WORKSHOP BOOKLET

— TRANSCRIPTS FROM THE ORIGINAL INTERVIEWS FROM THE ARCHIVE ‘NAMING IT WAR’

VOLKSKUNDEMUSEUM
VIENNA, 13.04.2018

even some of the statements of politicians about history, they started changing historical facts, they tried to change them, and... I don't know, to me it seemed like an agreed upon war. Even when 1 look at it now, it seems agreed upon. I don't think that Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, anyone started the war, I think the war was agreed upon in order to achieve something that they wanted.

73.
Well, the army could have ended that war, I still think that if they wanted to end the war they would have ended it in 24 hours. My opinion is that the army ought to have taken over the borders and committed a military coup and ended it. And not to let those five or six guys from those republics argue about it - Sloba and Tuđman and the others. It's not possible that the war was inevitable. It's impossible, impossible that they couldn't talk and come to an agreement, the question is in whose interest was it.

74.
A: I don't have an opinion and now I see why time is necessary to pass and distance is needed far a court of history, a lot of things need to yet be uncovered, a lot of documents need to be published, a lot of people need to die in order to talk about what they did. So I don't know if we will discover the real truth about it all.

Q: Were you, if I may ask, a nationalist?
A: Nope. No way.

Q: But you had the right to vote in 1990, were you politically active then?
A: No, I tell you.

Q: Because your entire generation was against Milošević?
A: The whole generation carried out that fight, I mean politically, conceptually, physically, all of it, except financially of course because we couldn't, sadly, if we could we would have taken power, we wouldn't have given it over to those older than us, and as it turned out, much worse than us.

Q: You were not a member of a party but you were against Milošević?
A: Well no, I wasn't a member of a party, because it was black and white then, the political scene in Serbia.

75.
When you look at it, why the war was fought in Croatia, why in Bosnia... But all this that happened, did happen, it was the politics... they devastated the country and that was... Now when you look at it, each of our farmer republics got its own president, everyone gat a place in power, a place in the ministry, parties were financed from it, everyone had their own interest. It's not great far the Croats, nor in Bosnia and Herzegovina today, they have the same troubles as we do. They have no jobs, their factories are closed, and now you see that they are coming, from Slovenia, from Croatia and from Bosnia, they come and visit, everyone is in Belgrade, so something is being pushed forward, but it will be difficult to those who suffered family catastrophes, because they can never forget.

from a historical and sociological perspective. By ‘87 no one wanted to print a book that talked about the post war history of Yugoslavia. That was when I gave up that history because I knew that nobody, no matter what I wrote, would want to publish anything concerning the history of Yugoslavia, and that was when I started researching nationalism. I knew that it was a hot topic and so I moved on to something new.

69.

Q: There is always the question - why didn’t the workers defend their companies, but defended some abstract concept like “the people”?
A: I remember that there were directives, that all companies had to, all the unions, the managers, had to go to rallies together, it was fear mongering, I remember those rallies - there were rows and rows from all those factories, Leskovac had a huge number of factories, a huge number of workers came, 20 or 30 thousand people. Supporting Milošević and all. I don’t understand those academic people, people with university degrees, that they can be so narrow-sighted, I don’t understand how someone could possibly need a war in the 20th century. So we young people were relatively young and we couldn’t make decisions on the state level, where we could say if we wanted or didn’t want to go to war. Our parents were the biggest problem in those days.

70.

lt was the end of 1990 when I realized... they started forming those parties, but I see that it was all, in a way... people opting for a person, there was no program here, no political ideas, nothing but some sort of basic anti-communism... no public opinion, nothing to even base some political options on, no arguments, no discussion, nothing.

71.

A: We were not mature enough for a multiparty system, or the multiparty system was badly accepted. People on that level of education didn’t realize that a multiparty system only meant a conflict of opinions, not a conflict in the sense that we should kill one another. It’s even better if there are two opposing opinions, because sometime in some distant future those opinions will merge into one. People should only prove why they think differently from one another through their actions. I think people are now changing for a night, which isn’t good, people are changing their clothing... So they weren’t there in the first place, when they changed for a night, when they trampled all over their opinions.

Q: What is the main reason for that?
A: The main reason is unemployment. The main reason is status.

72.

I think they all worked to divide, the media and the propaganda and the entire story,

1.

People didn’t believe that this could happen at all, that it has a logic of its own... all kinds of things could happen, and all kinds of things did happen, but still Yugoslavia was strong, I don’t know what it was about it that was so strong, the working class, or its constitutional structure, or... I don’t know, the army, I don’t know what. I often spoke about that crisis, where it could all lead, but it never occurred to me that it could lead to the breakup of Yugoslavia... and to war.

2.

Now, for sure, when I would be summoned, I would say: “Yes, sure!” But, only if your son would be in front of me, and then you, and than all the reset, well, then I would go too. You see? Still, I think that, besides the volunteers and similar, that it was only the poor and some of the middle class that went to the war, and all the rest, all those who could, hid away their children, yes, they hid them.

3.

I was drafted for reserve military forces as a part of JNA in 1991. I stayed on the battlefield three and a half months, and then got back as my shift was over. I was already employed for two years Jugoremedia, factory for pharmaceutics. Jugoremedija factory was working then in some strange regime, there were forced vacations, but I was still employed. So, I could have ran away, but I couldn’t have avoided the situation in which either I would lose my job or go to war. That is, my position was that one shouldn’t go to this war, but I defeated myself by going.

4.

Q: Were you told where you were going?
A: No, we were not. The group before us were told where they were going and then they were ambushed and liquidated, all of them. Three truck loads. We did not get any explanation where we were going, we were just thrown onto the buses, left (…) and arrived in Vukovar.

Q: What did you find there?
A: War situation, everything in ruins, bodies everywhere. I was in the first line, the second line was behind us, they were removing the bodies, for health reasons only, to prevent the infection, so an epidemic doesn’t break out.

Q: Which unit were you in?
A: Belgrade Guards.

Q: What did you find worst, which scene?
A: Everything was worst, from the moment I came to the front line, there were all sort of things, I saw bodies for the first time, strewn around, ripped into pieces by the shells. That was no joke, but I didn’t have time to think, the only thing I cared about was how to save my own neck and of course of those who were with me. You see, their life was

equally precious as mine.

Q: You were wounded there? How did it happen?

A: By the sniper, when we were ordered to go and get some ammunition and food, as we were crossing the street.

Q: Were you constantly under sniper fire?

A: Non-stop. We were non-stop under fire because we were in front of everybody else.

Q: How could you stand it, that pressure that any moment you could be … ?

A: I did not pay so much attention to it. I just behaved according to the training I got. I took care to hide, not to be in the open. Many among us, from our unit, were killed.

[…]

5.

