...

But it means...

But, if he came into an institution where there are physicians and I think that was really ...salvation and settlement. Now, the question is whether that wounded was able to come to the hospital. That is the question. And this, the stories exist. I don't know about them. I did hear them. But now about that ...

All right. We will not talk about the things you don't know...

Hear say.

In general, what is happening? Nova Bila Hospital must be made usable?

Nova Bila in reality is becoming central hospital in central Bosnia. It is formed as such. That was an object erected in concrete by those... All in concrete. That was the most logical location. At the same time it was accessible from the east, west and south side. And really in that enclave which existed, central spot where the wounded were treated, where to they could come... That enclave is about two, three kilometres wide. Not any wider. When it's looked at from North to South, it could be fired on with a simple rifle from one end to the other. It was very narrow region. And that was Nova Bila. Understandable, we didn't expect anything. Nobody expected there will be so many wounded there. Then we tried ... we sent there mobile surgical teams. They were local boys who worked there and ... all. They operated everything. O God. That was really start and finish of treatment; it wasn't possible to get out of that area. In order to pullout, because that was nevertheless overcrowded hospital with wounded. They were very many of them. And that central part was fired on a lot. Now I'm speaking about conflict with the Muslims. Serbs didn't fire on, but Muslims exclusively, where everything alive was harmed. That was... I think, that was most terrible.

Just a moment, they were firing on Nova Bila Hospital?

The hospital was fired on. But I am talking about... there are villages. There are civilians. There were most civilians and they were harmed. More than the soldiers. Everything exists. Medical documentation exists. Exact number of wounded, number of civilians and number of the soldiers. Because in this war civilians were harmed the most. And then we had to somehow organize evacuation of wounded from Bila. And the only way was with helicopters. Well, now. The helicopter flights were forbidden UNPROFOR forbade helicopter flights. Then, sometimes they allowed, sometimes they didn't. Then it had to be I don't know which altitude of the flights. I remember one of them talked to me, they were flying without masks on some for, five thousand meters. I think they were hypo-oxygenic a bit...

Well, hypo-oxygenic totally!

*** O Lord, that is... I don't know how that was possible at all. What kind of people are they. Only the desire, the heart for pullout. And again there was pullout. All the wounded who could be pulled out, were pulled out. We were getting in the Medical Corps, at the time it was transferred to Mostar. The end of 92. we were transferred to Mostar to Novi Brig Hospital. And we were getting the lists ...

Do you think Bili Brig?

Bili Brig, yes. Bili Brig. And we were getting lists of perished and wounded and sick in Nova Bila, with questionnaire. Because everything couldn't be pulled out. Only specific number of the ones for evacuation. ***I was there alone as commander, now whom to specify, whom not. That was very difficult and practically impossible. So we left it up to them in Nova Bila, to decide who should get into the helicopter, and who will not. Because those were very short evacuations. The helicopter would come. Land, stay about ten minutes, at the most, to load up the wounded. In spite of the knowledge, those are wounded, being transferred via helicopters; they were always fired on with mine throwers. Therefore the landing spot kept changing. And that was known. That is again, I speak about what was specific in this war. This time the Muslims were shooting medical helicopter, knowing that the wounded were being pooled out 100%. It is impossible not to know. In such a small space surely it was known. Accordingly they were shooting directly on the wounded. What Serbians were doing before, they now took over. That I claim. And I will always claim it. It was done that way intentionally. Thanks Lord, at no time was they able to hit the mark, that the wounded...

But there was firing through the helicopters?

There was firing through the helicopters, it is clear there was.

Was there any helicopters that were damaged***.**

But the helicopter would always pull out. How would it pull out, it was rattle, clatter and get out. Yes.

Were there also Muslim wounded in those helicopters?

Whoever was wounded and who came to the hospital Novi...Bili Brig...Nova Bila, by golly, I don't know any longer...

Nova Bila, Bili Brig.

