

SENAHID GAĆO

GAĆO SENAHID – SENDA

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Could you please state your name for the record.

My name is Senahid Gaćo. I was born in Sunja. Should I state my military rank?

Yes, please do.

Under the second president's commandment given on December 23, 1991, I'm a lieutenant. I still am. Still am.

Mhm. So, a permanent lieutenant.

Yes. I was born in Sunja, lived there, my family home is there. What else to say?

That's enough. I'm interested in the period between the second half of 1991 and spring of 1992, but I understand you were there before...

Yes, during illegal arming of the HDZ's (the Croatian Democratic Union) groups; that's how it's called; however, I like to say I was there as a part of the territorial defense. I was never a member of the party, but I was ***** as it was. Moreover, I was even assigned to be an automatic weapons instructor, but that was more or less. They were all fresh from the JNA (the Yugoslav People's Army), so it wasn't needed. All other problems could be solved. So, because of all that, we organized guards, controls...

When did it start?

We were armed on October 16, 1990, that's when we had a couple of those trips. Then small and large groups were formed. Nothing was solved legally, finally and generally, but it was more or less known who could be making decisions and about what, and who was a group leader. Those groups had two, three men at best. I mean, I have nothing special to say about it; lengthwise, it later became the battlefield of Sunja about three and a half kilometers long; there were only 12 guns there. Twelve automatic guns. Later, there were 23 shotguns, 7 carbines – and that was complete weaponry – and that's something I can talk about.

It was passed on, is that correct? From hand to hand?

Of course. That was actually publicity, because they were coming... In fact, their possible routes across the field were discovered, and it was clear. Because they had their reconnoiters, we knew them. Because we lived with them, I have to say we lived with those Serbs, so we knew them in a way. They gravitated across the field to us, i.e. they were asking which way to take – the one that wasn't guarded very well. There are a lot of empty houses on our side – families mostly move somewhere because of work, leaving a grandmother behind; a grandmother dies, and a house becomes empty. Exactly at those places we located our, so to say, guard posts, a place where groups gathered. And always, literally, let me just give you an example...as soon as I was done patrolling, I would give

my gun to another guy who came to patrol; so, it actually seemed as if we had a lot of weapons.

Yes, yes, I've heard that was the secret of your good weaponry...

So, it seemed we were something, but after the shooting started, the story was different. Even the police from Sunja... It turned out that a man from this place, our territory – Brđani and Drljače... Now, that man who was from Drljače... I guess he got scared, and came to the police station as a delegate of a certain Serbian party, asking for spare weapons, because Ustaše were supposedly to attack. I don't know exactly... That's when the conflicts started in Kostajnica, so guard members used to take that road to Kostajnica. Of course, the trucks were seen, the army was seen in the bus, and now... I assume that was it. I have to say something in their defense, although it shouldn't be like that. They were coming to the police station asking for weapons; however, a policeman, a Serbian, called intervention police from Sisak. They took all, complete weaponry that was in the police. There was enough left only for one shift. It turned out I was in that shift, so I had two weapons. That was... Now, should I say the exact date? The second half of June... I'm sorry! The first half of July 1991. That was... At that time... I asked for a few days off, because it was a bit exhausting, so I stayed at home. In fact, I was more involved in illegal operations... That's why I needed some rest; I would finish one shift over there, and in case I had the night to spend at home, I would be here with the guys; so, it was a bit exhausting. So I, in fact, entrusted my police weapon to a policeman and my colleague hunter, while keeping mine by my side – actually, even that happened in the field until we organized. In the name of the organization itself, that's where Slobodan Praljak comes in. Here; I'll just briefly describe it according to my memory. We organized ourselves, and when we saw the tanks on the other side, that was too much... I have to talk for myself; I started to get scared... But I wasn't the only one, everyone felt it. You could see it. In fact, that's when people started to leave...

Could you, please, just tell me what period we are talking about right now? Is it still July?

It's July, and the beginning of August.

1991, of course.

Yes, yes. A few things happened... The active guard was coming; they were coming, but immediately leaving, so there was a great manpower exchange. As far as shooting is concerned, those who had ammunition, used it. Anyway, it's especially important, Peša... I think he came in the end of August, but don't take my word for it. He came and brought 180 policemen from Sesveta. We were told there were 600. And that was a relief for us, i.e. we organized ourselves. We even started collecting food, eggs and other things. Lojza was in charge of that. We started a whole system.

You were collecting food... What for?

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For the army. For ourselves, for the army, for... The complete system. The bakery was working at that time, it had a supply of bread, and that bread was free of charge, everything was free of charge and delivered according to the number of people. Actually, all started functioning very well. That's when Praljak came. Now, there's that organization he was working on a lot. We can talk about how things should have been done... So it happened that I was at his headquarters during the formation of the headquarters. At first, they were located in different houses. It turned out that house was too close to the centre, and a lot of grenades were falling around it, so they decided to move. They started organizing... What can I say? A writing office was established, although it wasn't clear what the need for it was. However, he insisted on it, he specifically asked for it. Every receipt that was issued had to have a copy filed. Why? Everything was documented...the complete ammunition relay, authorization – let's call it that – when it got cold, we used to go to the woods to gather firewood, and he documented where we went to gather. And he gave his consent by signing it, because he also heard out an owner, in case one existed, because... I mean, I can talk about my army unit, i.e. a squad. 'Posavka', an agricultural cooperative later known as 'Posavka' – a company dealing with seeding, sowing and crops reproduction, owned forests. Those were abandoned parcels where we collected firewood. As I've mentioned... There was this one time when a woman came; I was at the headquarters at that time; because the army, some guards, took about two cubic meters of wood. So, she came to complain. And what he did...he made them return the wood.

