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Date of the statement: Monday, 18 July 2005

My name is Kemal Mujičić. I was born on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1939 in Bosanska Dubica. I live in 7 Ivana Stožira Street, in Zagreb.

At the request of the Defence of Slobodan Praljak, against whom there is a criminal procedure before the International Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia under the no IT-04-74-PT, I give the following

## **STATEMENT**

### **A NOTE FOR THE PORTRAIT OF MY FRIEND PRALJAK**

#### **EVERYTHING IS WORTH WRITING ABOUT**

Recently my friend Slobodan Praljak asked me to describe an event from our mutual past.

Some things need to be written down. If it is possible, they should be written down correctly so that afterwards there can be no speculations.

Certainly, there are things in life which I did not write down simply because I have considered them ordinary – therefore there was no need to write about them or describe them.

One such event was the festival in Pula in 1978, I think, but that needs to be checked. I was working as one of the editors of *Oko* and was writing about all sorts of things. It so happened that I was writing about film festivals for a while. If you want me to be honest, I was not doing it for the movies but because of good company, booze and girls.

As I was never tired of good company, that particular year I took with me my two very good friends: Alojz Majetić, a writer and Slobodan Praljak, a professor and film director.

Alojz Majetić is an excellent writer and Slobodan Praljak is an intellectual with whom I had worked fine as an editor. Praljak has three university degrees but that has never really impressed me. I liked his rebellious spirit and boyish sense of justice.

#### **BUNGALOW 100 A**

We sat in Majetić's beetle and Praljak was driving. Praljak is an excellent driver. My idea was that the three of us book a bungalow in hotel Pula. Our wages were never covering all the expenses at the festival so in this way we wanted to save some money. Bungalow had several rooms and a kitchen. We had agreed that I would cook, Praljak and I would get the food and drinks and Majetić would wash dishes. As it often happens when three guys like us are roommates, the bungalow 100 A soon became well-known. People were visiting, invited and uninvited, because we always had good food and fine quality drinks. We were cooking, baking, drinking, coming and going. In the morning we would go out for supplies, then we would cook and then had lunch which normally lasted for several hours.

It almost wasn't worth getting out of the bungalow. That year all of the social life at the Pula film festival was taking place in our bungalow. When the festival ended I wrote about it in *Okò* under the title Bungalow 100 A.

### **THE DROWNING MAN**

In front of the hotel Pula there is a small bay and a nice beach.

The three of us decided to spend a day on the beach in order to cure the hangover bathing in the sun and sea.

Just when we were leaving the bungalow Praljak's first wife arrived. He told Majetić and me to carry on and that he would join us later.

On that sunny day a strong yugo was blowing.

As we got there I noticed that two of the swimmers were not handling the waves very well.

I approached the place where two young men were swimming. They were swimming only a few meters from the rocks where the waves were foaming.

I saw one man drowning and the other trying to save him. But he was doing it wrong. In that very place the sea was hitting the rocks and it was almost impossible to reach the shore.

I had no choice but to jump into the waves and try to help young men.

I can tell you that when I jumped in I could barely reach them. I tried to drag the drowning young man away from the rocks but the other man was dragging him towards those sharp rocky points.

I was calling Majetić but in vain. He did not hear a thing.

The wrestling in the water took several minutes. It was enough to tire me out completely. I had swallowed so much salty water and realised that all three of us were going to drown.

When I realised that I started panicking. I had to save myself first and then help them as well. Therefore I shouted to them to hold on a little longer and that I was going to swim to the shore and try to save them with a boat.

I could barely get away from the rocks and the two of them and swam towards the boat which was some thirty meters away.

### **DRAMATIC RESCUE**

I saw Praljak getting up and approaching those two. Actually one because the other one had already sunk.

Then Praljak jumped and I have reached the anchored boat.

There were no oars in the boat. It had some kind of a float on a rope and another one without a rope. I took the float and the rope, swam to the shore and ran towards the rocks.

