

## HEMINGWAY

I met Hemingway at the Zagreb Academy of Theatre and Film, and then we called him by his nickname, Bobiša. I already had a reputation of a successful young director: I directed several successful student performances while he was finishing the studies of electrical engineering and philosophy, and then he got a wish to study motion picture and theatre directing. A Herzegovinian, huge, tall, brazen and independent, he stood apart from us "urban and cultivated" students by his direct manner which some colleagues and professors called rural behaviour. As soon as they passed their entrance exam at the Academy, many students already imagined themselves to be artists and dealt with theatre art for the sake of art itself, having no connection with real life. Professors supported them in the illusion that "theatre is something else, more life itself". The title of the piece which I did as a student emphasized just that: "Ars longa vita brevis"! But in a sarcastic meaning. A critical scrutiny of society and politics or of the theatre art itself one year before the student revolution of 1968 were areas into which the theatre artists did not venture.

With his free thinking and an open speech Bobiša soon began to resist this. He involved himself in sincere and self-assured debates with professors, disagreed with them, criticized their performances and professional theatre which, in pursuit of aesthetics, lost touch with reality. He liked me because of my distinctive theatre signature, truthfulness of expression, style of directing, investigative processes and means that I used, but especially due to fierceness and social engagement of my performances. I did not shy away from the scrutiny of politics and delicate national topics. He is tall, I am of medium height, he is loud and penetrating, I am silent and reasonable, he is exclusive, I am tolerant, he is a beginner, I already have a reputation, he is explosive, I am calm, he is skilful and successful in daily life, I am focused on the theatre and its role in the changing of society, but we became

friends. Our opposites connected us. He revealed to me some aspects of life of which I knew little. As an exercise we had to produce a short documentary film, and his ideas were new and shocking, like the cruel children's hunt of the goldfinch, the killing of a cat or a female worker tied to a heavy press with chains that protected her arms. This documentary became a brilliant metaphor on the real position of workers in socialism.

To me he "lent" one of his topics, the idea for a documentary about wage labourers whom he met when he was building his house. In Dubrava, behind the last tram station, there was an area where such labourers gathered. Here the employers would come and hire them on the black for heavy physical labour. The workers were mostly Albanian. For hours, even days, they would wait here for the bosses who will rent them like slaves for a small wage. I spoke with some of them, very few were prepared to speak into the camera, mainly they excused themselves by not knowing the language. We tried to make some shots on the building sites, while digging foundations of other difficult construction work, but the bosses wouldn't allow us access. We only took a shot of a basement in which, in subhuman conditions, some twenty of them slept on the wooden planks. In a single conversation to which one of the labourers agreed, we touched upon the reason for their escape from Kosovo, but he didn't dare speak about that on camera. This very silence was telling enough. Aleksandar Ranković "fell", but the fear of Albanians did not change. The film was supposed to touch upon politics and social topics which could have made it interesting, but I as a student-director and film organizer wasn't persistent and skilful enough to obtain interesting shots and the film remained artistically inconclusive.

Alongside Bobiša I learned a lot about social and political affairs, about the real nature and state of socialism. The lie of the politics in which we lived was not abstract any more, one just had to open one's eyes and perceive the life below the

crust of illusion created by politics. Slobodan is Herzegovinian, although he partly also belongs to Dalmatia, where his mother is from. His family origins and social position of his parents were supposed to direct him towards the government, but his personal temperament, education and environment made him into a rebel, a dissident and critic of the political class which ruled Yugoslavia. His father was a communist, a partisan hero, member of OZNA (Secret police), a hero about whom even the songs were written. His enemies hated him, but also respected him as a worthy opponent, his like-minded friends extolled him to mythic heights. In the epic character, only with negative features, he was equal to national heroes, like the Haiduk Mijat Tomić or "*škripari*" (remains of defeated armies) which he himself persecuted after World War II.

I met that huge, strong man, Bobiša's father, probably such were born in archaic, heroic times, probably such were the semi-gods who destroyed the beasts, monsters and evil barbarians. He was two metres high, a huge, incredibly strong man, equal to several men of normal built. The palm of his right hand which enveloped mine, was like a shovel. They say that his brother, Bobiša's uncle, was even bigger and stronger. Compared to him, Bobiša's father was small. Bobiša himself was half the size of his father, which doesn't mean that he was weak, just the contrary. Tall, strong and persistent he could dig the earth for days, carry cement or bricks.

