

TOMO KRILIĆ

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Ljubuški, September 2005

Conversation was recorded; tape is marked by code

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Duration 15:05

Interview was conducted in the city of Ploče.

**I would like to ask you to introduce yourself at the beginning of the session.**

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**Please state your name, last name, date and place of birth.**

My name is Tomo Krilić, I was born on January 9<sup>th</sup> 1961. I've been working for the Port of Ploče since 1986, as business manager from 1993, July 1993.

**Since July 1993 you've been working as?**

As business manager of the Port of Ploče.

**Mr. Krilić, please let me know what is your profession?**

Graduate economist in foreign trade.

**You were working for the Port of Ploče during the war?**

Yes I have, I've been working for the Port of Ploče, yes.

**What happened in the Port of Ploče during the war?**

Well, once a very, very busy port, before the war I mean, that held almost 4 and a half million tons of merchandise with its partners mostly from Bosnia and Herzegovina, our traffic was 90 % and more oriented to their market, in 1993, to be precise, the Port of Ploče weakened to 300 thousand tons. This means we dropped from 4 and a half million tons to 300 thousand tons, and in 1994 it was even less, 265. That was the minimum, minimum traffic through the Port of Ploče. At that time the port traffic came down only to humanitarian shipments, humanitarian shipments to Bosnia and Herzegovina coming from all sources, or should I say all programs, whether it was a program of American humanitarian organizations, other humanitarian organizations were also present, from Saudi Arabia for

example, Turkey, even some others, I wouldn't like to omit or forget any other, nevertheless, Port of Ploče was working regardless of the hard circumstances and the blockade, you know that Port of Ploče was blocked by land, there was no railroad transport and that the transshipment was done under very complex conditions. Practically, we can say during the war as well as after war, we can say under war conditions, the Port of Ploče was bombarded from air, attacked from sea etc. We were doing our work professionally according to the instructions we received from our clients and from destinations that we, as a port, didn't even know about and the same for the final, final client. However, we are talking about humanitarian help here; we didn't make any, any difference towards anybody, whoever it was intended for, if it was sent by this or that humanitarian organization, we worked with everybody under same rules and criteria.

**When you say the same criteria ... Shipments that were arriving to Port of Ploče went – to which side? Where did it all go?**

Basically it went to all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regardless of the fact that Bosnia was in such a war, I don't want to go into who, were, what, how, it didn't matter, but the shipments did practically go to all areas. Shipments were sent to Sarajevo as much as possible and in periods when it was possible, and to other destinations in Bosnia, the same as Banja Luka and Mostar, in Eastern, Western and Central Bosnia.

**If I understood you correctly, the American and Arab humanitarian help arrived to the Port of Ploče most often, that is, ships with their cargo?**

Yes, yes.

**Where did the American humanitarian help go? Was it more or less centered on a group, a specific district, or a region?**

No I don't think so, but in the end we never knew the exact schedule, nor did we get involved in it, our job was to reload and to store the cargo in warehouses, and we never received any explanation under what rules or principles the shipments were organized. We did know that the shipments were crossing the Croatian border, entering Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that they were distributed to all destinations, but we didn't know under what rules. However what we definitely did know was that those ships arrived to Port of Ploče from American and other ports, like Saudi Arabia, from Turkey, maybe from some other places, these shipments were smaller, but we did the same with that cargo as well, we reloaded it in the same way and under the same criteria.

**Who from did you receive more shipments, Americans or Arabs?**

There were mostly American shipments.

**How much more, approximately?**

Well that would, in any case I would say 3 to 1, maybe even more, I can't say precisely at this moment, but the American help program was essentially bigger.

**What was the content of these shipments? Were you aware of that?**

We definitely were, we reloaded the shipments, its' contents were mostly food supplies, food supplies mostly, so flour, bulk wheat, oil barrels, folding beds, tents, hospitals, various equipment mostly, sugar, as I said,

everything.

