

# IVICA IŠTUK

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The interview has been recorded, the code names of the recordings are

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The interview took place in Zagreb, in Dr. Ištuk's apartment

**At the beginning of the interview I will ask you to introduce yourself.**

**That is, your name, surname, place of birth, place of residence.**

My name is Ivica Ištuk. I was born on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1962 in a small place of Širovići near Livno, where I completed my elementary and secondary education. I enrolled and graduated at the School of Medicine in Zagreb. This was just before the war, I did my internship, and then, on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1991 I entered the troops of the ZNG, and was allocated in the Fourth Guards Brigade of the ZNG, 3<sup>rd</sup> Imotska Company with whom I passed the battlefields of Kruševo, Zadar and later on a bit around Drniš. Then I changed places with my colleague Rumbolt. He was a member of the Second Guards Brigade of the ZNG. He went to the Fourth Guards Brigade. And he had been in Sunja. So I immediately, automatically came to Sunja. It was on the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> October 1991. Sunja was then under fire, so we had to jump off the bus, civilian bus before Sisak. We took shelter in...I think it was the "Žitokombinat" or something like that. Then we managed somehow to get in touch with Sunja. Then a car came to fetch me. Likewise, under a barrage of shells, we managed to come to Sunja where I met Slobodan Praljak. He was then without a rank, just like me. He was commander of the defence of Sunja, i.e. the part of the battlefield around 55 kilometres long. With regard to the fact that I had a lot of war experience as a physician, military physician, war physician, whatever you wish to call it, I could see how all of it was functioning. We went to war really without anything. Unequipped, untrained, untrained and untrained. Everything was, how shall I put it, colourful. Some had military uniforms. I even lent my own uniform to a soldier, and I performed my duties in a white overcoat. I had had one distressing experience – the fall of Kruševo. I was the last one to pull out of Kruševo. Because, that was the order of the then commander of Kruševo. And really, I was the last one to get out of Kruševo. And I can testify the ZNG was organized. The orders were coming and they were kept. But this part, the local troops as they were then called, which defended Kruševo, they did not fulfil all their tasks. And when I came to Sunja, regardless of the fact that circumstances were terrible – the war

chaos of firing, shells and the rest, it was nothing new to me. But already after a couple of days I realized this was something different from what I had seen before. This was truly a very well organized defence. A defence where you could see that everyone has his task and sticks to it. And I think this is largely the merit of general Praljak.

**You arrived about a month and a half after Praljak took over Sunja?**

That's right.

**Do you maybe know what Praljak insisted upon before your arrival, or during the time that you were there, somewhere at the beginning? What were the key items to which Praljak paid attention in order to defend Sunja?**

Well, I think the basis was consolidating the defence. Because at that time the Croatian Army was not in the position to conduct any major offensive operations. Simply speaking, the concentration was to defend what we have. And when I came to Sunja, until then I was mainly... we had a certain hill, some elevations... still it was different. That's where I came. We were down. They were up. Very, very unfavourable. But, I must say, he consolidated the defence lines very well in a way which I witnessed myself. This is one of the first things which speaks about his character.

This man did not issue orders sitting in a chair, from a fortified trench or a fortified headquarters. He was mainly among the people on the front line. And my first contact, a real one, with the general was when we were at the railway station, one trench that was very significant in the defence of this...It was the right flank of defence. With us is the railway station...He personally fortified the trench.

**Can you remember a bit more of that event? What were the circumstances that made him go and fortify the trench?**

Well, before that he told the commanders of that flank what should be done. And then, in the control...when he saw what was there, it wasn't even close to what it should be. The trench that they had made was useless. Then he personally carried beams, and the earth and everything that was necessary. And it all proved correct, because when a shell came down on that particular trench, nothing happened as it had been fortified. Men were saved in such a way.

**\*\*\*\*\*at that moment when he was carrying sacks or whatever, was he angry?**

Well, he is such a temperament that he projected his personality into every act he performed. Yes. You couldn't say that he was angry. Simply, he is like that. He was full of passion, because he knows what it means to make a trench. Then he ordered them to move away from the floors of the railway station and to dig in themselves underneath, in the foundations.

