

THE JOURNAL OF A WAR SURGEON – DR MIODRAG LAZIC

I dedicate this journal to Serbian people, Serbian warriors and, above all, to Serbian nurses in military hospitals and on the front lines who gave away their lives, youth, beauty... They healed the wounded, saved their lives day and night with their gentle hands, warm glances and medical knowledge without a single sign of tiredness.

I also dedicate this journal to my children Pedja and Nina, who in their sixth and seventh years of age were forced to understand why their father wasn't with them.

Going to war. Four winters in war. A journal written at the time while the things were happening. The hospital. The war. The people. The events. The emotions. The personalities. Everything is described. This text describes my trip from Knin across Banja, Kordun, the corridors, to the battlefields of Sarajevo. I hope that this will one day become a novel that would tell about the epos and the sufferings of Serbian people.

If I wrote a novel I would start like this:

The summer of 1941. The hot month of August, the city of Nish. The war is breaking out in the territories of the Serbian border areas.

Knin – the bastion of the Serbian resistance, was the piemont of the Republic of Srpska Krajina in front of the invasion of Ustasas. Nish and Knin, two cities on the opposite sides of former Yugoslavia have been my destiny for four years. Responding to the desperate call of the Serbian people in Krajina, together with medical workers, especially surgeons, I leave Nish, my family, friends. I go to Knin, straight to the center of one of the most horrible wars in Europe. On the fourth of August my one thousand and two hundreds days in war start. Frankly speaking, I then thought that I was going to stay for a short period - a month or two.

My son Pedja was five that summer, and my daughter Nina was three years old. They are four years older now. Though very young, my children had to understand why their father was so long away from them. They knew that other children and their parents needed me when injured or sick.

Tens of thousands of wounded, disabled and dead people went through my hands. I thought I couldn't survive it: neither physically nor mentally. I survived, nevertheless. Only God knows how many litres of Serbian blood flew over my hands, down my trousers soaking my shoes, my socks. And that very blood was the most sacred Serbian river, the one that initiated all the others. Sometimes in my sleep, I see that river in blood, all foamed and red, out of which appear the familiar faces, the lost arms and legs, the unrecognizable bodies. It was, at first, the scream of horror and grief, the cry of pain and suffering. Then it became the voice of victory that said: "My brothers, don't give up, save the Serbian territories"! Serbian warriors, children, old men and old women died in my hands.

The memories are coming to me now, solid as truth. September, 1991. The Ustashas' massacre of the Serbian population. The village Kinjačka, between Sisak and Sunja. Children's bodies in blood, massacred old men. The eleven year old girl, shot in the head. Still beautiful. Her neighbour, the local game warden Dzemo who led the way of this bloody fiest of Ustashas, called the girl by name. The bustard had an argument with her father and that was his revenge. The girl came to the window and the bullet hit its target. The old man Arbutina, two houses away, went out into his front yard to see what was happening. He barely survived his German wounds from 1942. and now, after fifty years, got even worse ones. Tens of massacred bodies were scattered all around.

It was the first picture of the cruel truth, and then the corridor – “the road of life” appeared. June, 1992. The wounded Serbian fighter, a young man, whose name I did not know, somewhere around Modricha: “Hey, Serbian doctor, where is Belgrade?” “Over there, soldier”. I pointed with my hand in the direction of Belgrade. “Turn me to that direction so I can die looking towards Belgrade, towards the Sun.” He died soon after that... The unknown hero.

I remember the dead Serbian young men who were making “the road of life” that month, connecting Krajina to Serbia. They died with pride, like Obilich brothers.¹ With their own lives they were opening “the road of life” for their people in Krajina captured by Ustashas and Muslims. They didn't have any other choice having in their minds the deaths of the babies in maternity hospital in Banja Luka, the hungry children in Krajina...They fought like wolves and died like heroes. I witnessed their becoming a legend.

I recall a young woman, a mother of a five – year – old boy. Her name was Radoika Bulat – Svrzikapa, twenty five years old, a poetess and a soldier. She never separated from her book of poems in the left hand, having a gun in her right. She died of Ustashas' bullets like a real soldier, in the fortified position of Serbians in Kupa, somewhere between Glina and Petrinja. I was at her funeral, high in the top of the mountin Kordun, under the sky. There were a few of us – her father, her mother and her son, a quiet and serious boy. It was raining as if God was lamenting upon her soul. We were all crying, except for the boy. Maybe he was crying, though, I couldn't tell because the rain drops were rolling down his cheeks. The sky was crying, too.

The funeral of the Serbian soldiers who died in Suva Medja, above Dvor. The grave, inaccessible as usual, on the top of the mountain. Many people, heavy rain and thunder, again. April, 1992. The rain was falling heavily, tombs were filled with water. Crying and weeping of mothers, sisters, children. The most horrible choir I had ever heard. I wondered why all the Serbian graves were in such inaccessible places. The answer is simple – so that

¹ the famous Serbian brothers who fought bravely against the Turks in the 14th century

the enemy could not desecrate and demolish them. Graves have always been sacred for Serbians, and they have always been surrounded by the enemies who, apart from killing people, destroyed the tombstones, as well. The destiny and the history of my people is a sad one – in addition to their struggle for the existence they also have to protect the dead. The Serbian part of Sarajevo consisting of heroic Ilijash, Ilidza, Vogoscha, Rajlovac, Hadzici, legendary Nedjarici and other places. A hundred thousand of men, women and children. A life and death struggle. Grenades, sometimes over three hundred a day, snipers, the infantry combating hand – to – hand. Every day. A small hospital, with the ruined floor. One's foot falls through the wooden floor covered with linoleum. The floor ruined by blood, litres of life liquid. The souls of the Serbian fighters are inbuilt into the floors and the walls of the hospital in the foot of the mountain Igman, the black wall above us.

Wounded children, my heart was dying for you, children, little sweet creatures, who passed away of grenades' splinters and snipers, my soul yealed for you! Serbian soldiers, I would have given my life only if you could live!

I worked like insane, like a superman. I probably got my strength from God. The brave Serbian past through the centuries filled me with strength and vigour. Blood and death, the cry of grief, the rattle of vanishing souls, and, again the victorious triumph over death. The gratitude of the closest family, the grateful look of the saved stuck to my soul. Son! Warrior! Women! Mother! God looks upon us Serbians, too. "Doctor, you are a great man, right next to God!" And then, when I lose a dear soldier, a child, a man, I cry out loud: "Oh, God, where are you? Why did I lose a soldier from Nedjarich on Christmas, at two o'clock in the morning?! God, it's Your birthday today, why did you have to take him? Where are you?!"

I remember the Day of St. Nicolas in 1992.- three fatally wounded, three boys, all of them die. We can't help them. Why, St. Nicolas?! The day of my slava.²

Why you? And then the day of St. John, 1993, St.Nicolas, 1993. and the Christmas 1994. Winning death, happiness. The almost lost returned to life. Everybody shouts: "A miracle, it's a miracle! Doctor, you're God!" God exists, that's for sure. He came down to the Earth, among the Serbians with all his apostles. He showed mercy for our suffering, our prayers, our victims and our righteous struggle. He gave sign of himself. We are not alone anymore, we are unified with God.

I started to write this journal on the twelveth of April in 1992.

I came to the first battlefield in the Republic of Srpska Krajina, on the fourth of August in 1991. I got through many hardships, grief, happiness, tiredness, pain, through everything that follows the life of a surgeon who works under tents, at different objects, schools. We

² the Serbian family fiest of the patron saint, called "slava"

worked day and night, in poor conditions, with bad equipment, without assistants, without trained staff, with a lot of wounded people. For the first time in my life I encountered such heavy wounds. I worked a lot, and in those first months I probably accumulated the energy, strength and wish for putting down on paper what was happening around me. From the August 1991. to the April 1992. I was in charge of the military hospital in Dvor on the Una, to which the wounded people came from the whole territory of Banija and Kordun.

12th of April, 1992.

Having spent ten days with my family in Nish, I took off from Belgrade on a small jet plane together with twelve passengers towards Bihach. President of the Parliament of the Serbian Republic and President of Korenica Community, Bozanich were on the plane, too. We were flying above four thousand metres because of the possibility of a gun fire from the ground. We were flying above the Sava for a long time. Fifty minutes later we landed at the military airport in Bihach. It was in a very good condition. I saw rocket and radar systems. I saw a huge mountain massif to the left, in the direction of landing. While we were landing I noticed three big openings in the foot of the mountain. Those were the openings for the underground runways and hangars for the modern supersonic planes. Somewhere above them, in the mountain rocks, there were the openings for the navigation instead of the classical control towers. A perfect airport, one of the most famous and best in the world. Its length is several tens of kilometres, one part of which is in Bosnia and the other one in Croatia.

April – May 1992. – Glina

I work as the only general surgeon in the hospital in Glina, the only hospital in the Republic of Srpska Krajina. Day and night – operations, examinations and dressings. I cover the area of two hundred thousand inhabitants. The first line with Ustasha's forces, the river Kupa is only three kilometres away from the hospital. I have had more than sixty wounded and four dead people for these two months, April and May 1992. We were bombed twice in May. On the fourth of May grenades were falling on Glina from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Heavy explosions are echoing around the hospital. The wounded are in their beds. Patients' rooms are in the other part of the building, opposite to the direction of the falling of grenades, so that the wounded are relatively safe. Maternity section is on the first floor (the hospital has two floors). Pregnant women in the halls – listening attentively. Fear... Panic! We are lucky, however. Not a single grenade hit the building. One fell into the yard, but no one got hurt.

Apart from this, from the twentieth of May the phone and road connections with Serbia have been totally dead. Pitched battles have been fought in Prijedor and the surrounding areas. Thirty seven Serbian warriors were killed on the first day. Several hundreds of Muslim extremists were killed.

The Republic of Srpska Krajina

Banija and Kordun

Glina, 13th of May, 1992. 3p.m

Huge trucks are thundering along the road to Bihach, towards mother Serbia, the sound of which is being overpowered by the singing of our soldiers and the firing of the machine guns. Yugoslav Army is leaving. Serbian and Montenegrin boys, beardless and experienced warriors are going away. They gathered their experience in great battles of which their native country has no knowledge. They fought and protected their people, their native country, the only one they had. Will their parents and the Serbian people from the betrayed AVNOJ Serbia ever know with how much courage they were fighting for Serbian welfare and the pride of our centuries. Having matured over night into the real warriors, they were the only and the unreplacable ones.

