

Hrgovicjosip

Here I am switching on, and would you please introduce yourself to me.

My name is Josip Hrgovic, retired colonel, Croatian Air force. Since year 1991 to my retirement I was commander of the transportation wing, including the time we are talking about – which is the year of 1992 and a part of the year 1993.

Would you tell me, before we start to discuss what we are going to talk about - and that is mixed transportation Wing and its activities in the year 1992. – well, before 5. month of the year 1992, where were you? You were not at the really secure localities, is that so?

Yes. I enlisted the Croatian Army on 08.07.1991 and somewhere in the beginning of the 10. Month of the same year, I began to work in the Independent Air Unit in the town of Dakovo. That means it is the same unit which had the tasks to bomb Vukovar with so called “Boilers”, transport medical aid to Vukovar hospital, relative to bombing and some air support to our forces at all other locations in eastern Slavonija. It means locations where our small plane could reach. This lasted until the death of our colleagues, on 02.12.1991, when we realized, we were simply non stop their target, and they have found the way to shoot down our planes and we simply had to retreat.

I and another group went to the town of Bjelovar – meaning under the orders of that time general Tus, an Independent Bjelovar Air Section was formed, and I was the commander. We were stationed in Bjelovar, and carried out the same tasks transporting the wounded from the western front towards Zagreb; we accomplished 4 bombing raids with AT/400 planes over the Serbian positions in western Slavonija. All of that lasted, the fighting actions and some to say so, peace time activities after recognition of Croatia in the beginning of the year 1992, all of that lasted somewhere to the fort month of the year 1992, when we returned to Zagreb.

In the fifth month of the year 1993, a Mixed Transportation Escadrille was formed in the town of Lucko, and I was the commander: meaning under the orders of general Agotic, Commander of the Air Force. Not long after the forming of this Escadrille when we thought there are no more fighting actions, there are no war tasks, a situation came up where we were simply forced to help to region of Cazin, to the enclave surrounded by all sides by Serbs, and there were Croats and Muslims together, they were fighting together against Serbians.

It means, the orders came we had to provide via air, make an air bridge in order to deliver food, clothing, cigarettes and the most important ammunitions and armaments, some money and some people – to retrieve Croats and Muslims, firstly women and children and their wounded. The exact data, momentarily I could not say, but I think we transported somewhere over 100 tons of cargo in to region of Cazin, on the Coralice Airport, and some hundreds women, children and wounded

We returned to Croatian territory – meaning most frequently to Zagreb, several times to the town of Pula, because of weather situations we could not land in Zagreb. Meaning this lasted, such tasks, to the end of the year 1992. – meaning last flights were made even on 30.12.1992

There were take-offs from Aerodromes Pleso, Lucko, and even Pula, all of it in order to avoid hostile fire from the Serbian territory, over which we had to fly no matter what side we were coming from.

Excuse me for interruption. You said, there were take-offs from Lucko, Pula and where else?

From aerodrome Pleso.

Off Pleso?

That is right.

Those entire take-offs were under your command?

That is right.

... Or were there some other crews and some other aircrafts? Was all of that your escadrille?

You see, this way: this was a mixed transportation escadrille containing also the helicopters – but the boys that flew the helicopters, and the helicopters themselves did not make any flight, because the crews were not qualified for that kind of flight conditions, meaning night, which is very difficult to do. It means, we could do that with the planes.

Personally I managed and commanded all of those tasks. I planned the times of take-offs, ordered the crews, ordered the locations of the take-offs. Simply we went with different times in order to deceive the Serbs: meaning one day we would take off at nine in the evening, when they least expect us, and next day at three in the morning, and than two days we would not go, and than next day we take off at midnight. And we take off from Lucko, that from Pleso. If we took off, for example, from Zagreb it would happen we land at Pula – it means in order to interrupt flyovers at different places, of the demarcation line and military positions of the Serbs, who would, normally, fire at us whenever they could hear or see us.

Well, they fired at you?

That is right.

Were there any losses?

No. There was not. Indeed we did not loose any planes, or men. I don't know ...Due to our fitness, we paid attention to all smart advices and thanks to those different times and locations of the flyovers over military positions, and there was lots of luck. To be sincere, there was lots of luck.

Can we basically start with this technical information which is necessary: well, with how many aircraft did you have at your disposal, and what type?

It implies this way: in the beginning they were AN-2, "Antonov2" – biplane which has cloth covered wings, and has the fuel reservoirs in the wings and uses B 130 fuel, if you consider an automobile uses 98 octane fuel, you can imagine what kind of fuel is 130 octane. I mean to say: flammable. It means any, even single bullet from "Kalashnikov", or any kind of rifle, if it passes through the wing – that very instant triggers an explosion. I think ... without any doubt - it would explode. Considering this, the risk was greater.

Somewhere in the second half of the year 1992, I really don't know which way or from whom, a plane type C212 a "cassa" Spanish made airplane arrived, it had two engines, it was far better equipped, better and stronger than AN2, and a few of us with the help of the instructor from France in very short time acquired the training for that plane, so to start with, the three of us myself, Rajtar and Zrna – started flying that plane, taking turns as crew of two members. At the same time, I should point out; we began the flight instructions for the pilots, the Muslims from Cazin, on the AN2 and "Cassa" C212. On the AN2 we completed the instructions to the level where their crews were capable, in the second half of the year, to complete the missions on their own: to conduct flyovers to Cazin and back under the night condition flying, which was very complicated. Everyone in the profession knows it.

The AN2 plane is not at all equipped for night flying, which means it requires quite a lot of experience, fitness and knowledge to land such a plane overloaded with cargo at some airport neither lit up as the airports should be, nor wide or long enough, with unmarked obstructions in the vicinity of the airport and so on. It was especially complicated for the "Cassa" plane, which was much faster, and needs width and lit up runway and longer and so on. The advantage was it was equipped with instruments, had two engines, was stronger, and could fly higher – on the other hand it was more complicated to land securely. We flew simultaneously the ANs and "cassa".

"Cassa" we had only one?

Only one "cassa".

And ANs ?

ANs we had several, three to four. It depended on the fitness, because we had trouble with the parts. There were never enough parts, never enough tires, to get a replacement part for something, was very difficult, so we had to look to aero-clubs who at some time had AN2s, agricultural aviation, to borrow, make do in order to enable at least two, so we had them at disposal for flights. There was only one "cassa", difficult to maintain even more difficult than ANs, because we had no replacement parts. It took the ingenuity of our mechanics, to maintain, to keep it technically fit to be available for the flyovers.

Regardless of technical problems you had, and all the improvisations, were those flights made?

Absolutely, those flights were made. At the moment I can't say exactly, but I believe the command of the Air Force has correct information how many ... Because I had to send a complete report every week, and month, respectively to the Air Force Command

about completed flights. Meaning: hours of flights, number of flights, quantity of the freight transferred...

About kind of cargo?

Absolutely, the kind of cargo!

That was entered under the code name "Pula"? Or? How was the destination entered in the reports?

Well, in the reports to the Air Force Command, it was entered precisely what was transferred and where it went. At the same time in our conversations, telephone conversations, even in my journal, the one I kept, we were using expressions like "Pula", under the quotes – thinking, should it come into somebody's hands, one would not understand the right meaning. When we talk on the phone and say "flies to Pula" but we know it goes to Cazin. That was an in-house conversation between us. We understood each other completely – but the reports went there and they should exist somewhere.

Now well, my next question refers precisely to that. Now we are in the year 2005. and we are asking ourselves where is this documentation situated? Do you have any information regarding this, respectively do you have some copies of the reports you were sending?

No, The reports were always made in two copies: One copy remained with me in the Escadrille in the command, and one, the original we sent to the Air Force Command – with proviso where we were obliged to turn over at the end of every year all our completed reports and all our documentation, packed and complete to the Air Force Command to the archives. That means there was no necessity to keep that kind of documentation in the Escadrille. In the Escadrille we kept only documents pertinent exclusively to flights by each pilot, due to our qualifying, giving vocations, categories of flying, - and everything else went to the archives of the Air Force Command.

Meaning, under the ideal circumstances they should be there today?

Absolutely, it has to be because ... I say I had to every week orally, the half written, had to orally ... But at the end of every month I had to write the monthly report. Meaning about the quantity of flights, kind and quantity of cargo and number of the people we brought from Cazin to Croatia.

Would you simply tell me, if I start digging into it, this documentation is registered as what? Like documentation of the Mixed Transportation Escadrille?