Who was that woman?

I don't know her name. She came from Novi put.

When did that happen?

In 1991.

Yes, I know that. But when? In September?

Yes, that's right. The preparations had already started, and we needed to...

So, that's when the damages involving the wood were done. Who did the woman come to see?

Him.

General Praljak. Colonel at that time...

No, no. We were all soldiers at that time...

So, he was still a soldier at that time...

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He was a soldier, but he was a commander... I have to mention that he organized the raising of the flag...

Yes, yes, I know that...

The lineup. Everything was regular. We coordinated every morning, no matter if it was a public or a religious holiday or anything else...

But could you, please, finish the story... I'm interested in the story about firewood... So, the woman suffered damages, someone took two cubic meters of firewood from her...

The guards.

The guards took the firewood *** and the woman went to complain. What did Praljak do?**

I stayed there with them; we were always staying for a drink or afterwards... The woman left, but he issued an order over the line; I don't know to whom; to find and gather the firewood, and deliver it to her.

And that was done?

Yes. It was done, followed by his words...

What words?

I apologize, but he said 'Fuck her, and the firewood, and...' There was this one incident with people from Bobovac, involving their cows. The cows must have headed towards the mine fields or the Serbs; I can't remember exactly; anyway, at the coordination meeting, he said the same thing 'Fuck the cows, and you people from Bobovac...' Now, we were a bit... We were, like, the cows?

What was he really trying to accomplish? What did he want?

Look, the problem is, people, the villagers... Bobovac was a special place. Our Iva Klarić was also special, you have seen that. Bobovac was always specific. They had good relation with the Serbs. As far as I can say, Praljak was a bit irritated by a certain attack, so it was immediately responded to ten times stronger, they got their ***** kicked, but at that time the Serbs and the people of Bobovac had no contacts. Because the people of Bobovac nicely... There was shooting here, and 'weekend warriors' were coming, the state of war was in progress the entire time, and we were visiting Crkveni bok. We would just go to Bobovac on our side, and without any problem enter the Serbian territory, and move freely there. We could do anything, even visit someone, family, friends; and we would go back the same way. It all functioned. Even medical emergency functioned like that. It all functioned like that.

Yes, Bobovac was specific. They insisted on not getting involved, is that so? They had some kind of relation with...

With them, yes.

And that was all agreed? That the Serbs wouldn't attack them, is that correct?

Yes. That's how it was. And after the guards came...they had hayfields there between... Bobovac, Crkveni bok, Ivanjski bok; those Serbian villages, they lived off their cattle, so large hayfields were there, and they guarded them together. Horses, cows, pigs. The cows moved freely. Some people from Bobovac moved freely. There was this one case, reported by the policemen who, I think, came from Sesvete; those people that were there reported it, now...

What happened? What did they report?

Well, they reported... That we were going to battlefields to fight, and our people freely went to their territory and socialize with them; so, what does that mean? Was a guy with a gun supposed to shoot a cow, or one of our own, or one of them? Who was he supposed to shoot at? That's how it was reported, as a complaint. And then he... He yelled a bit at the people from Bobovac...

What did Praljak say?

Well, basically... He... That thing he mentioned. About how he has no intention to take care of the cows. They were either to be shot, or he would make the people of Bobovac join them in their destiny. That's how it ended. I mean, as far as I can say, he was very fair. Always...there were times when I would stay there longer, and it surprised me when he pointed out he was never in the JNA (the Yugoslav People's Army), saying he liked to hear any story regarding the army. Let's take me for example, it wasn't about me leading, but me expressing my opinion, elaborating about anti-tank warfare, about Malyutka missiles, i.e. mortar sections; there weren't exactly a lot of barrels. From Greda the right circle was covered, Drljače, using mortars 82, and from the hunter's shed. 500m away from the headquarters, following the same direction, the left part was covered. About, I think, right here *****. Their defense, i.e. the so-called defense, but actually an attack unit. They formed it, and it was divided into a squad that existed at that time – they called it Caprak. Those were our villages in Banija – Drljače, Brđani, Graduša gornja, Graduša donja, Paukovac; those Serbian villages located on our side. Banjaluka Corps held the entire part from Kostajnica, then Hrastovac, Dubica; all those villages. Actually, it ended in Četvrtkovac. And in Četvrtkovac we had the 'station'. If you are familiar with the defense system – Greda, the station, Palanka, and so on. That point was actually their place *****. So, they were known to open fire without a particular reason... They were known to open fire without a reason. So, when Banjaluka Corps opened fire from Kostajnica, and if the fire was heavy, these guys here would also open fire and shoot at us. I'm talking about a part of Banjaluka Corps in Kostajnica opening fire at us here in Sunja, these guys here sometimes joined them, and sometimes they remained quiet. And

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our set defense system, a part where I was directly exposed to open fire, was exactly that bridge – and the other belonged to a guy; I think he is a major now (???) in the 'Thunders' brigade; he lost his company on Viduševac, and one of his soldiers killed himself in a church in Sunja; his past is a bit ugly... He formed a unit there *****, he formed a unit. In fact, he started with four men, and in the end we became the first artillery unit. We even had guns, and so on... We functioned, but we didn't have enough manpower. We never had enough manpower. In that war, I had maximum of 18 men, and it was noted I had over eighty.

