

THE TOWN WAS THE TARGET

(the aggression by Serbia, that is the JNA and Serbian and Montenegrin forces against the Republic of Croatia and the Serb occupation of Vukovar 1991)

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Zagreb, 2011



Water tower, Vukovar (photographs taken from the archive of the Croatian Military Journal)

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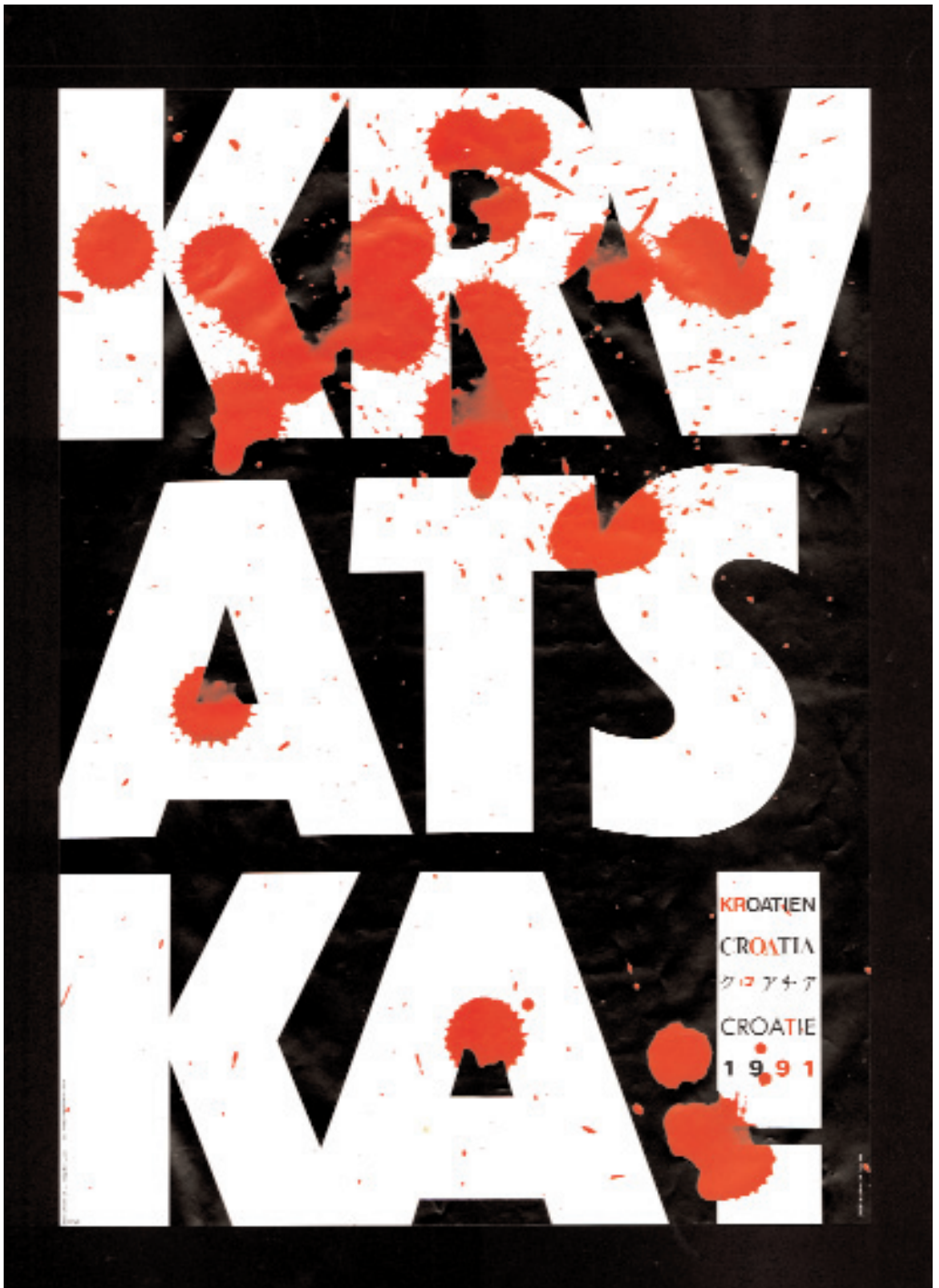
*A story of love**

The time we live in is so unpleasant that you wish you had not even been born, or rather that you had been born at some other time, on another occasion, simply because right now there is not enough love to go around. What is the use of big houses, expensive cars, winter holidays in Vysoke Tatry, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, expensive perfumes and briefings? These are just shadows of real life. We give ourselves up to the narcotics of delusion, the illusory, secret paths of life, and when it is already too late, with our eyes closed to our own failings, we reach maturity; we suddenly realize that it is too late to start again. The end is here, it is perhaps already peering around the next corner.

There is no way we can steal back the years, steal happiness – if there is no love. There may seem to be sun and joy, you may imagine that your success is complete as you earn a medal, in the shadow of great men, but I have seen many who, pockets empty walk with heads held high around this town. Their joy in having nothing is much greater. Because they have this town. They have friends. They have a soul. They didn't have money for Zagreb, Vienna or Prague. Their money was left in the glasses they emptied with friends with whom they later waited for the sunrise over the Croatian barricades. For some that waiting took too long and they were lost. But we know full well where they are. If life allows us to let our love control us, as their love carried them, at the end of the road, perhaps we can expect that we too will die happy.

Siniša Glavašević

** A story by the journalist from Croatian Radio Vukovar, Siniša Glavašević, who was captured and killed at Ovčara after the occupation of Vukovar, written during the siege and destruction of Vukovar.*



Author of the poster: Boris Ljubičić

Foreword

After I was asked to read and review the content of the first part of this book, which deals briefly with the break-up of Yugoslavia and the battle for Vukovar, and to write down some of my own thoughts about these events from the 1990's, I decided to present in this foreword some of the observations about the battle for Vukovar, which I wrote about ten years ago. Although they have mostly already been included in this book, I will supplement some of them with new details or simply repeat them out of a desire to particularly emphasize them. But before that, since I have been asked for an assessment of the text of the book, and since it is an overview of the more important moments and events which marked the process of the break-up of Yugoslavia and the battle for Vukovar, rather than a detailed analysis, I have no major comments to make about the text I have read, and I believe it to be objective and useful.

However, when reading the text, I noticed that some events, which are important for an understanding of the entire process of the break-up of Yugoslavia, were not stressed enough, so I will do this here. For example, it is necessary to point out that the proposal by Slovenia and Croatia of a confederation was confronted by the proposal to create a Unitarian Yugoslavia, that the Republics – members of the SFRY - had their own armies (Territorial Defense) as components of the armed forces of the SFRY and a joint army, the Yugoslav National Army, and that the so-called rebel Serbs were only part of the process of preparations for open armed aggression against Croatia by Serbia and Montenegro. It may be said that a similar softening of the territory and creation of a crisis had already been seen in the actions of Hitler leading up to the Second World War, that is the scenario with the so-called rebel Serbs was conducted along the same lines as with the SA units. Moreover I notice that in 1990 and 1991 the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) undertook activities as though the SFRY was under attack by NATO, that is, that the territory of Slovenia and Croatia was occupied. In the same way, I believe that the seizure of arms from the Croatian TD (and not from Slovenia) was not only an anti-constitutional and aggressive act, but was also an act of aggression and in a broader sense was even the occupation of Croatian territory.

In my thoughts written about ten years ago, I mentioned statements about the necessity of historical distance, which is often emphasized when people tried to talk about the Croatian Homeland War, especially the statement that “there is no objective truth without confirmation by sources from the other side”. That is why in this Foreword in which I will refer to the course of the battle for Vukovar, I have also included

some statements and orders from that “other side” which I believe to be interesting and significant for an understanding of the circumstances in which the aggression against Croatia by the Serbs was prepared and undertaken. I will mention some of them immediately, before referring to the battle for Vukovar, as a point for further discussion.

For example:

Mr Nenad Čanak in his book “Godina raspleta” (Year of Resolution) in a passage entitled “Nazism” compares the preparations for war in Hitler’s Germany and Milošević’s Serbia: *“In the area of the countries planned for occupation a fifth column was prepared.... organized around German cultural institutions. Nazism in Serbia to this end made use of the cultural societies “Sava”, “Prosvjeta” and various Serbian and democratic parties outside Serbia, aggressively interested in the survival of the cultural identity of Serbs in that area, organized directly from Belgrade. The beginning of the open persecution of Jews in Germany was marked by the murder of a German diplomat in Paris by “Jewish extremists”. Crystal Night followed. In our situation, this role was played out by the staged attack on an SDS activist (M. Mlinar) who on that occasion was allegedly cut with a razor blade or knife in the neck. This was followed by the building of the first barricades around Knin and the burning of Croatian houses in the Krajina.”*

Immediately after the multi-party elections were held in Croatia resulting in the victory of the Croatian Democratic Union, the JNA seized the weapons of the Croatian Territorial Defense and thereby disarmed Croatia. The only armed formations that were formally controlled by the newly elected Croatian authorities were within the Ministry of the Interior of the RoC. But in view of the structure of the MoI and the large number of Serb nationals in the MoI who did not accept the new democratic changes, the Croatian government apparently did not have practical control of a large proportion of the MoI. This is why it is necessary to particularly emphasize the gathering of the first Croatian policemen on 5th August 1990, since that was the beginning of the creation of the future Croatian Armed Forces and the only legal way of re-arming Croats.

After came a difficult period of neither war nor peace, a period of rotating presidents, which the “Minister of Defense” of the SFRY, Veljko Kadijević, in his book “Moje viđenje raspada” (My View of the Break-up, Belgrade, 1993, page 126-127) described as the first phase. According to what he wrote, the JNA’s goal was to “protect the Serbian people in Croatia from attacks by Croatian armed formations and enable them to organize themselves as a militia for self-defense” and the task was meant to be “undertaken as part of the prevention of an international conflict as the presidency of the SFRY formulated it”. Moreover, “in order to fulfill the task that had been set, the JNA had to be reinforced in Croatia and around Croatia. A large number of armored and mechanized units, from troops to battalions, were to be located as close as possible to potential conflict sites so they would be able to intervene quickly. A suitable number of armored and mechanized units, from brigades and stronger, would also be set up in appropriate locations in Croatia and around Croatia, so they could become involved in major interventions. This was clearly demonstrated in the well-known

events in the spring and summer of 1991, especially at Plitvice and Borovo Selo.

In Croatia, alongside the special MoI units, from April 1991 National Guard units (ZNG) (initially also within the MoI of the RoC) were formed, and after the outbreak of the “Slovene War” at the end of June 1991, the intensive blockage of JNA military bases began. This is the period where we need to seek the date of the actual beginning of the war. In this context, Veljko Kadijević in his book (on page 130) wrote that the “main task – apart from the defense of the Serb nation in Croatia, also came to be to protect buildings, units and members of the JNA and their families, which significantly complicated the completion of the task”. Serb sources clearly show the role of the JNA and the measures the JNA leadership took to cause an open conflict, as time was not on their side. In contrast, for Croatia every moment was precious as they simply did not have any weapons. This is also confirmed in the book by Veljko Kadijević, where he mentions how they looked for ways to cause conflicts aimed at establishing who was to blame for the war.

This is also confirmed by the events that took place at the end of August in Vukovar, that is, the beginning of the military siege of Vukovar on 25th August 1991, which this book deals with. After the ZNG barracks in Čakovec were shelled, the ZNG base in Opatovac was also rocketed on 24th August, as well as ZNG positions by the Đergaj silos near the village of Bršadin. ZNG units in Vukovar returned fire and the late Luka Andrijanić brought down the first JNA plane over Borovo Naselje. The following day there was already another incident, when a JNA vehicle in Borovo Naselje drove over a mine as it was going round a barricade. In the propaganda of the JNA, *Narodna armija* (31st August 1991, page 10) it says, “The Ustashe stationed at the Bršadin silos brought down a military plane last Saturday. A day later they opened fire from a hand held rocket launcher on a military truck driving through Borovo Naselje bringing food from Vukovar to the military unit in Borovo Selo”. As expected, an attack on Borovo Naselje and Vukovar followed, which at the pace set should have been taken in one concerted action. However the resistance by the Vukovar defenders was stronger than expected, so the enemy forces withdrew. The withdrawal was undertaken so that units were positioned around Vukovar so that Vukovar was surrounded. All entrance roads were blocked, and the only way into the town was by what was known as the “corn road” through the village of Lužac.

In the period from 24th August to 14th September the Serb army tried on several occasions to break through into the town itself, but without any real success. They lost several planes and tens of tanks. The town was mainly under attack from rocket launchers from Serb positions to the north of the town. In the town itself, the defenses were completely reorganized and units supplemented. There were several attempts to liberate the military base, and one of the most important events took place in the village of Berak on 2nd September 1991. The cynicism with which the JNA journal *Narodna armija* reported the attack by Serb forces and the massacre of civilians in the village of Berak does not need any comment. “For example (I suppose of the peace-making work of the JNA, op. a) they mention the recent armed conflict between Croat and Serb neighbors in Berak, when in

the course of their arguments they pursued, killed and slaughtered each other around the village and the cornfields the entire summer day, and who knows what would have happened in the end if a JNA unit had not been called in to prevent a bloody massacre”.

In that same period, fresh enemy forces were building up all around Vukovar, from Šid-Tovarnik-Lovas-Sotin and Šid-Tovarnik-Orolik-Negoslavci to the south and through Bogojevo to Trpinja and Borovo Selo to the north. Since there were not enough weapons, we prohibited the villages to undertake any form of combat, in the fear of reprisals. All the information we gathered told us that an attack on Vukovar of major proportions was being prepared. We were right; it began on 14th September 1991. Veljko Kadrijević writes about it in his book (pp. 134-135):

The main ideas from the basic plan by which further plans were developed for the use of the JNA throughout the whole of Yugoslavia were:

- to defeat the Croatian army completely if the situation allowed, and definitely to an extent which would permit the goals set to be reached,
- to establish complete cooperation with the Serb population in the Serbian Krajina
- to make possible the completion of the withdrawal of the remainder of the JNA from Slovenia;
- to particularly take into account the fact that the role of the Serbian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be key for the future of the Serb people as a whole;

Adjust the location of the JNA forces accordingly. Carry out the task in two phases:

- first: mainly by counter attacks of tactical importance until Croatia's aggression is completely apparent, with intensive organization and preparation of Serb rebels in Croatia;
- second: by a unified operative and strategic attack operation, defeat the Croatian army and complete the tasks set. For this operation, alongside the JNA forces already engaged in the first phase, 15 to 18 more brigades of land troops are needed – armored, mechanized and infantry.

The grouping of JNA forces and their use in the first phase should be undertaken in line with the plan for the operative and strategic attack operation planned for the second phase. The idea of the maneuvers contained basic elements mentioned in this book so I will not repeat them.

On 14th September 1991, at around noon, there was an all-out attack on Vukovar. First ten planes attacked, dropping cluster bombs, shelling and shooting at the town from machine guns, and then a tank and infantry attack began from the north, from Trpinja, down the Trpinjska Street, Vukovar and Borovo Selo – the Technical Hall (Borovo Naselje) and from the south Negoslavci- Vukovar (barracks) and Petrovci – Vukovar (Petrova gora). The battles lasted without a break until 20th September, and Vukovar was completely surrounded. In that period the “tank graveyard” came into being on the Trpinjska Street. At that time we partially activated the villages, mainly to attack the lines of troops moving towards Vukovar.

Regardless of the constant battles, we managed to activate a Defense Office which made a

list of all those of military service age and prepared all that was needed for mobilization; we established a military police force and enlarged our forces by creating four battalions and some smaller units (signals, Military Police, engineers, anti-aircraft etc.) We also resolved the issue of organizing logistics, both for the defenders and the civilian population. In the same period we also prepared and carried out an operation to unblock the roads around Vukovar, and we made a decision to block the border at Tovarnik. That is to say, according to the information we had available, the forces of a second enemy echelon were moving towards Šid. Since the enemy expected to take Vukovar and Eastern Slavonia, the second echelon forces were supposed to continue with the operation to attack Osijek and Virovitica, joining up with forces in Western Slavonia to continue towards Zagreb and Varaždin. In line with our decision, in Tovarnik on the morning of 21st September, our men blocked the entrances to the village and attacked the lines of forces moving that way. The enemy broke up in complete confusion and fled back to Šid. From *Narodna armija* we learned that these were “brave” men from Valjevci. The enemy was panic stricken, and some fled all the way to Belgrade. After this, the mobilization system in Serbia collapsed, and the JNA had to modify its plan of attack on Croatia.

Veljko Kadijević commented on this in his book (page 136): *The first phase of the second phase of the war in Croatia (the end of July – the beginning of September 1991) went mainly as we had expected. The Croatian army was making more preparations to attack JNA garrisons, blockades and there were more frequent individual provocations than direct attacks on units and garrisons (...).*

The strategic and operative attack operation in the second stage of the second phase of the war in Croatia was undertaken by the JNA, but with many modifications in relation to the initial plan. The only reason for the modifications of the operation was the semi-successful mobilization and organized desertion of the JNA reserve units. Not only was the response poor, but these reduced units were not able to move in directions and to places where they could be used, that is, some which did move forward, once they arrived at the front, moved away from it. All the problems of a strategic and operative nature in undertaking the operation, especially problems related to the time of arrival of the necessary fresh forces for individual lines of attack, were exclusively the result of the unsuccessful mobilization and desertion, especially in some parts of the country (...).

The tasks and the operation remained the same. The idea of the maneuver had to be partially modified, in that the tasks of individual groups of the land army were adjusted in terms of targets and time according to the forces available. Due to the lack of forces, it was not possible to undertake the operation in one sweep and quickly defeat the main body of the Croatian army, which was in any case numerically significantly stronger than the units of the JNA, but this had to be done gradually and over a longer period of time.

But regardless of our aim, we did not succeed in transferring the focus of our defense to Tovarnik, exclusively due to the lack of men in the Vukovar area and because of the

lack of understanding by the authorities in Vinkovci. After several days, the enemy appeared again with the aim of capturing the line of communication from Šid to Mirkovci and the left bank of the River Bosut, as the starting point for a new attempt to take Vukovar, and thereby a new move towards Osijek and Virovitica. The battles for Ilača became more intense, and then for Jankovci. We were aware of the situation that had arisen so we proposed to the defense in Vinkovci that we should create a joint defensive line between Jankovci – Petrovci and Bogdanovci, but without success. In the meantime we received an order to establish the 204th Brigade, and more than 600 volunteers arrived in Vukovar from all over Croatia. Since some JNA bases had been taken, we managed to take and bring to Vukovar a certain quantity of weapons and equipment, mainly from Varaždin and Đakovo.

Operation Vukovar officially began on 30th September and lasted until the town was occupied. The Serbian army forces were divided into the operative groups “North and South” whose line of limitation was the River Vuka. The operation was planned by the chief of staff in Belgrade and its commander was General Života Panić, who was also the commander of the first Military District (previously the 1st Army). At the end of September and the beginning of October the forces of the 252nd armored mechanized brigade of the JNA from Valjevo (in Serbia) attacked and conquered the villages of Svinjarevci, Petrovci, Marinci and Cerić, and made an unsuccessful attack on the village of Bogdanovci, which was an integral part of the defense of Vukovar. So from 1st October 1991, Vukovar was completely surrounded by Serb forces. On the following day, 2nd October 1991, Vukovar was fiercely attacked, but this time the Serb army resisted the attack with significant loss of life and machinery suffered by the enemy. Not counting the last days of the defense of Vukovar, 2nd October 1991 was the bloodiest day of the siege. On that day alone, more than 90 civilians and soldiers were wounded. In the days to follow, Vukovar was bombarded systematically and even more fiercely from a distance. There were no more mass tank attacks, but more and more combined with infantry.

To the east, the town of Ilok remained free with its surrounding villages. In the presence of the EU monitors, a “referendum” was conducted on expulsion, and on 17th October 1991, in the presence and with the “help” of the EU monitors, Ilok and the villages were ethnically cleansed of Croats, who were moved to other parts of Croatia.

The period of convoys is a separate chapter in the defense of Vukovar and an unprecedented example. The competitive spirit of the conflicting French humanitarian organizations in the fight for profit and prestige was fatal for Vukovar. The pressure from the EU on Croatia for their involvement was also pressure on Vukovar to forcefully accept something that was harmful. The “Doctors without Frontiers” convoy on 19th October 1991 was not meant to bring in humanitarian aid, but merely to take out some of the wounded. The convoy was supposed to travel from Nuštar – Marinci – Bogdanovci – Vukovar according to the agreement, but deliberately turned from the agreed course because the Serb army had massed its forces in the area between Bogdanovci and Vukovar. Allowing the convoy into the town required breaking the blockade of Vukovar’s line of defense,

without the possibility of closing it again quickly, which was also the aggressor's goal – a quick and easy opening into the town. The convoy was taken into the town from Bogdanovci via Lužac, since that direction was controlled by our forces. The leaders of the Doctors without Borders convoy offered the commander of the defense of Vukovar the surrender of the town and the expulsion of the people as had happened in Ilok. The offer was vehemently rejected. As the convoy left Vukovar, the Serb forces ambushed it, furious over the failure of their plan to break through into the town.

Up to the end of October there were no serious infantry attacks on the town, apart from one attempt to break into Mitnica, and constant provocation in Borovo Naselje and Sajmište. All that time, the town was subjected to severe shelling and bombing. The Serb army conducted mobilization in Serbia all the time, and brought in fresh forces from the broader area of Vukovar.

There was a more severe attack on the town on 2nd November. The main lines of the attack were the villages of Lužac and Sajmište, aimed at cutting off the line from Borovo Naselje to Vukovar and Mitnica to Vukovar. The operation was run by the command of the JNA. The area around Lužac in the following days was the scene of the most fierce battles but also extreme losses by the Serb army. The commander of the JNA operational group "North", General Bratić was also killed in that area. He was also the commander of the Novi Sad Corps of the JNA. Regardless of the battles won, the defense of Vukovar lost ground as it did not have fresh forces, arms or ammunition to make use of the results achieved. Fatigue, hunger, constant wounding and the death of defenders left their mark. The hospital, full of wounded, was only about 100 meters from the thick of the battle.

On 10th November 1991, the Serb forces also took over the last Croatian village to the east – Bogdanovci. About 50 tanks and JNA armored vehicles were destroyed on the roads leading to the village and a couple of thousand soldiers neutralized. On that same day, 10th November 1991, Serb forces broke through onto the road from Borovo Naselje to Vukovar and in Sajmište they took Milovo brdo and threatened to break through into the centre of the town. The following days saw the death throes of the defense of Vukovar. Although the Serb army was on its knees, the defense of Vukovar no longer had any strength for a counterattack, but only for mere survival.

I will again mention at the end what the source "from the other side", the book by Veljko Kadijević (pp. 137, 142, 143) has to say about this: *The main grouping of the JNA's land army, mainly the armoured and mechanized units in Eastern Slavonia, had two tasks: first to liberate the Serb regions in Eastern Slavonia; second to be the main maneuver forces of the Supreme Command for breaking through to Zagreb and Varaždin. The first task of this group was completed, but it had taken quite a long time, above all because it lacked the planned infantry to accompany the tanks, which should have been gathered through mobilization. Moreover, the so-called Battle for Vukovar was a battle with the main body of the Croatian army, which wanted at all costs to hold onto Eastern Slavonia and Baranya. This battle was won by the JNA groupings in Eastern Slavonia,*

(...) it defeated the main body of the Croatian army, and after the liberation of Vukovar it was ready to continue to move westwards. (...)

(...) What are the basic results and experiences from the war in Croatia? The failure of mobilization and desertion demanded the modification of the task and the idea of the final JNA operation in Croatia. (...)

What was not achieved by this final operation in Croatia and could have been if not for the failure of mobilization and desertion was the complete destruction of the Croatian army. The lack of strength and the slow and long lasting gathering of forces was the only reason why the operation could not maintain its initial tempo and impetus. Of course, our total losses would have been much smaller in that kind of operation, especially in terms of equipment.

Nenad Čanak from Serbia, actually from Vojvodina, also wrote a commentary about the mobilization conducted by the JNA, as he opposed in words and deeds the plans for a Greater Serbia and the aggression by the Serb forces against Croatia. "Forced mobilization is nothing new in our recent history. We need only recall the horrors of 1991 and 1992 when in only a few months, up to 1.3.1992, 106,824 men were sent from Vojvodina to the war in Slavonia. Thereby Vojvodina gave more than 72 percent of all the soldiers who fought in Slavonia".

By the Serb attacks in autumn 1991, Vukovar became a demolished town. The aggressors themselves spoke out about who demolished it. For example the commander of the Operational Group "South", JNA Colonel Mile Mrkšić said, "We demolished Vukovar, the hardest and the most strongly fortified Ustasha fortress, thanks to the courage and know-how of the members of the JNA guards unit from Belgrade, volunteers and members of the Territorial Defense, of whom many were actually from the town itself". In the JNA journal *Narodna armija* in the issue of 20th November 1991, it says, "The previously beautiful buildings on the banks of the Vuka and the Danube, now resemble a ghost town. People will surely remove that "cosmic disgrace" of mankind, the onslaught of neo-Nazism. The wounds will heal. But the memory, as a defense against mindlessness, could last – forever." Of course the "cosmic disgrace" and the "onslaught of neo-Nazism" was ascribed by the authors of the article in *Narodna armija* to the Croats. In these articles there is not an ounce of remorse or shame, let alone any admission of the least amount of responsibility for what was done. Unfortunately, the latest reactions by Serb officials show that this situation in the official sources from the Serbian side is still mainly present today - as a burden on the life of Croats and Serbs together in Vukovar and relations between Croatia and Serbia in general.

In Prečno, near Ivanić Grad, 20th November 2008

*Commander of the Defense of the
Town of Vukovar,
October-November 1991,
Branko Borković – "Young Hawk"*



Top: Poster remembering the casualties in Vukovar, with the date of its occupation.
Bottom: Millennium photography by Šime Strikoman "The Legendary 204 Vukovar Brigade of the Croatian Army", Vukovar September 25th, 2006



REFERENDUM

ZA

HRVATSKU

19. SVIBNJA 1991.

Poster: Invitation calling voters to vote on the referendum for the Independence of Croatia, May 19th, 1991

INTRODUCTION

(A brief overview of the process of independence and the occupation and liberation of the Republic of Croatia in the Homeland War)

The destruction of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 symbolically marked the beginning of a new era in European history, where most Eastern European states replaced the single-party communist regime with multi-party democracy. This process also affected most of the republics of the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), however, it did not include the Socialist Republic of Serbia. Its citizens were held hostage by Serbian nationalists, who, in the middle of the 1980's revived the Greater Serbia movement from the 19th century, according to which the western border of the Serbian state, known as Greater Serbia, was planned to run deep into Croatian territory, along the line Virovitica-Pakrac-Karlovac-Ogulin-Karlobag. This was approximately the border of the Turkish conquests in Croatia from the 15th to the 17th century.

The media campaign to create the conditions needed to carry out the Greater Serbia project began with the publication of the draft Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the Belgrade newspaper *Večernje Novosti* on 24th and 25th September 1986, which pointed out the supposed threat to Serbs in Yugoslavia. The Serbian nationalists actually wanted increased centralization of the state. They sought the domination of Serbia in the federation and the complete rule of Belgrade over events in the socialist autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo and the Socialist Republic of Montenegro. The result of these nationalist or Greater Serbian political activities was the replacement of the political leadership in those constituent parts of the SFRY, at the end of 1988 and the beginning of 1989, followed by the amendment of the Constitution of the SR Serbia, which *de facto* abolished the autonomy of those provinces. By imposing pro-Serbian



Map with the borders of “Great Serbia”



Poster of the 14th Congress of LCY; Due to the intrusions from the Serbian and Montenegrin delegation, ignoring and refusing every proposal from the Slovenian delegation, on January 22nd, 1990 the Slovenian and then the Croatian delegation left the Congress. That marked the end of the monolithic, centralised party organisation which was the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the beginning of the fall of the Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.

representatives of Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro in the state presidency of the time, which consisted of 6 representatives of the republics and 2 from the autonomous provinces, the Serbian leadership created the conditions for political domination of Serbia over the other Yugoslav republics. As a result, the Serb political elite tried to stop the democratic changes in Yugoslavia.

In line with Greater Serbian politics in Belgrade, at the beginning of 1990 mass rallies were organized in Croatia – known as “happenings of the people” – by Serbs from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, which worsened Serb-Croat political relations. These rallies were dominated by pictures of the new “all Serbian” leader Slobodan Milošević, flags of Serbia, Yugoslavia and the Communist Party and Greater Serbian and anti-Croat slogans. But these aggressive Serb politics could not stop the democratic process in Slovenia or Croatia. In April and May 1990, free, multi-party elections were held in Croatia, which were won by the Croatian Democratic Union, led by dr. Franjo Tuđman.

SFRY military leaders reacted to the election results in Croatia, in agreement or on the orders of Serb politicians (the president of Serbia Slobodan Milošević and the representatives of Serbia in the Presidency of the SFRY and its president Borisav Jović)

by disarming Croatia. This was planned and quickly undertaken before there had been a handover of authority in Croatia on the basis of the election results, and before the new government had been organized. The disarmament took place on 23rd May 1990 on the basis of a strictly confidential command, which was signed on 14th May, unlawfully (without the knowledge and agreement of the Presidency of the SFRY) by the head of the armed forces of the SFRY, General Blagoje Adžić. In his journal *Poslednji dani SFRJ: Izvodi iz Dnevnika* (The Last Days of the SFRY: Journal Extracts) (Belgrade, 1995, p. 146) Borisav Jović wrote on 17th May 1990, “We practically disarmed them. Formally this was done by the head of the armed forces, but in fact it was on our orders. The Slovenes and Croats reacted strongly, but they have nowhere to go”. The arms taken from the Croatian Territorial Defense (it is estimated that there were about 80,000 to 200,000 “barrels”) were stored in the warehouse of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA).¹

The Parliament of the Republic of Croatia at the convening session of the multi-party assembly on 30th May 1990 then elected dr. sc. Franjo Tuđman as president of the presidency of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, and on 25th July amendments were adopted to the Constitution of the SRC, by which the term “Socialist” was removed from the title of the state, a new (“historical”) coat of arms and flag were introduced and more appropriate titles for state functionaries were adopted: president, the Government of the RoC, minister and others (Official Gazette 31, 28th July 1990). That day, at the Serb



Cardinal Franjo Kuharić and dr. sc. Franjo Tuđman at a constituted session of a multipartied Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, May 30th, 1990

1 O. Žunec, *Rat u Hrvatskoj* (The War in Croatia), *Polemos* 1, Zagreb, 1998, 66; M. Špegelj, *Sjećanja vojnika*, (The Memoirs of a Soldier) Zagreb, 2001, 287, tab. III.



Zagreb, St. Mark's Square, July 25th, 1990 (Photos taken by: Renato Brandolica)

rally in Serb, the Declaration on the Sovereignty and Autonomy of Serbs in Croatia was adopted. It was also announced that a “referendum on Serb autonomy” would be held from 19th August to 2nd September 1990, which had no foundation in republic or federal regulations.²

Due to the appearance of armed Serb civilians at certain points (“guards”) and the threat that armed civilians would ensure the implementation of that “referendum”, the Ministry of the Interior of the RoC issued an order putting under control arms intended for the reserve MoI units in the RoC in police stations in areas where there was a threat of armed rebellion by Serbs. On the night of 16th-17th August 1990 some of those arms were taken over by special MoI units, after which citizens of Serb nationality began to gather in front of the police stations in Knin, Benkovac, Obrovac, Garčac, Titova Korenica, Dvor na Uni and Donji Lapac, and all the roads in that area were blocked by tree trunks and rocks, with the presence of armed men. This attempt, in the night between 16th and 17th August 1990, by the Croatian police to transfer the weapons to the reserve police units from certain police stations in Lika and Dalmatia and prevent the referendum being held, served the political leadership of the rebel Serbs as a direct incentive to declare a “state of war” on Radio Knin and on 17th August to occupy the roads in the area of Knin with armed rebels.³ The attempt by the Croatian police to restore order in that area was prevented by the federal army, the Yugoslav National Army (JNA).

What was known as the “tree-trunk revolution” was the response of some of the Serbs in Croatia to the democratic process in Croatia and may be seen as the beginning of the armed rebellion by Serbs in Croatia, against the Croatian, democratically elected authorities. The final goal of the rebellion they started was to annex part of the territory of the Republic of Croatia to a united Serb state, which would cover the majority of the former Yugoslavia. It is true that the armed action by rebel Serbs was at that time still limited to ambush attacks and terrorist action by individual groups including terrorists brought in from Serbia. There were particularly fierce conflicts between Croatian police and Serb terrorists in Pakrac on 2nd March



Borovo Selo, May 2nd, 1991 (Photos taken by: Goran Pichler)

2 The archives of the Constitutional Court of the RoC/legal documents related to file no.: U-VI-295/1991 of 2nd October 1992. (hereinafter: Archives of the CC of RoC).

3 HR – HMDCDR, Dossier Knin, 81-86.



Pakrac, March 2nd, 1991



Plitvice, March 31st, 1991

1991 and at Plitvice Lakes at Easter, 31st March, when the Croatian policeman Josip Jovič was killed – the first Croatian defender to fall in the Homeland War, and on 2nd May 1991 when 12 Croatian policemen were ambushed and killed in Borovo Selo (Slavonia), and one in Polača near Zadar (Dalmatia).

Due to the unacceptable situation in the country and the politics imposed by the Serbian leadership, which were seen in the arbitrary and unconstitutional decisions of the presidency and assembly of the SR Serbia, that is, in the attempt to centralize and strengthen the political and economic position of Serbia at the cost of the other republics in the federation, the Croatian and Slovene

leadership proposed the reorganization of the SFR Yugoslavia into a confederation. However, the Serbian leadership refused to talk about this, so Croatia and Slovenia began the process to become independent. After the new “Christmas” Constitution of the Republic of Croatia was proclaimed on 22nd December 1990 (Official Gazette 56, 22nd December 1990), the Parliament of the RoC, on the basis of the results of the referendum



The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia



Parliament of the Republic of Croatia, June 25th, 1991. (Author of the photograph: Stanko Szabo)

held on 19th May 1991, adopted the *Declaration on the Establishment of the Sovereign and Independent Republic of Croatia, and the Charter of Rights of Serbs and other nationalities in the RoC* (*Official Gazette* 31, 25th June 1991). The date when the Declaration came into force was postponed for three months, so that talks on a peaceful settlement of the Yugoslav crisis could continue.

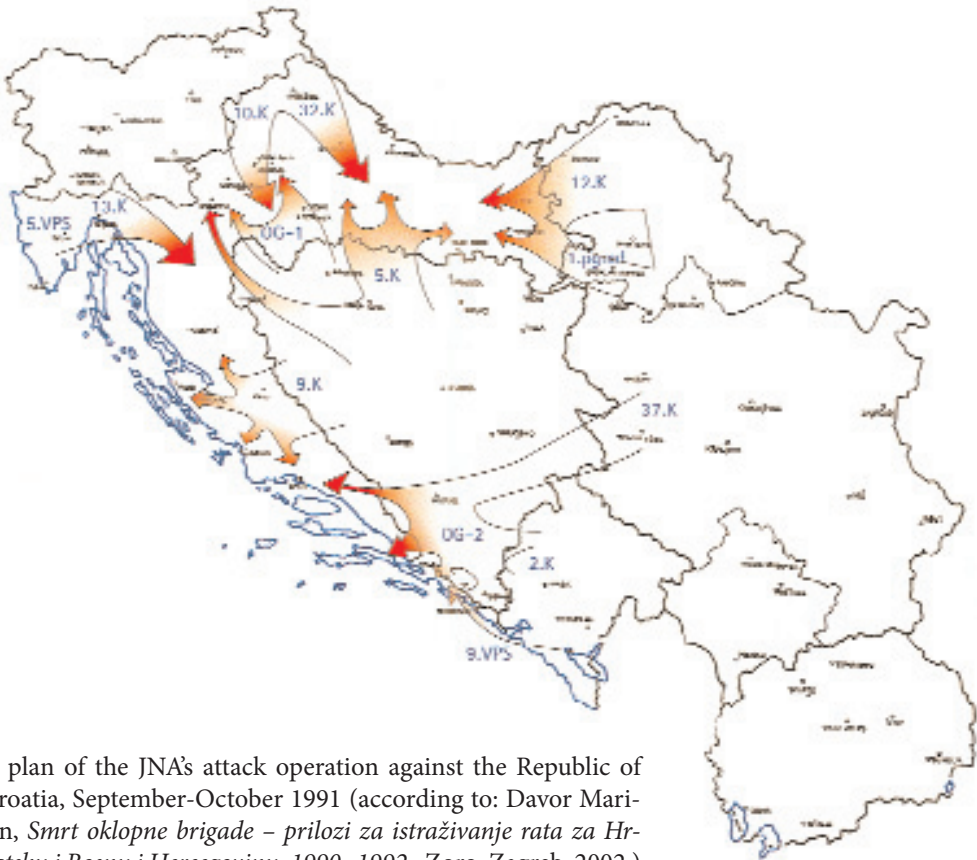
But, precisely then, on the basis of an agreement between the Serbian political leadership and the leaders of the JNA, the terrorist activities of Serb extremists in Croatia escalated to become open and merciless aggression by JNA and Serb paramilitary formations against the Republic of Croatia. The Serbian representative in the presidency of the SFRY and the acting president of the presidency of the SFRY at that time, Borisav Jović, in his book, “The Last Days of the SFRY: Extracts from my journal” (Belgrade, 1995; page 349) wrote that on 5th July 1991 he and the president of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević issued the Federal Secretary for National Defense of the SFRY (the “minister of defense”) Veljko Kadijević, a series of demands related to the role of the JNA, which he accepted without comment”:

Slobodan (Milošević) and I (Borisav Jović) arranged a meeting with Veljko Kadijević which we believe to be decisive... We are currently requiring the following of Veljko: ... to concentrate the main forces of the JNA on the lines: Karlovac- Plitvice to the west; Baranja, Osijek, Vinkovci – Sava to the east and the Neretva to the south. In this way all the territory where Serbs live will be covered until the final resolution... To completely eliminate Croats and Slovenes from the army...

JNA documents show that the plans of its strategists were not limited merely to “covering the territory where Serbs live”. So, according to the Directive by the command of the 1st military region (JNA) for operations in Slavonia of 19th September 1991, after conquering eastern and western Slavonia, JNA units were supposed to be “ready to extend the attack towards Varaždin and Koprivnica”. The beginning of the attacks was set for 21st September and their execution was planned in two stages, of two to three and four to five days. According to this plan the “minister of defense” General Veljko Kadijević stated on 21st September 1991 that the JNA would take decisive action to “prevent civil war”. Thereby he showed that the leadership of the armed forces of the SFRY, in contravention to the Constitution of the SFRY, did not recognize the president of the presidency of the SFRY, nor the authorities in the Republic of Croatia, and he practically declared war on Croatia. Ignoring the peace talks, that is the attempts by the Government of the RoC and the international community to resolve the crisis by peaceful means, the JNA and the Serb paramilitary units began a general attack on all fronts in Croatia, with the aim of breaking the defenses of the Republic of Croatia in 20 days. According to the command by the head of the JNA, General Blagoje Adžić of 12th October 1991, “armed units, whether the JNA, the TD or volunteers” must act “under the united command of the JNA”. Naturally, JNA units, local Serb territorial defense and rebel Serb militia in Croatia (Martić’s militia) as well as the volunteer units coming in from Serbia, had already

been acting under the joint command of the JNA up until then, practically since the beginning of open aggression against Croatia. The force of the attacks, supported by the JNA air force, commanded by General Zvonko Jurjević, may be seen in the assessment by some foreign military analysts that Croatian defenders would not be able to withstand them for *more than two weeks*.⁴ In his book *Moje viđenje raspada* (My View of the Break-up) (Belgrade, 1993, p. 135) General Veljko Kadijević presents the plan of attack by the JNA on Croatia in the autumn of 1991:

- Completely blockade Croatia from the air and sea
- Link the lines of attack by the main forces of the JNA as directly as possible with the liberation of Serb areas in Croatia and the JNA garrisons deep in Croatian territory. To this end, dissect Croatia along the lines: Gradiška – Virovitica, Bihać – Karlovac – Zagreb, Knin – Zadar, Mostar – Split. With the strongest grouping of armoured mechanical forces liberate eastern



A plan of the JNA's attack operation against the Republic of Croatia, September-October 1991 (according to: Davor Marijan, *Smrt oklopne brigade – prilozi za istraživanje rata za Hrvatsku i Bosnu i Hercegovinu, 1990.-1992.*, Zoro, Zagreb, 2002.)

4 A. Tus, *Rat u Sloveniji i Hrvatskoj do Sarajevskog primirja*, *Rat u Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini 1991.-1995.* („The War in Slovenia and Croatia up to the Truce of Sarajevo”, *The War in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991.-1995.*), Zagreb-Sarajevo, 1999, 78.



THIRTEEN CENTURIES OF CROATIAN CULTURE IN ASHES.

THE AGGRESSORS ARE SERBIA AND THE YUGO COMMUNIST ARMY.

CROATIAN INFORMATION CENTER
Pula: RIKVINSKA ULICA, ZAGREB

11.

Vinkovci – library hit during an attack by the JNA (top)

Banski dvori in Zagreb; results from an attack by a JNA airplane October 7th, 1991 (bottom)

Slavonia, and then quickly continue to the west, link up with forces in western Slavonia and continue towards Zagreb and Varaždin, that is the border with Slovenia. At the same time, block Dubrovnik with strong forces from the Herceg Novi-Trebinje region from the land and come out into the Neretva valley, and in that way act jointly with forces now in action towards Mostar-Split;

- Having reached certain objectives, secure and hold the borders of the Serb "Kraijina" in Croatia, withdraw remaining units of JNA from Slovenia and then withdraw JNA from Croatia;

- For mobilization, preparation of mobilized or prepared units and bringing them to the planned lines for use, 10-15 days are needed, depending on the level of "battle readiness" of the units and their distance from the line of use.

JNA planes showed that the aggressor did not choose means to reach its goal when they attacked Banski dvori – the seat of the Government of the Republic of Croatia in the centre of Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, on 7th October. By rocketing the building of the Government of the Republic of Croatia the Yugoslav, or pro-Serb leadership of the JNA intended to kill the president of the Republic of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, the president of the presidency of the SFRY, Stjepan Mesić and the president of the Federal Executive Council of the SFRY, Ante Marković who were having a meeting just at that time. This attempted assassination shows that the Greater Serbian strategists were not even thinking about a peaceful settlement of the Yugoslav crisis.

Representatives of the Yugo-army information service "The Federal Secretariat for National Defense" and the "Information Service of the Command of the Military Air Force and the anti-aircraft Defense" denied the role of the JNA in the attack on Banski Dvori in Zagreb in their statements, cynically suggesting that the "Croatian leadership had planned that attack"⁵

Under the impression of this event and the pictures of destruction and the news of numerous casualties coming from other Croatian towns and villages under attack, in the circumstances of violent aggression by the JNA against the Republic of Croatia, the following day, on 8th October 1991, the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia declared the independence of the Republic of Croatia. That is to say, having established that the three-month postponement of the constitutional decision of 25th June 1991 had passed, the members of parliament adopted the "*Decision on Secession of the Republic of Croatia from the SFRY and its independence. The Republic of Croatia has broken all state and legal ties on the basis of which it formed a part of the former SFRY together with the other republics and provinces.* Due to the danger of attack by JNA planes, that parliamentary session was held in the cellar of the INA building in Šubićeva Street in Zagreb (*Official Gazette* 53, 8th October 1991).

5 Collection of Documents from the Defense and Security Administration of Yugoslavia 1990-1991 (prepared by: prof. dr. Slavoljub Šušić, General in retirement, Zlatoje Terzić, Lieutenant General, dr. Nikola Petrović Colonel), Military publications institute, Belgrade, 2002, 457-458.



Session of the Croatian Parliament, October 8th, 1991 (author of the photograph: Josip Božićević)

Amongst other things, in the *Conclusions* which the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia adopted that day at the joint session of all the assemblies, it was particularly emphasized:

1. There has been armed aggression against the Republic of Croatia by the Republic of Serbia and the so-called JNA. The Republic of Croatia is forced to defend itself from this aggression by all available means.
2. The so-called JNA is declared to be the aggressor and the occupying army and must without delay withdraw from the territory of the Republic of Croatia which it has temporarily occupied.
3. The Parliament of the Republic of Croatia demands the former JNA to allow Croatian citizens who are doing military service, to leave the army immediately and return freely to their homes.
4. The republics of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro are called on not to allow the use of their state territory for the conduct of war against the Republic of Croatia.

Reacting to the decision and conclusion adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia, at the Conference on Yugoslavia in The Hague on 18th October 1991, the European Community presented a plan to the representatives of the former Yugoslav republics to reorganize Yugoslavia into a community of sovereign states. “The Agreement on an Overall Settlement of the Yugoslav Crisis”, known as the Carrington Plan, proposed the creation of a “free federation of sovereign and independent states with comprehensive agreements on control mechanisms to protect human rights and with special status for specific groups” and foresaw the “recognition of republics who so wish within their existing borders”. The proposed plan was accepted by all the Yugoslav republics except Serbia. However, under pressure from Serb and pro-Serb politicians,

Montenegro withdrew its approval of the plan although its president Momir Bulatović had initially accepted it.⁶ As a result the representative of the Prosecution at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague, Geoffrey Nice, stated that if Serbia had accepted the Carrington Plan on 18th October 1991, and that all parties had begun to create a confederation with special rights for Serbs in Croatia, the war would have ended in Croatia (already then, *author's note*) and thousands of lives saved.⁷ Therefore the exclusivity of the Serbian political leadership and the military leadership of the JNA sealed the fate of Yugoslavia and made its bloody break-up inevitable. After that Croatia speeded up the process of international recognition, basing it, amongst other things, on the provisions of the Yugoslav Constitution which had been valid until then, the *Constitution of the SFRY* of 1974, which affirmed the statehood of the republics, and the *Constitution of the SRC* of 1974 in which it was emphasized that the “Croatian people established their own state, the SR Croatia, on the foundation of the right to self-determination, including the right of secession”⁸

By the end of 1991 the JNA, under whose command were the armed units of rebel Serbs from Croatia and Serbian volunteers from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, had occupied almost one third of Croatian territory. In so doing, Serb extremists had committed many murders and crimes against Croats and other non-Serbs but also against Serbs who did not accept their Greater Serbia policies. On the occupied territory of the Republic of Croatia on 19th December 1991 the rebel Serbs proclaimed the “Republic of Serbian Krajina” with its seat in Knin. Almost all the non-Serb population was expelled from the area now ruled by the Serb rebels and their property destroyed or looted.

In the period that followed, after the international recognition of the RoC on 15th January 1992 and the RoC's reception into the UNO on 22nd May 1992, the Government of the RoC, with the help of European and world diplomacy, tried to reintegrate the occupied areas of its territory by peaceful means. But the rebel Serbs in Croatia, relying on help from Serbia and the SR Yugoslavia, rejected every peace proposal which prescribed the return of the occupied territory to the Croatian state and legal order, despite the fact that in the UN resolutions it was clearly stated that that territory was “temporarily occupied but an integral part of the Republic of Croatia.”⁹ In their intention to create a new Serbian

6 Momir Bulatović, *Pravila ćutanja*, (The rules of silence) Belgrade, 2004, 64-74.

7 O. Žunec, *Goli život – socijetalne dimenzije pobune Srba u Hrvatskoj*, I-II (Mere Existence – the social dimensions of the rebellion by Serbs in Croatia, I-II) , Zagreb, 2007., 172-174, notes. 274, 277.

8 The Constitution of the SFRY, the Constitution of the SR Croatia, exposition by Jakov Blažević, Zagreb, 1974, 224.

9 For example in Resolutions 820, 847 and 871, adopted on 17th April, 30th June and 4th October 1993, in Resolutions 908, 947, 958 adopted on 31st March, 30th September and 19th November 1994, Resolutions 981 and 994 adopted on 31st March and 17th May 1995; see: Specijalna policija MUP-a RH u oslobodilačkoj operaciji „Oluja“ 1995. prilozi (The Special Police of the MoI of the RoC in the liberation campaign “Storm”, enclosures), Zagreb, August 2008, pp. 78-96; <http://www.un.org/documents/>.

state and to be annexed to Serbia, the rebel Serbs in Croatia were not prepared to accept any other political option, especially not life together with Croats in the same state. As a result, in order to liberate the occupied parts of its territory and prevent further attacks by rebel Serbs, Croatia had to undertake limited military campaigns.

In April 1992, the Croatian army halted the advance of Serb units from Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the Adriatic Sea, whose goal was the complete occupation of the southernmost part of Croatia. The Croatian army then broke the siege on Dubrovnik – a city monument protected by the UNESCO Charter, which the JNA artillery was firing at from the surrounding hills – and then by the end of October 1992 liberated the occupied territory in the south of Croatia. In January 1993 the Croatian army and MoI units liberated the area around Zadar and after the construction of a pontoon bridge over the Masleničko ždrilo, road transport was re-established between the north and south of Croatia, and with the liberation of the Peruća hydro-electric power station near Sinj, Dalmatia once again had a normal electricity supply. In September 1993 Croatian soldiers and police liberated the area known as the Medak Pocket (Medački džep), from where the rebel Serbs were attacking and causing damage to the town of Gospić.

Despite their military defeats, the leadership of the rebel Serbs did not even accept the proposal by representatives of the USA, Russia, Germany and Great Britain (the Z-4 Plan) at the beginning of 1995 for a political resolution of the crisis in Croatia, which proposed exceptionally broad autonomy for the Serbs in parts of the Republic of Croatia with a majority Serb population (in the so-called UNPA areas North and South, in the area of Glina and Knin).¹⁰ As a result, the Croatian armed forces undertook a new liberating military and police campaign – “Flash” - and from 1st to 4th May 1995 they liberated the occupied territory of western Slavonia. In retaliation, on 2nd and 3rd May the rebel Serbs shelled Zagreb and other Croatian towns. In the cowardly terrorist attacks on Zagreb seven people were killed and more than a hundred were injured. The rockets hit the children’s hospital, the high school in Križanićeva, cultural institutions and other buildings.¹¹

As before, the leaders of the rebel Serbs went on implementing their exclusive policies, intending to cut off the remaining occupied territory in the Republic of Croatia and, together with parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina under Serb control, to become annexed to the planned united Serbian state. When, with the preparation of the draft “Constitution of the United Serb Republic” that process reached its climax in July 1995, and it became clear that the problem of the occupied territory of the RoC could only be resolved by military means. The final, liberating military and police campaign, known as “Storm”, was undertaken by Croatia from 4th to 8th August 1995. Croatian units liberated the occupied territory of the Republic of Croatia in northern Dalmatia, Lika, Banovina and Kordun (a total of about 10,500 km²) and broke through to the state border of the RoC and enabled the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina to break the Serb’s siege of Bihać. This prevented

10 D. Marijan, Oluja (Flash), Zagreb, September 2007, pp. 379-399.

11 Damir Luka Saftić, „Kod Šošarićeve prvi trg civilnim žrtvama“ (The first square with civil victims, near Šošarićeva), Večernji list, 8. 3. 2007, 26.

another humanitarian disaster in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a massacre such as the one in Srebrenica, when in July 1995 members of Serb units killed more than 8000 Bošnjaks (Muslims). Only the territory in the east of Croatia remained under Serb occupation, known as the UN sector East, which included Baranja and part of eastern Slavonia and western Sirmium (about 4.5 % of the total territory of the Republic of Croatia).

Along with the liberation of its own territory, Croatia also made a significant contribution to the liberation of parts of the occupied territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. So, on the basis of an agreement by the presidents of the RoC and B&H (the Split Declaration of 22nd July 1995) at the end of July 1995, in coordination with the army of B&H, Croatian forces (the Croatian army and the Croatian Defense Council), liberated about 1600 km² (operation Summer 95), in September about 2500 km² (Operation Maestral) and in October 1995 about 800 km² (Operation Southern Move) territory in south-western and western parts of B&H which were occupied by Serb units. This made the signing of the Dayton Agreement possible in November 1995, that is, the end of the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which began with the aggression by the JNA and Serb paramilitary units in 1991.