I believe in the section of the archive there, exists something as to where are the flight reports.

The flight reports?

That is right. It should be there. Because the report contains first of all, how many flying hours in the month. Respectively there were provisions for entering what kind of tasks were done, there was slot for entering kind of cargo, number of people transported from

there et cetera. It means, in this one report everything was combined, but I believe and think this has to be in those monthly reports of completed flights.

That is at Pleso, is that right?

That is right; The Air Force Command is momentarily at Pleso.

And I suppose the archive is there, because it didn't arrive to our archive.

Indeed, I don't know, but it must be in the Air Force Command because it is a written trail, it had a class, registration number, had the seal, I do not believe it would be thrown somewhere.

Do you perhaps have your own evidence about the classes and registration numbers?

Do not have. Do not have. Because all those so called jackets, when the year is up, than everything is packed, completed and sent, than next year from the beginning.

Well, let's return to what interests us. The Mixed Transportation Escadrille did have in the time from 5. or 6. Month of the year 1992. to the end of the year, lots of work flying – on what relation?

Do you mean the concrete tasks to Cazin?

Yes. Yes.

Yes, this way, well they were war tasks, which the escadrille, simply, completed on the orders of the general at the time Agotic. They were the routes...

It means Agotic new all about it?

Absolutely

He was giving you written or verbal orders? How was it?

Sometimes it was written, but 95% was verbal meaning by phone – wherein I had to go to Air Force Command for dialogue, arrangements etc. That means for some directions for the coming week and so on, where we were given concrete tasks. Lets say, because in the Cazin region, there was also HVO – well, Croats, Croatian Army to say so – and TO – Territorial Defence where the Muslims were. Meaning it was always known if the transport goes to TO and what is transported, respectively if it is transported for HVO then to say so, the representatives of the Croatian army would wait and take over the cargo in Coralici. However according to me, as you see from this documentation, there was approximately 90% flying for TO, it means for Muslim part of the army and some for us.

Mr. Agotic knew what was transported and what is coming back...

Obviously.

Was he personally interested, informed about details? How did that function?

Well, he was not informed daily about it, he had his assistants who were compelled to monitor our work, who definitely informed him about it, but again I have been duty bound to present all data regarding our completions - to them, respectively to him, when he would invite me for discussions, to get some directions if necessary.

It means, he was in any case, absolutely informed, moreover, I was not at the level which decided neither the kind of the cargo, nor which people should be brought back, and so on. It means we simply completed what was ordered.

Can you describe a bit what are Coralici, what did that look alike? You were landing there. Onto what? That was clear improvisation?

That is right. It means, that airport, let's call it so, under the quotes that is in reality a small airfield, a meadow rolled with rollers, to make the base harder. Left and right from the strip, some improvised bulbs were placed.

They are the ones from refrigerators?

Well, they could be from the refrigerators. We have used, let's say the ones from the tractor flashers, because they are allegedly very strong, they do not burn out too often. I really do not know what they were using, but mainly they marked that strip - the word improvisation by itself is adequate. If we are talking about those times and those circumstances, that was simply maximum they could provide.

Meaning, we did not depend on some facilities but, let's go, on our own experience, ingenuity, that we would be able to use minute provisions they provided, and we did use them. That strip was situated in a very unsuitable location. It was at end of a ravine. I would say, surrounded on all sides by the hills. Everybody in the profession knows what it means to land at night at the bottom of some ravine where on the sides there are height obstructions, hills not marked by anything: it means complete darkness – and only at the end of that small ravine there are two rows of lights indicating there is some kind of a strip.

We had terribly (very) skilled men, terribly (very) competent men, is that right?

Well, it was really ...

It looks that this entire flying group were powerfully skilful men with big hearts and with lots of knowledge?

Well, they were in general. That was the unit, now well, no connection to this, the unit from the year 1991, that performed let's say the same tasks. We gathered such people – and most of all the people who wanted to go voluntarily. It means, nobody forced them, but ...

Are you speaking about flights to Coralic?

That is right. The flights to Coralic. All of them were volunteers, respectfully they were all volunteers. It means the complete unit. And indeed, the ingenuity, luck and heartiness were needed to dive into the darkness and to touch the strip somewhere on the bottom, like at the bottom of a trough, - therefore I keep mentioning, all the people who would eventually listen to this, who are in the profession, they know what that means. A plane that has no instruments at all, one "Antonov 2" is an archaic

plane, biplane it was not designed for such tasks, not even close, and to add it there were no terrain arrangements to give us any direction as to where, what and how – but we succeeded. I say we never had any mishaps, not to mention some catastrophe, like losing a plane or men.

Tell me, the flight controller in Coralici was Malnar, is that right?

I have to be truthful ... I do not remember. I don't remember the name, but that was not flight control in the right sense, what the flight controller can ... He was needed so we could get in touch with him only to tell him when to put the lights on.

The airport was surrounded, as much as we were told, Serbian forces were some five to seven kilometres in a circle around the airport.

That means only five kilometres?

Five to seven kilometres – according to them. Relatively, we were to suppose that they also had some fighting planes which could fly by night, and if those lights were lit too long – in the complete dark that would be exceptionally visible, and they would fire on the spot. So we were flying towards the position of the airport and in the last moment we would tell him to put the lights on, so the lights would shine for the shortest time, and as soon as we touched the ground we would tell him to put the lights out.

Did Serbians ever discover Coralic?

I don't know, I have no information. I believe they did, because in as much as they were waiting for us, fired at us, they knew where we are going. Now well, what kind of information they had about Coralic ...

But they could technically fire at you?

Absolutely.

And could they cover Coralic?

Absolutely. Look, there was an occasion. When we landed for the first time, only once did we sleep there. Never again. Jokingly I like to say: better we wouldn't have, because when in the daytime we saw the surrounding hills, and when we realised we almost licked the brinks of the hills because simply we couldn't do otherwise. We had to go very low so we could get some estimate for landing and to land. Well that is the only time when we slept over. Well, I had the honour to say how I was the first one landed in Coralic. When we landed and shut the engine, thick dark, and imagine this kind of situation which was funny later, but at that moment, like this, very unpleasant... They were happy, normally, because we arrived ...

They? When you say “they” you are thinking about ...?

The Muslims, those people who waited for us in Coralic. And when we slowly taxied on the ground with our weak reflector, so we could stay on the narrow runway and not to get into some canal or something similar and when we finally stopped we saw a group of people waiting for us. We supposed, here, that is the group who

are waiting for us. We shut the engine off and at that moment I opened the window. I had the roll of the captain. I opened the window and a man from below took our picture. He used the flash. Well imagine, when the flash goes off in the in the thick darkness! It sliced through us! Normally, the first thought was a grenade exploded. We were irate, I said what is the matter with you man? Picture taking? But what? He did it, with best intentions to save for some history of theirs and he didn't think about our survival and what we went through. Well a bit funny situation. Essentially we spent the night there and tomorrow we've seen that.

Where did they accommodate you?

Well mainly we've been in the private homes

Muslim homes?

Yes, yes, Muslim homes. They treated us whatever they had – and they really had nothing. When is said treating, the army – one is thinking of something to drink. They asked us for example, what would you like to drink, ourselves lucky we were able to land – somebody would a beer somebody a glass of wine – and they say “boys, what is wrong with you? We haven't got such stuff for months”. They had some miserable Champaign; normally nobody wants to drink it. And then we joked somewhat and let's go, went to sleep.

Next day they brought us an accordion player from Sarajevo. That man, don't know his name, but he played in the Radio and TV Sarajevo orchestra. Which means, real professional, so here to treat us, he would play for us on his accordion, to relax us a bit? During the day we've seen on the surrounding hills there were people – I say, just alike a fair. Because all of them walked on the rim of those hills, set down and looked down at the planes and all are waiting, when will the planes take off towards Zagreb. And we are distressed, how we could tell everyone not to phone, not to talk things over, do not shout to each other, because Serbs are listening to all of it. Not only did they know we would fly to Zagreb, - but they knew the minute we would get going. Poor people overcome by some kind of happiness, had no idea, to let's say, are revealing some information protecting our safety. But in general, anyways ... Fortunately we returned. Never again did we sleep over, every time we landed, we would not shut the engine, while the motor ran the cargo was unloaded and the people who – again Muslim part of the army decided, who and how we didn't know because it was dark, and we couldn't see where they were led from and how – meaning they brought women, children and wounded, firstly wounded and they were taken back to Zagreb. I declare there were several hundreds women, children, wounded etc. transferred to Croatian territory.

