

JENGIĆ NIKICA

16.03.2005.

Hrvatska Kostajnica

The sound recording and the transcript of the conversation were recorded on a CD marked

SUNJA 3.

The sound recording of the conversation is registered under the code

jengcnikica

4,49 MB

duration 14:03

The conversation was held in Kostajnica, in the premises of the town hall

First I would like to ask you to introduce yourself to me.

JengiĆ Nikica.

JengiĆ?

Yes.

Where were you born?

In Zagreb.

In Zagreb!

Yes. My parents moved here.

There, I found a Zagreber!

Ha, ha

When were you born?

11.4.1958.

Tell me this, right now, you were the co-worker of Praljak. How close were you actually to him? How often did you have a chance to come in contact with him?

Well, I met him for the first time, that was on the ferry, when we went to Sunja.

When was that approximately?

In 1991, on 17.12 if I remember well, and then he looked like, listen, he was an appearance. Exactly like, military. He lined us up, like, it was really in military manner.

What was the situation like at the time? Can you remember? Where were you going?

We were moving across, in Selište, we were moving down there, and now the company was supposed to be divided in platoons, which one is going where, which platoon is going where. There, then he did that, you here, you there, that was that and we lined up without a problem. He said where we were supposed to go, how we were supposed to act. He was correct. There was no, not like that he shouted, it was really like, it was military.

And then?

And then one platoon stayed on that side of the river Sava. We went, my platoon, at the time I was the commanding officer of the platoon, the first platoon, we went on the Old road. We went along the Old road without lights. That's obligatory, he said, don't turn on the lights. We positioned ourselves on the first line, so the building B52, all the way up there. And he was with us the entire time.

From B52 up to...

B52 up to the Hotel. Up to the Petrol station. Exactly like that, yes, that was that first line.

And you were there all the time?

And we were there for a month. Then we went to Trebež, to rest, like some kind of vacation, and then we came back again.

You came back to the same place?

We came back to the New road and then we were here until the end, on the New road.

This line B52 – Station, i.e. Hotel, that was under attack all the time...

All the time, yes.

I know. So, you obviously had a privileged position. What was it like over there?

The worst for me was that night, first night. That was the worst, you go, you don't know where you are going. I knew Sunja, I played football, I knew where the football field was. And here, during the night, it is dark, we were separated. There were 25, 26 of us, I don't know exactly how many there were, and five here, five there – the next day the commander of the platoon had to search where people were. There were problems from the beginning.

When you came those pillboxes were already fortified?

The pillboxes were already fortified, we fortified a bit more later, and then later Greger also came to this position – there was shift, and then they also fortified. The worst was for Christmas, there was shooting then, but no matter of the shooting Praljak went from post to post and made rounds.

Tell me a bit about that. Many people told me that he actually...

He went from post to post! We were then the Alans, that code, Alan 1, Alan 5. We were Alan 5. And he went from post to post, from pillbox to pillbox, I don't know who else was with him.

And what happened when he came?

He congratulated, normally, visited people, do you need something, what is missing. He acted normally.

Did you have a chance to take part in some fiery situations with him?

No.

He was not present in some fiery situations?

No. At least not where I was, but he used to be up there in the Hotel, and in the corners. I was in the middle as the commanding officer of the platoon. He was on B52, at that time that was still Crni, the Thunders were then. Well, he went there.

So, the Thunders were holding B52, the Station and the Hotel, and you were in between?

We were together.

You were together?

At that time we were all mixed up.

And the emergency groups?

The emergency groups, that was from Crni. Then that guard brigade was emergency brigade. Crnković Miroslav. He is in Sisak, he also got injured. He can say, they were directly... He, Orkan, *****, he was in signals, and he can, he knows a lot about him. And we were like, exactly, you know, you don't go home for 45 days, children, you don't have a house, there, here, and he was cooperative here and gave us then a small bus, mini-bus so that we can go visit our families. We were in Duga uvala, in exile, and then he was cooperative: no matter of the shooting, of the prohibition, no problem, you have to go see your family, two days. As far as that was concerned he was quite reliable. And that he ordered people to shoot at random, to kill – I never heard that from him. He was really correct... There was even a prohibition, he strictly carried out the shooting prohibition. Once, there was the shooting prohibition, and now he was on B52, and at out post on shot a bullet from a sniper – he came here straight away and gave Tunja seven days of prison.

Wait... Why, why, why?

The shooting prohibition.

There was the shooting prohibition?