That is to say, even seeing the disastrous nature of their policies so far and the decisiveness of the Croats to liberate all the occupied parts of their state by military means, it was not until after “Storm” and the defeat of the army of the Republika Srpska in B&H that the leadership of the rebel Serbs in the remaining parts of the occupied territory of the RoC agreed to the proposals offered and a peaceful resolution of the conflict. So on Sunday 12th November 1995 representatives of the rebel Serbs from Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and western Sirmium signed the “Fundamental Agreement on Peaceful Reintegration of that Area into the constitutional legal order of the Republic of Croatia” in Erdut. On the same day the agreement was signed in the presidential palace in Zagreb by the representative of the Government of the RoC, Hrvoje Šarinić.¹²

This Erdut Agreement, which due to a large number of concessions to the rebel Serbs aroused the dissatisfaction of the Croats displaced from that area, confirmed the consistency of Croatia’s policy of endeavoring, even with painful compromises, to resolve problems with rebel Serbs by negotiations and peaceful means. The agreement on the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and western Sirmium into the Republic of Croatia was also ratified on 23rd November 1995 by the UN Security Council (Resolution 1023). The period of the peace-keeping operations for which the Security Council (Resolution 1037, of 15th January 1996) founded a special “Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia” or UNTAES, came to an end on 15th January 1998 when the Croatian Danube basin (Podunavlje) – that is Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium – was finally returned to the rule of the Republic of Croatia. Thereby the Croatian authorities, if we overlook disputes with neighboring countries over some border issues, established complete control over the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Croatia.

12 Hrvoje Šarinić, *Svi moji tajni pregovori sa Slobodanom Miloševićem 1993-95* (All my secret talks with Slobodan Milošević) (98), Zagreb, 1999, p. 311.



They are our truth

Karlo had only just graduated from high school in his Borovo. That autumn he sent his mother to join his sister in Zagreb. She was completing her education in a desire to help the town she came from. Karlo became a man overnight. With his peers and his father **Josip**, he remained behind to guard their family home. It was all they had, built by their own hard work. He was killed about a hundred meters from his home by enemy fire on Trpinjska Street – the road of heroes. The little hero Karlo, or what was left of him, was wrapped in a checkered blanket and buried in the sports stadium.

Who heard his father's cry over the unending thundering of mortar fire?

Who saw his tears through the smoke in the burned out ruins?

The father's body broke down as he was on guard on the doorstep of his family home. He was buried in a nearby garden. Father and son were exhumed from the New Graveyard in Vukovar in June 1998. The checkered blanket was the only recognizable sign of young Karlo. His father Josip's watch is still keeping time today.

On 13th June, Marica stood over the remains of her son Karlo and husband Josip at their funeral. She was burying her past and her future.

That day there was a wedding procession through Vukovar. Karlo's peers honked their horns with one hand, and with the other, having just laid down their guns, they made the three-finger salute. There was a Serbian flag at the head of the parade.

Marica came face to face with the present, on 13th June 1998, in Croatian Vukovar.

Vukovar does not hurt us all the same, it cannot and must not! But who can silence the truth?

Ljerka Ivušić



VUKOVAR,

A SHAME

FOR EUROPE AND THE WORLD,
ON THE BRINK OF THE 21st CENTURY.

THE AGGRESSORS ARE SERBIA AND THE YUGO COMMUNIST ARMY.

CRDALEN IM-ORGANIZACIJA ULLNIOI
FILM-ŠERVATOUZ TOUVERA. OLAN ZÁRKEK

100

Ante Nator

THE AGGRESSION BY SERBIA, THAT IS THE
ARMED FORCES OF THE SFRY
(THE JNA AND THE TERRITORIAL
DEFENSE OF SERBIA) AND THE
SERBIAN PARAMILITARY UNITS
AGAINST VUKOVAR IN 1991



DOCUMENTA CROATICA



Arrival of Croat refugees from Dalj, Erdut and Aljmaš to Nemetin, August 1st, 1991

The decision on the final declaration of independence by the Republic of Croatia on 8th October 1991 was welcomed with enthusiasm by Croatian soldiers and all citizens who felt Croatia to be their homeland. It was received with great joy in Vukovar too, especially as on that day the Croatian Parliament obliged the state and military authorities to do all they could to help Vukovar. Vukovar, already then a symbol of the defense of Croatia, was at that moment suffering under a new, even more ferocious Serb offensive.

Of course, the aggression against Vukovar was preceded by a long process of convincing the local Serb population of the impossibility of living together with Croats, begun by Greater Serbia ideologists after the publication of the “Memorandum” by the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1986 in those municipalities in Croatia where Serbs had an absolute or at least a relative majority over the rest of the population. This process speeded up with the arrival of multi-party politics in Croatia and its pace was then set by important political events: the multi-party elections of representatives for all three houses of parliament in the SRC in April and May 1990, the convening of the new Parliament of the Republic of Croatia on 30th May 1990 and especially the adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of Croatia on 22nd December 1990, which most of the Serb representatives in Croatia did not want to accept, although by it all citizens of the Republic of Croatia were guaranteed national and all other fundamental rights and freedoms of man and citizens.

According to the 1991 census, the municipality of Vukovar had 84,189 inhabitants: 36,910 Croats (43.8%), 31,445 Serbs (37.4%), 1,375 Hungarians (1.6%), 6,124 (7.3%) those who declared themselves to be Yugoslavs and 8,335 (9.9%) other or undecided. The town of Vukovar in 1991 had a total of 44,369 inhabitants: 21,065 Croats (47.2%), 14,425 Serbs (32.3%), 919 Ruthenians (2.1%), 694 Hungarians (1.5%), 147 Slovaks (0.3%), 94 Germans (0.2%), 4,355 who declared themselves to be Yugoslavs (9.8%) and 2,940 (6.6%) others or undecided.

At the first multi-party elections in 1990, 114 councilors were elected for the then municipality of Vukovar to the Municipal Council Assembly: 46 Croats, 42 Serbs, 17 Yugoslavs, 4 Montenegrins, 1 Muslim, 1 Hungarian, 1 Ruthenian, 1 Ukrainian and 1 Bulgarian. In terms of party membership, 59 councilors were from the Croatian Communist Party-Party for Democratic Change (SKH:SDP), 26 from the Croatian

Democratic Union (HDZ), 18 independents, 7 from the Socialist Union and one each from the SSOH (Union of Socialist Youth of Croatia), the unions, business and a citizens' group.

The political situation in the Vukovar area became more complex when, at the founding meeting of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) at the Vukovar beauty spot Adica on 10th June 1990, its leader Jovan Rašković made a speech, but Greater Serbia politics in eastern Slavonia and the Vukovar municipality became even more influential after a series of rallies in February and March 1991. At these rallies the Serbs present openly rejected the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and threatened Croats and the Croatian authorities. As in other parts of Croatia, the situation in that area became much worse after the armed conflict between the Croatian police and Serb terrorists at Plitvice on 31st March 1991. Serb extremists immediately began to erect barricades in Borovo Selo, and then in other villages in the Vukovar municipality with a majority Serb population – Pačetin, Bobota, Bršadin, Negosalvci, Trpinja. At the barricade in Bršadin shots were fired on 2nd April at a civilian car, and the passenger was seriously injured.

After that, in April, at further Serb rallies in Borovo Selo and Jagodnjak in Baranja, state and political functionaries from Serbia spoke of plans to create a united Greater Serbian state, which would cover a large part of the territory of the Republic of Croatia, and they included a minister in the Serbian government, Stanko Cvijan, a representative of the Serb parliament, Milan Paroški and the Chetnik leader and leader of the Radical Party in Serbia, Vojislav Šešelj. Speaking about the territory of the Republic of Croatia, they publicly threatened Croats, and the speech by Milan Paroški in Jagodnjak, with its emphasis on the “right to kill” was *de facto* a call to Serb rebellion against the Croatian authorities and for a reckoning with Croats in that area:

This is Serbian territory and they (Croats) must realize that they are outsiders. Therefore, whoever comes to you and says that this is his land, is a usurper, he has come to kill and you have the right to kill him, like a dog by the fence! (from the speech by Milan Paroški, representative in the Serb parliament, 21st April 1991, in the Baranja village of Jagodnjak, in the Republic of Croatia)

By sending the minister of the interior, Josip Boljkovac and his deputy Slavko Degoricija to Vukovar on 15th April 1991, the Croatian authorities tried to talk once again with representatives of political parties and the villages with a majority Serb population and avoid the armed conflicts which threatened the Vukovar area. Unfortunately the aggressive and inflammatory rhetoric of the Serbian politicians led to major bloodshed on 2nd May 1991 in Borovo Selo near Vukovar, where local and imported Serb terrorists ambushed and killed 12 and wounded more than 20 Croatian

policemen. The following Croatian policemen were killed: Ivica Vučić from Vinkovci, Luka Crnković and Zoran Grašić from Otok, Marinko Petrušić from Tovarnik, Antun Grbavac from Nijemci, Mladen Šarić from Novi Jankovci, Stipan Bošnjak and Zdenko Perica from Nuštar, Željko Hrala and Janko Čović from Ivankaovo, Josip Culej from Jarmina and Mladen Čatić from Županja. There were dead and wounded on the Serb side too. On the same day, the Croatian policeman Franko Lisica was also killed in Polača near Zadar. After the bloody 2nd May 1991 a period of intensive preparations for war began in the Vukovar area, but also in the whole of Croatia.

In an attempt to calm things down, on 9th May a delegation of the Federal (Yugoslav) executive council and the Government of the Republic of Croatia came to Vukovar and JNA units were deployed to “separate the conflicting sides”. But it became clear that their task was in fact to prevent the Croatian police in their attempt to restore public order and security, and take up positions for a planned attack. Although the talks temporarily eased the tension, the expectations that the problems in relationships between the Serb extremists and the Croatian authorities in eastern Slavonia could be resolved by peaceful means were further thrown into doubt by the arming of the Serb population in the villages Mirkovci, Markušica, Tenja, Bijelo Brdo, Borovo Selo, Bršadin, Pačetin, Trpinja, Bobota, Vera, Negoslavci and the arrival of various pro-Chetnik groups and Serb extremists in those villages. By the end of June 1991 terrorist bases had been set up in those villages for attacking Osijek, Vinkovci and Vukovar.



Borovo Selo, May 2nd, 1991

Of course the Croatian authorities were also preparing to defend themselves, organizing their own armed forces within the Ministry of the Interior, on the basis of the valid federal and republic laws. So in May, as reinforcements for the basic police force, members of the Special Police Force arrived in Vukovar from Slavonski Brod, and in June policemen from Varaždin and Čakovec, that is from the Varaždin and Međimurje Counties. In various changes in the defense of Vukovar, units from the police forces of Osijek, Vinkovci, Županja and Zabok took part. The changeovers of police units went on right up until the ring around Vukovar was completely closed. In June members of the military unit "Zrinski" arrived in Opatovac (and stayed for a month) and members of the 1st Brigade of the ZNG (National Guard) of the RoC came to Principovac near Ilok. The 4th and 3rd Guards Brigade was established and, to create the conditions for the undisturbed supply of logistics to Vukovar, work began already in April on a communications route between the villages of Bogdanovci and Marinci, which, after it was completed at the end of July, was particularly important in the defense of Vukovar.

The situation in the Vukovar area deteriorated again on 27th June, when the JNA attacked Slovenia. That day, the JNA with 20 tanks and armed vehicles surrounded the Đergaj silo near Bršadin, demanding the withdrawal of members of the National Guard who were guarding the silo, which was full of wheat from the Croatian reserves. It was only possible to reach the villages of Trpinja and Bršadin after being searched by strong JNA forces and armed Serb civilians, and six bus loads of "volunteers" arrived in Borovo Selo from Serbia. Movements by JNA vehicles intensified through the villages with majority Croat populations, and JNA artillery and strong tank units were located on the border between Croatia and Serbia, near Šid. The Serb police joined in with the provocation.

The next day, on 28th June 1991, about thirty Serb terrorists attacked the Croatian control point in Borovo Naselje. The attack was halted, but the rebel local Serbs, with the help of "volunteers" from Serbia and the JNA, continued attacking Borovo Naselje in order to take up their initial positions for an open attack on Vukovar. The Croatian guard and police also halted a fierce attack on Borovo Naselje on 4th July. With attacks by Serb units at the beginning of July on Borovo Naselje, Tenja near Osijek and the village of Čelije, which was quickly abandoned and burned down, and then attacks by the JNA on the ZNG bases in Čakovci and Erdut, Opatovac, Sotin and Principovac, the fighting began to spread inexorably throughout eastern Slavonia. The evacuation of Serb families from Vukovar in July was a sign that the JNA and Serb paramilitary formations would soon begin to attack the town more fiercely. Even then, Vukovar was occasionally attacked by JNA artillery from Trpinja, Orlovača and Borovo Selo. Under these circumstances, the president of the RoC, Franjo Tuđman visited Vukovar on 21st July 1991, accompanied by the coordinator of the Crisis Headquarters for Slavonia and Baranja, Vladimir Šeks, the minister of emigration and deputy minister of defense of the RoC, Gojko Šušak, and the deputy minister of the interior of the RoC, Slavko Degoricija. After that Marin Vidić Bili was

appointed commissioner of the Government of the RoC for Vukovar. As the highest ranking civilian official, he shared the day to day experience of war with his fellow townsmen right up to the end of the siege of Vukovar, and then in prison camp in Sremska Mitrovica, which he did not want to leave (although he was given the opportunity) until the last man from Vukovar left the camp.



Marin Vidić "Bili" (Whitey)

"In the last days there was talk of handing the town over to the aggressor and leaving Vukovar, which was actually the spiritual and physical, civilized surrender of people, because they were the town. We organized the surrender within the operative capacities we had, as well as we could. We made a list of the people in almost all the shelters and in the entire hospital which was confirmation that they were alive, who was in which shelter and even who went in which bus. We did this precisely to avoid what happened after the occupation (...). The only official conversation about the course and manner of surrender was held in Vukovar hospital with Veselin Šljivančanin. At that meeting there were representatives of the international community, an interpreter, Šljivančanin, Vesna Bosanac and me. We wanted to hand over the documentation and the list of people in the shelters, but Šljivančanin refused to take them and it later became clear why he acted like that..." (from the interview with Marin Vidić-Bili "Vukovar 18th November 1991", Vjesnik, 18th November 2005, page 40).

The next day, 22nd July, JNA plans bombed two bases of the ZNG 1st Brigade in Eastern Slavonia – in Pustara in Novi Čakovci (two dead, two seriously and several slightly wounded guardsmen) and at Opatovci near Ilok (several slightly injured guardsmen). The attacks by JNA planes were repeated on 27th July 1991 when they bombed ZNG buildings in Opatovac and Principovac near Ilok, wounding 4 guardsmen.

Serb extremists committed another major crime in the wider Vukovar area on 1st August 1991 when, with the help of the JNA, they killed 39 Croatian soldiers in an attack on Dalj, Erdut and Aljmaš: 20 policemen, 15 guardsmen and 4 members of the Civil Defense. Some of them were butchered after they were taken captive. The Croatian police and guards then established control of the Vukovar suburb of Lužac on 3rd August, which was important for control of the "corn" road, by which Vukovar was linked with Vinkovci during the siege, via Bogdanovci and Marinci. To encourage them, the newly appointed Prime Minister of Croatia, Franjo Gregurić, visited the people of Vukovar on 8th August, accompanied by Vladimir Šeks. The importance of Vukovar for the defense of Croatia was emphasized on 11th August by the newly appointed minister of defense of RoC, Luka Bebić, who then visited Vukovar on 23rd August.

Armed attacks and provocation by Serb paramilitary formations and the JNA became the everyday life of Vukovar in August. JNA planes would fly over the town often,

bombing ZNG positions and the Croatian police. But on Saturday, August 24th the Croatian soldier Luka Andrijanić returned fire and hit two JNA planes, which were attacking the silo in Đergaj near Bršadin. The Yugo army admitted that one of their planes had been shot down. This was the first JNA plane to be shot down in the Homeland War. Vukovar was then also blocked by the ZNG since a decision was in force prohibiting movements by military vehicles and they were to be followed and searched. The only more or less safe way out of the town was the Vukovar-Bogdanovci-Marinci-Nuštar-Vinkovci road.

In memory of Luka Andrijanić

According to the Vukovar defender Josip Jakobović, on 24th August 1991 at around 12 or 13 hours, the commander of the ZNG (4th Battalion, 3rd Brigade) Ivica Arbanas ordered movement to defend the strategically important point at the Đergaj silo: *We knew that they were coming to attack the Đergaj silo and before that Osijek, because we listened to their radio link and we had about 20 men at the Đergaj silo who needed protection, along with the silo. There was already a team on the 20/3 anti-aircraft gun or more simply PAT, comprising: the commander Luka Andrijanić, Antun Bekčević and Zvonimir Hincak and they needed a driver and a topographer, and our worthy "Doctor" (Ivan Anđelić) said, "We have the man for the job. Come on Josip, take the team! You know the land." Before that I had only seen the gun in a film and on pictures, but you learn it all when you have a master such as our Luka*

On the orders of Ivica Arbanas, before taking up positions in Bosanska Street in Borovo Naselje they reported to commander, Blago Zadro, since this was in the zone he was responsible for. Their „code“ was „Blue 4“, and about their regained positions and readiness to act they have informed „the Blue“, namely their commander Ivica Arbanas. Afterwards Ivica Arbanas joined them. At 14 hours, JNA plans attacked Osijek and then four „Super Galebs“ came over Vukovar and began shooting, and Luka Andrijanić returned fire; *Luka started shooting, I watched and I didn't understand why*



Luka Andrijanić

one G-4 plane began to fall towards Marinci, and the other started to smoke and stopped for a fraction of a second and went off to Serbia at a low altitude. We watched as a black mushroom cloud of smoke rose up between Bršadin and Marinci and Luka said, "That one's down". Both of them were down. After a few minutes JNA Migs arrived, flying quite high because they knew what to expect. A helicopter with the sign of the Red Cross came for the wounded pilots and we left it alone, because after all we are the ZNG. Two days later, on 26th August 1991, during an attack on the whole of Vukovar, we again set up the PAT 20/3 near the water tower. On the right bank of the Danube we waited for



Post on Bosnian Street with a view of the silo Đergaj, where on August 24th, 1991 an anti-aircraft cannon was placed from which Luka Andrijačić hit JNA airplanes (picture was sent by Josip Jakobović)

“mosquitoes” as we called the JNA planes and we sent them packing as is proper - we shot down a Mig 21, and one G-4. On the same day we went to Trpinjska Street and Hercegovačka Street to help out. Marjan Balić had come to reinforce our team, but we are without Zvonimir Hincak. We were helping to defend those streets. (...)

Each day we got to know each other better with all our virtues and vices. Our Luka said that it would soon be his birthday, that we should try to remain as calm as we could. There was shooting, bombing, shelling, mortar fire etc every day. We had to mine the land around us, with no mine experts. They came one day and left mines saying they would come and put them out when they had time. Our Luka was restless; he went to put them out himself because he said he had seen how it is done when he was in the JNA. He was putting out the mines and at that moment a rocket and shell attack from a multi-rocket launcher started. I suppose it took him by surprise. He died on 20th September 1991, three days before his twentieth birthday.

What can one say about someone who had just done his military service in the JNA in Batajnica as the first in his class for PAT 20/3, about a man with a gentle smile and a big heart, born on 23rd September 1971, in Bosanski Brod, who spent his life in Velika Brusnica, came to defend Croatia in Vukovar, and not anywhere else. We, who are older, thought that we could teach him something, but in fact he taught us many things that we were not even aware of”. (taken in abbreviated form from the book Sjećanje na Luku Andrijačića (In Memory of Luka Andrijačić), written by Vukovar defender and his comrade in arms, Josip Jakobović)

All these events may be termed foreplay to war in comparison with the attacks on Vukovar which began on 25th August 1991, when a JNA vehicle, from a line moving from Vukovar to Borovo Selo, turned off the road on the Borovska Street and drove over an anti-tank mine, killing JNA soldiers. This was the trigger for a fierce attack by the JNA on Vukovar. A line of armed JNA vehicles was stopped in the early morning on the Bogdanovačka Street, when a JNA tank was damaged under the underpass. That day the defenders destroyed a JNA tank, they disabled three more and two JNA trucks were set on fire. JNA planes attacked Croatian positions near Vukovar and Opatovci and the Đergaj silo with 30 air to earth missiles, and the Yugo-army was joined by rebel Serbs from Borovo Selo, Trpinja and Bršadin and the Vukovar neighbourhood, Petrova Gora.

The tank, artillery and air attacks were the beginning of the open Serb aggression against Vukovar and the three months of unbroken shelling of the town from all available weapons, where prohibited cassette bombs, phosphorous bombs and chemical weapons were also used. Vukovar was attacked from the air, from JNA boats on the Danube and JNA planes from the air, that is from the direction of Borovo Selo, Trpinja, Bršadin, Negoslavci, Lipovača, Sotin, Dalj, from the JNA barracks in Vukovar and the neighborhood known as Petrova Gora, as well as from Vojvodina and Serbia, and from nearby Šid new lines of JNA military vehicles kept coming over from Serbia into Croatia almost without a break. JNA and Serb paramilitary units acted together, according to the plans of the General Headquarters of the Armed Forces of the SFRY in Belgrade, or under the command of the JNA “officers”. The commander of the 1st Military Zone, and from September 1991 the commander of all land forces of the SFRY in Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, Lieutenant General Života Panić emphasized in a statement for the BBC series “The Death of Yugoslavia” that “Arkan’s Tigers and Šešelj’s Chetniks were under his command”. Assessing the JNA’s success in the war against Croatia in 1991, the then federal secretary for national defense of the SFRY, General Veljko Kadijević, in his book *Moje viđenje raspada* (My View of the Break-up) (page 137) says: “the main group of land forces of the JNA, mainly the armored mechanized units in eastern Slavonia had two tasks: to liberate the Serbian lands in eastern Slavonia and be the main maneuver forces of the Supreme Command for the thrust on Zagreb and Varaždin”. Of course alongside the military leadership of the JNA, the Serbian republican leadership of that time was particularly responsible for the attacks by units from Serbia on Croatia, as were the leadership of the self-proclaimed “Krajina” with their “president” Goran Hadžić. The Serbian government gave silent assent and in some cases even supported the foundation of paramilitary formations in Serbia, which operated in Croatia. The brutality of the units of Vojislav Šešelj, Željko Ražnatović Arkan, Mirko Jović and other leaders was particularly cruel.

Up to the middle of August, when Tomislav Merčep took over the duties of assistant minister of the interior, as secretary of the Secretariat for National Defense of the Town of Vukovar he was given a leading role in the defense of Vukovar. The town was still governed by the Crisis HQ, led by the Commissioner of the Government of the



Center of Vukovar, September 7th, 1991 (author of the photograph: Mario Filipi)



Tomislav Merčep

RoC for Vukovar, and it included a representative of the secretariat, the hospital, civil defense, the MoI and the guards, and according to an internal agreement by the commander in Vukovar, the command of the military formations was temporarily taken on by Ivan Arbanas, commander of the 4th Battalion of the 3rd Brigade of the ZNG. But for the defense of the town to be organized as well as possible and so the activities of the defender could be as effective as

possible, at the end of August 1991 the Headquarters of the Croatian Army appointed a professional soldier, a former Lieutenant in the JNA, Mile Dedaković - Jastreb (Hawk) to be commander of the defense of Vukovar. He came to Vukovar with a former JNA captain, Branko Borković - Mladi Jastreb (Young Hawk). In September the Secretariat for National Defense was taken over by Danijel Rehak. The defense office in Vukovar then made a register of all men of age to serve in the army and prepared what was needed to mobilize them, the issue of logistics was resolved, both for defenders and civilians, and the defense was organized in four battalions and several smaller specific units (signals, engineers, anti-aircraft etc). A military police service was also set up. When, after leaving Vukovar to get help, Mile Dedaković was appointed as commander of the Vukovar, Vinkovci and Županja Operations Group, which was established on 16th October 1991, Branko Borković took over the position of commander of the defense of the town.

... During the siege the town functioned almost normally, which is incredible. In the shelters all the people received the same rations of food and other necessities. It never happened that someone was denied because he was a Serb or for any other reason. I did not allow myself to be overtaken by hatred I did not tolerate it in my subordinates, because that is the heaviest burden anyone can carry. Hatred is a dangerous disease which only brings more trouble. I am proud of the fact that some Serbs also got actively involved in the defense of the Town despite the accusations of the Greater Serbian ideologists of national treason. This made it all the more unpleasant to learn that after 18th November there were some Serb civilians who on their own



Mile Dedaković "Hawk"

initiative pointed out their fellow citizens to members of the JNA and Chetniks as "Ustashe", which was a direct death sentence. The story of how the defenders of Vukovar withstood the three-month siege is a special story. In military terms, one average day of the war in Vukovar was equivalent to one month on some other battle field. Psychologists must definitely study the phenomenon that none of the defenders, even when they were freezing on the battle field and sleeping in trenches and cellars, never felt ill. Moreover, their personal hygiene, due to the systematic destruction of the utility infrastructure, was a particular problem. Even I as the commander received only a glass of clean water each day in which I cleaned my teeth, shaved (every morning!) and washed myself.

We went without sleep for incredible lengths of time. My personal record was six days and nights when I hardly closed my eyes. (from the interview with Mile Dedaković – Hawk, “Vukovar 18th November 1991”, Vjesnik, 18th November 2005, p. 33-34)

...But the fact is that many things have not yet been explained from wartime Vukovar and everything around it. The fact is that its defenders, that is the 204th Vukovar Battalion and the entire system of defense of the town, had impressive results which could only be compared with the results of the entire Croatian army in the Homeland War, together with the brilliant Storm campaign. That means, a small but very well organized unit led the battle in Vukovar which was undoubtedly impressive in world terms. Some nations, Americans, Jew, have cult mythical sites. For the Croatian people that is undoubtedly Vukovar! (...) (from the interview by Branko Borković – “Young Hawk” Vjesnik (7 Dana), 18th and 19th November 2006, p. 33).

In line with the decision by the MoI of the RoC, on 10th September the Crisis Headquarters in Vukovar decided to introduce a curfew from 11 PM to 5 AM. The people of Vukovar had to adapt completely to the conditions of war. The suffering and pain of life in the besieged town was felt by all citizens alike – Croats and Serbs and all the others. The shells sent by the Serb forces on the town did not select the nationality of the people they hit – Croatian Radio Vukovar warned its listeners not to leave their shelters, even after a truce had been signed, which the Serb paramilitary units did not respect at all. The radio staff, who did their job conscientiously right up to the final occupation of the town (Siniša Glavašević, Zvezdana and Branimir Polovina, Alenka Mirković, Vesna Vuković, Josip Esterajher and Zdravko Šeremet), were a powerful moral support to the defenders. Their full and dramatic, but warm and encouraging broadcasts from Vukovar were awaited with impatience and trepidation in all Croatian homes. As a result, after the occupation of Vukovar, the journalist from Radio Vukovar Siniša Glavašević and the technician Branimir Polovina, were killed by members of the JNA and Serb paramilitary units at Ovčara.



Branko Borković “Young Hawk“



Siniša Glavašević



Branimir Polovina



Vukovar's Croatian forces defenders, Lužac, September 7th, 1991 (author of the photograph: Mario Filipi)



Cold and dark shelters, part of children's everyday life in Vukovar, September 7th, 1991 (author of the photograph: Mario Filipi)

One of the fiercer comprehensive attacks by the JNA on the town began on 14th September 1991 around noon, from the north – along the Trpinjska Street and from Borovo Selo towards the Technical Hall in Borovo Naselje and from the south – from Negoslavci towards the barracks in Vukovar and from Petrovac towards the neighborhood of Petrova Gora in Vukovar, where the majority were Serbs and where Serbs gathered from other parts of the town and were systematically trained and prepared for attack. In the battles which lasted until 20th September, the famous “graveyard” of JNA tanks appeared on Trpinjska Street, but the enemy, with major losses, still managed to link up its barracks in the town with Petrova Gora and take over the Đergaj silo. In the “clean up” of the area taken, on 15th and 16th September 89 defenders and civilians were killed. Immediately after that the Serb forces set up a concentration camp for Croats and non-Serbs at Velepromet (Sajmište), which functioned right up until March 1992.

The mechanized brigade of the JNA from Valjevo in Serbia suffered particularly severe losses. After the Croatian defenders stopped it outside Tovarnik on 21st September, it withdrew from Croatia in complete confusion and panic. One of its embittered soldiers then drove up to the SFRY assembly in Belgrade in an armoured personnel carrier in protest.



Members of the Croatia police forces at there post by the Technical Home in Borovo Naselje



The minister for religious affairs in Serbia, Dragan Dragojlović spoke to the demoralized members of this brigade in Valjevo, directly confirming Serbia's involvement in the attack on Vukovar and Croatia, and the responsibility of the Serbian republican leadership for the war in Croatia: *We keep on saying that Serbia is not at war with Croatia, but the Serbian people are. We cannot say that because of world public opinion, for then Serbia would be the aggressor, for when a JNA soldier is in Croatia it cannot be said that that is Serbia. Therefore Serbia cannot have its own army within the JNA* (Dragan Todorović, „Da se general izvini“ (May the General Forgive Me) *Borba*, 26. 9. 1991., 3)



In the comprehensive attack on Trpinjska Street on 14th September 1991 one T84 tank came into Hercegovačka Street, and our Marjan Balić ran with all his might towards it, because he did not manage to set the mine we had prepared the day before. We watched with eyes wide open to see if he would make it or not, we shouted at him, Luka Andrijanić and I. Our Marjan made it, the tank rolled onto the mine and its caterpillar track was broken, and we wondered what to do with it, since we didn't know anything about it and those who knew kept quiet. There was nothing else to do but to fill it up with explosives and our Marjan blew it up. The dome flew through the air, the barrel got stuck in the ground and the dome stuck up in the air like a lollipop. Our Marjan said then that he would open an ice cream parlor after the war and sell lollipops in the shape of that dome. (Taken in abbreviated form from the text "In Memory of Luka Andrijanić" prepared by Vukovar defender and his colleague in arms, Josip Jakobović); photograph given by Ivica Arbanas.



Destroyed JNA tanks on Trpinjska Street, mid September 1991 (author of the photograph: Andrija Marić; photographs given by: Marko Babić, Ivan Leutar)



Local community Alojzije Stepinac, Trpinjska Street, second half of September 1991



Trpinjska Street, second half of September 1991; bottom row: Croatian guard, Ivan Mudrovčić-Šola, Ivan Bošnjak-Bole; standing: Miljenko Voloder-Beli, Ivan Leutar-Iva and Andrija Marić on the side Milan Berton-Fil (photographs given by Marko Babić, Ivan Leutar)



Bogdanovci, october 1991 (Photograph taken by: Damir Radnić)

In line with the process of organization and development of the Croatian army, on 25th September an order was given for the creation of the Vukovar Brigade, whose core was planned to be formed of the defense forces of Vukovar, apart from members of the 3rd “A” brigade of the ZNG and the MoI. The place for the mobilization of the brigade was set as Vukovar, and Lieutenant Mile Dedaković appointed responsible to form it, together with the Crisis Headquarters of the Vukovar municipality. The time limit given was 1st October 1991. The order to establish the 204th Brigade of the Croatian Army “R” was signed by the commander of the 1st Operative Zone of the CA Osijek, Colonel Karlo Gorinšek. But the next day, 26th September, the order to establish the 124th Brigade of the CA, which never arrived in Vukovar, was signed by the minister of defense of the RoC, which caused problems in the final naming of the brigade. The defenders of Vukovar finally accepted the title 204th Brigade. At the end of September a large quantity of weapons and equipment arrived from barracks that had been taken over by the Croatian army.

With the arrival of new reinforcements and their most elite units for the attack on Vukovar, on 30th September the JNA officially started “Operation Vukovar”. Its forces grouped themselves in two operative groups – North and South, with the dividing line on the River Vuka. The operation was planned in the Headquarters of the Armed Forces of SFRY in Belgrade, whose commander was Lieutenant General Života Panić, commander of the 1st Army (army region). In the fierce attack the JNA succeeded in taking Marinci on 1st October, and surrounded Bogdanovci to block the “corn road” to Vukovar. Thereby the defenders’ supply route was cut off and Vukovar was

completely surrounded from then on. The next day, on 2nd October, the JNA occupied the village of Cerić and the Croatian defenders with great effort halted a fierce attack on Vukovar. The days from 2nd to 4th October are said to be some of the bloodiest in the battle for Vukovar.

After that on 5th October, with a tremendous effort, a fierce JNA attack on the village of Nuštar was also put down, and it became the critical point in the defense of Vinkovci, and for the expected breakthrough to Vukovar. But the first major attempt by the Croatian army and police (the Lučko anti-terrorist unit and the special forces of the MoI of the RoC from Slavonski Brod and Vinkovci) to liberate the village of Marinci and unblock the road towards Vukovar on 13th October, did not succeed.

In a fierce attack on 16th October, the JNA and Serb paramilitary units commanded by Željko Ražnatović – Arkan, coming out of the Đergaj forest to Lužac and part of Borovo Naselje, broke through the lines of defense. That day Blago Zadro, the commander of the 3rd battalion, was killed, as was Alfred Hill – the commander of the military police in Vukovar. Still the defenders, in hand to hand fighting, managed to prevent the vital communication lines between Vukovar and Borovo Naselje from being cut, and the next day, in a counter offensive, they “cleaned up” the area of Lužac, destroyed the enemy’s pontoon bridge on the Vuka, broke through into part of the Đergaj forest and captured large quantities of ammunition and arms, including 3 tanks, 2 of which they managed to withdraw and use in defense.

The ring around Vukovar was getting tighter, and help for the defenders could only come from the direction of Vinkovci, as all the villages towards Ilok had been occupied by the JNA by the middle of October. Ilok itself was in a difficult position, under threat of attack by the JNA. Its civilian authorities were forced to sign an agreement on 14th October with JNA representatives on the evacuation of the population of the town. Ilok was occupied on 17th October, when, in the presence of European Community monitors, the JNA expelled more than 5000 Croats and other non-Serbs from the town.

Due to the firm blockage, the defenders of Vukovar began to run out of ammunition and they were extremely tired. There were no fresh forces to replace them and the number of killed and wounded increased from day to day. The “Doctors without Borders” convoy, whose arrival in Vukovar on 19th October the JNA tried to use to further endanger the position of the Vukovar defenders, took out 113 wounded and briefly improved the conditions in the hospital. In contrast, the JNA was constantly bringing in new forces and of course had no problems with ammunition.

One of the key successes in the attack on Vukovar was won by the JNA on 2nd November in its breakthrough to Lužac, the estate between Vukovar and Borovo Naselje, whereby the connections and supplies of those two parts of the town were threatened. On the same day a new attempt failed by the Croatian army to liberate the village Cerić and the defenders of Bogdanovci put down an attack by JNA armored vehicles and



A destroyed JNA tank in the middle of Nuštar, October 1991 (Author of the photograph: Mario Filipi)



Bogdanovci, October 1991; destroyed JNA tank (hit on October 2nd, 1991 by Ivan Jelić „Lepi“ (pretty boy) from Ivankovo)



Croatian defenders at the Sajmište, October 1991 (Author of the photograph: Damir Radnić)



Members of HOS, Sajmište, September/October 1991; from the left: Zvonko Ćurković „Zvone“, Jean – Michel Nicollier, Viktorin Jurić „Paša“ and Žarko Manjkas „Crvenkapa“ (photograph taken by: Damir Radnić)

infantry. As he watched the attack by the 51st mechanized brigade of the JNA on Lužac on 3rd November from the Đergaj forest, JNA Major General Mladen Bratić was killed, as the commander of the operative group North, and the command of the Novi Sad Corps of the JNA. The battle for Lužac continued and on 9th November the command of the Vinkovci, Vukovar and Županja operative group reported that the defense forces in the villages of Lužac and Budžak had been forced to withdraw to their reserve positions. This was a critical time for the defense of Vukovar. It was also critical in Lipovac, on the border with Serbia and the border between Croatia and B&H, where the JNA was massing its forces.

The bitter struggle for the village of Bogdanovci, the only exposed point in the defense of Vukovar, went on right up to 10th November, when the JNA and the Serb paramilitary units occupied the village and slaughtered the people there. The defenders of Bogdanovci had by then successfully destroyed tanks and armored vehicles and neutralized a large number of enemy soldiers. On the same day the Serb forces attacked the Priljevska Street from the direction of Lužac with the aim of taking the overpass towards the centre of Vukovar and joining up with their forces on the Trpinjska Street, and in Vukovar they took the area of Milovo Brdo one of the key points of resistance for the defense of Vukovar. The defense of Vukovar was cut off in two places, and the defenders were forced into three separate pockets. The head of the Main Headquarters of the Croatian Army, Antun Tus said on 12th November that the Yugoslav army had succeeded in entering two parts of Vukovar over the weekend, but it had not broken through to the town centre. Continuing with its powerful attacks, on 13th November the JNA took the VUPIK silo in Priljev and thereby finally cut off the road between Borovo Naselje and Vukovar. On the same day Croatian forces tried to liberate the village of Marinci from the direction of Nuštar and break the blockade on Vukovar, but their attack was repelled by the JNA. This was the last attempt by the Croatian Army to break through to Vukovar and save the town from occupation, which, in view of the enormous imbalance in the size of the forces and weaponry between the defenders and the aggressor, seemed inevitable.

And that is how it was. The greatly more numerous, and stronger Yugo army, including rebel Serbs from Croatia, Chetniks and other paramilitary Serb forces, broke the heroic efforts of the few, besieged defenders and on Monday 18th November 1991 occupied most of Vukovar. On the following day, 19th November, they also occupied Borovo Naselje. A few Croatian defenders continued to put up resistance until the early morning of 20th November, and some defenders withdrew from Borovo Naselje on 23rd November.



Entrance into Bogdanovci from the direction of Marinci, after October 2nd, 1991 (photograph taken by: Damir Radnić)



Members of HOS under the church in Bogdanovci, on post towards Marinci, October 1991 (photograph taken by: Damir Radnić)



Vukovar, November 16th, around 8 p.m., right before the breakthrough: Sanja Arbanas (far right Ivica Arbanas is poking out behind her), Ivan Anđelić “doctor” (with a pat on his eye), Velimir Kvesić (member of HOS, with the black cap), Zdravko Radić (with a cartridge belt around his neck), Viktorin Jurić “Paša” (left, in a civilian jacket), Zvonko Mažar (with a helmet), Zvonko Ćurković (standing, with his eyes closed), Josip Jakobović (squatting in the middle); photograph taken by: Viktorin Jurić “Paša”; given by Ivica Arbanas, from HVIDR Zadar.

Over a few days, actually nights, on the eve of the final occupation of Vukovar, some Vukovar defenders and their commanders, including the chief commander of the defense of Vukovar, managed to break out of the town in groups into free territory. Most of them set off on their own initiative after they had lost all hope of help coming from outside, in a desire to save their loved ones from seeing them being tortured and killed, but also to prevent them from suffering the same fate. Some civilians also went with them. Some of them never reached their goal. Some defenders left the town to try to find help and come back to Vukovar, but they did not succeed. The break out of Croatian defenders and civilians from Vukovar in various ways towards Nuštar, is a special part of the drama of Vukovar. Many of the defenders were in a dilemma: to break out or stay in the town and be captured. Both decisions were extremely hard and risky.

The defenders who, also out of concern for their loved ones and the wounded, did not break out of the town, were left on 18th November to the mercy of the enemy. With no ammunition, information or command structure, they could not put up any serious

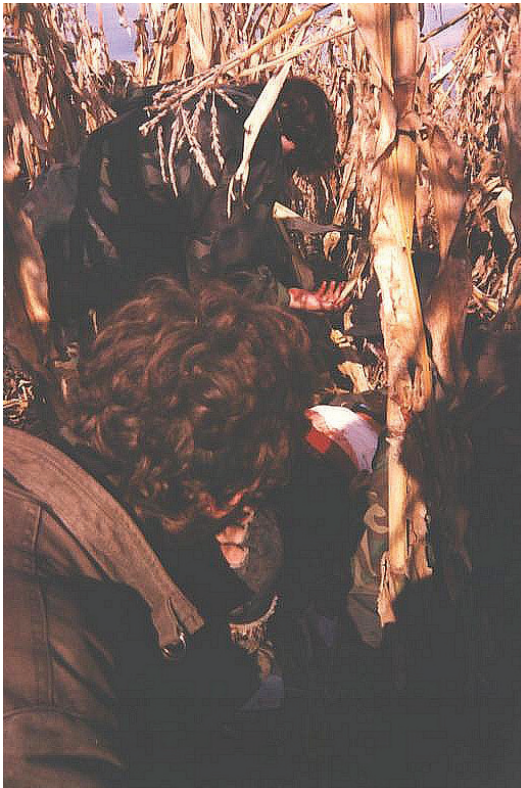
resistance, and by continuing with the defense they would only further endanger the lives of the civilians and wounded in the shelters. As a result negotiations began with JNA officers and they agreed to surrender certain parts of the town (Mitnica – on 18th November, then Borovo Naselje) conditioning their laying down of arms by the



Vukovar, November 1991; after the Serbian paramilitia troops (četniks) within the JNA sang that they would slaughter Croats.

guarantee from the JNA that civilians would be allowed to leave unhindered and the wounded would be cared for.

With the occupation of the town, the mass execution followed of Croatian defenders and civilians, and the expulsion of the civilian population. The Croats were separated out, men were separated from women, local Serbs pointed out their neighbors in Borovo Commerce and Velepromet and other places, and they were immediately killed. Rampant Serb soldiers put into action the words of the song: “There’ll be meat, we’ll slaughter the Croats”, which they sang as they marched around the demolished streets of Vukovar.



During the breakthrough between Cerić and Marinaca: wounded Croatian soldier Mate Prca being bandaged by Sanja Arbanas; photograph taken by: Viktorin Jurić “Paša”; given by Ivica Arbanas.

Vukovar, together with Baranja, and other parts of Eastern Slavonia and Western Sirium (known as UN Sector East) remained under Serb occupation until 15th January 1998 when the process of “peaceful reintegration” began and it was finally returned to the constitutional and legal order of the Republic of Croatia.

Vukovar, June 8th, 1997; The Peace train Croatia had symbolically come back to Vukovar (author of the photograph: Božo Biškupić)



Mr. Franjo Tuđman – Speech in Vukovar

The winner who does not know how to forgive, plants the seed of strife and future evil. The Croatian people do not want this. They did not want what they had suffered in Vukovar and in all of Croatia. All that we are doing now is not limited by local interests, rather by the overall interests of Croats and Europeans; it is in the interest of peace, the future of this region and Europe. Let coexistence between the Croatian and Serbian people and other ethnic communities flourish in this region! Let us celebrate the life of unique and eternal Croatia! (From the speech given by the President of the Republic of Croatia - Mr. Franjo Tuđman in Vukovar, June 8, 1997)

Summary

Although in the municipality and town of Vukovar the Croats were the most numerous nationality, due to the large percentage of Serbs in the total population and the huge disproportion in arms and military equipment to the advantage of the JNA, the Greater Serbian strategists expected a quick and easy victory in the Vukovar area. In their plans they also counted on the area of Petrova gora in the town which was mainly inhabited by people of Serb nationality as an important and perhaps even decisive problem for the defense of Vukovar, especially after the attackers succeeded in linking it up with the JNA barracks in the middle of September. When, alongside the expected cooperation of the local Serb population and the JNA forces in the town itself, we take into consideration the fact that Vukovar is surrounded by villages with Serb populations, from where the attacks against Vukovar by the overwhelming JNA forces began, and the fact that part of Vukovar borders with Serbia, from which it is divided by the River Danube, the enormity of the task for the defenders of Vukovar becomes clear.



October, 1991 (Author of the photograph: Mario Filipi)



Andrija Marić, Blago Zadro, Marko Babić, and Zoran Janković (standing on the side); Trpinjska Street, mid September 1991 (photograph given by Marko Babić)

Ivica Arbanas (with a hat), Velimir Đerek (on the right, with a black bandana around his head, he replaced the late Petra Kačića – “Bojler” as the commanding officer), Željko Delić – “Švico” (member of HOS); in the background members of HOS: right Tihomir Tomašić, left Duško Smek “Bosanac” (photograph taken by: Viktorin Jurić “Paša”; given by Ivica Arbanas)



The defenders of Vukovar were organized through their local community offices, and the defense was founded on resistance “points” set up along the lines bordering on enemy territory. Trpinjska Street, Slavonska, Hercegovačka, Bosanska, Lička, Pejton and other streets or parts of Borovo Naselje, as well as Budžak, Lužac, Mitnica, Sajmište and other areas of Vukovar, local communities and streets, or various “points” and the names of individual groups of Vukovar defenders - Dom tehnike, “Kod slona”, “Kivi”, “trokatnica”, Vatrogasni dom, “Osa” te “Žuti mravi”, “Pustinjski štakori”, “Turbo”, “Lovci na tenkove”, “Hosovci”, “Šumari”, “Bojleri”, “Plavi”, “Žuti”, “Crni”, (*Technical Hall, The Elephant, Kiwis, Three-storeys, Fire Station, Wasp, Yellow Ants, Desert Rats, Turbo, Tank Hunters, HOS men, Foresters, Boilers, Blues, Yellows, Blacks*) etc., became the brightest stars in Croatian military history in 1991.

Many would emphasize Sajmište in particular as the key to the defense of the town and the village of Bogdanovci as the “most exposed fortress” in the defense of Vukovar, and they will talk of their defenders, who included HOS soldiers from all over Croatia, as incredibly courageous warriors. They did not move from their positions even at the cost of their lives. It is sufficient to say that in the battles in Sajmište and Bogdanovci about 50% of the HOS soldiers died and almost all those who survived were wounded, some of them several times. Most of the defenders and their commanders did not have the military training they needed nor experience of war. The defense of the town depended on their inventiveness and courage. Some of them, for example the commander of the defense of Borovo Naselje, **Blago Zadro**, who was killed on 16th October, became legends of the defense of Vukovar and Croatia. The fact that the commanders were also killed in large numbers alongside the soldiers: **Velimir Đerek** – „Falcon“ from Imotski, **Ivan Poljak** – „Falcon“ from Sinj and **Petar Kačić** – „Boiler“ – commanders in Sajmište, **Ivan Šoljić** – „Big Joe“ in Mitnica, **Alfred Hill** – commander of the military police, **Nenad Sinković** – „Legion“ – commander of the engineers units and many others, tells of the ferocity of the conflicts and the courage of the men leading the Vukovar defenders.

The attacks on Vukovar usually began in the early morning, but there was actually no rule. It often happened that shelling would start after a quiet morning or in the evening. The attacks were sometimes so fierce that at least one or several projectiles would fall on the town every minute, for example on 5th September or from 4th to 6th October when about 11,000 shells fell on the town. The destructive and merciless attacks by the JNA artillery, in which several thousand mortars fell on the town, were frequent. The constant attacks on the town caused problems in supplies of electricity and water, and the telephone lines were also frequently down. From the second half of September right up to the occupation of the town the people of Vukovar were without electricity and water from the town mains. But thanks to the skill, resourcefulness and courage of the workers of the electricity company, the water works, the post office

and other utilities, by the creation of a network of generators in the town, some form of regular supplies of electricity for important buildings was ensured: for the hospital, the major shelters and their kitchens, the defense command centre and the MoI, the post office, bakeries and workshops for maintenance and production of the weapons needed to defend the town. This was extremely important, not so much for minimal lighting, as for the fans needed in the shelters and the apparatus in the hospital.

According to some figures, which include the entire logistics and doctors and medical staff of Vukovar Hospital, during the Serb siege, surrounded by the enemy, the town of Vukovar (including the village of Bogdanovci) was defended by about 4020 soldiers. The number of armed defenders in the town itself at no point exceeded 1800 to 2000 members of the police, and the ZNG, HOS and volunteers from various parts of Croatia, organized into the 204th CA Brigade, stretched over more than 10 km of frontlines. Alongside the Croats, the town was also defended by people of other nationalities in Croatia – Serbs, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Germans and others. Of course the defense of Vukovar was conducted with the joint support and contribution of the civilian bodies in the town: Vukovar Medical Centre, Vukovar Water works, the Borovo Combine, the Voluntary Fire Fighters, the utility company, Croatian Electrical Company (HEP), the post office. All these organizations were coordinated by the Crisis Headquarters run by the commissioner of the Government of the RoC for Vukovar, Marin Vidić-Bili. They cooperated daily with the defense command of the town, lead by Mile Dedaković and then Branko Borković and the Police Administration of the town, whose commander was Stipe Pole.

At the same time the Chief Headquarters of the CA and the CA Operational Zone Osijek planned action to break the siege on the town, and all the forces in the surrounding area were engaged as military support for Vukovar, especially artillery. To that end, on 16th October the CA Operational Group Vinkovci, Vukovar and Županja was founded, which, according to the assessment of its commander, Mile Dedaković, had about 6800 men available during the final battle for the town, 15 tanks, 11 armored vehicles, 52 20-100 mm caliber guns, 32 guns of more than 100 mm caliber, 1 multiple rocket launcher and 68 mortars. It became clear that with this force it was impossible to defend the town from attack by the many times more numerous and better armed aggressor.

According to incomplete figures, in the battles for Vukovar, the Serb aggressors used more than 1000 armored vehicles, planes and boats, several hundred guns of all kinds of artillery and rocket weaponry, from which they fired hundreds of thousands of projectiles at the town, systematically and without choosing their targets (according to some assessments more than a million or even one and a half million projectiles). At first the town was constantly under attack from more than 27,000 then, according to some sources, up to more than 60,000 and even 80,000 soldiers. It is thought that

Vukovar defenders hit about 300 to 400 armored vehicles, according to some sources as many as 500, of which about 200 were tanks, and they brought down more than 20 planes (some say 25). Since these figures seem to be exaggerated, they should be taken with reserve, until a scientific analysis is made of losses, based on sources from both sides.

The aggressor, in relation to the defenders, had more than ten times more shells and mortars and other ammunition available, and the defenders did not have a single military aircraft. In view of these figures, it is fascinating that the defense of Vukovar managed for almost three months to resist the attacks of an enemy who was so numerically superior and so much better equipped. This enormous disproportion between the aggressor and the defender in the quality and quantity of technical equipment and training and number of soldiers in terms of the results of the battles achieved in the fight for Vukovar, confirms that no military doctrine should neglect patriotism, that is, the soldiers' motivation.

In the most critical moments of the defense of Vukovar, logistical support, primarily drugs and sanitary materials for the hospital, were delivered by air on several occasions in small Cessna-172 and UTVA-75 planes, and larger agricultural An-2 bi-planes. They were flown by the incredibly brave Croatian pilots from the Independent Air Unit, founded at the beginning of October 1991 in the Operational Zone Osijek. Of course this was just a drop in the ocean in terms of the needs of the defenders and the staff of the hospital, but the night flights by the four-man crew of the Croatian planes meant more in a moral sense than the aid they delivered. Their courage, resourcefulness, ability to improvise and flying skills and determination, despite the strong anti-aircraft fire from the enemy, to help the defenders of Vukovar in old and slow aircraft, certainly unsuited to the conditions of war, demand equal admiration as the super-human efforts of the defenders of Vukovar, the hospital staff, the fire fighters, and other services who took care of maintaining at least minimal conditions for life in the besieged and ruined town.

According to figures from the Ministry of Health, on 19th November 1991, in the Vukovar area there were about 14,100 civilians, about 10,000 in Vukovar, about 4,000 in Borovo Naselje and about 100 in Lužac, and there were about 900 Croatian soldiers, about 450 in Vukovar and about 450 in Borovo Naselje. In Vukovar Hospital on the day it was occupied there were about 420 wounded and sick people and in the improvised hospital in the Borovo Commerce shelter there were 250 wounded.

According to figures from the Office for Captured and Missing Persons of the Ministry of the Family, Veterans Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity of the RoC, of November 2007, during the Serb aggression in 1991 against Vukovar, at least 1,739 people were killed, including 86 children, and about 22,000 citizens were expelled, mainly those of non-Serb origins, but also Serbs who did not want to stay under the

occupying authorities. In the Vukovar-Srijem County, 52 mass graves and several hundred individual graves have been found, from which the remains of 1,982 victims of Serb crimes have been exhumed, up to 22nd November 2007. Of the total of bodies exhumed, the remains of 1,717 Croatian defenders and civilians have been identified. At the Office for Captured and Missing Persons in November 2007 the procedure was still going on to search for 486 missing and forcibly abducted persons from the area of the Vukovar-Srijem County; of these 315 missing and abducted people were registered in the municipality of Vukovar (including Lipovača, Sotin and Grabovo). In Serb prison camps and prisons in Serbia and Yugoslavia, controlled by the JNA, at least 2,796 persons were imprisoned and abused and subjected to horrifying torture, having been captured in 1991 in the Vukovar area, and more than 4,000 people from the Croatian Danube valley area (Podunavlje) were forcibly taken to the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, that is Serbia, from where they were deported to the areas of the Republic of Croatia not occupied at that time. The youngest prisoner was not yet 15 years old and the oldest was 81.