The other event...

**Just tell me, how did people react to Praljak's insistence on such matters?**

Well, I can tell you first of all...first of all it was a wonder that the commander of defence comes to the front lines. This shocked them. Everyone was taken aback by such a gesture. But he very quickly transferred on them the inertia. I thought there would be a resistance, that people will say: "He is crazy". That is what they thought. On the other hand, even I was a bit afraid: what if something happens to him? Because at that moment while he was doing that, he was out on the open. And war activities there were on a daily basis. It was just a question whether some shell will land from somewhere or whether someone will take him down with a sniper. Because this was open towards...Četvrtkovac, the village to the right. Yes, that was close. Ideal for a sniper. But, here we are... God helps the brave. And in the end, it resulted in... Then the people realized that he is completely right and that they must do it. Because, we must be clear, these were all amateurs. No one had any idea what were the grenades, what powerful weapons these were...from the enemy side. Until a grenade landed in that and no one suffered any damage. On the other hand, also, after that... I was with him. I must say how it went. I was with him in the headquarters. I had my clinic in the adjoining room. But mainly, during the day and the night I spent in the headquarters. And we slept in the same room. Me, him and Miro Medimorec. So that all the time I was present at all the discussions and the ways and means of leading and commanding. The moment something went wrong, that very instant, he would go out to the field. Whenever the situation was precarious, he never stayed in the headquarters and never gave orders

from the headquarters. But he would go where it is the most critical. And that, that bordered on craziness. Because I...at any moment he could get a shrapnel or a bullet. It never happened. But it lifted the morale of the people to such a level that it never happened that someone left his post. Because they always knew that he was here. And his sonorous voice was always heard, on the Motorola and directly. And that is, we who were there, we know how much positive effect it had on people, and it became clear to me pretty soon that Sunja was never going to fall.

Although he, calculating all possibilities, always made sure that we have a good and safe way for retreat. Because on the other side there was a mighty force. We must admit that. And very organized. And very well trained. Then, there is another incident which speaks of his...what shall I call it, not honesty, but a war chivalry...On the first lines we had snipers. Then an inquiry came into the headquarters: "Commander, they are crossing, running over a road. Shall we take them out?" He immediately answered: "Are you sure that this is a soldier? Or is it a civilian?" "We are not sure." "Don't shoot. That's an order."

### **Were you present when he said that?**

Yes. "There is no shooting then." He expressly demanded chivalry: "If you are sure it's a soldier you can shoot." Also, when we got some heavier arms, after the freeing of these barracks, he never allowed, not to mention ordered, targeting a civilian target. You always had to check whether it is a military target. Is the army there... is it a military building, only then we could open fire.

**And you were present when all of this was said?**

Yes. I am telling you, I was in the headquarters all the time. And probably it is known where it was. Today it is no secret where we were. In one house.

**In Ćuk's house?**

Yes, yes, in the house of Ivica Ćuk. This wasn't a headquarters deep in the rear. It was a house on a clearing in front of which there were corn fields, and this corn stretched all the way to the first line of defence. So that this headquarters of ours was less than half a kilometre from the first lines. Which really tells you that this man lived with his fighters and valued them more than he did himself. And now, here is the event which a man can never forget, and that is the death of a man, I know him as Škaf. Fighter in B 52, as it was called. It was a house. A huge house which was really...our first line. The left flank of the defence of Sunja.

\*\*\*\*\* (they are speaking at the same time)\*\*\*\*\*

Through that, yes, yes...Vedro Polje. And they were also some 200 metres away, fortified, with tanks and heavy weapons and they had everything concentrated. And one such shot came directly at the first floor. Yes, there were sacks, etc. But this was too weak when the grenade struck...They immediately communicated that there are wounded there. And immediately him and me...

**You went together?**

We went together, yes, I...and...