They are originally from Čapljina, farmers, his grandfather was a pre-war member of the HSS. Through the HSS Foundation "Radiša" he sent his son to school in Zagreb where Bobiša's father came in touch with leftist ideas, became member of SKOJ, then a member of the Communist Party. Immediately after the uprising in World War II he went into the partisans and fought bravely. It is there that he met his wife, a small, but a strong and decisive woman, and by the very end of the war Bobiša was born. The child barely stayed alive in the last German offensive. A future high Party official of BIH carried him through high snow and

blasts of wind and saved him. Everything was predetermined for him to continue the ideological and political path of his parents, but the restless spirit and environment in which the sons of the partisans and Ustasha grew together, a natural revolt towards the parents and their strict, almost military upbringing, elementary education by the Franciscans on Široki Brijeg, the high school and companionship with Goran Babić and Abdulah Sidran, arrival to Zagreb to study, in the revolutionary 1960s shaped his intellectually vivid, mathematical mind and self-assured, brazen, free-thinking character.

He took part in the student movements of 1968, as well as in the Croatian spring of 1971. He socialized with future politicians both of the left and the right. In the summer, while I participated in the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, he would work as waiter abroad. With this money and tireless physical work he built his house in Zagreb. After graduation at the Academy he did a TV series for children, worked as a teacher in physics, directed theatre plays and interesting films, especially the one about the diaspora ("The Return of Katarina Kožul"). When socializing, he would always analyze politics, economy, art, signs which pointed to the direction in which the society is moving. In early 1970s he foresaw that socialism, due to its failure to create a strong economy and true equality between the peoples will collapse and the forcibly united Yugoslavia will fall apart. He would argue in a temperamental way, without the slightest shade of doubt, brazenly and self-assuredly. He would also prove his views to the then young Party leaders, among whom his high-school friend Goran Babić. He is often seen in the company of students and other Herzegovinians who were branded as nationalists after 1971. He took one of them, with his whole family into his house, and witnessed how the guy was taken into police custody whenever Tito or some important international guest would come to Zagreb. Partly due to his parents' background, partly due to his already accepted rebellious behaviour, but mostly due to his increasing financial independence, he

has no troubles with politics and the authorities. At the end of the 1980s he strongly engages himself in the awakening of the democratic movements. He turns his house into a headquarters of HDS, becomes the party Secretary, makes public appearances, and puts forward his candidacy for President, as opponent to Dr. Franjo Tuđman, winning a considerable number of votes. Then the war begins. He seeks a way to involve himself in the defence. By accident he meets his friend Žarko, a Herzegovinian from the police who was leaving the next day as commander of the company of police reservists to Sunja. Bobiša appears at the meeting point with a backpack and an old German Schmeisser, a trophy weapon, over his shoulder; leather shorts and hiking boots are already part of the legend that follows him.

Already during our studies together he takes me to Herzegovina to visit his parents. I passed through Herzegovina twice with high-school excursions. I took a ride with the old "Ćiro" (name of a train) from Sarajevo to Dubrovnik. I still remember well that part of the journey, it was still daylight and Ćiro advanced slowly, over the Ivan Sedlo, through the tunnels near Bradina, beside Konjic, along the narrow Neretva, below the crags and rocks of Prenj all the way to Mostar. I saw Mostar from afar, from the high railway track and the train station, but I had heard a lot about it from our neighbours – the Hećimovićs, close friends of my family. I particularly remembered the bravery of their son, a member of a combat communist group which attacked the Ustasha youth near the Botanical gardens. He was wounded, but managed to get to his girlfriend. However, he was betrayed by the taxi driver who drove him to her and was later killed in a shoot-out with the police. Such a feat and the heroic death of a young neighbour impressed me and then I thought that all the people from Mostar were brave and resolute in the same manner. It was already dark when we were leaving Mostar. I still remember that starlit night. Billions of shining, sparkling stars covered the sky vault. It seemed

that the sky could collapse under the weight of these sparkling gems, had it not been supported by the dark shadows of high mountains. The smell of the sea was already in the air, and I stood beside the open window on the passageway of the carriage staring into the primordial night. This is the country in which heroes are born, regardless of their political or ideological affiliation. Their epic history makes them do things others do not dare to do. On that journey I never thought that one day I will be a friend of such a man. I was tiny under that sky vault and mesmerized by the rocky land through which we were passing. I had later seen the glittering night sky in Australia and South America, but this one, which covered the land south of Mostar was and remained something special for me. The sky strewn with shining crystals in Herzegovina in mid-1950s I will always remember. On our second journey by train the sky did not have the same significance for me, I had grown up in the meantime, and my female high-school colleagues had more fascination for me than the stars.