According to figures collected by Croatian defenders in 1996, the 204th Brigade of the Croatian Army had 879 soldiers killed or missing and 777 wounded in the battle



Remains of Vukovar after being occupied by the Serbs; filmed during that period (author of the photograph: Dionizije Šebetovsky)



Memorial cemetery for the victims of the Homeland War; 938 white crosses, one cross for each victim exhumated from the massive grave in that area.



for Vukovar. Croatia's assessment of enemy losses on the Vukovar battlefield is from around 5,000 to 6,500, even up to as many as about 15,000 soldiers killed. In contrast, the figures from Serb literature state, "that in the battles for Vukovar a little less than 1,200 soldiers and officers were killed from the ranks of JNA units and volunteers". In view of the enormous differences in estimates these figures also require a scientific analysis, based on sources from both sides.

During the attack on the town, the JNA and Serb paramilitary formations destroyed or damaged almost all the buildings in Vukovar, not sparing even the hospital, religious, cultural or historical monuments, commercial or housing accommodation. Precisely the example of the deliberate destruction of Vukovar, and especially Vukovar Hospital, testifies to the callousness of the aggressor and the commanders of the JNA, who with their irrational, destructive tactics endeavored to achieve the goal of Greater Serbian ideology – an ethnically clean, Greater Serbian state, known as Greater Serbia. Due to the unexpectedly strong and successful resistance by the Vukovar defenders against the much more powerful Serb aggressor and due to destruction not seen in Europe since the Second World War, in August, September, October and November 1991 Vukovar became a symbol of Croatia's resistance to Serbian aggression in the



Homeland War, and its people, especially the defenders, an example of incredible self-sacrifice, resourcefulness and courage. Alongside the famous, prehistoric Vučedol dove, the house of the Nobel Prize winner Lavoslav Ružička, the old water tower, the Bečarski križ (Bečar Cross, the Church of St. Philip and St. Jacob, the Eltz Castle and other buildings, the large water tower, broken and full of holes, with a Croatian flag and the demolished hospital became symbols of Vukovar at that time.

Vukovar; taken while being occupied by Serbs (author of the photograph: Dionizije Šebjetovsky) Vukovar; taken while being occupied by Serbs (author of the photograph: Dionizije Šebetovsky)



Interior of the St. Phillip and Jacob church; taken while Vukovar was occupied by the Serbs; (photograph taken by: Dionizije Šebetovsky)



The railroad building; taken while Vukovar was occupied by the Serbs (photograph taken by: Dionizije Šebetovsky)



Remains of the church and Franciscan monastery St. Philip and Jacob, as well as the high school and water tower in Vukovar, after the Serb occupation November 18th, 1991



The destroyed Eltz castle in Vukovar, after the Serbs had taken over the area on November 18th, 1991

Of course the mass execution site at Ovčara too, as a symbol of the suffering and sacrifice borne by the people and defenders of Vukovar for the freedom and independence of the Republic of Croatia. Ovčara is agricultural land, five kilometers south east of Vukovar. Its warehouse was transformed by the JNA and Serb paramilitary formations into a concentration camp for Vukovar defenders, civilians, wounded and medical staff taken from Vukovar Hospital. In the camp, wild and drunk uniformed members of the Yugoslav National Army and paramilitary, Chetnik groups, but also the Serb

mayor of Vukovar, S. Dokmanović in person, beat the prisoners with baseball bats, hoes, chains, truncheons and other objects. Four prisoners immediately died from the abuse, and the remaining prisoners were taken in groups of 10 to 20 to a pit about 900 meters from the Ovčara-Grabovo road. On 20th November 1991 they were killed there and thrown into a mass grave. In September and October 1996 200 bodies were exhumed from the grave, and by November 2008 193 had been identified, killed at ages between 16 and 72 years.

The crime at Ovčara is only one in a series of mass crimes committed by the Serb aggressors in the attack on Vukovar. Over time, Ovčara has become a symbol of remembrance for all the execution sites and graves left behind by the JNA and the Serb paramilitary units in the broader Vukovar area: Antin, Berak, Bogdanovci, Borovo Selo, Bršadin, Čelije, Čakovci, Dalj, Daljski Atar – Globovac, Ilok, Lovas, Marinci, Mikluševci, Mohovo, Negoslavci, Novi Jankovci, Petrovci, Slakovci, Stari Jankovci, Svinjarevci, Sotin, Tordinci, Tovarnik, Vukovar – New Cemetery, Nova ulica, the Velepromet warehouse and many other places of mass or individual Serb crimes.



Monument to the victims killed on Ovčara.



Oh my God, what wonderful people are dying in this town!

Vukovar was occupied, but the determined and unrelenting resistance put up over several months by its defenders was what prevented the initial wave and slowed down the expected pace of the attack by the enemy. Sacrificing their own lives, they created the time so desperately needed for mobilization to begin in other parts of Croatia and for new units to be organized, arms gathered and other things needed in war, and for the Croatian leadership to intensify their diplomatic activities to attain international recognition. Moreover, by binding the main part of the enemy forces, who were largely broken and demoralized in Vukovar, so they were never again capable of making any serious advances, the defense of Vukovar prevented the joining up of JNA forces from eastern and western Slavonia, which in the JNA plans for conquering Croatia was of strategic importance. At the same time, the defenders of Vukovar showed that it was possible to fight successfully against an aggressor who was so superior in strength. The murder of civilians and the scale of the destruction of Vukovar revealed to the world the true face of Serbian aggression. In that way they contributed to an understanding of the events in Croatia and speeded up the international recognition of Croatia.

Through its exceptional role in preventing the enemy from obtaining operational depth by occupying the whole of eastern Slavonia, that is, favorable conditions for further advances towards Zagreb, and the realization of their goal – the creation of “Greater Serbia”, the defense of Vukovar became strategically important for the defense of all of Croatia. In studies of the battle for Vukovar, it was concluded that the “large amount of enemy machinery and men, which the Vukovar defenders destroyed or made inoperable, so weakened the military potential of the JNA, that is the Serbian aggressor, materially, politically and psychologically, that it may be said that the Vukovar defenders opened the door to the establishment of a free and independent Croatia and the victory of Croatia in the Homeland War”. For this reason the battle for Vukovar was “the strategic hallmark of the system of values of the contemporary Croatian state”, and the patriotism and courage of the Vukovar defenders have earned a place of honour in Croatian history.

Many writers have dedicated their work to the heroes of the Homeland War, in admiration of the sacrifice and greatness of the Croatian defenders. They speak with particular admiration of the defenders of Vukovar. Of these works, the book “91.6

MHZ – Voices against the Guns” by Alenka Mirković (a journalist on wartime Croatian Radio Vukovar), is outstanding in terms of its warmth, honesty and originality. In the part of the book where she writes about how she escaped from the besieged town, she describes the situation when she and her colleague were approached by two policemen from Varaždin, hoping that they as “locals” would know where to go. The sentence at the end of that passage stands out as a conclusion to the true story of the defense of Vukovar and Croatia in 1991, and as a simple description or summation of the high calibre of the people who defended Vukovar and defended Croatia:

“We’re done for anyway, my friend. You are at least local, you know the way...”

The hell we do, I thought, hopping about from the cold and blowing on my hands to warm them up. The policeman looked at me and then took something out of his pocket and gave it to me in the dark, “You will need these more than I do.” I took a pair of thick, warm, woolen gloves from his hands. I felt warmth, immeasurable gratitude and sorrow.

My God, I thought, what wonderful people are dying in this town!”



Monument to the victims for a free Croatia, on the mouth of the river Vuka by the Danube; in the Glagolitic script: Navik on živi ki zgine pošteno! (Thou who was killed honestly lives forever!)



DOCUMENTA **CROATICA**



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Personal recollections

Mirko Brekalo, Croatian Army Colonel:

Borovo Naselje, from which the Trpinjska Street, runs was throughout the time of the siege of Vukovar a high priority point of defense. It is necessary to say something about the men and women who by their heroism demonstrated the indestructible nature of the Croatian spirit and the survival of the Croatian people in this area of eastern Slavonia. Too many Croatian knights laid down their lives here on the altar of their homeland. We ask ourselves, who were those people, who were the first to take up arms to defend their homes – they are the true Croatian warriors, who gave the most it is possible to give for our beautiful homeland – the life they were given by God.

*They were from all over – from Vukovar, Vinkovci, Đakovo, Slavonski Brod, Našice, Varaždin, Čakovec, Zagreb, Kraljevica and from Dalmatia, Lika, Zagorje, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and from abroad. They were wonderful people, and as fearless warriors we knew them by their nicknames: **Turbo, Šljoka, Krešo, Plavi, Kivi, Zolja, Drava, Grubi, Bik** and others.*

These people's deeds speak for themselves. They left behind broken enemy forces, the tank graveyards on the streets: Trpinjska and Borovska, in Hercegovачka, Vinogradska, Bosanska and Vinkovačka, in Budžak and by the Technical Hall.

The enemy says of these Croatian warriors that they committed genocide, but in their ranks, alongside the Croats there were Serbs, Hungarians, Ruthenians and Ukrainians, Albanians and others.

Day after day they held their positions, as long as they had anti-tank weaponry. The enemy would never have broken through if they had been fully armed. The hardest part was when we had to say in the end, "We haven't got anything left to defend ourselves with." I still remember very vividly today the people, with great sorrow in my heart, asking as they looked up to the sky, "Oh my God, what now?"

*Many were taken away to an unknown destination: guardsmen, policemen, civilians, and even the wounded, simply for defending their own homes. Whole families disappeared, and individuals, whose model was the Croatian knight Blago Zadro. We note just some of the names that we will never forget: **Robo, Vjeko, Joja, Čičo, Neđo, Veso, Sućo, Šimun, Milan, Vinko, Ante, Škukur, Božo, Tomislav, Dragec, Ružica, Sabina, Mara, Vesna, Jelena** and others. (taken from the book *Gdje su naši najmiliji?* (Where are our loved ones?), Zagreb, 1996, p. 19).*

Zvone Ćurković, HOS commander:

*Sajmište was defended by locals as well as defenders from various parts of Croatia. We, the “HOS men”, were some of them, and in the unit I commanded there were several Serbs, Montenegrins and Muslims. We withstood the enemy attacks right up to somewhere around the middle of November. It was then that we began to lose one street at a time and slowly pull back towards the town centre. It is hard to describe briefly all that happened and mention the courageous defenders who fought in Sajmište,” says Zvone Ćurković, showing us a long passage about Sajmište and its defenders in the book “Bitka za Vukovar” (The Battle for Vukovar) by Mile Dedaković Jastrebović, Alenka Mirković-Nadžić and Davor Runtić. He points out that it says in this book that Sajmište was, “many were convinced, one of the most difficult parts of the defense of Vukovar” and confirms what was written then: The war in Sajmište was characterized by continuous street fighting for every neighborhood, for every street, for every house, cellar or garden, or operations to “clean out” the enemy when their infantry got into a certain part of the area, which is thought to be one of the hardest forms of battle. We went on these “cleaning” operations in small groups, led by local people as guides. There wasn’t a classical front line, we fought around defense points and in close contact with the enemy, as they say “hand to hand” at a distance of 15 meters. Sometimes the defenders and the Chetniks looked each other in the eye, watching for a moment before reacting. The quicker and more resourceful ones survived. The commanders always went first. That is how Ivan Brdar was killed, as the commander of a HOS unit. HOS men were always especially prized as fighters. They went where it was most difficult. Of the 58 HOS members who defended Sajmište and Bogdanovci, 25 were killed, but only seven were wounded. Some were wounded several times and the slightly wounded remained on their posts. For example I was hit first by shrapnel from a hand grenade, then shot from a “scorpion” and the third time by a “dum dum” bullet. Some were even wounded four times. We that survived and could still walk went to break the siege towards Nuštar together with the military police. It is difficult to mention now all the HOS men and the other defenders of Sajmište, but if I have to mention a few, then I will mention the commanders in Sajmište: **Petar Kačić – Medium Boiler, Stjepan Sučić – Blackie, Velimir Đerek – Hawk, Josip Tomašić – Wasp, Siniša Mataija – Rambo, Ivan Poljak – Falcon, Nikica Burić – Samoborac,** and other heroes. I will also mention the HOS commanders in Sajmište - **Stjepan Antolić and Josip Abel.***

And finally, I want to stress the purity of our fighting. Despite the brutality of the enemy, we did not allow any of our men to touch civilians. We went to the hospital for medication for Croats and Serbs, who were in the cellars in the areas we held. It is our obligation to show how the courage, character and moral purity invested in the defense of Vukovar are the foundation stone of statehood and Croatia’s freedom. Especially now, when many are distorting those facts, when a bad image has been created in the public eye of the defenders as a primitive group of men, without honor or ideals, just mere adventurers. Of course some were like that, but they were the exception. Most of the defenders were and remained people of strong character, morals and huge hearts.

Pilip Karaula, Croatian Army colonel:

The ring around the town was getting tighter. From Sajmište the streets fell one by one, and then Lužac was lost. Borovo was cut off from Vukovar, and in fierce attacks the Chetniks broke through to the old Catholic cemetery and the Stjepan Supanc elementary school. So Mitnica was cut off from the centre, and the town was divided into three small parts, three separated pockets. In Borovo the boys fought for every house. But the enemy was slowly making headway, the fighters from the centre of the town withdrew and tried to break through, Mitnica was still holding its position, with a new line opening up at "Najpaorova bašća" beside the water tower, because there were Chetniks on that side too. We found ourselves completely surrounded, with no access to the hospital, and thousands of shells were hitting more and more civilians in the cellars.

We had practically no more weapons or ammunition to fight the armoured vehicles, and we counted out bullets for the foot soldiers one by one, taking them from one post to give to another where the attacks were fiercer. Our lines could have been broken at any moment, and I cannot even begin to imagine what would have happened to the civilians in Mitnica. In the late evening of 17th November 1991 I called together the commanders of Mitnica and after considering all the facts, we made a difficult decision: to offer ourselves and the army to save the civilians.

I got in contact with the Yugo-army and offered talks. I agreed to go the Goldschmit farm on 18th November 1991. But Zdravko Komšić and Matija Mandić did not let me go alone, so the three of us, on 18th November at about noon, went to the "HQ" of the command of the Yugo-army, where we were met by their representatives, by International Red Cross representative, Nicholas Borsinger, and by a large number of cameras and journalists.

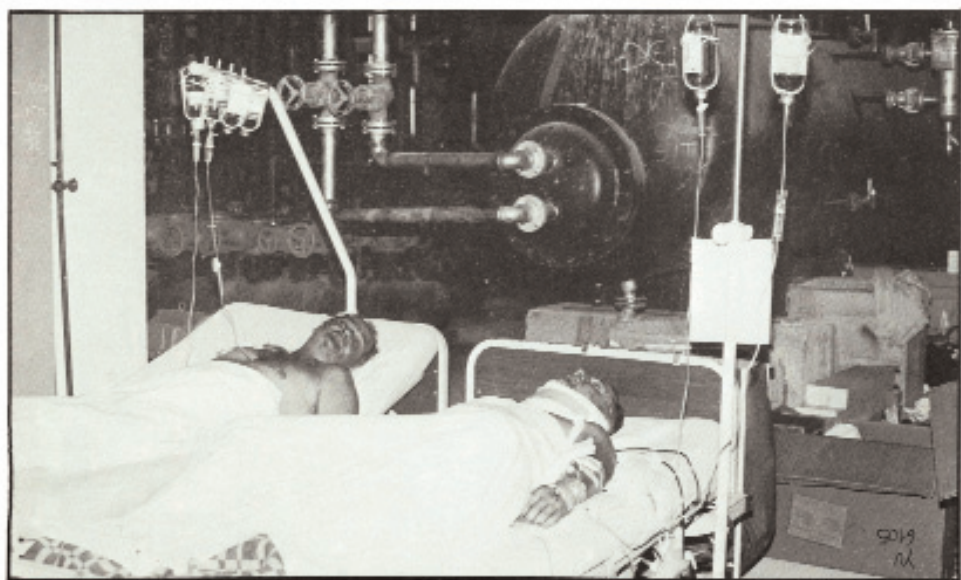
The Serbs demanded unconditional surrender of arms, and we the withdrawal of civilians and transport for them to Croatia, and then the surrender of the army with our arms. The final agreement was that we, the civilians and army together, would go to the new graveyard, where the soldiers would lay down their arms and surrender to the Yugo-army, and the civilians would be put in trucks and buses and taken to Croatia. The IRC guaranteed the fulfillment of the obligations from these talks, but the Serb side did not respect the agreement completely.

182 fighters surrendered with their arms, and they spent the night at Ovčara and then they were taken to the concentration camp in Sremska Mitrovica. All the civilians were also taken to Serbia. Then they were sorted and the men were sent with the soldiers, and the women and children sent to Croatia. The soldiers were exchanged for Serbs at several exchanges of prisoners, the largest group on 14th August 1992. One soldier was killed in Sremska Mitrovica, one civilian disappeared straight after the meeting at the new graveyard, and one later after Šid. All the other civilians and soldiers returned to Croatia.

A large number of soldiers from Mitnica were in the hospital at that moment and there were people from Mitnica in other parts of the town where many were lost without a trace, so the number of missing soldiers and civilians from Mitnica is much greater than these three, whom we mention as victims who died after the negotiations, and those negotiations were to do with them too (taken from the book: Gdje su naši najmiliji? (Where are our loved ones? Zagreb, 1996, pg. 20).



WAR IN BOSNIA
FROM B. POLJAKOVIC



WAR IN BOSNIA
FROM B. POLJAKOVIC

**HOSPITALS AND PATIENTS A FAVOURITE TARGET.
PATIENTS SHELTER IN HOSPITAL BOILER ROOMS
AND BASEMENTS.**

THE AGGRESSORS ARE SERBIA AND THE YUGO COMMUNIST ARMY.

CREATION INFORMATION CENTER
PULJE TRAVNIKA IŠKRA, 41000 ZAGREB

Ante Nazor

THE HOSPITAL WAS ALSO A TARGET

In the attacks on Vukovar and the Vukovar hospital and after the Serbian occupation of the city, thirty-two workers of the Vukovar war hospital died or were killed,
twenty of them at Ovčara,
and four water workers disappeared after being captured.

During the attack on the city,
while on duty at the Vukovar Medical Centre,
four doctors, six nurses, two members of the medical team,
one assistant and two drivers were wounded.

After the occupation of the Croatian city of Vukovar,
the Yugoslav (more precisely Serbian) army took
all the medical documentation from the Vukovar Medical Centre.
Therefore the data on the work of the hospital and the wounded is incomplete.



Logo of the museum – “Place of Remembrance” in the Vukovar hospital; made by Ivica Propadalo and Željko Kovačić.

... After all the difficult events it went through in its history, the Vukovar hospital lived its toughest and glorious days in the Homeland War, during the Serbian siege of Vukovar. During several months the aggressor, many times stronger, attacked the city whose heart was the hospital. Its brave and professional staff did the impossible. In a complete war environment and destroyed hospital, these worthy doctors, nurses and assistants created the conditions in which many wounded were saved, sick people cured and babies put to birth in the midst of daily darkness. The calls for help from the staff found no answer in the world. The world quietly observed the killing of Vukovar and the destruction of its hospital, which became the strategic objective of the aggressor in its aim to break the defense of Croatia. The silence of the international community constituted a support to this objective.

The international community's representative did not allow us to deliver medicine during the retreat of the convoys carrying the wounded (19 October 1991, op.A.N.). They did not allow us to replace the exhausted medical staff. They did not condemn the violation of the Agreement I signed in the name of the Republic of Croatia with the representatives of Yugoslav People's Army. According to this Agreement, during the night of the aggressor's bloodshed on the 19 October 1991, the international organization Red Cross was to take control of the hospital. The international observers did not inform the world that soldiers of the Yugoslav People's Army entered the hospital and forbid access to the Red Cross workers. The Yugoslav People's Army and the civilians to whom this army gave weapons abducted, tortured and brutally killed part of the patients and staff of the hospital, and this crime was kept silent. Lastly, not even today are the butchers who systematically destroyed Vukovar and killed its habitants being condemned. In such circumstances the Vukovar hospital played a heroic humanitarian role...

(from war Minister of Health,
Prof. dr. sc. Andrija Hebrang's foreword to the book
Vukovarska bolnica 1991. /Vukovar Hospital in 1991/, Vukovar, 2007.)

After the first barricades in Knin on 17 August 1990, which marked the launch of the armed uprising of the Serbs in Croatia, on the basis of the reports that arrived at Croatia's Health Ministry and the evaluation of potential future events, prof. dr. sc. Andrija Hebrang, then Health Minister, secretly prepared with a group of collaborators the adoption of the health system in case of war. During September 1990, stock-taking was carried in all the accessible warehouses of medical equipment and material. Because of the escalation of violence and the fact the federal army refused on several occasions to help insure medical care, even emergency medical assistance to the suffering population. Due to the threat of aggression on the Republic of Croatia, the Health Minister, on 19 December 1990, created the Health Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia whose mission was to organize health services in new circumstances.

On recommendation of the Health Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia the Minister of the Interior, Josip Boljkovac, pronounced on the 4 February 1991 the Decision on the creation of mobile surgical teams for the needs of the special police forces. As a result, the Health Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia became the Medical Corps Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia. The first action of the mobile surgical units took place in Pakrac on 2 March 1991, when the team gave medical support to the members of the Lučko Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATJ Lučko), and the first intervention took place in Plitvice on 31 March. Parallel to the development of the Croatian armed forces, in April 1991 the Medical Corps Headquarters became the Main Medical Corps Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia (GŠSRH), taking over the fundamental and main role in the organization of the triple system: civil medical care for the population, medical support for the units of the special and basic police forces of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Croatia and medical support for the units of the National Guard (ZNG) and other newly-formed units of the Ministry of Defense. On 3 September 1991 the Main Medical Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia (GŠSRH) was set up. Its commander was prim. dr. Ivo Prodan. The GŠSRH was divided into departments and services and, in conformity with the decisions of the Health Ministry, for the first time in Croatia the organization of the care provided to the wounded was based on echelons:

- First echelon - evacuation of the wounded from the front lines to the surgical reception centre and first aid;
- Second echelon - surgical reception centers for first surgical aid;
- Third echelon - temporary medical institutions in reserved locations (war hospitals) or medical institutions near the battle fields with teams for the complete treatment of the wounded and victims;
- Forth echelon - medical institutions for the definitive assistance to the wounded and victims and third-party medical institutions for the rehabilitation of the injured and the victims.



Medical center Vukovar, autumn 1991; result of the Serb aggression.

Therefore a quality, multi-purpose and exemplary health-sanitary system that was ready to respond to all possible scenarios was created in Croatia in a very short period of time. The accomplishments of the health-sanitary services in the Homeland War were among the best in the world.

The GSSRH played the most significant role in the organization of the supply of medicine and sanitary equipment to the Vukovar war hospital and the filling of surgical or other medical staff positions, especially in cases of complete blockade. The GSSRH also took part in the organization of the convoys evacuating the wounded from the hospital. The War Minister, prof. dr. sc. Andrija Hebrang, remained in contact with the Head of the Vukovar hospital, Dr. Vesna Bosanac, on almost a daily basis.

During the aggression on Croatia in the autumn of 1991, canons, tanks, multiple rocket launchers and aircrafts of the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA = JNA), partly or completely destroyed about thirty medical institutions. Some Croatian hospitals were hit by more than a thousand rounds of artillery ammunition. Due the number of strikes and the impossible work conditions in a totally enemy environment, the Vukovar war hospital stands out from the rest of the hospitals.

Before the Serbian aggression in 1991 the Vukovar Medical Centre had 420 hospital beds and 933 employees, of whom 104 were doctors and 337 were nurses. Until the



Vukovar hospital; result of the Serb aggression in 1991
(photograph: Damir Radnić)

end of the siege 350 doctors, nurses and medical personnel continued working. Immediately after the occupation, 250 ended up in continued exile. The first victims of the Serbian terrorists were taken to the Vukovar Medical Centre at the beginning of April 1991. After the massacre of Croatian policemen in an ambush set up by Serbian terrorists in Borovo Selo on 2 May 1991, the hospital introduced double on-duty hours and placed the necessary number of staff on alert in the surgical unit and the hospital's surgery department. From then on the workers of Serbian nationality started to leave their workplace. Despite work obligation, many of them passed on the side of the aggressors.

In order for the workers of Vukovar hospital to be organized as best as possible for work in exceptional war conditions, the "Crisis Headquarters" were created in July of 1991. Rooms for the Intensive Care Units, a room

for children equipped with an incubator, and a two rooms containing 120 mounted beds for the wounded and staff were arranged in the nuclear shelter. The shelter had toilets, a kitchenette and a storage area for medicine, food, sheets and water. The hospital rooms and doors on the ground floor and basement were protected with sand bags and wooden beams. Whenever possible the Main Medical Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia in Zagreb (GSS) sent medical teams to Vukovar (a surgeon and a specialist or two surgeons, an anesthesiologist, and sometimes a orthopedist and medical technicians - anesthesiologist or equipment technician) every 14 days.

Despite the clearly visible signs of the Red Cross on the roof and in the courtyard, an average of 70 to 80 shells fell on the Vukovar hospital every day during the siege. At times more the 700 grenades struck the hospital and its surroundings in one day. Due to the incessant artillery attacks of the YPA and Serbian paramilitary units, the

hospital departments could not be used to house the patients after 25 August 1991. Life and work at the hospital had to move to the basement and the hall that linked the old hospital building to the new one. The nuclear shelter was also used. The cast room and the x-ray room in the basement served as operating rooms. Abdominal operations were carried out on the examination bed in the room that contained the x-ray equipment. All the other operations were performed on the casting table and sometimes on the wheel-chairs and stretchers. These are the conditions in which the surgical department of the Vukovar war hospital carried out its activities, conditions not intended for such surgical procedures. The work was organized in teams, and three surgical teams were available 24 hours a day. The patients that had undergone operations were immediately transferred to the shelter, where a Department for intensive care and post-operative care and a Department for newborns and their mothers were set up. In the basement of the old hospital, a room for neurology and psychiatry was improvised.

When people were still able to leave Vukovar, the severely wounded were taken care of in the Vukovar hospital before being transferred to Vinkovci and Đakovo, or further away to Osijek or Zagreb. In five convoys led by dr. Josip Husara's team from the



Remains of the building "Borovo-Commerce" in Borovo Naselje, destroyed in the last attacks by the JNA on November 18th and 19th, 1991; the photograph was taken after Vukovar was occupied by Serbs (photograph taken by: Božo Biškupić)

end of August to the beginning of November, more than 600 (632) wounded were evacuated. When possible the lightly wounded patients were moved to the shelter in the “Borovo-Commerce” building, part of the “Borovo” complex, where there was a reserve hospital with medical services. In Vukovar’s best equipped shelter, with aggregators and continued running water and electricity, around 250 wounded and 600 civilians were cared for. The shelter was divided by a sheets in order to the separate rooms where families lived from rooms where the wounded and dying were placed. By moving the lightly wounded from the hospital, room was made for the newly wounded and patients. The last transfer of about 30 injured from the hospital to “Borovo-Commerce”, with great risk for the wounded and drivers, took place on the night of the 8 November 1991.

An in-patient clinic was also set up in Ilok to care for the wounded. With its emergency teams and the in-patient clinic in Bodanovci it operated successfully until the occupation. Operating rooms were also set up in the basement of Eltz castle, which was destroyed soon afterwards. Emergency medical assistance, which operated on all levels in the free part of the town, was based in the Vukovar War Hospital. Soon after the establishment of the hospital in September 1991, a medical war unit was attached to it. This unit was created with the Defense headquarters of the town.

Emergency medical assistance, with its teams of doctors and nurses and its reserves of medicine and medical equipment, was organized through the town’s civilian shelter. This prevented people from being exposed to even greater suffering. Aside from Borovo-Commerce, medical assistance was set up in two shelters, “Obučara“ and Radnički dom in Borovo Naselje and in the Banane neighborhood (Borovo Naselje), “Centar” (Vukovar) and Oljanice housing estates, in Ivo Lola Ribar and Vladimir Nazor Primary schools, in the basement of the Alpina shop, and in the wine cellars in Ribarska and under Eltz castle. These shelters were in contact with the hospital, and the necessary amount of medicine and medical equipment were thus delivered to them on a daily basis. Doctors and nurses worked in the shelters at all times.

Most of the staff did not leave the hospital until the end of August. The constant flow of wounded required tremendous efforts from the doctors, nurses and the all hospital staff in order for the patients to be taken care of. In the beginning, all the wounded underwent a complete diagnostic check-up, but during the last two months, after the destruction of the laboratory and the x-ray department, only essential laboratory examinations and x-rays could be conducted. Comprehensive records were kept for all the wounded. However the Yugoslav People’s Army took all the medical documentation when it entered the hospital. Therefore, it is difficult to establish the exact number of admitted and treated patients. However, on the basis of the available data, we can say with almost complete certainty that at least 2.500 wounded were admitted and taken care of during the siege of Vukovar at the Vukovar Medical Centre. Over 1000



From left to right medical doctors: Stanko Kušt, nurse Zorica Ganić, nurse Vesna Belinić, medical technician Ante Arić, Boris Kratofil, Edin Zujović in the basement x-ray room where the hospital staff would rest, October/November 1991 (photograph given by: Boris Kratofil)

major operations were conducted. The youngest person treated was 6 months old, and the oldest 88. On average, about 30 patients were admitted daily. One day there were 92 wounded, most of which required an urgent operation. This meant that the two anesthesiologists had to perform 78 anaesthesias that day! Estimates show that 70% of the wounded were civilians, 25% were part of the National Guard, and 5% were police officers. More than 80% of the wounds were caused by explosions, less than 10% were provoked by bullets, and roughly 5% were burns from napalm bombs. The remainder of the wounds were caused by the destruction of buildings and aerial attacks. The death rate, which was 1.5-1.7% at the end of September, rose to 3% before the occupation because of the extremely difficult conditions.

During the most violent siege of the town, 16 children were born in the hospital. Five of them were born prematurely. Four of the children survived (I.B., K.V., E. Đ., I. B.), and one premature baby weighed only 700 grams and died three days after birth. All the wounded were treated and taken care of equally, irrespective of their faith or ethnicity. JNA soldiers were treated in the hospital, and even members of the infamous Serbian paramilitary units. During the siege, some of the JNA soldiers that were receiving treatment willingly supported the call of the hospital's head, dr. Vesna Bosanac, for the end of the attacks on the hospital. One of the JNA soldiers,

who died of gas gangrene, received 6 bottles of blood, even though there was always a lack of blood in the hospital. It is ironic that the aggressor targeted the hospital while the doctors were treating some of their soldiers. On one occasion a tank shell passed through a window in the basement, into a room where there were wounded JNA soldiers. The shell flew over their heads and pierced the wall of the neighboring room, which was used as a rest area for the staff. The shell hit the ground but did not explode.

The national and international public was informed in due time of the extent of the destruction of Vukovar Hospital and the work conditions and suffering of the wounded, doctors, nurses, technicians and other staff. Almost every day dr. Vesna Bosanac sent calls for help to save the wounded, and protested at the daily shelling and destruction of the hospital to the ministries of the Republic of Croatia, the commanders of the Croatian army, the observers of the European Community in Hotel "I" in Zagreb, to Pope John Paul II, and to other high-ranking European and international

statesmen and officials (chairman of the Council of Ministers of the European Community, Hans Van Den Broek, French President, François Mitterrand, Italian President, Francesco Cossiga, German chancellor Helmut Kohl, British Prime minister John Major, the President of the United States of America George Bush, Australian Prime Minister Robert James Lee Hawk).



From left to right medical doctors: Željko Jelinčić, Ivica Matoš, Boris Kratofil, Tomislav Vlahović, Vesna Bosanac, Juraj Njavro and Stanko Kušt (sitting on the floor), in the admissions room (during the war it was used as V. Bosanac's work room), October/November 1991 (photograph given by: Boris Kratofil, MD)

The Head of Vukovar Hospital, Dr. Vesna Bosanac, and the commander of the war medical services of Vukovar, Dr. Juraj Njavro, together with the other doctors, nurses, technicians and other staff, became a symbol of humanity. During the three-month siege of Vukovar they worked conscientiously and unselfishly day and night. They took no genuine rest and were pushed to the limits of exhaustion. The operations did not even stop during the bombing of the



From left to right: nurse Vesna Belinić (holding a compression), Boris Kratofil, nurse Mihaela Brajković in an improvised operation room, in the hospital's basement (during periods of peace in the clinic for minor surgical operations), October/November 1991 (photograph given by: Boris Kratofil)



From left to right: Boris Spajić (turned back) talking with nurse Binazija Kolesar; medical technician – anaesthetic Zlatko Bukor (leaned against the wall) in the hallway in front of the surgical clinic, October/November 1991 (photograph given by: Boris Kratofil)

hospital and the town. The doctors and the rest of the staff lived with the wounded and took care of them as if they were family, feeling their suffering and pain. Many will remember the beautiful young man who cried all night long because he had lost his legs. The spirit of the wounded men will also never be forgotten; despite their condition and suffering, they often sang songs about Croatia.

Medicine, food and various help arrived on a regular basis until mid September. Medicine and medical equipment was received from the Main Medical Headquarters of the Ministry of Health, Caritas and various non-governmental organizations and individuals. However, after the complete blockade of the town, working and living conditions became more and more difficult. There was a lack of water, heating, electricity, food, medicine, medical equipment, and the number of wounded grew by the day. From the middle of October, the basement and the nuclear shelter were so full of people that the wounded were accommodated in the halls, waiting rooms, x-ray rooms, and examination rooms. Sometimes beds were shared by the patients, and the wounded had to be placed on mattresses on the floor, on benches or examination tables. It was therefore very difficult for the staff to get to their patients.

The hygiene conditions were sub-standard, and the lack of medicine was partially compensated by gathering stocks of medicine from the pharmacy in Mitnica, Borovo and the city centre, and by the rational use of medicine. When supplies ran out because of the increase in the number of wounded, brave hospital staff would go into town, risking their lives in search for medicine, medical equipment and sheets. Antibiotics, pain-killers and bandage lacked the most. Because of this anesthesia had to be given very economically and carefully. Minor operations were performed under local anesthesia. Most of the operations were conducted under spinal anesthesia, which meant that a very small quantity of anesthetic was injected very close to the spinal cord, thus ensuring complete numbness of the body from the navel downwards. The wounded were thus conscious but did not feel any pain. In the same manner plasma was used very economically, and the lack of blood derivatives was compensated by citizens, soldiers and medical staff who made blood donations. Despite the extraordinarily difficult war conditions, all the donors were examined prior to the donation and each blood sample was also examined before being used. During the siege a total of 1700 bottles of blood were collected.

Because the Sterilization Department was also destroyed in the bombings, materials required for operations (clothing, instruments and gloves) were, from the mid-October, sterilized in a dry sterilizer. The only controls of sterilization were the control trips. The materials necessary for medical interventions were sterilized in 3 dry sterilizers, which were often relocated because of damage to the hospital. A sterilization area was improvised in the nuclear shelter, and three nurses, who worked all day, managed to provide enough sterilized equipment, instruments and clothing for the operations.

In the beginning, the dead were buried at the city's New and Bulgarian cemeteries, then in a large common grave in the Old Catholic Cemetery near Vatrogasni dom, and soon after in the old cemetery near the NK "Sloga" stadium, where a large grave was built along the wall. Lastly, towards the end of the siege, the "funeral department" was established in the old administrative building of the Port authorities, opposite the hospital. Those who died in the hospital and those whose bodies were brought in from various parts of the town were placed in the courtyard of the portmaster's offices as they were prepared for the funeral. When there was a shortage of coffins, the dead were placed in plastic bags which were numbered. Some of the dead was buried in the courtyard. Around 110 bodies which had not been buried and were in the courtyard were falsely presented by Serbian soldiers and journalists as victims of the Croatian soldiers. Some dead were buried individually in more hidden locations (garages, gardens, etc.). Because of the incessant fighting in the last days of the siege, it was impossible to retrieve and bury all the dead. Therefore the town and the hospital were threatened by an epidemic of great proportions, but despite the awful living conditions this did not occur.



Yard of the Harbour Authority at the end of the siege of Vukovar (author of the photograph: Ante Arić).

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The town's waterworks were destroyed in the middle of September, thus sparking a constant lack of water. The hospital's nuclear shelter had its own water reservoirs with a capacity of 12 000 liters. There was also a 2000-litre reservoir in the laundry room. Daily consumption of water ranged from 2000 to 3000 liters. The water was delivered from Borovo in tanks under constant canon fire. Many of the tanks were hit and destroyed and three fire-fighters lost their lives. In the last two weeks of the siege water was taken from the neighboring wells, which had not been in use for 30 years or so. Only 150 liters could be drawn every two hours. Water was also brought in canisters, between 500 and 600 liters a day (mostly at night for security reasons). The water was disinfected immediately with a ten-time greater dose of isone. Water was also distilled in a nearby house with a distilling-apparatus for brandy. The daily ration of drinking and hygiene water was therefore reduced to half a liter. Water from the pipes of the destroyed central heating system was used as process water, and hospital staff collected rainfall in dishes in order to wash themselves. The rainwater, following chlorination, was also used as drinking water.

Due to the lack of water and electricity, the laundry room was used at night only, so that the limited quantity of electricity could be used for surgery. The machines were powered manually to rationalize the use of water. This was how things worked until the beginning of November when the laundry room was partially destroyed in a canon attack. From then on laundry staff and cleaners cleaned the bloody operation clothing in limited quantities of cold water before drying them in the halls. Despite this there was never a lack of clean clothing for surgery. The lack of water did however make it harder for the 24 cleaners to clean the hospital premises. Water shortages prevented the development of film at the X-Ray Department. The x-rays had to be studied as they were being developed, while they were humid, because they became blurred when they dried.

In mid-September, when a power cut occurred in the hospital, the hospital's electrical 186 kW generator was activated and was used until mid-October, when it was destroyed by JNA shelling. A new generator from Borovo was then installed, powered by 168 kW. Petrol shortages were solved by bringing in petrol from private depots in tin barrels. When this generator was also destroyed in one of the numerous shellings, workers from the Croatian national electricity company and Borovo connected the hospital directly to the Borovo generator, which was less powerful and had variable voltage. This direct connection functioned only for the needs of the laundry room and only at night, when surgical interventions were less frequent. The occupation of the village of Lužac at the beginning of November led to a power collapse. The surgical room was powered by a 28 kW generator from the police station, which had been destroyed. Because the generator could not also power the x-ray equipment, a 10 kW auxiliary generator was installed at the entrance of the hospital. However, operations and treatment of the patients was sometimes conducted with battery-powered lights, candles and improvised oil lamps which the workers confected themselves. The candles used in the hospital were taken from the "Na-Ma" warehouse in Zagreb and from the VUPIK shop in Gundulićeva street near the hospital.

In September the heating system was also destroyed. The hospital premises, including the operating rooms, were thus very cold. All the equipment that the hospital staff would repair after destruction (sterilizer, water supply, generator, and kitchen) would soon be hit and destroyed again. The question remains open whether this happened because of the high intensity of the shelling where everything was systematically destroyed or whether the aggressors received exact information from a member of the hospital staff before hitting a particular target.

The kitchen was hit very rapidly and was moved to the basement of the old hospital building, to the eye clinic. At the beginning of the war 450 meals were prepared three times a day; at the end of the siege, more than 700 meals were served. Despite the fact the makeshift kitchen was often targeted by missiles, 4 cooks and 6 cooking assistants

prepared three meals every day on a wood-fired cooker for the sick, wounded and staff.

Bread delivery was also life threatening, because it was brought from the often-targeted bakery in Priljevo (part of the VUPIK silo), between Borovo Naselje and Vukovar. The multiple attempts at setting up a bakery, which would have vastly improved bread supplies, were futile, because as soon as the bakery would begin operations it would become targeted by heavy attacks. In one of these attacks five people died. Therefore, in the auxiliary hospital in the “Borovo-Commerce” building, bread rolls were baked without yeast. These were then distributed during in small quantities which made it difficult to share them out. The wounded had priority. When communication was cut with Borovo during the last two weeks, bread was baked in two private houses near the hospital, most of the time without yeast. The bread was therefore very hard and the loaves were popularly named “tank rolls”. Every patient received a slice of bread, and the staff half a slice. Whenever possible, special food was prepared for people suffering from diabetes and for those with digestion problems until the very end.

Meat was supplied by slaughtering cattle in the outskirts of the town (in the Mitnica area), close to the front lines. Aside from regular supplies that were brought in by the hospital’s logistics services, food came in from Caritas and brave individuals who risked their lives by delivering food in vans. These people came mostly from Đakovo and from the surrounding villages, such as Petrovac, and they brought fresh milk and vegetables. With the existing food stocks it was very difficult to prepare quality meals for all the people in the hospital. At times one pig was used for the preparation of meat for 600 people. That is why hospital staff received smaller meals than patients, and they would very often have rice pudding for dinner. Food shortages and superhuman efforts resulted in the staff losing up to 10 kg in weight. In October meat meals were reduced, and there was no meat at all in the last days. Sometimes the patients were given “food packets” from the National Guard.

After the occupation of the town, the JNA on 20 November 1991 carried out 400 wounded, staff and members of their family and other civilians from the hospital. At least 267 people of the people were killed or were declared missing. At Ovčara 200 people were killed, of which 20 hospital staff. While the JNA soldiers were evicting the wound and staff from the hospital, their commander, JNA officer Veselin Šljivančanin, who took control of the hospital and supervised the situation, held a “victory speech” to the doctors and the medical staff, stressing that the JNA and other Serbian units were fighting together and shared the same objective.

Fragments of the chronology of events at Vukovar Hospital in 1991

2 April (Tuesday)

Heavily wounded Lj. N. was admitted to Vukovar hospital. She had been shot by Serbian terrorists while driving towards Bršadin. Her lower leg was seriously injured. After the incident Dr. J. Njavro organized a first aid course for the women of Vukovar at the Vukovar rowing club. During the month of April, 4 wounded were admitted to the Vukovar hospital.

2 May (Thursday)

After Serbian terrorists killed 12 and wounded 21 Croatian police officers in an ambush in Borovo Selo near Vukovar, 21 wounded were admitted to the Vukovar hospital: 15 members of the Croatian police and 6 Serbian terrorists. All received the best care possible.

During the month of May, 39 wounded were admitted to the Vukovar hospital.

June

The volunteers that organized the defense of Vukovar were vaccinated against tetanus, and their blood group was determined. Auxiliary clinics began to be set up in various parts of the town (count Eltz's castle, Mitnica, etc.): a few beds, a small operating room with old anesthetic equipment, instruments, medicine and medical equipment were brought from the Republic of Croatia's Main Medical Headquarters, but also via various private channels.

3 June (Monday)

17 tanks, 4 armored and 2 medical vehicles of the JNA arrived to Sremski Čakovci following an incident in which someone fired at the people after a football match, wounding two Croats who were brought to the hospital.

17 June (Monday)

The Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) built a field hospital in Bobota. Two doctors of Serbian nationality, Dr. R. D. and Dr. Lj. C., left the Vukovar hospital to work in this hospital.

In June, at least 7 wounded were admitted to the hospital.

July

Cleaning, sanitization and equipment of the nuclear shelter of Vukovar hospital was conducted. This shelter was built next to the new hospital building and was linked to the hospital. A NATO truck was used for the transport of foodstuff (tinned food, tablets for water disinfection, coffee, chocolate and similar products) and sand bags were prepared to protect the hospital ground entrances. The hospital received supplies of medicine, clothing and everything deemed necessary for survival in war conditions. In the basement of Eltz castle, a warehouse with medical equipment was set up by the volunteers of the 1st medical platoon of the 204th (124th) brigade of the National Guard.

4 July (Thursday)

After a battle that lasted several hours, Croatian guard members and police officers fought off a ground-artillery attack on Borovo Naselje led by Serbian rebels from Borovo Selo.

25 July (Thursday)

Dr. Vesna Bosanac was named Head of the Vukovar Medical Centre. The Crisis Headquarters of the Vukovar Medical Centre were created. In July, 56 wounded were admitted to the Vukovar hospital.

1 August (Thursday)

Because of the JNA's aerial and artillery attack on Vukovar and Borovo Naselje, an operating room was set up in the basement and in the nuclear shelter of the Vukovar hospital. Other rooms were also prepared for work and admission of the wounded and staff from all the hospital's departments.

3 August (Saturday)

Croatian soldiers established control over the suburb of Lučac.

5-6 August (Monday-Tuesday)

The administration building of Vukovar hospital is shelled. The wounded and sick are moved to the nuclear shelter and basement of the hospital.

11 August (Sunday)

The wounded and sick are returned to the hospital departments.

13 August (Tuesday)

Heavy attacks on Borovo Naselje and Vukovar from Borovo Selo and from JNA boats on the Danube - in three and a half hours about 120 missiles were fired. The hospital and its surroundings were hit.

20 August

The children who were evacuated from Vukovar for “summer vacation” returned to the town to prepare for the beginning of the school year.

From 1 to 24 August

At least 31 wounded are admitted to Vukovar hospital.

24 August (Saturday)

The planes of the JNA fired artillery at the abandoned National Guard base in Opatovac and then machine-gunned the Đergaj near Bršadin. The Croatian guardsman Luka Andrijanić managed to hit two planes.

25 August (Sunday)

From the Yugoslav Army’s traffic lanes that were heading from Vukovar on the Borovo Street towards Borovo Selo, one vehicle swerved from the road and drove over an anti-tank mine. Four wounded JNA soldiers, two of which were heavily wounded, were taken to Vukovar hospital and taken care of. At the request of the Yugoslav Army, they were transferred from the hospital to the War Medical Academy in Belgrade. Violent artillery and aerial attacks on Vukovar and Borovo Naselje mark the beginning of the three-month uninterrupted shelling of the town and the hospital. That day the hospital was struck by more than 15 plane bombs, wounding one doctor, V.H. (aged 28). Missiles destroyed two operating rooms on the second floor of the Vukovar hospital, causing the evacuation of all the patients and staff to the basement and nuclear shelter, where the activities of the hospital were conducted from then on. Thirty-two patients are in the hospital, most of which are wounded.

26 August (Monday)

A new violent JNA attack on Vukovar by “sea-gull” type planes begin at 9 a.m. Borovo Naselje and the very heart of Vukovar are hit (about 1200 grenades), and two ground-to-ground rockets hit Vukovar hospital. The hospital was also targeted by snipers. The hospital admitted at least 42 wounded, among which a brother (D.B., 11 years old) and sister (J.B., 16 years old), wounded in an artillery-air attack on the town.

Several employees of the administrative services are stranded in the ruins of Eltz castle. During the intervention an ambulance bearing a large Red Cross sign was hit by a missile from Vojvodina. Doctor S.T. (29 years old) is seriously hurt - serious injury to the middle ear and the centre of balance. Medical technician A.K. (28 years) and the driver of the ambulance M.Z. (36 years) are lightly wounded.

27 August (Tuesday)

The hospital is hit several times by snipers.
Eight people die in the town, and 15 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

28 August (Wednesday)

The hospital admits 13 wounded, making the total number of wounded more than 70.

29 August (Thursday)

At least six wounded are admitted to the hospital.

30 August (Friday)

At least fifteen wounded are admitted to the hospital.

31 August (Saturday)

In the attack on Mitnica and Borovo Naselje 26 civilians are wounded, 9 of which are children.

The hospital admits at least 28 wounded.

1 September (Sunday)

At least three wounded are admitted to the hospital.

2 September (Monday)

At least eight wounded are admitted to the hospital.

3 September (Tuesday)

At least thirteen wounded are admitted to the hospital.

4 September (Wednesday)

At least eleven wounded are admitted to the hospital.

A medical convoy evacuating patients with head wounds and brain damage from

Vukovar hospital to Zagreb comes under Serbian artillery and machine-gun fire near the village of Bogdanovci. Staff and patients took refuge in the canal along the road, and it took them 6 hours to reach Vinkovci.

5 September (Thursday)

The most violent artillery and aerial attack on Vukovar begins sometime before 6 a.m. One shell or rocket fell on the town every minute. The old people's home was hit, 2 people were killed, 4 were seriously wounded and 3 elderly people suffered minor wounds.

At least 17 wounded are admitted to the hospital Dr. Vesna Bosanac announced that 36 people died and 210 were wounded. Only 250 people are working in the hospital.

6 September (Friday)

At least 5 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

7 September (Saturday)

At least 8 wounded are admitted to the hospital following a JNA artillery attack only a few hours after a signed ceasefire.

8 September (Sunday)

At least 7 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

9 September (Monday)

At least 9 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

10 September (Tuesday)

At least 6 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

Lj. O. (39 years old), worker at the x-ray department of Vukovar hospital, was killed on her way home from work by direct machine-gun fire.

11 September (Wednesday)

Although a signed cease fire was supposed to be in force, Vukovar is attacked from the suburb of Petrova Gora, but no casualties were admitted to the hospital.

12 September (Thursday)

At least 7 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

13 September (Friday)

During the shelling of the Borovo factory, the Yugoslav Army killed 10 and wounded 6 people. One child was among the wounded.

Parents brought to the hospital their 6 year-old girl (D.J.) from Borovo Naselje, who had multiple heavy wounds on her body (abdomen and thorax, pierced liver and wound to the right kidney). She was hit by a cluster shell when she was running out of the shelter to fetch a ball. Despite dim prospects the little girl survived and was evacuated to Zagreb. Today she lives in Vukovar.

At least 6 wounded are admitted to the hospital, 3 of which were transported from Mitnica.

The representatives of the Red Cross met in the Vukovar barracks to discuss the liberation of hostages from Berko. They then visited the hospital. They proposed to the Croatian side an “all for all exchange”, meaning the liberation of Serbian terrorists.

14 September (Saturday)

“Slavija”, the only pharmacy in Vukovar that had remained open, is destroyed in an aerial attack. Pharmaceutical technician R.J. carries the reminding medicine to the hospital.

Nurse Z.M. (born in 1961) is killed in the occupied part of town.

At least 36 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

15 September (Sunday)

At least 40 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

After a night without sleep and attempts at getting at least a little rest, I am standing at the hospital entrance. Strong detonations can be heard throughout the town, especially in Sajmište, Mitnica and Borovo Naselje. It seems very likely that today will be like yesterday. I fear that once again we will have lots of wounded and that the town will undergo great destruction. Shells are starting to fall in the hospital courtyard. I have taken refuge in the basement. The courtyard was so badly hit by shells that it is dangerous to walk there during the day and even more so at night. If you are not hit by a shell, there is always the danger of fracturing a limb in the one of the holes in the ground. When I entered the basement I saw that the wounded had started to arrive. We admitted three wounded from Mitnica, three fighters who had halted the advance of a transporter on the front line. They had succeeded, but the house behind which they had been hiding

was hit by tank shells. They were wounded by the shell fragments. We're helping them the usual way. The wounds are quickly taken care of, we give them the appropriate dose of anti-tetanus serum, pain killers, and then we immobilize them. The team is running smoothly, which is not surprising since we work on almost identical cases 24 hours a day. I pray to God that they will be the last wounded to be admitted to the hospital today. Yesterday, 35 wounded were admitted.

The explosion of shells can be heard uninterruptedly, announcing that tomorrow could be even worse than today. They've started hitting the hospital as well. Shells are falling on the roof. Strong explosions echo in our ears. We are assembled in the basement and are grateful to the people who made the basement when the hospital was built, even though it's not completely underground, because the hospital wasn't built as a war hospital. The windows "peaked" towards the outside and allowed shrapnel to get in, but they still provide some sort of protection. In the basement corridor the lightly wounded who were in their homes, and who come in regularly for examinations when possible, are also arriving. It is becoming increasingly crowded. It would be almost impossible to move if the people hadn't made room, letting us pass and not disturbing us in our work. Because the explosions shattered the windows, there was a constant draught. Therefore, ventilation in the corridor was quite satisfactory. We are not afraid of suffocating because of smoke or dust.

*The wounded tell us the fighting is heavy at all points. This morning the enemy attempted with all its forces to break the defense and enter the town. The town is being attacked by tanks, transporters and especially mini rocket launchers. Just as we were treating the wounded, our additional "penance" began. This is how we called the attack of multiple rocket launchers that launched a great number of rockets on the hospital from Bačka. We were happy that the building was such a strong construction. It was really hard to rupture the building, except when a shell would hit a window and explode in a room. Such hits would have destroyed the walls if they were any thinner, as well as all the furniture in the room. (From dr. Juraj Njavro's book *Glava dolje - ruke na leđa* (Head down - hands behind your back), Zagreb, 1992)*

16 September (Monday)

After they occupied the part of Sajmište between the barracks and Petrova Gora, members of Serbian units killed dozens of people. Twenty-five wounded are admitted to the hospital.

17 September (Tuesday)

At least forty-three wounded are admitted to the hospital.

18 September (Wednesday)

At least 18 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

19 September (Thursday)

Ambulance driver I.Š. (born in 1950) was severely wounded by shell shrapnel to the thorax. At least twenty-six wounded are admitted to the hospital.