You claim they were mainly Muslims?

Mostly. I claim it was 90% Muslim population, but the wounded – they were from TO or HVO, there was no selection, meaning everybody wounded had absolute priority – and all remaining seats were filled by women and children.

And at the arrival to Zagreb, meaning on return from Coralic, who would take over the wounded?

The wounded were taken over ... That was nicely organized. Meaning with radio connection we had, in reference the representatives of the Muslim Army, who were in Zagreb district, who were

managing those actions together with the Command of HRZ (Croatian Air Force), they had the information we would bring two, three etc – they would wait with an ambulance at airport Pleso, Lucko or Pula, not essential now, and drive them according to the arrangements.

We didn't know that, it was out of our domain and didn't interest us. Also they had some mini-buses, all the men we brought in, they would drive away. Well, only they know where.

Did you get tired? Would you like some ...

I didn't, let's go on.

Well, now we shall talk a bit about what did you, according to your information, transfer to Coralic?

There was diverse cargo. Primarily whatever was appealing for the military – for HVO and for TO, more for TO – there were weapons from rifles to mortars, “Kalashnikovs” we carried lots of them, there were rifles, snipers, from “gun-smith Kranj” – meaning quality rifles, mostly all kinds of arms, explosives, bombs, I was always frightened to death looking at those, but it was necessary, the boxes were crammed. Everything was nicely packed, always only what the plane could carry. Meaning if AN-2 was going then approximately a ton to ton and a half was loaded.

You never flew half empty?

No, no, always maximum as much as we could cram, when you go then ...

Meaning into AN-2 whatever it would hold?

Somewhere up to a ton and a half of cargo. You know, in that line of business goes... On account of the fuel you can load. If there is more fuel, then there is less cargo and vice versa. Because of short distance.. Meaning the flight is relatively short for the aviation we could load minimum of fuel necessary to there and back, and eventually for some alternative if we can't land in Zagreb to have enough fuel to Pula, everything else, left over, what is foreseen for cargo, was going to “useful load” whatever they needed. That means, primarily the armaments: ammunitions and arms, varied short and long, and other, antitank mines etc. Meaning, everything the army needs, and what we could cram in that plane according to gabarit. (Regulation standard)

As the crew, you knew what you were transporting?

Absolutely.

Every time you knew?

Absolutely, yes. Because AN-2 is such a plane where everything in cargo space, what is placed, in order to get to pilot's place, to sit, we had to pass over the cargo and whether you like it or not, you simply see. Besides, during loading our control was there

to arrange distribution of the load, because that was essential for the plane and to control overloading, in which case we wouldn't be able neither to take off nor to fly. That is concerning, that is number one – armaments I munitions. Than necessary equipment: from some kind of tents to clothes. Meaning boots, there was never enough of them, we knew ...

They were army boots?

Army boots, that's right. The boots were taken out of the boxes and dumped that way, so more of them would be loaded, clothes, which were also needed ...

Civilian or military clothes?

No, no, also military, uniforms. Only military clothes bought here by their representatives and transported in their vehicles to Lucko Airport.

What does it mean their representatives? Were they Muslims...

That is right.

...the ones who were in Zagreb?

That's right. That means, there was their crew from five to six men. They had in some designated locations their warehouses; they would fill them up with clothes, footwear, armaments etc...

What locations were those warehouses at?

I don't know, really don't know. I know one warehouse was in Lucko. That was the most simple for them, when they buy something, they would transport and place in that warehouse at Lucko, because that was close to the loading location. That was most convenient. Those representatives of theirs kept radio contact with Cazin, talked, made arrangement; they knew what was most critical.

Where was the centre of radio connection?

For a long time the radio connection was at Jarun. It means, at the end, where the rowing club is, that is the building, there they had their radio station where ...we entered there to see what does it look like, they had fantastic equipment. It means, concerning the money, obviously, they didn't lack any. They could buy all the gear.

Did they let you come inside?

Yes, yes, well we were in general with them ...

That means at the time there no problems existed? That was in the year 1992.?

Yes, the year 1992. Because we were the ones who performed, it is logical they would let us see the way they are communicating. It means, they had constant connection with Cazin, and there was their team of four five men who were engaged in the task.

of transporting people from Cazin, accepting the wounded, respectfully that was the crew buying the armaments – don't ask me how and from whom – and stored it ...

Not to ask you because you don't know, or because you do not wish to say?

No, I don't know, really I don't know. Everything that was out of our domain, they were such times we didn't ask, neither had I had interest. Truthfully, we had enough of our own torments and problems to transport stuff there, and they had to bring it to the plane and load up. Well, now, we started about kinds of loads...

Just a minute, let's complete this. It means those people who were here at Jarun, according to your evaluation, were well equipped to maintain the connection?

Absolutely. Super.

That was how many? Five six people were there?

Well, five, six people, I don't know. One or two were around the radio station, or even one who was on duty all the time, and three to four were ... One was guarding the warehouse, he was the "key of the storage", as they say, and those two, three they were operatives who well, communicated with us, transferred wishes, commands ...

That means it was the following variant: they have permanent contact with Cazin, is that right?

That is right.

And then when they find out what is needed, they provide, respectively contact you at Lucko?

Yes, respectively with the Croatian Air Force Command.

Means, it was that way. Tell me, do you know the names of the men who were at Jarun?

Well, they are Senad Palic, then this Bibanovic I Bajo Hadzic – they were the three man group, they were their operatives.

Tell me once more the names. How did you say? Senad?

Palic, then Bibanovic I Hadzic, so-called Bajo.

What is with these people today, do you know?

Well this way: Palic Senad lives and works, he has a house by Velika Gorica. He works on installations of central heating, water etc. Bibanovic returned to Bihac. For some time as we heard, he worked at customs. I think he is still there, but I'm not sure. And Bajo Hadzic was a contractor before the war; he was financially a bit stronger. During the war he joined and did what he did, and after the war returned to his old vocation. I think the involvement is some kind of truck transport, fuel tankers etc.

Where does he live?

He is also in Bihac.

Tell me is it possible to get to these people; and do you think on account of your acquaintance, could I talk to them?

I think it is possible, because ... Lets say, that Bibanovic ended up in a hospital not long ago, somewhere in the eleventh month seems, he was sick so a colleague and I called him up, we talked. I don't know who told us, how we found out, we asked him how he is doing etc. Well some link is maintained.

Would you help me to get in touch wit him?

Absolutely. In any case. Senad Palic, well, we communicate, he sends me greetings at Christmas and rest, I send him greetings at Kurban Bajram, etc. we are already used to it. However, with this Bajo, he was the boss of their operative in Zagreb at the time, I'm not in touch with him and really for a long time I didn't hear or see him.

Well, but with Palic and Bibanovic you think it is possible?

Absolutely and I believe it would ...

I am very interested in them. I would like to get acquainted and talk with them. Well, we mentioned the cargo you were carrying. You said it was varied cargo?

Yes.

One of the stories that interest me is carrying of money.

Yes, yes. All right, the main things we mentioned were armaments, ammunitions and military equipment, clothing, footwear etc. – everything that a soldier needs. However, there was, to say so, interesting things. Jokingly I use to say I was one of the rare pilots who carried a plane full of money. And indeed I did.

And is that a good feeling?

Well, from that, I had no profit. That is to say, that was the money they were printing on the territory of Zagreb in the second half of the year 1992., because simply they had no means to complete the payment in that enclave, they were separated from the rest of the BiH. Meaning they were on their own, and in that sense this operating group most likely in agreement with those from Casin – printed a certain sum of money which was valid only and exclusively in the Cazin Territory.

What kind of currency was it?

Truthfully to say – I don't remember. Was it some kind of Dinar, some kind of Mark? Generally it was valid only there. And one evening a truck came, those boxes were loaded, under strict control over everybody present, those operatives and some other men

Who I saw then for the first time, and never again. It means every box going on the plane was accounted for – which is normal when there is a question of money.

Do you know where the money was printed?

Well, somewhere on the territory of Croatia I suppose. But I will not affirm, because I don't know precisely, but it was printed ... It wasn't printed in Cazin, there they couldn't, meaning somewhere here. So I had to crawl over those boxes to the pilot's seat, so jokingly I say I have driven a plane full of money.

Then let's say I personally in several tours have driven million and three hundred, million and four hundred thousand Marks.

Precisely Marks?

