

Prof. LJUBO MORO

Ljubuški
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The interview was recorded, the recording is registered as follows:

profmoro

9.63 MB
duration 30:07

The interview was conducted in Čapljina

Here, it is turned on. Now I am going to ask you to state your name, last name, date and place of birth at the beginning of the recording.

Ljubo Moro, born on June 6th, 1935 in Tasovčići, that is right across here, Čapljina,

Mister Moro, you are a professor?

Yes, a history professor. I was retired 5 years ago. For 40 years I have been employed as a professor in Čapljina High school, that is, the Secondary school center. For 40 years here in Čapljina.

The entire time in Čapljina?

The entire time in my Čapljina. I started in 1960, and finished in 2000, when I retired. After 40 years spent in the class-room, with the youth. I was the head-master for 4 years, the High school head-master. Now I am retired, and pensions are dreadfully small. I receive a pension of 314 KM (Convertible Marks, BiH currency), after 40 years of being a professor. At the end, I receive a pension of 314 KM.

Tell me, Mr. Moro, you spent the entire time in Čapljina, the entire time you were working with children?

The entire time.

Where were you during the war? What is your remembrance of that period?

Here?

Yes. What was happening?

That during the 90s, those last events?

That is correct, yes.

In the 90's, the weather started changing here, as we say it, all kinds of troubles started happening, stories, threats, it was hard to believe that it is possible for such things to happen here, in this region, like the things that happened in 1991 and 1992, especially in 1992, and then in 1993, 1994, before it ended in 2005. I tell you, I don't know how I survived, myself and everyone else here. It was very difficult, the way people would change was unbelievable.

How did people change?

They would change their attitudes, those who were once friends and colleagues would become reserved, they would not even greet you, I don't know what it was. I don't know what it was. And the hardest and the toughest thing for me was being accused by people belonging to my own nation, the Serbian nation, of being a traitor of the Serbian nation and more Ustasha than Ustashas themselves. That was the hardest and the toughest thing for me. Accusation of being a traitor of the Serbian nation and more Ustasha than Ustashas themselves. And those who were saying these things, they left this area and settled in the Eastern part of Serbia, Montenegro, I don't know where. That was the hardest and the toughest thing. For staying here, for being faithful to my home. Dear God, dear God! And they even sentenced me to death! The Serbs from Tasovčići, the Serbs from Tasovčići sentenced me to death in the Spring of 1992, for criticizing them and warning against Radovan Karadžić's politics, that was bound to result in

bloodshed, his politics. It was bound to result in bloodshed, which eventually happened. That is why that Serbian party sentenced me to death in 1992, in the Spring of 1992, while they were still here.

How did they sentenced you? What did they tell you?

They sentenced me to death. My colleagues from Tasovčići told me that, they found documents they left behind, they found documents that said I was sentenced to death, they even mentioned names of people who signed my death penalty. They even mentioned names.

Those were the people who were in Čapljina with you until the day before?

Yes, those who were living in Tasovčići and in Čapljina. They sentenced me to death in 1992 for criticizing them and warning against the politics of Radovan Karadžić that was about to result in bloodshed, which, as you know, demanded many lives here.

They believed in Radovana Karadžić's politics?

Well, yes. As a historian, I knew more than they did. I was warning them against it.

Where did you warn them against it? You talked to them and...?

In 1991 and 1992 I was constantly criticizing them. "Are you insane, what is happening in your heads? You want some kind of "Great Serbia", on who's territory, are you insane!?" And they lived better than I did, they were receiving good wages, good pensions, they even owned houses on the coast, etc. They should be ashamed of themselves!

Good, when did they leave?

Excuse me?

When did they leave?

They left in May or June, in the beginning of June. After the area behind Neretva was liberated, the eastern part.

May or June of what year?

1992. Yes, yes. I was cast off in the beginning of 1992. And a few months after that I was sentenced to death.

They left, and you stayed here?

They left, and I remained faithful to my home and these people. I respect the nation and believe in it, but the most important for me is humaneness, even though I respect religion, race and nation. So, that is how it is. But, these are not that kind of people, these are pure nationalists, chauvinists. Dear God!

Tell me, what were you doing, remaining here?

I remained here, the whole time. I continued to work, with no obstacles. My colleagues, Croats, saw me as their brother.

Did you have any problems with them?

No! Absolutely not! Absolutely not!

So, the Croat colleagues you were working with, there were no tensions between you and them?

No tensions. They were supporting me, helping me, and there were really no, it was, like we say it, the top mark. Great.

The top mark?

