

MIRA IVANIŠEVIĆ

IVANIŠEVIĆ MIRA

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The conversation is recorded, registered under designation

Ivanisevicmi

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Conversation took place in the apartment of the collocutor

Here, we are connected. I would ask you to introduce yourself, at the beginning of the recording. Well, your first and last name, date and place of birth, your profession and place of residence.

I am Mira Ivanisevic, born 16.02.1933. in Salzburg, my profession is electro engineer.

You are now living in Split, Kralja Zvonimira 93? Is that right?

93. Yes.

Reason of our conversation is Hague indictment against General Praljak. Therefore I would ask you to converse about what you did during the war '92. '93. years. You were the secretary of Croatian German Centre in Split, you were translating. Could you in the beginning remember of that time? Well, where were you? What did you do? For whom did you translate?

At that time, every political and newspaper delegation, would turn for help to honorary Consul Karl Grentz in Split. And we as the Centre were together with him on the same floor, of the same locality. The German Embassy was paying for the area, rent for the premises – for him and for us, so during those years we were as an entirety. Quite often I substituted for the secretary of the honorary Consul. He then didn't even have the command of German language, just mediocre, so under the circumstances I was present at all important conversations they had. If the German Ambassador came to Split, and visited different institutions, I was always going along. We even organized different talks, so even the German Ambassador gave talk about democracy in Germany after II. World War. I would organize round table with Mr. Kosnik and professor

Rogeman and the students from Berlin. We as the centre would offer free courses of German language for university and high school students, for a long time.

'92. and '93.?

Yes, yes! '93 we had courses. The professors for the courses were paid by the Embassy. Consequently, they covered the cost of the professors only. Well, we are like a center of the broad activities. We even received the books and wanted to organize a library for lending of the books. Many books we sorted out and donated to the universities. According to the themes we gave them to Zadar and Law Faculty in Split. We really got into full swing, because we considered that Germany is our friend. Secondly, I have studied in Germany, completed the studies, and had otherwise sympathy towards Germany, because my good friends are there. We helped on humanitarian grounds everyone who turned to us, regardless if that was a person of Serbian nationality, from Zenica, or from somewhere, A Bosnian. We helped everybody, as much as we could. Well, that was my activity, since then to '94.

Generally, your headquarters was in Split?

In Split. On the waterfront.

Working in that job, did you travel?

At the time I followed everything. Not only in Split, but in the entire region. From Zadar, Sibenik, our Zagora, Peruca, Oboljan, Makarska where the refugees were placed in the hotels. Then I even organized with the teachers union from Bavaria a trip for Bosnian young, who learned some circus skills, and children folklore groups from our Vrljika people. I took two children groups to Munchen for performance. Well, my activities at the time were very broad. Or, let's say I accompanied ZDF after barrage of Dubrovnik, when they were recording on film. They recorded, it could be said, good film about Dubrovnik and destruction of

Dubrovnik. Then to Hercegovina and all the way to Tomislav Grad, over that mountain where the convoys were driving the help, I believe towards Bila that was going either to Livno, Posusje, and Metkovic where the UNHCR depot was. And we recorded that.

It means you were going as translator?

As translator!

To whom were you the translator?

To all possible groups! First I was the translator to different newspaper men. And I would, let's say organize a newspaper, magazine conference. We went to Obojan. And really we were accepted everywhere. The police would take us with their patrol boat to Obojan. I led the newspaper and political delegations, accompanied and translated at the meetings with them and similar political organizations. When there was SDP delegation then we visited SPD in Split. Or Slobodna Dalmacija! There I also accompanied two, three delegations. Or even trade delegations in our Komora. And there was even a large gathering of Austrians, businessmen, in Mostar...

All Right. I would like to return into the time of the event when you had contact with General Praljak. That was, if I understood you correctly, your only contact with General Parlay?

The only one.

Can you tell me about that contact? Why and how it came to that contact?

I was with the crew of ZDF...

Excuse me. We are talking about the beginning of '93.?

That's right!

Don't you know the correct date?

I can't remember, but the weather was already warm. It was the spring or something like that. That time ZDF was stationed in Medugorje. We were in a private hotel and really the plan was to remain two three days, but it lasted ten days. There was always the same newspaperman from ZDF, Dietmar Shultz, while the cameraman and the helper were always hired through some firm in Cyprus. Sometime it would be an American, sometime British, because for them that was cheaper than a German cameraman. At the time there was the center of all television crews in Medugorje, because one of the hotels had satellite possibilities for direct transmission of the news to the home offices in Europe. He as a newspaperman did cost the home office quite a bit, because he always had to look for some news of the day....

Exclusive?

Exclusive news. And then he was interested about the campground in Gabela. All other newspapermen were mentioning this camp in Gabela, how it is not possible to enter there etc. Town of Citluk was near by, I got from my husband the number of Mr. Slobodan Praljak, and I knew where he was located. We went to Citluk, we wanted to talk to him. But, there they told us Mr. Praljak is not here, he is on the terrain. And then I proposed to go to Capljina to see the mayor Mr. Markovic.

It means, you are doing all of this to succeed...