Tens of trucks full of soldiers are heading towards Serbia. The planes that are transporting them show certain symbolism. They arrived here by dusty roads and now depart in the sky. Gunfires are tearing up the sky, Serbian and Montenegrin songs that nourish the tormented souls are echoing. The whole sight – a scream of going away for ever. People on both sides of the street are waving to their warriors. And they are crying, too, the grown ups and children. There are tears on the faces of the young soldiers, too. It is the separation of the people from their defenders, there is no fear, just sadness, the enormous one, the farewell. In just one moment this picture becomes the truth to the suffered people about their loneliness. Their native country doesn't exist anymore.

I am standing in front of the hospital the halls of which are soaked with the blood of the Serbian heroes. It is full of young warriors, many of whom with crutches and in wheelchairs. I am looking at these silent faces asking myself what they might be thinking right now, what the souls of the dead soldiers might be thinking. I close my eyes for a moment. I, being a surgeon and a Serbian volunteer from the beginning of this war. I see a column, hundreds of wounded, crippled, dead, those who trusted me. All of them are familiar faces of young men, girls, old people, children. My column, my heroes, my children. They are approaching me asking: "Doctor, you've always had an explanation for everything. What is all this about? Why? I am crying with my people. My two children are back there in Serbia, in Nish, but, for the moment, I want my citizens to feel the same pain.

The soldiers are waving, crying, gunfires are roaring, it is thundering: Serbia, Serbia, Serbia... We had one Albania and the exodus in 1916. It is our destiny to have another one.

Young men are going away with honour.

Serbia deserts its own people, those tears are heavy, there is weeping and pain. The warriors are singing and crying. Young and inexperienced, having always been misguided by lies and illusions of one horrible policy and ideology, they are experiencing their personal

tragedies now and the split in the territory of their native country where each of them lost at least one friend. They are crying out loud: "We'll be back!" knowing that they are going away for ever. The burden of all this madness has fallen on their youth. It will be hard for them to carry it.

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On this same day at noon, at the old graveyard in Glina, Serbian Metropolitan held the funeral service for the victims, thousands of men, women and children who were slaughtered in the church of Glina in the summer, 1941. The only thing they were guilty of was the fact that they were Serbians. He came to his people like a shepherd. Just in time. To bring back the faith to the deserted souls, as an apostle, to give hope to the deserted ones. We have had Kosovo many times, but we have never lost our soul and our faith. We are not giving up now, either. The harder it is for us the stronger we are.

The emergency alarm. Life goes on inexorably. And the last truck hasn't yet disappeared behind the road curve. Dead soldier, a boy. A cap with the initials JA beside him. Eyes open wide, inflexible. Killed in Petrinja. His home town. His father is with him. The hard male hand caresses the boy's hair. Eyes with no tears. Looking nowhere. They were together in the battlefield. Ustashas' sniper chose the boy. The first victim of the people with no homeland.

Departure, the funeral ceremony, death. All of that in one moment. Serbian trinity. My homeland, where are you now? I can't feel you. I can feel only one thing. You are both here and there.

1st of June, 1992.

The battles in Bosanski Novi. Everything is on fire. Five hundred of captured Muslim extremists, seven of them dead. The aircraft blockade of Krajina has been going on for the second week, now. The last helicopter took off to Banjaluka two weeks ago. We are completely cut off from the rest of the world. Croatia from one side and the blockade from the other.

6th of June, 1992.

There is no medicine coming from Belgrade. We have no electricity, water, telephone lines, cigarettes and matches, yeast, petrol and oil. Agregates ceased working, the food is rotten.

On the 13th of May, I had, together with the people of Krajina, the saddest day of my life, watching the Yugoslav National Army departing the part of the native country and the part of its nation and going to Serbia.

On the 6th of June I had the privilege to witness the moment of the formation of the Serbian army and its starting the battle of making the "road of life", the battle for corridor to Serbia. May God help them! They are going away to ensure life for their people. Early in the

morning the column of the Serbian army is going from Glina towards Dvor and further to Banjaluka. Serbian three coloured flag with four S-es on the shield is proudly fluttering at the head of it.

I know many of the soldiers. They are my good friends. I will probably never see again many of them. Fifteen warriors were killed for the last two months on the first line in Glina. One girl, too, the member of the Women's Batallion, a poetess and a mother, twenty six years old. I keep two of her poems. I remember the time of two months ago and the meeting with her on the first line, somewhere between Glina and Petrinja.

I was that day with my friend and colleague, the ophtamolog from Nish, also a Serbian volunteer, doctor Jovica Mrsich, at the position of our soldiers. We came across the Women's Batallion and met Radojka Bulat – Svrzikapa. It was a girl with a gentle face and a boyish head, mother of a five – year – old boy, a poetess and a fighter. With her book of poems and a machine gun she was at the Serbian shield. Her only brother is on the other side – with Ustashas. Maybe they are aiming one another. How dirty this war is! "How sacred this war must be when a sister her own brother sees as an enemy" – this is the last verse of one of her poems. She is dead now, wounded in the ribcage by a burst of fire.

I was at her funeral. Right now I am struggling for the life of another girl, from the same batallion. Her name is Milka, twenty one years old. She is shot in the stomach, the intestines are damaged in twelve places. I have operated her for three hours. She is well now, she is going to make it. I am happy.

7th of June 1992.

I work day and night, I barely have any sleep. It is strange though, I am not tired. I found two packs of cigarettes - Croatian "Obengston" from the members of the Nigerian batallion. I am taking them to my friends from Dvor. There are three hundred of them at the position, and two packs of cigarettes make a small fortune.

We have had no connections with Banjaluka for ten days. I take care of all the sick and wounded patients. There is no anesthesiologist, one anesthetist is in charge of anesthesia. We are completely in blockade. All eyes are, however, turned to mother Serbia. It's a great miracle that they still believe!

8th of June, 1992.

The raid of the Muslim extremists from Cazin border line to the Parliament in Dvor. They killed seven of our fighters, cunningly and ruthlessly.

10th of June, 1992.

The funeral. The sky sends the rain to wash away blood. The weeping of the women and the children. The honorary fire of the Banian soldiers, somewhere high in the mountain above Dvor, under the sky.

11th of June, 1992.

Seven o'clock in the morning. I am coming back from Dvor to Glina. I see the Serbian Army of Krajina rushing to the battle for corridor. Troop carriers, tanks, trucks, a magnificent column. I salute them by dimming the headlights on my car and with my three fingers. They return greeting. Proud and resolute. They are departing...They are going towards Derventa and Modricha. Thousands of them are going to open the way for their people to Serbia. Good Luck, heroes! The eyes of the whole Krajina and the hearts of all of us are with you!

A wounded patient is waiting for me in the hospital. He is shot by a dum dum bullet through the lower jaw. Muslim extremists from Cazin Krajina are again attacking Banija.

12th of June, 1992.

Five more members of the Serbian Army from Dvor have been killed. We are fighting back. Severely and painfully for them.

16th of June, 1992.

Four members of the Serbian Army of Krajina have been wounded somewhere near Sisak. The specialists for disassembling the mine – fields. It was a moment of negligence by the experienced miners. Serious wounds.

17th of June, 1992.

What can one say? Four weeks without electricity and water, without any connection with Serbia. Neither by land, nor by air or by telephone. One cigarette for ten patients; and it seems that the sky has also poured down on this suffered land. The horrible weather has lasted for two days now. The wounded patients are coming far away from Derventa to the hospital in Glina. Pitched battles are being fought there. There are lots of killed and injured fighters. The eyes of Krajina and the eyes of one million of Serbians are turned to this front. The Serbian television is ignoring this.

I've been to Petrinja where the life is coming back. I see children in the streets, playing. And with the naked eye I can see Sisak, the strongpoint of Ustashas. I see buildings, the water tower.

18th of June, 1992.

Four injured members of the Reconnaissance Detachment have been brought. Fine guys. One of our soldiers had been caught and slaughtered. He had been left behind. These guys approached him, but the body was filled with explosive. The moment they lifted the body it exploded. Fortunately, they are all alive, but the injuries are serious. Much work to do.

19th of June, 1992.

One more seriously ill patient. The serious insufficiency of kidneys. A young man. We take the last litres of petrol from the hospital aggregate for the ambulance that would take him to Banjaluka. And what is expecting him there? We hear that the dialysis is out of order.

There are problems with feeding the wounded and sick patients. There is even the shortage of bread, we have no yeast and the flour is running out.

20th of June, 1992.

For the second night I am operating by the light of petroleum lamp and the church candle. I started the operation tonight at seven o'clock and hoped to finish it until half past eight, before the sunset. I am using the light coming through the window. I am in a great hurry. However it isn't going smoothly. The dark is falling. I am finishing the operation by the light of the petroleum lamp, and it is bad because instead of petroleum I use oil which burns fast and with lots of smoke. However, we have found the recipe, a litre of oil – three spoons of salt. It doesn't make smoke and burns slower. The operation room is in the dark. The whole hospital is in the dark. The town is in the dark. There hasn't been any electricity for nine nights now. I am not tired but I am mentally exhausted among the Serbs and so far away from the native land – mother Serbia.

The Serbian Army is making a glorious victory, a break-through to Serbia. We are being informed that there is only ten kilometres left to the making of "the road of life" – the corridor. The Belgrade television is silent. In the glorious battle of the Serbian Army which nothing less important than the historical battle of Cer, Kolubara or Kajmakčalan, the Serbian Army is making the road for its people to the native land, to Belgrade, to Serbia.

Ten p.m. Boys and girls are singing near the hospital. The song's name is "Sasha". The graduates, indestructible. Life still goes on. Boys and girls are celebrating their maturity and six days from now it will be a whole year of their being armed and fighting. Beautiful Serbian youth. The young people of their age in Belgrade are on strike. I am not interested in their motives and reasons. I only know one thing: no reason for strike in Belgrade could be more valuable than the desperate fight of this people for their bare living. Sad!