Bobiša took me with an old Citroen of his from Vrgorac over Čitluk, Široki Brijeg, Ljubuški, Čapljina, Počitelj, Buna to Mostar. I got to know his parents, grandfather, brother, sister, friends. On the soil on which he had sprouted I realized the sources of his toughness and rashness of character. His father, by then in retirement, still carried the mark of a secret policeman of the government which the majority of the people did not support. They respected his personal bravery, after the war he infiltrated the insurgents, pretending he had come from abroad, constantly exposed himself to danger and played with death. He did it out of idealism, out of conviction that he is creating a better and a rightful society. During one of the first meetings of the representatives of the Croatian democratic coalition with the diaspora Bobiša represented the HDS. When his turn came to lay out the programme of his party, the émigrés tried to obstruct him by whistling and by evoking his father's past. He patiently endured the protests and then declared in

front of everybody that he was not going to renounce his father, even if his guilt would be proven at court. He doesn't agree with his father, they belong to different political convictions, but a father always remains a father, even if found guilty. Such a sincere declaration won him the good will of the people present and the right to argument the politics of his party.

In Sunja, the unusual outfit in which he went to war made the defenders laugh, but he soon asserted himself with his knowledge, organizational abilities, courage and strength. Firstly he was helping in building fortifications, convincing the defenders how important it is to build them. Until then, all defenders were respecting the rifle, few of them the shovel. Once shielded by trenches and sacks filled with sand they will find it easier to resist the enemy, will not retreat or flee. In these first days he was almost killed under the collapsed wall in the railway station. When Leopard left, he becomes the commander of the defence. Because of his long, untended beard and a lively temperament – they had heard something about his artistic profession as well – they called him Hemingway and this war nickname sticks with him to this day.

He enforces discipline and order, curbs the pillaging of deserted houses, although most were robbed immediately after the conflict began by the end of July. He is not afraid of combat, and is imposing order upon the unruly and those who resist discipline. Local defenders resist his new rules, they think that on their home turf they can do as they please, they think that the outsiders came because of some interests, probably to profit by advancement in the new government. There is no point responding to such complaints when it was questionable whose life will be preserved, will the new government maintain itself, will the war be won.

A drunken defender threatens him with an unlocked pistol, but Hemingway disarms him and sends him to jail under escort. The prisoner has another, hidden pistol, he shoots in the van in which he is being transported, disarms the escort and

flees. When he sobered up, he returns by himself and reports to Hemingway. He is forgiven, they make peace and become friends. By now, everyone respects him. He is constantly making rounds of the positions, knows personally every defender. When I arrived, he sends me to an "internship" of several days on the front lines. After that I become his chief of headquarters and I assume all the responsibility about organizing the defence – communications, logistics, military administration, reporting, I am helping him to create a strong military structure.

The entire defence of the "Sunja Bridgehead" is linked up and fortified by shelters, all parts of the battlefield are equally supplied with ammunition, spontaneous shooting is discouraged. The logisticians finally delivered uniforms to all the defenders, along with hats and markings so that we look like an orderly army. The comings and goings to Sunja are monitored. Hemingway is strongly opposed to the politics and differentiation, ideological or party affiliations, especially the radical ones. Patiently, he removes the Ustasha symbols and Ustasha ideas from among the defenders, battles against the use of drugs and alcohol, demands greater care in the handling of weapons, because a tragic number of people were already killed by "friendly fire". He introduces morning meetings with the hoisting of the flag and the anthem played by a trumpeter, the soldiers must be orderly, well supplied and led. The commanding and leadership are strict and he constantly repeats the irrevocable statement: "We are a single Croatian Army!"