The only thing, the only thing was that the two of my colleagues, two Muslims, as we were preparing for the new school year in 1992, the war started, so we needed to clean the school building, and during the break one of them said to me: "I cannot trust you only because you are a Serb, I cannot have any confidence in you, all Serbs are the same, all Serbs are Chetniks!". I told him: "Do you know that they sentenced me to death? Do you know that these people sentenced me to death? You should be ashamed of yourself!" I was a Chetnik, according to him I was a Chetnik! And I brought that very man to the High school, before that he was working at the Elementary school. I helped him more than both his father and his mother. Because upon getting employment at the High school he enrolled in a three-year college in Rijeka and finished it, and the High school provided funds for that. He finished it. And that was how he thanked me at the end. By equating me with Chetniks.

What happened later, did he stay here or go away?

No, no, he left in 1993.

Mr. Moro, as you started telling me, for 40 generations you were...?

They greet me whenever they see me, they wave, or they come to me, giving me hugs and kisses, making me feel awkward even. Tears start running from my eyes, I swear on my life. Because they know me, they know that I always loved

the youth and was always helping them. I was always pointing them to the right direction, work, work, and only work. Knowledge, work, work, and knowledge, they always mention that about me, they say: "Those were your words, work, work, and only work!"

They praise you, I heard it to. When I mention your name, they say: "He was my teacher, he was a great professor!"

Trust me, in Mostar they hug and kiss me! The same in Metković. I was in Zagreb on two occasions, and two of them hugged and kissed me, you see, I am starting to cry right now. And here, unfortunately, even some distant relatives were among them, they sentenced me to death. They should be ashamed of themselves, the Tasovići Serbs! My God, what have I come to! Let us be human, that is the most basic thing, let us be human! Because we only live once and die once, let us be human! That is the most basic thing!

Mr. Moro, tell me, during the war, did the classes go on?

In our school?

Yes.

There was no classes only during the Spring and the Summer of 1992. Apart from that we would start in September and work the entire time as usual here. Normally. The school year 1991/1992 we finished one month early. It was war and...

And during that time, were your students of various nationalities, were there Serbs, Muslims, Croats – or Serbs and Muslims left already? How was

is? What was the structure?

Everything was normal in 1992, everything was normal. And the next year, 1993, it was also normal. Everything was normal. Normal, normal.

Were there any problems here, considering the ongoing war?

Well, I am not aware of any. You mean between colleagues?

Between students in your classes?

I cannot recall any nationalistic incidents or threats, I really cannot recall. And I would tell you, for sure.

When did you meet Mr. Slobodan Praljak?

It was exactly during the time when the worst was beginning to happen, in 1992.

Can you remember that? How did your first encounter with Praljak look like?

Well, my son Goran was a physician in the Grabovine barracks, and I was visiting him on a regular basis until the end of March of 1992. Then they banned further visits. They banned it, we could not make any contacts. It was awkward for both myself and my wife. Our son was here, and we could not get in touch with him.

He was in the barracks?

Yes, he was a physician.

You could not make any contacts?

No. I would go there up until mid-March or the 20th, roughly speaking, but then they banned it, I was not allowed to do it any more. And then, in early April, someone contacted us and told us that General Praljak was inviting us to MUP (cro: Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova; Ministry of internal affairs). A few of us who had family members in the barracks. So we went there, I believe it was in the morning, in early April of 1992. General Praljak was waiting for us. We were sitting in a room, he introduced himself and told us about the agreement that was met in Mostar one or two days earlier. Regarding the youth that was serving the army. General said that a decision was made in Mostar, saying that every soldier had the right to decide whether they wish to stay in the army or go home. That was the agreement they made. So, everyone had the right to stay or go to their homes. That made things easier for us, we were glad, and he said: "We will go there to see them, to visit them."

You said that, the parents? Who said that?

No, General told us: "We will go to talk to them, to see what, and how, to check the condition there." So we left for Orahovine, and I believe we found quarters in Mr. Praljak's house, General Praljak. We stayed there for a while, waiting to receive a call and go to the barracks to meet our family members. We have been waiting for a long time.

For how long, approximately?

I think we waited for an hour or two. At the end someone proposed that we should go to the barracks, to the side entrance, the side entrance on the west side. We set out, and then shooting started. General said: "Lie down, lie down!" We all had to lie down, otherwise we would get killed. There were a few of us who were planning to go to the barracks, people who were here in MUP. But there

were some other people there, I don't know where they came from. After a few minutes we got on our feet and returned to our previous positions, where we were sitting before. After a certain time we received a message from the barracks that it was possible to go to the barracks entrance and meet our family members. So we set out. We arrived in 3, 4 minutes, since it was very near. That entrance was very near. We arrived, and you can imagine our mood when we met, when I saw my son, and hugged him. My God! But disappointment followed very soon, because they did not know anything. They were not told about the agreement met in Mostar. And so we were.