Q: What were your thoughts about Yugoslavia before the war? Did you follow the news? Did you think that all this could happen?

A: No, I didn't. I was a true Yugoslav baby, I lived all over former Yugoslavia, I got on well with everybody and I had friends all over the place. And that's why I find it so difficult now, it often crosses my mind, I should call them, but I don't think I could do it.

Q: Why not?

A: I can't get emotional any longer, it really makes me uncomfortable. I even never watch the films now, I can't do it. It makes me nervous and then I have to get back to the pills that I threw away long time ago.

[…]

6.

I do not want you to think that I'm imagining it, it's different when I'm talking to my friends who are also disabled veterans – we've all been through humiliation in one way or another, in our own environment. But the biggest humiliation of all was when we were issued those passes for the reduced fare. As I was going back from Belgrade to Aleksinac, I gave the conductor my pass to get the 75 per cent reduced bus fare, normally. And then he starts shouting at me: "What, are you an invalid?" in front of the whole bus full of people. "I only … well, no problem, if you don't wish, you don't have to, never mind." And he says, "Well, I do, but only …" and I say "Either give me the reduction, or charge the full price." And then I take the pass from him and tear it up to pieces. I say, "Even if I never travel again, I do not want to stand up for such humiliation". Now what, should I justify myself to the man who'd never been there and doesn't know what it was like? I could tell him all about it, but he'd never be able to understand it.

7.

Q: In other words, did the phenomenon of the division into anti-war and pro-war segments of society also have a class dimension?

BP: Well, I do not think that it had a class dimension at the time. You know, as soon as you are someone who fights against the war and crime, you are in the field of humanity, meaning that you are in the field of the left. That is interesting, but let me say that in

an immediate termination of the NATO bombing campaign against Serbia without being conscious of what Serbia was doing in Kosovo. They could have known of what was going on there, they still signed the letter. All of them signed.

Q: And why was there no polemics?

A: How would I say, why not? Because we differed among ourselves very much. They didn't want to open this issue. But that subject should have been tackled, but it never happened. During the NATO bombing there was a consensus between the civil society, the opposition and the government. With the first bomb fell here [Belgrade] then everything else... all were united and didn't care about the rest.

64.

I prefer the definition of war that someone from my neighborhood said: war is when people who don't know each other kill one another in the name those who talk to each other on a daily basis.

65.

Q: Are politicians to blame for everything?

A: Yes they are. The rest came later. I mean the hatred among the people and all the rest, this is simply when someone is looking at you through the rifle, and you are probably looking at him differently because you are afraid that he will shoot you, and the question of whether that was hatred comes after several months of running through forests, wading through rivers, not getting enough sleep and the rest. It's fear, clearly fear.

66.

Who is to blame for the breakup of Yugoslavia? Politicians. Which ones? Sloba, Tuđman, Izetbegović, the three of them, plus these foreign ones who probably expected it, hoped for it, wanted it. Yugoslavia was a strong country. We had a strong army. They were afraid. That is my opinion.

67.

In my opinion it was an organized war, Tuđman, Milošević, Izetbegović, I think that they started the war, and all the people thought that they would make some sort of deal, if they even thought about splitting up, that the war lasted long enough, the victims were piling up, that they will cut it short. That, if they counted on those borders, that they will make borders and be done with it.

68.

I finished my PhD in '87, the title of my thesis was "State and Self-Management '49 - '56". So it was an historical topic about introducing self-management in our society,

was working then in some strange regime, there were forced vacations, but I was still employed. So, I could have ran away, but I couldn't have avoided the situation in which either I would lose my job or go to war. That is, my position was that one shouldn't go to this war, but I defeated myself by going.

59.
ln my opinion, and from every firm, as much as I have seen, everywhere only the members of the working class went, those who were in higher position or more educated, I know from my firm, he couldn't go because the factory can not stay without him. And I could go, because the factory could keep working without me.

60.
Before the war, we were more or less enclosed in our professional circles and mainly kept friendships from those circles. The circumstance of war brought many different professionals together to the same circle that had only one goal. Suddenly all those philosophers, sociologists, artists, engineers, and others came together.

61.
There is aIso something like cultural racism against some parts of Serbia. For instance, against the south of Serbia, against Leskovac ... They were regarding it as Milosević's stronghold. That's simply untrue. Certainly, one of the problems was that the human substance became exhausted in Serbia. It was women that were in the first lines of protests, and they broke down physically because 40.000 of their men or relatives were mobilized for war in Kosovo.

62.
Yes, in the 1999. I was drafted and as every patriot I enlisted. We still did not know whether we are going to be deployed in Kosovo, we were stationed in a village near Leskovac around l5th or l6th March. A couple of days later they tried to move us to Kosovo, no one of us wanted to, a huge number we were, a couple of thousands. Then we walked to Leskovac, armed in front of the barracks, and we threw our guns in front of the headquarters. Nevertheless, the state - no one knows exactly according to whose directive - they came with buses and said let's go. And we were literally forced to go.

63.
A: With the events in Kosovo in 1999 everything stops. Here civil society brakes, and the human right movement was no more, and there is absolutely no solidarity with the Albanians. The Soros Foundation organized writing a letter by intellectuals to the international community. This initiative was started by Sanja Liht, a letter that demanded

the circumstances of war you are preoccupied with that which is most important at that moment and that is the lives of the people and the meaningless deaths, this is what is the primary focus of your interest. But what was completely missing and there I agree with you: you cannot enter the category of that social group unless you problematize the three main principles, as I told you – freedom, truth and justice. The social context comes post festum, after the war has ended. Our anti-war scene lost its focus after the war, because they never had the social totality in their focus. And this is why a thorough analysis failed to take place of what happened in the so called society in transition. And what is it that's almost the same as death, although it is not directly connected with dying, but brings death to the whole country and its generations and their future, if not the social problems area.

[...]

8.
Q: Would be possible to tie this idea and the whole problem area of the war to the fact that the war was in fact necessary for the plundering of the social property
BP: Well, of course everybody knows that! It's not difficult …
Q: Just a hunch …
BP: hunch or no hunch, it's the actual state of facts, It's purely empirical, what shall I say, experience. The facts speak for themselves, first you transform the social property into the state property overnight, then into private property, without any regulations, any legal procedures, simply by the acts of political voluntarism, and nobody utters a single word of protest. That's frightening.
Q: Now when you look at it from Serbia, they sent men to the war which they never acknowledged and then brought them back to the factories that in the meantime had been privatized. This logic, so to say, to send them to the war and then bring them back to empty factories, or to the privatized ones, whether they had been proclaimed state or private, speaks about some inner logic between the war and the plundering of the social property.
BP: No, no, that's quite clear, what else can be said about it? The war was the only state of total lawlessness in which you could do whatever you wanted to.