**\*\*\*\*in the headquarters then?**

Yes, yes. In the headquarters. And we received by communications that there are wounded. Normally, I have to go. And he went with his car. We went immediately with the ambulance, me and this Ivica Čuk. He was my driver then. And we came to the last row of houses. Then we had to run over the road. I can tell you, I was pretty frightened. Because this is a clearing of some 30, 40 metres over which one must run, and they are firing with everything they have. Probably they also felt that they had made a good shot. And then, he waited for me and "Doc, shall we?", "Where?" "Well, over there." "How do we do it?". I was persuading him. Maybe they will stop a little and then we shall... No. He took me by the arm and we...then when he went, I had to go too. When we came there, mostly the men were in the basement. No one wanted to go upstairs, because it was just a question of time when they will fire again into that part. And then, there was a friend of...Kosta's. Kosta and this guy...they were inseparable friends. He was in a shock, normally. In a serious shock. He was certain that his friend was alive. That we must pull him out. And than Praljak told him: "I doubt it". Because really what you could see from the outside is that a half of the house was torn apart. And he then said: "Doc, here we go." And we climbed upstairs. And this is on...We didn't see him at all. Because this was several tons of material. Demolished. Then we came back down. Than we again said to this Kosta: "Impossible". We don't see him at all, this is just a heap of rubble and... "Yes, he is 100% alive". Then we again went upstairs and started digging. Both of us.

**It means, Praljak and you together?**

Yes, yes. He also...started to move away these beams, bricks. And then a shot came into another part of the house. What a luck, no? And it shook us all. You

could only see the dust. I was shouting: "Praljak, let's go. We will get killed. What will people do without us?" "No. We must. We must find him." And then we were digging. We came...we found the boots. Just the boots and...nothing. Then we came back down. We said he is dead for certain. Than I had to take care of this other guy who was beside him. This one had eyes full of rubble. I was treating him. And then everyone calmed down a bit. They went upstairs. And really, he was dead. Direct shot in the head and there was no chance for him. But I want to stress how much he valued the suffering of this friend of his. And he was also shaken personally, because he knew all these lads. And this...Škaf, he was a Serb. He was a Serb, but there was an exceptional bond between him and Praljak. Because this guy was truly brave and steady on his position. He never retreated. And then Praljak asked himself, how will B 52 survive now without Škaf? What will it look like? But the people recovered quickly and...

**Tell me what was Praljak like that evening? After that event?**

Shaken. Shaken. He was shaken.

(They speak at the same time)\*\*\*\*\*?

Shaken. And that evening there were no discussions. There were no...I must tell another little story from our life in the headquarters. During the day we didn't eat anything, neither was there time for eating nor did we want to eat. Everyone managed as he could. Then in the evening we had one side room, and there the dinner was organized. And over dinner we would comment the day's events and it was a kind of relaxation. But this evening, there was nothing. There was no dinner, and no evening News (*Dnevnik*). Because he was watching the evening News every day...but...no, he didn't...because you could see how much he is

suffering. Is it a good word – suffering? Because...he never permitted himself to show such a luxury that people see in him that he is suffering. Because he knew that everyone was watching. But you could see that that day was very, very difficult for him.

**\*\*\*\*\*you could notice?**

To me personally. So that somehow it was a bit easier to me. When I saw that he is really shaken by this loss. The defence was really fortified and we didn't have many losses there, luckily. These were accidental losses, you can say. Or in this way, these severe attacks when it was unavoidable that someone would get hurt. And on the other side, his insistence on... when the enemy action started. As soon as the first shell landed...this was every day in Sunja. He insisted. Because you must know that civilians lived there as well. He did not insist that Sunja be cleared of civilians. I think there were some Serbs left and... The majority of them went over. But those who stayed these were really people who saw Croatia as their state. And took part in the defence of Sunja together with the Croats. Nothing ever happened to anyone. I wanted to say that life...He always insisted because...the coordination between civilian structures and these, we can say, military structures were on a daily basis. Because this was after...it was already November. It functioned very well. And he insisted that when the first shell fell, there is no life on the streets. People who were not directly involved in the defence of the town, had to take shelter. Because, he insisted that there must be no unnecessary casualties. And how much energy and emotion that man had towards these men that in the whole story of defence he must know where a certain soldier is. Is the intervention platoon doing its job well? Is there...and he still manages to think of civilians.

