

JOZO IVANČEVIĆ

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Here we are. We are switched on. Would you please introduce yourself at the beginning of the recording, your first and last name, date and place of birth, occupation and place of abode?

My name is Jozo Ivancevic, Medical Doctor, and Physician. My specialty is ophthalmology. I was born 27.08.1959, in Rama.

Where do you live now?

At this time I live in Rama, and in Prozor, working as an oculist in the Rama Health Centre.

Doctor Ivancevic, the reason and motive of this conversation is the Hague indictment against “sextet”, specifically against General Praljak. The prosecutor’s thesis is criminal association, criminal undertaking, as he states in the indictment. Today I would like to talk about what you did, where were you during those war years – and to see whether your recollection of that part corresponds to the prosecutor’s thesis, or we can state some other evidence.

Working as a physician before the war, in the Health Centre I joined the war of defense. The beginning of the clashes in our locality was 91. – 92. The first war attacks when the Serbs fired grenades at us, and bombard Rama. Even before that, we started with preparations and forming of this Rama War Hospital. It was located in the village of Rumboci, in a former diskette factory. In the beginning of 92, the War Hospital became operational, there we felt, we saw, the war is getting nearer in the Bosnia Hercegovina. Than we were simply compelled, we new there will be some war activities and we as physicians started forming medical corps. That is the reason this War Hospital was located in Rumboci.

Who participated in the organizing of the Medical Corps, in the formation of that ...?

The chief of staff of Medical Corps County of Prozor, as the title was known at the time, was the participant. I was the appointed one, and

I started organizing and forming of the Medical Corps, forming the units, equipping the war hospital. In the year 1992, part of the physicians remained in the Health Centre, it was known as battle for the wounded... part remained here establishing the organization. At the time the Muslims were active here. The physicians were both Muslims and Croatians. Maybe there were more Croatians, because more Croatians lived here, according to territory population. We worked together; they participated in the work and organizing of the War Hospital.

How did the preparations go? Well, common enemy, common ...

Our common enemy at the time were Serbs. They were already positioned on Kupres Plateau. I think that was in 1991, where they were conducting their manoeuvres, and we saw tanks were there. It was visible, they were passing through Kupres. It was obvious there will be some war confrontation. And now we started organization and realisation of this War Hospital.

Do you remember, excuse my interruption, at that moment the year 1992, which military units participated together? Well, was that HVO, TO, were the Muslims in HVO?

At the time that was common army, everybody was, now I don't know precisely... I do know in the beginning it was Territorial Defence. Later when the HVO was formed, we were together for a period. And even when it started, those conflicts, part of the physicians of Bosnian, Muslim nationality were with us. They were even up on the terrain. At the time that was the first line of Defence up against Kupres. The physicians both Croatians and Muslims worked together in that War Hospital as we organized it. Later as the time went, then maybe some conflicts came between Croatians and Bosnians, as it was happening at the time.

When did you start to notice the things which happened to separate Croats and Bosnians?

Well that is ... right now I don't know the date, I can't remember correctly, but that was the year 1993.

We had short brake, we are continuing now. Doctor Ivancevic, we are discussing the relationship of the existing alliance between Croatians and Muslims, and how it gradually grew into relationship of tensions, relationship of confrontation. Now then, do you remember, or can you possibly recall some event specifically important in the entire chronology of events?

Well, as far as I remember there was a County Board meeting. We were at the meeting Muslims and Croats, we were together...

Do you know the date?

I don't know exactly the date. Don't know, I can't ...

Can you establish approximately?

It was the year 1992, maybe sixth month of the year 92, I don't know... There I think in the middle of the year 1992. As we were at the meeting, then I don't know, somebody came and reported some man who was up at Makljen died. I don't know whether he was up there logging, cutting wood or looked after his flock. We got the message that he died. What was his name MEST*** or Zadro, don't rightly know, Zadro didn't. He did die. In connection therewith, the meeting was interrupted. When the news came, we stopped the meeting and simply dispersed. ...

Who was at that meeting?

There was: president ... the president of the county Board...

From what side?

Croatian and Bosnian, I already said, Croats and Bosnians. Then they made...

What was the purpose of the meeting?

I don't know correctly. At the time I was working in then War Hospital. It was most likely to subdue the tensions, to appease the situation...

Did tensions exist?

Yes they existed. Most likely they were trying to control, to somehow...However, I got the information they also tried to organize in part, and they gathered together, apparently two buses of the Bosnian army coming over Duga, passed towards Uzdol. It was that kind of information.

The man who died at Makljen, is he Croat or Muslim?

He is Croatian. And then when he died, we simply left the meeting hall, however, the sporadic fire started in the town. Being a physician, I withdrew to the War Hospital, thinking and expecting should need arise, adequate number of people could be taken care of, they could receive the help regardless whether they are Croats or Muslims, or any other nationality.

It means, that was that *.**

That is.

If I understand correctly, the tensions escalate, regardless of effort? It comes to shooting, it comes to ...

Tensions are escalating. Generally it came to confrontation between Muslims and Croats; they came to town where they organized their defence. One part of the town, let's say half of the town, in Prozor was held by them, where they were. Perhaps the military know better the structure, than I do. They got organized. Even they formed illegally a war hospital somewhere in the basements...

Parallel?

Yes, parallel. They were with us, in that period we were together, however, later when it came to confrontation ...

When did you find out there was a parallel war hospital operated by Muslims?

We found out when after all those clashes when ... how would I say it, when the conflict ended then one part ... there were most likely those who were captured Muslims. Then later it became known where their hospitals were. There was stationed ... I personally didn't go into that war hospital, but some of the soldiers who were posted in those houses, when the liberation came, somehow they found bandages and medications, and they found ... even some equipment.