The supplies of everything in Krajina are running out. The battle for corridor, for "the road of life", the greatest fight in the history of the Serbian people is coming to its final phase. There are many injured and killed people. We are all deeply hurt by the students' protests. Tens of the Serbian young boys are killed every day to make safe the life of a million Serbians in Serbian krajinas³ And the young well dressed boys and girls smoking expensive cigarettes and organizing concerts are protesting against the Serbian Government in Belgrade, the town to which are turned the eyes of this young people. They don't realize that in that way they are making a great damage to their people in Serbian krajinas!

Everything's the same. There are wounded people every day. I check the patients' rooms in complete dark with the oil lamp in my hand. I am in the bad mood. What is still giving us hope is the battle for the Serbian corridor.

³ krajina – the Serbian term for the border area

Belgrade does not tell anything. The television from Banjaluka gave the information that there had been the first meeting of the people from Krajina with the fighters from Semberija. Is the road to Serbia made at last?

28th of June, 1992. – Vidovdan ⁴

The incredible day! The Serbian Army of Krajina has made a breach to Serbia. The narrowest part of it is five kilometres wide. It is a great celebration for the Serbian fighters. Firing in the sky, cheering, tears, happiness. The Serbian Army of Krajina has given its people the greatest battle in the history. The present called “the road of life”. They swore to their people to do it until Vidovdan – and they did it. They avenged Kosovo and Jasenovac. They have given their people another Vidovdan, after that on Kosovo. Gratitude to the hundreds of dead Serbian fighters! I won't mention the Belgrade Vidovdan. While the Serbian victory over the Ustashas' slaughterers, Murat's⁵ descendants and the Serbian degenerates are being celebrated here, the leaders of the demonstrations are apologizing for the Serbian mines making equal the innocent victims killed for freedom to those of the enemy.

The big battles are still being fought. Our forces are heading towards the river Sava. The enemy is breaking into a headlong flight.

1st of July, 1992.

I operated by the light of two battery lamps tonight at ten o'clock. A soldier, twenty two years old. A contact mine. Having been wounded in Cazin Krajina. One leg cut off under the knee and the other all torn apart and full of mud, but will probably be saved. The lips are torn apart, the face is cut, the tongue is cut.

3rd of July, 1992.

I leave for Dobož with the members of the Reconnaissance Detachment. There are four hundred of wounded soldiers in the hospital. Six surgeons are on duty. The town is deserted. The shops are closed. The Army is in the streets. A regular military situation. We know that the enemy is preparing to attack the town but we are ready for that.

Modricha. I have been looking for our base with five of my friends for the whole day. We find it just before dark on four hundred metres of the strong point of Ustashas, called Dobar-kula. We are happy to see each other but we must express our excitement in silence because the enemy is near. The river Bosnia is down there, below us and “the road of life” corridor is across the way, beside its other bank. The entrance to Modricha is there, too. I am looking through binoculars: I see that our convoy with trucks and cisterns going to Belgrade has stopped. I can't see why. Ustashas can see this also and they try to attack the convoy but our forces respond and shut them up. The convoy leaves around nine p.m. Silence. I

⁴ Vidovdan – a day of the battle between the Serbian and the Turkish army on Kosovo field, on 28th of June, 1389

⁵ Murat was the Turkish tzar at the time of the Kosovo battle

know that at six o'clock in the morning the forces from Krajina are going to attack Dobar-kula which still controls the corridor.

It is morning. The rain is falling all night. Silent departure. My best friends are leaving, seventeen of them. I, together with the three of them, go down to the bank of the Bosnia and crossing it over the improvised bridge enter Modricha.

Our artillery from Modricha starts attacking Dobar-kula. They respond. Mines are falling all around us. Maliutka has just fallen somewhere near us, too. And then goes our Infantry, the experienced fighters from Krajina. Victory! The Serbian flag is fluttering on the top of Kula. Burst of fire expressing the joy. The road is finally safe, now. My friends go further to Odzak, Brod, to the river Sava. We have won "the road of life". Many have died. In only one day, on the glorious Vidovdan and in one sad hour seven men from Kostajnica died and twenty three of them were wounded. The Serbian soldiers fighting for corridor will be celebrated like new Kosovo heroes.

The convoys full of food and other goods are slowly leaving Serbia and going to Krajina. The people welcome them with tears, flowers, with their arms opened. More than ninety thousand of the Serbian fighters took part in this glorious battle for corridor, for "the road of life". There have never been so many Serbian soldiers in the history and in a single battle, until now. But the significance of this corridor for the krajinas, for Banjaluka is – life! Without it there is no life.

12th of July, 1992.

Returning home, to Nish. There are Serbian patrols on every ten kilometres. I am travelling across Vucjak. The famous detachment of "Wolves from Vucjak" has its origin here. Miraculously brave boys with their legendary leader Veljko Miladinovic.

I enter the column of our tanks on some ten kilometres in front of Doboj. They are going to Doboj. I found the reason for this after a couple of days. The Muslim forces tried to attack this city but they were stopped and destroyed. There is no treason any more. Everything has been well organized. This is the Serbian Army.

Modricha is a deserted town, destroyed in many parts. I find out that our forces came to Odzak today. We met a convoy of trucks heading its way to Krajina. They give back life to the Serbian people. Twenty buses of the company "Lasta" from Belgrade follow it. They return women and children from Serbia after two months of total blockade.

The next place – Brcko. A deserted town. Not being much destroyed. There is no people. The part of the road of some twenty kilometres leads along the river bank of the Sava. On the other bank, some fifty metres away is Croatia.

Bijeljina. A free and alive town. The shops with fruit and juice are at the side of the road. All money is convertible: dinars, old and new, Yugoslavian dinars and the new dinars of the Serbian Republic.

Kuzmin, the territory of the Republic of Serbia – a border crossing. The customs control doesn't last long. There are no ramps. After three months again in Serbia. I am happy to be here and I am sad that I left the Serbian krajinas.

Belgrade. Pubs are full of people and cold drinks. Children are eating ice-creams. The shopwindows are full. There are newspapers in the news stands. People are smoking real cigarettes. I felt not all there.

Two months in Nish have passed very quickly. At the end of August I got an invitation letter from the Ministry of Health of the Serbian Republic – a plea to go to Banjaluka for a month, and then to Mrkonjic-grad, where the new hospital is being formed. I realized later that it was a battle for Jajce and for that part of the Serbian Republic. I confirmed my coming and on the fifteenth of September I went to Belgrade. The people from the Ministry of Health informed me there that they had formed the team of surgeons for Mrkonjic-town, but that they immediately need a surgeon for Sarajevo, Pale. They asked me to go there and stay for a while to help the Serbian people and the Serbian soldiers. I accepted. I went to Pale to stay for a month, but as you'd see, I stayed for three years.

20th of September, 1992.

The hospital "Koran" Pale – a military hospital. I arrived by helicopter from Belgrade. Pale, the center, the television, the radio, the Government. The Presidency. The security. The hospital is well equipped. I operate.

1st of November, 1992.

I go to Ilidza, to the opposite side of Sarajevo. It is a dead-end.

"They" are everywhere, there is only one free way – the Northern border of Sarajevo. Fields, streams, paths, four hours of travelling. The wounded fighters travel from the worst part of the front of Sarajevo to the first surgeon and salvation using this road called "the Serbian highway" (a typical way of joking of our people in critical situation). Four to five hours of horror. They travel on an ambulance truck with the capacity of five to six patients. Who traveled once on it know how hard it is even for a healthy person to travel across these holes, fields, glides. When the snow falls the passage is blocked. Two soldiers out of five wounded die. The survivors are in a serious condition, in the state of shock. The wounded soldiers come from the five parts of Sarajevo: Ilidza, Nedjarici, Hadzichi, Vogoscha, Rajlovac and Ilijash. There is no other option for them. They have the hospital in Ilidza, but they haven't got a general surgeon. I together with a colleague and a nurse go to Ilidza, certainly the most dangerous part of the Bosnian battlefield. The hospital near Ilidza, one kilometre from the Vrelo of the Bosnia, in the slope of Igman, a military hospital "Zica". It is a nice building but it is placed in the open, eight, nine hundred metres from "their" strong point. Igman is on one side and Otes on the other.

Igman is everywhere around us and behind us. Muslims are preparing for the break-through to Sarajevo from there. We are literally in their way.

26th of November, 1992.

I was yesterday in Ilidza and went by mistake to Butmir, held by “them”. It was a narrow escape, I nearly got to the enemy’s territory. By the way, I operate here almost everything, except for the head. I am the only one who is “doing” stomach and ribcage. About thirty operations and a hundred of injured patients, so far. I am in charge of a post-operative intensive care, too.

Dr Brown, from the International Commissariat for Help, was here two days ago, and when she saw the Intensive Care and the number of the operated patients asked me if it had been possible that I had done it all by myself. When I answered affirmatively she told me that I was either a fantastic surgeon or a lunatic.

Half an hour ago we were shot by heavy grenades. Seven of them fell in the area of a hundred metres. It is not pleasant at all. There are many wounded and dead. This hospital and me, being the only surgeon for the rib cage and stomach cover the huge area, which is, at the same time, the most dangerous part of Sarajevo and Romanija battlefield, which makes eighty per cent of the whole battlefield.

I work a lot. I am physically fit and my mental condition is still O.K. We have enough working material. I don’t know how the things would develop. We got everything we need from the French – the hospital, the medicine, the equipment, the instruments, the food. It is the truth, believe it or not. Help doesn’t come at all from Serbia, from the Red Cross. If there hadn’t been for the members of the French Battalion and their “Doctors with no limitations” and their journalists the hospital wouldn’t have existed at all..

27th of November, 1992.

Ilidza has been bombed again. Twenty five wounded, four of them severely. I am operating a twenty – year – old boy; a rupture of the right kidney, small intestines are damaged in many places, the spine is injured, he is bleeding. Elez Zelivoje, born in 1969. from Ilidza. I think he’ll live.

I am working from noon till one o’clock in the morning.

28th of November, 1992.

There were five wounded soldiers until noon. I am operating a young man with the injured stomach. He is the third brother of the family Simic. Two months ago two other brothers were operated, too. This one has his liver and gaster operated. It will be alright.

