

MIJO ŠUNJIĆ

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Ljubuški

September 2005.

The interview was recorded; the tape is marked as code

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6,13 MB

Duration 19:12

The interview was taken in Ploče

Here, our Dictaphone is turned on; I would like to ask you to first introduce yourself, your name and surname, date and place of birth.

I'm Mije Šunjić born on the 6th May, 1959 in Metković.

What is your occupation?

I graduated in economy, I am director and partner of "Interšed".

It means that you're in "Interšped"? And before "Interšped" where were you?

Before „Interšped" I was the director of „Jadroagent" in Ploče. During period that interests you I was a director at "Jadroagent" in Ploče, 1994 deputy director till 1995, after 1995, director

When did you come to „Interšped"?

I came to „Interšped" in 2004.

When did you come to „Jadroagent"?

I'm in „Jadroagent" from 1985.

Tell me, „Jadroagent” during the war in Ploče did what, what job did „Jadroagent” do?

„Jadroagent” is an international shipping agency and forwarder, transporter. And that is what we were doing. We offered services to boats that imported cargo and exported cargo from the port of Ploče and transported the goods which they imported, that are if we had a forwarding bill which they asked for. That is, the consignee or those who were authorised to handle the cargo.

Where was the main destination to where the cargo was sent which had arrived in the port of Ploče?

In which period?

1993, 1994, let’s say.

1993 and 1994 there were a few destinations, in actual fact there were 5 main destinations: Mostar, as the most south, Sarajevo, as the most important, the biggest point, Tuzla and Zenica from places in the Federation and later somewhere 1995, Banja Luka was added, as a place where the humanitarian aid was systematically dispatched.

When we’re talking about firms such as “Interšed”, “Jadroagent” I’m interested for pure technical reasons, in what way did the clients, customers, how do you call it those sending a boat choose their agent, that is a shipping agent?

Then it was a very simple system. There was UNHCR, and other international agencies which had tenders. The most favourable offers were

chosen on the tenders.

Aha, that is how it functioned?

That is how it functioned. It was pure commercial relations.

There wasn't any special...?

There were some variants, some had connections. That is how I, with time figured out who were the eventual account senders, so they were analysed after the tenders, which, who you can talk too differently. Then you, as with all the other jobs on the market obtained what you...

The market conditions then determined...?

I was also working then for „Soroš", who had some kind of activities here, they were also sending humanitarian aide throughout BiH. For example, but that was no tender, I simply came upon them through my private channels.

But there was no division amongst the agencies, amongst those firms; there were no internal division, who would occupy themselves with that?

No, everyone, you have to understand, it was the time when the port of Ploče instead of 4 and a half million tonnes worked 300 thousand tonnes. We were all simply trying to survive, everything was good for us, and we did everything.

Roughly how many firms were here in this area, in that race?

More then now.

How many?

Well I'm counting on that there were about 15 firms that competed for that job plus private transporters.

I know that the traffic was reduced, however I'm interested in how much according to your information how frequent was it at the port of Ploče? Hence, when I'm talking about...?

The traffic was reduced, but in a certain way it was increased, because the structure of the cargo was different. The work was intense. You had to take each bag over your shoulder, and that is very questionable, so you can't tell whether it was increased or decreased. There was simply more physical work in the port of Ploče, and less use... There was less cargo and smaller boats, but the structure of the cargo and the work load that had to be done, seeing that the bags were more or less fifty kilos each which you had to keep putting one across the other, lets say that the structure of the job required more physical work. Work wise it was more intensive on the port of Ploče.

You were charging, you who were around them were receiving money?

We were receiving. Of course, we weren't receiving how...

How much you can, is it?

Yes.

But that was solved, is that so!?! First of all what I'm interested in is what was transported into Bosnia, that is what went through the port of Ploče towards other countries! What was the main cargo content which went through the port of Ploče in 1993 and 1994 into Bosnia?

Mainly it was the basic foodstuffs. Meaning, flour, oil, sugar, powdered milk, clothes, even Qur'ans, there was everything.

There were Qur'ans, not even – but there were, I heard, heaps!