There isn't any! When there is shooting prohibition there isn't any shooting, none! That was it, shooting is not allowed, you should respect that. And as far as that is concerned he was quite consistent.

Good, what were the reasons why Praljak punished people? Namely, people told me...

I'll tell you... here...

People told me that before Praljak there were hundreds of problems, from badly fortified pillboxes, from the from lines that were in people's back yards, from drinking, everything, everything, everything – but there was no prison.

No, no, no.

There were no systematic disciplinary measures – however, all that started functioning, and the institution of prison started functioning when Praljak came. Was it like that?

Yes, yes.

(In the background you can hear Greger who says: "One tenth of the military police came who had their obligation, they had their house and here...")

The prison was there, in that house where HVIDRA (Croatian military invalids of the Homeland War) is located now?

That's here, yes. Everything started functioning: the fortification, sad is coming for the bags, trailer truck came to fortify the pillboxes...

I would like to know what was the most common reason why Praljak punished? So, what would be the top three sins which would make Praljak go crazy?

Disobedience.

Disobedience in some special section or disobedience in general?

Well he did not punish a lot, for that the first time, then he punished and I don't know if he punished anymore. That was, that was the disobedience, he punished that. You could go to him, talk, normally, I accompanied Orkan to see him...

(In the background you can hear Greger who says: "Why would he punish one of my soldiers when I was the commanding officer? I punished him.")

That's right, I punished him if it was necessary.

Yes, but you had background in such a situation, you had Praljak behind you who...

Yes! Praljak who stood behind me if necessary. That's it, normally. But we didn't, at that time we didn't punish a lot.

Were marches a punishment?

Marches? Yes, there was one march.

Was it the one with the cat?

There was one and one of our soldiers...

(Greger, from the background: "I think that was because of the shooting")

That was because of shooting, also.

But do you know about some event with the cat?

No.

Some cat was tortured and then Praljak send the team on a march, for punishment.

No, I don't know. I know there were marches, but I don't know anything about that, really.

(Greger from the background: "They were not from our unit")

We were all mixed up and then, when those from Zagreb went home, we more or less stayed alone between B52... We alone held all the posts, and we were mixed up on B52 with those active, and up there – because those were those tops were there was most shooting and attacks.

You didn't try to break through?

Yes, we did try to break through from the flanks, from the tops, from those tops, B52. And that was in 1991. There were no later. Like, in 1991 when they still thought they could do something – it was then. Until the Sarajevo agreement.

The greatest loses that you had, when did they happen?

We, as in our unit, didn't have any loses. We were fortified well, boys passed more or less the entire Kostajnica, they knew how to take care of themselves and how to fortify.

Yes, it wasn't the first time they were shot on.

It wasn't the first time, yes. And the most was that what happened during the Storm, but then he wasn't here. Then there was Peša. That was later.

Tell me, the morning briefings, did you go to them?

At the time only Orkan went to the briefings, as the commanding officer of the company, and we went only later, when Peša was there, and then we went.

What were the greatest problems for you?

Problem?

Yes.

Not going home. Good, that's like, that's normal. Weaponry! We came with tandžara guns. There were only 3, 4 machine-guns when we came. Good there was ammunition, there was clothes, after a while we also got weaponry, automatic one. Secondly, the human relations were better than ever, they were really great.

Tell me how Praljak reacted in situations that occurred from time to time, not often but occasionally there were, and that was stealing things from abandoned houses?

Well, where we were that didn't happen. So that I wouldn't know, there was no stealing when we were there.

There wasn't?

No, there was nothing. We were in the houses and we knew when the post will be abandoned, when we had shifts, he was still there, it was all left there and we moved on. So, we only took our personal equipment and everything else was left behind. At the time that didn't happen within our unit. And for others I wouldn't know...

And tell me were there any problems with drinking?

Drinking? During the first month there wasn't. Later, bit by bit... We didn't have a drinking problem during the time he was there at all. He opened a canteen and when he caught someone drinking in the canteen – he threw him out. So that there wasn't, there weren't any drinking problems. I don't know that then, in our platoon during those two months that anyone got drunk.

So you didn't have those problems?

There were no problems then, with drinking...

Because I know that he used to have those problems with other people.

Yes, but not with us. Not in our platoon. That was only later. We were a bigger unit, other people came and then it was... However then it was like this. He opened a canteen, I know that then it was like, he caught someone with a beer and threw him out, and then the canteen was closed.

Alcohol was not served in the canteen?

No. There was nothing. Good, there used to be like, ***** cognac, but no, there was no drinking. Not at that time.

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