20 September (Friday)

At least 16 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

21 September (Saturday)

At least 14 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

22 September (Sunday)

At least 10 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

23 September (Monday)

At least 17 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

24 September (Tuesday)

At least 15 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

25 September (Wednesday)

At least 16 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

26 September (Thursday)

At least 14 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

27 September (Friday)

At least 25 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

28 September (Saturday)

At least 24 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

Thirty-six wounded are transferred from Vukovar hospital to the war hospital in Mikanovci and then to other medical institutions via a convoy of the Main Medical

Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia, led by Dr. Josip Husar. The convoy was attacked by Serbian outposts, but there were no casualties.

Over the radio dr. Vesna Bosanac asks the inhabitants of Vukovar not to venture out of the shelters.

EC observers choose Ilok for their centre for monitoring the situation in Vinkovci and Vukovar.

Talks are held in Ilok between representatives of the Republic of Croatia, the municipality of Vukovar, the observers and the commandment of the Novi Sad corps of the JNA. The observers' ceasefire proposal is again accepted by the Croatian side, but it is rejected by the JNA.

29 September (Sunday)

Croatian forces leave Tovarnik.

At least 32 wounded are admitted to the hospital, among which the foreign journalist Loren van den Stock.

30 September (Monday)

At least 27 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

1 October (Tuesday)

The JNA occupies Marinci, Petrovci and Deletovci.

At least 55 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

Nurse J.P. (30 years old) is wounded.

2 October (Wednesday)

The JNA occupies the village of Cerić.

The enemy fires more than 3000 shells on the town, and 37 shells fall on the hospital.

At least 74 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

3 October (Thursday)

At least 45 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

4 October (Friday)

At least 37 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

The bodies of three police officers from Županja are taken to the hospital. They had died on 1 October in Bogdanovci. Ten wounded from the same village are also brought in.

5 October (Saturday)

At about 5 p.m. a Yugoslav Army plane drops two 250 kg bombs - so called "sows" - on the hospital. The building is shaken and the window and door frames are dismounted. The patients in the basement pulled out their infusions and catheters, and jumped out of bed. Terrified they tried to crawl somewhere. The first "sow" blew up the external part of the building and the second floor, and the second busted through the roof and the concrete slabs of the new hospital building (5 slabs!) before landing on a bed in the corridor near the entrance to the nuclear shelter, precisely between the legs of a patient of Serbian nationality (P.V., 45 years old). Because of the dust and smoke it was impossible to tell it was a bomb at first, and a nurse rushed to the bed thinking it was a bottle of oxygen. The bed was destroyed, but the patient survived and did not suffer any additional injury. There were no detonators on the bomb's lighter, so it did not explode. From the basement one could see the sky through the hole it had created.

Nurse T.K. and doctor V.T. were injured while on duty.

At least 31 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

Marin Vidić-Bili addressed a call to Stjepan Mesić, Franjo Gregurić, Franjo Tuđman, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia, the Main Headquarters of the Croatian Army, Žarko Domljan and others, asking them to seriously consider that Vukovar needs help and how dramatic the situation in the hospital is.

6 October (Sunday)

At least 43 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

7 October (Monday)

I.K. (49 years old), medical technician at Vukovar hospital, was wounded by shell shrapnel. M.B., nurse, who decided to stay in the hospital after the Serbian occupation, was also injured.

At least 30 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

In 45 days, 158 people died and 654 were wounded in Vukovar.

Hospital head Dr. V. Bosanac demands the evacuation of the 160 most heavily wounded patients.

8 October (Tuesday)

At least 12 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

The independence of the Republic of Croatia is proclaimed during the session of the Croatian parliament in the INA building in Šubićeva Street in Zagreb. The Croatian parliament pledged the state and military authorities to do everything to help Vukovar, because Vukovar must not fall. For the first time in 46 days the town is quiet.

Dr. M. I. (about 50 years old), of Serbian nationality, is lightly wounded by a bullet fired from Serbian positions when he tried to flee the hospital to the Serbian side. After the occupation he decided to stay in the hospital, testifying about the events in a different manner than his Croatian colleagues.

9 October (Wednesday)

At least 28 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

10 October (Thursday)

At least 55 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

At the "I" Hotel in Zagreb it was agreed that the humanitarian convoy for Vukovar will depart from Đakovo.

11 October (Friday)

At least 25 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

Because of the obstruction of the Yugoslav Army, the aid convoy did not reach Vukovar and was stopped in Marinci under the pretext that a hand bomb was found in a hospital vehicle. The convoy is sent back to Vinkovci.

12 October (Saturday)

At least 30 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

The aid convoy fails to reach Vukovar again. In order for the convoy to enter Vukovar, the JNA conditioned for the Borongaj army barracks in Zagreb to be deblocked.

13 October (Sunday)

The Croatian army and police tried to lift the blockade of Vukovar, but the counter-attack on Marinci was unsuccessful.

At least 31 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

The humanitarian convoy (67 vehicles) arrives in the suburbs of Vukovar via Petrovci, and not via Marinci and Bogdanovci as had been planned. After a long wait the JNA directed the convoy towards its barracks instead of the hospital. The convoy was kept in the barracks for a short time, looted and then sent back to Vinkovci. By rerouting the convoy from the planned itinerary and by attempting to send it from the JNA barracks to the hospital, the commanders of the Yugoslav Army wanted to pierce the defense of the Croatian forces in Sajmište and thus use the convoy to penetrate this very well defended part of town.

14 October (Monday)

At least 23 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

15 October (Tuesday)

The hospital was hit by more than ten shells. Fireman Đ.R. dies and the boiler-room was destroyed. At least 6 people died in the town, and at least 42 wounded were admitted to the hospital. The Head of the humanitarian convoy, Ms. Vera Stanić (born Pivčević), held a press conference.

16 October (Wednesday)

At least 7 people died in the town, and at least 51 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

17 October (Thursday)

Croats are driven away from Ilok.

In the hospital, which was struck once again, 47 wounded were admitted.

18 October (Friday)

At least 28 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

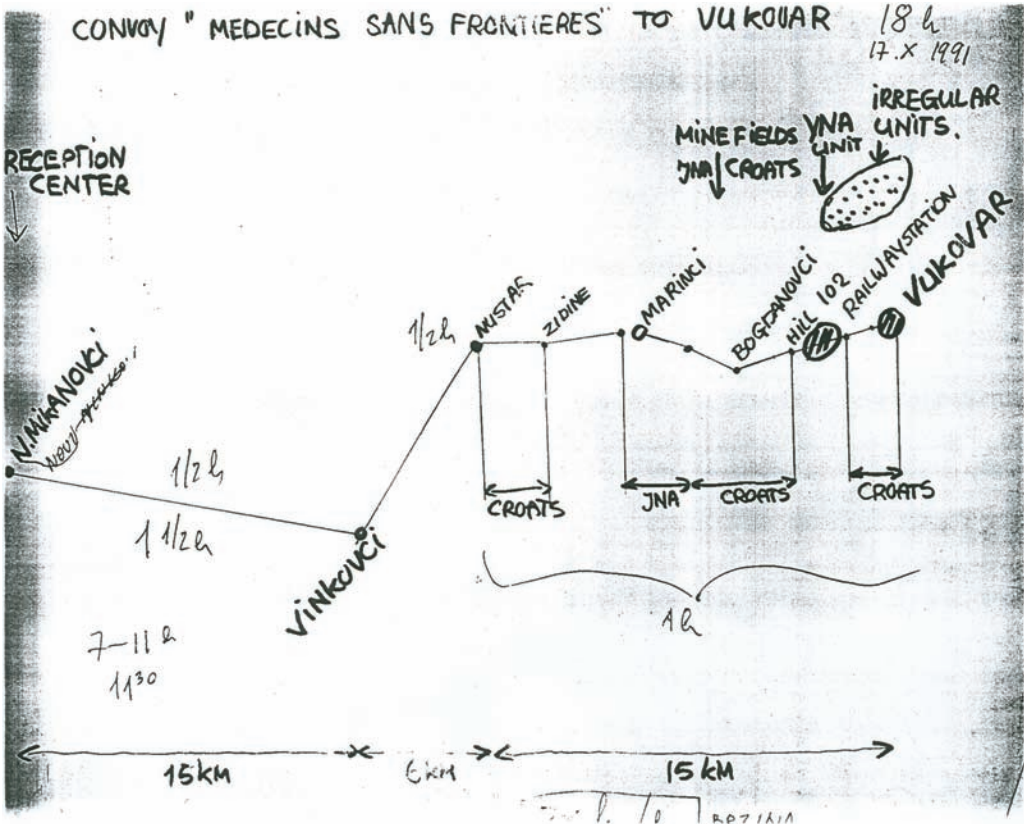
19 October (Saturday)

A six-month old dead baby (I.K., born on 1 April 1991) wrapped in a curtain was brought to the hospital from Mitnica. The child had been killed by a shell fired from JNA positions. His father (P.K.) and grand-mother were wounded. The grandmother almost died during the operation and had to amputate her right arm.

At least 18 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

Accompanied by Vukovar defenders, who were ahead of the convoy in a Zastava 101 car, a "Doctors without borders" convoy arrived at the hospital from Bogdanovci via the corn fields. The convoy was led by dr. Alain Destexe, Mr Martin Jean Michel, EC observer and a „liaison officer" from the JNA. By 12.30 p.m. 113 heavily wounded people had been placed in the convoy's vehicles. One of them (L.V., 72 years old) died of burns during the journey. One wounded JNA soldier, who had been treated at Vukovar hospital, was taken by the JNA in Petrovci and sent to Belgrade. The convoy set off from the hospital at 13 p.m., planning to return from Nuštre for the remaining wounded. However, when the convoy passed through JNA-controlled territory, a mine placed under one of the vehicles seriously wounded two nurses - Fabienne Schmit and Ghislaine Jacquier, who were then sent to the military hospital

in Belgrade. JNA diversionists from Pančevo had placed the mines under the vehicle. The diversionists had been dispatched on the ground during the setting up of the first convoy for Vukovar on 11 October. Because of ill-treatment by the JNA, the evacuation of the frozen and dehydrated to the free territory of the Republic of Croatia, which necessitated two hours at the most, lasted more than 11 hours, and was conducted in the rain and the cold. With this incident the JNA prevented the convoy from pursuing its journey through Bogdanovci and Marinci, as had been agreed between the representatives of the Croatian authorities and the JNA. The convoy turned before Bogdanovci and was redirected to a new road: Vukovar – Petrovci – Oriolik - Sremske Laze – Ilača – Tovarnik – Šid – Vašica – Batrovci – Lipovac – Bošnjaci - Županja, where it arrived at night, at about 1.30 a.m. From there the wounded were sent to Stari Mikanovci, Đakovo and Zagreb via Cerna and Vođinci.



Sketch of the humanitarian convoy “Doctor’s without borders” travel plans from Novi Mikanovci to Vukovar (sketch was given by Zlatko Ivković)

20 October (Sunday)

170 wounded and 70 ill, pregnant women and new-borns remained in the hospital. The supplies of medicine, infusion fluids, blood derivatives and medical equipment are almost empty. There are only a few bottles of oxygen and nitrogen gas left. Eight wounded are admitted to the hospital, as well as 3 identified bodies.

21 October (Monday)

24 wounded are admitted to the hospital.
From 25 August to 21 October 267 dead were recorded in the hospital, from which 165 adult civilians, 4 children, 11 members of Ministry of the Interior and 87 members of Croatian Army.

22 October (Tuesday)

At least 8 wounded are admitted to the hospital.
There is a shortage of medicine. Because of the danger of arriving to Vukovar by road, it is proposed that the delivery of medicine be organized by helicopter to a location closest to the hospital, the city stadium.

23 October (Wednesday)

In an attack that lasted from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. the hospital was struck by about 30 high caliber grenades. The hospital caught on fire, threatening the lives of the patients and destroying the auxiliary rooms and storerooms. One of the shells went through the entrance to the shelter, where there were wounded, pregnant women and newborns. One of the nurses (M.B., 50 years old) was heavily wounded, and became 100% handicapped. In the hospital, where a few cases of gas gangrene were reported, at least 26 wounded were admitted. More than 200 wounded and 70 sick are in the hospital.

24 October (Thursday)

The shelter and the hospital were hit. One shell fell on the town every 15 minutes. Via Croatian national television, Dr. Vesna Bosanac launched a new appeal for help for Vukovar and the hospital.

At least 5 wounded were admitted to the hospital.

25 October - International Day of Blood Donors (Friday)

The JNA occupied Tordinci.
S.I. (born in 1970) was wounded by a phosphor bomb. At least 19 wounded were admitted to the hospital. There are 210 wounded and 30 other patients in the hospital.

Dr. Edin Zujović, volunteer from Zagreb, and Željka Zgonjanin, head of the Croatian Red Cross in Vukovar, and other workers of the hospital organized blood donations in the shelter in Borovo Naselje. Seventy blood donors participated.

The town has about 15.000 inhabitants (Croats, Serbs, Hungarians, Rusyns and other nationalities), of which more than 2000 are children. For two months already they have remained behind closed doors. Because of the blockade of the town and difficult living conditions, the population is threatened by hunger and epidemics.

26 October (Saturday)

At least 17 wounded are admitted to the hospital. Some reports mention 21 wounded and 2 people who were already dead.

27 October (Sunday)

Until midday the hospital admitted 9, and until the end of the day 43 wounded.

At midday there were 209 wounded in the hospital, of which 60 to 70 % were civilians.

That day at least 5 people died.

28 October (Monday)

During the night more than 500 shells fell on Vukovar; the morning was somewhat quieter. Seven new wounded were admitted to the hospital. The hospital is completely destroyed and 220 wounded are in the nuclear shelter and basement.

29 October (Tuesday)

In the Olajnica district a shell killed two young boys aged 13 and 14 and injured 6 other civilians. The hospital admitted at least 29 wounded.

30 October (Wednesday)

At least 2 people died in the town and the hospital admitted at least 9 wounded.

31 October (Thursday)

...From 6 a.m. mines and shells from Petrova Gora and Negoslavci started to fall on all the parts of the town, as well as rockets from multiple rocket launchers in Bačka. During the day more than 5000 shells again hit the ruins and all the buildings where there were thought to be people. Of course the hospital was targeted several times (...) After five passes a formation of six MIG 21 planes stormed the town and bombed everything it could, even striking the hospital (from the report of Siniša Glavašević, Croatian Radio Vukovar)

Struck by heavy artillery missiles from JNA positions in Vojvodina and from Šid-Negoslavci, part of the hospital collapsed and fragments fell on the patients. At 1 p.m. the head of the Vukokar war hospital, Dr. Vesna Bosanac, demanded the urgent stop of the attack on the hospital, which has lasted since the morning. At 1.45 p.m. JNA planes dropped two bombs on the hospital. One bomb exploded in the ground under the shelter, causing the entrance to the shelter to cave in. Consequently concrete and rubble fell on P.T. (34 years old), a patient who was seriously injured but survived. The second bomb exploded near the entrance of the nuclear shelter and created a 3 to 4 meter deep crater in the hospital courtyard. Toxic gases from the explosion filled the entire shelter where there were, apart from the most seriously wounded and ill, pregnant women, newborns and children. In the afternoon shells twice provoked a fire which almost emblazed the hospital building. During the night a shell fell in front of the Emergency ward and set fire to 3 medical vehicles, leaving the hospital with only one vehicle.

Eight dead and at least 32 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

1 November (Friday - All Saints Day)

In the morning 5 wounded were admitted to the hospital, and at least 31 by the end of the day.

1-2 November

During the night, in the first flight to Vukovar, the crew of the Independent air platoon, which operated in the Osijek Operative zone, dropped five trunks and two bottles of oxygen for Vukovar hospital not far from the hospital.

2 November (Saturday)

By penetrating into the Lučac district the enemy wedged in between Vukovar and Borovo Naselje and broke the defense of the town into two parts. The efforts of the Croatian army to free Marinci and lift the blockade of the road to Vukovar did not succeed.

The President of the Republic of Croatia, F. Tuđman, praised Vukovar hospital ‘for the sacrifice and the successful work of treating the wounded fighters and civilians in almost impossible working conditions’, during the attacks “by Serbian terrorists and the Yugoslav aggressor army”.

In the afternoon the hospital’s boiler-room was hit, where its worker I.K., father of 4 children, succumbed to shrapnel wounds. The laundry room and the kitchen were destroyed. The transport of the wounded was made very difficult and dangerous, because several shells had struck the very entrance to the hospital. However, at least 32 wounded were admitted to the hospital, and some reports state 87 new wounded.

Among them a Yugoslav Army reservist, A.M. from Svetozarevi was admitted and operated on. He had left the JNA military hospital in Negoslavci on 25 October and was sent immediately to the front; because of the severity of his wounds he died during the night.

3 November (Sunday)

In the morning 18 wounded were admitted, and 52 by the end of the day. The hospital has 350 wounded, mainly women and children. The situation is very critical. Medicine supplies are almost gone and water and food supplies are low.

At 6 p.m., on 2 and 3 November, at least 24 people died in the town.

4 November (Monday)

In a letter addressed to the EC observers and world statesmen, the head of the hospital, dr. V. Bosanac, states that there are 370 wounded in the hospital and writes that attacks never stop, stressing that more than 90 shells had hit the hospital that day. At least 80 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

5 November (Tuesday)

At least 55 wounded are admitted to the hospital, along with a member of the JNA (B.G., born in 1972). In yesterday's and today's combats at least 11 defenders of the town died.

6 November (Wednesday)

At least 55 wounded are admitted to the hospital. Therefore, more than 350 wounded are being treated in impossible conditions. On the Croatian side at least 5 people died.

God help the heroes! Brother Serbs, heroic Serbian Chetniks, today you are going to war. Today you are going to free Serbian Vukovar and defend Serbian Slavonia. You are going to join the hundreds, the thousands of our volunteers. You come from all parts of our narrowed Serbia to bring glory back to the Serbian weapon. You will collaborate with the units of the Yugoslav army, because it is our army. It is above all a Serbian army by its old cadre and by its struggle to save the Serbian country and Serbian lands. (from the speech of the president of the Serbian radical party and Chetnik leader Vojislav Šešelj, held on 6 November 1991 and addressed to the volunteers of Serbia before their departure to Croatia; source: NTV Studio B)

7 November (Thursday)

The hospital is hit again, and part of the building collapsed on the patients, mostly civilians. The veracity of the words of Dr. Vesna Bosanac about the attacks of the JNA and the Serbian paramilitary units on the hospital are confirmed in signing by wounded soldiers of the JNA from Serbia, who were wounded in the battle for Vukovar and treated in the Vukovar hospital: S.J. - sergeant from Belgrade, P.T. - JNA reservist from Sombor, S.M. - soldier from Niš. At least 6 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

8 November (Friday)

Seventy-five wounded are admitted to the hospital and 35 complex operations are conducted in extremely difficult conditions. During the night some of the wounded are transferred for the last time from the hospital to "Borovo-Commerce"; with great risk for the wounded and the drivers, 30 wounded are transferred.

The air platoon with its AN-2 agricultural aircraft again drops 6 chests on Vukovar, each filled with 120kg of medical equipment. It seems that only two chests ended up in the hands of hospital staff. In one of the chests there were 24 bags of blood, in the other 20.

9 November (Saturday)

Siniša Glavašević reports for Croatian radio: the Commander of the Croatian defense in Vukovar Jastrež lifted the embargo on information, but the defense of Vukovar is about to break.At this moment the ruins of Vukovar hospital, on which shells and mines have been falling for a long time, hide 450 wounded. The medical teams are doing all they can to localize the infection that has started to develop amid the difficult conditions. Conducting difficult operations, the medical teams have lacked indispensable medicine and medical equipment for a quite a long time. Doctor Edin Zujović, head of transfusions, was supposed to talk about this for HTV tonight..... (from the report of Siniša Glavašević for Croatian radio)

For "Kronika dana" (Daily Chronicle), *Siniša Glavašević: ...These last three days three hundred shells have fallen on the hospital, they have destroyed all the vehicles for the transport of the wounded from the front to the hospital, and rendered some more operating rooms unusable. There are no more stocks of type O blood, and Croatia has again promised that it will help Vukovar. But the situation on the front allows for no other chance...* (from the report of Siniša Glavašević for the Daily Chronicle)

In the hospital, after only 25 weeks of pregnancy a woman gives birth to a premature baby weighing only 800 grams. The baby was placed in the only incubator in the hospital's shelter. During the afternoon two fires broke out in the hospital; they were extinguished with difficulty. The head of the hospital, Dr. Vesna Bosanac, demanded

the urgent evacuation of 450 wounded, children, pregnant women and babies. At least 8 wounded were admitted to the hospital. At least 5 people died in the town, and two succumbed to their wounds.

10 November (Sunday)

The JNA conducted an attack from Lušac on Priljevska cesta with the objective of taking control of the flyover towards the centre of Vukovar in order the join its units operating on Trpinjska cesta.

The JNA managed to take the area of Milovo Brdo, thus cutting the defense of Vukovar into two and dividing the defenders in three separate pockets.

The JNA and Serbian paramilitary groups occupied Bogdanovci and massacred the non-Serb population they came across.

At least 31 wounded were admitted to the hospital. Because of the road blocks 15 Croatian guardsmen walked 5 kilometers during the night - from Borovo to the hospital - to bring in 5 severely wounded co-fighters, of which 3 had cranial cerebral injuries.

11 November (Monday)

In the morning 12 wounded were admitted, and 25 till the end of the day. Because of the constant bombing and the road blocks the lightly wounded cannot be sent home or transferred to other shelters. In her appeal to the mission of the EC dr. V. Bosanac states that the hospital is housing 680 people, of which 480 wounded and sick.

12 November (Tuesday)

Nine wounded were admitted to the hospital, six were civilians. During the night, aid was delivered by air to the defenders at the hospital for the last time. Six 150 kg chests were dropped. These contained anti-tank missiles, ground ammunition and medical equipment. There were also a few cartons of cigarettes on the top of each chest.

13 November (Wednesday)

The attempt of the Croatian army to liberate the village of Marinci and unblock the road towards Vukovar fails.

Between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. more than 60 shells fell on the roof and walls of the hospital, and the attack never stopped. The kitchen has completely collapsed, as well as the basement of neurology, where two patients who were lying on the floor were injured by grenade shrapnel. At 4.20 p.m. dr. V. Bosanac sent out a new report about the situation in the hospital. Till now two people have died of gas gangrene in the hospital, and another 3 are suffering from the condition. New infections have appeared, because

of the absence of water, and the hospital is running short on medicine and food. At least 7 wounded were admitted to the hospital, and some reports say there were many more, stating the 14 new wounded had been admitted in the morning alone.

Šešelj (Vojislav, president of the Serbian radical party, A/N) is arriving with his suite to visit the front. In fact there is no true front here. The part of Vukovar where we are is mostly populated by Serbs, it is only very slightly damaged. Only the local inhabitants know which road we can take to get closer to the centre. But even that isn't safe. Snipers operate every day. Šešelj called a meeting with the commanding cadres of the JNA, the commanders of the Territorial Defence and the volunteers in one of the houses in Nova Street. the Vojvoda (literally "Duke" - i.e. Šešelj) is wearing a camouflage uniform and has a submachine gun around his neck. His bodyguards, their faces petrified, are on the lookout for a hidden danger. In fact it is all quiet comical. Šešelj, the officers, the other commanders with their beards, cockades and curved knives. They are all standing still and greet the duke. "We are all one army", says Šešelj. "But whose" - asks captain Saša Bojkovski (commander of the 1st motorized unit of the 1st motorized battalion, under the commandment of major Borivoj Tešić - later commander of the 1st storm-troops of the motorized guard brigade of the JNA, under the commandment of colonel Mile Mrkšić - commander of OG South, A/N). The duke, as if he hadn't heard the question, continues: "There are no looters, alcoholics, excesses..." I saw that he believed the volunteers that told him such lies. Because it is dangerous to go out as soon as it gets dark - they are all drunk and they all shoot. One night Šešelj's men went on a binge and threw a chest full of bombs out of the window into the garden. "Your fighters are excellent" - remarked one lieutenant-colonel. "There are not my fighters, we are all one army", responded the duke and continued: "This war is a big test for the Serbs, because he who goes through it wins. We have a lot of traitors and we mustn't allow deserters to be left unpunished. Lies are spread about the army, the treacherous parties are plotting; for example they use Čanak to agitate the Hungarians in Vojvodina..." They are all carefully listening to him - and major Veselin Šljivančanin (head of the "security organ" gmtbr, A/N) and Captain Miroslav Radić (commander of the 3rd Infantry company in the 1st gmtbr, A/N) and some other officers. The duke mumbles mainly half-truths and explains: "We accepted the concept of a Yugoslav army, not Serbian. Because in this way there is no true foundation for the foreign powers to get involved. As we can see it is the federal army and the insurgents Croats that are fighting..." At the end he leaves a message: "Not one Ustasha should come out alive from Vukovar. For most of the volunteers and members of the paramilitary units every Croat is an Ustasha. I fear that no-one will be able to stop them.

At 6.35 p.m. I hear from captain Bojkovski that about twenty of our fighters deserted a street that they had won, and we must now fight for it again. The commander of the territorial units, Stanko Vujanović, is also complaining. He says: "We first take hold of an area and then go pass it, because behind us we have our Cleaners, whose jobs it is

to look through each basement, each attic and room to see if an Ustasha stayed behind. However, they look at what can be taken from the house and take it. It's a mob in fact..." "Yes, but they are excellent cleaners", replies Bojkovski, "they cleaned in great detail every shelf and wardrobe". (authentic notes of the Serbian journalist Jovan Dulović, written on 13 November 1991 at 5.30 p.m.; published under the title "Krvava priča" (Bloody Story) in Serbian press *Vreme*, 20 November 1995, p.18-19)

14 November (Thursday)

At least 8 wounded are admitted to the hospital, and according to some reports there were many more, because they mentioned that there were 12 new wounded in the morning alone. Dr. Bosanac stubbornly sends out appeals to the world. In the hospital's shelter there were 44 children for which urgent evacuation was requested, as well as for the sick, undernourished and frightened children in the civilian shelters and basements across the town. One member of staff refused to fetch water at the well, because of the strong artillery fire. Dr. V. Bosanac herself went instead.

*Tonight from the clear sky two bombs fell about a hundred meters from the house where we are staying. We stayed in the basemen until the morning. Šljivančanin says that the Croatian agriculture planes dropped two boilers filled with explosives, which sounds untrue, because I was awake the whole time, and apart from the snoring of Tomo Peternek nothing else could be heard. Later one of our soldiers told me that our army had been targeting Vukovar with ground-to-ground rockets. The compositions of some units are completely unclear to me. I don't know who commands them, who has to listen to whom, the duties entrusted to the members....It seems that everything is a matter of agreement. For example, in one unit, there is a minority of JNA soldiers and a majority of volunteers, locals, Šešelj men, and some other riff-raffs. Who, for instance, can gives orders to a group of drunken volunteers with bloody eyes and a bullet in the barrel of a machine-gun? A couple of days ago I saw them mistreat two JNA officers. They almost killed them for the sake of peace. Here no-one has to answer to murder, and attacks are launched only when everyone agrees - always with a bottle of brandy. It is very clear, at least as far as the units in Nova Street are concerned, that the only and fundamental motive of their self-styled war is plain looting. On several occasions they killed themselves over the division of their spoils. (Authentic notes of the Serbian journalist Jovan Dulović, written on 14 November 1991 at 4.30 a.m.; published under the title "Krvava priča" (Bloody Story) in Serbian press: *Vreme*, 20 November 1995, p. 19)*



Vukovar, November 1991 (author of the photograph: Christopher Morris)

15 November (Friday)

Since 6 o'clock this morning the town has been under heavy artillery fire. Shells are falling on the hospital; a few shells fired from howitzers fell on the hospital's shelter. In the afternoon a shell fell on the civilian shelter in the basement of the destroyed Eltz castle, killing 9 civilians who had been living there with 20 or so other people for months. In the attack a physiotherapist, her husband, a computer scientist, and their three year-old son died. A mother and her two daughters (aged 5 and 6 and a half) were wounded. At least 12 wounded were admitted to the hospital. There are about 480 wounded in the hospital. Because of the very poor conditions, 8 patients have been infected with gas gangrene up to now, of which 3 have died as a consequence in the past three days.

There is no end to the horrors of the war in Vukovar. The several thousands of shells that fell today have turned what is left of Vukovar into ashes. There is less and less of it. So little in fact, that that the artillery and the tanks are destroying the last places of refuge of the survivors of Vukovar. Today one tank shell pierced through one of the worn-out shelters, killing 7 and wounding a great number of people. As if there will be no end to the crimes of the yugo-army.

The end of the third month of siege is approaching, and the horrors that the population has to go through are increasing by the day. Cold, exhaustion, infections, malnutrition

are affecting these half-dead people more and more. Is death by hunger and thirst the destiny of these people?

The war operations are in full blow. Borovo Naselje, the area of Priljevo and Lužac, Sajmište are still crisis points where the defenders of Vukovar are fighting for their family, their town, for themselves and finally for Croatia. The Croatian fighters, tired, restless and exhausted, are offering strong resistance to the enemy and its artillery and foot forces. Such a resistance has long surpassed all we knew about the morale and the courage of Croatian soldiers throughout history; for us who look from a Vukovar perspective, such a resistance has long surpassed all we knew, saw or heard about the war.

How long will we continue to talk about the battle of Vukovar, how long till the misery that will mean only one thing - there is no Croatian Vukovar any more? (Josip Esterajher from Vukovar, for the Daily news of Croatian radio, 15 November at 5 p.m.)

16 November (Saturday)

Heavy attacks since the morning, because the enemy started the last offensive on the town. Frightened by the Chetniks that have started entering the town and killing people in the basements, civilians from the cellars and shelters of the surrounding buildings have arrived at the hospital, hoping they will be better protected. At least 9 wounded are admitted to the hospital.

17 November (Sunday)

Dr. Njavro and Dr. Vlahović operated a baby, a six month-old girl, S.V., whom shrapnel had pierced the abdominal wall and ruptured the bowel. Dr. Kušt tried to heat the air in the cold "operating room" with a hair dryer. During the operation the little girl was given several blood transfusions, directly from the donor, a member of staff. After the fall of Vukovar the little girl was transferred to the War Medical academy in Belgrade, where she was shown as a "victim of the Ustasha" in front of the television cameras. She spent her life in exile in Zagreb, where she was operated on once again at the Children's hospital and now lives in Vukovar. For the evacuation of the wounded and other patients, which was supposed to be conducted by the International Red Cross in JNA vehicles according to a signed agreement, a list with their diagnostics was drawn up. At least 13 wounded were admitted to the hospital.

Diplomatic initiatives of the Croatian government and the international community aimed at saving the wounded, the women and the children of Vukovar. Dir Jan Van Houten, head of the observers, sends an urgent letter to general Rašeta, asking him to allow the observers to enter Vukovar and that the Yugo-army guarantees the security of women and children. At an extraordinary session the Croatian government

demands the JNA General Staff to set up a buffer zone towards the Chetniks in order to save the civilian population and allow humanitarian operations. The government required the urgent evacuation of the population of Vukovar in the presence of the observers and the International Red Cross via the Vukovar - Bogdanovci - Nuštar - Vinkovci route.

18 November (Monday)

Siniša Glavašević reports for the Daily Chronicle: ...The situation in Vukovar at 10 p.m. The 87th day will remain forever in the minds of the witnesses. Ghastly scenes appear relentlessly, the smell of ashes. Under your feet the remains of dead bodies, building material, glass, ruins and a frightening silence can be felt. At the same time the doctors at Vukovar hospital are fighting adversity. There is a great number of wounded, 300 of which are seriously wounded and about 400 are more mobile. There is also a great number of civilians, who found refuge in the hospital, and a five and a half month old baby, who suffered terrible wounds and who was operated on in the afternoon by doctor Tomislav Vlahović. The baby was wounded by a shell which seriously damaged its thigh and upper leg. A similar incident happened to a four and a half year old girl whose shoulders were crushed by a shell. Recently we reported the suffering of a future

P O S V R D A

Da se B [REDACTED] [REDACTED] rođen 1974 godine
stalno nastanjen u VUKOVAR ulica 12. IX - 46
broj 102 naležio u sabirnom centru "Livade" u
vremenici od 19. 11. do 02. 12. 91. godine.


Imenovani je otpušten i odlazi na adresu RAMANJIŠIĆI,
MESEK IMAJETA 23/88 BEOGRAD TRAVNIČKI BEOGRAD!
i dužan je da se prijavi vlastima odmah po dolasku a najkasnije
do 05. 12. 91. GOD. godine.

Potvrda se izdaje u cilju dokazivanja identiteta i pravljanja odsut-
ne u vremenici u sabirnom centru. Imenovani ME - Posudu-
je LK broj _____ izdata od SUP _____

Prilikom prijaviteljstvu nadležni organ prima potvrdu i uništava je.

Datum 02. 12. 91 godine

KAPITAN LOGORA
OF
BUREAU RANJELOVIĆ



Confirmation from the JNA's war refugee camp about keeping citizens of Vukovar captured in the camp in Serbia, December 2nd, 1991 komande

MEETINGS ON HUMANITARIAN CONVOY TO EVACUATE WOUNDED AND SICK
FROM VUKOVAR HOSPITAL - 18 NOVEMBER

1. Representatives of the Republic of Croatia, the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Medecins sans Frontier and the Maltese Cross met on 18 November 1991 and reached the following agreement regarding a convoy to evacuate the wounded and sick from Vukovar Hospital.

2. The Republic of Croatia and the YPA undertook to guarantee a ceasefire in the area of Vukovar Hospital and along the agreed evacuation route. This guarantee would cover both regular forces and irregular units in the areas in which they would respectively have responsibility for the evacuation operation. The guarantee would include the assurance that the route was clear of mines in the areas of respective responsibility.

3. The convoy will take a route from Vukovar to Prilievo to Luzac to Bogdanovci to Marinci to Zidine. The transfer from YPA to Croatian responsibility will take place at Zidine at the cross road to Henrikovci. The convoy will move at times to be agreed and notified to each side well before evacuation.

4. The YPA will provide suitable military vehicles for the movement from Vukovar to Zidine; the Republic of Croatia will provide suitable vehicles for the remainder of the journey. Both parties will provide suitably equipped and manned ambulances for some 40 seriously ill and lorries or coaches as appropriate for the remaining 360 or so casualties of whom around a third will be stretcher cases.

5. The evacuation will include all those wounded or sick undergoing medical treatment in Vukovar hospital who are judged by the authorities of the hospital to be fit to make the journey.

6. The Republic of Croatia and the YPA will recognise the neutrality of Vukovar hospital during a period covering the evacuation. The hospital will be put under the protection of the ICRC who will advise both parties of the period of neutrality which they require.

7. The Republic of Croatia and the YPA agree that the EC Monitor Mission should monitor the whole of the operation, having full access to all elements of the evacuation. The two Parties will also facilitate the involvement of the ICRC, Medecins sans Frontier and the Maltese Cross, as appropriate, to allow them to play such roles as may be decided in supporting and monitoring the evacuation.

8. This agreement is subject to all parties meeting their respective responsibilities. Any party may withdraw at any time if it judges that the terms of the agreement have not been met. The option of withdrawal would in particular arise if the security undertakings given by the Republic of Croatia and the JNA were judged to have been invalidated.

Signed for the Republic of Croatia

Signed for the YPA

An agreement between the Croatian Government and JNA about organizing the evacuation of wounded and ill from the Hospital in Vukovar, November 18th, 1991 (this document was given by: dr. Juraj Njavro)

mother and her unborn child. Civilization is incapable of bearing the load of such cases. Everyone hopes here that gas gangrene will never again rule over medicine.

*At this very moment I am receiving information regarding the negotiations. A convoy will leave tomorrow at 10 a.m. and will have a capacity of 600 patients. It will travel on the following route: Vukovar hospital, Priljevo, Lužac, Bogdanovci, Marinci, Zidine, Nuštar. Tomorrow contact will be established also with the civilian shelters in Borovo, where there are about 200 wounded. The population will also take part in the evacuation in the following days. We hope that the sufferings in Vukovar will come to an end. (from the report of Siniša Glavašević for the *Daily Chronicle*; two days after, Siniša Glavašević was killed by Serbian occupiers at Ovčara)*

The JNA and the Serbian paramilitary units occupied the greater part of Vukovar. In accordance with article 15 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, according to which hospitals in war zones are to be taken over by the International Red Cross whose staff are to treat the wounded and the sick, the representatives of the Republic of Croatia, the JNA, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Doctors without Borders and Malta Cross reached an agreement on the neutralization of Vukovar hospital and the organization of a convoy to evacuate the wounded and the sick. The Republic of Croatia and the JNA agreed to a “cease fire in the area of the Vukovar hospital and on the agreed evacuation route”, and engaged to insure “the proper vehicles with the appropriate staff for about 40 seriously ill patients and about 360 wounded, a third of which needed stretchers”, and also agreed to recognize the “neutrality of Vukovar hospital during the evacuation”. By agreement the Republic of Croatia and the JNA gave their consent that “the observers’ mission of the European Community supervise the entire operation and that it has complete access to all parts of the evacuation”, which will ‘comprise of all the wounded and sick who are being treated at Vukovar hospital and for whom the competent hospital staff have estimated they can travel’. According to the third clause of the agreement the convoy was to travel on the Vukovar - Priljevo - Lužac - Bogdanovci - Marinci - Zidine route. At Zidine, at the angle of the road heading towards Henrikovci the Croatian side was to take control over the convoy from the JNA. The agreement was signed by the representative of the European observation mission, J.M. Chenu, the representative of the Croatian government (Minister of Health), Prof. A. Hebrang, and the representative of JNA, General A. Rašeta.

At 10.10 a.m. V. Bosanac, MD informed the European mission that that hospital is again being targeted by artillery. The observation group of the European Community for Vukovar announced at 12.15 p.m. from Negoslavci that its representative will come to the hospital ‘if he is allowed to’. At 12.35 p.m. V. Bosanac addressed a protest to the European mission because it did not fulfill its promise regarding the contacts and the beginning of the evacuation of the wounded. At 3.40 p.m. V. Bosanac addressed another protest because no representative of the international community or the

Red Cross turned up ‘at the hospital which has more than 500 patients and the same number of civilians’. At 4.55 p.m. V. Bosanac again addressed a protest by telephone to the European mission, because the promised help had not arrived. At least 15 wounded were admitted to the hospital.

On 18 November 1991 the last bastion fell, the last outpost of Ustasha authority in Vukovar - Vukovar hospital. With its fall the town of Vukovar, formerly a beautiful town, has been liberated. Human imagination cannot imagine what one could see in the town at that time. A town that does not exist anymore, that offers images of hell, full of smoke, ash, corpses, foul smells, and above all, never ending ruins.

The hospital was one of the most beautiful buildings in the town, with its new wing erected 15 years ago, and it was considered one of the best equipped hospitals in the former Yugoslavia. Now it barely exists, because it is difficult, according to the contours in the mass of ruins, to figure out that we are standing precisely on its foundations. The hospital used to have a capacity of 450 beds, all the necessary wards, with its specialized and auxiliary services. Now there is nothing left, because 75 % of the building has been demolished and destroyed. (Vojska Krajina - list Srpske vojske Krajine, n°7-8, October-November 1993, p. 43; from a text by Vojislav Stanimirović, MD Minister without portfolio in the Government of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, 1995, in the occupied territories of the Republic of Croatia, then president of the Independent democratic Serbian party and, after the liberation and the peaceful reintegration of the occupied parts of the Republic of Croatia, member of parliament in the Croatian parliament from 2003 to 2008)

19 November (Tuesday)

Borovo Naselje is occupied, but part of the Croatian defenders continued to resist the enemy until the earlier hours of the next morning. Some defenders moved out of Borovo Naselje on 23 November.

At 9.01 a.m. Dr. V. Bosanac warned by telephone that no-one had contacted her regarding the evacuation.

In the war journal of Guards Motorized Brigade (JNA) it is mentioned that at 10 a.m. a UN delegation led by the personal envoy of the Secretary General, Cyrus Vance, had arrived at headquarters of the Operational Group (OG) South. Cyrus Vance is aware of the situation in Vukovar, but according to the video footage of Vance's visit one can conclude that major Veselin Šljivančanin did not grant him access to Vukovar hospital.

According to the regular combat report of commander of OG South, Mile Mrkšić, members of the JNA had "taken control of the hospital and the police precinct" by 11 a.m. There was never resistance coming from the hospital. The JNA immediately transferred its 6 soldiers which were receiving treatment as well some other patients. Among them was a wounded person that a Croatian guardsman had carried into the hospital in his arms, risking his own life by doing so. The combat report of the Yugo-army (1st Army District (VO)) states that the Guards Motorised Brigade (gmtbr), on 19 November 1991, removed from Vukovar hospital two of its men who had disappeared on 2 October 1991.

At about 2 p.m. in the enemy outpost of Negoslavci Dr. V. Bosanac insisted to JNA colonel M. Mrkšić, commander of the Guards Motorized Brigade and of the Operational Group South, that the international agreement on the evacuation of the wounded be implemented.

At about 5 p.m. members of the infamous Serbian paramilitary units entered the hospital. Some of the staff was taken out of the hospital: Zlatko Jurčević was imprisoned in Serbian camps till 12 December 1991 and Marko Mandić, who is registered as missing. The commissioner of the Croatian government for Vukovar, Marin Vidić-Bili and the head of the Vukovar Medical Centre, Dr. Vesna Bosanac, were arrested by the JNA and taken to Negoslavci; they were released the following morning at 6 a.m. At least 3 wounded were admitted to the hospital.

A document from 19 November states that a meeting was held that day in Zagreb in the early hours of the morning. The meeting was attended by "His Excellency, Ambassador Chenu from the Observation mission of the European Community, Dr. Andrija Hebrang, Minister of Health, representing the authorities of the Republic of Croatia, and General Rašeta, assistant commander of the 5th Army District in the name of the JNA." According to this document two meetings were held (the first on the 18th, the second on the 19th November). However, Dr. Andrija Hebrang claims that there was only one meeting, held on 18 November, and that 19 November was deliberately wrongly written in the document in order to escape responsibility for the crimes committed on the first day of the occupation, 18 November. The document stipulates that it had been agreed that

the Vukovar hospital area be “declared a neutral zone and be placed as such under the protection of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in conformity with article 15 of the Forth Geneva Convention”. By agreement access to the neutral zone was limited to the “sick and wounded civilians and army staff, the civilians who are not taking part in hostilities, the medical and administrative staff of the hospital and the delegates of the ICRC”; and access “to all other person outside of the mentioned categories must be authorized by the delegates of the ICRC”. The authorities of the Republic of Croatia and the JNA pledged that “they will cooperate completely with the ICRC in order to ensure the application of the agreement, which should enter into force on Tuesday 19 November at 8 p.m. local time and be valid till one of the signatories renounce it in written with 12 hours notice”. The 10th clause of the agreement states that the “oral agreement reached during the morning meeting on 19 November 1991 has the same force as a signature”. The agreement was never put into application by the JNA.

The same day the International Committee of the Red Cross delivered to the press a “statement on the evacuation of Vukovar hospital”, that stipulates that “an agreement has been reached regarding the evacuation on 20 November, whereby both parties guarantee the security of the convoy; the evacuation will begin at 8 a.m. and the evacuated people will be handed by the JNA to the Croatian authorities of the Republic of Croatia at 11 a.m. at Zidine, the convoy will travel along the Vukovar - Priljevo - Lužac - Bogdanovci - Marinci - Zidine route; the whole process will be conducted in accordance with international law, including the dispositions of the Geneva Convention regarding the rights of prisoners of war in hospital. Under the supervision of the Red Cross a location where the latter will be dropped off will be chosen. For the purpose of the evacuation Vukovar hospital will be proclaimed a neutral zone and the evacuation will depend on the fulfillment of the security guarantees.”

The federal secretary of people’s defense and head of the headquarters of Supreme commandment, army general Veljko Kadijević congratulated the commanders of the JNA operations in Slavonia and their units: commander of the 1st Army District, general lieutenant-colonel Života Panić, commander of OG North, general major Andrija Biorčević, commander of OG South, colonel Mile Mrkšić, commander of the 1st Air Corps, colonel Branislav Petković, and commander of anti-air defense, colonel Branislav Petrović. Some of them were immediately, or soon after, promoted to higher ranks: Života Panić became colonel general, Mile Mrkšić was promoted major general, Veselin Šljivančanin and Borivoje Tešić were named lieutenant-colonel, and Miroslav Radić became captain. During the night JNA soldiers guarded the hospital, which none of the staff were allowed to leave. Part of staff assembled in the kitchen and sang a folk song about Vukovar - *Moj lijepi Vukovar* (My Beautiful Vukovar).

In the hospital were about 700 staff and patients, of which about 420 were sick and wounded (more than 200 seriously) and 45 staff family members, as well as around 3000 civilians, who had arrived from the basements and the shelters in the hospital surroundings.

20 November (Wednesday)

Contrary to the “Protocol of the agreement on the neutralization and the free evacuation of Vukovar hospital”, JNA soldiers entered the hospital under the commandment of major Veselin Šljivančanin instead of the EC observers and the International Red Cross team.

“You can see that the international mission cannot fulfill its task. It cannot be considered responsible for what is happening here. I am being prevented from entering the hospital”. (declaration of Nicolas Borsinger, representative of the International Red Cross)

At 7.30 a.m. JNA major V. Šljivančanin announced to the hospital staff, assembled in the lobby near the hospital entrance, that martial law is in force and that dr. V. Bosanac has been dismissed. He talked for more than an hour. He gave 4 alternatives to hospital staff and patients: stay in the hospital under the authority of the JNA, go to Zagreb, to Novi Sad or to the reception centre in Šid. The JNA took all the medical documentation about the patients. During that time JNA officers carried out 400 men through the secondary exit of the hospital: wounded, staff and their family members and other civilians. Many of them never returned. At least 266 people were killed at various places of execution, most of which at Ovčara, where 200 people were shot, including 20 hospital staff members.

During the afternoon the severely wounded and sick were transported in medical vehicles; the other wounded and sick, staff and civilians, boarded buses. The bed-ridden patients received a bag with their medical documentation, and the patients that were able to move carried it with them. At around 4 p.m. the convoy set off for the JNA barracks and then, after a long wait, continued towards Negoslavci, instead of Nuštar as had been agreed. There was a JNA vehicle at the head of the convoy, followed by a vehicle with the representatives of the International Red Cross, an armed transporter of the JNA, vehicles carrying the wounded, a first aid vehicle and, lastly, the buses. At Negoslavci, where the convoy stopped, the local population and the Chetniks threatened the wounded and the hospital staff. After serious problems and mistreatment, the convoy arrived at about 9 p.m. at the JNA barracks in Sremska Mitrovica. About 120 seriously wounded people slept in the barrack's in-patient clinic. Medical staff mostly spent the night in the bus in the courtyard of the barracks. On the road to Sremska Mitrovica, G.S. (32 years old) died in her fifth month of pregnancy. The following morning K.O. (85 years) died in the in-patient clinic.

Fifty-four wounded remained at Vukovar hospital. They wished to go to the free part of Croatia. Among them were priest Smiljan Berišić, senior nurses - sisters Ana Zdravčević and Jela Tomašević and nurses from Zagreb who were helping out at the Vukovar war hospital - Vesna Belinić, instrumentist, and Zorica Ganić, anaesthetist. There were also wounded, doctors and other staff that wished to stay in the hospital. Some of them started calling their former colleagues Ustasha, and some of them were soon seen wearing JNA uniforms.

On 20 November the following staff was carried out of the hospital: medical technician Ante Arić (interned in Serbian camps till 12 December 1991) and logistics worker Zvonko Vulić (registered as missing).

In camps in Serbia JNA had imprisoned doctors: Vesna Bosanac, Juraj Njavro and Sadika Biluš in Sremska Mitrovica and in Stajićevo and Niš: Ivan Dasović, Tomislav Đuranac, Vladimir Emedi, Hischamo Malla, Vladislav Nadaš, Dražen Karnaš and Robert Mataušek (his brother, Rene Mataušek was abducted on 19 November and subsequently killed). They spent several weeks in prison.

Awful! Hundreds of women, children, sick, wounded, staff are leaving Vukovar hospital. One can feel the smell of death, in fact the smell of decomposition. Gas, gangrene, decaying wounds. Across the street from the hospital there are a hundred or so dead civilians: the bodies of those who were wounded and died in hospital. At night their bodies were taken out and left there. Journalists assail ten or so sisters who are carrying a newborn baby. Peacefully and with a smile on their faces the sisters refuse to comment. Major Šljivančanin uses the opportunity once again and plays the warrior. Before yesterday he led us to a part of town where hundreds of Vukovar inhabitants left the basements after three months. In front of foreign journalists he calls via a manual radio transmitter the commander of Vukovar, Mile Dedaković Jastrebović, so as to pass as a hero. Let them drink coffee first, as Šljivo says, and then take up the arms. This time he holds a speech in front of the hospital: "Dear journalists, we are doing all we can to help a people and stop the killings." Šljivo denies access to the hospital to the doctors of the International Red Cross even though they all the necessary authorizations. „There are still a hundred or so people in the hospital who are not sick, nor wounded, and they are armed and have lots of bombs“, explains Šljivančanin to the doctors of International Red Cross regarding the dangers of entering the hospital. "This is a war zone and anyone can perish at any time if he does stick to the rules. We wish to help everyone“, shouts Šljivančanin, but few people are listening to him. (authentic notes of the Serbian journalist Jovan Dulović, written on 20 November 1991 at 11.30 a.m.; published under the title "Krvava priča" (Bloody Story) in Serbian press: Vreme, 20 November 1995, p. 19)

Goran Hadžić, president of the government of the Serb Region of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srijem declared yesterday that Vukovar has at last been liberated after a three-month battle. *We are currently cleaning the ground, and after that, says Hadžić, we have a great task ahead of us, the building of a new town. Because, as you can see for yourself, there not a single house or building that is intact in the town. Life is currently impossible in the town. However, it is important that it is in our hands, and now we are going to erect a beautiful town together. The first task is to create the conditions for a normal life. This won't happen fast. All those who lived in the town and were chased from their homes can now return gradually - says Hadžić.*

Rade Leskovic, deputy minister of Information of the Serb Region of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srijem, pointed out that Vukovar must now be raised from the ashes. - *For*

the Croats Vukovar has fallen, and for us it has been liberated. Fighting has lasted more than three months. More than 1000 Ustasha have fallen in Vukovar. I must say that Vukovar is a sacrificed town, because it is completely in ruins. My personal estimation is that the fighting lasted that long because they wanted to leave enough room for the Croatian units to bring in new troops. Besides, this war is not being conducted in Croatia, but centuries-old Serbian lands. After the fall of Vukovar we will progress considerably faster in the war. We now hold the big complexes "Borovo" in Borovo, "Vuteks" in Vukovar, and we hope to soon control "Saponija" in Osijek, because Osijek belongs to the Serbian people on historical grounds. We will do everything to put these complexes back into operation. We will make a proposition to the Serbian assembly to pass a law according to which a certain percentage of help will be put aside to help these Serbian regions. We reject the enemy's allegations that this is an occupation of their territory - declared Leskovac yesterday. - We are liberating these territories from the Ustasha, not from the National Guard and the police forces, because Serbs have been living for centuries here. We call on all the Serbs whose homes have been burnt and destroyed to return to the free territories and to settle there. In Baranja alone there are 17 villages that must be settled. " (Dnevnik, Wednesday, 20 November, 1991, p.4; from an interview of Goran Hadžić, accused of war crimes at the ICTY in the Hague, and Rade Leskovac, today president of the Party of Danube Serbs in the Republic of Croatia)



Vukovar, 1991/1992 – result of Serb aggression

21 November (Thursday)

Today the convoy from Mitrovica was directed towards the village of Dvorovi, 6 kilometers north of Bijeljina in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where at about 1.30 p.m. the wounded were transferred to vehicles provided by the Main Medical Headquarters of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia. Police officers from the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, reservists and JNA soldiers (among which an officer with a doctor's badge) and local Serbs (two-hundred or so) attacked the Croatian convoy and beat up 6 people and damaged 6 vehicles including the ambulance. Despite this attack the vehicles carrying the wounded pursued its route over the bridge on the river Sava and entered Croatia, which marked the end of this humanitarian drama. During the night the wounded that had stayed in Vukovar hospital were turned in at Brčko at 7.30 p.m., but two wounded had died in the mean time. Therefore that day 174 wounded, accompanied by medical staff, were evacuated to Croatia from Vukovar hospital.

The regular battle report of the OG South states that the "civilian convoy on 20 and 21 November 1991 was carried out in Šid and Sremska Mitrovica" and that "from S. Mitrovica it was directed to an agreed location to be handed in Bosanska Rača".