There was a lot, yes.

Was there just one big consignment of Qur'ans or was there more?

I remember one, maybe there were more, the firm then was still “Tranšped”, who done that and I believe they don't exist anymore. But there were other things, commercial goods, it's hard to assume now what it could've been, I don't know, computers were coming this way.

During that time?

That's it, there were little firms who were working on that, let's say some firm from the Netherlands, we were the shipping agency, we had a warehouse of computers, their computers. It went up on a regular basis.

Also into Bosnia?

Also into Bosnia. There were people who were buying that, yes.

Meaning, things that fall under humanitarian aid left first before anything else. Tell me; during that time were there commercial ships?

Of course, there were commercial ships, of course they were limited, had restrictions, but they were present. Sugar, flour, as in every situation and also during war there are those that can afford to buy more than... I also had to work of some kind of packages of flour from Italy. In the port of Ploče there was flour that you could buy and send where ever you wanted to.

And that is, means also went the same way?

It also functioned, that is how the sugar functioned. Let's also say the oil.

Were there any things during that time, in a broader sense which you could've considered as military gear or help for soldiers? Hence, tents, tent wings, army boots, some kind of uniforms?

Notice this, there were often packages with footwear, some kind of textiles, you couldn't control what was civilian and what was military. In any case the humanitarian aid went through here.

You mentioned to me containers that went to Mostar?

Containers that went there 52 containers, maybe I'm wrongly speaking, is it 52, there were by nature 20 various containers adapted as parts of the hospital, in fact. It means there was complete hospital with a surgery theatre, ambulances, bearings, x-ray machines and so forth. The Lošinj fleet brought it here, we unloaded it on the bank 5, here on the corner between two banks, warehoused and transported to Mostar. That is, we took it to Metković... delivered to eastern Mostar. It was a joint action, there was also present a representative for the Embassy of BiH in

Zagreb who then...

Who was the representative?

Zlatko Hurtić was the person who we were contacting with. He presented himself as some kind of attaché or I don't know exactly what he was from those jobs. I didn't take much notice of that. Mainly, we transported it to Metković, and from Metković the English UNPROFOR, that's what they were called then, it's not important, they took it to east part of Mostar and it was in function over there. I was curious so I later looked in person. I went to Mostar, it was placed in some kind of big warehouse, put together de facto as a hospital.

It could've been in function?

It was definitely in function, I saw it. I was talking to the doctors there and I asked him, I introduced myself.

You were talking to the doctor? When was that?

Meaning, containers came by the end of 1993 or the beginning of 1994, I can't remember exactly, it's difficult for me now and they were equipped by the early 1994 in Mostar.

The beginning of 1994 in Mostar?

Yes. Meaning, even during the time when it couldn't, de facto meaning during the time of the Croatian – Muslim conflicts. Namely, that is why I'm telling you that the English took this, because there weren't other possibilities.

Because there weren't other possibilities. AH means, went this way?

Yes.

I didn't understand did we know where it was coming from? Do you have the information in your head where it came from?

Well, I contacted we these people and they paid me for the whole operation, I don't know, I would have to look in the books of "Jadroagent". I assume they have it evidenced. It was an Arab humanitarian organization, which...

IGASA, maybe?

No, no, it was definitely not IGASA. Saudi Arabia was, there were differently organized. They had their permanent shipping agency; I think it was "Tranšped". Saudi High Commissariat was present quite often. They were mentioned quite often, they had work a lot and nevertheless we could not get to them. It was a closed circle.

Where was their head office?

Saudi Committee?

Yes.

I believe it was an organization of the Saudi government.

Did they have their head office in Ploče?

They had it in Split, I believe so. They were all sitting in Split or in Zagreb. Whoever we had to contact it would be a number from Split or Zagreb.

You tell me, Zlatko?

Hurtić.

Hurtić, did you meet him, contacted him, he was in the Embassy of R BiH?

That is so.

Did have contact with anybody else, how often was the Embassy BiH present in all this, in this whole business that was going on here?

Well, from the very beginning of the war they established a logistical centre in Ploče and the head person was Zlatko Šoše.