Nova Bila, Bili Brig. Whatever came into Nova Bila, I always claim, and will claim for the rest of my life, regardless of who or what they were, if they were I don't know who and I don't know what – if their health situation needed evacuation, they were evacuated.

I understand, And did they at the time come there...?

And... they did.

Muslims too?

Whatever was left in the enclave, and was wounded, was treated ...

It means they were?

They were, they were.

Year 93. there was the incident at Mostar?

Yes, yes. Year 93., let's say somewhere there were always attempts to appease the conflict between Muslims and Croatsians.

What does that mean when you say: "there were always attempts to appease the conflict" How was that attempted? Who attempted it?

Everybody attempted it. We attempted, us who are "last hole on the flute" (last in the echelon of decisions) the Medical Corps, until it starts to be painful. When it becomes painful then we are the first. Then we are the most important. That's the way in peace and war. We tried. We tried cooperation with opposing side Medical Corps. We offered help. Understandably not in personnel. I am thinking, where will you go now... they wanted to leave me on the East side, as we were coming, there was a middle commander with us and he said: "Doctor stay here with us. You will be all right." I said: "I know I would be all right, let that be as it may. Maybe with you and yours everything will be all right, but there will be some fool, how do I know, and what would he do." Well, I'm not saying I would not go to help. Obviously, I would go. I was helping anyways. Therefore that has no relation. Physicians without borders. Medica*****. And well in general we tried and in our way we offered help in medical materials, in taking care of (their) wounded in our hospitals. An idea existed

- keep in view this idea we had, and discussed about it. Isn't strange somebody is firing at you and at the same time asking for your help.

Yes, yes. Can you elaborate and explain how does that fit together?

***how did... And how can someone explain from Bosnia and Hercegovina there were women, children, who were Muslims placed in Croatia in various camps, hotels, houses. There were wounded, decided primarily down in Herzegovina, relatively Bosnia, as they were attending rehabilitation in Croatian rehabilitation Centres. How it is possible ... there are a million questions: how is it possible someone is firing at you and then asks for your help, and you give it to him.

Did this, in the humane view, confuse you?

Well, what can the man do...

Or now, year 2005. how do you look at it?

Now, nothing confuses me. Now I know the men are as they are. There is an old saying: 'Help the needy to your own disgrace' it's obvious the people know this since times immemorial, it is the same now, and always will be. Well my Lord, why do we have to look at America. Goes there, destroys, and then brings humanitarian aid.

Yes, distributing band aids.

Distributing band aids, well, all right.

Well, all right, the fact is, you are saying, there were armed conflicts in that period of the year 93. with Muslims, but at the same time the Medical Corps gave and...

Gave aid.

Aid.

Full aid.

The Muslims were asking for it?

Muslims were asking for it. That was... somewhere year 93. I think it was already summer. And maybe before.

We are talking about Mostar?

We are talking about Mostar, about that Mostar. They formed a hospital on the East side of Mostar. Well, before they formed the hospital, we offered they could bring their wounded into the hospital on the west bank. But to make arrangements, because there were conflicts. They would not be located up at Bili Brig, but they would be down in the hospital which was next to Neretva. Even to stay there and have their own physicians, all of that together, to transport their wounded down. I know that is insane. Nobody intelligent can comprehend something like that would function. We really tried. And we wanted that project passed to United Nations, to have certain hospitals to have it formed and entered into some conventions, what I know, where in the same hospital could work, in now situation let's take Croatians and Muslims. And to have corridors to such hospitals. That would be territory on its own, outside of everything. The hospital would be the hospital. Here enter either side wounded. And both sides should be treated. That was really, it was one...Here is Slobodan Lang. We talked with him about it. He said he would pass that on, as he was always with someone of the United Nations, with this one with that one. He will pass such an idea. It means, our idea was, as the east side of Mostar was bad, had no infrastructure. They didn't... the people ran away from that area. They formed the hospital which had nothing. Then we offered to do this for them. However, it was not accepted. Then we offered help. A communication came from I think Arif Pasic. Well, now I think it was him. They send their request for the medical material, for some vehicles and everything they needed for that hospital. And I gave the order to give it to them. Praljak, was advised, he new about it, and he said: "There is no problem" With provision as I said I'll request to have Spanish battalion present, to film the transfer. Not only they are present, but they should have cameramen to film takeover of medical supplies, as it's been driven away. They came with two trucks. Whatever we had in store room, whatever we could, we gave. All of that is on record. The Spanish battalion knows, and that was