The enemy mostly attacks from afar. Mortar attacks and infantry skirmishes replace one another, mainly around the railway station, the Hotel, position B 52, Letinje, a village on the right flank of the defence along the Sava or Bobovac on the other side of the defence arc, village on the very bank of the Sava, in which there is also a ferry for the passage into Moslavina. Downstream from Bobovac there are four Serbian villages. A tacit agreement was long in force that neighbours do not attack each other, until it was broken by the savages, the Krajina territorial

defence, in reality Chetniks who wanted to crack the Sunja defence precisely at this point. When it seemed that the defenders of the villages might give in, Hemingway comes with reinforcements, consisting of a special mobile group of defenders from Sunja, and they repel this attack. There were killed and wounded on our side, but enemy losses are evident too. One of their casualties, a sergeant in the Krajina Army, is taken to the middle of the village in a wheelbarrow. The enemy will not attempt a stronger attack on this point ever more.

The telephone connections across the battle lines are still functioning. Due to suspicion that some attacks were directed by telephone, he shuts down the telephone exchange which was in the Sunja Post Office, and introduces a strict secrecy over military information. He plans and executes small reconnaissance and offensive actions. In an operation of pulling out a sabotage group from deep inside enemy territory, one mine kills five young defenders who were rushing to help, and the other five were wounded. We attend their funerals. The men were killed with whom we became close. They were not numbers or nameless people any more, we knew their families, their parents, wives, children, the larger family. We meet their gaze and the silent question: "Why did they have to go?"

For the first time I feel what it means to have responsibility for the men and their destinies.

Sunja becomes famous. Even before we came, the television often mentioned it in war reports, but now the three artists there – the Actor, Hemingway and me – contribute to this popularity. They interview us, they ask why we came here, what was our reason for being with the defenders. The journalists are coming, foreign and domestic, they want interviews, opinions and assessments. Associations and individuals bring help in food and equipment. We have a stream of visitors – soldiers, politicians, renowned personalities, theatres, the members of the Arts Company. Radio Sunja begins broadcasting. We have a clinic, a kitchen,

professional teams which immediately repair damages on electric and telephone lines. We open a shop in which at certain times you can also buy limited quantities of alcohol. There is a police station and fire brigade, the ferry is constantly and reliably transporting from one side of the river to the other. Two strong air attacks, damages on the tugboat and wounding of the crew and passengers did not stop it.

Some of the refugees are returning, most of them dare to visit their houses only during the day. More and more arms and equipment are pouring in, we have a number of new volunteers. Taught by experience, we ask each one of them to give us his personal data, which we proceed for a background check to the police in Zagreb. Several of them with a criminal record are immediately sent back across the Sava. We are joined by volunteers from Slovenia and, after the fall of Lovinac, those from Lika. After Vukovar, individuals who managed to break out from there also come to join us. Some are still in high school, some attend college. All of them want to take part in a war, albeit they don't understand it, just like the three lads from Zagreb, children of respected intellectuals. Their parents bought them equipment, American helmets and bullet-proof vests, they were equipped better than most of us, they looked like American soldiers in a Vietnam war movie and they came to us in Sunja. We assigned them to their positions, and the same afternoon one of them was wounded. They found a bicycle and started to cycle up and down the road on the very line of the battlefield, thus becoming a target for the snipers from the hill. One of them ended up in a hospital, and the other two were hastily returned to Zagreb with a certificate on dishonourable behaviour. One day and a cruel lesson was enough for them to learn that war is no joke and imitation of film heroes.

Several days after the fall of the Varaždin Garrison we got reinforcements in heavy arms. Everyone was happy, finally we will be able to confront the enemy on equal terms. Four light American Sherman tanks from World War II, pulled out

from the old war reserves of the JNA were no match to the modern tanks and anti-tank rockets of the enemy, but to us they seemed indestructible. Finally we have something with which to respond to the enemy. They were ferried across the river and then proceeded noisily towards the town and their positions. At night the noise of the engines and the clatter of caterpillars were heard for kilometres around. They didn't conceal themselves, they were making their existence known to those on the hill. Probably their arrival provoked the so-far strongest enemy attack on Sunja a couple of days later. The situation had been a bit calmer, it was just before the fall of Vukovar, but after the collapse of the Vukovar defence, we knew that they will now attack us. Sunja was a big obstacle to the rounding up of the planned Greater Serbia.