Then we come to this event with Puškar. On that day enemy air force was active. And these attacks were severe. They also opened machine gun fire and

shelled us. I think that on that day there were also severe infantry attacks. I don't know, I think that on that day hundreds of these...multiple rocket launchers...fell...it is difficult to describe now. When I think of those days I only remember the smell of blood, earth and gunpowder. This remains unforgettable in the nose. In the head. And there was\*\*\*\*. It was a wall of sacks. And there he was firing alone, the general firing from this machine gun.

### **Which means? You fired at the planes?**

We fired at the planes. But, you know what it looks like? When an airplane appeared we fired from everything we had. Because anyone who has not been through this machine guns and grenades from this plane doesn't know...what an ugly feeling it is, and then you fire, the whole line fires at the plane. And then...I was in the headquarters on the line waiting if something will happen...and at once, a terrible explosion...you could here the breaking of glass, bricks...Then I only heard the general: "Are you all alive? Let me hear you!" And then the men began reporting. Međimorec was outside as well. And this driver of mine, Ćuk. The cook was there. Everyone reported except this one. And then someone shouted: "Puškar, where is Puškar?" And then he asked: "Doc, Doc, where is Puškar?" "Is he here?" "He isn't". And then, as his place was in the workshop, he also came out. He also came out with the M 48 rifle. He also...and a grenade flew over. Now, I don't know which calibre it was, but it fell two metres from him, in the corn field, actually in the courtyard of the house. I came to him. He was literally in pieces. I quickly looked to see what there is. His both legs were overlapped, broken, it just cut him down. I thought...it isn't, we will solve this. I quickly look further on, because he was unconscious, I look and quickly...no, he was already in his death rattle. Then I quickly tore his shirt apart and on the heart there was a shrapnel wound, the size of a five-kuna coin. And blood was already in his mouth, and then Praljak ran

over and said: "Save him Doc, save him, please." These are the words that remain with you. But I knew he was fatally wounded and I quickly...I knew that he must continue to command, because it was very critical. And then I quickly said: "Boys, come let's put him on a stretcher to move him." Because the general was truly shocked by this. He must have been aware that there is no help for this guy. And then we took him...he was already dead! And this was also a civilian outpatient clinic essentially. Afterwards, when I came back to the headquarters, he waited, I think you could see it in his eyes with what anxiety he was waiting for the good news. Unfortunately I could not deliver it, but... from this you could see that he lives for his every soldier. That each one of these lives was valuable to him. And I think he preserved them by the dozens, with his persistent insistence, and fortifying of the line of defence and training. You must know that under those war circumstances, thanks to him, we carried out training in the background. A third of the men were always on training. Where did he pick up such knowledge, because he is not a soldier by profession? He was never a professional soldier, but he truly commanded and led the defence as a top class soldier. Probably in this wretched war and warring he saw some logic.

**All the time in his commanding Praljak went contrary to some school rules of commanding...**

Absolutely! Because, I am telling you, before that I was in... on the southern battlefields where people who commanded were from the former JNA, and they came over to us. They did it professionally, rigidly. And he did it in a humane kind of way. He did it humanely, and that's why Sunja is the most awkward battlefield, and the rest didn't move one millimetre.

**Tell me, when we speak like this of some events in Sunja – what is it that makes a man a good commander, leader under such circumstances? Is that**

**the rank? Is that the paper? Is that...?**

No! No, we didn't have ranks at that time. He was merely a commander.

**How did Praljak actually become commander? I.e., we speak about the trust of the people that he earned. How did he earn it?**

First of all by his personality, his humaneness. To be precise, he did not show warmth as we think of it romantically: warmth, through words, outpouring of sympathy and the like. He showed with his deeds on a daily basis how much he is emotionally involved and has a warmth towards these men whom he never saw before in his life, nor did they meet him. But he showed a toughness of character. Because in those moments, and by personal example... if he had commanded somewhere on the other side of Sava, this success of the war in Sunja wouldn't be close to what it was. But, he was among the men. He spoke to them every day. He could lose his temper. And now I will tell you of a situation in which I thought there would be, perhaps not blood, but, closely. As the situation was still a kind of chaos, regardless of the fact that it looked orderly, but on a daily basis it was a chaos because in the men there was a dose of insecurity. Sava is behind us. The enemy is too strong, they are on the hill, they can see us. It is normal that there was insecurity in the people, but apparently there were those among them who didn't care too much to defend Sunja, but to make some profit for themselves. So, there was some kind of warehouse, this is some kind of "Agrooprema", I think, with agricultural machinery. And this machinery began to disappear. And when he found out about it, I think that the deputy head of the municipality informed him, he went crazy. He went crazy, I mean, it is difficult to reproduce those words, but he was raging that someone dared to do that in the moments when people are dying. But it left him quickly, so at the end he...