Tell me, in those war days and during those war events - how often did you see the general?

While he was here, I saw him every day. Every day, during regular coordination meetings, absolutely... He even used to apologize for being late in the morning, and Međa used to start the meeting... That happened this one time, when his wife came to visit him, so he allowed himself... I mean... A few times he showed us he was only human. Like...he had to go to Zagreb, had to see...

How did a usual, let's call it a work day, look like?

In the morning we would meet in order to coordinate and raise the flag...

When did it start in the morning?

At eight o'clock. Exactly at eight o'clock. He was given a report in front of all the commanders lined up. That way he could immediately see who was present, and whom he could rely on.

And it was all done in a strict military way...saluting?

Yes, yes.

And when did that procedure start? Can you remember?

Well, he was here... I don't know if ten days had passed from his arrival. I don't know the exact date...

Is it possible it was some time in mid September?

Yes, yes.

Mid September of 1991?

Yes. Look, when I first met him...when he came, he toured the villages. Here's what I can say about myself, and the same happened in other places. On the premises of 'Seljačka sloga' all the civilians gathered to exchange opinions. He even recorded it using

a camcorder. As it happened, I was sitting next to him, although I never thought he could be ***** Basically, he saw people's reactions and conclusions, and based on that, he started organizing the army. We organized ourselves in a way that wasn't very strict, but now; I didn't know when exactly was my shift, I simply made arrangements, so if I was tired and couldn't go on, I would go rest, and someone would replace me. That's how it was. However, when he came, it started... Let me just point out... We were building bunkers, and I made the first one. Actually, he, just as he promised, ensured we would get weapons after finishing building a bunker. We got two bombs after we finished.

So, the general introduced that?

That's how it started. It grew stronger in time.

What was he hoping to accomplish by that?

Basically, to organize a secure line as soon as possible. Because, look, we were located in different houses, under canopies, and it was hot... And who was to build bunkers? Let's not talk... And now, tired as we were, we were supposed to go down there to get those thick, large boards, planks, and then load them into bags. Those bags weren't those small ones; you couldn't get any kind; but they were the large ones that were probably used for transporting coffee beans, found on docks, with the volume of 160kg. The four of us were supposed to lift it... We filled them with sand, and then...

So, that was organized, is that so?

It started, but it was his idea.

So, it became organized after Praljak's arrival?

Yes, yes.

Was it hard to carry it out? Did people realize the reason they were doing it?

Yes, it was clear to them...

Were they opposing?

...they understood, but we were all very tired. The same people were on watch, because we didn't have enough manpower. I mean, we are talking about... Within the area 200m or 400m away, on the corner...have you heard of the fortress B-52?

Yes.

That place was guarded by only two men. Only two men were guarding the road of 200-400m in width! Look, men were really tired. And then, when someone brings a couple of boxes of anti-personnel mines, you don't go setting them. You just switch the fuse and

throw. And if it detonates – it's ok, and if it doesn't – even better. It fell over there, and someone will find it. And now that we are trying to find and talked, let's demine. And what are we to demine? I mean, it is what it is. We can say this and that... All kinds of things happened in the beginning. I only now that four bunkers spent 82 bottles of cognac in seven days.

Four bunkers, 82 bottles of cognac, in how many days?

In seven days.

In seven days?

Yes. Well, ok, I think there was also some reserve...

Well, when was that?

Well, in the beginning...

Was Praljak there?

No, no. It was exactly... During the time he was there, he prohibited that. But it was...

So, that was the situation just before Praljak came?

Yes. Every group had their own rules. In short. They were eating there, sleeping there, doing everything there. Dear God, it felt good going... I went to a couple of places, up there, the station; the 'Thunders' got electricity and water, so they could shower. There was a problem with that, because a guy would go to take a shower or go to Sunja for a bath, and the shooting would start. A problem! One man wasn't there, and the other three were supposed to cover all four sides. They couldn't. As I've said, that's how it was in the beginning. There was food and everything, but as I've said, after he came, people started organizing. I can say he was really good at it, but he didn't really have a plan. He solved problems as they arose. He introduced the lineup. And from the lineup, officially, he continued to the problems that were present, planning what was to be done; he dealt with the situation during the night, why was there shooting, why did I spend ten liters of gasoline yesterday; and stuff like that, all the details...even my daily plans with my men; how many men will be off for the day, how many will go for a bath, all that.

Tell me how the general solved the problem of drinking?

Ha!

Drinking was a problem, right? It started becoming a problem?

Yes, yes. Later it even got worse. I mean, those who were prone to drinking, started enjoying it a bit too much. Alcohol was easy to come by.

And what about those who were not prone to it?