To get to Gabela. That was the target, the task. Gabela was some bugaboo, and everybody wanted to get into Gabela. Mr. Markovic wasn't present, but there was some assistant. He refused: he can't give any permissions, he has no jurisdiction. Then I asked him if I could try and see if Mr. Praljak came back, and he allowed me that. I called, and Mr. Praljak really responded immediately, without some inter-switchboards,

so I as I remember got surprised. I thought they would now transfer me etc.

This means you did talk with Praljak?

With Praljak, that's right! I introduced myself I am Mira Ivanisevic, translator for the ZDF crew and that they have the desire to enter Gabela to tape that camp in Gabela. To get the taboo subject cleared. He didn't deliberate at all, and he immediately said we can go and tape.

Did Praljak then over the phone pose any restrictions? And do you get the feeling that he didn't want something seen?

No! No! Nothing! He immediately said we can go. Then I asked, knowing those people which we will encounter there, the mentality, that there could be problems and I cant just refer to, that Mr. Praljak allowed me. So, then I asked him if he could fax me to the office of Mr. Markovic, his permission. We waited very shortly, and the fax arrived.

The fax came immediately?

Immediately! Immediately!

And who signed the fax?

He! Slobodan Praljak.

What was written in the fax?

He is allowing to the crew of ZDF to enter in that – now I don't know how he called this Gabela, but he didn't call it a camp.

Do you have that fax?

I really preserved it in that journal for many years, because to say it truthfully, it was like some trophy. But, then later the fax faded, and then afterward I threw it away. I didn't photocopy it.

That means we don't have it?

I don't have it.

All right. It means, in that fax which was signed by Mr. Slobodan Praljak, it was written that you can enter and you can tape?

That's right! And we started immediately for Gabela. I know there was an access ramp, and to the right there was the administration building or something. And we entered.

Did you have problems entering?

No! No! None! I showed that fax, we are the ones, the ramp was raised and we... I know the road was asphalt and we walked to the top and on the right side of the road, there were low, long brick built ground level buildings.

Let me interrupt you for just a second. Do you have the feeling that Mr. Shultz, who was the main newspaperman, was surprised getting the permit for entrance?

Yes, he was the highest. He knew that if I start something, it will somehow end successfully. Because quite often he would find the doors closed, and then I would, as the translator and intermediary succeed to get him to see what he wanted. He was more than happy that ZDF would be first to enter Gabela.

**But was he surprised that something taboo gets the permit?
You were in that moment their translator?**

Yes! Yes! But he considered me for a person who was more than a simple translator. He knew my husband was in the Croatian Army and...He was surprised, but his main object was to enter into Gabela and tape.

I am now interested in these: What did, Shultz say when he saw the paper signed by Praljak?

Well, he was happy! We picked up the paper and disappeared through the door faster than when we entered. Into the car and to Gabela. That was the reaction. On the way we didn't talk much. I remember the asphalt road, then no asphalt road, because in reality I didn't know Hercegovina. And when we came there, we introduced ourselves in the administration building, the ramp was raised and we entered. And we went to the end of that road, that way. And on the top, I remember very well, there were some cisterns with water. The men were bathing. And they also washed the clothes. There was some quiet atmosphere.

What does it mean "quiet atmosphere"?

There wasn't much speech to hear, or something. It was really very silent. Now I don't know whether the men were surprised when all of a sudden there comes for the first time television with cameras.

That means, it is the first time the television entered?

First time!

Then they most likely were surprised?

Yes! Yes! They were not accustomed and they didn't know what is happening. I got such an impression about those men. One of the long halls was open and he was taping the hall from the doorway, and the surrounding of the entire Gabela. I personally talked to one of them. He was a professor of German from Capljina. He got out and talked something with Shultz. I asked a young man if he needs anything. He

said he needs nothing. They were there all together, next to each other in that hall. And than to my surprise a couple of them came on the road from below. In the first moment I thought they are maybe some kind of guards, but they answered they are not, they go outside to work and now they are returning.

Well, that was your encounter with Gabela? After that Dietmar Shultz made his part?!

Yes! And we didn't stay for long, he was in such a hurry to get his news as first in the world, we were rushing to Medugorje. And I didn't have a chance to see that tape of his, because we were in a small private hotel, and transmission was from another hotel. But all of us were on the same small street. And he sent that and was very happy that this was a first such a film shooting by ZDF and ZDF later sold it to other television Companies.

Were you present all the time during his filming? Did he then talk with people?

He was talking probably with the one who knew German. I even entered into the hall and he filmed from the door. I entered inside and wanted to talk with the people.

You were the translator, there was Dietmar and the cameraman! Who was the cameraman?

And the assistant was there. And the cameraman was there – I think it was an American, who ordinarily accompanied us a few times. And he, the cameraman, always had an assistant who held the microphone or... Well, we were four.

Do you know the names of those people?

No, I don't remember.

All right, I think we came to the end of our conversation. Tell me only – Dietmar Shultz, gentlemen with whom you worked in the year '93. Where is that gentleman today? Do you have any information?

After the war in Croatia he went to Israel. And he even told me that his spouse is going with him to Israel. And then, maybe later one more time I've heard from him, and later nothing.

It means you have no more contacts?

No, nothing more!

What is happening with him now, what is he doing?

I don't know. Sometime I thought I would get in touch, but I have no time.

Madame Mira, you told me what was important, Do you think we forgot anything, Should we mention anything else?

In connection with Mr. Praljak?

In connection with this event.

I don't think so. That happened exactly as I told you.

Thank You.