Down there, only about three meters away from the sharp rocks Praljak was carrying one of the young men pinned to his wide chest. The other tried to save himself, hopelessly swimming towards the rocks. I yelled to him to stay away and threw the float to him.

The other float which had a rope I tried to throw to Praljak. However, the wind was so strong and he did not manage to catch it.

I saw Praljak fight the waves and the drowning man with superhuman strength.

The struggle lasted for ten minutes until he managed to get away from the rocks. I wanted to join him but he was giving me signs to stay where I was.

I noticed that besides myself nobody else was interested in the possible tragedy. People were laying in the sun, some were bathing at the other side of the bay where the beach was ..... They were all minding their own business.

### **RESCUED FROM THE SEA**

When Praljak managed to distance himself from the rocks holding the drowning man everything was easy. They only needed to stay afloat and the sea was going to do the rest. It was easy to reach the beach if you let yourself be carried by the waves. The other young man also realised that he had to stay away from the rocks.

Both of them swam to the shore at the same time. I waited for them there and was very angry with the other young man. I wanted to slap him because all three of us could have drowned. But Praljak said that they had enough for one day.

“They would not have suffered but I would.” I said to Praljak. “What would have happened if you did not come? This poor soul would have drowned and I would have had him on my conscience because I was a twat and I left him because of this other idiot.”

Later we established that they were brothers. Both could swim but they panicked. They thanked Praljak and me and left.

The two of us joined Majetić. Then I went back to the hotel to cook lunch and they stayed at the beach.

All that day I was haunted by the thought that I turned out to be a coward because I had ran away from the drowning man. I still feel sick when I think of that. It does not matter that I drank several litres of saltwater while wrestling with the drowning man and the waves. I know that in a particular moment I panicked and thought that I was going to drown with them. A boat was an excuse to save my own skin.

### **GUARDIAN OF THE WEAK**

Late at night, after the program in Arena had finished, we returned to the hotel where we were hanging out in a bar with actors, directors, screen writers and journalists. Drink was taken and there was singing. A few local boys were in the bar and making passes at young actresses. Two bullies were sitting at the bar and giving hard time to everyone there.

When one of them realised that he can not provoke me he started looking for someone he could show his strength to and found a cleaning lady. He went to the toilet and on his way intentionally tripped over her leg. Then he pushed the chair so violently that he broke the big glass on the door. When the glass broke everyone turned around. It was an interesting scene. The bully was standing above the cleaning lady and shouting: ‘Your mothers ....! You can never trip me, you old whore! I will teach you a lesson!’

Then he made her clean the glass and when she took the broom and approached the pile he said:

‘What are you doing, you old twat? You can not threaten me with a broom...’

And then he slapped her.

I stepped towards the bully but Praljak’s strong arm stopped me.

He said:

‘I will do it.’

He went to him and told him to apologise to the cleaning lady. When the man did not want to Praljak pulled his ear and dragged him to the cleaning lady. He made him apologise and then gave him the broom and a bucket and ordered him to clean up. And he did.

## ETHICS

Afterwards Majetić and Praljak went to bed and I stayed at the bar. I could not forget about the sea water I drank and the thought that I deserted a man in trouble.

*Then I realised that Praljak saved the man's life and my face.* As you can see, even today I clearly remember every detail.

I am not an amateur psychologist and am not going to dissect the event I have described, but if you ask me I will tell you: *I do not believe that Praljak is a war criminal.* A man who saves an unknown person from drowning and protects an unknown woman from bullies can not, even in a war, alter *his system of moral values.* And we are talking about principles of ethics.

Today, when I think about what I have just written, I find similarities with the events from our recent history in Praljak's actions.

That is to say, *Croatia was drowning in the huge waves of great-Serbian raging sea.*

Praljak jumped to help this *wonderful drowning lady* in the same way he did it in the described event.

When it was needed to defend the *weaker party* from the force of the stronger, Praljak did it.

Just as he has defended the weak lady from the attack of the drunken bully.

Kemal Mujičić  
/signed: Kemal Mujičić/