Those who weren't... I mean, I can talk about... By the way, I got my invalidity status based on the posttraumatic stress. We've all experienced it. When your hands are shaking or in similar situations, it's best to take two or three sips, and then another two or three sips, and it stops. It's just that it could have been in the evening, and in the morning you were supposed to visit a doctor. No one went to see the doctor. That was how it was done. It was easier after a few drinks. Easier, easier. As far as I'm concerned, I drank moderately. When there was work to be done, we weren't drinking, but when we were relaxing, we drank. But some men were drunk all the time. ***** He imposed prohibition, and basically...

What were his orders exactly? What did he ask for?

Simply, all the alcohol brought over the scaffold; because that place was easy to control; was seized by the police. It was seized by the civil police, they kept it in that room over there ***** My wife made pies, here the fish stew was cooked; dear God, I can't remember... Every village had its meal, and we knew exactly where we were to go. That's what happened on Sundays, when we had time and when it was possible. But this here was a surprise, a room filled with confiscated alcohol. I wasn't even aware so much alcohol came over seven days! I never even saw some of that liquor. People brought; at that time, the smuggling started, based on the quantity that was brought in. It was confiscated, and here, it was prohibited. That is to say, those who were drunk were seized by the police and locked up. He imposed it ***** this one time in Bobovac; I was there at that time. A man was drunk, but in fact, he never crossed over. However, he had the usual stuff with him – a wire spread across the water; and his godfather or someone was on the other side; he tied the bottle and pulled it over to his side, got drunk. While he pulled it over to one side, another wire went to the other side – that's how it was done. Actually, he kept his records, and according to those, there were more drunk people after he prohibited alcohol, than there were before. That's when he discontinued it. And ***** what pub was allowed to serve drinks, everything was done openly, and the number of drunks reduced. You couldn't see so many drunken men. The punishment was still present, so if any of the commanders wished to order a one day in prison punishment... But, all I can say – the watch was harder than prison. They had a utility room where they kept them during the day; a utility room and a garage; but at night they had to let them go home to sleep, because they had no place to sleep here.

There was some kind of canteen here, is that so?

Yes, there was a canteen. I can't say much about it; I just know there was a group there called 'Cucki', they carried out all the work. They were the intervention group. They had mortars 60 ***** I mean, I'm not sure I can say anything about individuals... but ***** Odžak. I've also heard there was some smuggling involving weapons *****

All right, the general dealt with those problems. They needed to be solved in order for the army to start functioning properly. What were other problems? For example, were you present when he dealt with the problems concerning building bunkers and fortification?

Yes.

How did the general behave in practice, how did he function around men? Did he visit you?

Yes, yes. He personally visited every bunker to confirm... The commander of the sector would decide to set a bunker. He visited, agreed with that commander, i.e. trusted him completely regarding that bunker. And after the bunker was finished, he came to see it, to commend the men; and, as I've said, at that time, two hand grenades were given. There's nothing to say... one grenade was paid 150... not millions I guess, I think thousands of those...I don't know...I can't talk about money right now.

Probably 150000 of those dinars? So, that's how much one grenade was worth?

Yes. Or in my case; I got even a better deal; I had to bring four cases of beer to the guys in the station ***** Now, he used to bring it as a souvenir for every finished bunker, i.e. as part of regular equipment. Later we went...

People appreciated that?

Of course!

At that time, it was important...

Of course! It was...although, it's hard to talk about it in such a funny way, but it was very important...

Well, it's easy to laugh about it today, but at that time...

It was very important... I can say something about... 18 of us, two automatic guns, one hunting rifle, 16; the one that doesn't eject the shells, i.e. two artillery projectiles could be ejected, and then you were asked for a code to get it out; and a couple of knives – that's all we had during the watch, one group, one functioning squad.

Mhm. We are still talking about September of 1991? We are still talking about that period?

That was before... when Praljak came he organized everything and started the systematic arming. He immediately allocated light machineguns. Even the police that came from Zagreb carried light machineguns; personal weapons were returned, and the light

machineguns were kept. The same was with connections. I have to mention... His artists helped a lot. Mustafa Nadarević came and brought a...

Could you speak up, please, this noise will deafen us... You said Mustafa Nadarević?

Mustafa Nadarević had some connections. So, I saw other people; I can't remember all the names. I know those people very well, but I cannot sort them out right now. Martin Sagner... He was in Bobovac... There were a lot of people...

Did they come because Praljak asked them to or...? How exactly did they come?

I think they came just to show their support...

Did Praljak call them?

They came because they wanted to visit him, and then they liked it, so here... They always brought, so to say, a quality gift... I don't know if there were weapons, but I assume...

What kind of effect did it have on men?

Look, the system was set, everything started functioning as intended, a sense of security was felt again. The civilians who were over there in Lukavac, Ušće, started returning to their homes... I mean, when everything functions properly, it's different. I remember the very beginning when the three of us went out, and we didn't know... Down the road, as far as the eye can see, there wasn't a soul in sight. Sometimes we encountered a stray dog, and that was it... People took their cattle with them when they left. Now, in some places, old people stayed, because they didn't care if someone killed them. We regularly visited them, but...

Tell me... I'm sorry to stop you at this point... Those people that stayed behind... There were Serbs, is that correct?

Yes, there were.

What happened to them? Actually, I want to know how Praljak made sure they were looked after and taken care of. Did anyone look after them?

