

DARKO ŠPOLJARIĆ

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**March 16, 2005**

**Hrvatska Kostajnica**

Recording and transcript of the interview was done on the CD and recorded as

**SUNJA 3.**

Recording of the interview was labelled as

*spoljaricdarko*

2,37 MB

duration 7:26

The interview was conducted at the Kostajnica municipal office premises

**I turned it on now, I will kindly ask you to introduce yourself.**

Špoljarić Darko

**Špoljarić?**

Hrvatska Kostajnica, \*\*\*\*\* 60.

**Where were you born?**

In Hrvatska Kostajnica.

**In Kostajnica? Please tell me, where did the beginning of the war catch you? Where were you?**

I was here.

**You stayed here?**

Yes.

**Well I am interested in your first war experiences that you had here?**

Ahh, that was not much, it did not last long, almost nothing.

**OK.**

Mostly we left Kostajnica. All these places were defended by people from other regions. People from Kostajnica, for example, defended Sunja instead of people from Sunja.

**OK...**

Do you understand that? I did not defend Kostajnica and thus I cannot say anything about it.

**Do you recall your first encounter with Praljak?**

My first encounter with Praljak happened close to the so-called Svrabina pilana (Svrab's saw-mill).

**Svrab's saw-mill?**

Svrab's saw-mill. That was my last position before I was given a job at the command headquarters (HQ) as a telephonist. Since I had also served as a telephonist in the former Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), our officers chose me for the job. The air raid siren was sounded and one guy - we called him Mića – because he couldn't pronounce letters č and ć – started firing shots from a machine gun which was all rusty. He heard from someone that by firing the

machine gun he would be able to clean it more easily. At that very moment an intervention squad headed by a huge man, a very large man, arrived. He even scared me – later on we realised that he was not like that at all. He solved the problem at once.

**And what did the large man say when he came?**

Praljak, that was Praljak. I do not know exactly what he said ...

**Did he shout?**

No, he didn't shout, but he was strict, strict in a military way. He immediately demanded a meeting with a commanding officer in order to solve the problem. His action extremely impressed me.

**He demanded – what – to be solved exactly?**

A problem regarding unauthorised firing of a weapon, in this case of a machine gun, meaning firing from a machine gun without a prior approval.

**Ah I see...**

Later on, while I was working at the command HQ switchboard, I finally understood what it was all about. The command HQ ordered various stages of military preparedness depending on current circumstances and danger. They also issued orders on what we were allowed and not allowed to do. Mr. Praljak, I had such an impression, wanted to know everything. He wanted to be informed of everything and wanted to know everything. He did not allow things to pass him by; he solved all the problems at once. It seemed to me, during those several

days that I stayed at the command HQ, that he immediately solved all the problems, as far as it was possible. If the problems were more complicated he summoned his commanders and solved the problems with them. I think that is the most important thing that I have to say about Mr. Praljak. That is my opinion of him which I reached after meeting him and getting to know him during several days of my work at the command HQ.

**That means when you came to the command HQ as a telephonist...**

He was already there. Mr. Peša arrived as Mr. Praljak's replacement. Praljak was preparing to leave.

**And now, tell me, in those few days that you were together with him at the command HQ, what kind of relationship did you have with Praljak?**

Well, I did not have any relationship... I was a telephonist...

**Were you located at the premises of the command HQ?**

Yes, at the command HQ. The rooms were connected so we could hear everything. I asked to be moved later on, because I did not want to listen to the confidential information. The less you know, the better. He did not speak in the loud voice, he did not shout, but he solved problems at once and in a rather strictly manner.

**Were people afraid of him?**

I believe that people respected him more than they feared him. Well, who wouldn't be afraid of a huge, two meters tall man, who sometimes raises his

voice. Yes, but that was only the first impression, we wrongly believe that a huge man is necessarily a dangerous man - in reality they are not dangerous at all.

**Yes, you've got the point.**

He was extremely intelligent and smart, and he knew exactly at every moment what he was doing.

**Međa was also in Sunja during that period, is that correct?**

Yes, yes. I think he was there, or maybe he had left earlier, I think.

**Međa? Međimorec?**

Međimorec, well it seems to me that he left together with Praljak.

**At that time in February 1992 you were regularly visited by the European Union observes, is that right?**

Yes.

**They often came to the command HQ?**

Yes, they came to the command HQ.

**What did all that look like? Were there any special preparations made prior to their arrival?**

I don't think that there were any special preparations undertaken. They came and presented certain problems which were then solved immediately. I remember some of those situations even before my arrival to the command HQ... What did they know? Chetniks used to open fire and shoot at their own people and later on blame us and report that we had opened fire and shot at them. All kinds of things happened. I don't know. You ask me, I don't have anything else to add.

**O.K., tell me, while you were there, did you notice any major problems which might have been worrying or which might have made general Praljak angry for instance?**

Well... I think he was more concentrated on his departure. Mr. Peša had already taken the command.

**That means, that you arrived to Sunja at the very end of Praljak's stay there?**

Yes, that's correct, that's right. I am not able to talk about some events or actions. I can only tell you my own impression and opinions.

**And when Praljak left, you stayed on?**

I stayed until 1993. Until October 1993, when I was released from the army, and I started working at state office in which I had worked prior to the war.

**O.k. That means that you did not contact Praljak often?**

No, I did not contact him often, but I did not have any problems either.

**Did you notice any drinking problems?**

I didn't. I did not notice that people drank or that they were drunk.

**He managed to put that in order already. Drinking problem was reported before.**

I don't know. There were guys from Zagreb stationed here before us. What happened to them, I don't know. When we arrived to our position there was a terrible mess which we solved and took care off thanks to Praljak and I don't know who else. Well you know, times were different then, there were many more attacks before, and the railroad station was..

**Yes?**

That's all, but that all happened before we came and took the positions.

**That's it, that would be all – I hope we didn't miss or forget anything.**

I don't know what else...

May, 2005