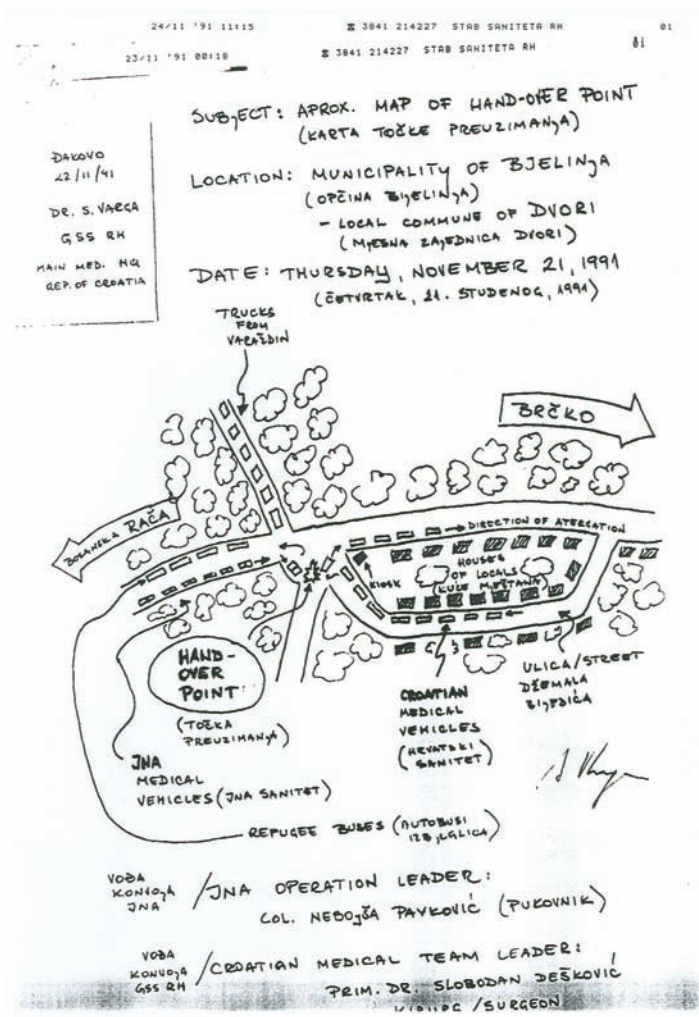
The report of the 1st Army District mentions that the "observation mission of the European Community for the region of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srijem supervised the activities related to the evacuation of the wounded and refugees from Vukovar, as well as the delivery of people to the Croatian side" and that the "mission monitored the activities of the Garrison infirmary in Sremska Mitrovica, where the wounded evacuated from Vukovar hospital were housed, in the sports hall in Sremska Mitrovica, where refugees from Vukovar were housed, and in the hospital in Vukovar."

Something serious happened last night. Almost everyone is talking about the massive execution of Croatian prisoners and wounded from Vukovar hospital. "Last night we killed them from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. at Ovčara and Petrova Gora", says a corpulent bearded man from Smederevo while drinking his morning coffee and smoking a cigarette on a cigarette-holder. "And today, on my name day, Saint Archangel. My, we should have heard them pray, whine, cry and claim they did not shoot or kill anyone". Dragica-Daca from Novi Sad gave a more detailed account of the execution. However, she tells me that she is worried because those who took part in the execution are boasting about it. The bodies were buried with a bulldozer. The killers carefully stole belongings from the victims: rings, wedding rings, necklaces, watches. Everyone claims that Štjivančanin also killed a few prisoners to test the new AK-74 assault rifle. Captain Miroslav Radić and the other commanders of the unit agreed that a big mistake had occurred and that the prisoners should have been killed more discreetly. "I did not have enough men for this action, so I had to engage these drunken volunteers. Now everyone will know about it because of their talkativeness. You know, this won't turn out all right", says commander of the Territorial Defence unit. It is interesting that not one of them is scared of being convicted; they all fear a possible Croatian revenge. In fact many of them openly told

me that they were not sure the Croatian won't come back one day. (authentic notes of the Serbian journalist Jovan Dulović, written on 21 November 1991 at 8 a.m.; published under the title 'Krvava priča' (Bloody Story) in Serbian press: Vreme, 20 November 1995, p. 19)

22 November (Friday)

According to the regular battle report of the OG South and the 1st Army District, "the transport of civilians and wounded from Vukovar and Borovo was accomplished entirely".



A sketch of the reception center for the wounded and refugees from Vukovar, November 21st, 1991, (this sketch was given by Ivo Kujundžića, MD)

List of Vukovar hospital staff killed and registered as missing

In the attacks on the town and the hospital, and after the Serbian occupation of the town, 32 hospital staff members died and were killed. Twenty of them were killed at Ovčara and 4 workers were registered as missing after being captured.

List of hospital staff killed at Ovčara:

Jozo Adžaga (1949) – logistics (cook)
Ilija Asađanin (1952) – emergency services (driver)
Ivan Bainrauch (1956) – logistics (head of technical services)
Tomislav Bosanac (1941) – logistics (water distillation)
Ivan Buovac (1966) – emergency services (driver)
Dragan Gavrić (1956) – logistics (vehicle maintenance)
Zlatko Jarabek (1956) – logistics (vehicle maintenance)
Đuro Knežić (1937) – logistics (technical services, hospital barber)
Zlatko Krajnović (1969) – emergency services (driver)
Tomislav Mihović (1952) – x-ray department (photo lab technician)
Tomislav Papp (1963) – logistics (supplies, energy and storeroom)
Tomo Pravdić (1934) – logistics (technical services)
Stjepan Šarik (1955) – logistics (boiler-room and generators)
Đuro Šrenk (1943) – logistics (technical services, plumber)
Zvonko Varenica (1957) – logistics (technical services, locksmith)
Goran Vidoš (1960) – logistics (electrician)
Mate Vlaho (1959) – emergency services (driver)
Miroslav Vlaho (1967) – emergency services (driver)
Josip Zeljko (1953) – hospital security
Mihajlo Zera (1955) – emergency services (driver)

Workers of the war hospital killed during the attacks on the town and after the occupation of the town:

Vlasta Aleksandar (1965) – Physical medicine ward (physiotherapist)
Dušica Jeremić (1954) – accounting (administrative jurist)
Ljubica Kojić (1954) – “Borovo-Commerce” shelter (cleaner)
Nevenka Matić (1948) – common services (clerk)
Zdenka Miličević (1961) – surgery (nurse)
Ljubica Obradović (1952) – x-ray department (administrator)
Ivan Raguž (1938) – logistics (boiler-room technician)
Rudolf Terek (1943) – stomatology (senior dentist)
Marica Stanek (1952) – infirmary for school children (nurse)
Blanka Stefanjuk (1961) – surgery (nurse)
Goran Krznarić (1965) – logistics (doorman)
Karlo Crk (1942) – logistics (butcher)

Workers of the war hospital who were captured and are registered as missing:

Ivan Baranjek (1939) – post-operative care, “Borovo-Commerce” in-patient clinic (male-nurse); abducted from “Borovo-Commerce” on 19 November 1991
Marko Mandić (1953) – surgery (medical technician, emergency assistance to the wounded); abducted from the hospital on 19 November 1991
Ivan Božak (1958) – doorman; abducted from the hospital on 20 November 1991
Zvonko Vulić (1971) – logistics (supplies, energy and storeroom); abducted from the hospital on 20 November 1991

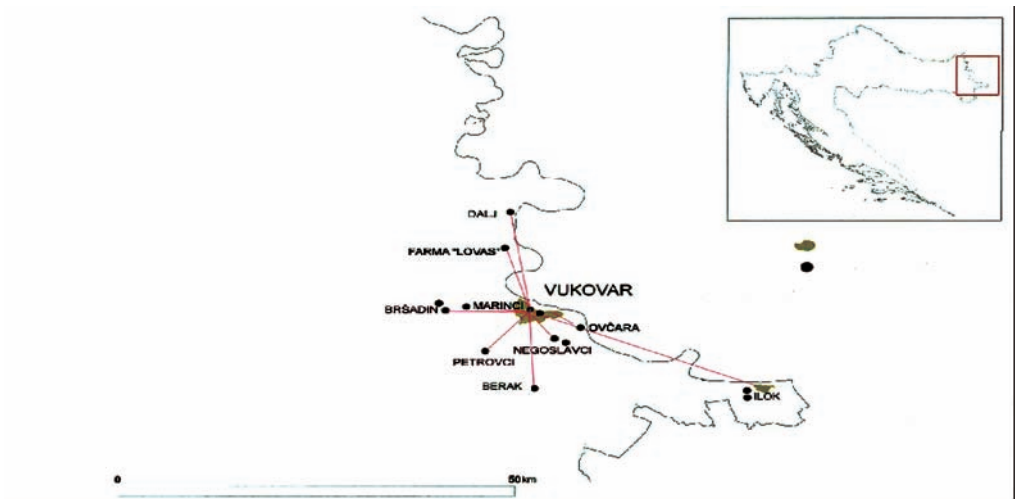
Ivan Grujić, Višnja Bilić

The Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity
Office for Detained and Missing Persons

Casualties from Vukovar hospital

Casualties from Vukovar have been found so far in 14 mass graves discovered in the region of the Croatian Danube River Valley (Podunavlje) and in 150 individual graves. Most of these graves date from after the occupation of Vukovar, the same time as the mass grave at Ovčara, which confirms that this was a systematic and mass attack on the Croatian and non-Serb population of Vukovar, Podunavlje and the Republic of Croatia as a whole. Since 335 persons are still being sought who went missing or were forcibly removed from Vukovar, the number of mass graves with casualties from Vukovar will certainly grow.

Picture 1 – The location of mass graves in which casualties from Vukovar have been found.



Of the casualties of Vukovar, people who were forcibly removed from Vukovar Hospital have a special place in terms of their vulnerability and special status in international humanitarian law – the wounded, the medical staff and civilians. Figures on the exact number of people forcibly taken from Vukovar Hospital vary depending on the source, although the figure of 400 people forcibly captured is used most often.

In order to establish a most reliable and undisputed list which would be used by the International Criminal Tribunal for War Crimes in the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the Office for Detained and Missing Persons collected data in 1994 from all available sources on people who were forcibly removed from Vukovar Hospital. By a comparison and analysis of data gathered from all sources, it was established that in November 1991 266 persons were forcibly removed from Vukovar Hospital, and a list of names was drawn up. The reliability of the reconstructed list was confirmed by the process of identifying the remains of victims from the mass grave at Ovčara, as well as the grave at Velepromet, the New Cemetery in Vukovar etc.

An analysis of the 266 persons forcibly taken from Vukovar Hospital (status of records on 4th December 2008) established the following:

211 persons have been found in mass and individual graves discovered in the area of the Croatian Danube River Valley and in the Republic of Serbia.

55 persons are still described as missing (*List 4*)

A further analysis of the list of 211 persons identified, according to where their remains were found, established the following:

Persons found in the mass grave at Ovčara (where the remains of 200 victims were exhumed in 1996)	193	<i>List 1.</i>
Persons found in the New Cemetery in Vukovar	13	<i>List 2.</i>
Persons found in individual graves at Velepromet	2	<i>List 2.</i>
Person found in the mass grave on the Lovas farm	1	<i>List 2.</i>
Persons found in Serbia (Belgrade and Sremska Mitrovica)	2	<i>List 3.</i>
TOTAL	211	

These analyses and figures are an integral part of the indictment by the Prosecution of the ICTY in the cases against Slobodan Milošević, and V. Šljivančanin, M. Mrkšić and M. Radić, to which Colonel Ivan Grujić testified before the ICTY, and in the case against V. Šešelj, to which Višnja Bilić testified. These figures and analysis are also part of the lawsuit filed by the Republic of Croatia against the SRY for genocide before the International Court of Justice.

*PERSONS IDENTIFIED WHOSE REMAINS WERE EXHUMED
FROM THE MASS GRAVE AT OVČARA (193)*

1	ADŽAGA	JOZO	ILIJA	21.5.1949.
2	AHMETOVIĆ	ISMET	MARIJAN	14.11.1968.
3	ANDRIJANIĆ	VINKO	MARKO	9.2.1953.
4	ARNOLD	KREŠIMIR	ALOJZ	18.4.1958.
5	ASAĐANIN	ILIJA	JOVAN-JOŽIKA	5.7.1952.
6	BABIĆ	DRAŽEN	JOSIP	1.10.1966.
7	BAINRAUCH	IVAN	STJEPAN	21.6.1956.
8	BAJNRAUH	TOMISLAV	FRANJO	13.12.1938.
9	BALAŠ	STJEPAN	ANDRIJA	1.5.1956.
10	BALOG	DRAGUTIN	JOSIP	19.6.1974.
11	BALOG	JOSIP	DRAGUTIN	25.11.1928.
12	BALOG	ZVONKO	IVAN	10.1.1958.
13	BALVANAC	ĐURO	ANDRIJA	17.7.1952.
14	BANOŽIĆ	BORIS	DRAGO	2.2.1967.
15	BARANJAJI	PERO	RATKO	19.6.1968.
16	BARBIR	LOVRO	IVAN	1.11.1935.
17	BARIĆ	ĐUKA	ĐURO	26.12.1950.
18	BARIŠIĆ	FRANJO	ANDRIJA	28.5.1946.
19	BARTA	ANĐELKO-IVAN	IVAN	31.1.1967.
20	BATARELO	ŽELJKO	ANTE	25.10.1955.
21	BAUMGÄRTNER	TOMISLAV	TOMISLAV	27.11.1973.
22	BEGČEVIĆ	MARKO	IVO	1.4.1968.
23	BEGOV	ŽELJKO	MATO	30.9.1958.
24	BINGULA	STJEPAN	STJEPAN	15.10.1958.
25	BJELANOVIĆ	RINGO	NIKOLA	24.11.1970.
26	BLAŽEVIĆ	ZLATKO	ZDENKA	24.2.1964.
27	BOSAK	MARKO	JURAJ	2.7.1967.
28	BOSANAC	DRAGUTIN	VLADISLAV	21.8.1919.
29	BOSANAC	TOMISLAV	ANTUN	5.3.1941.
30	BRAČIĆ	ZVONIMIR	IVAN	4.7.1970.
31	BUKVIĆ	ĐORDE	ĐURO	3.5.1966.
32	BUOVAC	IVAN	ILIJA	3.9.1966.
33	CRNJAC	IVAN	SLAVKO	18.3.1966.
34	ČUPIĆ	STANOJA	BOŠKO	12.10.1953.
35	DALIĆ	TIHOMIR	ZVONKO	2.11.1966.

36	DOLIŠNJI	IVICA	PETAR	27.11.1960.
37	DRAGUN	JOSIP	SREČKO	9.9.1962.
38	ĐUĐAR	SAŠA	ĐURO	5.3.1968.
39	ĐUKIĆ	VLADIMIR	IVAN	21.2.1948.
40	DUVNJAK	STANKO	VLADIMIR	23.5.1959.
41	EBNER	VINKO-ĐURO	VINKO	1.1.1961.
42	FRIŠČIĆ	DRAGUTIN	MATIJA	2.11.1958.
43	FURUNDŽIJA	PETAR	DANKO	30.11.1949.
44	GAJDA	ROBERT	MIHAJLO	27.12.1966.
45	GALIĆ	MILENKO	MATE	10.12.1965.
46	GALIĆ	VEDRAN	VLADIMIR	29.5.1973.
47	GARVANOVIĆ	BORISLAV	IVAN	23.11.1954.
48	GAVRIĆ	DRAGAN	PAVO	31.10.1956.
49	GLAVAŠEVIĆ	SINIŠA	PETAR	4.11.1960.
50	GRAF	BRANISLAV	VLADIMIR	7.9.1954.
51	GRANIĆ	DRAGAN	MILE	1.1.1960.
52	GRUBER	ZORAN	ILIJA	5.9.1969.
53	GUDELJ	DRAGO	IVAN	9.9.1940.
54	HEGEDUŠIĆ	MARIO	DRAGUTIN	29.6.1972.
55	HERCEG	ŽELJKO	SLAVKO	20.1.1962.
56	HERMAN	IVAN	DRAGUTIN	14.5.1969.
57	HERMAN	STJEPAN	ANTUN	10.3.1955.
58	HLEVNJAK	NEDELJKO	ANĐELKO	8.1.1964.
59	HOLJEVAC	NIKICA	IVAN	10.4.1955.
60	HORVAT	IVICA	JOSIP	27.11.1958.
61	ILEŠ	ZVONKO	IVAN	12.12.1941.
62	IMBRIŠIĆ	IVICA	PAVLE	13.2.1958.
63	IVEZIĆ	ALEKSANDAR	IVAN	5.12.1950.
64	JAJELO	MARKO	IVAN	28.10.1957.
65	JAKUBOVSKI	MARTIN	IVAN	1.4.1971.
66	JAMBOR	TOMO	DRAGUTIN	3.3.1966.
67	JANIĆ	MIHAEL	ANTUN	9.10.1939.
68	JANTOL	BORIS	ĐURO	21.9.1959.
69	JARABEK	ZLATKO	KAMILO	21.4.1956.
70	JEZIDŽIĆ	IVICA	STIPA	5.11.1957.
71	JOVAN	ZVONIMIR	VLATKO	7.4.1967.
72	JOVANOVIĆ	BRANKO	TODOR	4.2.1955.
73	JOVANOVIĆ	OLIVER	ĐURO	8.12.1972.
74	JULARIĆ	GORAN	ANDRIJA	15.2.1971.
75	JURELA	DAMIR	TOMISLAV	25.4.1969.

76	JURELA	ŽELJKO	BOŽO	30.6.1956.
77	JURENDIĆ	DRAGO	JURO	23.4.1966.
78	JURIŠIĆ	MARKO-JOSIP	FRANJO	17.8.1946.
79	JURIŠIĆ	PAVAO	PAVO	28.8.1966.
80	JURIŠIĆ	ŽELJKO	RUDE	20.12.1963.
81	KAČIĆ	IGOR	PETAR	23.8.1975.
82	KAPUSTIĆ	JOSIP	JOSIP	8.12.1965.
83	KELAVA	KREŠIMIR	ANTE	17.1.1953.
84	KNEŽIĆ	ĐURO	FRANJO	2.4.1937.
85	KOLAK	TOMISLAV	DOBROSLAV	22.7.1962.
86	KOLAK	VLADIMIR	DOBROSLAV	20.1.1966.
87	KOMORSKI	IVAN	PERO	23.6.1952.
88	KOSTOVIĆ	BORISLAV	ANTE	24.12.1962.
89	KOVAČ	IVAN	MATE	18.6.1953.
90	KOVAČEVIĆ	ZORAN		16.4.1962.
91	KOŽUL	JOSIP	FRANO	8.3.1968.
92	KRAJINOVIĆ	IVAN	LUKA	14.10.1966.
93	KRAJINOVIĆ	ZLATKO	ANTE	4.12.1969.
94	KRASIĆ	IVAN	PETAR	18.6.1964.
95	KREZO	IVICA	HRVOJE	10.9.1963.
96	KRISTIČEVIĆ	KAZIMIR	BRANKO	13.6.1959.
97	KRUNEŠ	BRANIMIR	MATE	28.2.1966.
98	LESIĆ	TOMISLAV	BRANKO	10.5.1950.
99	LET	MIHAJLO	ĐURO	25.4.1956.
100	LILI	DRAGUTIN	DRAGUTIN	26.1.1951.
101	LOVRIĆ	JOKO	IVO	6.11.1968.
102	LUCIĆ	MARKO	MIJO	8.9.1954.
103	LUKIĆ	MATO	MARKO	2.3.1963.
104	LJUBAS	HRVOJE	LUKA	26.1.1971.
105	MAGOČ	PREDRAG	MIHAJLO	18.12.1965.
106	MAJOR	ŽELJKO	STJEPAN	14.12.1960.
107	MARIČIĆ	ZDENKO	MARKO	27.9.1956.
108	MARKOBAŠIĆ	RUŽICA	PERO	28.9.1959.
109	MEĐEŠI	ANDRIJA	JANKO	16.10.1936.
110	MEĐEŠI	ZORAN	ANDRIJA	3.1.1964.
111	MIHALEC	JOSIP	VALENT	9.5.1926.
112	MIHOVIĆ	TOMISLAV	GAŠPAR	23.6.1952.
113	MIKULIĆ	ZDRAVKO	SLAVKO	15.3.1961.
114	MIŠIĆ	IVAN	MARKO	22.12.1968.
115	MLINARIĆ	MILE	PAVO	5.12.1966.

116	MOKOŠ	ANDRIJA	STEVAN	16.11.1955.
117	MOLNAR	SAŠA	STJEPAN	8.4.1965.
118	MUTVAR	ANTUN	ANTUN	30.1.1969.
119	NAĐ	DARKO	VLADIMIR	27.2.1965.
120	NAĐ	FRANJO	FRANJO	17.8.1935.
121	NEJAŠMIĆ	IVAN	MILAN	19.10.1958.
122	OMEROVIĆ	MUFAD	DŽEMAL	29.11.1963.
123	OREŠKI	VLADISLAV	STJEPAN	19.5.1967.
124	PAPP	TOMISLAV	ANDRIJA	1.1.1963.
125	PATARIĆ	ŽELJKO	NIKOLA	16.7.1959.
126	PAVLIĆ	SLOBODAN	ADAM	24.9.1965.
127	PAVLOVIĆ	ZLATKO	ĐURO	19.11.1965.
128	PERAK	MATO	ANTO	28.11.1961.
129	PERKO	ALEKSANDAR	BRANKO	17.3.1967.
130	PERKOVIĆ	DAMIR	JOSIP	28.10.1965.
131	PERKOVIĆ	JOSIP	JURE	24.3.1963.
132	PETROVIĆ	STJEPAN	STANKO	26.10.1949.
133	PINTER	NIKOLA ŽELJKO	NIKOLA	4.10.1940.
134	PLAVŠIĆ	IVAN-ZVONIMIR	MATO	24.3.1939.
135	PODHORSKI	JANJA	STJEPAN	17.11.1931.
136	POLHERT	DAMIR	IVAN	22.11.1962.
137	POLOVINA	BRANIMIR	VOJIN	22.6.1950.
138	POLJAK	VJEKOSLAV	IGNAC	6.8.1951.
139	POSAVEC	STANKO	GUSTAV	9.4.1952.
140	PRAVDIĆ	TOMO	PERO	1.11.1934.
141	PUCAR	DMITAR	NIKOLA	18.1.1949.
142	RADAČIĆ	IVO	SLAVKO	1.1.1955.
143	RAGUŽ	IVAN	ANTUN	22.4.1955.
144	RAŠIĆ	MILAN	FRANJO	16.4.1954.
145	RATKOVIĆ	KREŠIMIR	MILAN	4.3.1968.
146	RIBIČIĆ	MARKO	IVAN	11.11.1951.
147	RIMAC	SALVADOR	SLAVKO	6.11.1970.
148	ROHAČEK	KARLO	ANTUN	21.10.1942.
149	ROHAČEK	ŽELJKO	KARLO	16.5.1971.
150	SPUDIĆ	PAVAO	IVAN	16.7.1965.
151	STANIĆ	MARKO	MATO	2.8.1958.
152	STANIĆ	ŽELJKO	NIKO	23.6.1968.
153	STEFANKO	PETAR	VASILJ	5.5.1942.
154	STOJANOVIĆ	IVAN	ŽIVKO	19.3.1949.
155	STUBIČAR	LJUBOMIR	VLADIMIR	12.7.1954.

156	ŠARIK	STJEPAN	ŠTEFAN	2.4.1955.
157	ŠIMENIĆ	DAMIR	STJEPAN	18.3.1965.
158	ŠIMUNIĆ	PERO	MARKO	30.9.1943.
159	ŠINDILJ	VJEKOSLAV	VLADIMIR	1.11.1971.
160	ŠRENK	ĐURO	GABRIJEL	21.4.1943.
161	ŠTEFULJ	DRAŽEN	JURAJ	1.1.1963.
162	TADIĆ	TADIJA	JOZO	26.8.1959.
163	TEREK	ANTUN	BOŽIDAR	6.10.1940.
164	TIŠLJARIĆ	DARKO	TOMO	1.6.1971.
165	TIVANOVAC	IVICA	PAVO	22.2.1963.
166	TOMAŠIĆ	TIHOMIR	ALBIN	4.7.1963.
167	TORDINAC	ŽELJKO	IVAN	14.12.1961.
168	TOT	TOMISLAV	EUGEN	6.6.1967.
169	TRALJIĆ	TIHOMIR	PETAR	17.7.1967.
170	TURK	MIROSLAV	ANTUN	12.4.1950.
171	TURK	PETAR	PETAR	30.6.1947.
172	TUSTONJIĆ	DANE	JOZO	10.10.1959.
173	UŠAK	BRANKO	MARTIN	17.7.1958.
174	VAGENHOFER	MIRKO	JOSIP	3.6.1937.
175	VARENICA	ZVONKO	FRANJO	19.5.1957.
176	VARGA	VLADIMIR	JOSIP	9.8.1944.
177	VASIĆ	MIKAILO	ĐORĐE	12.12.1963.
178	VEBER	SINIŠA	VLADIMIR	22.2.1969.
179	VIDOŠ	GORAN	MATO	4.10.1960.
180	VIRGES	ANTON	ANTON	9.6.1953.
181	VLAHO	MIROSLAV	MARKO	30.12.1967.
182	VLAHO	MATE	DRAGO	3.2.1959.
183	VOLODER	ZLATAN	LJUBO	23.11.1960.
184	VUJEVIĆ	ZLATKO	ANTUN	28.10.1951.
185	VUKOJEVIĆ	SLAVEN	JOSIP	23.6.1970.
186	VUKOVIĆ	RUDOLF	RUDOLF	18.11.1961.
187	VULIĆ	IVAN	ANTE	18.7.1946.
188	ZELJKO	JOSIP	DANKO	14.3.1953.
189	ZERA	MIHAJLO	VASILJ	7.8.1955.
190	ŽUGEC	BORISLAV	MATO	21.11.1963.
191	*BARBARIĆ	BRANKO	JOZO	1.11.1967.
192	*TARLE	DUJO	JOZO	6.5.1950.
193	*ŽERAVICA	DOMINIK	STJEPAN	11.11.1959.

THE PERSONS WHOSE REMAINS WERE EXHUMED FROM OTHER GRAVES IN THE VUKOVAR AREA (16)

1	BARIČEVIĆ	ŽELJKO	STJEPAN	17.8.1965.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
2	BRAJDIĆ	JOSIP	PAVO	16.3.1950.	FARMA LOVAS
3	FIRI	IVAN	ĐURO	1.6.1915.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
4	GOLAC	KRUNOSLAV	VELJKO	6.7.1959.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
5	HUSNJAK	NEDJELJKO	JURAJ	30.6.1969.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
6	JALŠOVEC	LJUBOMIR	ANTUN	2.11.1957.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
7	KITIĆ	GORAN	MITAR	23.11.1966.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
8	KOŠIR	BOŽIDAR	MIRKO	28.9.1957.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
9	LENDEL	TOMISLAV	FRANJO	6.8.1957.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
10	LENDEL	ZLATKO	FRANJO	18.7.1949.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
11	MILIĆ	SLAVKO	MIJO	17.4.1955.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
12	ŠAJTOVIĆ	DAVOR	MARTIN	13.11.1961.	VUKOVAR, VELEPROMET
13	ŠAJTOVIĆ	MARTIN	ADAM	14.4.1928.	VUKOVAR, VELEPROMET
14	ŠAŠKIN	SEAD	HASAN	22.3.1960.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
15	VUKOVIĆ	VLADIMIR	ZLATKO	25.11.1957.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE
16	VUKOVIĆ	ZDRAVKO	NIKOLA	7.9.1967.	VUKOVAR, NOVO GROBLJE

PERSONS WHOSE REMAINS WERE HANDED OVER BY THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA (2)

1	KIRALJ	DAMIR	JULIJE	17.7.1959.
2	MIKULIĆ	ZVONKO	SLAVKO	11.5.1969.

PERSONS WHOSE FATE HAS NOT YET BEEN ESTABLISHED (55)

1	ANIĆ-ANTIĆ	JADRANKO	ANTE	19.4.1959.
2	BAKETA	GORAN	STOJAN	28.6.1960.
3	BATARELO	JOSIP	DANIEL	12.3.1947.
4	BLAŠKOVIĆ	MIROSLAV	MIJO	6.4.1959.
5	BODROŽIĆ	ANTE	MARIJAN	7.6.1953.
6	BOŽAK	IVAN	DRAGAN	28.8.1958.
7	BRADARIĆ	JOSIP	ŠIME	2.3.1949.
8	BUŽIĆ	ZVONKO	STJEPAN	27.8.1955.
9	ČALETA	ZVONIMIR	NIKOLA	24.2.1953.
10	ČOLAK	IVICA	BLAGO	26.9.1965.
11	ČUPIĆ	MLADEN	MARKO	19.5.1967.
12	DOŠEN	IVAN	IVAN	4.1.1958.
13	DOŠEN	MARTIN	IVAN	19.2.1952.
14	DOŠEN	TADIJA	IVAN	9.10.1950.
15	FITUŠ	KARLO	IŠTVAN	28.9.1964.
16	GAŠPAR	ZORISLAV	DRAGUTIN	14.3.1971.
17	GOJANI	JOZO	NUO	1.1.1966.
18	GREJZA	MILAN	MATO	27.6.1959.
19	HEGEDUŠ	TOMISLAV	FRANJO	2.11.1953.
20	HORVAT	VIKTOR	ŠIMUN	27.8.1949.
21	IVAN	ZLATKO	EUGEN	25.12.1955.
22	JANJIĆ	BORISLAV	IVAN	8.9.1956.
23	KIRALJ	DAMIR	JOSIP	10.3.1964.
24	KOLOGRANIĆ	DUŠKO	JOSIP	23.10.1950.
25	KOSTENAC	BONO	ANDRIJA	15.2.1942.
26	KOVAČ	MLADEN	BRANKO	20.8.1958.
27	KOVAČIĆ	DAMIR	TOMO	14.7.1970.
28	KRIŽAN	DRAGO	JOZO	5.11.1957.
29	LEROTIĆ	ZVONIMIR	FILIP	13.9.1960.
30	LONČAR	TIHOMIR	ĐORDE	28.3.1955.
31	LOVRIĆ	JOZO	LOVRO	15.7.1953.
32	LUKENDA	BRANKO	IVAN	14.4.1961.
33	MAGDIĆ	MILE	IVAN SABLJAK	25.3.1953.
34	MAJIĆ	ROBERT	TVRTKO	23.2.1971.
35	MANDIĆ	MARKO	ANTUN	26.7.1953.
36	MARIJANOVIĆ	MARTIN	MARKO	17.8.1959.

37	MAŽAR	IVAN	ANTUN	20.11.1934.
38	MERIC	OHRAN	MUHAMED	10.7.1956.
39	MIKLETIC	JOSIP	STJEPAN	26.2.1952.
40	MILJAK	ZVONIMIR	IVAN	10.5.1950.
41	NICOLLIER	JEAN-MICHAEL	MICHAEL	10.7.1966.
42	OREŠKI	IVAN	DRAGUTIN	12.4.1950.
43	PRPIĆ	TOMISLAV	MILAN	3.4.1959.
44	SAITI	ĆEMAN	AZEM	17.9.1960.
45	SAMARDŽIĆ	DAMJAN	MARKO	23.7.1946.
46	SAVANOVIĆ	TIHOMIR	DRAGOSLAV	17.7.1964.
47	SENČIĆ	IVAN	MARTIN	21.2.1964.
48	SOTINAC	STIPAN	JOZO	25.11.1939.
49	TABAČEK	ANTUN	JOSIP	5.6.1958.
50	TUŠKAN	DRAŽEN	DRAGUTIN	26.10.1966.
51	VON BASINGGER	HARLLAN	DUŠAN	25.8.1971.
52	VULIĆ	VID	VID	1.9.1941.
53	VULIĆ	ZVONKO	IVAN	7.4.1971.
54	ŽIVKOVIĆ	DAMIR	JOSIP	17.2.1970.
55	ŽIVKOVIĆ	GORAN	PAVAO	20.12.1969.

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The list of the victims killed at Ovčara rests on the *List of identified remains exhumed from the mass grave at Ovčara* of the Administration for the detainees and the missing of the Ministry of Family, Veterans and Intergenerational Solidarity and also on the data collected by Neda Balog - Community of Associations of Widows of the Croatian Veterans from the Homeland War, Ivan Pšenica - Association of Parents and Family of the Detainees and forcibly Abducted Croatian Veterans "Vukovar Mothers", Danijel Rehak – Croatian Society of Inmates of Serbian Concentration Camps, and others. They were published in 2006 in the exhibition catalogue *Mjesto sjećanja – vukovarska bolnica 1991*.

In the captions of some photos in the book, authors are not mentioned. Possible authors are Andrija Marić, Siniša Jovanov, Stjepan Šustić Štef, Nikola Jurčević and others who had taken war photos during the fightings in Vukovar. The photos taken at the Vukovar war hospital were given to the Centre by Dr. Boris Kratofil. The photos of the hospital destroyed were provided by Damir Radnić, Croatian volunteer and veteran, and HOS member, photos taken by Croatian war volunteer and veteran Viktorin Jurić were provided by commander of the guard in Vukovar Ivica Arbanas, photos of Vukovar and veterans from September 1991 were provided by its author Mario Filipi. Lastly, the photos of Croatian volunteer and war veteran Andrija Marić and others authors of the photos from Trpinjska cesta came from Croatian volunteer and veteran and Croatian army colonel Marko Babić, who recently passed away. Some of the photos are in possession of Croatian war volunteers and veterans Vinko Mažar i Ivo Leutar. Thanks to all of them.

Photos prepared and inserted in the text by mr.sc. Ana Holjevac Tuković.

Signs of Genocide!



8/19/1991



11/19/1991

In three months, the Yugo-Serbian army has made the Croatian city of Vukovar disappear from the face of the earth. Now they are trying to do the same to Dubrovnik and the rest of Croatia. Stop the madmen now!

**STOP THE WAR
IN CROATIA!**

Support Croatian Independence!

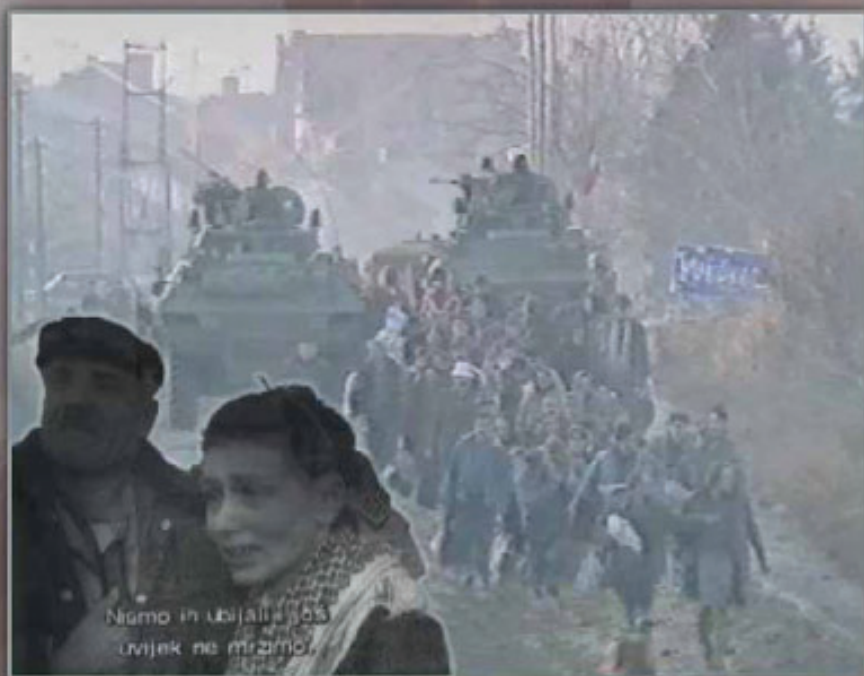
Anica Marić

THE NURSING HOME
WAS A TARGET TOO

HALO MAMA!

Ratni dnevnik i progon iz Vukovara

Anica Marić



Nismo ih ubijali, 1993.
Uvijek ne možemo.

A short history about the Veterans and Senior Citizens Nursing Home in Vukovar, on Peter Kočić Street

In 1983, a new nursing home for the elderly was built in Vukovar. The Home for the Veterans and Senior Citizens as it was called was moved into in 1986 and had the capacity to hold 100 residents. It was built with the assets of the building fund that was used to care for the participants of NOR (People's Liberation War) in the area of Vukovar County. There was only one condition for it being built. The condition was that it be a home for the partisans as well as a nursing home. Another ward had been built in 1987, making the home's total capacity 120 residents.

The old home for the elderly and helpless inherited the so called alms house which was taken care of by the family of Count Eltz and it was located across the street from Vukovar's General Hospital. It had the capacity to hold 70 people but it always had over 90. It is my responsibility to pay my respects and give thanks to the employees of this nursing home where I had worked as the Head of accounting in September 1980. The conditions under which they had worked proved that the great love they had towards people gave them the strength to fight against setbacks. The building of the home itself was old, the installations were in a terrible state, heating was on wood and coal in tile stoves, the kitchen was inadequate, and the staff that directly took care of the residents was mainly women, as the director of the Home used to say, women without an education. They were Mrs. Rozalija Herbut, Danica Klaić, Marica Prica, Zora Pavlek, Slavica Radić and Agata Zorčec. Mrs. Danica Klaić and Agata Zorčec were the cooks, and the rest were cleaning ladies, laundresses,



The Nursing Home for the Elderly in Vukovar; result of the Serb aggression.

basically everything that was needed. The winter of 1980 was a rough one with a lot of snow. We had two washing machines and none of them worked. The water pipe in the middle of the Home's backyard was frozen so water for washing the laundry was taken from the bathroom. It was heated up in a cauldron, and the laundry was washed by hand. This meant that the washing and rinsing was all done by hand. I will never forget the bright red color of their hands after rinsing the laundry in cold water. They would run into the kitchen for a moment to warm up around the big wood burning stove, and then they would spread out the laundry so that it froze a bit and after lunch was over they would hang the laundry around the kitchen and in the wards to dry. The women worked in two shifts. In each shift there was a cook and two cleaning ladies. 6 women took care of over 90 people, half of which were bed-ridden, and for a very small salary at that time. It is important to stress that the three cleaning ladies were also cooks when necessary, and vice versa, the cooks were also cleaning ladies and laundresses, especially during vacation time. No matter how hard they tried, they just couldn't get rid of the smell of urine by the main entrance of the institution. The nursing home was without supervision during the night and the residents especially the men urinated in an "ajnoforu" as we called the entrance to the yard typical for German houses (Švapske kuće). Plumbers, repairmen, and electricians rarely came to the home because of the specific smell which could be sensed from the entrance into all the wards. We only had one painter "Cviće" as we called him, from "Bojorad" who came often and I think this said it all. It was not my intention to write a long book about the nursing home's hard work and the struggles to build a decent home for the people, especially the employees. I believe that these sentences say enough for one to get a picture of the nursing home's state. How good the quality of the work was despite its conditions can be seen from the fact that there was never any kind of food poisoning in the institution. Once more huge thanks in the name of all who were served, washed and listened: Rozalija (Aunt Seka), Danica, Marica (A.K.A Ivanka), Slavica (Orphan), Zora, and Agata (Aunt Aggie).

The new nursing home had 22 employees: from the director, social worker, nurses, care-givers, cleaning ladies, cooks, economists, treasurers to my humble self, Head of Accounting. For only 30 residents more than in the old nursing home we had 13 more employees. I am honored to say that I was part of a team that can't be found nowadays. We all got along and whenever anyone needed help, we were a team. We had our conflicts as in all working environments, but they ended in conversation never anger. Taking care of our residents which in the beginning was 100 and then grew to 120 didn't give us much time for arguments. Each minute was dedicated to the well being of the nursing home residents. I must mention the exceptional contribution by Dr. Aleksandra Kajba Zubarev who was the nursing home's doctor for many years. She was succeeded by Dr Karnaš.

Vukovar's home for veterans and senior citizens was the only nursing home, to my knowledge that worked under war conditions in Croatia. Also to this day no one expressed gratitude to the home's staff that stayed with their residents till the very end. I am convinced that their contribution to the defense of Croatia and Vukovar is not small. Talking to those who were there till the end I found out that nobody is asking for anything. This is what encouraged me and finally gave me the strength to make public this journal so that we wouldn't forget. There must be many more untold stories in Vukovar about the Homeland War. As many stories as the number of people who had stayed in Vukovar till the very end.

For helping us during the war I am especially grateful to: members of the guard led by the deceased Damjan Samardžić (Big boiler), the deceased Dragan Ćorić, Milenko Tešanović, Franjo Mandić, Josip Budimir, the late Tomislav Beljo and of course to the staff of the nursing home of Veterans and Senior Citizens of Vukovar who were with us until the very end: Nensi Mučalov (married name Polhert), nurse Vera Tešanović, care-giver and Dara Mandić, treasurer.

In the end, why give this diary the title "Hello Mom". When there was already a real war in Vukovar, while the phone lines were still working, my daughter Sandra would call several times a day to ask how I was, especially after September 5th when the home had been directly hit and when our residents had been injured. Every call began with "Hello Mom". "Hello Mom" helped me get through the many years of being a refugee. I believe it helped many other mothers whose children were refugees and ended up all around the globe. I want to thank Sandra for staying with us during the crucial moments in Srijemska Mitrovica helping us make it into Croatia safely.

War Journal May 13th – November 18th, 1991

May 13th, 1991

A lecture is held in the nursing home. The Director Živko Dukić informs members that we are obliged by law to announce a vacancy for the home's director. He wouldn't be a candidate due to the fact that he had decided to go into retirement.

May 14th, 1991

A vacancy is advertised for home director.

May 20th, 1991

Director Živko Dukić informs me as president of the tender commission that he will be a candidate for director after finding out that his pension would be a lot lower than he expected.

June 14th, 1991

The majority of votes at the executive institutional workers assembly choose Ivić Mandić for the new director. Živko Dukić was present at the conference.

June 24th, 1991

Director Živko Dukić goes on vacation.

July 22nd, 1991

Živko Dukić comes back from his vacation after extending it for ten days.

July 26th, 1991

The Executive institutional workers assembly made a decision based on Živko Dukić's written request to go into retirement. Ivić Mandić informed the institution that he wasn't going to accept the job as director because he had another offer in the Borovo complex.

July 30th, 1991

I was invited to Vukovar's town council to see the assistant Commissioner of the government of the Republic of Croatia for the city of Vukovar Stipe Ivanda. He told me that I was obliged to take over running the Home due to the state of war in Vukovar. He also informed me that today the executive institutional workers assembly would make a decision in accordance with the statute of the work organization of the Nursing Home of Veterans and Senior Citizens of Vukovar on naming me director. I warned Mr. Ivanda that I was Head of Accounting in the Home, and that by the law of social welfare I didn't have the qualifications to be the director. He explained to me that the county of Vukovar was in a state of war and that all jobs and work tasks, as well as employees, had to be subject to the state they found themselves in. These decisions were made by the Commissioner of the government of Croatia for the city and county of Vukovar Mr. Marin Vidić Bili and they had to be implemented. He gave me a written decision by the Crisis Headquarters and mentioned that the decision from the Executive institutional workers assembly on appointing the director was to be made today.

Immediately after talking to Mr. Ivanda I tried to contact the assistant commissioner for the county of Vukovar for humanities Mrs. Bojana Peter, in order to inform her about the situation I was in, but that wasn't possible since she was busy.

I informed the members of the staff about the decision made by the Crisis Headquarters and gave them a written copy of the decision. In accordance with the Statute of the institution of the choir of the workers assembly, a decision was made to appoint a new director. The decision of the county and city of Vukovar and the decision of the workers assembly were sent to the Republic's fund for social protection of the Republic of Croatia.

MEJE SIGURNOSTI I STABILNOSTI KORISNIKE 31.07.91.
TE OSTALIH AKTIVNOSTI

MEJE	ZOK
1. Priprema pedimne za skladište	01.08.91.
2. Priprema duke hrane	01.08.91.
3. Priprema vode u skladištu	01.08.91.
4. Priprema hrane u skladištu	01.08.91.
5. Obavšt korisnice o skladištu i posuđju u slučaju nepode	1.08.91.
6. Obavšt zaposlenih o obilježju u slučaju nepode	01.08.91.
7. Obilježiti prostorju za radu	01.08.91.
8. Poraziti se za erom	do 15.08.91.
9. Prethi putim najst korisnice	17.08.91.
10. Koordinacija za hranku	17.08.91.
11. Obilježiti skladište u skladištu	17.08.91.
12. Obavšt korisnicima soci. ulogom o doze, ničice u radu u skladištu	01.08.91. (poc.2.)
13. Pregled stanju u skladištu godišnj. odmore i skladište u skladištu	do 15.08.91.
14. Mrežje u skladištu u skladištu (izje, bojanje, izje, podere u skladištu)	do 17.08.91. 17.08.91.
15. Ostaniti u skladištu za erom u skladištu	do 15.08.91.

Security measures and measures on how to take care of the residents (scanned pages of the diary)

July 31st, 1991

I handed out measures and deadlines to the employees for the safety and well being of our residence, as well as other activities. Under the command of the war headquarters of the Vukovar region some of the basement warehouses of the institution were used for storing groceries and the guard's equipment.

August 1st, 1991

Damjan Samardžić, also known as “the Big Boiler”, brought some groceries and equipment into the warehouse. I never saw anything, he just informed me that his guards and he himself would occasionally stop by in order to take and leave some things. They were the only ones who had the keys to these rooms.

August 2nd, 1991

I spoke with father Branimir Kosec about the possibilities of holding a mass in the institution for the believers. We agreed to have it on Sunday, August 4th, 1991.

August 3rd, 1991

I was informed about the departure of the head nurse from the Vukovar institution. The day before, at around 4 pm, I had called her mother in law, and she said that Delfa Miljanović, the institution's head nurse, had gone to Bosnia with her children for a holiday - although we had an oral and written agreement that all holidays in the home were postponed due to the state of war. Despite this, the head nurse went on vacation and left her work place. A telegram was sent to Delfa Miljanović (number 2197) to return to work on Monday August 5th, 1991 due to war in Vukovar, as well as to contact Margareta Sruk the caregiver by telephone in Zagreb (041/286-410). Margareta informed me that she was ill (she had been in Zagreb for a funeral and got ill and took sick leave).

During breakfast I told the residents about the state in Vukovar and the lack of employees in the institution and asked them to help the institution to function in the best way possible because of the newly found conditions. They were also informed about the shelter and its contents. Rade Prpić, Zvonko Šibalić and Jovo Vukomanović were the residence in charge of helping move the other residence into the shelter.

All the employees were invited to come to a brief meeting at 1 pm in order to agree upon further details. I came to an agreement with father Kosec from the Roman

Catholic church in Vukovar to hold a mass in the institution on Sunday August 4th, 1991 at 3 pm. Nurse Ljuba Antolović was in charge of decorating the room.

August 4th, 1991

The main event in the institution was the mass held by father Branimir Kosec. The residents were overwhelmed and stayed with father Branimir long after the mass was over. They asked him whether mass would be held more often. He promised that he would from now on regularly come for Sunday mass.

August 6th, 1991

A telegraph was sent to Branka Mišćević (number 2225) to contact her work place on August 9th, 1991.

August 7th, 1991

An agreement was made to buy potatoes at the market price. Beans were delivered from Lovas. All the food supplies were checked in the storage and a list was made up in order to buy a three month supply.

August 8th, 1991

The Republic's Fund for Social Security is urgently asking for the payroll forms. Everything is ready to be sent on August 9th, 1991.

August 9th, 1991

The payroll forms were sent to the Republic's Fund for Social Security. The estimate for buying coal and for its transportation from Banović arrived. They asked us to pay it as soon as possible. Working in shifts was becoming more difficult. It is becoming very difficult to organize shifts with seven people missing. A meeting is scheduled by the workers union in order to make a decision about terminating the status of the employees that left the institution without permission. I got a Kalashnikov with two clips and two boxes of ammunition from Damjan Samardžić. I prayed to God that I would never have to use it.

HO DOM BORACA I UMIROVLJENIKA p. o.
VUKOVAR
P. Kočića b.b.

Vukovar, 19. o8. 1991

Broj: _____

Žiro račun br.: 35100-603-341

Telefon: 036-48-741

REPUBLIČKI FOND SOCIJALNE
HRVATSKE
Z A G R E B

U prilogu dopisa dostavljamo pregled materijalnih troškova za mjesec srpanj 1991. godine.

Ujedno vas obavještavamo da trenutno nedostaje 5 radnika koji zbog odlaska u mirovinu koji zbog izrečene mjere prestanka radnog odnosa zbog nedolaska na posao. Radnici koji nedostaju su:

- spremačica od 20. 06. 1991. godine
- njegovateljica od 15. 07. 91. godine
- direktor od 1. 08. 91. godine
- njegovateljica od 1. 08. 91. godine
- glavna sestra od 3. 08. 91. godine

Za privremenog vršioca dužnosti direktora ustanove rješenjem povjerenika vlade Republike Hrvatske za općinu Vukovar imenovana je Marić Anica, glavni knjigovodja i za to radno mjesto je u ovom trenutku najmanje problematično jer svi zaposleni u ovoj ustanovi i bez direktora znaju što treba, raditi i do sada su svoje obaveze do maksimuma ispunjavali. No međutim nedostatak spremačice, dvije njegovateljice i glavne sestre ozbiljan je problem. Moramo napomenuti da od osoblja medicinskog i njegovateljskog kadra još niko nije koristio godišnji odmor a od 1. 08. 1991. godine radi se bez slobodnih dana i u dupliranim smjenama kako bi se poslovi obavili na zadovoljstvo svih korisnika usluga. O svemu ovome obavješteno je Ministarstvo rada i socijalne skrbi no još uvijek nema odgovora te vas molim o da ako već ne odlučujete o zapošljavanju radne snage barem utječete na odgovorne za ova pitanja u Ministarstvu rada i socijalne skrbi. Obzirom na opću političku situaciju u našoj općini te rad u dupliranim smjenama neće se još dugo moći izdržati bez zapošljavanja ljudi na upražnjena radna mjesta u ovoj ustanovi.

August 10th, 1991

Shopping for groceries at the market is completed. I must talk to someone from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security on Monday about the workforce problem and ask for instructions on what to do with the employees that left Vukovar.

August 12th, 1991

I sent the correction of the P-1 form and table 2 form and hired Nensi Mučalov, who had been working as a temporary nurse, and Čolak Đurda as a caregiver.

I received a memo stating that we urgently needed to cut the institutions costs by 20 percent. A workers union meeting was held. The decision to let go of Delfi Miljanović, Branka Mišević, Margaret Sruk, Katica Milić and Zora Magoč was made.

August 13th, 1991

A report was sent to the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare about the dismissals (by fax from Vukovar's post office), as well as a tender for hiring new nurses and caregivers.

August 19th, 1991

An outline of material costs was sent to the Republic's fund as well as an official letter about the state of the institution.

August 24th, 1991

Attacks began on Vukovar coming from Borovo village.

August 26th, 1991

The workers assembly about the problems of the institution and working organization wasn't held due to the shooting. We agreed that we would do our best to cover all the shifts so our residents wouldn't feel the lack of personnel. Vukovar was bombed after the sirens had gone off three times. All of the mobile residents went into the basement, while the immobile residents were taken care of in their rooms.

August 27th, 1991

The attacks on Vukovar continued. We received some bread. In between attacks we were trying to prepare meals, change our residents' clothes, as well as wash and clean the institution.

August 28th, 1991

Early in the morning after returning from my house where I had spent the night after a long time, I ran into Milenko Tešanović by the crossing near the home. He had a VBR on his shoulder. He was waiting for one of his own who was holding post by the Bulgarian cemetery to give him a lift but nobody came. He asked me to give him a lift. Even though I was in a hurry to get the groceries for the home, I gave him a ride. I noticed an obstacle right behind the veterinarian station. It was made out of a ball of hay, a couple of trucks and as I came closer I saw mines on the road. I stopped instinctively but Milenko told me to calmly continue driving that there was enough room for the truck to pass. I had realized that war was at our doorstep. I brought him to the post. Budimir, Dujčić, Čolak and Beljo were already there. I turned around and went back to the home. I had just sat down when Vera Tešanović, Milenko's wife ran into the office. She worked in the institution as a caregiver. She was in a state of shock and barely could say that the JNA tanks had gone past the Bulgarian cemetery and that our people who were holding that post along with Milenko had been cut off from the valley, close to the path that leads to Vučedol. I couldn't believe it, since I had just gotten back from there that instant. She told me that our people saw them shooting at them and that nobody knew what had happened to them. I hadn't seen anything while driving Milenko. I heard the noise of a tank close by but then Milenko told me that it was like that every day. He said that it was because there were tanks by Ovčara and everyday early in the morning they would rev up the motor. They did this so that we would get the feeling that they were right behind us. I didn't know what to say, it was stupid to try and comfort her. All we could do was wait to hear any news. We didn't get any bread. We heard constant explosions all morning. The residents were in the basement.