Look, as far as I can say, based on what I've seen... It was made sure they had enough bread. There was food in abundance, so there was absolutely no problem regarding that.

Could you tell me, roughly at least, how many households there were that needed to be cared for?

I don't know that...

Were there 10? 50? 150?

No, no, I can't say. The number was changing. They used to leave and then come back. I guess they used to visit their family, and then come back. Sometimes they stayed a long time. I can say something about a colleague of mine, from school, Lovrić Stevo...

What? Lovrić...?

Lovrić Stevo. He was a geodesist. A father and a daughter. She was a lawyer working at the court in Petrinja. He was here the whole time. Moreover, the guard had an assignment... he used to make coffee for them in the morning, and the guard had an assignment – an unofficial assignment – to bring him bread, food, anything possible. The man was alone; I guess his wife went to see her family...

How old was he?

He died about four or five years ago.

How old was he back then? How old would you say he was?

Around sixty.

So, he was alone at that time?

Yes. And he lacked absolutely nothing. Moreover, he made it his job to make coffee for the army.

So, what? The bread was brought, is that correct?

Well, the basic stuff that was needed... Because we had everything else. During the day milk, juice... would arrive. I mean, there is no point talking about the food, because there was food in abundance...

But it needed to be delivered to people?

Yes and...

And that was part of the job?

It was mostly done by the army.

So, general Praljak also took care of that?

Yes. I can't say whether it was an official order, but mostly as... As I've mentioned before in regard to the bunkers, he completely relied on the sector commanders. He

supported their decisions, even when those decisions contradicted our goals. Because that's the kind of man he is. The story I started telling about the mortars, our organization... He listened to me, he listened to me a lot, listened to what I had to say, and... – he is an intellectual – he used to ask me some really difficult questions, so I had to ask for help to justify everything I said; it was like I had to defend my actions. Basically, he consulted a lot of people before issuing an order.

Tell me if you know... Were those people that stayed suffering any abuse, any maltreatment? By individuals, the army...

He's dead now, he was the police group commander, the first one, ***** soldier, Sedojević Zvonimir...

What?

Sedojević Zvonimir. Allegedly, he was charged for killing the son of some director from Sisak. He was found, I guess... The group was found based on the numbers on the weapons, because he was killed with a bullet from the automatic riffle called 'Argentinka'. When Praljak was here, it was discovered within three or four days. ***** that week, and Zvonimir had to leave... he was discharged. I don't know what his punishment was.

So, just a moment...It was an incident that happened...

Actually, I have to explain it... That guy that was killed wasn't from this area, and he wasn't a soldier.

All right. And where was he?

As far as I know, he was killed in Lukavac. However, he was picked up in Sisak, the sector of Sisak, which wasn't under Praljak's authority. He was brought in Lukavac, killed, i.e. that soldier, the group leader, who killed him was here. And he was immediately relieved of duty...

And that reached Praljak... And then Praljak launched an investigation? Or? How did it go?

Praljak mostly... Yes. He launched an investigation through the civil police, and they found him based on the weapon number.

And? When did they find the perpetrator?

As far as I know, he was relieved of duty.

Praljak relieved him of duty?

Yes. What exactly happened later, what was the punishment... He came to me as a regular soldier three years later. Now, whether he was punished – I don't know that...

But, we could say Praljak intervened in that matter...

Yes!

...and he sanctioned...

Yes, yes. He did.

There's one more thing I'd like to know. It's about an incident I'd like to know more about. It was an attack on the station, after which we retreated, but afterwards we needed to get the station back, i.e. artillery fighting was needed. Then the general went in front of...

Yes, yes.

You know what I'm talking about? Do you remember it?

I remember it, but I can't remember all the details, e.g. who was where, I can't talk about that. It was the SPOAD (Self-propelled Anti-armor Artillery Division), 25. SPOAD, the division for self-propelled...

Yes, it was a self-propelled artillery division.

The self-propelled artillery division, yes. They had a limited amount of ammunition. I know that during one of the attacks; I have to mention it; I guess they were influenced by fear, so they started to shoot more. Praljak even cared about that. He reproached them because they used one mine too many than the number he allowed. Because the mines would get spent and then *****

Oh, so, that was he thinking of!

And, anyways, I have to mention that time when Praljak organized for the SPOAD to come. He was... I think he arranged everything with an active colonel; I don't know it for sure; from the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army). Anyways, when he came to my sector, the entire division settled there. I went to get them, he entrusted me to go at night, with no lights, to get them. We managed to bring them, one of the mines fell off the road, but we got it back; everything was ok. Immediately the next day he allocated them to B52, to the train station... Actually, the one that was on the train station was located across the road from the gas station, where the new building is being built, perhaps you noticed it. It was, in fact, hidden. On the other side, at that time there were the reservists from Montenegro. They, as far as I know, were the best organized army on the other side. They lined up every morning in order to raise the flag, and did everything that needed to be done. Actually, one army squad was on guard, and the other one was prepared. That's what I

assume based on the manpower. Later it turned out there were 149 or 150 of them. It was known...we knew that 24 of them refused to participate in the attack on Sunja because they were reservists. Out of that, 21 left the army, three were punished and one was lost. It seems he was buried there. There are five graves in Četvrtkovac. As far as I can say, they were organized and the only ones who managed to penetrate the station.