passed to the East side Mostar. Yes, so much so, that was during strongest conflict with the Muslims.

You are saying, Praljak new about it?

Yes.

What were his reactions his comments? Did he support that? Was he doubtful? How did he in general...?

As you have, how much do you have – give. I think, don't let us do without. I think that is nonsense. But as much as possible, we'll help that much.

But let's be realistic: in that moment the enemy is being helped.

The patients are being helped. The wounded are being helped. The enemy is not being helped.

And up to a while ago it was the enemy which shoots.

Yes, but in this moment he is wounded. When wounded, he is no longer enemy. As I said, that is a bit crazy. But, that's that. Then there is Sally Baker. Where did she appear from? Who is she? Only Lord knows. How did she get in touch with us, with everybody? She appeared all of a sudden, and she wants to see the situation, she has been sent for. Well, OK. The whole lot used to come down. Then she went to the east shore, well some people were pulled out through her, I don't know what. Essentially, at one time, there was a child on the east side in very bad shape. And generally she was asking to have the child evacuated through us. Without any problem. That child was evacuated to the west shore. The UNPROFOR came for her.

When was that? Was that also 93.?

93.

Which part of 93, do you know?

It could be seventh month.

Summer?

Summer, summer. Yes. It was summer.

And how did the story with that child go on. Do you have information?

They went to get the child.

Who?

Sally Baker went, somebody from the Spanish Battalion went. The child was brought to us.

How old was the child?

Well, the child could have been about three years old. Somewhere there, two, four years.

What was wrong with the child?

Well, the child was dehydrated, too cold...in poor condition... neglected child, really neglected. We didn't have any possibility to care for the child in Mostar or somewhere near by. And because of the conflict, and because of everything together. But we had no possibility to place... we could provide care. It was necessary to transfer the child to Split. But before that I requested from the Spanish Battalion, to at least...it was the night when they came, to have the child spend the night with them in the warmth, to get the health, to feed it, to have it rehydrated, all of that together. However, they refused; they are not allowed to have civilians in their quarters inside of that camp, whatever it was. Well at that time it was forbidden to leave (for Croatia)in any ambulance, or any other medical vehicle with plates....then there were already those plates HVO and what do I know, so the question came up: What to do with the child? I reacted in a stormy manner, as I was in the war, I caught the child and said to the mother: "Get into the ambulance" I took the child and got it to her in the ambulance...Somebody was recording all of that. I know they were two cameras. In general, I ordered the driver to take them to Split. So if they kill him at the border it would be better for him, than if he returns to me and the child is not taken to Split. Well, in general that ended well, thanks the Lord.

He succeeded to transfer the child?

He succeeded, the child was transferred to Split, accepted, everything is OK in Split Hospital. As far as I know, later everything with the child went well. I don't know where they went after. Who knows? Well we have another story. The story about Heliodrom.

That is also 93.?

That was when the helyodrom was completed, when the conflict with Muslims started, in Mostar, was it fifth month 93.? I am thinking, something tells me 09.05.93., and now...

All Right, We will...

I don't know...

...easily confirm.