9.
Q: In which capacity did you go to the war?
BK: I went as a reservist, what I mean is, I was discharged from the compulsory military service in '91 and was called up again in '91, towards the end of September, actually they made a house call on the 28th or 29th of October and I went for the first time to Jarušica as a reservist, even though before that I didn't even know I was a reservist, I didn't have any information about that. When I was discharged, I just went to let them know that I had finished my military service. I mean, I didn't get any discharge papers, any information, nothing. Until they came to my door and handed me the call-up papers.
Q: Why did you go, I mean why did you respond to the call?

BK: Well, that was very tricky. I was only 22 at the time, I never thought about the war, surely not about the war as it turned out to be. When I received the first call, a day or two before it, a friend of mine was getting married and it was very nice, such a beautiful wedding, nobody in my company thought about the war, or going to the front, or anything like that. I least of all, I just did not think about being called up and going there. It was all so weird. It was the first time I got it. I was very, what shall I say, surprised by it. And then I heard that some of my friends who also lived in this building and in the other four entrances, in this whole block, some of them were also called up, some weren't, neither here, nor there. The first assembly point was in Jarušice, I don't remember exactly where. And I went there in my jeans and a leather jacket. I didn't even have a uniform, I'd never been issued with one. I did take my military record booklet, though, and my ID card, and went where we were told we would spend a couple of days and do some drilling, sort of … We stayed there for two days and then busses came to take us to the front, or something. On this occasion we went as far as Šid. When we arrived in Šid, we came to some sort of a factory where they let us out. Men were protesting, they did not want to go across the Danube, that is to Croatia, to the front. I was pretty immature at the time, I didn't know what to do, so I joined the majority of them and they let us go. Then we came back from Šid, here to Kragujevac. But it so happened that while we were there some lorries came from Kragujevac with military equipment, guns and ammunition. They gave me a rifle in Šid, you see, dressed as a civilian in sneakers, leather jacket and pullover and they gave me a rifle with bullets. And I told them, there was no way I would go to the front like this, because I'd been through a thorough military training. I spent six month in Kosovo, in Prizren, six months in Kuršumlija, however, there were no army barracks in Podujevo, so we were in charge of the whole region. I knew what real army was like, responsible like, and this wasn't it. And so it happened that the men started protesting and then, they took us back from Šid in those lorries. They unloaded us in front of the municipality building in Kragujevac and that was the end of our protest and we all went home. That's how I brought the rifle and ammunition to Kragujevac. You know, I just didn't have who to give it to, so I took it home. So the next day I went to the barracks, our barracks across the street from the theatre and there I returned this semi-automatic rifle, together with 150 bullets. After that, there was a time when they would call up, or didn't, and I would sometimes go there, sometimes not. And then again, they called me up, that was in October '91. So we went to Divčibare, for some training, you know, at Divčibare. We spent about four days there, again some people started protesting, I was not among them, like before, but out of my company, I don't know, out of a hundred soldiers, only 4-5 stayed there. All the rest of us, 95 men altogether, went home. This time we left our weapons at Divčibare, and all the equipment. What was strange is that this time they gave us uniforms, so we had them. And the third time when I was called up, already some of my mates from the same generation had gone there, and a another one was also called up and we had to go to Cerovac. And so, we went to Cerovac and from Cerovac we went to the front. You know, I felt embarrassed that my mates should go there and I wouldn't.

Q: And what did you expect, what was it going to be like?

not explain it, and I know I left it at the moment when I saw a group of chetniks singing patriotic songs. I just turned around and went home.

55.
I took part in those actions, I took part in the "Black Band" (Crni Flor) and the candle lighting, but this was like, I can say, my personal, small, non-significant contribution to the activism, by the way. And, of course I was active within the GS (Građanski Savez / Civic Alliance of Serbia), but I think that it was all together, sterile. When summing it up I can say - well done - but in spite of it, to none of them did it occur to initiate a struggle, on the domestic terrain, that would have more chance. We were all under the wings of Vuk Drašković, right? He was the main oppositional party, and we were all under his umbrella. And as such, anti-war, completely unconscious of the fact that this had no chance to succeed since it lacked any kind of ideological background as well as any kind of perspective... as the political destiny of Vuk Drašković had clearly shown.

56.
During the initial years of the anti-war movement, it was reduced to Belgrade or Vojvodina, but it was not in Serbia until 1996... I was very interested in what was going on in Serbia, because of the deserters rebellions, but this is the history that Serbia today does not remember... this single testimony that testifies of resistance, is terribly missing today.

57.
I have heard that the majority of armed forces from Požega refused to go and that they rebelled. We were simply put into the buses and taken to Hercegovina. Everyone is saying that we were volunteers, but I sure was no volunteer, no one even gave us a paper, I believe you know, to sign that we are volunteers, that they are not the Yugoslav People's Army, or however that army was called at that time that.

58.
I just got employed and on 28th April 1992, when military police came looking for me at work. I thought that those guys came to buy a TV set or something like that. They just came, asked me if my name is so and so, we came far that, they said "do you want to go home and get changed or to get going immediately. The bus was waiting.". So, the story goes that I said: "No need for going home, let's go right away". I just called home, "They came for me". "Well, what can be done", I thought. Military police are the same as the civil one, because when they come for you, that's it. A war is a war. Within a half hour we were in uniforms, gotten on the bus and left off.
I was drafted for reserve military forces as a part of JNA in 1991. I stayed on the battlefield three and a half months, and then got back as my shift was over. I was already employed for two years Jugoremedia, factory for pharmaceutics. Jugoremedija factory

with 350people in a battalion that was supposed to consist of 700.

50.
I was here, around Serbia, in Požarevac, in Mladenovac, in Kragujevac... according to the given task... to gather the people who did want to participate so they ducked... So we went and gathered them, we as Military Police... With our cars... this could be termed as a forced dispatching to the war...

51.
I was not thinking about why people didn't go, it was not mine, and if I was asked - no need, those decisions are also hard to make. But if someone signed a sworn oath that person should respect that and go to war. It would be humiliating for me to be arrested at my doorstep.

52.
A: My older son took part in the war during the fighting in Kosovo, during the NATO bombing. He was stationed somewhere near Kruševac. He was there the whole time, he is a war participant as a medical doctor. And during the 1990s, Slobodan Đukić participated in Croatia on the Vukovar front, as a volunteer.

Q: That was your husband.

A: Yes. After a general desertion of a whole military unit, the was a lot of fuss and a large part of the people from Kragujevac volunteered to save face. He went in the beginning of November and got killed 20 days later. He went there as a Yugoslav. I guess nationalism was involved, he was of Bosniak descent, they are specific.

Q: Have you backed him up in his decision?

A: Yes.