Mhm. That was the incident?

Yes, yes. I mean, I should describe it briefly...

Please do. Tell me.

They were the only ones who succeeded. Exactly at that time I was exclusively connected as instructed by the general himself... He was... I have to describe his way of work. We had radio connection in key places; Motorola radios, or whatever, it doesn't matter. Anyway, the guys from the command center; when a crisis was about to happen he simply noted I should start. And I specifically heard him giving consent...

What did it mean for you to start?

For me to start shooting. Because, basically, if he was the one deciding on the targets... In the beginning he tried setting my targets, but that was no way to work. I had to have my scout to guide a mine for me, and he simply just... he gave me the signal to go. And the way I started...I was literally setting targets for myself, choosing the places where they were firing. What they say about houses being demolished... We never targeted the houses.

And why?

No one ever fired from the houses. They were shooting from...

All right, but whose decision was it, let's say, to avoid hitting the houses? How did it come to that request for precise targeting of specific places?

Look, in the beginning there was a problem of inadequate amount of equipment, targeting devices and so on. Later we organized, i.e. one targeting device – that's how much shooting there was – was used on three weapons... Weapons. I'm using the old term – weapon. The possible offsets were clear. Anyway, that targeting device was carried around all the time, but it was checked where it fell. The place from where they fired was more or less monitored all the time. The area where the mortar was located, where we used to go and shoot, and the retreat followed immediately – so, we literally had to wait. So... I mean... This one time, as they've said, 'you hit the shutter, why didn't you continue?' I guess they came to pick up the wounded and ***** with a truck called 'desetka'. I guess there was a lot, but we didn't know it. We immediately put it in order, and that was it. It was, like a criticism... Anyway, as he used to note...and they seized fire during that time. He gave me permission to start, and on the other side the mortars and recoilless

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rifles stopped firing. So, we actually found... We needed to wait longer... Anyway, when it turned out that our men were in some kind of trouble, he would be precise about the target, he would mention the number, i.e. more or less. He never talked openly about the location or anything. He let us, lower-level commanders, so to say, to arrange it over the radio or whatever. The same thing happened when those Montenegrins penetrated the station. Our men retreated, i.e. I started using the mortars, as instructed by Ceki, who was the commander at that time... He even... I think he exaggerated a bit... He picked building entrances, the right entrance, the left entrance... It was a bit exaggerated. But ok, that building was small, and there were those rocks on the station, so I guess it also added to the effect. At that time, actually... I have to say Praljak was always... And when Kosta died, that action he was involved in up there...

That was the 'Triangl'?

Yes. Different, contradictory things were thought of Kosta. Kosta was a strict commander. ***** When Škaf (???), one of Kosta's soldiers, died, Praljak went to get him out.

Were you present?

At that time, I was taking mines from the command center, and Kosta came to get Praljak, all red in the face. And Praljak immediately went up there. It's interesting he was leaving the command center like that. He went up there and later I noticed he was all dirty...

Praljak went to get him out?

Yes, yes. He never left the army handle the crisis on their own. And that thing they asked me about the station... He returned among the soldiers, and they went, they went to occupy the station. Let me just point that out – after Montenegrins penetrated the station, that poor guy from Zagreb who was driving the self-propelled artillery vehicle got lost. He drove out in the vehicle and headed towards the station, not left... if he had gone right, I guess he would reach them, I guess that was his intention. And instead of going left or back, he went towards the station, and that's when the engine turned off. The self-propelled artillery vehicle has a motor which is a bit complicated to turn on. The commander of the vehicle had no other option, but to shoot. So, he used his ammunition, low-caliber, flammable and instant. And, that's what actually destroyed the station. Then the station burst into flames, it was torn down, and later they found *****

There's a story...

Just a moment... Let me finish this. Then Praljak, actually, led the army back to the station.

What do you mean when you say he led it back? What did he do?

Oh, actually, he... Wherever he went, he was like 'we have to do it'. In fact, we went in order to do it. He...he didn't hide, so someone could find an excuse, 'he's hiding and I have to go'.

How would you explain that event, let's say, to a judge in Haag who doesn't know anything about a war and what it's like when bullets are flying around one's head; how would you describe that – Praljak returning to the station with his men? What did Praljak do then? Now, what was the key element for motivating those men? Because the army had already retreated...

First of all, the fact that he appeared, that he arrived there, meant something. And besides, we were headed back, and he headed for the station. So, even those who weren't in favor of going, didn't want to back down. They wouldn't dare, because he led the way.

So, Praljak took the lead?

Yes, he walked, and he was gone. Gone!

Gone?

Gone! Walking. He always walked upright. Moreover, he always carried his rifle in the hand. He never held it like he was ready to fire. It's just that he always made sure people knew that... The others felt secure because of that and that's what got them there. Now, I have to point out, the Chetniks continued shooting at us from the station. Then, Praljak reached a smart conclusion that they didn't want anyone to see their dead or to know their number, or anything else... They retreated after they took their dead, and by eight o'clock in the evening you could literally walk around freely, even drive a car...

Is it true Praljak walked and the self-propelled artillery vehicle followed him?

The vehicle was at the intersection.

But before it reached the intersection. Is it true it was actually in a courtyard?