All right. I don't know exactly. In general how was formed that reception centre for the Muslims... In essence, the reason it was accepted was, there were all kinds of characters who roamed through Mostar and who at the time of conflict with the Muslims most likely did harm to those civilians and all of that evil. And therefore, ...that was a matter we didn't know. But we were told. One of the premises, in order to conserve the lives of those people. Was to place them in one spot... Because if someone would enter somebody's apartment, somebody would robe the house, and those robbers and dogs of war were everywhere. Most likely down there too. And, well let's not get into that. That is a camp. I'm against that. But, when the camp is made, then we formed a clinic on that heliodrom. There was our medical crew. And there was all medical material necessary for operation of a normal clinic. In it worked the Muslim physicians, who were also at the heliodrome. Brought away at the time, which did have complete freedom of work. It means they were performing their medical duties just as if they were working in Salata or Sveti Duh or anywhere else.

Let's be more precise. It means, it's about Muslims who were there in capacity of prisoners of war?

In capacity of prisoners of war.

Who were on that space of Heliodrom. Who were physicians.

Yes, physicians.

Physicians by profession ...

Professional physicians.

That's right. They were enabled to do what?

They were enabled to do their medical work.

In what space did they do that?

Down at Heliodrom they had their clinic.

Who organized that clinic?, who equipped it?

It was equipped by Headquarters Medical Corps of Herceg-Bosna.

That means, they were given opportunity in that clinic...

Given opportunity... at that time under those circumstances, suitable to those conditions they had possibility to do their work.

They were getting ...

They were getting medicaments, medical supplies, and bandages. They had everything that was necessary.

What would, let's say, happened, if such a Muslim physician in such a clinic, noticed that some of other Muslim prisoner, needs more serious help, then what he was able to offer?

In that case the patient would have been evacuated, either to Split, or to a hospital they were considering he should go to.

Would that mean, the opinion of this Muslim physician was respected...?

The opinion of that Muslim was respected. He is a colleague, and there we never had any differences. He made his triage down there. If someone had to be operated on, he would go for the operation either in Mostar or Split. Or Zagreb, or to some third institution. I don't know where, out of this land. That is all the same. Well in such a case where someone had to be evacuated, it would be reported to military police and everybody concerned.

But that means is we can say they had medical....

Complete freedom.

...medical help?

Yes.

Did medical help exist there...

Yes.

...organized in that manner?

Moreover, we have requested, respectively I have requested according to the reports of doctor Curic, who was a specialist in epidemiology, who really understands all of that,

we requested that their situation be improved. Improved why? Because... I was looking... my reports are there, where I asked for improvement of the conditions. Meaning, to do more, to elevate the conditions to higher level. For what reason? Because when someone is imprisoned, he is already in worse situation. And he needs better medical care than to a free man. Those were some basic thoughts, wherein those men must have maximum help. Under the circumstances they are there. Would it be for their protection, or something, or somewhat, I don't know. I'm not getting into that. They are there. But, we as Medical Corps must provide to them maximal, maximal care. And we did.

And you provided?

Yes we provided... and that is for certain.

Doctor Gveric, can you remember the events with psychiatry?

Well, yes. During the conflict in Mostar, those poor psychiatric patients were stationed near... practically on the front line. And they were walking around, they would perish, they were fired on, Lord forbid, everything was happening. We came to conclusion that those people should be evacuated.

Those are also events of 93?.

This thing is happening in the year 93.

Do you know approximately the month?

I have no idea.

Season of the year, at least?

Well, I have no idea.

All right.

I have no idea, could that be summer. Everything is somehow in the summer...There are so many events in the summer, it makes it abnormal. Most likely that would have been summer, yes.

On whose initiative does it come? And then further how does it develop?