Was that a well equipped hospital?

Well, improvisation. It was lesser equipped than this War Hospital in Rama...in ...Rumboc because in the beginning we worked together, and equipped the Rumboc Hospital, a part of workers was in the Health Centre, and part in Rumboc, up until the hostilities.

Would you tell me about equipping the War Hospital in Rumboc, how did you acquire the necessities?

Simply I had contacts where ...Don't know how, I just started looking for contacts with Croatia, contacts with some humanitarian organizations. As we were working in the Health Centre, during that period, as a physician I was in the Health Centre, we didn't have those needles, for single use. We had those refractory ones, the name for the syringes where we sterilized the needles them through boiling. And that was the beginning before the war. However, later on, through different organizations, I felt the need to organize the medical corps. Then I looked for, collected through different echelons etc. the War Hospital in Rumboc became well equipped. We have worked sufficiently, we succeeded, and the hospital functioned. It functioned for everybody, regardless who was who. And when the conflict started it is visible from our protocol, we have them now in the Health Centre, that the Muslims were taken care of there ...

Those are the ones we photocopied?

Yes, we should photocopy ... Where it is visible "lege artis" they were operated, where we allowed the surgical unit that came from Split

I think we ...worked there on major surgical operations in general anaesthetics. We had protocols on those large operations. We had some smaller ones for war injuries, lesser operations.

Well, now to me, as a person who was not here in that period it's not clear: the hostilities between Croats and Muslims are going on.

Yes.

In this hospital are treated Croats and Muslims. Did I understand right?

Absolutely, they are treated ... it has ... I am telling you, it is visible in our protocols. Here, we will photocopy them, where they were taken care of under this medical Doctrine, Geneva Doctrine (Convention). We didn't even think all the physicians who worked there didn't distance themselves; there were no indications of triads. This one can and that one can't be taken care of. Everybody was taken care of. All were adequately ... whoever came to the hospital... I think 99% survived. Well, everything necessary, what we could give. Furthermore, those who had major operations were transported to Hospital in Split, due to the fact it was the closest one. A part of those lightly operated on, went to Tomislavgrad, Livno, as is visible from our protocols.

Was there any problem about the fact where the wounded of the opposed armies or opposed people in the conflict, are at the same time taken care of, in the same hospital? How did...?

As the chief of Medical Staff at the time, and commanding officer of the hospital, I can say there was no discrimination, no difference made between wounded Muslims and Croats. I am telling you, adequate aid was given, adequate help was dispensed. Everything we had at the time, as it was improvisation, we gave to everybody, and adequate help was given, and I think ...

Tell me please, did the political leadership, military command know that there are being taken care of both of them? Was there any problem due to ...?

Concerning that, the political leadership knew they were treated there. However, we didn't, I am saying it again, we didn't ... nobody gave us any direction, nobody said to me... do not, this is a Croatian Hospital or this ...didn't say, nobody said it. All kinds passed there ...We were just some War Hospital, I don't know, like Caritas, regardless where the people came from, passed by, there were sleeping provisions food provisions, and there was let's say the most peaceful, the most secure spot, a position where we gave to all that came, let's say Hypocrite's pledge worked here, and we all abided by the codex and behaved, and all the physicians who were there provided adequate care. We didn't look at nationality of some, whose soldier is he. Everybody was given the same quality care, as much as the hospital could provide at those times.

A while ago you mentioned existence of a parallel Muslim war hospital. Do you have any information indicating that the hospital in some way helped Croats, who needed the help, and were located on that side? Well, do you have such information?

I do not. I don't have information concerning that, but later I got a positive. Later we got the information where the Muslims organized, and that was in the town in the basement of a house, there was found as I said, those medicines, some apparatus, and some accompanying material ... those things assigned for this hospital etc.

Could the Croats get help there?

I think they could not because nobody among us knew hospital existed.

Well we have no such indications?

We do not. I don't know, I do not ... don't know anybody was taken care of there.

Doc, do we have anything else important we should mention. Did we miss something? Would you need anything else?

Well, I wouldn't... I think, I am again turning back, the war hospital did function, and in that hospital care was really given to all the people who came

in... the wounded, the soldiers, regardless of the military affiliation, regardless of the nationality. And the civilians who remained there in Prozor, in the County in Prozor, in the District in Prozor, Rama. I think, later some part as it happened under military, really to all who came the help was provided, given according to the Hypocrite's Pledge.

The seriously wounded needing special care was going to Split?

Absolutely, towards Split...

...and there they were operated at?

Yes, yes. Because later the helicopters were engaged. Before that the transport was over the Vran. That was a macadam road, it took to 10 hours to Split, and because that was at the time the closest hospital where we could transport the wounded. Later when the helicopters came, they enabled easier and faster transport. And there was many a life saved. On the way back, they would bring the blood, which was given to any wounded who came, who needed it. That was given ...

Now would you tell me, this my last question: you said you used different means to acquire necessities for the hospital through humanitarian organizations etc. Tell me, did you get anything necessary for the hospital through the Arab humanitarian organizations, or were those some other organizations?

Through the Arab lands I didn't get anything, that help. I didn't. But there were some other at that time, it was not known who was representing whom, it was... Some organizations ... came. Allegedly, like what does the hospital need? I don't know, where was I in Croatia is some company, where it was said if any medical help is needed for the War Hospital, they would be willing to help. However, later when the phone numbers were exchanged, and when I needed to get in touch with them to realise the promise, they were not available. We would never anything ...

Doctor Ivancevic, thank you very much.

Your welcome,