Precisely "Deutsch Marks"! The bag was hanging on my shoulder, as I was sitting on the pilot's seat. The bag was hanging this way over ... It means, I was sitting on the left side, here is the empty space between myself and this co-pilot, and that bag was hanging besides me, in that hollow, full of Marks.

It means you were not allowed to take it off?

No I was not, it was closed, and not even one Mark was ever missing. Those moneys were going for the payroll of their army.

Aha, the payroll was going in those Marks?

That is right in the Marks. Then, I say, several times I have driven, that was at the end of month when it's needed, when the payroll goes, they are sending it there, somebody there waits, under his first and last name accepts and it goes on.

How? When you were taking possession of, you have signed some paper for takeover?

No, none paper. I don't know. It was such cooperation with them and it was clear to me, the most important thing was to go and return alive. What he gave me, it was the law for us, and nobody would even think to touch it. It was closed; it couldn't be touched or opened etc.

And when you were delivering, you also didn't sign anything?

No, no.

Nobody signed anything for you? There was no paper?

No, in the air there was no chance, to anything... to pass something to someone or something. It means, when we start from here, they would see me off, and when I land, they would wait for me. It means, whatever I took from there only here I could deliver, and nowhere further.

And did you know the man you were delivering the money to?

No, no.

Was that always the same man, or did they alternate?

Well, roughly they were the same faces, it was dark always, but it could be with the name ...”You will deliver, he will introduce himself as such and such...” and then the man enters the plane, ”I am such and such” with first and last name, “if you please” etc.

With first and last name, there was nothing in cipher?

No. First and last name. The one here tells me. This Bajo Hadzic, “Joso will enter the plane such and such, that is his name, give him the bag and everything is OK” We worked that way. There was no ...

The receiving man, was he in uniform?

Yes.

What kind of insignia he had?

It was dark. Dark, always dark. All the lights were off, but there was enough light from the instrument panel, which was lit, to come to our cabin ...When the cargo is unloaded, then this guy enters, introduces himself etc, that I take the bag off my shoulder and deliver. And that was all the procedure. There were no papers, neither I sign for him, no possibility.. As I say, this one sees me off, and when I land the other one greets me. In essence that was very simple. And the thing, don't know what to say, of trust? In some ways we were depending on each other.

And Mr. Agotic new about that?

Yes. Naturally.

For payouts in this and other currency?

Everything, everything! Absolutely he was informed. They are, not only than, but even now, enormous quantities of money – and naturally the people who were in charge must have known, because even today when you mention million Marks that is ...

And you are telling me a million Marks fits into a bag?

It fits. It fits. Sure! Such beautiful leather ...

And I always thought that would be half a room!

It does not. It does not. When one says “small bag” – but lots, lots fits into it.

And the origin of those moneys? Do you know anything about that?

I neither never asked, nor anybody told me. It was said only: Inside there so much money – just for information, in as much as it didn't matter to me – and I new that was for payroll to the army there.

This Bibanovic would tell you that?

No, no. Bajo Hadzic. On je bio their boss, boss of the operating group, which was on our Zagreb territory.

I am interested in one more thing. You said: on the return flight from Coralic mostly to Zagreb, but not always, the civilians went, the wounded went ...

And children.

... and children, under what principle were the people chosen to enter the plane or who would fly on certain day and certain flight to Zagreb, to Croatia?

Thus way, that was exclusively, means exclusively, ordered by the representatives from the Muslim part of the army in Coralic. It means, when the need was for our = under quotes our, conditionally speaking, the representatives of the HVO, somebody wounded and so on – even they went through that part of the Muslim army. There was as I heard a group of people who ordered, made up the lists etc.

In reality the Muslims were – regardless what was flying either for Muslims or HVO - but it seems, if I understand you correctly, the Muslims were really ...

Those who were ordering!

And they were central for organization, for arrangements, for everything?

That's right. Absolutely. With them exclusively with them arrangements were made, and they are the ones who led to the plane and according to listings strictly controlled, led into the plane. When everybody on the list enters, we close and move. I say we didn't shut the engine off, thinking what if we can't start the engine again, because there were no aggregates to give us the current for restarting, or something like that. So much so, we didn't exit, they would bring this, we would deliver that, they were waiting...

You had no chance to influence? To say I want somebody, this one I don't want?

No.

Nothing?

No. Well, to tell you, once, only one time. A gentleman came from Slovenia, a Slovenian. I am not certain how did he hear and know, most likely from his daughter in law, who stayed behind, with a child. His son, a Slovenian, was a non commissioned officer in the former JNA (Yugoslav Army). When the new situation prevailed, he managed to pull out and went to Slovenia – but the wife and child remainder in the Cazin. Now well this gentleman came crying to me ... Really I don't know who pointed me to him, I am the one ... He found me in the Command of the Croatian Air Force in Zagreb. Somebody told me I have a visit some Slovenian is looking for me – I never heard or seen him before, he introduced himself, who and what he is, and asked me if I had a minute, or two, because he would like to talk with me about something. I accepted, well we set with a coffee and he started this

way – he seem to be, by my judgement some 55 or 60 years old – with tears in his eyes, begging me if there was some way he could get his grandson and his son's wife to Zagreb. I tried to explain to him the procedure about the way the people are getting into the plane, that is not only difficult, I do not get out of the plane, and anyway have no influence. Well that was that, but second day this man came to me again. It was very awkward, every normal man softens to tears, when a 60 year old man is crying to you, and begging on his knees – and I am within my rights to promise to him I would certainly do whatever I can. He gave me his name etc. And when I went next time, we landed in Coralic, I told my colleague to stay, he sat on the right side seat I cant remember who was my co-pilot on that flight, "let the engine run, I am going to get a lady" I told (the old Slovenian) to inform her, what way he did it? Telephone? This way, that way? I do not know – but tell her to wait in this house. Well, it was the first time I've seen that house: That s like a gathering centre, a small one. Generally, all of those who would leave that night for Zagreb would come there

Only those who were supposed – or also the ones who tried, begged?

There was those who tried, begged, because as they say, some arrangement were made, so the people would bring some papers, documents to get on the list, what way, I don't know. But I told him (the old Slovenian) she should come and be there. That was the first time I got out of the plane, and seen, from that plane to the house there are two three ramps, some guard posts, control spots to go through. Meaning when they are placed into the vehicle by the house, the first control comes, where they verify those the right people and there is no surplus, than second control, and than the plane. Meaning it was strictly controlled.

I said to the boy who brought the people "now, put me in the car, you and I are going for a lady and her child. Now, that is my sin, I want to take her to Zagreb" The man was surprised: Well will you be able to? I don't know what will the others say? I said "I will say, I will be able to, because I fly this, I am risking my head for all of yours who are inside" - but the best was, she wasn't Slovenian, neither Croatian, but Muslim! That boy, Slovenian, was married to a Muslim, because he worked in Bihac, that was the way then, and I found her for him.

You can imagine there was a mass of people; I am looking for that special woman and the child. Normally, that creates disapproval, most likely I would disapprove if I were in that position, but now I'm not going into details, and I said what I said...

But, do go on!

Well, he simply understood who and what I am, in view that I am the pilot, in view ...

What? You entered into the crowd?

I went personally! That man touched me, I don't know, but he got me to go with those boys, they mentioned who I was, I was the commander of the unit and I personally am looking for that woman. Then I said: "Boys, I am the one, I will come I don't know how many times, this the first and last time, and I am looking for that lady to take her with me". They didn't oppose me, there was some disapproval, but not by those who were in charge – they understood I was some boss in the chain of transfers – and they led the woman, placed her in the car, and four of us left.

And the woman, what did she do?

What would she do? What can I tell you? It was dark, she was looking at me, whether she believes or not that she is really coming with me. I didn't even try to explain to her,

How old was the child?

Small child, estimating how old could it is? Around four, five years. Well now, the plane is full according to the list, but there is always some reserve if another one comes, there is no problem. Plus or minus 50, 60 kilograms - doesn't matter. Anyways I placed the lady in the plane and luckily brought her and her child alive and healthy to Zagreb. That man, waited for her as I said "Wait, will do". And now came the giving of thanks we will come to visit – do not bother, I said stay alive and healthy. Well, now is it essential or not – but I never heard from them, they never offered: "Well boys take this kilogram of coffee" I think that's the least they could have said, let's say, I would, had somebody done for me something like that...

Well I waited for the end of this story expecting you would tell me how you exchanged phone numbers, saw each other and stayed in touch.