A little after lunch Anđa Budimir called me and told me that all of our men from the front on the way to Vučedol had returned. Their retreat lasted a full five hours through the woods around the New Cemetery in Vukovar and ended by the first houses in Čvorkovac. Anđa told me that they had crawled the whole way, and that Milenko didn't want to leave the VBR so they all took turns pulling it with them. They were alive and well which was most important. I immediately contacted Vera and told her that they were alive and that Milenko would be home soon. Around 5 pm the air raid sirens signaling an air attack went off. It seemed to me that airplanes were

flying only over Mitnica. I thought about what would happen if a bomb fell on the home. Surely none of us would survive because our basement wasn't secure enough for those kinds of situations. My thoughts were interrupted by a strong explosion close to the home, followed by a couple more. Everything was shaking. We all remained silent with our heads between our legs as if that would help us. After a siren announcing the end of the air attacks went off at around 7 pm, I was speechless. We had all been taught only the best about the JNA and in a way for my generation the JNA meant security. This same JNA was bombing its own people. Unfortunately, there wasn't any time to think. We had to prepare dinner and try to calm the residents. We hadn't had any electricity or water since 7 pm.

August 29th, 1991

We got bread in Vukovar's NA-MA early in the morning. We changed our menu according to our current situation. Vukovar was expecting to be attacked from all directions. The tanks that made their way to the cemetery had Mitnica in their hand and had been shooting at us from dusk till dawn. I went out of the home and saw five craters in the fields made by the bombs that had been thrown the day before. I picked up some screws and metal parts and brought them into the basement. I sent a report to Croatian Radio Vukovar that five bombs had fallen near the institution and that all the residents and staff were well. I hoped that our residents' relatives would hear that they were fine. We got our water back at 10 am but we were still without electricity.

August 30th, 1991

The residents were taken care off. Breakfast passed as always, we were able to get medicine from the pharmacy as well as powder for disinfecting water (Izosan). We received 120 kg of bread, 60 yoghurts and 150 kg of powdered milk from the Territorial Defense Headquarters. Shootings began at 9:45 am by the barracks. We were expecting to be attacked by tanks from all directions. Attacks from all over on Vukovar started at 6 pm. A countless amount of missiles fell on the home. Shootings stopped at 10 pm. The residents and staff remained in the basement until 1:30 am and then returned to their wards. There was no damage to the home. There was no electricity or water.

August 31st, 1991

Already at 7 am we could hear shooting from different directions. All the residents were taken care off. Shooting from heavy artillery started at around 10 and lasted until 12. Lunch was distributed and all the residents were fine. We were able to clean and wash everything. We didn't have electricity. We got water at around noon. Dinner was served at 5 pm. New attacks were announced over Radio Vukovar. We had a relatively peaceful night.

September 1st, 1991

Chores were completed early in the morning. You could hear airplanes flying high above us. We got electricity back during the night. The day passed by peacefully. Everything was prepared for the next day. All the laundry has been washed and ironed.

September 2nd, 1991

I was able to get all the supplies by noon. We had enough bread. No sirens went off. Shootings lasted all day. The army announced their retreat. Nobody believed it.

September 3rd, 1991

There was no electricity or water. Attacks on Mitnica started around 8 pm and lasted up until 10 pm. The home filled up all of its vacancies during the day. Telephone calls enquiring about accommodation were more frequent. People didn't know what to do with their elderly especially those who didn't have anyone. The guard informed us that Vuteks and the fire station had been burned down. Despite the ceasefire grenades and bombs were falling even in the center of the city. More and more civilians had been wounded because the attacks were sudden and unannounced. We listened to Radio Vukovar on a regular basis to be up to date. We were often visited by guards, during their breaks between combat, who talked about their posts.

September 4th, 1991

No water or electricity. Our meat supplies were running low. The residents were satisfied with their food. There hadn't been any complaints about the meals that had been consistent up until now. We had a relatively peacefully day and night, at least in our area. Our electricity came back during the night.

September 5th, 1991

We were just getting ready for the day and a strong explosion from Ovčara and the new cemetery region began. We quickly took all the mobile residents into the basement and started carrying the handicapped into the storage room because it was the biggest room in the basement. Suddenly we heard a strong explosion in the A ward of the nursing home. I ran up from the basement and found myself in the hallway in an instant. You could hear screams and cries for help. Everyone who was working that shift ran to the family room in the ward and saw a cloud of dust spreading from it

and the room next to it. Groans from the room were getting louder. Grandma Rozalija Mujić was in the family room watching television. Her head was slightly leaning back as if she had fallen asleep. She was dead. Nurses Lena Vrtarić, Ljuba Antolović and I ran into the room next to the family room. At first we didn't know where to turn because of all the dust, the smell of gunpowder and the groans. There were three beds in the room. Sofija Nikolić laid by the window, Katarina Hop in the middle and Marija Bunjac by the door. I instinctively ran to Katarina Hop because I had a feeling that she wanted to tell me something. She was rolling her eyes making a weird face, and her tongue was sticking in and out of her mouth. Ljuba and Lena immediately saw the state of the other two grandmas and uncovered grandma Kata in order to see the severity of her wounds. To my horror her stomach and whole uterus were gone; her legs were on one side of the bed and the upper part of her body on the other. In that moment I felt the horrible stench of burnt flesh and I ran into the hallway in a second. I felt sick to my stomach and I was covered in sweat. I heard someone yell for a stretcher. We took all three into the hallway. In a flash the boys from the guard, the police, the neighbors as well as Dr Karnaš came shortly after with the ambulance. We took all the bed-ridden residents into the basement within ten minutes, even though the attacks were still taking place. The employees of "Morgue" had quickly come and taken away the deceased. I informed Marin Vidić on what had happened in the nursing home. I asked him if he could insure transportation for the bed-ridden patients to leave the institution. We couldn't go on like this the residents as well as the employees were under great danger. The home was only a few hundred miles from the front line. He promised to do everything possible to evacuate the residents. The television crew did their job while we were still carrying the residents into the basement.

Right after my conversation with Marin Vidić preparations for the evacuation began. The buses arrived around 7 pm. The guard and the police had arrived in order to help. We had all of the bed-ridden residents in the bus by 9pm. Only a small number of them could sit, and due to the fact that the way to Vinkovci was through the Bogdanovci corn field, we had to try and prevent any injuries from occurring during the journey. We tied some of them to the chairs and bolted others to the floor. My colleague from Vinkovci had contacted me late in the night to inform me that they had arrived safely to the nursing home in Vinkovci. I started crying, screaming in despair and happiness because we had succeeded in evacuating the bed-ridden residents. Death had taken its toll here. Katarina Hop and Rozalija Mujić were killed. Sofija Nikolić, Marija Bunjac, Gojko Drakulić, Lazar Grgić had been heavily injured and Boško Čurč, Dragica Tomšik and Ana Edelmajer had minor injuries. Even though all of us employed in the institution were used to close encounters with death, this was something else. This had been a warning. There were no more exits out of the basement and even if it wasn't the safest place to be it was some kind of protection. I hadn't fallen asleep until late that night. For the first time, the shootings around us meant nothing. I was indifferent. I didn't even flinch at explosions anymore.

September 6th, 1991

After the evacuation of the bed-ridden, 49 residents remained in the institution. Amongst them was Jelena Pereterski who was on her deathbed so we couldn't send her to Vinkovci and Jovan Vukomanović who had refused to leave Vukovar. While my coworkers were trying to get things into order, preparing breakfast and calming down the residents as much as possible, I made a list of those who had left and of those who had stayed. I gave Vinkovci all the telephone numbers of the relatives of the residents that had been evacuated. After breakfast we began cleaning the family room that had been hit by a tank missile the day before. Some residents were able to help us. It was difficult to enter the room next to the family room, not only because it was almost totally destroyed but because the path on the way to that room, where a granny had been killed and two others heavily injured, raised a feeling of helplessness and made one ask many questions. Who was in charge of those who shot missiles on an institution that cared for the sick and elderly? How was it possible that this had happened even with the big Red Cross sign on the building's roof which was respected worldwide? What did this barbaric act mean to the enemy? Were these people greater beasts than animals? Looking at the room's ceiling which still had the remains of the deceased Katarina Hop, the smell of human flesh which was still intensely spreading throughout the whole ward reminded me of the fact that we were at war and that we had to defend ourselves as best as we knew how: with our hearts and faith in God that the sacrifice we would bare would be worth what we believed in. We believed that we had never done harm to anyone and that hatred never won. We quickly cleaned up everything and went down into the basement because the shootings had already begun again around 10 am. The elderly women were praying the rosary. Nurse Dragica Babić informed me that she was leaving to go to Germany with her children. She asked me if I knew anyone who could give her a lift to Vinkovci. I asked Mrs. Vilma Vidović and her husband to take her to Vinkovci. They took her and her children to the train station in Vinkovci without any questions asked. They also took some underwear, clothing and linens for the evacuated residents to the nursing home in Vinkovci.

September 7th, 1991

After receiving a call from my colleague in Vinkovci I collected all the documents of the evacuated residents (social and health charts) and accompanied by Damjan Samardžić and guard Đuka from Lovas we went with their vehicle to Vinkovci. Damjan explained to me that we had to go to Bogdanovci through the famous corn path, with the possibility of being shot at from Đergaj forest. Thank God there hadn't been any shooting. I couldn't even see where we were driving. Damjan had driven so

fast so that we wouldn't become targets for those in the Đergaj forest. I was surprised when I arrived in Vinkovci, as the state of war had begun long before in Vukovar. The shops and market were working normally. The city was full of people who were sitting carefree in front of cafes. Everything looked so normal as if nothing was happening only twenty kilometers away. Only then had it dawned on me why my colleagues from Vinkovci had insisted on the residents's documents. I believe that they didn't even know the real state in Vukovar and that by their insisting to get the documents I had jeopardized not only my life but also the lives of two other people who were driving me. There is a saying that the elderly say that there are things worse than evil so our sacrifice didn't look so big in comparison to the soldiers buried along the corn path. They were there day and night, and when we were passing by they were having lunch – something out of a can, bread and water. When I returned, we made a sleeping schedule for the residents and prepared them for being constantly in the basement. Đuka with his boys brought the telephone into the basement and I immediately called the office for refugees in Zagreb. I talked to Mrs. Jasminka Žanić who promised to help evacuate the rest of the residents. It was obvious that if Vukovar came under heavier attacks we wouldn't be safe in the basement. I also talked to Mr. Vicko Goluža, the director of the Fund for social welfare, who advised me to call the nursing homes in Slavonia and Baranja and try to find accommodation there and organize an evacuation. Unfortunately I didn't find sympathy from any of the nursing homes in Slavonia and Baranja. I got the same answer from all of them and that was that none of them had any room. A colleague from a newly built nursing home in Slavenska Požega told me that they had room but that they only accepted a certain category of residents and unfortunately they couldn't accept ours. I called Mrs. Žanić again and informed her that I wasn't able to find accommodation for our residents.

She told me to call her tomorrow. She would try to do something to speed up the evacuation. I had to talk to our patients and organize everything until the government's commissioner let us know that it was safe to evacuate. During the day all the destroyed rooms had been cleaned up. The day passed relatively peacefully. The residents were taken care off. There were shootings throughout the whole night.

September 8th, 1991

All the duties around preparing meals for the residents were completed on time. We cleaned up all the soot in ward's A and B, and took off the broken windows. We made doughnuts for our residents despite the constant shootings to cheer them up a bit. Vlado Veber and I went into the kitchen to make them because we still had gas in the tank. When we were almost finished, there was a strong attack coming from the direction of Negoslavci. Missiles fell right under our kitchen window. We both laid down on the floor, and heard our co-workers and residents yelling from the basement for us to come

down. We didn't leave the doughnuts. In a small break between shootings we brought them down into the basement for all of us to enjoy. It was also a chance to inform all of the residents that negotiations for evacuation were underway and that everyone should get prepared and take only their necessities. Grandma Jelena Pereterski died that afternoon. We called the morgue to come and get her. It was impossible to take her to the morgue because the attacks weren't stopping. We took her into the hallway.

September 9th, 1991

The past three days went by in attempts to find a place for evacuating the remaining residents. I talked to Mr. Masnić from the Republic Fund for Social Welfare who told me that they couldn't decide on the evacuation day. This decision had to be made by the crisis headquarters in Vukovar, which was understandable. Mrs. Žanić helped me find accommodation in Istria's Novigrad. The director of the nursing home in Istria's Novigrad Dr Ikač was very cooperative and agreed to take in all of our residents. Now all we had to do was wait for the right time to evacuate. The residents were ready and the place of evacuation was known. Unfortunately a safe time for evacuation was hard to foresee. It was almost impossible.

September 10th, 1991

I spoke with Marin Vidić right after breakfast about the possibilities to take our residents to a safer place. He told me that he believed that it would be possible on September 13th between ten and eleven a.m. The buses were ready; it all depended on the intensity of the attacks. We prepared our residents for the evacuation and packed their underwear and medication. News about the evacuation spread fast throughout the city. We were constantly receiving phone calls asking to evacuate other elderly people in Vukovar. We determined which people would chaperon the residents to Istria. We took pictures from all the wards and put them in the basement, as well as the linens. We wanted to save everything we could. There was an awkward silence amongst us. A moment I would never forget. We felt joy that we were finally taking care of these senior citizens, and sorrow that we would be separating. We were like one big family; we shared good and bad times like a good marriage. The war had made the feeling of belonging even stronger. They trusted us. We were their only family. The evening and night was peaceful, regardless of the shootings. Everybody was in their own thoughts.

September 11th, 1991

The agreed evacuation was cancelled due to security reasons. The attacks on Vukovar were getting stronger by the minute and it was practically impossible to go anywhere.

I talked to Dr Bosanac about the possibility to move Jove Vukomanović and Josip Erdeg because of the bad state they were in. She promised to send an ambulance. We didn't leave the basement the whole day and night.

September 12th, 1991

The ambulance wasn't able to get to us. All the residents were very restless due to the cancellation of the evacuation. I tried to explain to them that because of security reasons it wasn't possible. I obviously wasn't convincing enough. Their conclusions were right. They weren't safe here either, they said. They didn't accept the fact that everybody who would be driving and accompanying them would most likely get hurt. Their safety came first. They were ready for the journey as were we, and unfortunately yesterday it didn't happen. If it would happen today, I couldn't say. In the meantime we didn't have any electricity and water. We handed out dry meals for lunch and dinner. I informed Mr. Masnić that the evacuation was postponed until further notice. Vukovar was being attacked from all directions. The heaviest attacks began at 1:20 pm. I forbade everyone from leaving the basement. We handed out dinner under candlelight. Everyone was very worried. The situation seemed even more difficult and I thought that there wouldn't be an evacuation. All the ceasefires up until now had been violated and I didn't believe that it would get better. I wasn't in the position to share these thoughts with anybody. They were too negative to say out loud.

September 13th, 1991

Attacks weakened around midnight and new ones began early in the morning. When we saw that the shells weren't falling nearby, we made a fire in the backyard. We succeeded in making potato stew for lunch. Planes were flying high over us. Just as Bartol and I had brought the bowls with food into the basement, a shell fell right where the fire was. Luckily, no one was hurt.

The attacks lasted all day. We had enough drinking water because we had gently let it out of the pipes. The basement was lower than the building installations. We made a deal that we would get water from the nearby well the next day if we ran out. Some of the residents were on the verge of a breakdown. It was getting more difficult to calm them down. The biggest disbelief to them was that they were being attacked by members of the JNA. They didn't believe that we couldn't take them to the hospital. They were sure that it was safer in the hospital. I hadn't told them a lot of things because I didn't want to worry them. Even if we could drive them to the hospital, we wouldn't. They didn't have any room there. The hospital was full of wounded soldiers and civilians. In Vukovar people were getting killed for water, groceries, clean air. It was difficult to explain anything to them, especially when things were getting worse by the hour.

September 14th, 1991

I checked around our nursing home early in the morning. There was a lot of broken glass. The area around the building was totally destroyed. Many houses in the neighbourhood had been directly hit, some totally destroyed. New attacks from all over started at 9 am. Vukovar's soldiers were running from Mitnica to Trpinjska Street, from Trpinjska Street to the Sajmište. Close to the nursing home from the direction of the barracks they were trying to hit Ina's gas station. I prayed to God that they didn't hit it because if they did we would all burn because the reservoirs still contained gas. Luckily, they didn't hit it. There was constant firing from Negoslavci. It seemed like every shell ended up under our window. Our water supplies were good, but we were forced to serve dry meals again. It was too dangerous to try and cook a meal outside again. We were visited by Dragan Čorić, a guard. His position was by the barracks. He told me that part of Vukovar, Sajmište had fallen into the hands of the Chetniks. A small number of citizens from that part of Vukovar were able to get out of their houses and go to the elementary school Vladimir Nazor, where the basements were ready to shelter people. He was able to settle his sick mother and sister with two little girls there. We didn't know anything about the fate of the others. The stories of those who survived were horrible. The Chetniks went from house to house and threw bombs inside. Only after did they look to see if anybody was inside or not. I didn't have the strength to say anything. Negative thoughts took over.

September 15th, 1991

The night passed by peacefully. News about the fall of the Sajmište spread fast. You could see that there was a shortage of food in the city. Attacks on Vukovar already started at 9 am. We gave our residents breakfast. The water supply was running low. We were able to cook lunch outside as well as bring a couple of buckets of water from the nearby well, even with the shootings underway. There wasn't a lot of bread so we were using more dough. Throughout the day we were being attacked from all directions including the air. Josip Erdeg died at around noon and Elizabeta Pabulkov was in a coma. Both of them were put in the room with the dishes so the other residents wouldn't be even more scared. The telephones were still working so I informed the morgue to come and pick up Josip. I didn't believe that would be anytime soon. We kept him in the room with grandma Elizabeta until we were able to get him to the morgue. The telephone connection stopped in the afternoon, the cable was cut somewhere. No electricity and water. The day passed by as if we all had knots in our stomachs. Everything became normal and nothing was normal. Our attackers hadn't given us a minute to think.

September 16th, 1991

First thing in the morning we took Josip Erdeg's body to the morgue. The attacks stopped after midnight and still hadn't started. Radio Vukovar announced that a ceasefire had been signed yesterday. Nobody really believed in a real ceasefire. We cooked lunch for our residents and us, and Dragan brought us three days worth of bread. We brought water in barrels and I thought we would have enough for a few days of rational usage. At 11 am as if agreed upon a heavy attack on Vukovar began. From the direction of Trpinje the heaviest tank attack up until now on Trpinjska Street. We spent the rest of the day and night in the basement getting the usual chores done. We were lucky to have a toilette, so we didn't have to leave the basement. We ran out of candles. Because we had oil we made an icon lamp out of oil, corks and waist strings which we had from our male underwear. This way we had a little light for dinner. The icon lamps turned out to be the ideal solution until we got our electricity back. The radio that the guards had left us along with flashlights came in handy. The staff could listen to the news and we played music for our residents in the evening to forget about the shootings.

September 17th, 1991

We hadn't had electricity for a long time so the meat in our freezers started to thaw. We got gulaš (stew) from the "City Kavana" for lunch. Even though I told all of our residents not to leave the basement, it was difficult with all the chores we had to do within short intervals of shootings to control their movements. Mirko Indić left unsupervised. Since the beginning he had wanted to get some of his personal belongings out of his room in ward "C". At least that was what he had told Zvonko. When Zvonko told me that Mirko had gone out of the basement it was already too late. I found him in front of his room. He was hit by a piece of missile on the nose. He had no other injuries. Nensi told me that he had most likely died instantly. He looked like he was sleeping. Missiles were falling all over and with great difficulty we succeeded in bringing him into the basement. It was hard on everyone. Despite that accident I think our elderly realized just then what was waiting for them if they left the basement. The attacks lasted all day. Grandma Elizabeta Pabulkov died around 9 pm. We already had three deceased people who we couldn't bury nor put anywhere safe so the missiles wouldn't tear them apart. Grandpa Josip was still in the morgue and we couldn't leave these two amongst the living residents. Despite the danger we wrapped up those two in sheets and took them to the morgue. It had been a long time since we had been visited by a guard. The attacks on Vukovar were so intense that they all had to be in all the positions in order to protect the city. I was struck with sorrow. I had a feeling that the tanks were in front of our doors, that was how strong the attacks were. Besides that, I hadn't been home in days even though it was only a couple hundred meters away from the nursing home. Constant fear of a possible military breakthrough from the barracks

across the river made me insane. Ante Mihaljević and the other soldiers assured me that an infantry breakthrough wasn't possible because everything had been mined. This was a small amount of comfort when you knew that on the other side of the river were tanks, howitzers, mortars that could at any moment make the earth flat. In my house's basement was my Sandra with a dozen other people and children. Ante often came and brought me messages from my family. He told me that they were fine, but all of that still seemed surreal. I could only ask how they were coming along with food, water, how they were doing electricity. The only comfort I had was that I knew that the basement was secure and well equipped.

September 18th, 1991

I was informed by nurse Lena Vrtarić early in the morning that she would go to her apartment in "Rupa" because her children couldn't bare the constant shooting anymore. When the attacks on Vukovar became more frequent we made a deal that we would always be in the nursing home and I allowed the employees that had children to bring them here to make it easier on them. Lena thought that it would be better at her apartment than it was in Mitnica where we were. I didn't want to nor could I stop her from doing so. Who was I to decide about the destiny of other people, especially the future of her children? I didn't condemn this action even though every man was important to us. We could manage without one person due to the fact that Milenko, Beljo and Franjo Mandić as well as Dragan came to help in our nursing home whenever they weren't on the front. The fact that Lena was a medical nurse was of great importance to us and it made the matter more difficult. We couldn't do anything. Lena left with the children. Dragan drove them in our van. I thought that it would be safer that way even though nothing was safe in Vukovar. In a short period without shooting Dragan was able to take them safely to the apartment and make it back. I was relieved when I heard him come back. Nensi Mučalov's mom came in the afternoon and asked me to let her go home. She hadn't seen her in more than two weeks. She promised to return her back to us. I let Nensi go even if it meant that in case she didn't come back we would be left with just one medical nurse Branka Mažar.

The attacks on Vukovar lasted all day and night. We cooked lunch outdoors because we still didn't have electricity or water, and the telephone lines were out. Nobody came throughout the whole day to pick up the deceased. I was worried because of this and thought about burying the bodies wherever possible if no one would come tomorrow as well. Even with the heavy firing we were able to gather some of the resident's personal belongings from their rooms so that they wouldn't leave the shelter. Before the war, I was always angry at their extra supply of toilette paper that kept on piling up in the rooms. Now I would just love to kiss them because in their lockers we not only found tons of toilette paper but laundry detergent as well. Another day of battling for survival had passed.

September 19th, 1991

I made a deal with my remaining colleagues to finally let our residents know after breakfast that the evacuation to places in Croatia that hadn't been affected by the war wouldn't be able to go through. The ring around Vukovar was tightening and there were no signs of an evacuation happening. We told them as we had agreed. They took it quite calmly; all of them had already survived a war. Even though they hadn't left the basement, it was clear to them that those who would survive would wait for the end. I also explained to them that from now on we would have to save water. It was our biggest problem right after the missiles of course.

Around 9 am Damjan Samardžić (Big Boiler) and Đuka from Lovas came for their last visit. They took what was necessary for the guard out of their room. They left us four boxes of smoked dry meat products, coffee, cookies and some canned meat. He took me outside and showed me how to use a Kalashnikov for individual and machine shooting. He also gave me five hand grenades and showed me how to use them. I couldn't imagine using it and said it out loud. Damjan just shouted at me saying that "if Vukovar fell into the hands of Chetniks, not to let them take me alive. Nobody knew what happened out by the Sajmište, many women and girls ended up in the hands of Chetniks in Bandić's factory" They left us one more hunting rifle, an anti tank bomb and two cases of ammunition. Damjan told me that he was leaving that for us to take care of and that someone would come later to pick it up. They retreated from their position by the gymnasium. They had to leave quickly before the shootings began. In the meantime Đuka had fixed our telephone connection. They told us that they wouldn't return. Only a few soldiers were left in Vukovar so they had to help each other. That meant that from now on we had to rely on ourselves like the rest of the civilians in Vukovar. Right after he left, Vera and I went to the nearby garden and picked tomatoes and peppers with the goal of killing our food monotony. Attacks on Vukovar started after 11 am. Up until then we were able to prepare lunch, bring water from the well and clean up the soot that had disabled us from getting out of the basement. People from the morgue came around 5 pm to pick up the deceased bodies. They told us that they would be buried in the Jewish cemetery. Attacks lasted throughout the whole night. It seemed to all of us in the basement that the earth was falling apart. I went to bed for the first time holding a weapon. Vera told me that it would be best if I put it by my bed because it was the one place where the children didn't go or stay long.

September 20th, 1991

Morning arrived peacefully. Our attackers probably got tired and stopped their fire around 5 am. None of us had slept a wink all night. While Vera and Dara were preparing breakfast, I walked around the building. It seemed to me that last night

the building had been directly hit from the explosions. I was right: the “C” ward that faced the new cemetery and tanks some 300 meters away from the front line was totally destroyed. Water was leaking from the radiator as well as from the water pipes. The dining room had been hit from the direction of Negoslavci also. The kitchen windows and furniture were destroyed. In front of the building the delivery van had been completely demolished. Luckily, we had a delivery car, a “Yugo”, in the garage that was untouched. An innumerable amount of visible signs of explosion were around the whole building. The emergency room and office area of the nursing home was also ruined. We were able to make lunch and bring 2 barrels of water by the time the next attacks began. Dragan brought us bread for the next two days from the Vupik bakery. They were like buns more than bread but we were happy because we didn’t have anything else. Attacks started at 10:30. They lasted all day and night.

September 21st, 1991

Scattered shooting throughout the whole day could be heard from all directions. All the residents were fine. One meal had been cooked. The water had been fetched. During the day we were visited by Ante, Franjo, Josip, and Dragan who came whenever they could. They were our protectors. Their optimism rubbed off on us. I asked Dragan to go and get Nensi if he could. He went for her. I was relieved to see her even though it was difficult to think about how her mom was doing in Borovo Naselje. She only had her. Nensi with her cheerful and optimistic spirit was a comfort to these people in the basement and she loved her job in the nursing home. We weren’t even expecting to get our water or electricity back anymore. The telephone was working only for domestic lines. More intense attacks commenced at around 7 pm. Throughout the night, ten strong missiles fell on the nursing home. Everything was shaking.

September 22nd, 1991

All the residents in the nursing home were doing well. We were able to cook lunch and get water. During the day, that is to say at exactly 10 am our electricity was back. No one was happier than us. The attacks started in the evening, as did the rain. We put plastic containers on the drain pipes that were somewhat whole and this way tried to collect water for washing the dishes and toilettes. The rain brought colder weather, but nobody complained. We had enough blankets so no one was cold.

September 23rd, 1991

Already at noon planes were flying over “Mitnica”. There weren’t any shootings or activity coming from the planes. A new ceasefire had been signed. Despite that we

tried to do what was inevitable. That meant to prepare everything for the meals, cook lunch, have the nurses check the residents and prepare the medicine (Thank God we had enough), do the laundry, just the necessities, clean the toilettes so we wouldn't suffocate (after all there were 60 of us in the basement). There were no attacks on Vukovar during the day. The firefighter with a cistern tank came around 5 pm and brought us water. We filled up all the barrels we had. All the residents immediately washed up and so did we. We picked up some clothing and blankets, two televisions from the ward and went down into the basement. I was also able to pick up from the ruins some official documents that I had left behind before because our residents came first. I found some money in the desk of a social worker. The money belonged to our residents. I took a bed for Karlo Didio. It was very difficult for him to lie on a mattress (both of his legs were amputated). He was the happiest resident when we brought the bed. Jovo Vukomanović was in bad shape and in great pain. We placed him in a small room for linens so he wouldn't bother the others. The attacks began sometime after 6 pm. I don't know how but we got our water back for a short period during the night. It was off quickly probably due to huge damages in the water installations.

September 24th, 1991

Social worker Beba Mažar and her daughter Branka Mažar left the nursing home. Out of 22 employees only four were left: treasurer Dara Mandić, nurse Nensi Mučalov, caregiver Vera Tešanović and acting director Anica Marić. I didn't think much about how long it would stay like this and if anyone else would leave. At noon heavy attacks began from all directions. The shootings stopped at 10 pm. I went to see what the situation was like outside. I was speechless when I saw the state, even though I had expected new damages to the building from the explosions. Almost everything had been hit. There were ruins everywhere, especially on ward C. To my surprise I saw Grandma Ana Beak in front of her room in ward A standing dumbly looking in the direction of her bed. She couldn't tell me when she had left the basement and how she had come to the room. I took her back into the basement and thanked God that nothing had happened to her. I informed Croatian radio about the destructions and asked them to announce that the nursing home residents were fine. I began thinking about an evacuation or at least moving the residents to another place. It seems to me that they were hitting Mitnica the most. Radio Vukovar announced that it was the same all around Vukovar: hell.

September 25th, 1991

All the residents were ok. Attacks lasted all night. A shower of various missiles fell over Mitnica: from tanks to mortar and štančerića or what we called multiple rocket launchers. It was a miracle none of the residents were complaining even though all of

them had many illnesses. We were able to prepare everything for that day as well as make lunch by 10 am. New attacks began on Vukovar at around 11 am. It had been a while since we had had a visit from a soldier including Dragan. According to the intensity of the attacks and number of missiles fired it looked like the chetniks would take over our position on the front and start throwing bombs into basements as they did by the Fair. I talked to my family. Everybody was alive and healthy. They had food and water. No one had electricity.

September 26th, 1991

I called Mr. Marin Vidić right after breakfast (it was served at 7 am, rain or shine) to see if there was a possibility to move our residents into a nuclear shelter because it was getting more dangerous where we were. Each new missile, considering everything over us was already destroyed, could go through into the basement. In order to calm my conscious I called him even though I knew it was an impossible mission because thick showers of missiles were falling on Vukovar every day. Unfortunately I received a familiar answer. There was no room anywhere, and the situation was difficult everywhere. We all started to feel fear and panic. We had to fight back all of our feelings except our survival instinct and our will to cope with what was waiting for us each day. After speaking with the commissioner, I called Bartol, who usually helped me cook lunch, to hurry up with chopping the wood so we could start making lunch. We still had a pretty good supply. Our dog Žučo (yellow), who had come to us from no mans land, was also with us. The moment I called Bartol to help me take the pot with our lunch into the basement, Žučo ran down to the basement. Bartol yelled from the staircase “run down!” and I immediately started running down to the basement not even thinking why. I wasn't even able to make it to the basement door when a strong explosion echoed above me. Exactly at noon another strong attack began. I asked the residents to be patient and informed them that lunch was done. I did this because our lunch was usually between noon and 1 pm. We would go and get the pot the first chance we got. We had our chance about half an hour later. Bartol and I went up, but there was no pot or fire - it was a direct hit on our lunch. Another explosion fired again in front of our kitchen so we again ran to the shelter of our basement. I told Dara, Vera and Nensi that there wouldn't be any lunch today and that we would have to hand out dry food. The residents started to complain even though Bartol had told them what had happened. They were waiting for goulash (stew) but had to be satisfied with luncheon meat. The attacks lasted all afternoon and night. Tank fire from Ovčara had increased at around 4 am.

September 27th, 1991

I wasn't going to check the building anymore because they didn't have anything else to destroy. Beba Mažar called and asked Dragan to come and pick up her daughter Branka and her. She was coming to work. Dragan arrived with Beba, Branka and some bread. Attacks began around 10 am. It was impossible to leave the shelter all day and night. We ate the bread only for breakfast and lunch. We handed out dough and cookies for dinner.

September 28th, 1991

At 5 am I sat in our undamaged vehicle and headed to Vupik's bakery by the grain silo near the Vukovar exit. It was quiet and I got a 3 day supply of bread (actually pita bread). The bread was quite hard there wasn't any baking powder. Hard bread was better than nothing. We cut the bread in half for our residents and dipped it in oil, water, and spices and fried them on a pan. This way they got soft buns that were quite tasty. Driving from Mitnica to the silos, I was convinced that everything in Vukovar was destroyed. It didn't comfort me, but it helped me stick to my decision not to drive our residents anywhere. All of Vukovar was a living hell. People were running around, some for water, and others for groceries. I felt as if I were in a movie. Everyone had a goal and an exact amount of time to do what they had to. No one knew when a new attack was coming. In last night's rampage, our attackers began turning Vukovar into ruins. I came back to the nursing home on time. As soon as I arrived Zvonko Šibalić called me aside and told me that Stevan Jovičić (a former partisan) from Borovo village was by the basement window every night between 8 and 8:30 sending homogenous signals with his flashlight towards Negoslavci. Zvonko claimed that missiles from Negoslavci would end up under our windows and some above us in the kitchen and dining room half an hour afterward. I remember frequently seeing Stevan while we had electricity in the dining room with the light on. I warned him not to have it on, and never in my wildest dreams did I think he would send light signals to someone who would then inform people in Negoslavci. Other houses nearby were almost flat with the earth. I didn't give too much importance to it all, but Zvonko kept on convincing me that attacks from Negoslavci began after the signals. I talked to Stevan and asked him if he had a flashlight. He said that he did but that he needed it when he went to the bathroom during the night. I told him that the same rules applied to him as to the others and that there was enough light in the hallways during the night for him to make his way to the bathroom. I took his flashlight more to calm down Zvonko than to stop Stevan from signaling further. Dragan arrived in the evening. Zvonko told him about Stevan and he went crazy in a second. He took him out of the building with the intent of killing him. I froze and couldn't believe that

something like this was happening. I stood in between Stevan and Dragan and tried to explain to Dragan that there was no need for such a drastic measure because we were all in the same boat. Making the situation worse and causing panic amongst the residents was unnecessary. Dragan answered briefly “Auntie, you don’t know what they are capable of doing. If he had the chance he would stab a knife in your back first“. Despite the fact that Dragan was right, I once again asked him to leave Stevan alone, and I promised to keep a better eye on him in the future. He let him go, and we went back inside. Zvonko watched him from that day on.

September 29th, 1991

Attacks began at 8 am. It was the most intense attack up until now and lasted all day and night. The multiple rocket launchers were especially active when they started spreading the deadly missiles; nothing was left but to pray to God that the missiles land somewhere else. Unfortunately, that meant that someone else would be praying the same prayer. The radio announced that the military leaders of the JNA sent an ultimatum to the Republic of Croatia in which they were asking Vukovar to unconditionally surrender or else they would attack the rest of Croatia with all their available forces. Our soldiers were resisting the enemy with supernatural power. If that wasn’t bad enough it started to rain at around 4 pm. We filled the barrels up again and took them to a safe place. If we rationally spent our drinking water we could have it for three days in case we wouldn’t be able to go to the well. We heard that many wells had been destroyed, but thankfully ours was untouched. No electricity and water and it looked as if we wouldn’t have it for a while. The telephone connections were also out. We didn’t have Đuka anymore to fix things. It was raining cats and dogs all afternoon and night. It started to leak in our biggest room where the residents were, which was right underneath the dining room. The dining room floor had been smashed from all the violent attacks during the last few days. The concrete had cracked and water started flowing through the cracks into the room underneath. We were collecting water from the ceiling all night with sponges so we could somewhat protect our residents below. In the morning we would think about what to do and move the beds.

September 30th, 1991

Late last night Dara Mandić and her husband left. We cooked lunch. The residents were fine. Beba Mažar and her daughter Branka came back which was a relief. It was a bit easier on us now. Shootings commenced at around ten in the morning. They lasted all day and night. It was difficult between breaks to cook meals. With the lack of bread we cooked milk and cornmeal for dinner. We had enough food for now. It was a little more difficult with water, but we were trying to use it rationally. They had fixed our

telephone cable so our telephone was working again. During the night the building had suffered more damages.

October 1st, 1991

We prepared for the new day until the new attack at 8 am. We brought enough water to last us a couple of days and cleaned out the soot from the dining room as much as possible. We put nylon down on the damaged part of the floor hoping that the water wouldn't go leak into the basement. It was especially difficult to prepare meals without bread. We were using dough but that wasn't bread. Unfortunately we weren't able to even make bread dough because we didn't have anywhere to bake it. The violent attacks started at 10 am and lasted all day and night. Radio Vukovar announced that the last connection between Vukovar and Vinkovci through Bogdanovci and Marinaca was cut. It rained continually. In the fire room itself, where the boilers were and where Vera's children Bojan and Tibor slept, had water flowing into it due to the heavy rain. We had a lot of nylon and rubber for the residents beds so we were able to protect the mattresses. We put towels and sheets to absorb the water under the door and waited for dawn. It was the most difficult night up until now.

October 2nd, 1991

The radio reported on the superhuman struggle of Vukovar's soldiers during the past days and nights and about the number of wounded and killed. All chores related to meals and the safety of our residents were completed early in the morning because none of us had slept. Nensi and Branka when called by a neighbor went to bandage a wounded soldier who couldn't get to the hospital. Luckily we had enough medical supplies and rivanol to clean up wounds, so we could help anyone. Vera informed me that we had two bed-ridden people besides Jove Vukomanović and Vljaka Petrović - Grandma Kata Filipović and Terezija Lukić. Vera and the other nurses tried not to burden me with problems before they were serious and until it was necessary to move the residents. She knew that they complained about every move because they had their own little territory that they hung on to. In these kinds of cases we had to somehow isolate the people. Condition of the rest of the clients is satisfactory. We have a problem with the water. We noticed that some of the residents were taking water from the barrels during the night in order to make their own supplies. This caused a false water shortage. The attacks died down and could be heard only sporadically after midnight.

October 3rd, 1991

At about 8 am small attacks began. At 10 am very strong ones continued. We weren't able to cook lunch because we were so tired that we fell asleep and this ruined

everything. Our residents were especially anxious today. They were complaining about the lack of lunch and asking to be moved somewhere further. They didn't believe us when we said that we couldn't move them to the hospital. They thought it would be safer there. It was harder to convince them that we were doing everything in our power. We still didn't have electricity or water so the possibilities to cook a meal a day had lessened. We had been collecting water that had gone through into the basement all day. We threw out wet towels, sheets and covers. We didn't wash anything anymore because there wasn't any more water and it wasn't necessary. We changed what we had. The residents had a lot of things for changing and wearing but this was a problem for us. We had almost nothing, just what was on our backs. Our food supply was getting low. We could still get vegetables from the nearby gardens. Nensi and Branka went into the neighborhood to bandage the wounded soldiers. They returned safely.

October 4th, 1991

Late last night we got pork from the neighborhood and cooked lunch first thing in the morning. The attacks on Vukovar began at 8 am. The radio reported strong attacks and attempts of the infantry to pass by from the direction of Negoslavci and Dudik. Our soldiers were holding up well. The radio informed that the tanks by Bogdanovci had been destroyed, but unfortunately our troops weren't able to free the path to Vinkovci. Attacks on Vukovar were getting longer and stronger with each day. Each time our troops succeeded in defending their infantry, their planes became active. The same situation took place today; they were mercilessly hitting our soldier's positions. I received a message from Dr Bosanac to send them any extra medical supplies and medicine. We packed everything we could spare. We were waiting for a good time for Dragan to deliver them to the hospital. Dara Mandić came back. There were six of us at work now and it was much easier.

October 5th, 1991

The city was in a very difficult state. Attacks using all kinds of weaponry had been going on since the morning. Even the airplanes were active. People had been risking their lives even more in search of food and water. Our employee Dinka came to ask for food for her two children, her husband and herself. I told her to take what she needed and as much as she could carry. We had food supplies for the next three months according to the menus we had made and to the average usage in the institution. We had enough supplies due to the fact that we had calculated everything based on 110 residents which was the capacity of the nursing home. With the evacuation of the bed-ridden and the arrival of the neighborhood's elderly we had around 60 people. We just didn't have enough bread and water. Our biggest problem was cooking meals with all the shootings and attacks.

The Croatian government's commissioner Marin Vidić Bili sent an appeal for help to everyone in Croatia and Europe through Radio Vukovar to help Vukovar and its citizens, especially its children. Vukovar had around two thousand children; there were newborns amongst them as well. The food and water supply was getting low. The hospital was full of wounded. Even the dead couldn't be buried on time. There were no medical supplies or medicine. Help, significant help was nowhere to be found, at least the kind of help that would influence the ratio of strength. The radio announced that the enemy would have new reinforcements in human strength and weapons arriving over Šid. We were all anxious. The suspense was killing us. We were all waiting to see what would happen. We heard that a large number of chetniks were heading towards Vukovar. That could mean only one thing, nobody would stay alive in Vukovar.

October 6th, 1991

Attacks hadn't stopped since yesterday. They got stronger in the morning. The navy was on the Danube, airplanes were in the air. Our soldiers were successfully resisting all the attacks for now. It was amazing that they handled all of the attacks. We weren't successful in sending our extra medical supplies and medicine to the hospital. It was difficult to even peek out of the shelter. My husband came around 10 am. He was running the emergency group from the city's waterworks. He told me that our house had been directly hit. He had to leave right away, and I decided to go home to see how Sandra was and if they needed anything. I didn't tell anyone because they for sure wouldn't have let me go during these shootings. All of us who occasionally went through the city could evaluate approximately when it was dangerous. The only unpredictable attacks were from snipers who were all over. An eternity seemed to have passed by the time I got home. Under normal circumstances it would have taken me less than ten minutes on foot, but now I was walking a bit and then stopping trying to avoid danger. Missiles were showering around me. I could see that they didn't have anything to destroy. Mitnica was almost totally flat. I finally got home and ran into the basement. Everyone looked good at first glance. There were eleven of them in our basement, seven adults and four children. The adults: Mile Beronja, Eva Beronja, Zlatko Marić, Zdenka Marić, Ljubica Marić, Karlo Marić, Sandra Marić and children: Davor Marić, Vedran Marić, Melita Beronja and Anita Beronja. I looked for Sandra. The only thing that mattered to me was that she was fine. I held her tightly and began to cry. I couldn't forgive myself for not getting her out of Vukovar on time. I knew that she didn't want to leave even though I was telling her to leave while she still could. Never in our wildest dreams could anyone even imagine that something like this could happen, especially not by the JNA. I was home for an hour. They told me that the house had been shelled directly a couple of times. I didn't look at the house's state nor did it interest me. I begged Sandra not to leave the basement without a

reason and to take care of herself. I knew I just said it out of habit, as my grandmother would say, but I still hoped that she would listen to me. They didn't need anything, but Sandra asked me to send her some powdered milk because there was a little child in the neighborhood and they didn't have any more milk. I promised to send some as soon as I could. I went back to the nursing home the same way I came, jogging, and miraculously I wasn't hurt. Nensi, Dara and Vera were waiting for me by the door. I can't repeat all the things they said to me. I told them that I had to go home. They were very frightened. Our residents were getting more and more restless, and it looked like they would only listen to me. On my way back I saw that the nursing home building was almost completely destroyed. No water, electricity or telephone.

October 7th, 1991

Attacks began already at 7 am from multiple rocket launchers, and then from all means of combat. It lasted till 10 am and then it quieted down. We used that time to get water. Our well was still in one piece. Luckily our Yugo was working so we could get the water in barrels. We spared our car as much as we could because there wasn't any gas, and the nearest gas station stopped working a long time ago. There was a huge crater from an aerial bomb (weighing 500 kg) in front of it on the street. The radio reported that around 2000 different missiles fell on Mitnica each day. They warned people to move as little possible because there was no more room in the hospital for the wounded. Across the street from the nursing home, Tomislav Belje's house and garage were bombed. Tomislav hadn't eaten anything in two days. We tried to explain to him that they were just things, and then he told us that he had a new car in the garage. I jumped at that news because we had a period when we didn't have gas for the vehicle and we had to go get bread. He hadn't told us then that he had a new car. Material things had become unimportant for most people in Vukovar a long time ago but not everyone thought the same.

October 8th, 1991

We had heard that a ceasefire had been signed for all positions around Vukovar (because Vukovar had been surrounded for almost a month). We weren't expecting anything. Heavier attacks followed after each ceasefire. I allowed the residents who wanted to leave the basement to do so. As a result they were in higher spirits, and more importantly, they realized that they were surrounded by ruins making it impossible to be mobile. I went home to see how my family was and took powdered milk for our neighbors. I heard that they had slaughtered some cattle and divided the meat between everyone in the basements and, that they were baking bread as well. Everyone's biggest problem was water. It was impossible to get when there was

shooting underway. My family was fine. Ante Mihaljević and his people often visited them so they both had benefits from it: the soldiers ate a cooked meal, and my people in the basement felt more secure. At around 7 p.m, nurse Branka Mažar informed me that she and her mother Beba were leaving the home because one of the residents had insulted her mother making remarks about her Serbian nationality. I couldn't believe my ears because the nursing home had more Serb residents than Croats. Why would a Serb insult her? I knew the real reason they were leaving. I couldn't stop them. It seemed to me that they were attacking Mitnica most intensely during the night. I also knew that it was hell throughout the whole city because I went in search of bread and water every day. I couldn't ask anyone to fulfill their work duties. Nobody could afford that anymore. They left. Once again the four of us were left with 55 residents. One nurse and three of us who didn't have a work place anymore. We didn't even have a title just the will to help these people as much as possible because we had the same fate. We had been convinced innumerable times since the beginning of the war that accidents enjoyed company. That was how it was today. It had rained all night and we had to watch out that the water didn't reach the residents. We once again gathered water with sponges because the nylon in the dining room above us couldn't stop the water. Residents who had the will and strength helped us too. They were Zvonko Šibalić and Bartol Falamić, my right hand man.

October 9th, 1991

Our residents had slept right after breakfast because it had been raining the night before and the attacks had lessened a bit. We went to clean up the mess in the dining room, and even though the attacks weren't as intense, a few missiles still managed to hit the dining room. We had received two rolls of tar paper from the Civil Welfare headquarters and believed that it would be better than the nylon for isolation. We didn't know where to begin. The whole roof had fallen into the dining room. The entire room was full of soot and building materials. We first cleaned up the middle part where there was quite a big hole from the missiles. The floor was destroyed and dented. We spread out the tar paper. We covered up parts of the building construction, took out the rest of the soot and made lunch for that day. In the meantime Nensi had to put a catheter on Kata Filipović.

We sent medicine, all our narcotics, and medical supplies to the hospital. We left only the necessities. Nensi left to go see the wounded soldiers in the area. Despite the signed ceasefire new attacks began at 11 am. There was nothing more to do. Attacks lasted all night until the morning.

October 10th, 1991

The radio announced that the strongest attacks on Vukovar's 49th day siege had started. They began intensively at 4 am. They were blaming each other for violation of the

ceasefire. It didn't matter to us who was guilty. Bombs were falling as if they were rain drops. Heavy infantry attacks came from Negoslavci and Trpinjska Street. All other attacks had been successfully stopped. They reported seeing an enemy tank graveyard on Trpinjska Street. The Worker's Home in Vukovar had completely burned down. Despite everything we were happy that they were resisting attacks. There were around 50 wounded and 9 dead on our side, according to the radio. Their side had a far greater loss. We were expecting the arrival of the food and medicine convoys. There was an appeal for evacuating the heavily injured from the hospital. It was clear to everyone that this depended on the good will of a JNA officer or a higher ranked commander.

October 11th, 1991

Morning dawned peacefully. The city was covered with heavy fog. Tank movement could be heard by the new cemetery and Ovčara as well as by the barracks. New enemy reinforcements arrived from Šid (Serbia). I asked the residents to gather together for the news at 10 so that they could hear what was happening in Vukovar. They could hear loudly and clearly what was going on in Vukovar, and the news which shocked them the most was that many were without food and water. It seemed to me that they had finally realized that their situation wasn't as terrible as they had thought. They had three meals a day, which included one cooked meal. They had enough water and under these circumstances decent accommodation. They didn't have to put themselves in danger like most of the other citizens of Vukovar in search of food and water. All of their meals were served. This was very good news for them. After they listened to the news they calmed down and were almost speechless the rest of the day. The new forces began heavy attacks on Vukovar around 1 pm. More than 2000 bombs fell on certain parts of the city. Just before midnight the attacks died down. Maybe the enemy got tired. We had used up all the water. We had to get more in the morning.

October 12th, 1991

The food and medicine convoy according to the radio was sent back to Đakovo and Osijek. Attacks on Vukovar began at five in the morning. A powerful explosion echoed over our heads. I thought that everything was going to fall on us. Nothing fell on us, but due to the intensity of the explosion we all plugged our ears expecting more. When things calmed down a bit, I went out to see what had happened. It was as I had expected, another heavy bomb had fallen right in the middle of our kitchen. Luckily it didn't go through into the basement. We immediately ran out to get water. We were only able to get four buckets of water before the next attacks. We had no more fuel in the car and had to carry the water by hand. We didn't have any more dry yeast so we couldn't make dough. We ate the last meat we had. Grandma Kata Filipović and Jovo Vukomanović were in a critical state.

October 13th, 1991

Vukovar had been completely blocked for 15 days. We heard on the radio that the food and medicine convoy was on its way to Vukovar again. A possibility for evacuating the women and children was announced so I hoped that we would be able to evacuate our elderly. I decided not to tell them for now because I didn't believe it would be possible unless they freed the route towards Marinci and Vinkovci. They would be calmer if they didn't hear the news. After we had handed out breakfast, I went to the neighbor's house in search of dry yeast. We had used ours by baking bread as well as buns a couple of times. I found three packs of dry yeast in a demolished house. As I was about to leave, I heard male voices. One of them said: "She was here; I saw her going into the house." I stood waiting for the stranger to appear. I didn't have to wait long. Three armed men came into the house and one of them turned to me quite strictly: "What are you doing here?" I told them that I was looking for dry yeast and baking powder. I also explained to them that I worked in the nursing home where we had over 60 senior citizens and that we had to bake our own bread. He asked me to empty out all of my pockets, which I did. He told me after in a strict voice: You could have died for that, many people have been robbing houses and taking valuables. I advise you not to go into other people's houses. Someone else might have first shot you first and then checked who it was. I didn't say a word. I went towards the nursing home and caught a glance of a stove oven in the garage in Kumšić's house across the street. I told Milenka and Franjo right after getting down into the basement how great it would be if we could install it in the basement. It would solve our cooking and baking problems because we had enough wood. We went across the street and brought the stove, which was in excellent condition. We placed it in the basement and built a fire. Everything was fine. I was relieved as was everyone around me because we knew that from now on we would be able to prepare meals and it would be warm.

Right after 10 am new attacks began.

October 14th, 1991

After two weeks we finally baked bread in an oven. It was excellent, but we didn't want to overdo it. We gave everyone a slice of bread for lunch. For dinner and breakfast we combined cookies and dough. We still had enough luncheon meat, flour, oil, salt, sugar, tea and cookies. The food and medicine convoy returned from the barracks back to Vinkovci. The Yugo army wanted to use the convoy to get through to the center of the city. Our soldiers decisively rejected this solution even at the cost of starvation. People from the neighborhood were coming over more often for food. After the convoy had returned hell broke loose in Vukovar. I didn't know what else could be destroyed in this city. Everything had been destroyed a long time ago. There was a strong desire amongst

the soldiers not to give in easily to the enemy. It was like a thick shield that couldn't be broken. Everyone knew that they had nothing to lose except of course their lives. Life and death were so close that you couldn't feel the difference. Under a shower of bombs the radio reported that our side, despite heavy attacks, was successfully defending itself. They were helping each other. In between news they were playing Oliver Dragojević. Everyone loves listening to him, and despite the thunder of explosions everyone felt happy. His voice and the voice of Siniša Glavašević were the only two things that gave them a little hope and the strength to move on. On today's date in 1967 I got married in Vukovar. God, it was as if it was yesterday. Will anyone in Vukovar stay alive? It was getting harder and harder with each moment.

October 15th, 1991

Shootings lasted all night. It had calmed down at sunrise. I went to the gardens around us in search of vegetables. I found cabbage. I ran into a neighbor close to the nursing home where we went to get water. He told me that a bomb had caved in his basement last night. He was getting the earth out from the basement in order to get out his daughter with her little child and son in law. The well where we had gone to get water was also destroyed. I offered that they come and stay with us. Even though we had little space we could still manage. He told me that they had already moved into a house across the street from their own with a good basement. A beautiful day dawned, sunny, with clear blue skies which left you in disbelief that a shower of bombs could begin in a second. I found some grapes in one of the vineyards and took them for the children. Just like clockwork shootings started at 10 am. The radio warned not to go out of shelters because many had been killed and wounded while searching for food, water or just fresh air. Only our soldiers were running around the whole city trying to defend what they could. The rest of us almost didn't have any contact with the outer world. Day or night it was all the same.