53.
The most important action was the Black Band (Crni Flor) and our condition for participation in it was that no one is to display any party insignia and all the people, including Vuk Drašković, obeyed it it was the biggest anti-war action or, so to speak, action of solidarity with people under constant siege, people in Sarajevo. There were 150.000 people in the streets. At a certain point, indeed, a situation occurred that the people from the SPO (Srpski Pokret Obnove / Serbian Regeneration Movement) took over our manifestation, so that we, the organizers, stayed behind on the Slavija square.

54.
I went to the "Black Band" (Crni Flor) manifestation, it remained for me as a phenomenon, the city was packed with people. There were thousands of people, really. I can

BK: I simply had no idea what would happen and what it was going to be like. The training that I'd got while doing my military service was very thorough and I gained real knowledge how to use the weapons and fight in the war and all that and I can say that at that moment I was ready both physically and mentally for the worst things that could happen in one's life, like in the war. I didn't expect anything special. I had no idea what it would be like, except for what I'd seen in the media, like on the telly, or in the newspapers, where you could see such things, but to tell the truth, I had no idea.

[...]

10.
BK: I could tell you so much, I could go on forever. A lot of things happened there. I had already done my military service and we had very good training there, real discipline. I went to the front and there were men older than me who didn't know how to use automatic weapons. When they did their service they only had semi-automatic rifles and those M48 guns. And then a couple of us showed them how to use an automatic rifle, how to load it and how to shoot. On the other hand, people were afraid to use hand grenades, they just didn't know how to use them. And then when they distributed those Zoljas (M80 anti-tank rocket propelled grenades), that was weird, a transporter came and unloaded Zoljas, just like that, and nobody dared take them, cause nobody knew how to use them. Because I had a chance, when we were trained, to use this weapon and shoot with it, I took one and I also explained to the men how to open it, how to take aim, how to fire it. I told them that no one should stand behind it, that there should be no barrier made of concrete, or anything else, in front of them, because if they fire it, it could ricochet off the wall and hit them. I was so surprised that there should be men who came to the front and were not at all prepared for the fighting. That's the first thing.
The second thing: communication between the platoons was real catastrophe. Out of a hundred soldiers, actually, out of 300-500 soldiers in a battalion, there would be only one officer in active service, all others were just reservists. The commanding officer in my troop knew simply nothing. With my 22 years of age and the military training just behind me, I knew five times more about the war than he did. Believe me, the lack of organization there, that was a real catastrophe.

[...]

11.
He got hit by the grenade and fell right there, between the two of us and was dead on the very spot, got killed, they killed him. So, we tried to get out of the house, you know, and as we were standing at the door, because the entrance of the house was not from the street, but from the back-yard and we wanted to get out there. We agreed that I should go out first and then he would, after me. And then we started throwing grenades and shooting. When I jumped down from the stairs to get out into the yard, my friend didn't fire, I don't know what he was thinking, but I know that they were firing at us. So I got shot in both legs and he only in the foot.

[...]

12.
BK: What is it that makes me so angry? Well, it makes me angry that this war, such as it was, could have been fought with a much smaller number of casualties and that a lot more could have been achieved, had it been fought properly. What I want to say is that I was so disappointed with this army and with those politicians who led it all. We could have spared so many casualties if we only had been thinking correctly, instead of rushing like that and sending to war those who were capable and those who were not capable for it. It simply did not matter how many of them would get killed, the only thing that mattered was to achieve some sort of a goal and the victims did not matter at all. And this is what makes me so angry, that so many people perished in vain.

[...]

13.
In my mind, not everybody is a veteran. According to me, only those who were at the front can be veterans, reckoning the time throughout the '90-es and the NATO bombing. Veterans can be only those who were directly engaged in the fighting at the front even if they had been lucky enough not to be wounded and thanks God came home safe and sound. But those who were signed up and stayed in the territories of Kragujevac, Belgrade, Niš, Užice, or any other town in Serbia and were not directly engaged in the fighting, in my opinion they are no veterans, all they did was additional military training, as usual. To repeat, only those who directly took part in the war can be called veterans and all of us who were there have our own traumas and our own problems and this country should really find a way to recompense these men, one way or another. Why do I say this? First of all, there is one thing: when we came back from the front, well I did, I came home because I was wounded. Often, I was asked and all the other men, "What did you bring back, what did you get there?" and things like that. Everybody thought that we went there to steal. Although, there was a lot of that, too. Stealing went on all over the place, uncontrolled plundering.

[...]

14.
BK: AS soon as I could walk again, I had this great wish to explain to people that this war was a total nonsense and I thought that it would help to get into politics and be a member of a political party, but already after a few months, I knew that it was not worth it, and it didn't work, it was a lost cause, like anything else in Serbia, that it was all idiotic and that only those who nodded their heads all the time could achieve something, but for those who could do something or had something to say, for them there was no place. So, after just a few months I abandoned politics and by chance I found out about civic alliances, as it was called at the time, or NGOs and so a joined some of them, hoping that working in them I could contribute first of all to the change of government. Secondly, I joined them because, being a Rom, I wanted to help through my work to change the position of the Roma population and their living conditions.

45.
1991 arrives and what can be observed that is happening in Belgrade, is that many were deciding to leave the country while some were trying to get organized... That year, 91', from 8th October, we were organizing lighting candle each night from 8.30 to 9 pm, reading the names of those who were killed, names of Serbs, names of Croats, ... It lasted until the 8th February 1992. Something starts to develop, I would say, a human rights movement. On the one hand, there was the Center for Anti-War Action and then the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights is being established, and a lot of us were among the founders of the Belgrade Circle.

46.
The formation of the Belgrade Circle started in 1992, and then begin the sessions of the Belgrade Circle. From those presentations, that were held once a week, there is a collection of essays entitled "The Other Serbia" (Druga Srbija) and this term enters the public discourse.

47.
I started organizing different groups to go to Vojvodina, since unpleasant things were already happening to the Croats there. lt was quite evident that the government employed the Serbian Radical Party to do that kind of work there. That is, we arrive in Hrtkovci, and it is already 1992, when we supported, together with the Belgrade Circle and other intellectuals, a group of Serbs from Hrtkovci that were trying to help their Croatian neighbors, not to allow to the pressure to be applied on them, that would force them to leave their homes.

48.
My brigade was made up of mostly men from Zrenjanin and the surrounding villages. The major of the city Krstić was bragging about the fact that mobilization in Zreanjanin was successful in over 97% and wanted to set a record of the Zrenjenin reserve soldiers sent to Vukovar, Osjek or some other front Iin... Believe me, if you would take me back there, I could find I've where been...