After that, the most horrible operation in my life. Five hours of despair. Jevric Dragan, born in 1958. from Ilijash. The main blood vessels have been torn apart. I haven’t got the prosthesis for connecting the artery and the vein. Is this a good reason for cutting off a young man’s leg?! At the last minute we find one, but it is much bigger than it should be. I

somehow manage to connect the blood vessels. In the morning, the leg is warm and the puls is regular.

30th of November, 1992.

Several patients with no operations. I was today at The Headquarters of the Batallion Payton, in Ilidza, around six a.m. I see lights, it's like the peage on the highway near Nais (it is the entrance to Nish from Belgrade). The lights are on some three or four hundred metres away from me. I wonder what it is. It is the the runway of the airport in Butmir. Gunfires everywhere.

There are major battles in Otes, the part of the town that is in enemy's hands. It is, in fact, a part of Ilidza. I am going back to the hospital and start the preparations for tomorrow. It will be very intense, I can feel it now. Two of our brigades take part, the tenks and all other forces. However, everyone was sure that this part of Ilidza, called Otes, will be ours.

City battles; the buildings, the streets. We were informed that the enemy could use war gases. Our soldiers have no gas masks. We blind the windows of the hospital every night. Our hospital can be seen from their position. That infamous Otes, which will be the aim of our soldiers tomorrow, is about one thousand metres away from the hospital. I am on the first line, indeed. I think about fear, but I don't feel it. I am completely numb.

1st , 2nd and 3rd of December, 1992.

Three days of hell. Tens of our wounded soldiers, many of them being killed. Our forces' attacks to Otes and Sokolje. The enemy's fierce responds with rocketts to Ilidza.

I have been operating continually for three nights and days. Me and my patients were lucky to have with us Colonel Borkovac, a great surgeon and a great man. He came from Pale to help us. We have been working without any break in two operating rooms. We are operating not only the warriors, but also children, women, old men, wounded at the time of granading Ilidza, Hadzichi, Rajlovac, Ilijash.

Here are some of the names of our patients: Trifunovich Zoran, born in 1970, Vasich Miodrag, born in 1969. Rusov Djurica, born in 1969. Milanovich Srdjan, Andrich Branka, born in 1964. Shilj Nevenka, born in 1939. Kljajich Slobodan, Govedarica Radovan, born in 1953. Lalovich Vid, Buha Dushan, Dzebo Stojan born in 1924, Mijatovich Radojka. All of them are very seriously injured and brought here on the same day. All the operations lasted two or three hours, extremely difficult and complicated.

I have two little girls who are three and six years old in the Intensive Care. The older one had her leg almost amputated by the granade which came into the house through the window, killing her mother on that occasion. Struggle. Three operations. I think the leg will be saved.

The younger one is only three. She hugged me not wanting to let me go. The contusion of the head by the granade in Vogoscha. She was there with her granny. Her

parents couldn't manage to escape from Sarajevo. She came to her grandmother and stayed there in the beginning of the war. She is asking for her mother all the time crying for her nipple. It makes one want to die. One nurse from the Intensive Care saves me. When the little girl sees her she starts crying and yelling : "Mommy, mommy."

The nurse probably looks like her mother. The nurse takes the child in her arms and the little one kisses her. Tears. We all cry. She holds Snjeza, tightly.

Canonades have lasted for three days. Bullets fall on our building, too. A boy, called Captain, has almost been killed. He sterilizes the instruments in the hospital. The granades are pouring heavily on us from Igman. Our soldiers strike back severely with great loss but their damage is greater. The trenches are filled with their bodies.

4th of December, 1992.

The day has come. The strange silence. You get used to canonade and then silence. It is more fearful. It is seven o'clock. As if the Earth opened. The hell begins. The morality of our soldiers is extremely strong. Battles for every house. Everything is burning around us. We are in the operating room from ten o'clock p.m. to nine a.m. non-stop. Five operations.

Around twelve heavy grenades start falling around us in the distance of fifty to a hundred metres. There is no fear. We work in silence. At four o'clock in the afternoon I see the fire balls of our artillery flying towards Igman. We are trying to silence their mortar. Hundreds of mines falling on Ilidza. Igman is being on fire, Ilidza is being on fire, too. Their deadly nests have been silenced. This is a real war. It is nine o'clock p.m. now. The body of the commander Zoran Borovina has been brought. He died leading his soldiers in the assault. He hasn't got his right hand. The injuries of the head, the chest, the face. A bomb fell among his fighters. The brave commander from the Ilidza Brigade wanted to return the bomb to the enemy. It exploded in his right hand. He protected his soldiers with his body.

He was a true commander. He wore a badge with the face of Njegosh⁶ on the left pocket of his uniform. In his right pocket he had some sweets. The same ones that he had given to the children in the hospital when he had come to visit them some five or six days ago. Has he got the children of his own somewhere? I am truly sorry for Zoran Borovina a Commander and a great soldier. It's been hard for me both as a man and as a surgeon. Unbelievably hard. But at the same time I am happy and proud to help my people, and be the part of this great Serbian struggle.

7th of December, 1992.

The hell is still going on. The day before yesterday – twelve operations, yesterday – fourteen. I didn't have time to write a word. I didn't sleep for forty hours. There were fifty

⁶ Peter II Petrovich Njegosh, Montenegrin king and a poet

injured and eight dead patients yesterday. There have been more than three hundred and fifty injured and fifty dead people until now.

I have been called from the First Aid Station. Three men are bleeding very much. Legs. I am going out of the room. One of them is already dead. From the rest two I can take one and the other one I sentence to death. Or I can put it another way: I save one of them and in my heart I feel that I let another one die. I choose the younger. I didn't know then who he was or where he came from. His name is Batkalj Aleksandar, born in 1968. a volunteer from Belgrade. Clinically dead. With the quick reanimaton the heart starts beating again. I have to amputate the leg above the knee. However, he is saved. He is alive!

It takes me twenty minutes to do that. Then I run to the other one. It is too late! He is dead! Born in the same year like me, 1955. from Ilidza. I am all in blood. My underwear is soaked with blood, my socks, too, my shoes are torn apart. This can't be expressed with words!

I am standing by the window of the Intensive Care and waiting to do a drainage of the rib cage. Right in front of my eyes, a direct shot of the granade from Igman into a house which is fifty metres away from the winndow. The part of the roof is being pulled down. This is a hell! It is Beirut outhere! Inside of the walls – blood, weeping and screams of the wounded, the dead bodies being removed.

Otes is free, it is ours! Victory!

12th of December, 1992.

I work in blood, hell and grief, but I also feel a joy of life. I am proud of this hospital and its staff, but I am madly exhausted. Grief, pain, joy. Altogether – insanity.

Yesterday was an unbelievable day. Seven operations – three dead soldiers. The soldier of my age, his both kidneys and his spine are blown off. A sniper. I operate, he lives. I finish the operation. He dies after an hour. He bleeds to death. We didn't have enough blood.

His son who is seventeen and his daughter of thirteen are waiting outside. I tell them that he is dead. They are crying. Pain in the chest. Tears.

A pretty woman, born in 1956. A serious wound in the top part of the spine. We intubate her. We are trying to reanimate her. We want her to live. She dies.

A girl, as pretty as a picture, fifteen years old, hit in the head by a geller. Her brain all over her T-shirt and her jeans. Tomorrow is her birthday. There is no way of saving her. She dies. Her father is crying, weeping, running around the bed of his dead daughter. How can one survive this?! I can't do take this anymore!

I go to my room and throw up. Jovo, the man from the Security comes in and asks me to call in his house, to forget about all this. To forget – I could never do this! I am dead and all this around me is, probably, hell.

13th of December, 1992. – 3 o'clock p.m.

More than fifteen heavy grenades have fallen on us. One fell only twenty metres away from my window. It is strange how calm we are and how we can work when the grenades fall from Igman.

16th of December, 1992.

The battles for Zuch are still going on. It seems that we have returned the part of the territory, but they, still, hold the highest peak, number 850. They control the road to Pale. We have casualties. If we want to transport something immediately to Pale and Serbia we could do that only using the airport which is under the UMPROFOR control. It allows the passage across the runway of the airport, but this is extremely dangerous. The enemy is shooting with snipers the unprotected ambulance.

18th of December, 1992.

It was a bloody day. More than five hundred heavy grenades fell on Ilidza and Blazuj, seven hundred of them fell on the whole area of our front. And then they started with the infantry assaults on Hadzichi and us, from Igman. We rejected them with casualties. I came into the operation room at six a.m. and went out at eleven p.m. Six serious thorax-abdominal operations in sequence. Four soldiers one of which is a brave girl. Samardzich Radoslav, born in 1970. From Vogoscha – serious stomach injuries; Kakucha Radovan, born in 1955. from Semizovac – serious stomach and liver injuries. Rosuljash Novo, born in 1968. From Ilijash – serious stomach wounds and Radovanovich Sanja, only twenty four years old, a Serbian fighter from Zuch, from Vogoscha – the explosive wound of stomach, half of the right kidney has been smashed inside the stomach, the other half has fallen out through the wound. The large and the small intestines have been torn apart in many places. The parts of the two spinal vertebrae have been cut off, there is a huge bleeding near the spine, the right thighbone has been smashed. I work quickly for two hours. The bleeding is stopped, the work is technically finished, she is stable. We even talk after the operation. She will be all right. This is my reward for all the troubles I had. One young life has been gifted. I tell her: “ Sanja, it is two o'clock in the morning. The nineteenth of December, 1992. It is the day of St. Nicolas. This is my Slava. From now on it will be yours, too.

One year exactly after that a beautiful girl came into my room in the hospital. She smiled. I didn't recognize her. “Doctor, it's Sanja”. She brought a painting, a watercolour, as a gift for me. She had painted it herself during the time of her rehabilitation in Serbia. This painting hangs on the wall of my study in Nish now.

19th of December, 1992.

A few hours of rest. I have been in the operation room from eleven a.m. and I left it at six p.m. More than seven hours. Two heavy wounds.

The enemy still attacks with its infantry. They are here, only one kilometre away from us. They attack with machine guns. The operations have never been more difficult. The

injuries are more and more various, the destructions are more and more big. They use dum-dum bullets. Intestines in many places torn apart and perforated, kidneys and liver, pelvic bones, severe bleedings. I am completely wet with blood and the contents of intestines. I finished an operation yesterday with my uniform and my gloves taken off. I operated without my surgical gloves.