But nothing! Nothing. This doesn't go against the grain of all Slovenes, absolutely, but this guy was the original "Janez" (Janez is an original Slovene name used in jokes to depict Slovenes) He took some advantage of me, but I say: I did a good deed; let it be for the good of my soul. The coffee is not important, but ... In the moment when I delivered the woman and the child to him, it is not important, there was crowd happening is under stress, he cries, she cries etc, they are leaving, well they said we will get in touch, everything is O.K. – but I believed, expected after few days, when they pull themselves together in Slovenija, the grandfather would come to say: Boys here, I thank you, lets go have a drink, or coffee" – however see ...

What were their names?

I do not know. I forgot. It wasn't important to write down. And that was that. We talked about id, what we did – well that was the one only time I personally intervened, and everything else is ... But I had the occasion to see the kind of chain of command used for the loading of the people.

Did those people fight, the ones waiting, the ones trying to get on the flight? When you already got out, when you saw, what kind of atmosphere was there?

The atmosphere was somewhat painful. There were no fights, but you see... In general women and children were dominant, you know. The one who were wounded that was immediately ...

The women in those traditional Muslim ...

Classic, the civilian normally traditional. Those are the women from all the villages whose husbands were fighting, dead ... I don't know how did they rank those priorities, really don't know, but I've seen a painful situation, pitch dark, you only see a lot of children moving about, the women are waiting. That was a private house the lists were made there. Some of their people made them.

Did the civilians pay for entrance into the plane?

Well, I can't say anything, but we heard some unthankful stories about them ... Allegedly, large sums of money changed hands, ***** (corruption???) like in all the life situations – This, I am saying and emphasize, I only heard. Neither I have any evidence, it wasn't up to me to verify.

But the people we stayed in touch with, a while ago I mentioned them, they would in between the lines say "My boys, you really don't know what was going on down there, what were they doing. They pointed the fingers at us, how we got out. We were in Zagreb but what they did there ..." Well, there...

It means, there was some kind of shady dealing, and then it was on their level?

Absolutely.

Well in Coralic? That was happening inside their organization?

That's right, that way. There we didn't...Because, those who were here, those – I call them operating group – they had no possibilities, they would only compile the lists, well whatever was going on there – let it go against their conscience.

Let me ask you something else – I think I have found in this notebook of yours the information concerning returns from Coralic to Croatia, there was periodically something else transferred, besides the people.

Well, I think that was first or second time, when the chain wasn't established. We transferred for the large howitzers 200 ...Well I am lean concerning infantry armaments! Generally calibre over 200, 220 mm. only the heads.

Cannon projectiles?

Yes cannon projectiles; they are extremely large and heavy. As I say, only about ten, twelve, we could place on the floor of the plane. That was metal head, enormous, for some cannon, I have no idea. That was what we brought in, a few times. They have found those allegedly reserves, at the Bihac airport. They definitively, neither Muslims, nor Croats in Cazin, had no tubes, for such large cannons, where they could use them – so we transferred them to the Croatian territory, because Croatian Army most likely had such large howitzers over 200 mm.

Was that that an exception or did really some cooperation exist concerning that question, so they would systematically send some ammunitions, armaments, anything to Croatia?

No, no, no. It was only the other way. It was what they found exclusively ...You know Bihac was a military airfield; there was all kind of things. Well. Now when JNA left Bihac, there is quite damaged that ***** on the airfield, so the Muslim Army found somewhere in the storage those large projectiles and brought them out, and then the people who understand - knew what those were. Contacting with the operative group in Zagreb

It was reported what they have, is it needed?, It's needed, the decision was made next time we go over to bring it back.

Well, if I understand you correctly, that was an exception and it couldn't be said – or it could be said? – Some kind of rapport, lets call it equilibrium in the sense of giving and receiving?

No, no. Surely not that. I am certain, definitively and sure. In all other flights we were returning primarily wounded: Both Croatians and Muslims, them women and children. If there was no wounded, we would load the plane with as many as we could cram into the plane, to take them out.

The ones who were wounded, were they soldiers or civilians?

Either, both, I can't insist, but mainly they were the boys casualties of the first lines. We tried that ...Well more often they were severely wounded, and the ones who had light injuries were taken care of there. Most likely they had some improvised hospitals. And the more serious ones went to Zagreb. Well, were there any civilians? There was fire from howitzers on the civilian targets; understandably the civilian population was at peril. Now, I personally know, what was going on, because I've seen them in the uniforms, those wounded ones, most of them.

How could you know, I understand it is not essential now, - but how could you know, whether you are transferring wounded Muslim or wounded Croat?

Well, at the time we didn't know to tell the truth, nobody was interested to know, who is laying down. That was really the least important. The fact, one is seeing a wounded man ... Regardless what we experienced and everything we seen before these projects, again the person ...Well I don't know, you are seeing someone riddled with holes, bleeding or something – those are very bad situations. Well in that moment whether is a Croat from HVO or TO – that really wasn't important and we didn't ask.

You still insist there were more Muslims; relatively there were about 90% of them?

More, more, definitely more. The boys I mentioned before, if we ever get in touch with them, they have no reason or purpose to claim anything else, because we were working together. And they are better informed than me. They can say it more concretely. And what I said stands, it is documented by me. You have seen, how many time is written TO, TO , and more rarely HVO.

I am asking you because of that. How could you know what are you transferring for TO and what for HVO?

Well, when we started from here, that was clear. Now see here (list flying log and comments) if it's written HVO... Here for example is written six flights, four are for TO and two for HVO.

Yes I see, those were the last days of the twelfth month 1992. and at the time the flights were intensive. But I am still interested in how did you know – here in your log at every

Flight is written whether is for TO or HVO - how did you know what flight is for TO, and what for HVO. Did you receive information about it?

Well, that information we got here in Croatia ...

You were receiving the information?

We did. That's right. So as to HVO goes, and as to Ours, Conditional ours, because then ours were the Muslims too, because both were fighting against Serbs, but it was known that goes for HVO. Even the boys who were from Zagreb new and usually reported, over their radio contact: for those from HVO to wait because the load is for them. That was usually known. And our boys would wait in Coralic and cart the load away. Only they knew where.

You mentioned you had occasion to drive, transfer Mudzahedin from Zagreb to Coralic?

I did. I personally did. We were transferring them how did we know? They are typically themselves ... I was told "Josip (Josip, they are special warriors, there is nothing sacred to them except the Holy war" etc. Means: the beard and everything that goes with the concept mudzahedin. Not only wasn't hidden from us at the time they were, to say so, positive appearance because we knew ... Even before that we new they are going to fight on the Muslim and Croatians side against Serbs. For us that was positive at the time and with Lord's provision there should have been more of them. Well now. How did they degenerate those Mudzahedins – something we couldn't have neither influence nor known at the time.

How many Mudzahedins did you transport? Not only you, but in general you and your team?

Well...I don't quite know. Perhaps the number between 10 and 20, somewhere there. Because from here we primarily transferred cargo. Well now, when the plane is full then it is possible to place two, or maximum three, well on account of the cargo so even if the plane is a bit overloaded, that bit, we knew the limit of overload. And every time a bit by bit. We could not transfer there a plane full of Mudzahedins.

That would mean, they didn't go in large group but few at the time?

Two or three, when the occasion presents itself, when they would arrive, the provisions were made, and we would transfer them. As far as I know, between 10 and 20.

When was that? Approximately?

Second half of the year 1992. Somewhere towards, winter, fall part. When the activity became serious, when the bridge was established regularly and when it was known it is operating. Whether will it go from Zagreb, or Pula, Lucko – but it was known the plane will surely get there. Under the conditions weather situation allows, and the plane is in working order.

Tell me did you ever make contact with those people? Were you able to talk with them?

We didn't. They kept and talked among themselves. They didn't know our language; most likely they came from Arab lands. Neither had they asked us, nor did we ask them anything. We transferred them, it has been said ...

And the team you mentioned brought them to you?

That's right.

They would bring those people, placed them on the plane and you would then ...?

That's right, it means they were responsible for loading, kind of load, what people if eventually they went this way, etc.

It means all the mudzahedins went through them?

Through them, they would contact Command of Croatian Air force, I respectively as needed, when general Agotic called me. Usually in the beginning of the week, some directions would be passed and eventually a telephone call, this or that goes and so on ... Could we get a small brake now?

Hrgovicjosip2

This is continuation of the recording with Mr. Hrgovic, Continuation of the recording ...