49.
It is a matter of general knowledge that mobilizations in the Kragujevac county were unsuccessful twice. When the first mobilization failed in Krčmarima, people left and only 25 of us stayed. The second one was held in Divčibare, again people rebelled and out of 700 people, that we were supposed to be, there were 70 that were willing to go. The third mobilization was held overnight in Cerovac, reserve soldiers were immediately put in the buses and we left in the direction of, I did not know where, and around the 1st of November we went to Tovarnik and further, as the things developed. We had left

good at that moment which was peace - human life and peace.

43.
A: Then in 1991, when they set off from here, it was clear, it was clear that they were going to war.

Q: He was among the first ones from the village that left?
A: Yes, among the first ones.

Q: How did you accept it, that information, that your son is going?
A: How to hide him, where to hide him, teli me, and I was begging them to leave him hame, that I will go instead of him. “What do they know, they are young, send me, if someone has to go”. And then like, they are not going anywhere.

Q: Who told you that?
A: The officer in charge from Zrenjanin, like, “they are nat going anywhere”. And there was a lot of people, what can I say, in that barrack near the Žitoprodukt. “Let’s go home, they are not going anywhere”. They were rounded up around 1 o’clock. My neighbor gotten in his car, “Let’s go and see”, when we got there, they were already gone.

Q: These few days when you were there, when there were many of you, they couldn’t get out of the barracks?
A: They were inside, they were not allowed to go out...

Q: You were the parents, women, friends, that rebellion, not rebellion, these people standing at the barrack’s gate were like some rebellion and whole city of Zrenjanin knew about it, how is it that that protest didn’t grow to a general protest of the citizens of Zrenjanin, in order to stop it?
Because they said that they are not going, I am telling you how it was.

Q: So, that pacified people?
It calmed down the people that they were not going anywhere. Where did they take them... with whom they are fighting... then, there was the war already. When he got back home, they immediately drafted me.

44.
A: The “Women in Black” were already on 9th October...

Q: What year was it?
A: 1991. We cared about attracting as many people as we could, women. That it would not be just another group of us, feminists. That there would be from the mother’s movement, those mothers that rebelled because of the mobilization, that were hiding their sons. After reading our first statements half of those women felt repelled, deterred. It states: this war is wanted only by those in power, by militarists, by war profiteers, speculators, and that the ones that are defeated are civil populations; workers will become cannon fodder... yes, this also. We were approached by deserters, men that is, mothers...

[...]

15.
BK: Somehow, I was ashamed to admit that I had fought in the war. First of all because they would think that I was a thief and a war criminal, that I brought back who knows what from the war, things like that. So many times I had to bite my tongue and not say things, especially if there was some sort of gathering or celebration and then people would talk and me being someone who can’t keep his mouth shut and keep quiet when people talk, and not say a word or give my opinion. A million times I felt awful and a million times a had to quarrel with people when they say that it should have been done like this, or like that and I say: “No, this is how it really was done!”. I came into conflict so many times with such people, let me call them Serbian patriots, nationalists.

[...]

16.
I had to say that it was all one huge mistake, a disaster, when Serbian people, and not just Serbian, take my example, I am a Rom and I was also forced to go to the front and live through all that happened to me. Many Roma were victims of that war because many of them had been mobilized.

[...]

17.
And then after all this, you come here and you’re ashamed to say that you were in the war and that you were wounded. But then people start looking at you differently and instead of getting into a fight, they say, well, OK, he’s one of us, something like that, he was in the war, he’s a fighter, he’s this and that. And the worst of it was when they begin to … Then I have to say that I feel almost embarrassed to have to say that I had been in the war and was wounded, especially in those situations when I have to say it in order to avoid … or when someone asks me directly, then I have to say. But, many of us have been falsely accused of … Sometimes with reason, sometimes without reason. Every individual and every man has to be responsible for his actions. Whether he was a thief, or whether he was a war criminal, he has to answer for what he did. But as it happened, we were all lumped together and I was never OK with it, nor did I want it to be like that, but as I say, for many years I avoided telling people that I had been to the front, that I had suffered there, or just telling anyone what was really happening there. Instead, I tried to participate in whatever there was to participate in, whatever actions were organized at that time, anything that was against the war.

18.
From the experience of my generation, which was completely international, we didn’t need visas, we went wherever we felt like going, or wherever we had a reason to go, there were no obstacles and somehow, considering what I was doing at the time, even Yugoslavia was too small for me, you know, and for the rest of us as well. And now,

where am I going to live? My father and mother are there, in Zagreb, and I'd have to cross the border, with a passport. It simply wasn't to be endured, there was a smell of war in the air. Of course it smelt of war, of which, relying on my later experience in Sarajevo, people were totally unaware. And then, towards the end of 1990, in October, quite by coincidence, I went to Paris with my ex-husband. Well he was going there on business and I somehow felt that it was the last moment, I had no idea how it all would end and where I should go. And so, I decide to leave Belgrade and then, after a year, everything falls apart.

[...]

19.
Those of us who left in '91 from Belgrade, Zagreb, in 93' from Sarajevo, we were connected on a different level and we held together, we were attached to each other, that was our diaspora, because we belonged to the same generation and our children as well, who were all somewhere studying or fleeing from the mobilization. And so we got organized in various cities and started …
And then, in '91 the war begins, and my ex-husband and I decide not to go back to Belgrade, We chose exile on principle, we did not want to opt for the refugee status. Instead, we continued living and working as freelancers, each one in their own fields and, of course, we all came together on the anti-war basis.

[...]

20.
DB: When it all began, the blockade of Sarajevo and as it went on and on, we formed an association for Sarajevo. In the meantime, Ivan and his team, not only those from Belgrade, also tried to form some kind of a party in exile.

Q: They even took part in the elections, a think.

DB: Well, I think they did, Vidosav, too. For our female logic, for Rada Iveković, all this was a bit too masculine. Come on, altogether there were five of us and we'll manage to topple down those who were waging the war out there, in Croatia and Bosnia and so on: we couldn't be enthusiastic about founding parties in exile and, you know, being banished from our countries. [...] We opted for the exile, nobody was forcing us to do so. But of course, we were organized and we were not only very well informed, we also did all we could, being foreigners and freelancers there, you know, we were well connected with French intellectuals and we were trying to explain things … to explain, and actually, they were also involved in a lot of things.

[...]

21.
DB: And then we found a way how to organize the relief, what to do, how to do it. THAT was meant for Sarajevo in particular. Now how do we engage the artists? So we organized a raffle. We gathered around 500 works, small-size works by French artists. Of course, they just gave them to us and we did the raffle … and we actually made quite a nice little sum with this raffle. A then, I had connections with the people in

37.
Well, I was in Croatia, in the infamous Tovamik. But not in the unit that gotten cut off there, but in the one that had the mission to help them break out of there. The unfortunate circumstance for our unit was that some 4000 soldiers run away and literally,on foot returned from Adaševac near Šid to Kragujevac. So, the remaining 63 soldiers from the battalion were joined by 43 active soldiers and 40 volunteers, and that led at one point to a total dismay.