Yes, yes. It was in a courtyard...

Right! And how did it actually go out?

It went out of the courtyard... They had already reached...

You were there?

I wasn't at the station at that time, but later... I was with the mortars down there... They went into the station and spread. They went into the warehouse, transportation office, because that's where our guards used to be. That was important. Our guys from the station retreated all the way behind the gas station, that building, and the recoilless rifles

were with them, because they carried everything with them. The recoilless rifle is a mean weapon. It pierced, it pierces the building and destroys the ceiling, this or that, it doesn't matter. And it hit the building a couple of times, and during the commotion the self-propelled vehicle... Someone did issue an order, I don't know who... The vehicle moved, but instead retreating, I guess in all that commotion, it moved forward – towards them. And then it started shooting. They didn't...

Where was Praljak at that time?

I think he was up there, but I don't know where exactly... I think he was there ***** the 'Boars'. I don't know. I can't say anything, because I don't know, I don't know that. I only know he was up there, but I don't know where exactly. Because all of the guys that were here... As they pulled back and took their position, the recoilless rifle already started firing at them... and the commotion started. It was a chaos. And during all that...

Now tell me something else... So, there is one more event, and I would like to know if I could collect more information about it – the scaffold, men retreating, stopping...

Yes...

...returning of the army. Do you know about it?

There was only running away from small, individual groups spreading the panic. Actually, their fear...

But a situation where Praljak was on the scaffold stopping those men...

That was when...

That was the event?

Yes. When the panic starts spreading like that... This will not sound fair, but... the director of 'Electra'! His house was up there... True, it was in the neutral zone, between the two fires, one, as well as the other. He was here, in the army, and during every shooting he kept guard on the scaffold... But on the other side. I mean, those who knew who he was and where he was from, noticed it right away. I guess to stay out of sight, to move, to hide. I can say it is normal that the fear gets the best of you a couple of times, but... I wouldn't exactly behave like that, posing that much – no way. Anyway, I can say that Praljak received an order that we should get ready to move out. I think that's how it was, and we were to abandon this territory. I think that's how it was. It happened at that time, during that month when Kostajnica fell. He asked our opinion, openly... I told him what I wanted to say, and it was interesting I wasn't the only one. I was to stay regardless of the army and organization, I was determined to follow it through, do the work, but staying on this bank, and my deputy or whomever, he can continue on the other side. That confused him a bit, and after he heard the others, he said 'If you're staying, then I'm

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staying too'. He reached a decision that wasn't in accordance with orders coming from Zagreb, from the higher-level command center. That's what he said. There was probably some kind of pressure because he pointed out that we would have to move to reserve positions. I.e. the reserve positions... We build only three bunkers, three machinegun nests, in case of an aerial attack coming from behind us, so we could defend ourselves from that side as well. It was really a huge area. They had aviation, and we didn't have enough weapons to fight the aviation, let alone... Not even to fight the infantry... That what he mentioned, I suppose he let Zagreb know that we moved to the reserve positions. I suppose that. Later, it turned out that place was quiet, and negotiations continued. Because, the Serbian side was interested only in the railway station, wheat in the wagons and the road. Nothing else. This was a deadlock for them. As it was for Croatia, and...

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... i.e. in the context of regulating and forming the army, there was some haggling with the other side over the radio...

Yes, yes...

...they called each other 'ujo', 'ćedo'. Do you know anything about that?

Yes, yes. In short, I don't know if you're familiar with the military, i.e. police frequency. In the police frequency every channel is different by 50Hz, it uses a 2-meter system, semi-duplex and semi-simplex. Let's say, the semi-simplex functions on a certain frequency and every next channel is 50Hz plus or minus, the way the channel moves up and down. The police repeaters in the entire Yugoslavia used plus 4000Hz, and the military used minus. Let me give you an example... you talk using 1500, i.e. 150000, your signal goes to 19000 and returns under 15... 150000. 190000 and 150000, if you understand me. The police, i.e. the military one, go the other way around, down. Those who managed to master all that, were able to keep track. There were a lot of police Motorola radio devices, and those that were up there used the big one, and they always negotiated. Moreover, they asked about certain names. It depended. They entered literally all connection systems. Praljak himself... Actually, that's the reason we received the order to use a very rare police channel 37, and without a repeater. So, only direct connection. They could hear us, but we couldn't hear them. Something like that. They couldn't mess anything up for us, our internal connections. And during long talks he used to issue an order to use a doubled connection. The doubled connection - it's a bit hard to understand that. We didn't have individual groups. It was at the station, here on our side only the commanders had it. When I say 'doubled connection', that means that my commander and I have to be together, i.e. his and my connection have to be combined, and we both use one of them. That way I actually control my commander, and he controls me. During one period we use his connection, and during another period we use mine. It could have been discovered, although Slobodan never had time for that, and I assume he never had a way

of discovering that. That selection, that music playing, discovers the connection. I doubt he ever controlled it, but after it became known, talks to the other side stopped.

Were there any situations where those talks and haggling caused some kind of damage?