Continuation of the recording, it's all right, I am here.

I was looking at your notes so now I'll ask about some things I noticed: maybe they are of essence, maybe not – you would tell me. The date is 15. 07. The meeting in connection with "Pula" is mentioned. – It means it's relative to Coralic. Then further on, did I read that correctly? "two plums" are mentioned. Is that something that would interest us?

I think, had it been something special, I would remember. But the year 1992, let the ones listening to this forgive me, but 14 years have passed ...

It means, those plums are nothing of essence?

Yes. Because, I am reiterating: all of my, whatever I wrote, was for my use exclusively. Meaning what I did today, what will I eventually do tomorrow? There were many things, I wrote to myself, nobody forced me, but under the circumstances ... so it might have meant something to me, to him in that moment, but it wasn't anything special...

Means it is not anything important? All the same, may you be blessed, for what you wrote? Next we have you mention in your notes the "cadets". We know that, the Muslims were schooled by you.

Yes, that is now called cadets. They were their ...

They are Beslagic, Iftic, Pecenkovic, is that right?

That's right.

Were there others?

Well, it was, I don't know ... I think Beganovic. I think that boy even got killed. Now I can't remember. The last names, specifically their last names are so ... But those two Iftic I Pecenkovic, they are the first who came, and they were magnificent boys. They learned, comprehended really quickly. They were the first ones we thought and enabled to become skilled for AN2 on their own, to fly to Coralic and back. Meaning for the first time they transferred the cargo on their own, two of them.

Tell me when you say "they came". Where from did they come?

From Coralic

Oh, they came from Coralic?

Yes. They were the boys, who were there. Well, lets say, Pecenkovic and Iftic were the boys who were flying in the Aero-club; they haven't been in the former JNA.

They were young boys?

Yes, young. Later several Muslims came who were pilots, but they were in JNA, they fled.

Meaning and them you later ...?

Thad's right. Meaning everything that came ... For us that wasn't essential. Whatever they sent and for whom was said – we worked on their instructions.

Tel me something, we mentioned before I switched on the Dictaphone, what is going on with those people today?

Pecenkovic flies, I don't know precisely in which firm, he is a captain for an airline and as far as I know, he lives in Zagreb, he bought an apartment etc.

Iftic, we know, he killed himself, ten years ago he committed suicide, disappointed...what with, I don't know. These are the details I don't know, there is no need to probe. Only he himself knows what he encountered after the return from Croatia.

And where did he kill himself?

He was in Coralic

Oh, it means after the completion of the training, he returned to Coralic, stayed there for some time and killed himself there?

That's right, that's right. Meaning when all of them returned ... I mentioned we flew with them until the middle of the year 1993. till eight month, and after that they all returned to Coralic - and among the rest Iftic too. Well now, what situations they encountered there, how angry, disappointed, how were they accepted – I don't know. Mainly, the news came we checked, got the newspaper, found out Iftic killed himself. For this boy, well, what was his name ... was it Beslagic?

Beslagic, yes.

Beslagic. I think he ran away to Germany in the beginning. Well, Iftic, Pecenkovic and Beslagic arrived ... Yes he ran away to Germany – he took some monies and went to Germany.

Just a moment, he finished the training?

No, when they arrived. When Iftic, Pecenkovic and Beslagic arrived – Iftic and Pecenkovic continued, we were training them, and this one started likewise, however, he stole some money and ran away to Germany.

But he is mentioned for some time in those flights. In the second half of the year 1992, he was still there.

And after that he simply ran away.

Meaning he didn't return to Coralic?

No, he didn't return. And now, these couple of boys, for those two I certainly know: Beganovic died in the plane. Meaning when towards the end of the year 1992. we stopped flying for them, they were looking for other crew in the world, in Europe, they were ready to pay whatever, so somebody would fly for them.

In one of those planes, Russian, it is known it was shot down, the Russians managed to land in Coralic, unload the cargo, however, on the way back to Croatia, the Serbians shot them down. There was this Beganovic, he died with them.

Am I comprehending correctly, we stopped flying the rout to Coralic?

That's right.

And we stopped - because of what?

That was at the times when in the other parts of Bosnia Hercegovina Muslims and Croats started serious conflict, and the order to stop such flight to Coralic and the transfer of cargo came – as general Agotic explained to us – from the top, from the president of the state. To stop with it, and we stopped those kinds of tasks, but we continued to fly with the boys in the course of the year 2003...

You mean year 1993?

Yes, excuse me, 1993, but as the training only.

Meaning that kind of cooperation with the training continued?

Yes. But no more flyovers.

Well the flyovers were no more.

Yes. Now then, because they still needed materials etc. they were looking for crews in Zagreb in Europe, who would fly to Coralic. I personally went to instruct or prepare an Englishman on a small two engine plane. They invited me if I would explain to him, how we were landing there. Like "Joso, come, we found one of them, who would go, would you give him some instructions ..." our inner pilot's how to land there. We met in the hotel "Intercontinental" that was the name at the time, and to the Englishman I did, using my meagre English... But it was pilot lingo and I managed to explain to him certain points; where, what, how, descending, direction of landing.

We parted, the people expressed thanks, however, the next day this Bibanovic I mentioned, said "Joso, he ran away head over heels. In the morning we couldn't find him. He got scared and ran away"

All right, where did this Englishman come from? He was some adventurist or?

They were simply looking for, at all possible connections, pilots and lets say adventurer who would readily, most likely for some good money, go to Coralic. So among the others they found one, like "this one will" brought him to the hotel so I could explain to him how to get there.

Where would they then take off from?

To them would most likely ... Let me say it conditionally, ours here in Zagreb would allow them to take off from Pleso, from Pula, it's not important. They would load up the cargo and ...we were not allowed to fly any longer.

Well, was there later any take offs from our airports, but with other crews?

Yes, yes.

How long did that last?

Huh ... Now you are asking too much. Good part of 1993. To the first part of the year 1993 – That I certainly know, it lasted certainly! For any longer I can't say, simply I don't remember any more. My head is filled with other things. But let's say that Englishman I instructed and he ran away, got scared, he saw it made no sense for a pilot, regardless of the money offered – Lord only knows how much! – But he wouldn't do it. Later they flew helicopters from Lucko, again some foreign crews. They were as far as we knew, Russians, Well now, was that Russia, Ukraine? You know we all say "Russian pilots, Russian techniques" Well now, from which of those states, only they know that. Generally they came from that territory and they flew.

Among the rest there was this AN-26 it came from those eastern lands, formerly Russian. How many flights it made I don't know, but I know at one time on the return to Croatia from Coralic Serbs shot him down. One of their political leaders died there, and among the others that boy Beganovic. That was the year 1993, when we didn't fly any longer, and they crawled out in all directions over the Europe looking for the crews, planes who would be willing to go.

It means you don't now precisely, respectively, you are supposing that was the middle of the year 1993. Until then our runaways were, let's say, rented for their use?

That's right. That I can say with certainty, we flew to the half of the year 1993. From the aerodrome Lucko helicopters were taking off, that is documented, when one of those helicopters exploded at Lucko, loaded with ammunitions. Perhaps you know that.

Yes, I've heard something about it but ... Well, what happened?

I don't know precisely, it was "top secret" Something, bumped, exploded I ...

Whose crew was it?

Theirs. Now when I say "theirs" that was somebody they found in the world.

When was that? Approximately at least?

Well, what can I say? Whatever I say I could be wrong. I have nothing documented, I didn't about it ... Simply we were disconnected from any further tasks, we were working our own, the training in Croatia, flying etc.

And tell me this crew: Palic, Bibanovic, Hadzic were they still in charge?

Yes, yes, they continued, but with someone else.

It means they continued with other crews?

That's right, but mainly that was the same crew, to find materials, to procure, to buy, to transport, to load etc.

For how long, were Palic, Bibanovic and Hadzic active with those jobs here?

Well, in the outermost case somewhere to seventh, eight month of year 1993, when we didn't instruct them any more. Then they eventually stayed connected to some flight, only if they found some aircraft or the pilot to fly. But now they didn't communicate with us, there was no need. We turned to our own tasks, they would communicate with the Ministry, Air force Command etc.

I'm going to ask you something else: under the date 22. 07 you wrote "loading cargo on AT400.

That's an air tractor.

An air tractor?