20th of December, 1992.

The morning was peaceful but it is not promising anything good. Serbians celebrated St. Nicolas yesterday and buried their dead sons.

31st of December, 1992.

Happy New Year! A year! An irony! An oath! Twelve children have been wounded in Hadzichi. I operated three of them. Major injuries. When I see a wounded child I want to die. I died twelve times today.

We are expecting an attack. A great offensive, as Muslims are announcing it. There are twenty thousands of them on Igman. But we won't give up. For the last two days more than two hundred grenades have fallen on us. And then say: "Happy New Year", if you can.

2nd of January, 1993.

This is the third calendar year of my being in the battlefields. Yesterday morning, on the first of January, at seven o'clock, I operated one wounded soldier. The stomach. Everything remains the same. We are expecting the attack. The snow has fallen heavily. Maybe it is good, the tracks of the beasts could be seen on it.

7th of January, 1993.

Merry Christmas!⁷ I have neither time nor patience for writing. Tens of wounded and dead people in the last three or four days. Ten serious operations: Antelj Milivoje, born in 1960. Hadzichi, the injuries of the big blood vessels of the right leg. Zdravko Milorad born in 1964. Rakovica. Lemez Dragisha, born in 1957. Rajlovac. Both of them – the serious injuries of the stomach and the blood vessels of legs. Lazich Stanimir, born in 1966. Rakovica, the injury of the ribcage. Serafijan Novica, born in 1950. Rakovica, the injuries of the stomach. More than twenty four injuries of the small intestines. Stolica Pavle, born in 1958. Rakovica, stomach injury. Adzich Dushan, born in 1923. Vagoscha, stomach injury. Bjelosh Dushan, born in 1931. Ilijash, ribcage injury. Petrovich Radovan from Hadzichi, stomach injury. Lazich Mile, born in 1949. Rajlovac, stomach injury.

The enemy succeeded in breaking through our front line in some spots, but for the short time only. Our Army returned the attack today. They returned the trenches in Vela by this counter attack. Forty of their dead bodies in the snow. They were mostly dzihad warriors from all over the world.

⁷ the Orthodox Christmas is on the 7th of January

16th of January, 1993.

There is a lot of work to do these days. I don't write. I begin this day with a single word – sniper. I was only one centimeter away from the certain death. I would have almost got shot in my temple if there wasn't for that one centimeter. I was saved by the frame of the right door of the Golf, on the road Ilidza-Vogoscha-Pale. The bullet couldn't get through the double sheet metal. Since my head had been leaned on that place I was only in a contusion. If the bullet went only one centimeter lower I would have lost a half of my skull.

We have lain in mood for three hours under the rain of bullets from several snipers. Cars are in front of us and behind us. We don't move. They fire at us mercilessly. The tires of our cars are flat. The window glasses crack. One bullet goes through my pocket in which I have a woolen cap. It makes two holes in it. Burning bullets. And then, running across the fifty – sixty metres. Not a pleasant experience. I keep the bullet aimed at me.

18th of January, 1993.

Did God send for me? I am operating at eight o'clock in the morning and suddenly, several grenades fall on us. I think we are hit. But everything is O.K. There are no wounded. God saves his Serbians.

Five wounded children from Ilijash. I operate two of them. One of them looks like my son. Sad. Little children hit by grenades. A boy from Ilijash, Krsmanovich Velibor, 1980. like my son, looks like him: the stomach, the jaw, the hands.

The other one: Malinovich Radoslav, 1978. from Hadzichi, the explosive wounds of the face and the stomach. I operate both of them. It is so sad that little children are wounded by grenades. This day is worse for me than all the rest together. I think about my Nina and Pedja. These are someone's Pedja and Nina. I have to save them!

One has bled a lot. It is eleven a.m. The Intensive Care. I caress the small blond hair. Children vomit. They are alive. Everything will be all right. Little Tanja, seven years old, lays beside them and cry. Little Vele, clever as the child can be, console her: "Don't cry Tanja, it will pass. That's the way it should be." Tanja cries: "My sweet doctor!" They are prematurely grown up!

24th of January, 1993.

Five o'clock in the afternoon. I put my three children in the truck called "a hundred and ten". I pack them like sardines. Tanja, Vele, Radoslav. Tanja kisses me and caresses my hair: "My sweet doctor, don't leave me!" Vele is silent, he just gives me a wink. They are in the stretchers, tied up, so that they can't fall down, because the road isn't exactly the road – it is a field and a stream. Tied bags with drains and sondas hang at the side. They leave under the shield of darkness, the only protection from snipers and grenades on the road to Pale and safety. I have to send them there.

Our capacities are full. Major battles are expected in this part and the road will probably be blockaded for a long time and these children need proper care in some of the children's Surgical Clinics.

28th of January, 1993.

Raging battles have been fought since yesterday. Zuch, Sokolje, Rajlovac... Our eight soldiers are dead. Six serious operations. Mijatovich Momchilo, born in 1968. Rajlovac. A serious wound of the pelvis and the interior organs, major bleeding, an extremely difficult operation. He died half an hour after the operation. Draskovich Goran, born in 1966. Rajlovac, the injury of the ribcage. Durich Niko, born in 1938. Ilijash, a serious stomach injury.

The road to Pale, our only exit, has been closed!

29th of January, 1993.

The road has been returned, with losses, but we liberated it and rejected the enemy. We are connected with the world again.

30th of January, 1993.

Adzichi, the part of Iidza that was held by the Muslims. We liberate it by the strong counterattack. One soldier is dead, many are wounded. One serious operation of the ribcage. Beribaka Miro, born in 1964. from Iidza; the ribcage is torn apart by the dum dum bullet, the lungs are ripped off, they are outside the ribcage. I save him. The operation lasts for two hours, extremely difficult, but he is alive. If he got here fifteen minutes later he would have been dead.

But I lost my two good friends, and one has been wounded. Journalists. The most courageous of all. They went together with our soldiers and shot the battle. It is insanely brave to go to a battle and write the history with camera and words while it is happening. Grenades killed them. My dear friends, a journalist of Radio Iidza, Milosh Vulovich and the cameraman, the colleague from Novi Sad, Zika. We all called him like that. God save their souls! We all feel sad about them. Three little children lost their fathers. My friend, a journalist from TV Novi Sad is seriously wounded. I operated him at once. His life is not in danger. I transfer him to Pale, and from there to the Medical Military Academy.

3rd of February, 1993.

Going back to Serbia, to Nish. Visiting children, family. After five months. Night, driving with no lights. They fire at us in the same place they did some time ago, they heard us pushing the car stuck in the mud. They only hit the back rampart and the tin. The bullet hole.

Serbia, the bridge in Zvornik, after five months. I am return to Iidza in two weeks. I can't leave my friends and my people! I can't leave the Serbian Republic!

22nd of March, 1993.

Ilidza. The spring began with grenades and howitzers. A howitzer still barries the Serbians, levels the Serbian land and frightens. Ilidza has been intensely granaded for three of four days. There are killed people. The horror of the war is an everyday situation here. I returned to Ilidza a month ago. I have been in Nish for fifteen days.

I am writing for the first time today. Fierce battles were fought here seven days ago. The battle for Ilidza, Rajlovac, Hadzichi, Ilijash, Vogoscha, Sokolje is still being fought. The special units from Doboje, Bilece, Trebinje, Bijeljina are here to help us. Big battles, the ground is burning. We watch it through the windows of the hospital. We see explosions, smoke and hear strong detonations.

Sokolje, the strongpoint of the Muslims, is the place from where we are fired at every day. The rat people who wait for our every infantry attack are there. Dug in deep under the ground, in trenches, they walk under the houses, surviving the artillery and then coming out to the ground like rats.

Big battles again, around eleven a.m. Wounded soldiers are being brought to the hospital. They couldn't manage to reach the first Muslim trenches. One of the wounded has the surname Bratic. I think he is from Trebinje. The father of four daughters. A part of our tank's crew is coming, all of them wounded. One young man lost a half of his stomach wall. Maliutka went through the transporter and burnt down the part of his stomach. His name is Domazet Nemanja, from Ilidza. I operate him. Everything is all right. At the same time we are fighting back in the area of Stupsko hill. This is for us the gate to Sarajevo and for them the only exit and the break-through the blockade. The brave men from Ilidza are fighting and progressing slowly, house by house, towards the well-known Hladnjacha the place from where sniper is firing at the streets of Ilidza bringing death to the citizens. It is said that they are firing a new kind of weapon from Igman. Strong detonations. Grenades that are falling from Igman are falling down on the asphalt. Not on the ground, but on the asphalt. They bring death to the civilians. Five dead civilians. Major destructions. These are the vehement fights.

Drago Milanovich is being brought, born in 1963. From Ilijash. A serious explosive wound, a shock, the injuries of the diaphragm, lungs, spleen, kidneys, big blood vessels. An urgent operation, we are fighting for his life. He dies fifteen minutes after the operation. Kljajich Dragan, born in 1943. from Rajlova, a stomach injury, having been operated, well. Ilikich Zeljko, born in 1965. severe stomach wounds, the wounds of spleen, kidneys, pancreas, large intestine, gaster. Is he going to stay alive? A difficult operation. He survives. He is transported to Belgrade. Damjanovich Sretko, born in 1934. from Rajlovac, a serious injury of the ribcage, liver, lungs. Popovich Bogdan, born in 1933. the injury of the ribcage. Kopich Slobodan, born in 1956. the injury of the ribcage.

Kandich Vukosav, born in 1938. from Airport colony, the injury of the stomach and the large intestine. Kljajich Branislav, 1967. Ilidza, a serious injury of the stomach and the liver. Ronchevich Radivoje, 1970, Hadzichi, the injury of the ribcage. Mijatovich Ana, 1949. Ilijash, the injury of the stomach and the large intestine. Surtov Dragoje, 1947. Airport colony, a serious injury of the stomach, had three operations in five days. It was the battle for his life, both ours and his. He survived it. It's a miracle, he is alive!