38.
I was working for the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) up until 1993, when I was retired. The war begun in very complex circumstances with the introduction of multi-party parliamentary system. On the one hand, there was mobilization while on the other were "Women in Black", some political parties creating their own armies, while their members infiltrated into the regular army and made a mess. This was one of the reasons for the eroding moral of the Yugoslav People's Army, everything else that adorned JNA was downgraded.

39.
What can one feel when someone wrenches you out of your civil life, out of your jeans, out of discotheques, and takes you away giving you a rifle and bullets saying: This is a military exercise, one with live ammunition?

40.
I can only remember the anti-war protest walks around the FederaIAssembly building in the fali of 1990. But, that gathering had no more than 80 people, half of them were employed by that same state.

41.
I was called to join the reserve forces of the Yugoslav People's Army. I was stationed in the west Slavonia from, as I recall, 6th September 1991. I was ready to defend Yugoslavia, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, and until today, I feel sad that the state exists no more.

42.
Whatever happens there must not be war. That initial impulse was anti-war. lt was neither a pro-Yugoslav impulse neither some different one. This was my impression from those first anti-war activities, actions, that they were driven more by spontaneity than by political contemplation. The actions were authentically anti-war, but without giving priority to a certain kind of solution. They dealt with preserving the most endangered

31.

Q: How did I got to the war? Through mobilization.

A: ln June or July of 1991. ... my telephone rung. They were calling me from the military barracks to enlist. So, I did. But it is not entered as warn [in the military booklet], but military exercise. I was in the first dispatch, when we delivered tanks and transporters, of this and that, from here, to there, across„.

32.

I was never a volunteer. I was drafted. What did I think at that moment? Ijust packed, said goodbye to my wife, kissed the child. I hold that it should be done and I would always do it. The same goes for the 1999, and ali the rest...

33.

That what is nowadays called the anti-war movement came about relatively late right at the end of the 1980s. This doesn't mean that there were no discussions in certain circles about resistance, that it will end in war, etc. that some kind of movement should be organized, but it just was not visible.

34.

As much as was shown on TV. I knew, it was not going to be an ordinary military exercise. I did not want to desert.. Yugoslavia was Yugoslavia, as I was taught in school and in the army, and that was the reason I enlisted. Well, I was not very conscious, since I was only 24 years old.

35.

Beware, I graduated from the school of reserve officers and for years prepared for the case of war. Rightfully Ijoined the drafted call, for mobilization and to go to war. I went to Croatia to defend Serbian people as I went to Bosnia to defend Serbian people and no, I didn't have any other aim.

36.

Being a professional army personnel, I knew what my task was and the dedication of this job, so I had no doubts. At a certain point we employed as buffer zone unit One could not anticipate how to behave in the case of, now I can accurately say,a fratricidal war. We were the Yugoslav People's Army that consisted of people from all the ex-republics. lt was hard to unify all those people and truly be the Yugoslav People's Army without being inclined to one of the sides.

Sarajevo, my colleagues and others who stayed down there. There was this, what was its name, a magazine, published down there, during the war. We sent them paper, all sorts of things, we asked them to let us know what they needed, what kind of material. We had very good connections with the UNPROFOR, there were French officers who took things there, anything from medicaments to you name it, that network was also very well developed. Yes, that's when we organized this raffle. And we called it a raffle, not auction, or sale – on the suggestion of those young French artists, Antonio Galego and the other one, what was his name, Rodriguez – their parents were refugees from Spain after the civil war there, and then in France, they know it from their family tales, the French, workers in small towns organized raffles for the refugees from Spain. And that was true relief, by simple people, workers. And that's why we said, we're not going to organize a sale, we'll organize a raffle for Sarajevo and so the five of us went up and down Paris for a whole month, selling those …

Q: Tickets

DB: Yes, tickets for the raffle and you see, that's what comes to my mind now. There were lots of things, but you can't imagine, the situation was completely schizophrenic. In this magnificent city, it isn't easy to make ends meet, what with freelancing and being a stranger. I did manage to survive with my work, but on the other hand, every day ...

Q: Activism

DB: Look, you know, it was chaotic. My son was in Belgrade, my grandson was born in '94. They couldn't come, he couldn't get a visa. There was a chasm, I do not know how to explain it, all the time in your head there is this chaos going on in your country and you are in this magnificent city of Paris. Of course, this is a horrific state of mind, but nothing to compare to what you were going through down there and the people in Sarajevo, that's simply incomparable. But, take for example Braco Dimitrijević who was also in Paris at the time and we often met. He suffered from insomnia, he just couldn't sleep and all this time the TV's on and he watches all the news, like a maniac and then he tells me: "What is this, what's happening there, fuck them all, pardon me, who are these: Chetniks, Ustashas, Balijas (Bosnian Muslims), but no Partisans! There are no Partisans to be seen anywhere, you know, like in the Second World War. There are no resistance movements, the small anti-war nuclei. They would be the real heroes in those circumstances, I mean, those who stayed in the country. But many of them chose to be exiled internally, simply closed up …

We also chose the exile and now we were there. And then, the wars are coming to an end.

[...]

22.

I stayed there, in France, I even don't know for how long, seven years? But here, too, I am a stranger. What you thought was your country, isn't your country any more. So I say, I don't have it any more, in fact, I'm a stranger everywhere. And this isn't such a bad feeling at all, what I mean, it provides a certain distance, you know, you can't get involved any longer and that's why I don't care at all who's in power here, or there. Well, that's it. This is how the story ends and after a number of years you no longer care. I find this interesting, from the point of view of psychological dynamism and

development and all that. Because all this time since the ’90-es you had to take sides, morally, politically emotionally, you name it, you had to react to the situation you’re confronted with, whether you want to put up with it, or you don’t want to put up with it; I don’t want to – then you have to leave. Well, I don’t want to, but I don’t know, so I go back, I take the rifle … well, those were the years and everything. Now I say, you know what: there are a number of people with whom you live in some kind of harmony, some of them are the friends I made, not only those from the former life, because I call it my former life, the life before ‘91 and the life after ‘91. Some of them are young people who are close to you, with whom you share some of the views, with whom you are tied to professionally, with whom you share ideas. I say, that’s what’s important, ten people are enough, from this nucleus something always comes out. I don’t care any longer who governs the country. You, you can either love it or leave it, what’s important is that you have your own work, your own activities, so I say to myself, I don’t care who is in power, you know.

23.