Well, see, maybe it's necessary to mention, I didn't mention that plane. Well, small omission. Besides "Antonov 2": the biplane, "cassa": C212, AT-400 also flew. That is a plane with one crew member, and at that time only Lalic Zvonko was qualified, and he completed the tasks, He had solid number of Flights and at night he would with that ... that small plane, there wasn't much of a load.

Transferred the people?

No, no, no. He couldn't fly anybody, only eventually if there were sometimes ... That was a crop dusting plane.

Agricultural?

That's right. Well now, in the hollow where the fertilizer was placed, he would place cargo.

How much could it carry?

Well, I don't know. Maybe some 600-700 kilos of cargo, but they were not cargo under gabarit (regulation standard), and most of the time they were not metal. It was loaded with medicines, cigarettes, everything that an army needs, maybe some ammunition for special rifles. Meaning, nothing specifically heavy, because that hollow ... was not designed for some bigger load. But Lalic managed.

24. 07, and at some other spots in your notes it's mentioned "returned empty bottles"?

Those are for hospital oxygen. It means he could place those inside ***** at some lighter operation or whatever was used for.

Aha, they would use those.

Yes, yes.

When we are speaking about hospital things and transfer of the wounded – were there ever medical teams present?

No, no. They would bring ... Well I think ... it wasn't necessary. Such flights were of short duration. They were risky, from the first second, as it appears they would last an eternity – but that was 35-40 minutes from Coralic.

And those wounded were enhanced, is that right?

Enhanced as much as possible, and placed in the plane, and as soon as we landed, there were ambulances waiting and they were taken somewhere.

It's written "everything was in order, except Hajrudin box" 25. 07. on the return. Is that something important?

Dear Lord knows! But I don't believe. Hajrudin? Kutija? I'm thinking who is Hajrudin? But those are all their names ...

Tell me this information, here in four dairy under the date 20.07 is written: "AN-2, altogether 180". This is relative to flights?

Flights, yes.

"42 hours and 35 minutes, is that right?

That's right, without exceptional situation. Meaning everything was ...

Well, now it's written this way, "from that for BH 124" – I'm assuming Flights?

That's right.

"29 and a half hours of flying"

That's right.

In departures to BiH 3000 kilos cargo"

Cargo, yes.

That's some kind ...

That was my accounting, yes.

For that time?

Yes, All together. That is 27.07, yes. That was approximately. It means all together, because we didn't fly at night for Bosnia only, we also flied our tasks. That is all together 180 flights and 42 ... Total.

And that is relative to the time from fifth month, or that is only situation in the seventh month?

I think that is only seventh month. Yes. Because we prepared monthly reports. And of the total number of Flights made, for BiH 124 flights – you see, that's more that half of the flights. And 29 hours and three tons.

That would mean, approximately three tons of cargo was transferred only in seventh month of the year 1992?

Yes, yes, considering we probably flew only one AN-2. Later it was...I think something like this; roughly we transferred somewhere about 100 tons of cargo to Coralic, and couple of hundreds of people transferred from there to the Croatian territory. I know that, because I personally prepared the compiled report, that information remained in my head. And that means it's

Approximate, not right to the kilogram, but we transferred to them, about 100 tons of cargo as was needed, and couple hundreds people from there to here.

Because in only one flight with “cassa” we used to load over 20 or 25 people for the return flight. Meaning, they were lots of those flights. Meaning, in a night we would transfer maybe 50 people in two flights, and if in addition an AN-2 was flying, in it we could place 15 people. Meaning, several hundreds people from that territory was transferred here.

Would you tell me, in reading these notes, those abbreviations “IL” means one flight?

That’s right. One flight. Meaning 0.20 hrs.

And that’s the flight time?

That’s right, duration time.

And that is one way or return too?

This way, let’s say that was parachutes’. That was for the parachutes’. Now: one flight, 20 minutes. That is one flight. When is written – that is one takeoff and one landing.

That means if one wants to see for how long did you fly in that day or night, has to add the flights?

Absolutely. How many flights and how many hours. That is simple. When it’s written “one flight” that means in a day one took off once and landed once. If it two – normal, two.

And this is reliable information? Well, two flights; two hours; night; there one ton armaments; return 5 passengers, 3 wounded, 1 fighter?

That’s right.

This is reliable information?

There is no doubt. because then I didn’t think anything, neither I had any need to fix, or something. You see from when it is dated? That is simply our record; to see how much did we take there, and how much back.

Well, you are telling me the end of those flights was ordered from the top.

That’s right

You are saying the president Tudman, himself, most likely knew?

It came to me like that. Meaning, to stop the tasks I was ordered by general Agotic. That means, he ordered me, and the information came somewhat from him, and the information came literally ...

I think the president of the republic knew about the flights, which is normal. That was the only possible help to that enclave at that time from anywhere in the world. Nobody else

Could help, but our small group. Well, Agotic knew about it, and normally he had to report ... And through that chain of command it was ordered to stop it.

However, in your note book it is written “further flights stopped due to constant presence of the observers”. Was that real reason for stopping or is that official reason only?

This is not for ... That was specifically for the day. I said they went like – not to use some bad word - behind us. They were following us. We go to Pula, they come after us, and they also had their people in Pula.

When you say “the observers” you think about ...

I always call them Unprofor – generally, from the first days until now. They were in Pula at the airport, they were on every airport, which was normal, and at Pleso too, they were at our backs, looked and wrote. They didn't stop us physically, they had no means, neither had they wanted to, but they were making notes of what we did. We didn't want to be insolent, we tried as much as possible to be discreet, to somehow avert their attention and then take off.

Well, was that prohibitive at the time?

Well, I can't say it was prohibitive, but simply it wasn't desirable to let the Unprofor see, Croatia is flying there helping etc. Because they would report through their channels, and that would go against our Air Force command.

Means it was done semi secretly?

That's right. So as much as we could, we tried to be discreet, and to hide. However, that day they most likely came around the plane, and we couldn't any longer ... Because, we would most likely that night, it was a favourable night, see how it went, we would still go.

There was lots of flying that day, yes?

Yes. However, they simply surrounded us, it was physically impossible, now we shouldn't have been really insolent. Well, the year end is coming and everything together.

Yes, its written time to take yearly vacation...

...there is a need to stop etc. And in the mean time the orders were to return to Zagreb, and we didn't go back to Pula, and that's ... I think, it stopped in the sense it was no longer on the agenda. And we remained in Pula in 1993 to instruct...

You mean in the Pula proper?

Exactly in Pula. Yes. Right, there we gave flight instructions to their boys.

Aha, it means later you continued flight instructions in Pula?

Yes. That's right. In Pula and on Pleso, to get them to know... Because Pleso was then as it is now a frequent aerodrome, you understand? And now we can't give instructions on such an aerodrome, because we are interfering with traffic – so we had to move to Pula where perhaps in two weeks only one civilian plane would land. It means we had freedom; the entire space is ours, so we are there most frequently. And the weather is also nice, there is no fog ...

Tell me, Cico from Sarajevo? Did you ever have contacts with him? Cico was in charge of contacts, and for all later ones, when Sarajevo air traffic went through Zagreb?

Cico? if I'm not mistaken from Virovitica. Do I have anything recorded ... or?

No, no. Cico is from a previous story I have, but now my interest is do you perhaps know something about him. Cico is Muslim, he was in Sarajevo from AKL, and he ...

I don't. I haven't been in contact with him, that's for sure. The only contact was with this part of BiH, and nobody else.

Did you have an occasion ... You said Malnar had the duty to light up and extinguish the lights?

That's right.

Did you have an occasion to contact him?

No. No. I said only one time did we sleep there, and every time actually we didn't get out of the plane, so the man ...

And didn't he come to the plane?

No, no, it wasn't possible, because the access to the plane was strictly controlled: the people, what is loaded ...

But he, that means, was not among these people who approached?

No, no, he wasn't. Maybe we have only on the radio contact.. Because you know, the radio contact was maximally – avoided because as much as he hears on the tower working for us, it is heard by the Serbs. Now well we couldn't over radio contact, it goes to ether. We couldn't say "hey put the lights on, we are going left. We are now on such position", because they are listening, certainly they would fire. That was very strict, minimally only what we had to say what we couldn't do without – like for example "put the lights on"

I believe we had it in cipher "one" "two". When we land, we say "two" and he puts the lights out. When we are in the air, before we land, when already ascended, when we come near, so we could line up the plane for some direction to land, so I say to him "one" – and that is a signal for him to light up that row of lights, which was well, so squinty as it was.

I think I asked you everything I intended to ask. Did I tire you?