Because of the great number of the injured patients and our poor capacities, with the help of the French Battalion, the patients are being transported on their ambulance to Pale. Then they go further to Belgrade, to the Medical Military Academy, the Urgent Center and other hospitals. Just before leaving the hospital, in the Intensive Care, a patient was carried from the bed to the stretchers. In the presence of the French doctor, two officers and two or three soldiers I had to do the urgent thoracocentesis, with trocar drainage. A special trocar, a peak is used for piercing the ribcage and the drain is put so that the blood from the ribcage could be taken out to make the normal breathing possible. This is extremely painful and horrible to look at. Normally, I had to do it without any anesthesia. Not a word or a move of pain, and it hurts like hell. When the French asked the patient if he had felt pain, he showed them his thumb and said OK. A real Serbian fighter, a hero!

The Foreign Legion with the sign UN, which is at the moment in this part of the battlefield of Sarajevo, helps us immensely. Using the airport and with their transporters they transport our wounded patients. The time of travelling to Pale is shortened this way from four hours to less than an hour. The road to Pale, to the helicopter, to the salvation. Belgrade, the Medical Military Academy, the Urgent Center, other hospitals. Without the French we wouldn't be able to cross the runway, because the Muslims control this part with snipers, mortars. They are on both sides of the runway, in some two – three hundred metres so that our ambulance cannot get through. The French help us whenever we call them. Friendship with no obligations, for the time being.

I met Branko, the legionnaire. He was born in Tivat and lived there for fourteen years. He is thirty now. When he was seventeen he joined the Legion and has never been home and in his hometown since then. He hasn't seen his sister ever since and he saw his mother in Italy last year and didn't recognize her. He speaks some strange Montenegrin accent, but his French is perfect. He helps us as much as he can. Sometimes he brings some food and medicine. Blood is thicker than water.

There are many people, stories, recollections... It is a war time. Images are changing so fast that what is not written down is soon forgotten. What was horrible, tragic, fades away very quickly when the new tragedy comes, the new destruction, death, which happens every day.

Wounded soldiers come again. The member of the Special unit from Dobož Dragan Djukich – a splinter got through his ribcage, the perforated lung is bleeding. The splinter went through the ribcage and pierced the arm. The urgent drainage of the ribcage. We take out the blood – almost two litres. The breathing is stabilized. The young man is saved. I am looking at him thinking about our similar destinies. He came from Dobož to help the Serbian people in Serbian Sarajevo, to restrain the Muslim fundamentalism, the jihad warriors. I came from Niš to heal the wounded soldiers.

24th of March, 1993.

Several wounded patients come to the hospital every day. It becomes a common thing. Ilidža has been still mercilessly bombed.

It is noon.

25th of March, 1993.

The truce or the agreed break of fire. At twelve thirty four boys are brought. They are wounded with a grenade. One of them got serious wounds, the other three are in better condition. They come from Hadžichi. The enemy obeyed the agreement for only half an hour and sent a grenade. One of the boys has become an invalid, the others got less serious wounds.

Three o'clock, p.m. Belgrade television reports: "The truce is being obeyed." The reporter from Sarajevo, Pale also says: "The truce is being obeyed. There hasn't been any fired bullet in the battlefield of Sarajevo."

And what about the mother who is crying beside her son with the smashed hand?! What is that?! Is that one bullet? This bullet is so big that it makes the truce invisible. One mother is crying, one boy has become an invalid, while everybody is saying: "The truce is being obeyed. There hasn't been any fired bullet."

28th of March, 1993.

A severe attack at the Airport colony. They succeed in breaking through a part of our line. We have wounded soldiers. No one is in life danger. I am writing this for a certain interesting event. Also, for making the vehemence and the exceptional nature of this war more understandable. The Muslims broke through our line by taking up one of the ten entrances of one building. And they didn't get the whole of it, but only a half – a door and a part of the entrance from the back yard. We have the other part of the street. A big battle for one entrance. Bazookas, bombs, machine guns. This is not anymore a war of one part of the country against the other, a town against a town, a house against a house, a street against a street, this has become a war of "one half of the entrance against the other half of the entrance. "

Our forces have succeeded in returning the previous positions, by a vehement counter attack, and in taking over all the ten entrances and a part of the street.

The enemy withdrew the troops to the next building, five – six metres away. The front has been established again. The separation line, too. We are in the safe distance of five to seven metres. That is the distance of the separation line in many parts of the battlefield of Ilijaz. About fifteen dead bodies of the jihad-warriors were left behind near the entrance.

Captain Lemon visited me today. He is the Captain of one of the units of the Foreign League. He is a true friend. He helps us, socialize with us. We have heard that the Muslims call him “Chetnik”. People like him give us hope that the whole world isn’t against us, that the truth will eventually come up. He is an honest, rational man, a true soldier with exceptional character. He comes in and helps as much as he can. He probably feels on whose side the truth and the justice are. One day he brings oranges, the other day, some medicine. He gave his blood once.

Yesterday, the snow was falling for forty eight hours non-stop. It is the end of March and so much snow? I have never seen such snow before. Our soldiers in trenches are having the hardest time. The transport is impossible, the moving is hindered and limited.

31st of March, 1993.

A wounded soldier from Dobrinja. He is shot by a sniper. The small intestines are torn apart in many places, the large intestines and the liver, too. He bled a lot but he is still alive. We are fighting for his life. Two hours after the operation he is feeling well, talking, stabilized. There are our victories. At four p.m. from the same place in Dobrinja – another fire of the same sniperist. This time it was a shot right through the heart. The soldier was brought dead.

Early this morning I operated a girl of four. A serious appendix inflammation. She was late, a perforation, the acute abdomen. I wash and clean the stomach, she will be all right. Such things happen, too. A child feels pain in the stomach for two or three days but there is no car to take her to the hospital. She lives in the hills, towards Ilijash. It is hard to reach even this hospital which is literally on the front line. And what are the chances of going to a regular hospital in Belgrade? Few people would survive it. Yesterday, a little Tanja from Podlugovi, came to see me. It was after her serious operation, the ileostome, the small intestine was taken out through the stomach. She was in Belgrade, in the Center for a mother and a child. She returns healthy, in a better condition, having put some weight on. I am kissing her and she is hugging me as if I were her father. I give her some juice, a jar of apricot compote. I got it from the French Battalion. I see happiness and love in her eyes. The saddest eyes in the world are laughing now.

She tells me that she made three drawings on the eighth of March in Belgrade and that the doctor gave her compliments. He took the drawings for the exhibition in the hall of the hospital. I ask her what was on them and she says: “I first wrote a card for my mom with her picture on it. Then I made three drawings.

The first one was the drawing of a big helicopter.” That was the helicopter that took her from Pale to Belgrade. She was alone in it. The most lonesome child in the world. She hoped to come back by the same helicopter. And this was what she probably wanted the most. The second one was the drawing of a house on fire and the third one was the drawing of the children playing in fields.

Here is something for you psychologists and psychiatrists. Here’s an interesting theme for you. You can see how these children live. The question is: are they still children? I only wonder where you are now. You should have been here helping them.

The official truce lasted for three – four days but it was continually interrupted. Nobody believed in it. We know that the Muslims are gathering on Igman.

5th of April, 1993.

Four o’clock p.m. Another child. Dragan Lazarevich, nine years old, from Podlugovi. Hit by a bullet in the stomach while he was playing in front of his house. He had to play behind the house for he could enter his house only through the window. He forgot about it and went out through the door. He was saved behind the walls while on the other side he was a target for the enemy’s sniper. It is the cruelty of this war. The stomach is torn apart as well as the small intestines, the large intestines, the kidney. A long and a complicated operation. He is a very bright boy. He is laying on the table waiting for us to put him to sleep and start the operation. He is looking at the aspirator asking: “What is this for?” I operated him. The Intensive Care. He wakes up calling: “Doctor!” I ask him how he is. He wants to drink water. I tell him:”No, Dragan, you can’t have water. When your stomach is operated you can’t drink water. Have you read those stories about the boys partisans Mirko and Slavko? You know when they say - hit in the stomach, cannot drink water.”

He is looking at me and saying calmly: “What kind of a man are you when you don’t give even water? If you came to me in Ilijash, I would give you everything.” I don’t say anything, feeling sad.

This war hasn’t got mercy even for children. They suffer all the time. But “fools”suffer, too. Three men got drunk and threw bombs hurting themselves. The paradox of war.

A year of the rebellion of the Serbian people of Ilidza against the Muslim fundamentalism was marked yesterday. A baby was hit on that day. It was only three months old. It was hit in its cradle through the window. A lost bullet. It was also a fighter. The bullet got through the both legs without demaging the bones. The babies in their cradles are not safe in this war and in this territory.

My windows are blinded. I am thinking that when the peace comes I wouldn’t be able to get used to the twilight, to the electricity and not having to approach my window and put the blinds on.

18th of April, 1993.

The Muslims attacked and our forces gave them vehement counter attacks. Everything had been all right until two p.m. and then four wounded soldiers were brought. All of them had injuries in the pelvis. Our fighters checked the attack. The line isn't moved, because there is no other behind it. Behind that line is Hadzichi and Serbian villages, and their families and it has to be protected with one's life!

19th of April, 1993.

Four kids have been hit by a grenade in Otes. One of them is dead. Little Sinisha Milivojevic, born in 1982. What a repulsive war this is, when our children are wounded and killed, when the children are the targets for the grown ups' bullets! What a repulsive war this is!

26th of May, 1993.

I will never forget the day and night of the twenty sixth of May. I always wrote immediately after the events, I couldn't do it now. This is the day of death. The time of truce. The television and the radio are silent. Our forces are attacked early in the morning, bright and sunny, from Igman. Vehement fighting hand to hand. And then our counter attack to the hill Stupnik, an important spot above Hadzichi. We reached our goal, the hill Stupnik for twelve minutes. A quick and easy victory, but with losses. Our fighters were too happy for having beaten the stronger enemy that they behaved too carelessly. A few of our prisoners who dugged trenches for the Muslims were liberated. An extreme success. And then, a moment of inattention. The Muslims break into our connections. Motorolas are giving misinformation. Balijas are getting backup and help. Dead and wounded soldiers. An operation succeeds another one, immediately. I operate three soldiers. All of them are young men of twenty to twenty two years of age. For the first time the patients die after the operations. Serious wounds of pelvis and blood vessels. They have already lost much blood. Parents and sisters are outside waiting and crying. They are hoping. I tell them that there is no hope. The patients die. Crying and weeping. The day of death, defeat, sorrow. God forbid it should happen again!