### **Were you present?**

Yes, yes, yes, it was in the courtyard, yes. And he very quickly recollected himself and solved this problem in an organized way.

### **How?**

He put these machines on auction. Can you imagine this? War is going on. You don't know whether your head will be on your shoulders until night time...and he is organizing an auction and concludes it successfully and the money remains. I don't know, he gave it legally to the institutions of the state and the problem was solved. I think this is all on record and that there is a document about that. It means, whoever owned those machines will get his money or whatever.

### **How did the people react to this? What did you think of this idea at such a moment?**

Crazy, the idea seemed crazy to me, because I don't understand that he had so much energy and reserves in him to solve that. Because, definitely, there were no possibilities then to conduct an investigation, who did it, what was taken, because simply the night, you know, who did it, you follow, it would waste energy and time and I don't know who could do that. But he solved this problem in an elegant manner and I think that the men themselves...at first they resisted...how, this is not ours...? But at the end they accepted it wholeheartedly and praised him and again gained trust in him as an honest man. Because, he could have confiscated these machines. Because you cannot follow the trace where it disappeared. But, no! Transparently, in public...

**...in some other ways?**

Yes. I wish to mention another event when we located the enemy. Actually he, together with the commanders found out through some intelligence that in a certain room, and I think it was the railway station in Hrastovec. That there is a larger group of reservists, it means their soldiers, situated and he saw a good opportunity to attack and inflict damage upon the enemy. However, the action unfortunately did not succeed, now we know why...a string of unfavourable circumstances and this group of ours was detected and...

**On which area?**

On the area when they were returning.

**On which area was this?**

Well, this is the part near...this is a road near...this is between...this is a stream, this B 52. And it means by the left flank of the defence we entered by...this is a road going down toward Hrastovec, as far as I remember. And then they were slowly returning. But the enemy closed the flanks and it was then that this Košta got killed. And then our boys went...these are the local lads mostly, unfortunately, they went to close the flanks for our forces to manage to pull out. And I was on standby because...I expected there will be medical needs, and I heard him shouting in the Motorola. He was there. He was in...there, immediately at B 52, on the first line.

**\*\*\*\*waited?**

Yes, yes. And he was shouting: "No, stretch yourself out, stretch yourself 50 metres from one another, stretch yourselves." And boom! You could hear directly in the ether how it exploded and then...then we lost four or five lads and there were some nine or ten wounded.

**And how do you go on? How does he function after that?**

Than he...

**He made himself heard and...?**

Yes. Then he called: "We need the doc, there is work for him quickly!" Then we organized this care. When such a number of people are wounded than it is really panic. And then basically we took them all to the clinic in Sunja, there to, to...

\*\*\*\*?

All. I think he took part as well and these men, the fighters who remained in one piece. They contributed, the paramedics, everyone cooperated. But there...there appeared a congestion, then I had to decide quickly who can be helped, who cannot. But this event is unfortunately a constituent part of the war and warring, but later you had to tell the people. You had to tell...

**Who told them?**

I did. As far as I remember, he was so much shaken by this event. Above everything else, an unfortunate set of circumstances. But I believe that he, and to this day I believe that he feels a burden of responsibility for what happened. Although, as I say, this is part of the war and warring. If we were to carry out

this action today, I don't think we could do it any better. But mainly I think that...I went to one or two families...whether he went I don't know, but he expressed his condolences to all the families. And this part remains engraved in you. I think he didn't sleep that night, but was biting himself. You could see it on him and after that he became very cautious. And then we talked. I thought there might be some kind of revenge, like anger. No, he strictly ordered people to stick to military targets. To fire only on civilian buildings in military use and on soldiers. And before the event itself, before the action started, I asked him: "Praljak what do we do in case we have casualties, and the enemy too, if...?" He just said resolutely: "As towards our soldiers, so towards theirs."