It started with a vicious night attack on the Hotel. The attackers tried to penetrate through the deserted facilities of Koka Varaždin, a large poultry farm, in which tens of thousands of left-over eggs were rotting. The defenders met the attackers with a rapid fire from small mortars, grenade launchers, hand grenades and machine gun fire. Although the enemy was more persistent than earlier, before the morning they withdrew. In the Koka facilities our lads found bloody military shirts, bloody bandages and a thrown away Montenegrin cap. It was a proof that new volunteers arrived, some even from Montenegro. It meant that something serious was in the making, and it could only have been the attack on the railway station. At first it started with a fierce cannon and mortar fire, followed by an infantry attack. The enemy penetrated through the mined railway tracks and evicted the defenders from the legendary railway station. They first retreated into the park, then into the Hotel across the road, facing the station. Fierce shooting continued from the station towards the Hotel and houses along the main road, and in the other direction, from the Hotel toward the station, warehouses and the water tower. The pressure of the attackers grew continuously. If they manage to cross the road and

seize the Hotel they can proceed unobstructed toward the centre of the town, and then everything will be over. Hemingway was in the courtyard behind the Hotel where one of the four newly arrived Shermans had been parked. They arrived only two days ago, the crew was inexperienced, fearful, didn't yet get used to shooting and danger. They holed up the tank in the farthest corner of the courtyard behind the building. They do not dare peep out from the cupola because the grenades are exploding all the time, and pieces of burst steel are hitting the tank armour. The guys inside know that this armour cannot protect them from the piercing power of the newest anti-tank rockets which the army and Serbian insurgents possess and they do not join the fighting.

It is a turning point of the battle. Hemingway approaches the tank and tries to persuade the tank commander to pull the tank out and attack the building of the railway station. This one refuses, justifying himself with a small distance from the target and a great speed of the tank grenade which will not activate after such a short flight. He argues that this is against all the rules of the use of this gun, it says so in the American handbooks which he has with him, right here in the tank. Hemingway does not give a damn about the rules and handbooks, he is demanding, even against all military rules, to evict the enemy from the railway station, because the contrary means defeat and an unimaginable tragedy for the people for whom he is responsible. The best weapon, the only weapon he has on his disposal is that tank. He goes on persuading, he knows he cannot demand and order a task that will endanger his soldiers, nor order anything that he himself would not be prepared to do. The only thing that remains is personal example.

"Do not ask of the others what you yourself are not prepared to do" and "Follow me" are the rules of the new Croatian Army which differentiate it from the JNA, the Croatian officer from the Yugoslav officer. He told the tank crew that he will

go in front of them, he, the pedestrian will go in front and they will follow him in armour. Such an "order" they could simply not resist.

He moved out of the shelter of the building into open space and came to a clearing at the crossroads of the main road and a by-road toward the centre of Sunja, the tank following slowly behind. He stood on the clearing, large as he was, upright, exposed to direct enemy fire. He brought the tank into a position from which the entire railway station could be targeted, less than a hundred metres away.

The roar of the battle was not subsiding, bullets were whistling, bursts of machine-gun fire echoed, grenade launchers and mines exploding. The defenders in the houses, behind sacks with sand, in the shelters of layers of earth and logs waited and feared for their commander. Will they take out Hemingway first, or will the tank gun start shooting at the building of the railway station? Finally, the gun went off. For several hundredths of a second everyone waited for the effect of the explosion, prayed for the grenade to activate. The grenade hit one of the openings, and then the explosion went off. Contrary to all American guidelines on their use, the grenades were effective even on such a small distance. Projectiles of 75 mm systematically riddled the building and set it on fire, the burning roof collapsed into the interior, the attackers withdrew over the railway tracks to their original positions on the hill, and the defenders returned into the station. The word was that several killed attackers remained under the ruins, the defenders did not search beneath a rubble of bricks and mortar, they let it be their grave until victory and peace.

The defence and re-taking of the railway station was, by all accounts, the turning point of the battle for Sunja. Since then, the safety of the town never came into question. Although hardly perceptible, the military balance slowly started to shift in our favour. The first successful offensive began in our background. The fighters from Podravina and Slavonia were tightening the grip around western

Slavonia. Every day we marked their advances on the map. We were also getting ready for advancing. Hemingway had moved the army from the defensive role into the offensive one, organized marches and combat training in residential areas. The defenders, stuck for months in the positions in houses and bunkers, went out into the open and started preparing for the liberation of occupied areas of Banovina. Unfortunately, full three and a half years passed until that moment. The Sarajevo ceasefire stopped the successful offensive in western Slavonia, but it brought peace to Croatia.