He was here? I thought that ad hoc was made only for a month, two, three?

No, no, for quite a long time. They had rented out a place in „Jadroagent“-over there. Zlatko Šoše wasn't in charge then, I can't remember the name, it was someone else, Željko Raguž would show up as a person, maybe it was even him, but the person who was, I was under the impression that the most important person there was Zlatko Šoše.

Means they had in the name of the Embassy BiH been present here and

watched over, coordinated, cooperated?

In their office they had the shield of BiH, the one with a lily the whole time, most normally. They had a big room on first floor of that building of „Jadroagent" where everyone was, those who done the operational functions and the room for the director was separate.

During the conflict in 1993, 1994 did anything change, was there any tension, was there something that was affected later on...?

There was no tension. Humanitarian aid arrived most normally, from here it was transported to Metković, from Metković it was transported by UNHCR trucks, everything was carried normally, they were coming here, they were protected, I know very well that my forerunner in „Interšped" helped a lot and immensely let's say the director then RNK Zenica, Željezare Zenica and they are grateful even today for all that was done. The relations were most normal, their goods and things were protected in the port of Ploče without any loses.

I saw that now while looking at these papers. Let's say, with Zenica the cooperation went that is Zenica was exporting their coal?

They had goods here that they were selling, most normally. I tell you, we were sending flour in total uncertainty to Zenica and prayed to God that some kind of „1K Banka" Zenica paid their bill. They were all paid. I have to admit.

It means, you could then and with Zenica cooperate in business in such a way...?

Contacts were difficult and limited. You couldn't communicate normally with people, there was always an intermediary, then satellite telephones, then hundreds of miracles, but...

I know, the problem with contacts did exist.

Yes.

And it means that problem with people didn't exist?

No.

People were working there, their goods they were trying to...

Coming, leaving, passing and I don't know the director of „Interšpeda“ Sarajevo was then in Zagreb.

What year are you talking about?

1993 and 1994.

During that time?

Yes. There were of course commercial lines, the market never stopped. There were commercial contacts. Limited, but they did exist. They existed.

Did Sarajevo at the time cooperate as much with Beograd, with Titograd, I don't know with who else?

How did they cooperate it is difficult for me to say. I only know that we had continuous contact with all those people.

Meaning, it went. Good, did we forget to mention something, did I forget to ask you something?

In any case, the humanitarian aid went regularly to Ploče. Regularly. The whole time without any problems. Meaning, it did go in such a way that it was illogical, because we had to transfer the cargo from Ploče to Metkovićš, in Metković the UNHCR convoys were formed who took the cargo to their destination. But, not once was there a backset.

Do you ever have feedback with information about the cargo that went that way, transferred etc., did something happen, was it stolen, was it...?

Well one of ours from Ploče died following the convoy.

Following the convoy he died?

Yes, a Dugandžić.

Where was that convoy going?

The convoy went to Sarajevo, he was a monitor of the convoy and died in Mostar by a mine thrower grenade. Meaning, the Serbs on a regular basis, when they felt like it they would fight.

And they didn't settle in Ploče?

Serbs did not settle. The first convoy of humanitarian aide for the Serbs went according to the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Meaning they did not use Ploče during the war?

No! No. De facto, towards the end, let's say...

Why? If during the conflict with Muslims the port of Ploče was used also by the Muslims – in any way: humanitarian, commercial, business, - why then wasn't the port of Ploče used the same way with the Serbs? Why didn't the Serbs use it?

Well they didn't use it, I don't know why not. We were the first ones to forward the first trucks to the Serbian area, I actually done, in the summer of 1995, and the price for transport to the Serbian area were double the price, as a wage for the fear that the truck drivers faced. Meaning, Banja Luka was paying, I'm talking of the top of my head, let's say the transport to Sarajevo was 1,100 DEM then, and the transport for Banja Luka was 3,000 DEM or 4.000 DEM. I forgot to mention, a lot of cargo went to Bugojno then. Bugojno was also a regional centre where we sent humanitarian aide.

Good, Mister Šunjić thank you very much.

Your welcome.