**\*\*\*\* before the action?**

Yes, yes. No difference. The same happened when Vukovar fell. Normally, we were all living with Vukovar. Vukovar with us. And I think that basically he was the first one who had a presentiment, found out, and finally Međimorec wrote it in his book "The Fall of Vukovar" how he lived through it then. I asked him: "How about taking some action...?" "No, we still have our assignment to defend Sunja. No unnecessary casualties." And he insisted, always insisted, this I find interesting, on a chivalrous fight. It means, to have a real, clean fight, and he always gave credit to the enemy side when credit was due.

**Yes?**

Yes.

**How?**

When they were attacking, when there would be a real fight. Let's say a couple

of times when they came to attack the railway station. He admitted it was really courage, to come in such a way. He probably...

**Had the balls to acknowledge?**

Yes.

**...the enemy's courage...?**

Yes, yes, and that's why he was successful. He never underestimated the enemy nor underrated him.

**Do you know Praljak from some earlier, peacetime days?**

No.

**You come there. You come ready for war. You know what the battlefields are and you come upon such and unusual, let's say...**

Yes.

**...unusual man. What were you thinking as you were discovering, getting to know Praljak?**

At first it was not unusual, but he looked bizarre in comparison to my earlier experiences where those commanders were strictly distanced, watched their own head in the first place. He fundamentally, I don't know, it's as if he was convinced that nothing can happen to him when he works like that. We once discussed it in the headquarters because he had heard about me, that I am also

just like that. If I go to help a man, save his life, I believe that God will not kill me then. He reasoned the same way. If I am going to consolidate a defence, if a point is critical, nothing can happen to me. Because I am going out to help my boys.

**All right, a man has the right to reason in such a way about himself. But when you were looking at him sticking out, flying out – were you worried at times...?**

I think, at the beginning, a few times, yes. But after a week I realized that this man knew exactly what he was doing and that he is doing a good thing. And then he begins to inspire confidence, an extraordinary confidence. And you do not think beyond the fact that this is a person who means life for you. And then, I think this is a cycle which\*\*\*\*, because you, at that moment it is easier to rely on him who acts so... He acts so self-assuredly, and you are full of insecurity. Then it is easier to rely on him. And he was transmitting this energy. He simply exuded optimism. And never, not in a single moment did that man have ideas that he would enter some village with the army and take the village apart. He was always saying that things should be done in a soldierly manner. And he... arranged the things in such a way that simply... but for this you have to have energy, have character and be sure of yourself that you can command a group. Only then you can call it a group. Because, mind you, we had there only a part of the Guards' brigade which could not cover this entire territory. Part of these men were the locals, these reservists of ours were coming. This had to be blended together. And they were replaced every two weeks. To have the power to fit these men into such a delicate and dangerous battlefield, but he managed it. And to describe Praljak, you cannot describe him, he impresses you! It is a man who at every moment speaks of something that he had already been thinking about. You understand? You, if you want to speak to him, you have to prepare

yourself, because he already reflected on it. There was one event when a BBC journalist or someone like that came... This had to be done at a time when Croatia had not been recognized and everyone was still looking at us as a part of Yugoslavia. This journalist comes to interview him. And now he came and Međa interpreted. And he was just asking: "Mister, what do you know about my country? What do you know about me?" This guy remained speechless. "What do you mean?" "Well, how did you prepare yourself? What do you know about Praljak the man" "Well, I know nothing." "So how are we going to talk?" "What do you know about the history of Croatia?" "What do you know about what's going on in Croatia? Do you know...?" "Well..." "There is nothing we can talk about." And he didn't give him the interview. He told him when he comes prepared, when he comprehends in an objective way what was happening, and when he realizes and finds out about him as a person, makes that effort, then the two of them will talk, then he will give him the interview.