Christmas was approaching. We received aid in food and drink, clothes and hygienic accessories from all sides. On the battlefield there were never any difficulties in the supply of the defenders with food. They fed us well, abundantly and tastefully. In the small kitchen beside the headquarters, Mrs. Željka, a superb cook cooked for all of us, commanders and soldiers alike. The European observers, dressed in white, started visiting and monitoring our battlefield. After an official conversation in which he would inform them of the situation in Sunja, Hemingway would invite them for lunch. Very soon the cuisine, hospitality and manners, as well as the unusual personality of the commander became widely known. There were teams of observers, journalists and guests, replacing each other, continuously. Hemingway jokingly called our humble kitchen the ship salon, and the table the admiral's table. This was actually the beginning of the future diplomacy, and foreigners got to know our cuisine and wines, history, traditions and culture. At the beginning, the observers, mainly military personnel and diplomats, would come uninformed, full of prejudices, even arrogant towards us, "civilians" playing war, men of questionable military education and culture. To such guys Hemingway would firstly introduce us: we graduated at five faculties, speak foreign languages, we mean something in the arts and society of our people and that we have travelled through a greater part of the world. Those particularly disrespectful he would

challenge by discussing philosophy, world literature, physics or mathematics. The visits by the observers were more and more frequent, the conversations over tasteful lunches more and more relaxed, while their respect for us grew.

By the end of November Hemingway and I were informed that we were being promoted to high-ranking officers. The first solemn giving of ranks to the first officers of the Croatian Army was supposed to take place in a week's time in the Presidential Office on Pantovčak, and the ranks will be given to us by the President himself.

We arrived on Pantovčak directly from Sunja, in war uniform, with dusty boots, with pistols in our belts. The President held a brief speech and then congratulated each of the officers personally. I proudly accepted my rank and dedicated it in my thoughts to my grandfather, my father and three uncles who were killed on opposite sides for Croatia. I wished my father was still alive. He would have been proud of me now. Most of all I thought about my brother, who had disappeared in Vukovar, was captured there, and of whose fate I knew nothing.

Of the multitude of Christmas gifts we prepared packages and distributed them among the defenders and poor families. On Christmas day all the remaining residents of Sunja gathered in the local church whose belfry had been destroyed and the roof damaged. Asked by the priest, who had stayed all the time with his parishioners, Hemingway read the Christmas epistle from the altar, and everyone joyously joined in the singing of Christmas carols. We felt that the end of the most difficult part of the war is getting near.

Hemingway ordered no firing on Christmas and the New Year, in order not to waste ammunition in vain. Probably on those days Sunja was the most silent place on the battlefield. We were happy about the Sarajevo armistice, the only other thing that we wanted was for the world to recognize us. When that happened, no one could have restrained the happiness of the defenders and forbid them to waste

ammunition. We were watching that night, the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, how the entire sky was burning from Sisak to Novska. It roared and burned, sparkled and detonated as far as the eye could reach. Finally we reached the long-awaited, dreamed-of independence and freedom of Croatia although we knew that fierce fights are ahead of us for its complete liberation from the occupiers.

Several days after recognition, Hemingway concluded that the time of our departure was getting near. Neither he nor I had the ambition to stay on the battlefield, becoming professional soldiers. We helped when it was the most difficult, when everything was uncertain, now let the securing of the armistice be taken over by the younger ones. He was only worried about the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He knew that war, even more brutal and bloody, will move over there and that he will have to join in the defence of the Croats. His parents are still living there, that is his country, it is his duty to defend it.

I was the first one to leave Sunja, not far, only to a higher headquarters in Sisak. Due to my command of languages and the acquired experience with foreign observers I became a liaison officer with UN observers. Less than a full month has passed when Hemingway called me. "Get ready, tomorrow we are going to talk to the President!"

He said nothing more. We went to the President and after a conversation took over the duties that will determine our lives for many years to come.