October 16th, 1991

Heavy attacks began on the city at 8 this morning. We were able to bring two barrels of water from the other well. Right before lunch at around 11:30 our only entrance to the basement was hit. The ceiling and walls had fallen right in front of the door and the rest of us were blocked from the outer world. There was nothing we could do until the shootings stopped. An elderly woman was slightly wounded while standing close to the door. I thought that they would kill everything in Vukovar. There wasn't a spot where a bomb or a heavy missile hadn't fallen. Help was nowhere to be found, our weapon and ammunition supplies were running low. The enemy was attacking Vukovar from a safe distance. I didn't know how long this would last and if anyone would survive. What kind of people would mercilessly destroy a city and its citizens?

What did we do wrong to be punished like this? We prayed that all those who were killed would at least come before God with a clear conscience. If things continued like this few survivors would leave Vukovar. Not one ceasefire had been respected. Nothing was sacred to them. The hospital in Vukovar was bombed the most even though they knew that the wounded were there. One thing was for sure, even if we survived we wouldn't have any memories of the past. Everything was destroyed and the bandits wouldn't stop until the last citizen of Vukovar was breathing. It would be much easier if we had some new weapons and people. Help was nowhere to be found. Jovan Vukomanović died after being in a coma for four days.



Blago Zadro

October 17th, 1991

Dragan came over late last night. We were overjoyed to see him safe and sound. He brought sweets for Vera's children Bojan and Tibor. He also told us horrible news. Blago Zadro had been killed yesterday. He was the leader and defense strategist of Trpinjska Street.

He didn't stay long because the shootings hadn't stopped all night. His departure left a sense of uncertainty. Blago wasn't just a symbol of defense in Vukovar, but he was primarily a man everybody loved and respected, even the enemy. It will be very difficult without him.

Shootings didn't stop even during the day. Despite the danger we were able to clear out the entrance from the rubbish left over from the explosion so that we could leave the shelter. We took Jovan's body to the morgue.

Heavy rain started during the day. Water leaked through the entrance door to the shelter because we didn't have a roof to protect it anymore. Once again we were battling with water. We didn't even react to explosions anymore. The will to survive was stronger than anything else. As the saying goes, after every evil something good comes along. During the day we were able to collect enough rain water and were left with more drinking water.

I heard that I could go and get bread at the local district in Mitnica. When I got there they told me that it was every man for himself. They had already handed out the little bread they had. On my way back I saw some people pumping gas out at the gas station by our nursing home. I asked them to give us some for our van and thank God they did. They gave me ten liters. My husband stopped by shortly to tell me that the civil protection unit was working in the "Vladimir Nazor" elementary school. I could go

and ask them to fix the roof over the entrance to the shelter so that water wouldn't leak. I told him to find someone from the morgue and inform them that we had a deceased man and if possible for someone to get his body. After that I went to the school under a storm of missiles. When they saw me they couldn't believe that I was driving around the city. I didn't have any luck there either. They told me, probably convinced that the home had more than four women working, that so many people were calling them they couldn't get to everyone. They also told me that we should try and fix the roof ourselves. We baked the bread ourselves. We left a piece of dough with yeast because we didn't have any more dry yeast or baking powder for our bread. We heard on the radio that our soldiers had defended all infantry attacks.

October 18th, 1991

We were able to get drinking water in a short break between two attacks. It was pretty cold. We cleaned out our storage room where we usually kept food and made room for our residents who were lying in the hallway. It was a little uncomfortable because the room didn't have any windows or ventilation. Nonetheless it was better and warmer than the hallway. The look of gratitude on the elderly's faces told us that we had done the right thing. Day came with the scent of something burning. Many houses had been burning during the night. As the radio reported the enemy had used phosphor and napalm bombs. Heavy fighting in the Lužac area had been going on since early morning. Some Yugo army officers had been taken hostage. A good part of their weapons and ammunition as well as an attack plan of Vukovar with details on how to fight during winter conditions were also taken. During the night our soldiers cleaned out the Lužac area of the chetniks and strengthened their position.

Vlajko Petković passed away in the afternoon. We contacted his son who was across the street from the nursing home to come and get his father and bury him. It rained all night. It was as if the sky had opened up. We didn't know where to turn to stop the water from flowing. In the room with the most people we had to gather water from the ceiling. A pond was flowing through the entrance door so two of us were always on call, collecting the water and pouring it into the toilettes. When the shelling calmed down a bit, we tried to fix the room in front of the entrance. We gathered four barrels of water. We filtered one through gauze and disinfected it with izosan so it could be drinking water in a few days. If things continued like this, we wouldn't be able to get water in the neighborhood.

October 19th, 1991

It rained all day. We were able to get our residents some clothes from wards "A", and "B" because the shootings were not as intense as usual. We gave them all the

bedspreads we had because we didn't have any heating. We had to ration our wood so right after we finished cooking a meal we put out the fire. Nobody could tell us how long it would last. According to the stolen winter war plans it was obvious that even the enemy didn't know when it would come to an end. Josip Budimir came to visit us, so I asked him to fix the roof above the entrance. He told me to go to the old military district and the civil protection headquarters to explain my situation. I had to go even though the military district was across the street from the hospital and I practically had to go through the city. Dragan took me in our old car Yugo. I couldn't see what the city looked like from the speed we were going, the missiles and the snipers. I only knew that you could barely drive in the center of the city from all the soot. Vera asked me to take some food to her mother and sister who were in a basement in an apartment building close to the military district. Dragan and I went into the building where they were right on the banks of the Danube. Snipers were shooting at us from neighboring buildings while entering and exiting the basement. They didn't hit us. Vera's mother and sister were fine. They couldn't help us here either. They told me to go to the "Vladimir Nazor" elementary school again to see what they could do. Upon arriving at the school I saw that their roof was also badly hit and that they were struggling with the same problem. Despite everything Mr. Menges promised that someone would come as quickly as possible. On our way back to the nursing home we saw the body of our deceased Petković in the field in front of the home wrapped up in sheets. His son was probably trying to carry him across the street in order to bury him in their yard and while doing so shootings began so he couldn't carry him. There was shelling all around us also. Thank God nothing happened to us and we returned to the nursing home unharmed.

October 20th, 1991

It was still raining heavily. There was less shooting. Josip Budimir came early in the morning and said that with the help of Milenko, Dragan, Franjo, Belje and our residents they would fix the roof above the entrance. We were able to fix the roof by evening even during the rain and missile fire. Someone could have gotten hurt at any moment. We were all listening for the sound of missiles, while running into the shelter and returning back up in order to fix the roof as fast as possible.

We hadn't listened to the radio these days in order to save our batteries. I turned it on after the roof had been fixed and heard that the convoy with the wounded from the hospital was able to make it to Đakovo. That meant that the hospital had received medicine and had less heavily wounded patients. I told everyone what I had heard. They were all happy and clapping. While pulling out the wounded the enemy was able to regroup so the radio informed us to expect even heavier attacks on the city. Josip Budimir changed and went to the front late in the evening. He hadn't eaten

anything all day and didn't want to eat dinner. I was worried about him. He knew he was needed more where he was headed. The deceased Mr. Petković's son had taken him home and buried him.

October 21st, 1991

We moved our residents into the big room for firewood and changed the wet mattress. We hung a string through the hallway so that we could dry our wet clothes and sheets. Our residents were mostly doing well. The shelling stopped a bit so we threw the soot out from the kitchen and dining room. The people from Elektro Slavonia installed our electric cable and told us to get a barrel gas and take it to the veterinarian station where they had a power generator. We would get two to three hours of electricity a day. We received burning oil from the port. Milenko and Dragan took it to the veterinarian station. We were able to throw out the rest of the soot and construction material that was blocking the entrance. We were looking forward to the electricity because we all smelled of smoke from the icon lamp. Throughout the day a couple of destructive missiles fell into the center of the city and in Mitnica where we were. Compared to the other days the shelling was a lot less frequent so we succeeded in getting a lot of things done in order to improve our living conditions.

October 22nd, 1991

It was raining cats and dogs. We had to be on call all night in the area beneath the dining room collecting water from the ceiling. Attacks lasted all night. The metal door to the room where most of the residents were was smashed from explosions around the nursing home. Small pieces of explosive devices had stuck into the mattresses, but miraculously none of the residents had been hurt. Thank the dear Lord for that. If someone had been wounded it would have been difficult because we weren't able to go to the hospital and we were almost out of medicine. Even if we could make it to the hospital soldiers and children needed help there more than we did. Nensi told us that Neža Savić was in a coma. Grandma Neža was a heavy diabetic. Nensi took all the necessary measures. Grandma Kata Filipović was getting worse also. People from the mortuary came to pick up Jove Vukomanović's body before 8 am. There was a lot less shelling than during the night. Radio Vukovar reported that more than a thousand missiles had been fired during the night. Our residents were getting fidgety and wanted to get out a bit. I forbade them to do so because you never knew when the shelling could get stronger.

At around 9 am a neighbor of ours ran into the basement. He told me that someone was crying for help from the upper part of the building. Nensi and I ran out immediately. The cries came from ward "B". A stronger attack had just begun. We ran towards

the direction of the cry. In one of the rooms in the middle of the ward we found Bartol Falamić. He was lying in the ruins and when he saw us he just said “I’m a goner, my legs”. Nensi ran right back to the basement to call someone to help us. I looked for a blanket which we could put him in since he kept on repeating “my legs”. It would be impossible for the two of us to carry him over the ruins into the basement. Shortly after, she came with Zvonko, one of our residents. We laid Bartol on the blanket. Nensi and I held one end and Zvonko the other. We walked by the walls that were still standing believing that this was the easiest way to avoid the missiles that were flying over us. We went slowly because Bartol was screaming in pain and because we couldn’t go any faster due to the soot. After what seemed to be an eternity we brought him to the basement unharmed. We laid him on the floor in the laundry room. Nensi did a check-up on him. She saw that almost both of his legs were smashed. She gave him an injection to calm him down. There was nothing more we could do at that time. Bartol fell asleep shortly after the injection. We got things ready so that we could transport him to the hospital as soon as the shellings had stopped. Bartol passed away shortly after he had fallen asleep. We assumed that he must have had some internal wounds that we didn’t know about. I looked at his calm pale face and tears started rolling down my cheek. Even though he was “a welfare man”, this was what we called our residents whose accommodation was paid by the Center for Social Welfare. I was especially fond of him. He was always there to help even when there was still peace and especially now during the war conditions. He was my right hand man. He was with me when I would get groceries, while cooking, taking out the trash, chopping firewood. He was a small and bony man and now he looked even more delicate. The last couple of days he often said to me: “Boss, we won’t get out of here alive”. As if he knew the end was near. I didn’t get a chance to ask him what he was doing upstairs when the shelling started. I believe he was looking for cigarettes or tobacco. For a smoker this was a huge problem since we hadn’t had any cigarettes or tobacco for a long time. Misfortune was in every centimeter of the land and air that surrounded us. There was constant shooting, new destruction, rain, medicine and food shortage, and a lack of water. Death was getting closer with every moment. Bartol’s death had affected all of us. Attacks got heavier in the afternoon. We all got into the safest parts of the basement and waited. We got the regular chores around washing dishes and preparing meals done on time. If only we could sleep, it would be easier but with this kind of shelling it was impossible. Attacks lasted all night until 4 am. I dozed off a bit, as did the rest of us. I was awoken by a new infernal morning.

October 23rd, 1991

I woke up at 7 am. While breakfast was being made (with Vera and Dara in charge) and bread was being baked, I went into the laundry room where we kept our radio in order to listen to the news. Nensi came to me after to take clean sheets from the closet. We also kept our medicine in this room because it was the only room that we could

watch and make sure that our residents didn't take anything on their own. I saw Nensi try and open the door but she wasn't able to. We called some of our residents to help pull up the door and move it. Oh what a sight. The space was almost half filled with earth. Shelves had been destroyed, with medicine and clean laundry sticking out of the earth. One or two missiles had made their way to the room that night and brought in almost three cubic meters of earth making it full. A huge hole was in the wall. Half was under the window and half was in the window itself. We immediately took some sheets that were on top of the earth. After breakfast we tried to take out as much medicine and medical supplies. Luckily Nensi had put the small amount of narcotics we had into the bottom of the central heating boiler. Who knows if we would have been able to find it in this mess. For situations such as Bartol's we took great care of our narcotics. We spent the whole morning throwing earth out in order to save as much medicine as we could. Dragan came around noon so I asked him to drive me to the hospital so I could talk to Dr Bosanac about the possibility of moving our residents into the hospital. As soon as I entered the hospital's basement, I knew that I shouldn't have come even though it was far safer here than in our nursing home. It was crystal clear that I shouldn't have come. I left without even trying to talk to Dr Bosanac. On the way back I stopped by the town hall to see if it was possible to take shelter in one of the bomb shelters in the city. Mr. Marin Vidić told me that everything was full and that there wasn't any space anywhere. He also told me that I could pick up the paychecks for the nursing home's employees while there. How ironic, our paychecks. I took the money and went back to the nursing home. While I was away we had received meat from the local district. It had stopped raining but had gotten very cold.

October 24th, 1991

Attacks on Mitnica had already started at 9 am. By then we had gone to Vupik to pick up buns, that way saving up a day's worth of bread yeast. The buns were quite stale. We had to dip them into water and fry them in order to soften them up. We made tea and bread soup for dinner using the buns. We got electricity from 5 to 9 pm after a long time of being without. We all cheered up a bit. We were able to watch the news on TV. Even the smallest joy had to be ruined. It started raining again in the afternoon. It rained all night.

October 25th, 1991

Kata Filipović passed away. Franjo and Dragan brought some warm shoes from Borovo's plant for us and our residents. Attacks began at 10 am. Up until then, while my associates were making breakfast and lunch, I was digging potatoes from the nearest garden for a change. I checked our food supplies. We had enough beans and flour, as well as oil and meat spam. Water was constantly leaking under the dining

room into a room where we had the most people. We were constantly gathering and throwing it out. We had more than enough rain water. Our neighbor Ante Mihaljević stopped by briefly. He told me that my family was ok and that there was a plan to free the road towards Vinkovci in order to free the wounded, the women and the children. I thought that it would be impossible to do, with the forces that Vukovar had, without help from the outside. We were afraid of another Dalj massacre.

October 26th, 1991

It was getting cold and the ring around Vukovar was getting tighter and tighter. Attacks on Vukovar began early in the morning from all directions and from all types of weapons. The radio reported that the hospital was under attack. There were more and more wounded and casualties. My husband came over shortly to tell me that our neighbor Franka was killed along with her son and daughter in law who was six months pregnant, in the basement of their house. A shell fell straight into their basement. Our neighbor Lukinić, who had just stopped by to visit them, was also killed. The radio reported that enemy concentration was greater as well as their means of combat. They weren't attacking us aerially as often. They had dug themselves a hole around Vukovar and were hitting us with lethal missiles from a distance. Early in the morning it felt as if one of the enemy soldiers had just woken up and while still in a daze pressed the trigger on a tank, a multiple rocket launcher, or something else. It looked as if the days weren't getting any better in Vukovar. Winter was just around the corner.

October 27th, 1991

The night had passed by relatively peacefully, but they attacked everything they could early in the morning. The radio announced that the battle for freeing the road towards Vinkovci had begun. Enemy concentration in that part was great and it was impossible to expect a successful mission. Vukovar was burning on all sides. They lost count of the wounded and casualties. Food and water was more and more scarce. Many were injured while searching for food and water. Even the basements weren't safe anymore. Missiles were more frequently ending up in basements because there weren't any houses to hold them on the surface. There was no more fear. The battle for survival pushed back sickness, fear, and helplessness almost all the good and bad emotions a man could have.

October 28th, 1991

It got even colder. Once again I was able to find potatoes. The ground was covered in frost. We would have enough potatoes for two days. Attacks began at 9 am. Today we were supposed to get water from the firefighters driving them in cisterns but they didn't make it to us. We had to use the water that we had disinfected. The residents

were getting more anxious. A large number of them were smokers and the lack of cigarettes and tobacco increased anxiety. Some of them, despite my restriction, dug through the ruins in search of a cigarette. I heard that they rolled chamomile tea or uvin tea in toilette paper. They said that it was a good replacement for tobacco. The battle for the Marinci path (the way to Vinkovci) continued, but without any results. The enemy was constantly getting new forces both in human power and weapons. We weren't getting anything. We were at war with what we had left or with what we took away from the enemy. It was getting harder to get ammunition or weapons because the enemy rarely used infantry attacks. They were attacking us from a distance and enjoying it.

October 29th, 1991

Attacks began at 8 am. Two hours later the shootings quieted down, but loud detonations could be heard from Bogdanovci. Due to our soldier's consistency in fighting for the road towards Vinkovci, our enemy sent planes around noon. They bombed the center of the city as well as Trpinjska Street. It was a little quieter in our area, so again I went to that garden to get potatoes. I had a shovel over there, and the ground wasn't too frozen anymore. I had just made it to the garden when I saw two planes flying down by the Danube dropping lethal freight into the river. The water rose like a huge water fall. I immediately thought that the pilots were Croats who were forced to fly for the enemy's army when they threw the freight into the river instead of on the city. The planes went right back towards Serbia. Unconsciously, my eyes filled up with tears. It was a drop in the river for the people of Vukovar, but it was help. Just the thought that they could have thrown it on any part of the city, made me thank God that they were people who thought differently than their cruel authorities. After they left I tried to take out some when a strong attack began from Negoslavci and Ovčara. I took shelter in a second under the terrace of a nearby house covered my eyes and waited to see what would happen next. I stayed like that for some time. I didn't exactly know for how long. When I opened my eyes there were potatoes everywhere because a shell had fallen right in the middle of the garden. I gathered up half a bag and ran towards the nursing home. I had lost my breath from running with the heavy load. Nensi, Vera, Dara and some elderly women were waiting for me by the door. They were all yelling at me, but I couldn't answer because I was still out of breath. After things had calmed down a bit, I realized that they were worried about me and that it wasn't a smart idea to leave the basement alone. Thank God, nothing had happened to me. The attacks lasted all afternoon and night.

October 30th, 1991

The radio announced that the Croatian government was conducting intense

negotiations for a ceasefire in Vukovar. They were also asking the international community for help in order to prevent a catastrophe from happening. Our enemy answered by throwing a shower of shells on Vukovar early in the morning, without stopping all day and night. It was especially difficult in the hospital. It was full of wounded people. There was a catastrophic lack of food and water. People were being killed for a glass of water. Mitnica was as flat as the earth.

October 31st, 1991

Attacks on the city continued. We couldn't go and get water. We handed out only a glass of water after each meal. The car didn't have any more gasoline. We were still able to have three meals a day. Our residents were unsatisfied with their meals. It was impossible to explain to them that the situation in other parts of the town were even more difficult. They said that we were paid to take care of them. Their lives were obviously too precious and they didn't believe us when we said that we were doing everything we could to have decent meals. An elderly woman left the basement around one. She simply couldn't stand to be in the basement anymore and she just left. She told us after that she was going towards the hospital where she was convinced was better. Nensi and I ran after her, but she had left some time earlier so we reached her by the cafe Quo Vadis in Mitnica where our soldiers would go to relax. Luckily she wasn't heavy. We took her under the arm and practically carried her all the way back to the nursing home. She insulted us, telling us to put her down. We didn't listen. We returned under heavy shelling. Both the sky and the earth were on fire. When we were finally safe, I exploded when she told me to take her to the hospital. I led her to the basement door and told her to go by herself. She told me that it was my duty to take her. I once again told her to go alone and closed the door. As soon as I closed it, I felt sorry for doing so. I reacted this way because Nensi had gone after her first, and I had promised Nensi's mother that nothing would happen to her. The thought of Nensi being killed drove me crazy. Sometime after, Vera had called the woman to come back into the basement and to go to her bed. She replied "I can't, our director won't let me, and can't you see that she is crazy". We all laughed, I took her by her arm and brought her inside. It took some time before I calmed down. Vukovar's inferno continued.

November 1st, 1991

It dawned peacefully. A new ceasefire had been signed. I told Vera that I was going home. I had to see Sandra and the others. I left right after we had handed out breakfast. All the houses and even the new elementary school in Mitnica were destroyed. I didn't see anyone on the way to our neighborhood. Everyone at our house was fine. There

were tanks on the other side of the pond. The row of new houses in front of them was ruined so they had Mitnica in the palm of their hand. I asked Sandra whether they had enough food. She told me that they had enough for now, but that their biggest problem was water. Even though I had asked her not to take any risks by going out she told me that they went somewhere every day. I didn't say anything because she obviously wouldn't listen to me anyway. In our basement there were four children and eight adults. They needed something every day whether it be food or water. It was the kind of situation when you just couldn't think about consequences. If they needed bread which was being baked by women in the neighborhood or meat they had to go despite the danger. I think that God was watching over those people. I heard that Marko Deronja from our neighborhood went around supplying everyone in need of bread and water with his bicycle and nothing had happened to him yet. It must be man's animal instinct for survival during dangerous times. I quickly went back. It was easier for me now once I had seen my family. Once again we got gasoline for the Yugo and went to get buns in the bakery. We also got petroleum for the power generator. The electric cable was unfortunately out so we didn't have any electricity.

New intense attacks began at noon despite the signed ceasefire. Now when it was clear to everyone that a peaceful solution was impossible in Vukovar, our only hope was to set free the path towards Vinkovci through Bogdanovci and Marinci. We were still fighting for this but without any results because the enemy was just too strong. Dragan came to us in the afternoon during a short break from the front and asked me to go with him over to his mother and sister in the basement of the "Vladimir Nazor" elementary school. He had to take medication to his mother who had kidney disease. Nensi gave us the medicine that Dragan was looking for and we took some cookies for his sister's children and toilette paper. It was the first time that I had gone into the basement by the school. Tons of people mostly women and children and some elderly were on the floor. We had to jump over them in order to get to Dragan's sister and mother. They were cramped together like sardines. Dragan told me that most of them were from the Sajmište and that they had been there since the Fair had fallen. They had dim lighting and it was pretty stuffy inside. Outside they were cooking meals in a kettle for everyone in the basement and for members of Mr. Menges's civil protection who were also in the school. I thought for a second how much easier it was for us. There wasn't as many of us and we had fewer children. It was much harder with children then with adults. Dragan's sister's two little girls were looking at me curiously and with fear because I had a Kalashnikov in my hand. It was Dragan's Kalashnikov that I had held while he was driving. I felt awkward in front of the children so I went outside to wait for Dragan. He didn't stay with his mother and sister for long so we came back to the nursing home quickly. I heard praying coming from the basement. Father Branimir Kosec was holding a mass over the radio and was praying with everyone in Vukovar. Once again planes were bombing the positions

by Bogdanovci and Marinci. We were running low on all supplies and water. The hospital, the defense headquarters and the municipal hall all had priority over us. The radio announced that all civilians had to find supplies on their own. On my way back I found Vera crying. She told me that her Bojan who wasn't even fifteen wanted to go and fight because he couldn't stand being in the basement anymore. I tried to talk to him too. He told me that he felt useless and that we were all eventually going to die, so he wanted to be with the soldiers. Heavy shootings began and we were able to convince him not to leave the nursing home.

November 2nd, 1991

Heavy attacks began early in the morning. Planes appeared around nine and left heading towards Bogdanovci. Heavy detonations could be heard from that direction. They were bombing our position. The radio emphasized the superhuman heroism of our soldiers if it meant something to anyone. For those who weren't there they will never know what really happened in Vukovar. If only we were as smart as the others and left Vukovar on time. We could be somewhere watching the news with reports from Vukovar. I would have even shed a tear after a horrific scene in Vukovar. Much more was needed to save Vukovar and its citizens. Something that Croatia didn't have. It wasn't difficult to conclude what was in store for us after listening to the radio reporting that thousands of tanks, armored vehicles, transporters and thousands of new people were coming to Vukovar. It was just a question of how much Vukovar's defense would be able to handle. Belgrade radio announced that Vukovar had fallen. Even though he knew that nothing could save Vukovar, our Siniša Glavašević wrote poems about Vukovar during his show. He left them at the conscience of those who could have done something but didn't, all the blood, and pain of the people of Vukovar and their soldiers. He wasn't desperate. He was sending words of hope to all who were experiencing this tragedy in their basements and on the front line of defense that from these ruins an even more beautiful Vukovar would bloom. There wouldn't be room in it for those who were destroying it. He sent another plea to help Vukovar to all of Croatia. Help was nowhere to be found.

November 3rd, 1991

We weren't able to get any water. We had less food supplies. The attacks on Vukovar weren't stopping and were getting stronger with every moment. New destructions continued even though I didn't believe that there was anything still in one piece in the city. The firefighters let us know that unfortunately they wouldn't be able to get water. A water tank had been hit and many were in need of water. We made a ration schedule for the groceries because we didn't know how long this would last.

November 4th, 1991

Our soldier's strength was concentrated on breaking through the route towards Vinkovci. Our enemy's infantry was penetrating on all sides protected by tanks. The radio reported that heavy fighting for Lužac was underway because enemy tanks had passed Budžak. Negotiations for a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities were taking place in The Hague. None of us had faith in it. It started to rain again in the evening. Hardly anyone was talking. I didn't have the strength to say anything even though I knew that the residents were expecting a word of comfort from me. How to react? To tell them the truth or like our soldiers that had been visiting us more frequently tell them that help from all over Croatia was on its way to Vukovar.

November 5th, 1991

It had rained all night. We didn't sleep. Those who could, slept only a bit. We didn't listen to the radio, but our soldiers had told us that Lužac had fallen. The circle around Vukovar was getting tighter. We didn't have anything else to lose but our lives that is. Even though we were fraught with uncertainty considering the enemies great losses on Vukovar's battlefield, it was clear that they wouldn't have mercy on anyone under any conditions whether we had fallen or surrendered. I didn't have any news from home. I was afraid the enemy soldiers had broken through to that area. I knew that no one could help us, yet deep inside my soul I could feel that God was with us and that he was our only light. The radio informed us that Serbia had rejected the peace plan. That meant total destruction for us.

They announced that a new front line was made towards Županja. It was a result of the failed negotiations in The Hague. It was impossible to hold such a long front without new strength and weapons. There was combat underway all around Vukovar. I got the chills just thinking about what had happened in Lužac. There were great losses on both sides.

November 6th, 1991

A complete information blockade had been ordered in Vukovar. I didn't really know what that meant. They told us that even Jastreb (the Hawk) had left Vukovar. I couldn't believe it. I remembered his voice over the walkie-talkie when he was waking up the soldiers early in the morning calling them to their positions in Vukovar. He knew every soldier by name. Who knew what had happened if even he had left. I sensed that the end was near. Our people from Mitnica said that they would fight until the last soldier. The same thing was decided on other frontlines. Too many crimes had been committed to be able to forgive them. Death itself didn't seem so scary anymore. It was worse to fall into a Chetnik's hands alive.

November 7th, 1991

The radio announced that Serbia would accept the European Community's conditions to begin a peace process with Croatia by November 10th, 1991. Taking the intensity of last night's shellings and the things that had happened earlier that morning I knew that Vukovar wasn't included in this process. Whenever any kind of ceasefire was signed the attacks were even stronger and lasted longer. It was even too risky to go and get water. We accidentally discovered that our heating system still had water. It was dirty but it was good enough for washing the dishes and toilette. We checked up on everyone while they were using the toilette so they wouldn't suffocate. There were a lot of us and not that much water. We couldn't even go out to get rain water. One barrel had been hit and now we only had one left in use. President Tuđman's interview was being aired on the radio. We were shocked by his words saying how Vukovar wouldn't have lasted a day if it hadn't received help from the side. For us in this inferno it certainly didn't seem like that. It wasn't even realistic to judge from this point of view. On the other hand I was positive that Croatia was far from having what the JNA had. They said that they were in fourth place when it came to power in Europe.

November 8th, 1991

There hadn't been any heavy shellings since morning. A pig had been slaughtered in the neighborhood so we had meat. When my husband didn't return from Borovo Naselje where he had gone with his men to repair a filter station, I asked Franjo Mandić to take me to the headquarters of the waterworks which was in the basement of the building of "Construction workers" close to Vukovar's town hall. It wasn't easy driving through the center of Vukovar but we made it to the waterworks safely. I ran into director Štengl and Štef Konigskneht. I immediately noticed that something wasn't as it should be because Štef was crying. I asked about my husband and his men. Mr. Štengl told me that they had to stay in Borovo Naselje longer and that there driver Lijović had been killed that morning. Štef was with him in the car when they went to Olajnica to visit their parents. Lijović had been shot by a sniper's bullet. Štef told me that the chetniks had broken through to Milovo Brdo with their tanks and that they had the town center in the palm of their hands. He also said that I should be careful when going across the bridge on the river Vuka. It was clear to me that my husband most likely wouldn't return from Borovo Naselje because they had already announced that Lužac and Budžak had fallen and that the driver had been killed. Franjo and I returned to Mitnica without any major problems.

November 9th, 1991

Dara and Franjo Mandić left our basement to go home. They had elderly parents there and the end seemed near. It was a very difficult situation. I hoped that we would have water for the next two days with the saving measures we had implemented. New attacks began early on in the afternoon. Vukovar looked like a boiling volcano; it was burning on all sides. Nobody could escape this tragedy.

November 10th, 1991

Shellings continued all night. It started raining during the night. Heavy attacks by the area of Mitnica began at 8 am. Everyone was desperate. The situation in the city was unbearable. The hospital had over 450 injured. Nobody was even counting the dead anymore. They were buried in joint graves by Sloga's stadium and in nearby gardens and backyards. Those of them who were left in the ruins couldn't be buried. We didn't know the exact number of people who had been killed in daily bombings since the battle of the road towards Vinkovci had begun. I couldn't go home. I hoped that everyone was still alive. Great battles took place in the afternoon in Slavija and Borovo Naselje. I hoped that there weren't any casualties on our side.

November 11th, 1991

I went home early in the morning. Everyone was fine. The results of the last shellings on Mitnica were even more terrible. In our neighborhood Bora's house had been heavily damaged as well as a few new houses. The upper part of our house had almost collapsed. All houses of an older construction were destroyed flat with the earth. I quickly returned back to the nursing home and because the attacks weren't so bad I decided to go to the "waterworks" to see how my husband was. They told me that he couldn't return and that Borovo Naselje was surrounded. They also said that tanks were going towards Vukovar from Lužac and Budžaka. I had heard that they came from Bogdanovci to the wood market and that it was a question of time when they would be able to join with the forces from the Sajmište on Slavija where great battles were taking place. That meant that Vukovar would soon be cut into several parts and that it wouldn't be able to defend itself. I was on my way back when a soldier stopped me by the department store. He went to visit his family in Olajnica and was on his way back to the front in Slavija. He asked me to give him a lift when he heard that I was on my way to Mitnica. He warned me of the tanks on Milovo hill and told me to cross the bridge on the Vuka as fast as possible. I did as he said. I shifted into third gear and hit the accelerator which made the van literally fly. Bullets had whizzed by us but none of them hit us. I had cramped up but I wasn't going to hang around "Slavija" where

over the school “Vladimir Nazor” the chetniks were already on the hill. We said our goodbyes and I wished him luck. He showed me two bullets that he got in combat and smiled at me. We both knew that what was happening in Vukovar had nothing to do with luck. Back at the nursing home they had told me that we were out of potatoes. I went and got half a bag since we weren't under heavy fire. In the meantime Milenko and Beljo went to get drinking water. Airplanes appeared around 9 am but weren't in combat. Shellings went on all night, but a lot less than the night before.

November 12th, 1991

All the residents were fine for now. Two grannies were brought in from the neighborhood to us. They were found wandering the streets. They couldn't tell us their names or where they came from. They were hungry and tired. We immediately gave them something to eat and got them ready for bed. They fell asleep right away. The only toilette we had got clogged up. We had some more water in the system. Milenko found a wire cable so we were able to unclog it and wash the toilette. We checked our food supplies and discovered that they had drastically decreased. Many people came to us for food and we couldn't refuse anyone. Nobody asked for the impossible just enough to survive. Our drug and medical supplies were also running low. Attacks began again in the afternoon. Heavy attacks were taking place in Slavija and the Drvena pijaca (wood market) because the enemy wanted to make it to the center of the city. Rumor had it that the tanks were close to the railway bridge when entering Vukovar. The odds that my husband would come back home were slim.

November 13th, 1991

The situation in Vukovar was very difficult the hardest since the beginning of this war. In my opinion this war was the filthiest war ever to have taken place on the face of the earth. Radio Vukovar announced that the soldiers would fight till the very end. May God help those who survive all of this because nobody else would be able to. Everyone was waiting for Vukovar to finally give in. I didn't know how the others felt but I felt sort of cheated. Not just because help didn't and wouldn't come but because I started to realize why a large number of people who from the beginning saw things differently left Vukovar on time. Some even took their valuables with them. Most of them took pictures with weapons in their hands and strutted around Vukovar. When things got tough they were the ones that left Vukovar. People from Međimurje, Zagorje, and Hercegovina stayed in Vukovar: the residents of Vukovar stayed the least. Those of us who were here were to thank for Vukovar holding on as long as it had. We were constantly hearing on the radio that the soldiers would fight till the end. As things had it none of us would be alive. I was thinking about all the children

and youth. What would I tell Sandra if we ever made it out of here? Was it worth staying? On the other hand if there would be survivors and I had left early would I have been able to look them in the eye after all that had happened in Vukovar. I had a huge urge to go home and I went without telling anyone. Everyone was alive. They were waiting for a miracle to happen like the rest of us. They had already made peace with their destiny. Sandra told me that some boys had left the front on Mitnica and went to the hospital because they heard that the chetniks were especially hard on the soldiers from Mitnica. They said that they wouldn't let anyone leave Mitnica alive. I didn't know what to say. I just held her close and cried. I wasn't afraid of her death or mine but the torture and humiliation I had heard women went through by the Fair in "Modateks". She told me that Damjan had left five hand grenades in case we didn't have any other options. If they came to Mitnica, which was in a matter of hours, it was better to end it like that then to surrender to them. They were playing "Marš na Drini" at the barracks which was a sign that new attacks would begin. I hurried before the next heavy attack began.

As soon as it was dark I went to the utilities administration close to our nursing home. It wasn't necessary for us to save ammunition or anti tank bombs that were left by our soldiers. I gathered everything up and gave it to Mijo Bendra. I didn't ask if it would help them. He told me that commander Šuljić was also missing and that they didn't know what to do next. I had just returned at around 8 pm when new attacks on Vukovar were in full blast. By the door of the fire room where I slept were Anita, my cousin's daughter Eva, Melina's older daughter, then Davor and Vedran my husband's cousin's kids and everyone else from my house: Mile, Zlatka, Eva, Zdenka, my mother in law Ljubica and my daughter Sandra. When I saw Sandra (May God forgive me) I felt relieved. I couldn't say anything from the shock. I just hugged her and started crying. Only a mad man would get out of a shelter under such shelling. I heard them explain to the others that tanks began attacking right after I had left the house and that they couldn't leave the basement all day. Despite the shelling they decided to go out a window at night and head towards us because everything around them was collapsing. They did that and came running to the nursing home. They said that over thirty missiles had fallen on our house. We gave them something to eat and made room for all of them to sleep. I told Sandra that her father couldn't come back from Borovo Naselje. Grandma started crying. I couldn't tell her that everything was going to be ok. Words of comfort didn't mean anything anymore. Ante Mihaljević came a little bit after. The fight for Vukovar was down to each meter and each house. The enemy would make it to Slavija and the center of the city very fast.

November 14th, 1991

The biggest and strongest attack from all means of combat and all directions at least when Mitnica was concerned began at 6 am. We had a feeling of helplessness

4200 28. kolovoz '69

taj u ministru, na utorn dan od
8 sati jani upodje na kuuoveriz mtk
povraea, Gora i de su neprijetljive
jednice uspile u svoje planine jer
je presjele kuuoveriz - baronske jedinice
na tri dijela, O civilnom stanovnistvu nista
ne moze ni reci - jer je stajao jastvo,
zato vidio jeha de je dogovoreno u
beograd izmedu barde kuuoveriz i
zavienk znanj petimni peniol rete Marfob
na kuuover tajn ostaj dana, isto u nekom
momentu one jere, cinu se, aroni i
mtrje je da bi se borbeno djelovao, cinu
ga da niveni dogovori ne vaze za kuuover
i baron, kuuu ni se jos nije mtko i se
znan da bi se bit nove usgubnosti umora
de dostano prestio.

Oko 11 sati fuzil bife jario de je
nepozredno isped zgrade jezinsko Dregan
Carid zardiste koji je doletio kod nas
i dosta nemene pucaje u nuelatjeznu
ustanove, fuzije bife i je unjele duo go unje
av zgrade, obogsten pahio. Dregan je ster
jeuno it godue, talies uam je onine kuuu.
Dmit se uovule u jastku kom izdregu.

14.11.
CTE.

DRAGAN POSINUS OJ BRANITE

mixed with fear for the lives of our loved ones. Despite everything we all did our chores and made breakfast, lunch and baked bread. I heard that a new ceasefire had been agreed upon. It seems that it wasn't valid for Vukovar. If it was enforced, they wouldn't have been hitting us this early in the morning. They announced that the road from Borovo to Vukovar had been completely taken over by chetniks and their army. Milošević and Lord Carrington in Belgrade had agreed upon a complete ceasefire. All of it didn't affect Vukovar. Its soldiers and citizens were counting down their remaining hours. We didn't go out all day. I tried to take a nap when it got dark because I hadn't slept at all the night before. Sandra was right beside me by the door. When I had just dozed off at



Dragan Čorić

around ten Sandra woke me up. She told me to come out into the hallway. At first I thought that maybe one of our residents wasn't feeling well. It was quiet and everyone was in their place. Ante and another guard stood at the end of the hallway. When I came closer Sandra told me quietly that they had come to tell us that Dragan had just been killed in front of the nursing home. I immediately asked them if they had brought him inside. Ante answered sobbingly that they hadn't, that he wasn't able to carry him. Dragan was Ante's wife's brother. Sandra and I went out and the two of them followed. Dragan laid hit on the concrete in front of the garage. His legs were in a weird position bent unnaturally as if made out of cloth. Blood was oozing under his helmet over his forehead. His body was still warm. We picked him up and brought him inside. They were shooting everywhere. While we were carrying Dragan no grenades had fallen nearby. Some of the granny's had heard my conversation with Ante in the hallway and when we were back in the shelter everyone already knew that Dragan had been killed. They were crying. Dragan had helped us out a lot. He drove me into the city in search of groceries whenever I needed. He was always finding sweets for the children in the ruins where his post was in order to cheer them up. He adored Vera's son Tibor. He had shared everything he had with us. He was a member of our big family. I remember the first time he came to our nursing home with Franjo Mandić, in his uniform. He had said "Look auntie, we now have our own Captain Dragan". From that moment on Dragan was with us always. I remembered him often telling me that he had a wallet with his personal documents with some money in it and if anything should ever happen to him to give that to his sister Katica and to kiss his nieces and to "Tell my mom not to cry". I told him not to talk nonsense and that nothing would happen. Ante and his fellow soldier had already left. I went to find the wallet Dragan had talked about. I came to his body with a flashlight that was lit very weakly. I put my hand under Dragan's jacket in order to find his wallet. I expected

him to say something to me at any moment. His face and hands were pale, he had gum in his left hand. Ante told me that they had tried to talk him out of going to the nursing home because of the shootings, but his answer was “I’m going to see the children”. He was killed running towards the nursing homes entrance. Will I ever see his sister and his mother alive? Dragan’s life ended at the age of 27.

November 15th, 1991

Chaos in Vukovar. It was as if they were burying us alive. Destruction began at 6 am. A grenade went through our fire room’s ceiling at 2 pm. Soot went all over the pots. Nobody was hurt. We all went into the hallway because it seemed like the safest room. I held Vedran and Davor with both my hands. I felt as if their hearts were going to jump out of their chests. I tried to calm them down but it was obvious that we weren’t safe anywhere. Ante had announced Dragan’s death and around 10 am again under full fire Martin went from the hospital to pick up Dragan. I asked him how he had managed to get to us. He told me that the Chetniks had come down to Slavija, and he went from Bečarski Križ beside Saint Philip and Jacob’s church and the high school down to the “water tower” where they still hadn’t been. He went straight back because the chetniks could move forward towards Mitnica at any moment. We saw Dragan off and went back into the basement. Martin told us that the battles were taking place practically face to face and that our soldiers were fighting for every house.

November 16th, 1991

We weren’t able to get water. Attacks were continuing all day and night. I was hoping for a miracle and hope was the only thing I had left even though my common sense knew the facts. They weren’t the least bit encouraging. Vukovar was in chaos. An epidemic had broken out because the hospital had been without water for days and most people were trying to find shelter in the hospital. Everyone thought that it was the safest place to be when surrendering. According to the radio a total ceasefire had been agreed upon at 6 pm. Meanwhile attacks on Vukovar hadn’t stopped. Ante, Zlatko, Mile, Vlado, Senka, Bili and Ivica came over in the evening. They were convincing us that the chetniks wouldn’t be able to breakthrough to Mitnica and they hoped that help would eventually make it to Vukovar. They didn’t fool me. I didn’t see hope in their eyes, but I didn’t say a thing. Nensi let me know as soon as they had left that two grannies had arrived in the nursing home. They didn’t know their names. They were exhausted and hungry. We fed them and put them with our other residents.

November 17th, 1991

Our neighbor from across the street had come to tell us that his basement was full of people from Slavija. They had escaped to Mitnica just in front of the chetniks. He asked us for something to eat because they didn't have anything. They also had little children with them. We gave breakfast, lunch and dinner to them and our residents. The fighting continued early in the morning. We heard that a great battle was underway for the hospital. I was still thinking of Dragan and his words how we were going to win and make a little Switzerland out of Croatia. We would go to weddings after the war, and give bombs as gifts to those who didn't invite us. Now all of that was just a dream.

Ante and Bili came again late in the evening. They had brought a wounded police officer with a cast on his leg. They begged us to let him stay with us. They said that the soldiers from Mitnica were preparing to break through towards Dudik. I let the young man stay with us without any questions asked. We said our goodbyes and they left. They began hitting the upper part of the shelter heavily right after that. We transferred the officer from a room into the fire room even though it was difficult because of his cast. No one slept. Not because of the shooting but because of the fact that the end was here and we didn't know what to expect. Our "guest" police officer looked calm. He told us that he didn't know how long all of this would last but that it would be good if as many people from the neighborhood would get together in one place and destroy everything that could connect us with the soldiers. He believed that that way we would decrease the chance of a massacre. The more of us, the less there was a chance for a massive execution. I promised that I would call everyone in the neighborhood to come over first thing in the morning, even though we didn't have any room.

November 18th, 1991

Written November 19th, 1991 on a bus on the highway "Bratstvo – Jedinstvo" (Fraternity – Unity) by Adaševac

There wasn't any shooting in the morning. We heard some detonations here and there. A strange silence was in the air. Sandra and I took breakfast into the neighborhood. Lunch was on the stove (beans stew with pasta) and the bread dough had been kneaded. We even brought a couple of buckets of water. Bili showed up around noon. I was surprised to see him because the night before Ante told me that he was going into combat. I immediately asked him why they hadn't gone. He told me that they had made a deal with the army to surrender Mitnica. One of the conditions was that the army and chetniks let the civilians free. They had all decided to surrender. We had to start getting ready and head towards the "Veterinarian" station where we would continue in accordance with the army's commands. We informed the whole

neighborhood and told them what to do. I told our residents that the war was over and for them to get ready to leave. I also told them that I didn't know where they were taking us. The police officer told us to destroy anything that would show that the soldiers had come to us and to bury the weapons we had. I gave Milenko the Kalashnikov with ammunition as well as the bombs to bury somewhere in the nursing homes ruins. We had lunch and then headed towards the door. The bread dough had never risen any better. It looked like a huge mushroom. Some of our residents had taken too many things even though I had told them to take only the necessities. The two elderly women who had just recently come to our nursing home didn't want to go with us. I took only a hand bag with ripped pages from my diary and a few empty pages from a notebook.



The destroyed Senior Citizens Nursing Home

Persecution and a trip to the unknown

Written on Christmas, 1991 in Munich

November 18th, 1991

After lunch we slowly started to come out of the basement. Some of our residents packed too many things which we helped them carry. Most of our residents upon exiting the basement paused and looked around themselves. The elderly women made the sign of the cross. None of them could even imagine what was waiting for them on the outside. Everything around us was destroyed, trees were without branches. You couldn't even hear the birds because there probably weren't any. You could hear cattle roaring in the distance. It was difficult for people to be without water, it was even worse for the cattle. We came to the main road relatively quickly and went towards the veterinarian station. Exhausted people, mostly elderly women and children from nearby streets, started coming out onto. Everyone was carrying bags or somewhat bigger bundles. The elderly carried a lot more than the youth as if they had made an agreement. They had learnt their lesson from surviving the Second World War. It hadn't taken us long to get to the veterinarian station where there were already many people. On our right side towards the New Cemetery Zdravko Komšić and Pilip Karaula were constantly passing by and warning us to hurry up and not to walk around. I ran into Ana Dumendžić with little Vinko in Pliša's house. We greeted and hugged each other. I asked her where her husband Stipo and her older son Ivica were. They had been defending Vukovar from the start. She said that she had heard that Stipo was wounded and that he was in "Borovo Commerce", and she didn't know where Ivica was. We were standing by the veterinarian station for around an hour and then they ordered us to head towards the New Cemetery. We weren't allowed to go off the road because both sides were mined.

They were waiting for us with tanks by the New Cemetery on the side of Poić's farm. On the farm, high up on the walnut tree a Chetnik flag was hanging, loud music was blasting and you could hear chetniks screaming. In the fields on the left side of the road tanks were lined up one next to another, bearded young men were peering out snickering wickedly and drinking. We walked with our heads up high and with dark thoughts in our minds. Nobody said a word, we looked ahead to try and see from our soldiers movements on the right and the army in front of us what was going on. A few steps in the line in front of Sandra and me was the police officer with a cast. We came to the point where our soldiers had surrendered their weapons. I saw a pile of guns,

Kalashnikovs, pistols, plus-fours and a couple of hand grenades. A young soldier on my right told me to open my bag so he could check it. I had noticed earlier that they were looking through the bags, so I tore out the pages of my diary and put them in my pants under my shirt. They looked through our bags and at the moment Sandra and I noticed some people with cameras and a few dressed in white. The journalists and cameramen quickly came to the pile of weapons and started taping old Grgić who through tears said that everything was destroyed and that he didn't know where his sons were. The journalists consistently kept on asking him something in English so I told Sandra to go over there and see what they were asking. They asked if there were anymore survivors and if the city was destroyed. Sandra answered their question and in tears, even though she said that she wouldn't cry in front of murderers, talked about what had happened in Vukovar.

It all happened so fast. A JNA officer passed by us and came to the piles of weapons, kicked it with his foot and spat swearing, "Fucking Serbian mother, this is what you held the turkeys back with for three months". Sandra looked at me and smiled slightly. The Macedonian obviously couldn't believe that we had, with this small amount of weapons and a handful of soldiers from Mitnica that had surrendered, held the frontline around Vukovar for so long. It was obvious that they weren't satisfied with the small number of soldiers so one officer with a megaphone called for all the soldiers to surrender. In the civilian line there were some young people who hadn't proved to be soldiers. Our soldiers from Mitnica at that time went into a truck one after another. I could see Ante, Bili and some others. Ante noticed us and smiled and waved to us in a way to say goodbye. I quietly murmured "God, save them". I got chills throughout my body just thinking of what was waiting for them. Our future was unknown and they had offered their lives for our security. However, I have believed - based on the facts that foreign journalists have taped the convoy in Mitnica and the surrender of the defenders - that it means something and that soldiers could not be killed that easily. While new people were arriving, we were on the way to Vučedol awaiting further orders. Young soldiers stood on both sides of the road and that is how we greeted night. Under the cover of darkness trucks arrived and we were ordered to get into them when it was our turn. An example of a real bearded Chetnik passed by beside me and because I had said out loud that my legs were stiff from standing so long he just said briefly "Marić be quiet". The voice was so familiar, but I couldn't figure out from where. I thought long about who that could have been, but I never could remember. He obviously knew me well. We entered a truck and after a few minutes headed out towards Sotin. After a while the truck turned right and I knew they were driving us to Jakobovac and Ovčara. Shortly after that the trucks stopped and we were all told to get out. I looked around to see where we were and from the trucks lights I could see that we were on the road behind the barn in Jakobovac on the way to Ovčara. Everyone got out of the trucks, even our soldiers who were already here on both sides. They told us that buses were coming to pick us up. We didn't have to

wait long for the buses to arrive. We got in them. Then all hell broke loose. An order came that only women and children could get onto these buses. The men had to stay outside. Women whose husbands were being taken away were screaming and crying. A young woman was beside me with her twin girls and with them her husband. When a soldier told him to move his wife hugged him goodbye and then the soldier hit him with the rifle stock in the shoulder which made him fall in the mud next to the street. The twins screamed and one grabbed one leg and the other the other leg screaming “we aren’t letting our daddy go”. The soldier warned us that he would kill him if we didn’t move the children. We could hardly separate them from their father. We got on the bus and when it was full it left immediately.

We hadn’t been driving long when we saw a light. We recognized the houses and knew that we were in Negoslavci, a pure Serb inhabited village next to Vukovar. The buses drove slowly, and the village was full of civilians and the army. We stopped right in the center. The driver told us to put our heads down and not to look out the window. He said that he wasn’t going to be responsible if someone from Negoslavci recognized us. After all, we weren’t just random people; we were the Ustasha from Mitnica. I listened to him, but in the end through the corner of my eye I looked out at the road. A lot of people were hanging around the bus like hyenas; they were almost running to see all the buses. We stood for a few minutes which had seemed like an eternity and then went on. We headed out towards Orolik, Šidski Banovac, Tovarnik to Šid. I think we arrived in Šid around 8 pm, maybe a bit later. Our bus stopped some twenty meters before the center close to the crossing. We saw an open store on our left side. I asked the driver if we could go and buy something while we were waiting. He said that we could but to hurry. I quickly bought juices, coca cola, yoghurt and milk. They didn’t have any bread. Some locals from Šid had already gathered around and were yelling at the top of their lungs “they should have killed all of you ustaša’s, where is your Tuđman now” and of course it was followed by swearing. I returned quickly to the bus, same as few other women who were gone outside previously. We continued and I saw that we turned towards Adaševci. In Adaševci, another pure Serb inhabited village, we drove with the speed of a snail. The main road was lit up and almost every gate had an obituary on it which meant that many had been killed in Vukovar. There weren’t many people on the roads, so without stopping we slowly continued. Before the overpass towards Morović the line of buses turned and went up to the Bratstvo & Jedinstvo highway (fraternity and equality), Zagreb – Belgrade. Here we were, awaited by real chetniks, arkans, and many Vukovar Serbs, mostly younger like my daughter. Some had even gone to school with her. The buses were put into two lines and we were ordered to get out of the bus. Sandra and I had counted fifteen buses. We were being searched again. I still kept the diary in my pants. One young man asked me to empty out my bag, which I did. When he told Sandra to empty out her bag she refused to do so. She told him that she only had books. Regardless he asked her to empty out her bag. She refused and he took her bag and dumped her books on the asphalt.