### **And this guy left?**

He left. Here, this is Praljak. There is no shady business with Praljak. The only thing that passes is sincerity, I don't want to use phrases now like patriotism and the like. From me as a physician he demanded only professionalism and an occasional warm word when things were difficult. Absolutely, he knew how to open up...he would open up occasionally, and then you saw that deep down he is a romantic, and that he was experiencing all this very deeply. But God had gifted him with such a feature that he managed to hide it. If he had shown it, I don't know how it would all end. Here, this is, I don't know what else...

**You put it nicely. You said a lot. Give me just one more detail, were you present at the moment when the civilians from the other side were coming to the railway station to those wagons to steal grain.**

I was not present personally, but I was present when this was...

**This is what interests me.**

...when this was happening.

**Do you remember that conversation, can you\*\*\*?**

Yes, but this is in line of what I already said, not to shoot at civilians! We left those people to take the grain. Not one of them was killed. Not one bullet was fired at them. And why? Because people listened to his orders and believed him.

**\*\*\*\* the end of conversation. Is there anything else of importance that we should mention, that maybe I didn't ask you?**

Well, I don't know. I can just mention another human characteristic of his. The late Košta, he was then divorced or was quarrelling with his wife or whatever, I don't know exactly. Whether they were married and then divorced, or... basically, he was in conversation with... Košta was a difficult man, very difficult, he would make Praljak crazy. On the other hand, Praljak knew that he is a very reliable fighter, and where Košta is, the enemy cannot pass. That was definitely so. For this reason he tolerated him, but all the mischief that the late Košta was doing, about the deceased all the best, but I must recall, and then he is involved in a story with his wife and then Praljak patched them up.

**Praljak did that?**

Yes, and they were married in Sunja.

**I know that they married, but I didn't know that Praljak was instrumental in that.**

Yes, yes, yes. Also later, when Košta was killed...the same way...one cannot describe with words someone's suffering or someone's feelings. You can only see it. Or detect it from a jerk on the face or from the eye, or from his behaviour during the day. And now that I describe that it was a big loss for Praljak...I can't, I can simply say that it was. It was, and later on he took care of that wife, I don't know if they had children, no just Košta. Košta is an example of his humaneness, that not a single man remained forgotten. He simply, in the midst of these war events had the force and will to call to resolve something.

**Thank you.**

You're welcome.

I forgot to tell something...yes, but you could conclude from what was said before, that there was never chaos around him. Nor did he allow it, and he fought against it with all his might. And the fact that speaks in favour of this is that of the vacated Serbian houses, not one has been robbed. Not one has been set aflame. He didn't allow the ruining of those houses.

**How did he behave? How did he demand that? Were there attempts...**

Yes, yes. How to...? It is better not to see. When Praljak gets mad, you better get out of the way. Because, he is man who, when something evil was done, his whole being would raise against it. And by nature he is a huge man, and that hair of his, I have the feeling it was standing out another metre in the air. And I think

they heard him not only in Vedro Polje, but that they heard him all the way to Kostajnica. This is how he would shout at times.

**All right, were you present at some specific situation? When something was happening. When someone was taking something from a house, or so?**

Well, there was the situation when one of ours, a soldier whom I pulled out in the end, he was going to steal bicycles.

**Yes, and?**

And then...the enemy discovered him. And he was wounded in the lower leg through the muscle. It wasn't...it was a light wound...light wound. And I had to go to and pull him out. By the way I taught him a lesson...and at the end I nearly said to him that I would readily leave him where he was due to what he intended to do. But I told him: "Just wait until you face the commander." That was something! Above all, he behaved in a very soldierly manner. Yes...his orders were clear. And everyone knew that. That there shall be no looting, in the least the things that belonged to Serbs. On the other hand, he then gave the man a moral lesson. As a man. In the sense that...this is hard to describe, it is hard to remember the words. Because he could be very, very eloquent. But I want to say that this man, we patched him up and...over that wound of his he tried to explain it to him that he could have remained without his head. In such a way. Not in the way that the very fact that he went to steal something is a criminal act, what he clearly told him. On the other hand, you could see that even in this situation he is a man. That he doesn't want to write off this man. But to make the man understand what he did. Here...