GS: Even if I lived to be a hundred, I still couldn’t forget this woman. Whenever I go to see someone, I have all the data about their family member who was killed. I’m not going there to ask them to tell me how he was killed, or when. I particularly remember one woman, her son was killed in Vukovar, on October 18. He was a soldier in the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA). They let her know that someone from the municipality would come to see her, but she did not know that I was an officer. She said I should come at 10 o’clock. I came and she let me in, very politely. I greet her and ask even before we sit down whether she knows why I’ve come. And she tells me: “I’ve no idea”. “I’ve come” and it is nine years, it’s the tenth year since her son got killed, “I’ve come to see how you’ve been living since your son was killed.” And then, she throws herself on the sofa and starts howling, her shoulders shaking, her head bent like this, for a moment I considered whether I should leave. But then, I thought, it would be shameful of me to leave. And then, after five or six minutes, she calmed down and just sat there, whipping her eyes. And she said, “I’m sorry, Sir, please excuse my momentary weakness.” And I said: “Madam, if I had known that I would cause you such a shock, I would never have come, even if someone promised to give me ten lives in exchange”. And then she asked me: “Do you know why I’ve cried?” “Why, of course, because of your son.” “Well, you’re wrong there. I grieved for my son for a long time and it’s over now, but ever since he was killed, you’re the first person to come to my house and ask how I was. It’s only 300 meters across from here to the barracks from where he left, never to come back again, and no one ever came to see me.” So I went and found Colonel Kovačević, who at the time was the commanding officer there. I ask him: “How is it possible that no one ever went?” And he tells me:”Well, why, Sekula? It’s not in the regulations.” And that’s it. That’s all there is. So, did we prepare ourselves for the war of any sort? Why am I now in the position to be ashamed to have been an officer at all?

[…]

went as a serviceman.

Q: In 1991 when you went there, did you know that fighting had broken out?

ŽS: Right from the beginning. I knew that fighting was going on there and I went to defend my country.

[…]

ŽS: I had enough of the war. I really had enough. To live through 1981 in Mitrovica, Peć, Đakovica, the demonstrations, checkpoints and the rest of it and then, ten years later – the same all over again, I’d had too much of it. But 1999 arrives, like the icing on the cake. So, when we’re talking freely, I often say, whenever there was a change of government, I went to the war.

[…]

ŽS: The traumas of the war remain, pushed to the back of one’s mind, filed away, enshrined somewhere, but the memory comes back from time to time to each one of us, regardless of how strong mentally we are, or how stable our families are. There, the family can help most, regardless of how strong you are as a person, in certain moments, some situations surface again.

[…]

ŽS: At the time they should have cared more and thought differently about the future of the new generations, of the future of the children that were being born then and those who were born in the ’90-es, in the ’80-es and of the children who are being born now. You see, I went to the front in 1999, when my granddaughter was born. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have gone. And in 1981 I went there when my son was born. I went to defend them first of all, and then all the other children. The first time, the second time, these are difficult things.

[…]

Q: Where were you posted in 1999?

ŽS: In 1999 I was also on the Drina, on the hillsides of Cer.

Q: How long?

ŽS: All this time.

[…]

Q: Already then you were dissatisfied with the political decisions?

ŽS: I was not dissatisfied with the political decisions, I only thought that things should have been done differently.

Q: Did you express this in any way?

ŽS: There was no one to express this to. I was a soldier sent on a mission and I didn’t engage in politics. You see, we soldiers don’t deal with politics.

Q: But you bear the consequences of it?

ŽS: We bear grave consequences of their politics. We bear these consequences in ourselves and this is why we appeal to the state and all state institutions to pay it least some attention to the war veterans. Not to be forgotten. And this is what we are – forgotten. And this is what pains us most, all the soldiers, all the fighters in the war, all those who were at the front, whether it was in 1991, or in 1992, in 1999, or in 1981. It doesn’t matter which year. All the participants have been forgotten. In a way, we have been put aside, stored somewhere, so to say.

how they bombed Petrohemija and Belgrade. When there is light, you see and hear it exactly. You see them fly around and you are helpless. So we were just looking at our horizons, where we could shoot. And then, at that moment, everyone hid, it was dreadfully creepy, impossibly creepy. The roar of that engine that was above, as if you had something over your head - that was the feeling. Mato told me: "Mika, give me the cigarettes". At the time I was smoking because… Now I don't smoke, I have never smoked, and back then I smoked just because of the stress.

Q: Then you really started smoking?

MM: Sure, the stress made me smoke then. It was all because of the stress. I took that cigarette. I took it and my hands were shaking, and he was the leader of our whole group in my eyes, a man I could rely on. And then he told me: „Give me the cigarette." I was about to give it to him when he said: „Are you crazy? I cannot move, light it for me." At that moment I realized that he could not move. He, who was a mountain of a man, history for me. And I took it, lit it for him, put it into his mouth and he smoked it. Then something happened to me. I was invigorated, and I felt I was now protecting him. Everyone ran away. That was really terrible.

[...]

29.

MM: I never had any doubts concerning who killed who, and why, and what was happening. We make around 10-15% of this population, and we will always be a minority. I am aware that a minority, in an intellectual sense, will never be able to take a populistic view, in the same way a majority will never be able to take a minority stand. That means that manipulating with people who are not educated and who do not possess certain knowledge and can be easily manipulated, will always exist. It exists even today. That is the need of the people who are in power. So, every government, I repeat, every government, asks for a majority which is as uneducated as possible, in order to be able to manipulate them easily. This happens even today. Things have not changed. Only the actors have changed.

30.

ŽS: I am Žika Stefanović, one of the war veterans. Actually, I have been a participant in the war since the early days, since 1981, when the first demonstrations and the first skirmishes broke out in Kosovo in March, and later, in 1991, 1992 and in 1999.

[…]

Q: Where were you in 1981?

ŽS: I was an active serviceman then. I was an officer of the JNA, Yugoslav People's Army, and as such, when the first demonstrations broke out in Kosovo in 1981, in the month of March, we were sent there for intervention. And for six years I stayed in Kosovo.

[…]

Q: Where were you in 1991, when the war broke out, where you engaged there, or did you volunteer?

ŽS: I volunteered. I went of my own will to defend my country in 1991, but in 1981 I

24.

Q: How many books have you written?

GS: So far I have published 12 books. Not all of them are in connection with this war, but most of them are. I've written the book "The Drina Division" about the history of the Serbian Army, then "The Battle of Cer – the Gemstone in the Art of War of the Serbian Army" that took place in 1914. I wrote a monograph about Puniša Račić, the man who was shooting in the Parliament in 1928 and whose throat was slashed by a general in 1945.

Q: Who published those books?