As always in predicting political developments, he was right. War did move over into BIH and he soon joined in. I was not in his vicinity any more. I followed him from afar when he laid siege to the barracks in Čapljina, when he went to Bosanska Posavina leading the Sunja volunteers, his return to Herzegovina and the liberation of Mostar, and defence of Travnik, Jajce, Bugojno and Uskoplje.

Everywhere he did something which he was remembered by. In Čapljina, he himself came in front of the barracks gate and demanded the surrender of the

garrison, in Posavina he was stopping the brigades that were fleeing. He commanded the crossing of Neretva although all the bridges except the Old Bridge were destroyed, he has merits in the liberation of Mostar and pushing the Serbs on to Velež and Stolovi. He contributed to the fortifying of the defences of Travnik, protected the Old Bridge in Mostar, he didn't destroy it, although many are unjustly accusing him of it. As a commander of HVO he stopped with great effort a strong pressure of Bosnian forces down the Neretva valley and defended Uskoplje. At yet another crucial moment, when it seemed that Uskoplje is about to fall, when the army began to flee in disarray, he climbed on a tank and with the call "Ustasha after me!" – the only call that could at that moment stop and turn the runaways, and returned the defenders into the town. He was relieved of the duty of the HVO commander two days before the demolition of the Old Bridge, for which he is accused. A certain period he carries out a duty in the Ministry of Defence and the Foundation for the Promotion of Croatia, and then, tired of it all seeks retirement and becomes an entrepreneur, a career that engages him to this very day.

Who is Hemingway really? For those who dislike him he is a self-assured, self-infatuated lover of himself, a man who always wants to play an important role, to be liked, to evoke admiration and enthusiasm. Or a rough and a violent man? A war criminal, traitor and military charlatan, nationalist, Ustasha, a rigid right-winger? Or for the others, those who like him, he an idealist, a dreamer, patriot and hero, an unselfish and honest man, a precise analyst and visionary? A patriot, a charismatic leader and a winning general? A man of order, authority and law? Or is he a revolutionary and an anarchist? Maybe too consistent? Intelligent and educated, gifted for the arts? Capable of entrepreneurship and the acquisition of a fortune? A man of patriarchal ties and sense of responsibility towards his family? Or an arrogant, quarrelsome person, a selfish man who is always right, mathematically

logical and precise, a man of discussion or a stubborn, persistent fighter who does not give up and likes to use force to prove that he is right? Who is he really?

I was alongside Bobiša when he was becoming Hemingway, I can testify that he was exceptionally brave, an example to the soldiers who respected his knowledge, his strong personality, intuition and communication skills, his power and authority which was occasionally imposed by force. He never separated himself nor did he try to raise above simple and uneducated lads, he liked to be in their company and joke with them. He was imposing order and discipline, rooting out the pillaging and theft, did not allow national hatred, dozens of Serbs were in the ranks of the defenders of Sunja. He opposed every ideology in the army except patriotism, any ideology which denied democracy and the freedom of individuals and peoples. I could see how, under the pressure of war, he develops traits that every good leader needs to have. In later developments, in Bosnia and Herzegovina they will have become even more visible. He ordered arrests of those who compromised the defence and disrupted strict rules of behaviour in war circumstances. He forbade the entry into the Sunja area to black marketeers, criminals and crooks. He opposed the politicians from the ruling party when they would interfere in the matters of defence. He was a genial host and conversationalist at the table around which he entertained his guests. During the fiercest mortar attacks, he would go by car to the railway station or to the Hotel and encouraged the guardsmen with his presence. He shared their joys and their sadness when someone had been killed. He would bury them. He went to reconnaissance and provided cover for his soldiers with a rifle in hand. He was also rough, he could raise his voice and physically oppose. It was war. He made no material or any other profit in the war, and he earned his rank. Everything that happened later – ranks, positions, respect, authority, was rooted in his behaviour in Sunja and the transformation of Bobiša into Hemingway.

Towards me he felt a great responsibility, and protected me lest something happen to me. He invited me into the war and was responsible towards my family, especially towards my mother. I know what kind of burden it is. I myself could not take such a burden under similar circumstances. A friend of mine asked me, in writing, to enable him to come to Sunja, but until then I had seen too much death around me and I refused him. He never forgave me. Hemingway took that responsibility for me, but for many others also. There are many who can testify to this.