There has been no truce since that day. There are wounded and dead people day after day. We know that there are great losses on their side, too, but for me as a surgeon, a Serbian, a patriot this is of no importance. I can only see our dead boys, our crippled soldiers, our suffered civilians. I see the horror of this war.

31st of May, 1993.

It happens to be my birthday today. A bloody and crazy day. Grenades have been falling since the early morning. Ilidza, Rajlovac, Hadzichi, pitched battles. The television of so called Bosnia and Hertzegovina give reports on this and shows the bloody pictures.

Two dead children in Ilidza. The Belgrade TV Journal announces about this being one of the the bloodiest days in the battlefield of Sarajevo.

The same day a boy from Ilijash was brought. "Meat paste". His leg is smashed above the knee. He went swimming to his river where he knew every stone and didn't know about the "Meat paste" – an inhuman weapon which can cut off a leg in a moment.

A brave chief of MUP, Brana Mijatovich, from Hadzichi, is brought. He was wounded on Igman, in the pitched battle against the Muslims. He was crawling almost a mile until he found our soldiers. He is alive. We operate him and dress his wounds. Four bullets are in his body. He can't wait to return to the battlefield. These are the real sons of the Serbian people, Obiliches, Lazars !⁸

Many impressions, many known and unknown heroes. It is a miracle one can take it anymore. Then I realize that I gather my strength from these heroes and ordinary people. That is why I have so much strength. I didn't believe I could survive it. I am inspired by their greatness and courage.

5th of June, 1993.

Two women from the Airport colony are hit by a sniper. The first one is hit in the head. She comes to the hospital without a half of her skull. The other one is hit right into the heart. The third fighter, Mika Michevich, who was trying to save them, is hit in the ribcage and lost a lot of blood. A serious wound. The muscles and the ribs are torn into pieces, a huge hole. The operation room is occupied. We can't operate him with the total anesthesia, he will die. I operate the ribcage in the length of some twenty centimetres, using the local anesthesia. I drain him. He is silent. When I finish I ask him: "Are you alive?", and he rises his three fingers as an answer. He can't speak, but he nevertheless puts his three fingers up in the air. He is alive.

The snipers of the special group "Lasta" are doing this, it is well known. When they "do" this there are dead men, women, children, soldiers.

7th of June, 1993.

It is a fine night, surprisingly calm. Some explosion or a sound of a machine gun is being heard somewhere around. Nothing new. However, there is some tension in the air. It seems that something big is bound to happen. Maybe the end of this war is near. There's been a rumour that something is going to change, that we will eventually show the Muslims who we really are, because this battlefield of Sarajevo is by the opinion of military experts one of the major battlefields in the former Bosnia and Herzegovina. My opinion and the opinion of many respected people, whose job is to think about this, is that this is the most important place for solving the war.

⁸ Serbian tzar Lazar led the way of the Serbian Army in the battle of Kosovo

10th of June, 1993.

Two operations at the same time, in both operation rooms. The only two rooms we have. A man from Ilijash, 1936. is downstairs. Todorovich is his family name - the artery and the vein, the main thigh vein has been cut as well as the throat vein. A young man Marko Duganchich, twenty years old, from Lepenica, Kiseljak, Hertzeg Bosnia, is upstairs. He is the son of one of the officials of HVO⁹. The left thigh artery and the vein are torn apart, as well as the stomach, the large intestine, the bladder, the urinary canals. Horrible injuries. He lost much blood.

Our man, a Serb from Ilijash, didn't survive. He died on the operation table in the first minutes because the bleeding was so hard that the heart stopped and we couldn't recover him.

The young man from Hertzeg Bosnia was saved. He was being operated at the same time as the Serbian. He stayed alive only because of our care, skill and above all, our speed. That's the way the Serbian surgeons, doctors, humanists fight. They fight for every life, no matter whose it is. That Marko Duganchich has to remember that he stayed alive because of the great help of Serbian doctors and Serbian nurses. That is the ethics. It is a miracle that the Croatian young man stayed alive. A miracle even for medicine. Considering the condition he was in, how much blood he lost and what had to be done for a short time I call this a miracle.

12th of June, 1993.

Saturday. Suddenly as it usually happens fierce battles start. The wounded patients start to arrive. The Muslims went to a break through from the city to Rajlovac, Vogoscha. They attack Vogoscha mercilessly. More than four hundred grenades fell in this day. Sixty hours with no sleep. Two and a half days in the operation room. Between the operations – some water, juice, tea, some opened can, and again work, work, work...

Then I fell asleep like dead for only three – four hours and again back to work. No one will ever believe this: during the operation while operating a small intestine I fell asleep. I wake up suddenly and ask my assistant, a surgeon Mira Boskovich: " Hey, Mira, have I finished the second part or just the first?"

She looks at me with astonishment. I realize that I was sleeping. Working and sleeping at the same time. Even surgeons can't believe such a thing – doing a serious operation while sleeping. That's tiredness.

The Muslims have broken through some of our lines. We succeeded in holding them back. All our forces have been put into the battle. Our soldiers come to the hospital.

⁹ an abbreviation for The Croatian Council of Defense

There are battles some three or four kilometres away from us. There are wounded men from Krajina, from Grahovo, who have come here to help the Serbian people. Good and brave guys. I operate three of them. All of them are good. One is called Marko. His nickname is Vojvoda. He is from Kupres, an experienced soldier, a great man with a heart of steel. He takes out five amblems with the sign of a lily. War trophies. He says: "I haven't completed my task, and I am wounded." The task is to have ten amblems. When he gets well (his ribcage was pierced with a bullet) he will go back to finish his job. He is from Mokri Lug, a village between Livno and Grahovo. He has come here to help his people.

There are seriously wounded patients. They have been wounded by various weapons, having probably not been mentioned in any literature. One young man from the Special unit from Ilidza has been wounded in his lumbal part of the back. The wound is some thirty centimetres long, a huge damage. The muscles are torn apart. I take out the splinters, one of them being a lock for hangars made of steel. This is what the Muslims' granades are - filled with locks, tin pieces, screws, bolts. A lock of some seven centimetres is in the back of this young man. Tromblones are filled with everything. A guy from the Unit of the duke Vaske has been wounded by a piece of steel with the size of five times three times two centimetres, in the lower part of the ribcage. The right half of the liver is destroyed. The colon doesn't exist anymore, and there is only a half of the small intestines. Fighting for his life – three and a half hours. I finish the operation, everything has been done, but the young man has no reaction; his heart is pumping, he is a young, strong man. After four hours of struggling he dies in the Intensive Care. His brain was without blood for a long time, so he practically lost his brain, he just vegetated. The young man is dead. His commander Vaske is sitting with me talking of how severe our battles are. He puts PAT on his truck and goes zig-zag through our line firing at Muslims. They search for him all day with their snipers, granades and mortars but they can't do anything for he is a moving target.

In all that chaos the Croatians come, the Croatian Council of Defense. They haven't got a hospital. They come from the whole central Bosnia, Fojnica, Vareš, Kakanj, Kraljeva Sutjeska, Kiseljak, Lepenica, Busovacha and many other places where major battles between the HVO and the Muslim fundamentalists are being fought. Croatians have many dead and wounded people but they haven't got a hospital. They have one so-called hospital which looks more like a warehouse for dead people. It is placed in Nova Bila, in some monastery. They haven't got the electricity, the transfusion, the surgeon. People die there. All the patients are being brought to our hospital "Zica" for their next hospital is in Mostar and Mostar is on fire. There is one in Split, too. We save their lives and they go from here to Split.

A young mother, twenty one year old, Antonija Jurich, Kraljevska Sutjeska. She tells me that she witnessed the murders of her husband, two his brothers, her parents, and the mother of her husband was looking the death of her three sons.

With the child in her arms she tried to run away. She was hit by Muslims' bullets in her legs, though. She fell. Her child remained there. She was dragged into the house which was on fire. With her wounded legs she managed to escape through the back window. She wasn't burnt alive. All this happened on the twelfth of June, 1993. in the village Kovachi, near Kraljeva Sutjeska. Seriously wounded she got to Vares. She was brought here on the sixteenth of June, 1993. After four days. She spent four days with the pierced right thigh, the smashed bone and the inflamed wound. She doesn't know anything about the child. It is only two years old. She prays that her child and her mother-in-law are alive. I talk to her. There is fear in her eyes. A woman – child. The eyes of a dove, panic, fear. She recovers, however. After a month we manage to send her and several Croatian fighters on a plane to Split, for a further recovery. They were crying and saying: "You are friends." One of them told me: "Doctor Laza, wherever we meet in future we will drink until we fall down under a table." Antonija was gone. I found out from some friends that her child was alive and her mother-in-law, too.

Many Croatians have been saved. A Serbian is a man with the soul, not a beast. There goes a story about our young nurse, our girl from Nedjarichi, seventeen years old, Ljilja Radovanovich. A brave girl, she was in the ambulance in Nedjarichi from the beginning of the war. She saves the wounded and heals their wounds in the first line. She was hit by a grenade while she was helping a young soldier. She was hit in the leg, her main thigh vein having been smashed. She was urgently taken to our hospital. She lost a lot of blood. I operate her. I put the veins together. Her sister works here, as a nurse. Ljilja is fine, her leg is saved, she walks. A beautiful girl.

26th of June, 1993.

Days of insanity. Days and nights with operations. Croatian soldiers and their patients come. Our fighters come, too. We work non-stop. We work for two states, for two armies. The hospital is small, there are few of us. We work as if there were ten times more of us.

Yesterday was one of these crazy days. Our soldier from the Special unit of Karishika is brought. A stomach injury, his liver is torn apart. After him comes another one, with the stomach injury also. We operate, save lives as many times, a hundred times before. We save people from death. We win. That victory and the strength of our soldiers make us strong.

Right after them a Croatian soldier comes. Half of the ribcage is wounded. We act immediately and save him.

A pregnant woman comes at ten p.m. The delivery began. The gynecologist comes and operates her. We have a gynecologist and a pediatrician, too. We have everything, we do everything. Women have childbirths during the most pitched battles and children have appendix inflammation. Everything had to be done.

28th of June, 1993.