Doctor Subic... Sa***tic, she is a psychiatrist who came to us and mentioned the condition of the psychiatric patients. We in the Medical Corps, had no idea about

those patients being fired on. We didn't know they were down there. And now when she came and told us about the problems, those people are going out, the firing is going on and everything. We then in cooperation with Red Cross of Italy, region Como, decided, in reality we asked about possibility of accepting, because the possibility of acceptance of psychiatric patients in Croatia does not exist any longer. Psychiatric hospital in Pakrac is in ruins. There was, uh what's the name, Popovaca, somewhere there, all those hospitals, what could be placed in Vrapce, was on Ugljan, was in Jankomir, not possible, all the capacities are full. It's not possible now some other 30, 40, 50, what do I know, how many they were, drag up there. Then we tried with them (Italians), and in conversation with them, they decided to accept those psychiatric patients. Everything went through Red Cross of Italy, somewhere in the vicinity of Milano; I don't know exactly where was that psychiatric hospital. In general the medical technician Aleksovski Bobo, and this doctor Subic, don't know her name; it was on "S" went with them. They went by plane; it was interesting when they later talked about it. In general they were accepted there, and all of them were evacuated. Again among those psychiatric patients were Croatians, Serbs and Muslims. And all of them were taken away regardless of nationality or religion. They are all patients. All of them were placed in the plane and taken to Italy. There was no discrimination. None. That is very important. And we expanded the contact, now when we took care of those patients. Then we thought, if someone offers you a finger, that you grab the entire hand. So we started the initiative to build a hospital in Bili Brig u Garbanjate, relatively in Milan where we would evacuate the children arriving from, the children and mothers with more serious illnesses, who would go there for treatment. They would be from central Bosnia and everybody whoever came to us...

That was also year 93?

The same... the year 93. Generally at the time the children taken away had malignant illnesses, with some strange illnesses. Also, whoever came, there was no discussion whether he is ...

Signed: Illegible

And who was coming?

The Croats and the Muslims came. So both...

And then, that means, were transported?

They were transported, they were driven up. That hospital did function, now I am not sure, but I think they are still accepting certain patients from Bosnia, up there in Milano, into that hospital. Now more...I know somewhere 98. 99., 2000. that was still functioning. It was working.

In the year 93., there was a great need? There were many children?

Many children, and what is interesting, it was noticed, many malignant lymphomas appeared in the children, and they were sending many like that. Before we didn't have such numbers. But most likely the studies to be written will confirm. And why, how, I don't know. Generally, that was it, all regardless went to Italy. What else was interesting?

Convoys?

Well, yes. Convoy for... As there were attempts to reduce the conflicts at all costs. And there were all kinds of stories, from one side: those massacred these, they massacred those, and these made a mess, those other mess. It was like that. Those below or what did I say, where?

Those below.

Those below, so that Croatians made a large massacre on Muslims. And at the same time it happened in Konjic, at Easter...We were given report, from our physicians in Konjic, a bloody Easter is being prepared. Muslims are making preparations for a bloody Easter in Konjic. We got that report. We...

When?

93. it means Easter 93. Understandably we transmitted to others, to institutions. To the physicians, everybody complains, we had direct contacts. They may have had their secret services, SIS***I don't know, whatever they want. But when someone from a remote area comes, because he is hurt, then he comes and tells all,

What is pertinent and what is not. And so we got this information for bloody Easter. And we transmitted it. That was some 15 to 20 days before Easter. Now I don't know when did the Easter fall. We transmitted that to ours in HVO. Well, everybody talks everything, and what happened? On Easter the Muslims attacked Konjic, they imprisoned everybody, they killed those, and closed in the church and what do I know, there were all kinds of things. That means it was a planned attack on Konjic. At the same time there was a cut off, the upper Northern part Vrce, don't know now there, Not***, Trusi***, don't know any more all those villages. In general, somehow everything started to appease. In the summer there were organized convoys to pull out...We had about fifteen, twenty wounded in Vrce. We were supposed to go with UNPROFOR convoy. One for Konjic to pull out prisoners and wounded Croats. We were supposed to go up to pull out from Vraca our wounded. Third convoy under... in which was this Petkovic, he was a colonel, brigadier, and it does not matter, with some Muslim, who was commander of all Muslim Army. Now I don't know his name, but everything about it exists. They went to Doljani, I don't know where. To see whether there was or wasn't a massacre. In the mean time, we have come to Jablanica. And we stopped in Jablanica. The convoys were not allowed to proceed, until the third convoy returns and finds out whether there was a massacre. By me, that is stupid. What now? If there was; catastrophe. If there wasn't, everything is OK. But we are going for wounded. What kind of sense does it make if there was a massacre? We are going for the wounded. Should there be a massacre because some fool massacred somebody else. Stupid. Well anyways, those are political and military matters, and so. In general, they returned. Everything is in order. And we got going. This convoy went to Konjic. The leader of the convoy was doctor Kolak, and I was leader of the convoy for Vrce. With me was Vehbija Karic, he was one of highly positioned Muslim functionaries, but a bit in the shade. I think he was a physician. Well, now I don't know exactly. In general, we came to a check point in Neiz***, There the convoy stopped, where they stopped us. Then this Vehbija went