Not on our side. The only thing was that the connection was busy, what we later ***** I.e., here's an example, in the connection center, Sunja, now there is a colonel, he is in Zagreb, they were all ***** guys. In case of an attack they would immediately open four reserve connections. The radio connection was not mentioned anywhere. They immediately opened four additional telephone connections; it worked perfectly, and Slobodan himself maintained them. That's true. Later, after the 17th Home Guard Regiment was formed, the commotion started, the artillery hits and targets data were leaking to the other side. In fact, they came from completely different sides, and from them.

Tell me, do you know anything about the wood auction? The auction of wood and stuff people left behind?

Oh! The sale! I know. I know, I know. That's the time when my wife bought a TV stand and for the sink. And then he, later ***** 'well, don't you want this?, don't you want that?'

And he was selling?

Oh, actually, he was that guy saying 'going once, going twice', and it went to the highest bidder. They raised...it was a company selling furniture up there. And now, it scattered. I mean, there's nothing to say about it...the army was there, and a chair would break; they wouldn't fix it, they just got a new one.

Yes, yes, but what was the point of that?

He collected everything so it could be used.

Oh. What does that mean? Praljak's wish was not to scatter it?

Exactly. So people wouldn't think they could just take it, but that there was some kind of order to be followed ***** It was all located there, and now the store was in the center, the yard was fenced, it was big... Our craftsmen were there, they fixed as much as they could. The locals were notified and called to come and buy whatever they wanted. The prices were more than reasonable, but there was... You just pay and take it.

That's how it was organized?

Yes.

And what was the money used for?

I think it was for the children of the fallen defenders. I think... but don't take my word for it because there were a lot of similar actions, so I've heard different stories, and I don't like to talk about it...

There were a lot when Praljak was in charge or there were a lot in general?

Later.

Later. And there was only that one when Praljak was in charge?

When Praljak was there, there was only that one; that's how the money was collected, and it was settled. As far as I know, something similar happened with corn ***** 'Posavka'. The money was used to rebuild the church. There were some really good moves, but I don't know who used it later and in what way. Because we were formed, coordinated, and we had our own income. We would all get our pay, and some of that money was used for the representation, i.e. one daily wage was given to the children. That was usual. Those who opposed it and refused, they had to justify it and sign, and so on...

Tell me this, and I'll stop... We have Žremen. I have a note – bomb explosion during fire. And we have an information – leaving positions, panic and Praljak's alleged threat 'I'll slaughter their cattle'. Do you know about it?

That was that, involving the cows.

That was it? So, we finished that one.

That was, that was... How should I describe it? People who live off their cattle; you have no other option, but to deprive them of it. Then they will obey.

And what? Then he said 'I'll slaughter your cattle!'... And?

Yes, well, in the end, when we stayed behind as a smaller part, he gathered everyone – people from Bobovac and their cattle... But it happened in revolt, because they couldn't be dealt with any other... They were very difficult people. Besides, you'll see it this afternoon, you'll meet Ivo Klarić, he's their neighbor. No, he's not like that, he's a lot smarter; he's here in the municipality every day, meeting some people, but you'll see – he is a very difficult man. And they were even more difficult. I mean, that's how it is. And regarding the bomb... Žreme was specific. And Praljak... it was a task he... through some of his sponsors; I don't know, he called someone. They received rubber boots, fishing boats, all kinds of stuff. Because in that area people had to have... people! The army had to have rubber boots in order to reach bunkers. There was water everywhere.

What? So, Praljak also used to supply the army with rubber boots?

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Yes. He... Actually, it wasn't a part of military equipment, but he... he got it from someone. He thought of it, got it and gave it to the guards. Because the guards... Sunja, the river was calm. When you looked at it, it seemed very calm... You couldn't even notice it was flowing. You could throw a leaf into the water and then sit and wait half an hour just to see if it moves. But, in fact, it could flood everything within an hour. During that season it was literally impossible to leave the bunker. The bunker was up there, on top, raised; it was dry, but they couldn't leave it, they couldn't go home, couldn't reach their homes; it was possible only in fishing boats, i.e. during winter ***** The food was carried in nylon bags, the wood was in the haversack. ***** He organized that too. Then, later, some kind of transportation, those vehicles with winches; a lot of got hurt ***** The terrain was very difficult, very difficult. That terrain shouldn't have been guarded in the first place, because it made no sense, but the river was the only reason, Sunja, which was like some kind of natural shield. The embankment couldn't be walked on, because the enemy was shooting, and the water was below. Now, some of our guys were there, in one of the bunkers, and they had a bomb; they lit a fire... Actually, they wanted to make some coffee, so they lit a fire to warm themselves a bit, and while they were doing it, the bomb fuse got pulled out... They didn't pay attention to where they left the bomb, so it fell; and since the fire was burning, and water was there... There were three of them. Luckily, they weren't badly hurt. One of them lost an eye, that was the worst thing. The other one...it passed right by his knee, and the third one was just scratched; actually, he got scared... But we have a scout here who was a member of the 17th Home Guard Regiment; he works in 'Elektra', a very nice guy. I guess he was a bit drunk, and the other guys were teasing him, and he wanted to throw a bomb. Now, I don't know if he wanted to throw it or he was just holding it, so they wouldn't bother him... He lay on a bed, a military metal bed with a mattress, and the bomb rolled away from his hand and fell next to him... He never even woke up. He was woken up by the guys dragging him. There, you see what happens...

Zagreb, February 2005.