You didn't. It's not a problem. If some benefit is derived from this, I will be very pleased.

I believe, from things like this there should be benefit. Tell me did we forget something? Did I perhaps forget to ask about something you consider important for this thing of ours?

Well, I don't know, perhaps to put more emphasis on the first part of the year 1993. when we provided intensive instructions for their boys, and on that "cassa" which was a more complex plane etc. all up to ... In the eight month we took that "cassa" to Köln for general repairs. Now, then, after all of those ... To me personally it was offensive, we felt very badly when we came to Koln, like some thieves. We came to leave the plane for service, to have it serviced in a short time, and to return it to Croatia. And now in a day or two, it happens our access to the plane is forbidden, the plane is taken from us, and it's going to BiH etc. etc.

Wait. Tell me in detail about that situation. Well, this "cassa" came – how?

The year 1992 came from somewhere.

It means we don't know precisely where it came from?

It's known most likely ... Well not likely. It means: general Agotic and his superiors do know, but to me and my level, wasn't known. I got an instrument to use and I used it until ...

On that "casa" you trained Muslim pilots?

That's right. Trained them and flew. That's right trained them and flew the tasks in the year 1992 to Coralic. Well, now comes 1993, there are no more tasks for Coralic but we trained the Muslims intensively...

On this the same "cassa"?

On the same "cassa". So in the eight month we flew it to Koln for service, she was in catastrophic ...

Who then went to Koln?

They were Hrgovic, Rajtar I Zrna. Three of us went. We delivered, we landed orderly in Koln, delivered the plane, explained the damage, and made a list what's to be done. As soon as we landed the men – obviously the work was ordered – they started immediately, we didn't even take our belongings from the plane they already started looking, screwing off the covers etc. so tomorrow or the day after – don't now hold me to my word – a notification came to us, we can no longer enter this airport.

What? You simply didn't even try? You couldn't enter?

Yes, yes, we had no more possibility to contact the people who were working on this plane, at the airport. We were told the plane is impounded, it's a Bosnian plane and it is going, supposedly, to Sarajevo.

Who told you that?

Airport security service at the gate. This is a civilian airport, but it has a part for service. That is an enormous space we could enter from the outside into service, not the passenger part where the passengers are, but to pass to the plane to see work progress. Well, when we came there, we got stopped, the plane is impounded, I don't know, it was taken, where it shouldn't have been taken.

Anyhow, whatever they told us at the time, it was news to us, and I say we felt badly – at least myself, I believe the two of my colleagues too – taking into consideration what we did, and what we intended to do, the desire and will to continue instructions of the Muslims - had we returned the plane to Croatia. Moreover this was a bit strange, but nothing doing; we took the train and returned to Croatia. And never again, did we see or hear that plane. They flew it over, somewhere, I don't know where.

Do you have any information, did that plane come in some illegal, unlawful way, and in Koln, their authority stopped it, and took over – or was it an intervention by Muslims, Muslim side respectfully, who are taking the plane?

This second part really, the Muslim side headed by Kulic – Kulic was his name, but we called him “Kula” (tower) – I had the opportunity to meet this gentleman before the war, because he was active with aero-clubs in Bosnia and Hercegovina. At the time for JNA with AN-2's we used to throw off the parachutists – as it has been said at those aero-clubs throughout former Yugoslavia, so I met this gentleman once or twice.

After all these years, under the circumstances, In Kolen we heard, he is in contact with Rajtar – at the time - Rajtar was travel leader – and he was the one who impounded the plane.

Well on behalf of the Muslim side, and not on behalf of German authority, but they intervened at the German authority to forbid our approach.

In other words, simplified, is it true: At the time the Muslims took that plane away, using deceit, without any information?

Well, I don't know whether deceit is the right word – but simply they reported there, and to the plane, we had no more... They most likely showed some proof the plane is theirs – because allegedly it came from somewhere Turkey, and through all manners, landed in Croatia in the year 1992, and we were using it. Well, now when all of that is over, and when we were, after repairs, return to Croatia, to continue the training – this Kulic intervened, banned, leave the plane, and we did so. We had to. We informed our command as to what is going on and we were told. “Boys, take the train and come home” We did that.

Did the training continue after that?

No we had no means.

There is no more training after that?

No. Afterwards, all of their boys went to Coralic, Cazin, Kladusa, wherever they went.

I will ask you to help me with the future conversations I wish to have about these things. The Muslims, pilots who attended your training – which ones among them would be suitable to talk to, namely, which ones, could be gotten in touch with? Can you help me with that?

Let's see, firstly and in first place I am thinking about Pecenkovic, among pilots. Because he was in the first group, a very nice and intelligent boy, professional in his work.

Iftic, unfortunately, we can't get, he is no longer alive, but Pecenkovic is accessible. He is in the Zagreb district, where he has an apartment. That's that concerning the pilots. He can give all the information, confirm, because he was there from day one, first among the trio who arrived.

As far as the others from the operations group, I mentioned before, most accessible is Palic Senad, who has a house near Velika Gorica, and he is running a private business here, has no contact with army, neither Croatian nor Bosnian.

And eventually Bibanovic, who lives in the Bihac district. Meaning he lives and works there.

Do you have any opportunity to get in touch with these people?

I have, I have. For Bibanovic and for Palic I have, for Pecenkovic I should use some efforts to find the number, but I believe one of the other two has it. Generally there would be ways to ... Besides if he has an apartment here, I believe he is registered.

Could I ask you not to hate me if I pester you again about these contacts?

There is no problem, really. I've said ...

I think these co-discussants could be interesting ...

They would, certainly.

I think they know they can testify directly about some things ... If they only have a bit of good will, I think that would be interesting.

Absolutely. Everything I said, they could and should, and I believe and I'm sure they will confirm, they can only add some details, which I may have missed – but in essence that is that. It would be possible where some day or some happening can be processed and filed in with their information, but that is that. We will contact them.

Tell me, this team that went from Split to Bosnia with helicopters to get the wounded, and then transferred them – Did you ever have any contact with them?

We did not, we did not. Look, there was to say ... In Split, that is southern part of our Croatia, there were no planes there, only helicopters. The base Divulje, helicopters, those boys

Worked on similar tasks, the man in charge at the time, Matko Raos, is presently retired, same as I am. I was in charge of other territory.

There was something on the north in Cakovec, but those boys didn't participate. They were more involved with their training, and were not connected to this project. Mainly, there was one group in Zagreb, one group on Split. They were working out their tasks, but how and in what way I can't tell you for certain.

According to your knowledge, was there anywhere else in Croatia airports from which eventually the same kind of tasks were flown towards Bosnia – besides, what we already mentioned?

In Croatia no. Posusje was active, but then the conflict Muslims Croats already existed. The helicopters were flying from Posusje territory. At the same time they were flying from Split, perhaps somewhat earlier.

And we were covering over here: Pleso, Pula, Krk airport, Lucko and that would be it. Nobody else had either means to fly, or experience to complete such tasks.

Well, those were the two groups of people. Now, when precisely, did the ones from Split start with the first flights towards Bosnia – I think, it was closer to the dates when the clashes with the Muslims started.

As for us, I firmly maintain everything I have said is correct, we can document most of happenings, and we have worked on in the year 1992 and part of 1993.

OK it means, Split and that part I will workout there.

Yes, there are gentlemen still alive, healthy and most likely have documentation – at least similar like I do. If nothing else, it would be evidenced in their flying logs: The flights, dates, etc. I believe they were recording correctly. They are alive, healthy, most likely they can confirm.

You gave me, or I should say I came into possession of your notes, That is year 1992. Did you keep the records later?

I did, I did.

You did? Do they contain something about this?

Well, there is. I don't know... I have here ...It is photocopied to what date?

To the end of 1992.

Oh, yes, And there is more, further in the same book... I've thought there were of interest only parts when the tasks to Coralic were flown – however, I have in the same book recorded in the same manner: how did the training go, and flight to Koeln, eight month etc. Till the eight month everything is the same, the names are mentioned...

And can you photocopy that for me?

Of course, yes. We can.

Those are the things we talked about so far.

Yes, it means from 01.01. Till the eight month of the year 1993. ...because later they are not mentioned any longer, and later only flight instructions remain – but for our pilots, younger and older who needed to complete the upgrading for certain plane. The original boys are not mentioned, they returned to Coralic to their own tasks, duties, the subsequent part I don't know.

Can we disconnect?

As far as I am concerned ...