To talk with the head of check point, to raise the ramp, so we can go to Vrce for wounded. I went out if the transporter. Out went the officer of UNPROFOR, he was of Croatian descent, and generally...

Do you know his name?

I don't know. All I know, he had a beard. All of that is recorded somewhere. Now I don't know who he is. In general he said: "It seems they are awaiting us there. It will be disgusting" As we were unarmed, he said: "I'll give you my gun, so if they start firing, you can die as a soldier, not just for no reason." Well, thanks Lord, nothing happened. This Vehbija Karic came back he said: "The man will not let us pass. We shall turn the transporters and go back." So we didn't go to Vrce for the wounded. And they stayed there, in what condition I don't know. In general we had to return.

What happened to those wounded later?

I don't know.

You have no information?

I have no information. I don't know. All of this was reported to Medical Corps Headquarters, where I was one of the commanders, However, doctor Kolak and doctor Barisic are 'al pari' (equal) with me), we were all of the same status the same rank and friends, colleagues from civilian times and we were together in the war. So everyone would know one part and work off that part. When was necessary to work together, we would discuss it, and then come to a decision. So some of the parts I don't know. Some of the parts were worked off passing me by, what Kolak and Barisic worked off, some of them I worked off passing them by and so on

You mentioned doctor Kolak, where is he now?

In Dubrava, in the new hospital.

He is in Dubrava. And doctor Barisic?

At Sveti Duh.

He is at Sveti Duh?

Yes

Doctor Gveric, you are full of events, you could most likely write a novel of several parts.

It could be done, easily.

I'm interested in those events, how often did you meet Praljak? What kind were your contacts? What kind was this association? Was that exclusively and always connected with your work, or did you have some private contacts outside of work...?

Well, there were all kinds...First I really met Praljak when we were going for Jajce, evacuation and all of that.

You've seen him then for the first time?

I've seen him then for the first time... I've heard about him, and all of that, but at that time I've seen him for the first time. And then when I've seen him large as he is, with beard, and all of that, a man would say that must be some terrible type. And in reality a good soul, so here... So somehow, since the first contact it became a deeper relation. I believe, deeper in the sense that he must have realised, we are working at our jobs responsibly, and we are accepting our positions professionally, without some indoctrination and some political ideology and so on. We are working, we are professionals. Professional Physicians.

Frequently you mentioned today Hippocrates Oath and it is clear to me that you believe in it. You do not believe some other physicians exist and they could proceed otherwise. Did you in that war time and in your meetings with Praljak see a person to whom you believe, which is a support, to which you could turn? How did you really experience him?