What did your son tell you on that occasion?

Nothing, what could he say. He was crying, as I was: "Dad, I'm staying, I am going to stay here, and we'll see what will happen!" And no one knows how it was better than him! So we exchanged greetings and left the meeting place, the place where we were talking, but without result. General was there, he saw the mood I was in, tears in my eyes, and he said to me: "Professor, I am convinced that this issue will be resolved in the way that was agreed upon in Mostar! I am convinced of that!" I said: "Thank you, General." We shook hands, he kissed me "Do not worry", he said, "don't cry, don't be worried, I'm convinced that it will be resolved in the way that was agreed in Mostar!" I said: "That is good to know. General, you made it easier for me!" My dear God! Two or three days after that, two or three days after that event, they left, of they fled, I don't know what the soldiers did, the barracks were liberated, the HVO (cro: Hrvatsko vijeće obrane; Croatian Defense Council) went in, in the morning of the 20th, 21st or 22nd of April, I think it was on April 20th or 22nd, I don't know who it was, they called me and said: "Professor, here's your son!"

Who called you?

It was someone from the building across the street to the Secondary school center. "Here is your son!" When me and my wife saw him, we were the luckiest people on Earth! Hugging, kissing, he told us how he survived, sweet mother! A few of them stayed with Goran – I am sure he will tell you about it in detail. Only, I would not wish, believe me, not even to my biggest enemy, to go through what we went through during 1992. I would not wish that to anyone. We didn't sleep for days, nights, maybe an hour or two, if we would be able to fall asleep. Strains, worries, my God! I will tell you one thing, believe me that the person who helped me the most during that period was General Praljak. He brought me back to life, especially after we met for the first time in MUP and after our talks in Grabovina, and after that, as we parted. I guarantee with my own life that he influenced his colleagues in Čapljina to take care of me and my family. And believe me, believe me, I had no problems, no problems, apart from the occasion when my Muslim colleague insulted me. Believe me, two of my Croat colleagues who were not involved in that preparation and cleaning of the school, they came to me and whispered: "Ljubo, we heard what your colleague said". They showed me a gun, they wanted to kill him. I cried and told them: "Please, don't!" They said: "To say that to you of all people, to you, who Čapljina is proud of!" I cried and they listened to me. They obeyed, my hat is off to them. So, two of my Croat colleagues wanted to kill him for insulting me. There now, you see, my God!

Would you like us to take a short break? Would you like to rest for a while?

I would, I would.

That was hard for him.

How do you know it was hard for him?

Well, it was clear from his expression. He was absorbed in thoughts, he was in a poor mood.

He was not in a good mood?

No. Because he said, when I was disappointed, since they did not know anything, my son said nothing, he told me as we parted: "I am convinced that the agreement met in Mostar will come to realization! I am convinced of that!"

That was him comforting you?

Well, that was what he said, and that helped me to survive, believe me.

And how did you feel when he told you that? How did you feel, as a father?

Well, I believed him, I believed. After all, he was telling me what was agreed upon in Mostar. I was not 100% sure whether that will be realized, I was not sure, but I still believed, I believed.

Did he help you to surmount that period easier, that uncertainty?

He said: "I am convinced that what was agreed upon will be realized! Whether it will happen today, tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, I am convinced!" This is what he said to me: "I am convinced that what was agreed upon in Mostar will be realized!" And after two or three days, the matter was resolved.

Tell me, there was a situation when you went toward the barracks and were shot at...?

Yes, yes.

That happened how long before that whole story ended?

Well, I don't know how long, we were sitting up there for a long time, I cannot

recall for how long after the shooting.

Mainly, Praljak was present there also, is that right?

Yes, yes.

How did Praljak react then?

It was him who said: "Lie down, lie down, lie down!" He was afraid that someone might get hurt. It was good, no one, no one even got wounded, it was good. It ended well.

Were you present when Praljak was shouting on some kind of a megaphone? He was holding a megaphone and he was shouting, something like: "Do not shoot!", or something like that? Were you there when that happened?

I believe I was, but I cannot really recall, believe me, I cannot recall.

Good. Is there something we forgot to mention? We are at the end of the interview, is there something important we forgot to mention? Something I forgot to ask you? Is there something else that you think should be said?

I don't know. To be honest, I am surprised by what is happening with General Praljak. I think that he should be commended for what he did here, in Čapljina, and yet, he is facing a court of law. Why, I ask you, why!? I guarantee you that I have not heard one bad word about General Praljak, not one bad word in this town, how did this happen, I don't know, how, how!?

Thank you very much!

Sweet mother!

September 2005, Ljubuški