**Was there any military equipment? Are you aware of such cargo?**

I never saw any explicitly military equipment; I mean, even a tent can be considered as equipment, if we consider it broadly. I haven't seen any explicitly military equipment.

**Are you aware of any armament? Ammunition?**

No, no. Not that. Definitely and certainly not.

**Before we switched on the dictaphone, you mentioned one interesting shipment that happened on August 31<sup>st</sup> 1993!?**

Yes, it was an interesting case. Among others, a ship named "Arap Hind" from Saudi Arabia arrived with a shipment of 5 and a half thousand tons of bagged wheat, like, packed in sacks of 50 kg, that is quite a shipment of food, and the sacks were marked that they were sent exclusively for Bosnian Muslims.

**That was written on the sacks?**

Yes.

**On each sack?**

Yes, on each sack. Well you can imagine that 5 and half tons is quite an amount of food, and yes, the Port handled, stored and shipped that cargo without any incident.

**What were the reactions of, let's say, people working in the Port? During August 1993 Croats and Muslims were in conflict, and not far away from here.**

Well, listen, I think, all of us at the Port thought that everybody in Bosnia and Herzegovina needed humanitarian help. I can't say everybody was pleased with this method, but they didn't provoke any incidents or anything.

**I wasn't expecting to hear that there were any incidents – but I presume people noticed that detail?**

Yes, yes. It made an impression.

**Were there any cases like this previously?**

Well no, there was one more in 1994, 1995, also very similar or...I can't pinpoint, I can't exactly specify what ship was it, but people who work on the site will know.

**What did it say then?**

Well in that, that the humanitarian help was intended for Muslim brothers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also a big sign.

**The sign was bilingual?**

Yes, yes bilingual. It was written in Croatian and English.

**What did the sign say in both Croatian and English?**

Yes, well conditionally it was Croatian. Well, it said what I've just mentioned.

**One question, the wheat shipment, the big wheat shipment that arrived on August 8<sup>th</sup> 1993, was it bagged?**

Yes.

**Is that the usual way to transport wheat?**

Well not quite. No. Wheat was always transported in bulk, however, why and for what reason it was the way it was, you should bear in mind that there was a complete blockade and that the simplest way to transport anything was by trucks. So, this was a completely understandable means of transportation to smaller towns or, I don't know, in heavy conditions. It is quite unusual. It is completely and absolutely, usually an unacceptable way of transporting, since wheat is always transported in bulk in high quantities, but not in 50 kg sacks.

**You mentioned earlier a shipment of Qur'an, and propaganda materials?**

Among other things, yes. Yes, yes, there were some books that were shipped with the cargo, however, regarding its contents and so, I wouldn't like to talk about it.

**Was it the luxury edition of Qur'an?**

Oh, no, I don't want to comment on that. I'm not able to give judgment there.

**Was it soft like this?**

No, no.

**Or was it a hard, nice binding?**

It was nice, hard bound. However I have to say and repeat, for us it represented cargo that needed to be stored and shipped, we were doing it professionally.

**Good, you didn't and, I presume, couldn't do it on your own initiative!?**

Meaning what?

**So, if you decided to do it in the Port of Ploče on your own, regardless to, let's say, government politics?**

I think that politics didn't, I wouldn't like commenting on it too much.

**Here, to be precise: did the Port of Ploče do what the government politics requested or approved?**

Listen, the Port of Ploče had to tranship the cargo according to orders of their clients, or to say better, their representatives, this was our business and all of this had to be interconnected with the law regulations of the state you are working in. We reload everything that is allowed at the given moment. We don't think.

**Did you ever receive any signals, instructions to stop doing it?**

No.

**Off course, I mean, from the government, the ministers?**

No.

**You never received any information on this?**

No. No. No. We never received comments or never experienced any kind of government interference on the work we were doing, at least in the part I was included, in the commercial aspect of the work in the Port of Ploče, no.

**Did we forget anything; is there anything more that needs to be said?**

I don't think so. There's always more, but in short, this is it.

**I'm turning the dictaphone off.**

*September 2005, Ljubuški*