GS: Various people. "The Drina Division" was published by an association in Loznica. The Drina Division is connected with that region, etc. Puniša Račić was published by someone from Berane, some professors, doctors, I could never have done it on my own. They edited it, checked the language, organized the whole text, got the book for publishing. I just write the text, then the language-editor works takes it over, and then the general editor. All this has to be paid for. And in the "Killed in War" series I have eight monographs. One of them is "Born in Serbia and Montenegro – Killed in the Army of Republika Srpska and in Serbian Army". I also have "Born in Croatia – Killed in the Army of Republika Srpska". Separately, I have "The Army Forces of SFRJ" (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). Eight thousand have been killed until the 1st of July, 1992. All this is from The Hague. I have counted from all the daily reports quoting the numbers of those killed on a particular day, added them up –more than eight thousand. However, Života Panić, the then Commander-in-Chief, in his statement to the press said that only 1,283 had been killed. After all, he didn't know. I'm not going to claim that there was some ulterior motive behind it, but that's the real trouble, we do not know all about what has happened. That's how it is. (…) If someone published the numbers of those killed, or of the wounded who died at VMA (Military Hospital in Belgrade), they would all faint. It's top secret. I also approached Stanković, when he was Commander-in-Chief, I knew him from long ago. He didn't even answer. They must have a reason. On the other hand, I have all their documents, I have analyzed them all. I offered to give them over for inspection and if they don't think they should be published, let them just keep those documents, but I never got an answer. It's complete nonsense, they are all somehow … I turned to a defense minister, when The Army of Yugoslavia was created, I wanted to make some things legal, because I was taking documents from the Archives and did not want people who work there to get in trouble. I approached him through the man who had been his best man. I told him that I would like to take out the documents for 20 members of JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) and wanted him to approve of it. And then he asked me: "What does the Army of Yugoslavia have to do with JNA?" I was so surprised, I didn't know what to answer. Then he told me: "I'll answer it for you, the same as the Army of Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia. We have nothing to do with JNA". And then I told him: "But 95 per cent of those killed in that army were Serbs." And he told me: "That's your opinion" So, what else should I tell you?

[…]

25.
GS: This is a volunteer who died at the front – I have a list of 2,000 names. Did he really have to go to the front, and then lose his life there? It's a completely different matter when a soldier is mobilized by me and then gets killed. That's different, because a soldier has to go to the front. This one didn't have to. These were all honest men. Well, just because there were some who had a criminal record, or some were marauders and went there out of criminal motives, does not mean that they all should be presented like this. When I want to define a volunteer, this is how I approach the matter – I begin from the month of July, 1991, when the Serbian Parliament passed the TO Bill (Territorial Defense) which stipulated the foundation of units of volunteers. After that they formulated the instructions for the organization of volunteers into units of territorial defense, with strict directions. On the 1st of September, 1991, the Federal Secretary issued instructions for the admission of volunteers into the JNA, as well as the Presidency of SFRJ at the beginning of December 1991; there are executive orders for everything and I have copied them. Those who disobeyed these orders were either volunteering elsewhere, since MUP (Ministry of Internal Affairs) could also have formations of volunteers and indeed had them, or were completely out of control. Those were the ones who went there in order to get something out of it and then go back, but this was the responsibility of MUP. Or, can I now take arms and go somewhere? Shall I shut my eyes and keep quiet? That's how it was.

26.
MM: Once you knew it was going to be a big bang, did you have the feeling that one should get away from it, or how should one react – what was your attitude?
B: From the emotional point of view, I barely survived, I don't know if I even survived. Everyone in my family was pro-Yugoslavia and not nationally oriented. We considered that country to be our first, so to say, first home. So, defending Yugoslavia was an emotional issue, that is, an internal issue. I wanted it to be defended, but I couldn't see the way how that could be done. I didn't respond to the call I received.

Q:When did you get the call?

MM: I got it in August 1991. Since I had an allergy, they postponed it for some other time, so I was put on hold until the end of all those events.

Q: Okay, now when you know that it all ended, do you think that it was a good decision not to take part in it?
MM: I am convinced that it was good that I didn't take part in it because there are no winners in a civil war, everyone loses. Therefore I think there is no point in participating in something that is condemned in advance.

Q: Still, some people from your surroundings did go to the battlefield. What was your attitude? Thanks to your allergy you managed to avoid it so to say, and on the other hand, some people did go. We also know that some people from this area literally fled to Hungary, to another country. Did you even have a personal attitude towards that? Did you approve of the former or latter?
MM: I took pity on all of them. The people who fled did not flee from the promised

land, and the ones who stayed I took pity on even more, because they went to the battlefield and came back the way they did. So I took pity on both. I did not see the difference between them, apart from those who acted in their best interest, in the sense that they had parents abroad who could help them transfer. I have never felt sorry for them, nor do I feel sorry for them today, because they should not be pitied. But the ones who fled to hide here or there, and the ones who took part in all those events really got the worst out of it.

[...]

27.
MM: There was a captain, Stanković... I think it was Stojanović, Stojanović, he was the only one who would turn up, and when we first met, he was already like, I don't know, he was a genius for me, out of ordinary. Interestingly, he immediately remembered my surname. After that, whenever he saw me, he would say: „Hey Mihajlović". There were so many of us, how could he remember me?! It seemed like he remembered everyone, that's the way he was. And he said: „We will turn on NATO, neither guilty nor responsible."

Q: Those were his words?

MM: Yes, he didn't approve of it.

Q: Okay, so, that was an attitude of a professional soldier, after all, so to say. And when a professional soldier says that, what do you, ordinary people think?
MM: Well, personally I thought that if someone attacked you, you should defend your family no matter what. And we defended our family. That means I defended my town, where my family was, and that was the most sincere thing to do. I didn't think that I should leave that place just because I thought that I might succeed in preventing something in the whole story. If every link said they wouldn't do it, then there would be no links. So, I thought that I was maybe a small link, and if I endured, everyone else would endure, and we wouldn't break.

[...]

28.
MM: Yes, there was a situation which was very risky. It sounds incredible, but it's true that at the distance of maybe 200 meters, a grenade fell, or it was, er, a rocket.

Q: A rocket.

MM: The rocket was stuck just under the railroad. At that moment, we didn't know what was happening, when it fell, when it exploded. Everything was flying around us, shrapnels, this and that, some soil. A disaster. And we were not prepared for it at all. It was night. At that moment, I was completely cut off, I started running away through the fields. Međo yelled at me: „Where are you going, you fool?" Another guy yelled that it might fall exactly where I was going, so I should come back. And it wasn't only me, everyone started running, you know when you start to panic. Some of them came back; some ran into the night through the wheat fields. I came back. It was terrible. There was a guy called Hekel Mato. He calmed me down and then we sat and talked and that was the hardest thing to do. The last night B52, or how it was called, that big bomber, bombed us, when they bombed Petrohemija in Novi Sad, we went there and saw exactly