In reality he was a person... whenever something squeaked, we knew we could go to Praljak. Not only I, but Kolak I Barisic, where we will in normal conversation come to certain conclusions and surely have fool support. That is for certain. And Praljak gave us fool support. He gave it. Sometimes, maybe in some private conversations which were more private than official. In reality all of that was unwinding on a semi-official-semiprivate relationship. It wasn't like, now I'll write

Praljak a letter: "General Sir, da da da..." than as the chief of staff sign myself. Stupidities. It was, go to Praljak, sit in the car. Telephone is again Telephone. Those are the distances, where were the times, you sit in the car, go have a conversation, have a drink, smoke a few cigarettes, a bit... tell a few jokes, and everything is all right. And he was really giving full support to the Medical Corps. He never insisted we send some reports, neither did he ask to adhere strictly to the protocol, and he believed us because he saw what we did. And full support he gave to giving help to the other side. Form that, from pullout from that small...from that pullout from Jajce. I already said all about it..

Praljak was present in the way he was informed?

Yes. He was informed.

And in everything you did he...

Yes.

... gave support?

Yes.

When we were getting ready for this conversation, you told me then all your contacts in general were scrounging and making requests to Praljak?

Yes.

Is that so? It means you were turning to him for...

Help.

For scrounging and requests?

Scrounging...yes...

And why did you turn exactly to him for scrounging and requests?

Because he is the man who has wide vision. Because he is not narrowly oriented onto his small segment, let's say, now he is the commander of a zone and he does not care about anything happening around him. And this zone of his now has to be, I don't know how, super, wonderful, beautiful, and he couldn't care less for everything else. He...He did, really comprehend..., and I think intellectual who has wide views who could comprehend what we were in reality doing in Jajce, and at the same time as we are being fired on...

what are we going through. Muslims are firing at our Medical Corps to take away our vehicles, and at the same time we are sending help into their hospital to evacuate Muslims. Praljak could understand that.

All right, and that is why you communicated with Praljak, does that mean that some other instance which would naturally be...?

You have to comprehend one thing, we were down there, and we had no other instance. We were the top of the tops. Main headquarters Medical Corps for difference of the one in Croatia. To us doctor Bagaric who was assistant to the minister of defence. We succeeded that way, because we knew that is the only way we could function in order to compose an organization of Medical Corps, which would function maximum well, but maximum fast. Because let's say I am now inside the headquarters. I have a commander over me, let's say in logistics, as it was in Croatia, and this chief of Medical Corps is subordinate to someone who is in logistics, and that one to someone who is over him. That is hierarchy in which by the time a paper passes from to the other to the third, the patient died. And finish. There is no Medical Corps on that****, the patient died. The story is finished. So we succeeded to work out, that we were in the rank of military commanders. It meant Headquarters commander, if you please. You have no command over me, send me a report where, what is going to happen, let me organize the Medical Corps. Story finished. But there was always need from other part of logistics, which had fuel, which had vehicles, which had acquisition of everything that should be bought. And so on. They are their own part of logistics. Well now we are somehow equal. He does not care about me. To him... he looks only for military priority. As I said before, until it starts hurting, it's not needed. When it hurts, they will give you everything. That is the way they were thinking. It is not necessary now, this-that. To break through that, to get something... well there we had Praljak.

Just the same I don't see one thing. Did you communicate with Praljak because he was the person who should have worked on it, and who should have been part of it.

Well, no.

Or...

Well, no. He didn't have to do that. Why would he have to do that!

But what?

He didn't have to do that. That should have all...

Then, why did you go precisely to him?

Because he was a commander. Because we listened to him, in a specific way, clear. I think with hold back. But everybody else had to obey him, because when he as the commander said something that had to be done. If he said, let's say, " hey, Jelavic down in Grude, Gveric needs a vehicle, give it to him and there is no question."

Then it functioned?

Then it functioned. If I went to Jelavic, and have said: "Listen I need a vehicle."

"Well I haven't got, well you know, be patient till tomorrow." Nothing tomorrow, I need it now. Well it's there. And all those actions, I say he new about... and that was everything. Nevertheless, he was the commander down there. And as such he was appreciated. And we had his support.

Doctor Gveric, did we forget anything?

For now, I can't remember anything else that would be essential.

Zagreb, January 2006