Sandra yelled “don’t touch my bag.” I froze because the younger soldier started to take his rifle off his shoulder. I quickly grabbed her and made her kneel down in order to pick up her books and some papers. The soldier walked away from us. We stood there on the road for some time when another young officer came and told us that all those people who wanted to go to Serbia could get on to the bus that was parked facing the direction of Belgrade. Mostly Serbs from Vukovar started separating as well as some Croats that had relatives in Serbia. I saw Delfa Miljanović’s mother in law head towards the buses for Serbia. Since she wasn’t far from us I told Sandra that we should move away so she wouldn’t see us. I was afraid that if she saw us she would tell her people that I was the nursing home’s director. Her son Gojko had taken the tanks on August 28th, 1991 to the new cemetery. Her daughter in law, even though she was a Croat, publicly called the nursing home “a nest for the Ustasha”. It was enough for someone to just point their finger and you could lose your head. All our Serb residents went to Serbia. After the search and the Serb’s departure we could get back onto the buses. Shortly afterward journalists and cameramen came from Novi Sad TV. The television had done more evil than all the weapons in Vukovar. I didn’t know if they had talked with even one of our men from Mitnica, but I saw them talking to the chetniks who offered them brandy. They had plenty of it. A familiar song by Tomislav Ivičić could be heard in the background. “Tonight we will celebrate, tonight we will celebrate, tonight Tuđman will be baked.” They sang while drinking an abundance of brandy, the television taped its heroes. Many Serbs from Vukovar were arriving and looking for their wives and children. That is how Lazo, I don’t know his last name, from Mitnica came in search of his wife. She was with us on the bus with our neighbor Ksenija. They got out of the bus and started talking, when Lazo grabbed his head and started crying and hitting his head on the roof of a parked car. His wife, as well, started to cry. Ksenija got back on the bus and explained to us that she had told him that his daughter was killed in our neighbor Franka’s basement, along with her husband (Franka’s son) and Franka. Nobody dared to tell Lazo’s wife while she was in Vukovar so she found out with him that their pregnant daughter was killed. Lazo, as most Serbs, was in Negoslavci from where they had systematically attacked Vukovar. Who knows, maybe one of the bombs he had fired had hit the basement where his daughter was. Our bus driver told us that we were going to spend the night here and that we would head towards Lipovac in the morning where we would cross over to Croatia. You could see the relief on everyone’s face, but it didn’t last long. An example of a real chetnik got onto the bus armed in a way like the chetniks of Draža Mihajlović were, with fur caps on their heads and cockades. He held his Kalashnikov towards us and said to the driver “why are you driving these ustaša bastards. If I had it my way, I would kill them all so we wouldn’t have any more problems with them. Do you know what the ustaša’s did to our children and women in Vukovar?” Our driver kept quiet and we all waited for him to start shooting at us. Everyone put their heads down instinctively behind the chairs. It must have been the hardest for those who were sitting

in the front. A boy, maybe four years old suddenly started to sing: "Ustani, bane, Hrvatska te zove"(Rise, Croatia is calling you...) Silence fell over the bus and our expectations were so ghastly that I thought that this really was the end. The boy's mother covered his mouth with her hand, but the words had been already said. Luckily a young officer had entered the bus. By his uniform I would say that he belonged to some sort of special forces. He ordered the Chetnik to get out which the Chetnik did. You could see that the young officer had authority and that he was obeyed. He was with us the whole time until Bjeljine and I believe we owe him a great deal for making it to Croatia. He was middle height, thin, quiet and always serious. He wore an olive green beret on his head. I didn't notice any weapons on him. He had a gun maybe, but you couldn't see it. After our bus the drunken Chetnik had tried the same thing in another bus. The bus driver threw him out yelling at him to kill him so they wouldn't have anyone to drive them around. Once again a young officer got things in order. Our driver took out a bag of candy and went down our bus in order to give it to the children. He mentioned that he had grandchildren and that he was sick of driving. We also heard some news from him that surprised us all. He told us that during the last seven days helicopters were carrying out the wounded and dead from Vukovar throughout the whole day and that the Serbs and the Yugoslav army had seriously considered giving up on Vukovar in three days. He warned us not to leave the bus unless necessary considering the fact that chetniks along with arkans and Šešeljs were walking around just waiting to kill someone. He stayed with us throughout the night. I didn't sleep all night and neither did Sandra. My neighbor Melita Štimac was on the bus with us. She didn't know where her husband was and neither did I. I believed that nobody except the children had slept that night.

Tuesday November 19th, 1991

A woman got onto the bus at around 9 am and introduced herself as being a Red Cross worker from Šid. She told us that she had to make a list of all of us. Almost all of us simultaneously said that it was more important for us to make a list of the men who had been violently taken away and of those who had surrendered than to make a list of us. She answered that she had come to make a list of us and that someone else was in charge of the others. While she was making the list, she asked us if we needed anything. We all needed something to eat and drink as well as baby diapers. She promised to do what she could. A car with food and tea arrived around 8 am when the sun had risen. It wasn't enough for all of us. Many of us were left without anything. We had bought something in Šid the night before so we shared what we had. We didn't get any diapers. We took off our undershirts so that we could change the babies into something dry. The undershirts obviously weren't clean, but they were cotton and were of some help for the children that hadn't been changed in over 24 hours. Our driver informed us that negotiations for our transfer into Croatia were

underway. He also said that Croatia and Tuđman didn't want us. We were all quiet and waited to see what would happen next. Inspired by the Red Cross lady's example we organized ourselves by buses and made lists of all the names and birthdays of all the men who were taken away. We hoped to arrive to Croatia soon so that we could give the authorities our lists and that way leave a trace of all the people who were taken away from Mitnica. We spent the whole morning on the highway and were informed that we were going back to the Šid Fair because Tuđman wasn't letting us go into Croatia. We knew that the JNA troops with chetniks were supposed to go along with us as far into Croatia as possible and that was one of the reasons why we couldn't head for Croatia that day. The buses made a line and we counted a total of 13 which meant that about 150 people had gone towards Serbia if those other buses were full. The driver warned us to put our heads down and not to let our eyes meet a Chetnik because that got on their nerves and made them start shooting uncontrollably. They said that that had happened last night when they took out a few elderly couples from a bus for no reason and shot them on the spot. There were chetniks standing on both sides of the bus column covered with weapons. At the moment our bus headed down a little high ground beside our highway in order to get to the road towards Adaševci. Sandra noticed three white jeeps that were coming from Adaševci, towards the highway which clearly had the sign of the Red Cross on them. Sandra told me that they were the International Red Cross vehicles and that she was getting off the bus. Before I could do anything, she had pressed the button to open the door and ran out of the bus. You could hear shouts "Stop, I'll shoot! Stop!" She ran with all her might towards the jeeps. It looked as though the people in the jeeps had noticed her. I saw them slow down and eventually they had stopped. Sandra was already beside the first vehicle out of which a tall man dressed in white got out and hugged her. They talked for awhile and then he accompanied her to our bus. I didn't know whether to hit her or hug her. The dear Lord always guides us to do the right thing. I held her tight shaking with my whole body because it had all happened so fast that I couldn't even stop her in her attempt to get to the vehicles. She smiled and told us that they were from the International Red Cross and that they had actually been looking for us since we had been taken from Vukovar. They had taken them everywhere just not where we were. That was odd since we knew that the TV crew from Novi Sad had found us the same night on the highway. The chetniks and their translator must have had a misunderstanding so they had accidentally been there just as we were preparing to return to Šid. They told us that from that moment on they would follow us all the way back to Croatia. You could see the relief and happiness on everyone's faces. We quickly went towards Šid. This time they drove us normally through Adaševac. We didn't have any stops till the place where the fair was held in Šid. All the buses parked there. We had just stopped, when a tall man entered the bus and in pure Croatian asked "Is Sandra here?" Sandra got up and went to him. Melita and I got out of the

bus in order to see where she was going. She went with the man to their jeep and we saw her get in. She was talking to someone by radio. Melita and I were a bit on the side because the soldiers wouldn't let us get any closer. They ordered us to get back on the bus. Locals from Šid had already started gathering by the fair. They came from all directions yelling loudly that we should all be killed. We were watching that from inside the bus. None of us dared to get out of the bus. Shortly after three more buses filled with women and children arrived along with them an International Red Cross vehicle from Geneva. They handed out packages to all of us. Inside the packages was food, toilette paper, and cigarettes. We all freshened up a bit and then Sandra came. I couldn't wait for her to tell me what had happened. As if she knew, she immediately told us that she had talked with Mr. Budiša in Zagreb and had explained to him where we were and what had happened to us. He convinced her that we were now safe when the International Red Cross officials were with us and that we had to listen to everything they told us to do. They would lead us the whole way into Croatia. She told us that we could get out of the bus and walk around a bit. There was also a toilette nearby for those who needed to go. We all got off the bus except for the elderly. Sandra again disappeared for a while. She got back on the bus and told us that in one of the buses there was a little girl wounded in her leg. She could get gangrene if someone didn't take care of it. She was with her and had tried to clean up her wound as much as she could. I ran into Dara Mandić who told me that she came with the three buses and that they had first gone to Srijemska Mitrovica and were then brought back because there wasn't any room there. The afternoon passed by quickly. They called Sandra once more, when the sun started to set. I saw her going from bus to bus with a tall man. When she came to our bus she told us that we were moving on and that we were returning to Vukovar via Ovčara. We couldn't hide our disappointment and fear. We knew what we had left. It was crazy to return to Vukovar. Unfortunately, it wasn't our decision to make.

As soon as it was dark, we headed towards Vukovar. A deadly silence filled the bus full of doubt, fear and anticipation. When we got to the center of Tovarnik we turned right which meant that we were going past Jelaši and Lovas. We weren't going the same way that we had gone on the highway. We heard from the chetniks on the highway that a so called "Brada: (Beard) was in the Jelaši forest. He made the Ustasha frightened and anxious when passing by in the night. Would they attack us? Was it all made up, we didn't know and we couldn't do anything. At the beginning of the forest the buses slowed down as much as possible. You could even say that we were crawling down the path. The chetniks accompanying us did everything but yell "attack, what are you waiting for?" There weren't any attacks and when the barrack appeared at the ex "ORI" I knew that we had passed the forest. I felt relieved, but not for long. We were entering Sotin. It was the first village on the way from Vukovar towards Ilok and Šid. We were greeted by bearded chetniks. Alfons, the tall man, came to get Sandra and

she went with him in front of the bus. They were actually in the light of the buses headlights. I got up from my seat and went to the front in order to hear what was going on. I came up to the driver in the moment when the bearded Chetnik told Alfons and a young officer that his duke gave orders that nobody could leave until they had talked to him. He went into the house on the left side of the street which was a saw mill in Sotin. He returned quickly and told us that we could move on. We didn't have a long drive from the entrance in Sotin until the turning for Ovčara. The turning was approximately half way between Vukovar and Sotin. After the turning they slowed down. Even though it was dark, we could see many armed people, both from the army and chetniks.

We were brought to the hangar for farming machinery in Ovčara. I recognized this part of Pik's estate where I had often gone before the war to get vegetables for the nursing home. The buses stopped on the road and an elderly officer who was slightly drunk came onto the bus and told us that we had arrived to the place where we would spend the night. He also told us to get off the bus. Alfons came on right after him and called Sandra to get out. Some people started getting off the bus and I saw Sandra signaling for them to get back on. She went along with Alfons from bus to bus explaining what the representatives of the International Red Cross wanted us to do. Even though they knew it was difficult they wanted us to stay in the buses that night. She told us that we had to unanimously answer the officer's question of whether or not we wanted to stay on the bus or get out. "We were staying on the bus." No further explanation was needed. She went with Alfons and informed the rest of the buses. When the officer came on the bus once again with the question whether or not we wanted to stay on the bus or go out, we all answered as one "we were staying on the bus". He also went on all the buses and then came back to Sandra, their translator and Alfons. He shook hands with them and the buses went into the space meant for farming machinery. Sandra came back shortly after, so I asked her why we had to stay on the buses and since when did she shake hands with JNA officers. She explained that the officer had insisted we get off the buses and Alfons and his colleagues wanted us to stay on. The officer had offered to ask the people what they wanted. He thought that it was more dangerous to stay on the bus because the Ustasha left behind in Vukovar could get the idea to shoot a rocket at us and he didn't want to be responsible for it. Alfons asked him if he could guarantee that a rocket wouldn't fall on us if we got out of the bus to which the officer replied that there were no guarantees. Besides that the deal was to leave Bogdanovci where we were supposed to cross over into Croatia already at 8 the next morning. Alfons and his colleagues thought that it would be very difficult to get 16 buses full of women and children into the buses on time for departure. That was why Alfons asked Sandra to tell all of us to hang in there just one more night because it was for our safety. After the officer had gotten our reply, he came over to Alfons and Sandra and said "Congratulations, you won", and shook hands with them. We could get out of the bus to go to the toilet, but there was no need

to stay out for long. We were surrounded by young bearded soldiers with chetniks behind them. It looked like those boys guarding us had more fear in their eyes than we did. Melita, Sandra and I went out to stretch our legs. Sandra and Melita started talking with the young soldier who flinched at every shot from Vukovar while we stood still being used to much worse. We were also aware that they were shooting far away from us. Was the shooting just an intentional provocation or was an execution underway, we didn't know. Mostly all the soldiers were from Bosnia and Kosovo. They received photographs of the so called children's massacre in the Borovo kindergarten. You could see that the photos were professionally edited but these boys were scared even in front of the wives of the Ustasha just thinking about the horrible things on those photos. We tried to convince them that it wasn't true, that it was all just military propaganda but without any success. The conversation was over quickly because the boys were afraid also because they had chetniks behind their backs. We got back on the bus quickly. I sat on my seat and tried to fall asleep. No matter how hard I tried I just couldn't fall asleep. Sandra leaned on me and fell asleep. I was glad that she had finally fallen asleep. I gave in to my thoughts. Surrounded by chetniks I remembered "Big Boiler's" words, "don't give in to the chetniks alive". If anything had happened now, I was helpless. What was to protect me I already gave to Milenko to bury it. I quietly said a prayer after a long time and stayed sitting until dawn when I had finally fallen asleep for a moment.

Wednesday, November 20th, 1991

I woke up between six and seven am, it had just dawned. Women started going out to relieve their needs. Nobody stayed out for long. We waited for 8 am to leave. When the International Red Cross representatives began going to the buses to tell people that we were going to leave soon, military trucks entered the area where the buses turn. They had brought bread, tin cans, water from a cistern. Sandra and a few other women tried to tell them that it was a trick just to keep us there longer were unsuccessful. Nothing could convince the hungry, thirsty and exhausted that we should move on as soon as possible. Camera men had also come along with the trucks. This time they weren't from Novi Sad, I think they were military. They asked us questions about how the army had been treating us, who had destroyed Vukovar and many other questions that they used to edit to show the public how the army had liberated us. This scene had cost us two hours. We left around ten am towards Bogdanovci and Nuštar where we were supposed to pass into Croatia. The buses went one after another. I was somewhere in the middle. To our left by the end of the forest I saw an excavator pushing freshly shoveled land. The sun was already high, it wasn't cold. They were probably digging for mortars and whole tanks that we could see on the right side were buried in the fields. They drove us on a field path, over the acres, as Slavonians would

say. We then realized what Vukovar had been surrounded by. They had sown deadly and destructive missiles around Vukovar. It was clear to me that only a miracle had saved us. Vupik's fields on our way from Ovčara to Negoslavci by the road Vukovar – Negoslavci were full of tanks, howitzers, mortars, in some spots we could even see the tips of rockets peeking out of the lands. We drove without stopping and arrived quickly at the entrance to Vukovar from Negoslavci, at the end of the Fair road. The buses had stopped briefly and then headed towards the Fair on the left. I could see from our bus that by the turning towards the infamous Peter's mountain (Petrova gora), the part of Vukovar with a majority Serb population a ramp had been put up in order for us to pass. The ramp was held by Jezdimir Stanković in an JNA uniform. Everyone in Vukovar knew him because he was a bank clerk, and on weekends he played at weddings. The houses on this side were mostly untouched. There was a white ribbon hanging on almost every gate. We found out later that they had marked the Serb houses because it was important for the JNA while breaking into that part of



International observers (EU)

the city. I was sitting on the right side of the last row in the bus so the “Modateks” factory caught my eye immediately. I saw that there were many women in the factory’s building. I didn’t know whether they knew who was on the buses, but I saw all of them standing by the windows holding the palms of both their hands on the glass and quietly watched what was going on. They were surrounded by many soldiers, and there were armed chetniks outside the factory. Our buses moved slowly, every now and then an open jeep full of chetniks hurried in between the buses screaming and occasionally shooting up in the air. There were two white International Red Cross jeeps in front of the row of buses and one behind it. We turned into Proletarska Street until “Vuteks”. By “Vuteks” we made a left onto

Svetozar Marković Street. There weren't many people on the street, just an occasional passerby. Almost all the gates were open. The streets were marked with wooden signs saying first chetniks, second chetniks, etc. It was the pig butchering season in Slavonia which obviously wasn't lacking here. Only one elderly woman was standing by her house wiping her tears while watching the buses which were turning by the Kruno butcher shop, towards Bogdanovci and God willing on their way to Nuštar and finally crossing over into Croatia.

It was a five minute drive from Vukovar to Bogdanovci. The columns stopped right at the entrance into Bogdanovci. After a couple of minutes Leo a Dane who was accompanying us came to get Sandra and took her to the front. After a soldier entered and told us that we were going to wait here until we had the conditions to continue. We could get out of the bus, but we couldn't get off the road because everything was full of mines. There were soldiers to our right with 50 meters of space between them. Almost everyone had gone outside. It was a warm and sunny day. The cornfield around us was left untouched. Not far from our bus I saw the path that I had gone to Vinkovci after the nursing home had been bombed, when I went to carry the documentation for the evacuated residents. I saw smoke in the distance at the beginning of the main road in Bogdanovci. I went behind the bus on the other side in order to stretch my legs like the others. The small hill towards the valley on the way to Bogdanovci was covered in missiles; a few dead cows were swollen and decaying. A small breeze was blowing and carried the stench of the decaying cattle. I went back to the other side of the bus and waited to see what would happen. It was already noon when Sandra showed up running with Leo. She said that we probably wouldn't be going to Croatia after all. She had been with the International Red Cross representatives in the valley behind Marinci towards Nuštar. Despite the white flag that they were carrying, both sides had shot at one another so they had barely made it out of their alive. This time it was obvious that the army and chetniks wanted to get into Croatia as far as possible. Sandra also told me that Leo and Alfons had confirmed that nobody really wanted us and that everyone would have been happier if nobody had come out of Vukovar alive. I couldn't believe it. I told her that it must be a lie. She told me that Leo and Alfons had said that they had been in many crisis centers and that they had had a lot of experience with these types of situations but they had never had so many violations of agreements. The women in the front buses had started to enter them so we did the same. The order was to get on the buses and they would take us to Srijemska Mitrovica. They didn't say where, in a jail maybe? I doubted it, where would we all fit. We quickly got on the buses and headed towards the center of Bogdanovci because it was the only way we would be able to turn the buses around in order to return on the way to Srijemska Mitrovica.

We saw in front of the first houses that were almost burning parked cars with trailers, vans and tractors. Civilians and soldiers were getting out of the houses carrying appliances, furniture, dishes, clothes, shoes, and linens, basically everything they

could. Calmly without getting anxious or looking at us as if they were picking plums not robbing other people's property. It looked as if this war wasn't only a liberating one as they called it. It also had other meaning and motive: war booty. The center by the church was also heavily destroyed. We turned left towards the cemetery in Bogdanovci. It was the only way that all the buses could turn around at the crossing in front of the church. Three musicians were exiting a house on our right side. A trumpet player, accordion player and guitarist were playing music and dancing. They were snickering all messy and dirty with their beards and were obviously sending us a message that we were on their territory and that they had won. Chetniks came out of the other houses. The army wasn't here waiting to see what would happen next. They held rifles and Kalashnikovs in their hands with the clear intention of shooting if necessary. When it was our buses turn to move the driver began revving up even though the gear shift, as I saw, was in neutral. Shortly after he turned off the motor, got out and went under the bus and stayed there for a short time. He came back mumbling something like why did he have to breakdown now. We were all silent, filled with anxiety, expecting him to move on. Groups of chetniks began to come closer to the bus. A young officer then came onto our bus and ordered the driver to move. The driver turned the bus on at once and went in reverse in order to turn at the crossing. I started to breathe again when we came to the valley outside of Bogdanovci. Nobody said a word. The other drivers must have done the same thing ours did because we had lost more than two hours just on turning around. They drove us back the same way, but we continued past the Fair towards Negoslavci. We arrived in Negoslavci at around 3 pm and miraculously the buses drove normally the whole way without stopping. In the yards of the houses by the main road we saw military vehicles, cases of ammunition and army soldiers. We passed Negoslavci and just when I thought we only had Orolik, Šidski Banovci till Tovarnik, we stopped. We had stopped at the road crossing from Negoslavci towards Orolik and the road from Berak. There were water cisterns there. Many left the buses to fill up their bottles with water. We were entering Orolik, a pure Serb village like Negoslavci. It was untouched just like Negoslavci, not a single tile had been missing from the houses. All the Serb villages towards Tovarnik were whole. Tovarnik had many mined houses and the JNA could tell it was a Croatian village. Destroyed houses, broken windows, everything that could have been taken was taken. In the center of the village I could see an ambulance sign and by the movement of soldiers a JNA headquarters. We didn't stay in Tovarnik long. We headed towards Šid. This time we didn't stop in Šid but continued towards the highway by Adaševci on the way to Srijemska Mitrovica.

We made it to Mitrovica during the daytime. They took us right into the center of the city where there was a newly built sports gym. Soldiers greeted us and told us to get into the gym where we could rest, get water and something to eat. Most likely we would spend the night until a new solution could be found for our transport to

Croatia. We had to take our things with us. Melita, Sandra and I got out and went into the gym. At first glance I could see that there was no room on the gym floor. We let the elderly and children take the remaining spaces left on the floor. It was all full of women and children, laying on the floor or mats, if they were lucky. They were from the other parts of Vukovar, mostly the ones who succeeded in escaping the chetniks when the Fair had fallen. I looked around to see if I could catch a glimpse of someone I knew or someone from Borovo Naselje in order to find out more about the others, including my husband. There was nobody from that part of the town. Suddenly I caught a glimpse of Dragan's sister Katica. I saw her two girls and her mother next to her. Her mother was lying in a slightly upright position. While thinking of how to approach her, she noticed me and quickly came to me. I was trying to put a sentence together in order to tell her that her brother Dragan had been killed. It was as if my brain had frozen. I was speechless. Katica as if sensing my troubles told me that they had contacted her the same day Dragan had been killed. She said that her mother didn't know and that she wasn't going to tell her until she felt better. She was in very bad condition and Katica believed that finding out about her son's death would make things worse. I was relieved. I didn't have the strength to say anything about Dragan. Sandra took out some juice and chocolates for the children and I gave Katica Dragan's wallet just as he had told me too. I didn't know what was inside because I had never opened it. Katica told us that they had been taken from the basement of the "Vladimir Nazor" elementary school when the chetniks and army had taken over Slavija all the way to the "Velepromet". They had spent one night there. They said that a horrible massacre had taken place there and that the civilians were tortured in the carpenter's workshop. All the men that had survived were taken to an unknown place. She heard from the representative of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia that they would take us all to Croatia through Bosnia, but we didn't know when. They announced over the PA system that food and water was on its way and that they also had a toilette in the vicinity of the gym where we could freshen up. Everyone was pushing forward in order to get their food and water. Sandra, Melita and I sat on the bleachers waiting for the crowd to pass. Nensi and Vera Tešanović saw us and came over. Vera told us that they had taken her eldest son, even though he was only 15 years old, to the jail in Mitrovica. Her younger son Tibor was with her. We sat together. As soon as they started distributing the food and water, television crews came into the gym and began taping. They first taped the distribution of food and after that the helpless people in the gym. A journalist with her hair dyed really red, dressed in a black leather jacket and short skirt with a smile on her face went towards the exhausted women. She was asking them very familiar questions: how was the army treating you, who had destroyed Vukovar, did we want to go to Croatia. A tall thin man came to us, cleanly shaven, he was carrying his own camera, taping and asking questions. We figured out right away that he was a military man. He immediately asked us who had destroyed

Vukovar. We all answered that the JNA had, which he in a calm voice replied that the Ustasha had done it. Melita all worked up told him that the Ustasha hadn't had the weapons to destroy Vukovar. He started explaining to us that we had been hostages of the Ustasha and that the JNA had the task of liberating us. We asked him if this was so why were they driving us around Serbia and why weren't they letting us go back to Croatia. His answer was also familiar: Tuđman didn't want us and that they couldn't put their soldiers under any other risk because of us. He praised the honesty and dignity of all the members of the JNA, especially the officers. Melita couldn't resist and ask him questions which explained the fact which we were witnesses to and that was that the chetniks were with the army. The answer was short and clear: "the chetniks were part of the JNA, with different features." I didn't know what kind of reaction he expected from us, but we certainly didn't think that we could remain calm after that statement. Despite his expectations we stayed calm. This had been just a confirmation that the JNA had armed Serb civilian chetniks and had stood behind all the atrocities they had committed. He left us and a then young Krešo Kasalo joined us. They had let him out of the prison in Srijemska Mitrovica so he could see his mother. I didn't know how he managed to do that but he came. He was covered in bruises and beaten up so that he could barely stand on his feet. He warned us not to talk to the civilians around us. Amongst them were many with clubs hidden in their jacket sleeves, waiting to push someone out of the gym and beat them. There was one man not that far from us who wasn't even hiding the club up his sleeve. Leo also came to us and explained to Sandra that we would most likely be heading for Bosnia in the morning and that we should try and get Kasalo on the bus with us at all costs. The commotion around the distribution of food and water had calmed down so we went to get what they were handing out. We could have salami sandwiches, canned goods, bread, juice, milk and water. We took a bit of everything and went up on the bleachers. Vera and Nensi joined the three of us.

They were constantly calling people to go out over the PA. We heard that family and friends were coming to see their loved ones. Vukovar was connected with Srijem not only geographically but also by relatives. The five of us ate our meals slowly, each in her own thoughts. It seemed to me that I had been completely out of it for a moment. I was just chewing slowly; my head was without any thoughts. I could hear a voice in the distance on the PA "Sandra and Anica Marić please come out to the front of the gym." I looked at Sandra and in a daze I said that it must be my mother who lived in Kukujevcı not far from Šid. I thought that she had heard about us being in Mitrovica so she came to visit us or at least check and see if we were there. We left our food and went out. Leo and Alfons were in front of the doors and with them was Sandra's boyfriend from Vukovar Marinko Cvikić. We greeted him and after we had exchanged the usual questions how are you, how's your family, I told Sandra that I was going to go back inside the gym. I left her and almost ran back into the gym with

one thought on my mind. She was going to go with him. I knew that we needed her more than ever because there was still a long way to Croatia having in mind what we had been through. I couldn't and didn't want to say anything. I had to let her make the decision by herself. Marinko, his parents, and younger brother left Vukovar when the war began and went to Novi Sad. Sandra had been dating him for almost three years before the war. They must have had things to say to each other. I went back to Nensi, Melita and Vera. I told them who had come. Melita didn't know who Marinko was so I explained to her. Nensi knew him well because she had lived in Borovo Naselje just like Marinko. She couldn't help but ask "Auntie, will she go with him?" I told her that I didn't know and that we would see. I had lost my appetite. What could one say or think in a time like this. It didn't last long. Sandra was coming towards us. All four of us were staring at her without saying a word. She knew what was bothering us and smiled saying "What is it, you thought that I would leave with him. Well, I won't. We talked about some things. I told him that I had to go to Croatia with you, and if fate would want when this was all over for us to be together, maybe we would meet again. He begged me to go to Novi Sad with him and I explained that I was needed more here." I asked her how he knew that we were in Srijemska Mitrovica. She said that from the moment he saw her on television speaking in English about what was going on in Vukovar, he was constantly asking about the woman and children from Mitnica and found out that we would be here today. I remembered her telling me when the phones were still working in Vukovar that Marinko had called her saying he had a pass that Tomislav Merčep had issued for her to get out of Vukovar. She had refused because she was tied to her job as her father was to his. That was how she stayed in the city. I was relieved and could breathe easier. I kept on repeating to myself "Shame on you. How could you have doubted her." The fact was that Sandra never listened to me whether I was giving her advice or ordering her around. She always had her own opinion and attitude. Maybe that was why I had doubted her for a moment. When everyone had calmed down, Leo came to get Sandra and asked her to go to the doctor in the gym and tell everyone in need of medical assistance that they could go to him. He told her that the little girl Marijana Karaula who was wounded in the leg was in critical condition, her leg was swollen and she had a high temperature. The doctor recommended that she get situated in the hospital in order to be operated as quickly as possible. The girl and her mother refused the thought of staying in Mitrovica. She went to the doctor but unfortunately both mother and daughter rejected staying in the hospital in Mitrovica even if it meant their lives. There was also a pregnant woman who was having contractions. She had also refused to go to the hospital to give birth. Sandra told me that she was worried about little Marijana. She got an injection as a precaution, but the Dr said that she urgently needed surgery. Despite exhaustion, nobody was sleeping not even the children at around 9 pm. Around that time they announced over the PA that those who had come the day before would be leaving

for Bosnia in the morning, and that the others would have to wait. Chaos erupted and everyone tried to get close to the doors. Who was going to be the one to stay, who came when? We saw panic and chaos around us and we had to rest that night as well. This was clear to Leo and Alfons so they came to Sandra to talk to her. She went with them to the middle of the gym where the Red Cross table was with two women who were responsible for those who had decided to go and visit their relatives in Serbia. They briefly spoke with the women and after a few minutes announced on the PA “your representative Sandra Marić told us that you have decided to go all together and wait until enough buses for transporting all of you have been insured.” Everyone started clapping. I wasn’t thrilled because the chetniks weren’t pleased with her translating instead of their official translator. This way we could also get legal advice as how to act in certain situations that weren’t at all easy. I was afraid of her disappearing somewhere in the night. I knew this move had been a result of Leo and Alfons’s advice. They knew they had to take into consideration around a thousand women and children maybe even more. When she finally returned, Sandra told me that they would still be with us and that they believed we would be able to go without any problems to Croatia in the morning. They went to the hotel to spend the night and gave her a perfume to use when she got to Zagreb. We must have all had a really bad stench. Who wouldn’t have, when we weren’t able to take a bath in over a month and a half. We could finally go and look for a place to sleep. I tried to lie down on the chairs on the bleachers, but I couldn’t get comfortable. No matter what I did it wasn’t comfortable because the edges of the seats were raised and were constantly poking me in my kidney. I decided to lay down on the concrete in-between the seats. I fell asleep soon after.

Thursday November 21st, 1991

I woke up before it dawn. Almost everyone was sleeping and it was pretty stuffy in the gym. I went to the toilette to freshen up a bit. I went back to the bleachers and waited for everyone else to wake up. Melita woke up first and then around 7 and 8 almost everyone was up. They brought us breakfast: buns, tea, yoghurt, milk. There wasn’t a commotion, everyone took their food and ate their breakfast quietly. At around 9:30 the PA announced for us to pack up our things and wait to be called to enter the buses. Little Marijana wasn’t doing so well. She still had a high temperature and her leg was really swollen. I didn’t see or hear the pregnant woman.

Around ten they told us that the buses had arrived and that they would drive us to Bijeljina where buses and vehicles from Croatia would be waiting for us because some heavily wounded patients from Vukovar hospital would be in our convoy. They would be brought to Brčko by a military transporter and join us. There wasn’t any panic or pushing, we quietly got on the bus and as soon as the last person had entered we

were on our way to Bijeljina. Kasalo got on the bus with us too. We drove slowly over Kuzmina and Srijemska Rača over Sava towards Bijeljina. We stopped frequently at so called control stops, which were really only there to prolong the trip from Mitrovica to Bjeljina into a whole day so we would arrive in Bijeljina at night. This is exactly what had happened.

We arrived in Bijeljina at nightfall. I didn't know exactly where we had stopped but it was certainly on a state road. On both sides of the road there were buses and trucks from Croatia waiting. Right after we had gotten off the bus a short man with a black jacket and black hat with the Red Cross sign on his sleeve appeared. He told us that our truck was across the street and that we could get on it. Citizens of Bjeljina probably Serbs were yelling "This is what you Ustasha deserve, where is Tuđman now to help you, fuck your ustaša mothers". It began to rain. Fifteen of us crossed the road quietly and got on the truck. Our driver was from Varaždin I think, and he told us that we would be leaving shortly. He told us not to be mad because they didn't have many buses and they had to leave space for the wounded that couldn't sit and the elderly. Nobody had anything to say against that. We were finally leaving for Croatia and were being driven by our own people in our trucks. We put the canvas down as the driver had told us to do and sat down on the floor. There were blankets so it wouldn't be too hard to sit on. We all found a spot and waited to get going. The truck in front of us had left and I expected ours to go as well. That didn't happen. I heard by the sound of the engine that the truck behind us had left also. I lifted up the canvas and saw that all the trucks were leaving and making a line on the right side of the road. I told Sandra to go and find our driver, which she did immediately. She came back and told me that he was drunk in a nearby bar. He couldn't have gotten drunk in such a short amount of time. He was completely cautious and sober when we got here. I got out of the truck, and the driver from the last truck in the line for Croatia from across the street yelled for us to quickly get on his truck. We all quickly got out of our truck. We were about to cross the road when a traffic cop let a column of vehicles supposedly waiting for gas pass by. The truck driver yelled for us to hurry up but we couldn't cross from all the vehicles. We had no choice but to tell the cop to either let us pass or to kill us all. He was shocked at our reaction, stopped the vehicles and we ran across the road and got onto the truck. When I got on the truck with the wounded, I noticed that Sandra wasn't with us. I asked Melita where Sandra was. She just shrugged her shoulders and said she may have gotten onto another truck. As if I had been struck by lightning, I got off the truck onto the road and ran towards the front yelling "Sandra, Sandra!" She didn't answer. I ran almost past half the column quickly and got the same answer everywhere. Nobody had seen her. The vehicles were moving and I was still desperately calling for Sandra hoping she would hear me. The truck with my fellow travelers came beside me and the driver called me to get inside. I refused and told him that my daughter was missing. He replied that she was certainly somewhere

in the front. The man in the black jacket appeared asking who I was looking for. I told him that I was looking for my daughter. He asked if she was the one with the bandana. I confirmed. "She got on a bus, I saw her," he said. I didn't believe him and continued running forward calling her. The column of vehicles stopped abruptly. I looked in front to see why, and I saw Sandra running with Leo and Alfons towards me. I fell on the road on my knees. Sandra ran to me, lifting me up. While we were climbing onto a truck she explained to me that she went to warn Leo and Alfons about our driver and that we couldn't cross the road. They told us that our driver wasn't the only one hurt. A few of them were taken out of their vehicles and beaten up so that the people would stay in the vehicles, and we knew what would happen next. I could hear everything, it was all echoing in my ears, but I couldn't say a word. I got onto the truck with Sandra's help, on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I held her tightly with my whole body shaking. Tons of questions went through my head. What would have happened if we had stayed and how was this possible when we were one to closer to Croatia. Fear, anger, desperation, I had a heavy load on my chest. It was too much to bear. I couldn't say a word. I heard Sandra as if nothing had happened saying that we were finally on our way to Croatia and that there was a place on the way to Brčko where we could be a target. When we passed that place, we were safe. After a couple of minutes, she realized that I was in shock and I was practically stiff. She started kissing me and telling me not to worry that it was all over and that we were on our way to freedom. I was quiet holding her tightly. The tears just started going down my face. I didn't even try to wipe them off. After some time we heard shots. I jumped and I think those shots had brought me back to reality. I still had to survive this. I didn't know if anyone in the column was hit. I felt that our truck was moving faster and we arrived to Brčko at around midnight. They said that we were in the center of Brčko. All the vehicles stopped in a circle. We opened the canvas and saw military transporters already preparing to transfer the wounded onto our convoy. Right beside our truck we saw Albert Saider, a salesman from Vukovar lying on a stretcher. He looked at us and recognized me. Holding one hand under his head, he shouted at me "Once again, you are looking at me from above." I answered that it looked like fate wanted it that way. He was thinking about the day when he said the same sentence passing by our house in Vukovar. I was on the roof with the repairman. We had known each other for ten years. I had worked in "Velepromet" so he shouted: "You are looking at me from up above." They took him away quickly and we didn't see each other ever again. He had one leg. Our vehicle and all the other vehicles had been surrounded by all of Brčko. They brought us food, drink, cakes from the local bakeries, everything we asked for. We even had too much of everything. One Albanian brought us roasted lamb with potatoes and onions. We gave them our relatives' numbers so that they could contact them and tell them that we were alright. The people of Brčko welcomed us as if we were their own, and I think they felt compassion for us. I will never forget that. We didn't stay in Brčko for long, just enough time needed to transfer the wounded into the

vehicles. Shortly after we left I had fallen asleep. I woke up to the voice of our soldier who had raised our trucks canvas saying: "Welcome to Croatia" which meant that we had crossed the river Sava by Bosanski Šamac and that we were on our way to Đakovo, but who was thinking about that now. The trip to Đakovo passed by quickly; there was no end to our happiness.

I think we arrived in Đakovo at around 10 pm. We all got out of the vehicles and got into a gym. I wasn't sure what it was used for but it was pretty big. I heard that all the wounded had been taken care of. We were greeted with tables full of food and drink. Few of us ate because we had all eaten well in Brčko. Alfons and Leo came to say their goodbyes to Sandra. They told us that they were rushing to Zagreb and taking little Marijana with them. She was in critical condition, but they believed that they would make it to Zagreb on time and that they wouldn't have to amputate her leg. They thanked Sandra for all her help, left their addresses in case she ever needed them or if she wanted to contact them and then left. We used this break and the safety of Đakovo to agree upon asking that they drive us directly to Zagreb. We wanted to hand to the authorities a list of the men who were taken this way we would make a small contribution towards their search. We agreed to go to Jelačić square and wait there until someone from the government or maybe even President Tuđman himself would take us. We believed that we deserved that after all that we had been through these past few days and during the siege of Vukovar. Our soldiers that were taken to unknown places deserved at least that. I think that we left Đakovo at around midnight. A young man entered the bus right before our departure (I heard that he had worked in the hospital in Vukovar as a medical technician). He told us that he knew what our intentions were when we came to Zagreb, but not to deceive ourselves into thinking that some grannies could overthrow the Croatian government. We informed him that this had never crossed our minds. He repeated once more not to even think about doing such a thing but to accept what had already been planned for us and that the Croatian government was taking care of us. He got off the bus and we couldn't believe what we had heard, and we asked ourselves why he was even telling us such things when he must have known that our only goal was to deliver a list of those who had been violently taken away. It started raining even more and we were somewhere half way between Đakovo and Bjelovar. We stopped at a motel. We were able to freshen up there, have some tea and coffee and then move on.

Friday November 22nd, 1991

We arrived in Bjelovar at 7 am. It had stopped raining. When we stopped by the traffic lights the driver opened the door a little to make a draft because we must have really stunk. Children were on their way to school and when they heard that we were from Vukovar they got on the bus and gave us their allowances, and those who had already bought their lunch shared their food with us thinking that we were hungry. Our grannies eyes were full of tears. Shortly after, we were in Bjelovar in front of a gym or some kind of hall. The space we had entered was empty and it had a stage. The Mayor of Bjelovar was there with a few people. He welcomed us to Bjelovar and told us that the doors of Bjelovar were always open to greet us with open hearts. We thanked him, but we wanted to go to Zagreb. He told us to rest from our trip and that he would call someone in Zagreb and forward our requests. We agreed with him. We needed some real rest. I told Sandra to go and find Nensi and Vera with the intent to try and gather the residents of the nursing home that were with us. There was no reason to drag them to Zagreb. I went to go look for a social worker and was quickly sent to one. I explained to her my intentions and she agreed with me completely. Luckily, she was also a social worker in a nursing home. She told me that they had enough room and that they would organize transportation of the elderly people by an ambulance to their nursing home which wasn't far from the gym we were in. Our responsibility was to gather the elderly. Sandra, Nensi, and Vera came so we began to gather together our elderly. We saw the other elderly giving us strange looks and they asked us where we were taking the others. I got an idea to send all of our elderly into the nursing home if they had enough space. Luckily there was enough room. We were able to transfer all the elderly residents that wanted to go into the nursing home by lunch time. Around lunch time the social worker allowed me to tell everyone that they would temporarily stay in the nursing home in Bjelovar, until further notice. I explained to them that we had to go to Zagreb to do what we had intended. They all thanked us and wholeheartedly accepted lunch. They already knew which rooms they were in and the social worker promised that her associates would take over their complete care. I went back to the bus convinced that we had taken care of settling Vukovar's senior citizens.

Sometime after twelve the mayor appeared trying to convince us that it was better for us to stay in Bjelovar then to go to Zagreb. He ignored the reasons we mentioned that were motivating us to go to Zagreb. At one moment when the women's uproar was at its peak he yelled that we didn't have a green light from Zagreb. We couldn't believe our ears. I asked him who gave the people in Zagreb a green light to deceive Vukovar. He couldn't answer my question. At that moment

we headed towards the buses. We had been sitting in the buses for around an hour, when they came to tell us that we didn't have any drivers. Our bus drivers were really tired and had gone home to rest. It was already almost 4 pm due to the fact that the mayor and his people were arguing and trying to outwit us. Right after they had informed us that we didn't have any bus drivers the citizens of Bjelovar that had been there almost all day started entering our bus wanting to take us into their homes. They begged us to stay in Bjelovar. We explained our reasons to them and what we really wanted, they agreed with us mentioning that once we got everything done in Zagreb to return to Bjelovar. We promised to come to Bjelovar. We waited for maybe half an hour and because the drivers still hadn't appeared we agreed to start walking towards Zagreb. We had enough strength to walk those 60 km. We took only our necessities. The younger women actually didn't have much baggage. Women with children decided to stay. We started walking while the citizens of Bjelovar stood on both sides of the road crying while watching us go. Suddenly the mayor appeared in front of us in a vehicle and told us to get back into our buses. Our drivers had come back and would drive us to Zagreb. We left immediately. The citizens of Bjelovar had clapped and waved to us. They were showing two fingers in the shape of the letter "V". We entered Zagreb in darkness. At the first big crossing where there was a sign showing the direction of the center we turned but nowhere near that direction. I thought there must be other places where one could turn towards the center but that didn't happen. They brought us to the Zagreb Trade Fair and that was our last stop.

It was obvious that all the people from Vukovar that were in Zagreb were informed that we were arriving by the Trade Fair. Many people were there who as soon as the bus doors opened came in looking for their relatives and acquaintances. Young Kasalo who was with his mother had left that way. We stayed in the bus because we didn't want to go anywhere until we had handed our list of the violently taken away soldiers and civilians from Vukovar. Melita's mother came. She had been in Zagreb with Melita's children Dunja and Mirta. She begged her to get off the bus. Melita told her repeatedly: "I have to go to Jelačić square first and hand in the list. I don't know where Vlatko is and I have to do this first." The poor woman had to accept the fact that she wasn't going to convince Melita to get off the bus. Due to the fact that none of the women would get off the bus as we had agreed upon, after half an hour a woman got on the bus introducing herself as a tour guide. She told us that we would be accommodated in the hotels of Zagreb. Answering our question about the list we were carrying she told us to give them to her and that she would give them to the right people. We didn't want to do that, and then she told us that they would drive us to the center of the city. We departed and already in a couple of minutes found ourselves in front of hotel "Intercontinental" in the center of

Zagreb. We thought that the other buses were with us. As soon as I got off the bus I saw only two other buses. The other buses weren't there. I asked the lady where the other buses were, and she answered that we weren't in a situation to think or act rationally. We were all under a lot of stress. We were tired and hungry and that it would be best for all of us to rest until morning. She said that the other buses had gone to other hotels in Zagreb in order for all the refugees to be accommodated for the night. It was clear to me that we wouldn't be able to gather everyone together and go to the main square. Melita's mother was already here. She told Melita that we couldn't at least not tonight accomplish what we wanted and to go home to her children. We said our goodbyes. Sandra and I came to the hotel reception and checked in.

The hall around the reception was full of people. Television cameras were already here and for a moment I saw a young woman with a newborn not older than two days. I thought that it could be the woman who had had contractions in Mitrovica. I headed towards her but journalist and camera men beat me to it, so I gave up. Sandra took our room key and we went towards the elevator. We were surrounded by silk and velvet, as our elderly would say, our feet were sinking into the expensive carpet. I think I would have felt a lot better if somebody would have just slapped me rather than given me this luxurious room. The first thing we looked for was the bathroom. We realized that if we would wash ourselves we wouldn't have anything clean to wear. We asked a woman in the hallway if the stores were still open and she told us that they were open till 9 in the city. We headed towards the city. In a shop across from the statute of vice-roy Jelačić we bought clothes, underwear, and a little bit further down we bought shoes. We bought clothes for my mother in law as well who had stayed behind in the nursing home in Bjelovar. We came back to the hotel and saw that relatives of my sister's (who lived in Munich) deceased husband were waiting for us. They told us that they wouldn't let us stay in the hotel and they wanted us to go and get our things so that they would take us to their place. We got our bags and left the number of the Obadić family with whom we were going to stay and left the hotel. On the way to their apartment Sanja told me that my sister had contacted them and told them that she had talked to my husband who was able to make it to Indije. He was with my sister's second husband's family and would try to contact us at the apartment. We had already made an agreement in Vukovar that if we were separated while leaving Vukovar, we would head towards my sister's place in Munich. As soon as we got to the Obadić's apartment we showered and got changed. I didn't even want to think about what the water was like after we had showered. I had talked to my sister and somehow they had arranged for me to talk to my husband. I told him that we were going to Munich and that I would call the nursing home in the morning to send his mother to Zagreb. After dinner

we watched the news at ten in the evening. The fall of Vukovar and our Calvary were still the main topic. I could even see Sandra in some short segments done by foreign journalists. Our hosts had many questions for us. They told us how they were worried and how they were praying for us. They also said that all of Croatia wept over Vukovar's fate. That didn't mean anything to us and we couldn't tell them how Croatia had welcomed us. Even though my bed was clean and comfortable after a long time, I couldn't sleep. Our hosts attentiveness was at its maximum. I thought about everything that had happened. I wondered if my husband would make it out of Indija, a Chetnik nest. I couldn't fall asleep until dawn. Right before morning, I fell asleep probably from the exhaustion.

Saturday November 23rd, 1991

After breakfast a man from Bjelovar called us informing us that our grandmother was with him. I asked him to bring her to Zagreb or for them to come by train because we were planning on leaving for Munich the next day by train. He promised to bring her by train. I asked our host Jerko Obadić to call Mr. Vicko Goluža, Head of the Social Welfare fund. I had his home number. I was able to bring (considering I had been searched) with me to Zagreb our residents money that I had found in the nursing home's ruins in the social worker's room. Mr. Goluža came within half an hour. I informed him about everything we had done for our residents and that I believed all of them were in Bjelovar. I asked him to take care of them and our nursing home's employees who had come with us to Zagreb. He promised to do everything in order to help them and he kept his word. I handed the money, which he confirmed with his signature and I told him that Sandra and I were heading for Munich. He left telling us to contact him if we needed anything. In our hosts building news spread that there were refugees from Vukovar staying with the Obadić's. We had their friends and neighbors over almost all day and night. They all wanted to let us know how hard it was for them to watch what was happening in Vukovar and how they had prayed for us. We believed it was true because common people weren't burdened with politics and national interests. They could feel for those suffering. After lunch we went to the railroad station and bought tickets for Munich. Grandma arrived from Bjelovar. We were together again, only my husband was missing. I had talked to him and he told me that he would try to make it to Macedonia and from there go to Munich. Saturday passed by quickly. We bought a seat reservation for Munich for Sunday November 24th, 1991 at 8:10 in the morning. We had a ticket for train 258. We were leaving Zagreb and we were on our way to Munich. Even though the trip lasted eight hours, I couldn't wait to arrive. I knew that my son Josip would be waiting for us at the train station. We had sent my son Josip with a cast on his arm and leg on the last bus to

Mcupaw zaposleni fuji rok

1. Jukić Zoran (direktor) (16.12.91. posla 1-2. rabi minime.)
2. Ljilja Bala (zoc. rabi) (odila do 8.10. 91.)
3. Ljilja Anica (zof. rabi) (zof. rabi) (odila do 18. 11. 91.)
4. Ljilja Anica (glava Bala) (12.08.91. otkaz)
5. Vrfanić Ljilja (med. festa) (radila do 09.09.91.)
6. Viber Vladimir (Lopni) (radila do 14.09.91.) ✓
7. Viber Dugica (njegarka) (radila do 06.09.91.) ✓
8. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 18. 11. 91.) ✓
9. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (12.08.91. otkaz)
10. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (posla odila u rabi posla)
11. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 31.08.91.)
12. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 3.09.91.)
13. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 16.09.91.)
14. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila posla odila u rabi; odila u rabi);
15. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (12.08.91. otkaz)
16. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 13.09.91.)
17. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 12.09.91.)
18. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 8.10.91.)
19. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 9.10.91. odila u rabi)
20. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (12.08.91. otkaz)
21. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 12.09.91. otkaz)
22. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 12.09.91. otkaz)
23. Ljilja Anica (Ljilja) (odila do 12.09.91. otkaz)

List of the Home's employees in 1991

1.	Filipani' kofu	Arumula	16.10.1959,	liver + Foud	
2.	Carici' bosu +	Arumula	Byelavar	Komitek d.d.	
3.	bozan' dui +	Zagvelo,	Kifel	Jilena, Foud	
4.	Krageni' kofu +	nije	hpele id'i' 1	Foud	
5.	Janice' Jron +	?	1	liver,	
6.	Kisa' kufala +	?	2	liver + Komitek	
7.	Pomoni' kofu +	Arumula	2	liver + Foud	
8.	Heran' liver +	Byelavar	1	liver + Foud	
9.	Janice' Heran +	Arumula	3	liver, -	
10.	Imonemari' Jara	Arumula	16.10.1951,	liver + Kom.	
11.	Kristi' kofu +	Byelavar	2	Foud	
12.	Kasia' kofu +	Byelavar	3	liver,	
13.	Luni' Jernje +	?	3	Foud	
14.	Lujatani' Jarni +	Komune	Arumula	1	2, kofu
15.	Janice' kofu +	Arumula	4	Foud,	
16.	Janice' kofu +	Arumula	5	liver	
17.	Arumula' kofu +	Arumula	2	Foud	
18.	Arumula' kofu +	Arumula	3	liver + Foud	
19.	Krageni' kofu +	?	4	Foud	
20.	Janice' kofu +	Byelavar	4	liver,	
21.	Janice' kofu +	?	5	liver,	
22.	Arumula' kofu +	Byelavar	5	liver,	
23.	Arumula' kofu +	Byelavar	6	Foud	
24.	Arumula' kofu +	?	6	liver,	
25.	Arumula' kofu +	Byelavar	7	liver + Foud	
26.	Arumula' kofu +	Byelavar	8	Foud	
27.	Arumula' kofu +	nije	hpele id'i' 4	liver	

List of the Home's surviving residents in 1991

28.	Katehi' duica	+ Hillaar	9	Foud
29.	Badami' kalye'	+ Zagreb	?	Foud
30.	Simic' kofu'	+ ?	?	Kamlet J.D.
31.	Chief' kagye'	+ ?	8	Luras. + Foud
32.	Kovic' hove'	+ Meograd	6	Luras. + Kamit
33.	Silabic' Zornac	+ Zagreb	7	Luras
34.	Kerivic' Giganac	+ Hillaar	10	Luras. + Foud
35.	Fomic' kofu'	+ Meograd	8	Luras. + Foud
36.	Plozina' kofu'	+ Meograd	9	Luras. + Foud.
37.	Pojmic' kofu'	+ Melovar	11	Luras. + Foud.
38.	Pojmic' kofu'	+ Hillaar	12	Foud.
39.	Jacic' kofu'	+ Hillaar	13	Luras.
40.	Jacic' kofu'	+ Melovar	14	Foud
41.	Kampes' kofu'	+ Melovar	15	Luras. + Foud
42.	Zecovic' kofu'	Pogranac	22. 10. 1931.	Foud
43.	Stancic' Vladimir	Pogranac	16. 10. 1931.	Luras.
44.	Gidaj' Jozo	Pogranac	17. 03. 1931.	Luras.
45.	Jacic' kofu'	Pogranac	19. 03. 1931.	Luras.
46.	Polubur' O. Zlatko	Pogranac	19. 03. 1931.	Luras. + Foud
47.	Pactovic' Jelenc	Pogranac	2. 03. 1931.	Luras.

Melovar	15.	Pogranac	6
Meograd	9.	Pogranac	2
Zagreb	8.		8
ostali u kofu'	4	+ 39	
Zagreb	2		
Luras	1		
	<u>39</u>		<u>47</u>



*Story of a town**

I abandon all search for justice and truth. I give up all attempts at submitting ideals to my life. I give up everything that I considered until yesterday essential to a good beginning or a good ending. I would probably abandon myself, but I can't. Because, who would be left if we all abandoned ourselves and fled in fear? Who would the town be left with? Who will take care of the town while I'm not there, while I try to find myself in the rubbish-heaps of human souls, while I am alone and stagger, wounded and tired, in the heat, while my eyes begin to face my personal defeat?

Who will guard my town? My friends? Who will extract Vukovar from darkness? There are shoulders broader than mine and yours. So, if it's not too difficult for you, if there's still a zest of youthfulness in you, join in. Someone messed with my parks, the benches on which your names are still carved and the shade where you both gave and received your first kiss. Someone simply stole everything, how else could I explain that there is not even shade anymore. There are no shop windows that filled you with joy, no cinema where you watched the saddest film. You must build from scratch, first your past, looking for your roots, and then your present. And if there is still strength left in you, invest it in the future. And don't be alone in the future. As for the town, don't worry. All that time it was in you, hidden so that the oppressor wouldn't find it. The town - that's you!

Siniša Glavašević

* (story of the Journalist of Croatian radio Vukovar, Siniša Glavašević who, after the occupation of Vukovar, was abducted in the hospital and killed at Ovčara; written during the siege and the destruction of Vukovar)

ABBREVIATIONS

JNA – Yugoslav National Army

OG - Operational Group

RH – Republic of Croatia

UN – United Nations

UNPA - United Nations Protection Areas

UNTAES – UN Transitional Authority in Eastern Slavonia, 1995-1998

SFRY– Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia

VUPIK – Vukovarski poljoprivredno-industrijski kombinat

B&H - Bosnia and Hercegovina

USA – United States of America

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