The unforgettable Friday. I went to the operating room at half past nine p.m. and worked non-stop until one p.m. the next day. The operation after the operation, serious stomach injuries, pierced wounds of stomachs, serious wounds of the intestines, major bleeding. Pavlovich from Kiseljak, a serious wound probably with a bomb. His nephew Vlatko Pavlovich has also a serious stomach injury. Milutin Stanishich, Ilijash, the ulcer, an operation. Jure Mijich, Kraljevska Sutjeska, a serious wound of the left upper arm. The operation after the operation. Eight operations, one by one. Every surgeon reading this will realize how hard it is, especially with such injuries, in such conditions and without going out of the operation room for months.

3rd of July, 1993.

It is four twenty in the morning. I don't know if it is the beginning of the day, its middle or its end.

I have had a bath. I washed away the most disgusting mixture with the most repulsive smell, the mixture of blood and fecals. My uniform, my slippers were soaked with that mixture, the smell of which when it is absorbed once comes out very slowly.

I started to operate at nine p.m. and went out at four in the morning. A woman, Kata, from Fojnica, a grenade, sixty five years old. The stomach is blown out, the small intestines damaged in many places, the large intestine, the liver. After that a child comes from Fojnica. The injury of the head. A young man from Fojnica is brought, eighteen years old, Florijan Berich, a Croatian, a member of the HVO literally torn apart by a sniper. The ways of a bullet could be really strange. It went through the lungs, diaphragm, spleen, large and small intestines, all to the left side. He is operated. Fifteen minutes ago he was dead, now he is alive, and will live. Around three thirty he was brought almost dead but now he is alive.

Tenks are passing by. The morning is near. The barking of the dogs is heard outside. And bursts of fire, again. It is said that this day is "the day", that today we are going to defeat the enemy on Igman, the same enemy that fires granates on us every day and makes our civilians suffer. Our forces will depart both from here and from Igman. Our soldiers from Ilidza and Hadzichi will go, too. We hear that General Mladich has departed from Treskavica, Bjelasnica.

We expect the wounded patients. I haven't slept yet. I have no other choice, I have to work as long as I can, but I don't know how long this will be. I have been in the operation room doing the bloody work for this whole bloody day.

Mladen Popovich, born in 1966. is brought. He has a serious wound of the ribcage, a major bleeding, then he gets a quick drainage, the bleeding being stopped. He is well.

Marko Samardzich, sixty five years old, from Semizovac, has also a wound of the ribcage, and gets the same treatment.

Djordje Marcheta, forty six years old, from Nedjarichi. A serious wound of the stomach with a part of the grenade, the wounds of the small and large intestines. The operation lasts for a long time, the patient is well, alive.

Stevan Gavrich, born in 1948. has a serious wound of the ribcage, bleeding, drainage, the bleeding being stopped. The patient is well. All this happened in one day.

A boy, Miroslav Miljanich, seventeen years old, from Ilidza. By chance born in Nish. He is brought to the hospital with his lungs totally torn apart and with bleeding from his artery. The nurse was calm enough to press the artery with her finger. Such injury causes death for fifteen seconds. With his artery pressed in this way he arrived to hospital. Fortunately my colleague Popovich and I were at that time in the first – aid station. He pressed the artery with his finger and I caught it with the clamp stopping the bleeding that way. The boy was clinically dead at that time. We brought him back to life by a heart massage and the artificial breathing. The blood was running out of the lungs. I closed the hole quickly and drained the ribcage to take out the blood and widen the lung in that way so that the bleeding can be stopped. Unfortunately both operation rooms were occupied at that time. We carry him immediately to the Intensive care, reanimate him, he gets blood. One operation room becomes free after a half an hour. As we are preparing to take him down to the operation room cardiac-arrest happens again, the heart stops. We massage his heart again and it starts pumping again. We take him to the operation room immediately. I open the ribcage. The left lung, its lower part is completely torn apart. I connect the blood vessels by the clamp and cut off the part of the lung. It is a very serious operation. My colleague Perich comes and finishes the upper part of the artery by connecting its ends in the area of the left shoulder. During the operation the heart stops once again. I massage the heart inside the body. It starts pumping again. At first it beats slowly, it vibrates and then it becomes more and more strong. It gets the precious blood. More than eight litres of it. It becomes strong. We see it beating in the regular rhythm. The operation is finished after three and a half hours. The boy is alive. The boy from Ilidza, born in Nish. He survived. He has been lucky. By the way he was injured by the forbidden dum-dum bullet. Only half an hour after the operation the boy looks around himself in the Intensive Care as if nothing had happened.

What is life?! That is our victories. I always say – victories over death. One young life, seventeen years old, is saved.

However, people are dying.

Kovach, from Ilidza, hit by a bullet in the stomach only half an hour earlier. He has no pulse, his eyes' pupils are wide and his heart has stopped. Beside all my efforts, beside the intubation, he stays dead. I hear crying behind my back. His cousin, a nurse who works here, is crying for her cousin.

Speaking about nurses and the rest of the staff I must say that they work with all their heart, like supermen. A great worry and fear are seen in their eyes. When the ambulance alarm announcing the new wounded patients is heard the fear comes to their eyes. The fear for their fathers, brothers, sons, daughters, husbands, sisters, children. They all take part in the pitched battles. It often happens that the nurse who is at the reception or the one who is in the Intensive Care admits someone of her relatives.

We received this morning an Order on the state of war and on the working hours. What does it mean? It means working non-stop. Well, we have worked like that from the first day of this war. We work all the time, without having a rest. This hospital is a drugstore. This order doesn't apply to this hospital. We have obeyed it since the first day and we will abolish it the moment this war stops.

When I talked about the operations I mentioned a child from Fojnica. I don't remember its name. It was four years old. That was the time of the granading of Fojnica, of the part where the Croats lived. It was seriously injured. It was operated last night. It died this morning. A little Croat. The tears in the eyes of the Serbian nurses. This is a journal, these are the pages extracted from the real life.

Many brave soldiers came to this hospital, many wounded people, many miraculous turnovers of destiny. All of them couldn't find their place in this book because the things were happening with great speed. I regret for not having noted the names of all these people, all the destinies, for not having mentioned all these brave boys.

To do this I will have to go back for one month, on the thirteenth of June, 1993. Name - Zdravko Crnogorac, 1979. Rajlovac. I have been called from the Ambulance. A young, beautiful man all pale in the face lies on the bed ... having lost a lot of blood. He is brought two or three hours after the injury. A serious wound of the right shoulder, of the right armpit. I can't stop the bleeding. He slowly dies. We go to the operation room at once. I try to stop the bleeding in the armpit. It can't be done for this part was severely damaged. I can see that there isn't much time, some ten or fifteen minutes. If I continue trying to stop the bleeding the boy will probably die. And what is the other solution? To cut off the whole arm?! How can I do that when I see that the fingers are unhurt. A puddle of blood is making under the operation table. The anesthesiologist is telling me: "Laza, do something, I am losing him!" I am looking at him not being able to change my mind. I know that his life is on stake, but how can I cut his arm off? The anesthesiologist says again: "Laza, I am losing him for sure now!" In one moment I say: "Scalpel"; in one second, in a couple of seconds a young, beautiful boy loses his arm. I finish the operation automatically. I can't bear to look at the boy without his right arm. I ask the anesthesiologist in an almost indifferent voice: "How is he?" I am sorry for the arm almost as much as for life. He says: "He'll pull through. He is fine." It was a wound caused by a dum dum bullet in Rajlovac. He is well, he is alive although he has lost his arm.

Why am I writing this now? Two days ago a young man came by to see me. "How are you doctor? Here is a bottle of drink for you." I couldn't remember who he was. When he took off his jacket, I saw that he didn't have the right arm. I remembered then. "Doctor, it's cool. I am a happy man, because I am alive!" At that moment I realized that I had done a right thing. I didn't cut off his hand for a hair's breadth. I could have fought for it and today this boy wouldn't be alive. His parents, his friends must be happy now. Many people died of less serious wounds and went away, far away from here, probably to heaven.

5th of July, 1993.

It is 7.30. p.m. Gunfires are heard from the direction of Sarajevo, Kiseljak, Igman. We are granaded from Igman and Sokkolje. How long will it last? I hope not too long.

16th of July, 1993.

Our great Serbian battle has finally got on well. The battle for Igman. The Serbian Army set off with General Mladich leading its way. It is going to pull down the walls above the Serbian heads, which destroy several lives every day. We liberate Trnovo connecting this way with Serbian Hertzegovina. The Serbian Army, fearless and unrestrainable is heading towards the mountains Bjelasnica and Igman. The Muslims are running away in front of us. The Earth is thundering. A panic in Sarajevo. They are escaping from Dobrinja, Butmir to the center. How many lives did Igman cost us? It was bent over us like a black wall bringing death and suffering, destroying and annihilation. It is swinging now. We tried many times to approach it from down there and we didn't succeed. Now we are approaching it from the other side, from the back, where from we weren't expected. Our aim is Igman, and then we'll see. I hope that Sarajevo would be come next. We listen to the news. Shiber, the Ustashas' general who is on the side of the Muslims being the head of their Staff, says that there are more powerful forces around Sarajevo, than there used to be around Berlin. Fear has magnifying eyes. The Serbians are here and the Russians were there. I have a feeling that this is the same thing. And I hope that the end would be the same for the Muslims as it was for the Germans, in the Second World War. They are again in the same war, on the same side. It seems that the destiny of one would become the destiny of the other.

I have worked day and night for these past ten days. I sleep whenever I can, at three, four o'clock in the morning, at noon, at six in the afternoon, at nine in the evening, whenever I have time. I never sleep longer than an hour. Some days I operate non-stop. We hold two fronts. Our, Serbian front and the front of HVO, the central Bosnia. An enormous battlefield, there are tens of wounded people.

Two days ago a bus was hit on the road from Pale to Ilidza. I operate a woman – her stomach is torn apart, the liver, the intestines; I am trying to mend it. A long and hard work. One life is saved. There probably won't be any bad effects. We are fighting for life every day.

The stress. Racing with time and the heart beats. And when the heart starts beating I take off my gloves. The joy of victory over death brings about the new energy.

There is a lot of sadness, tragedy but there is also much happiness and the feeling of victory and success. The constant life and death struggle. We are some kind of fighters on the side of life – the staff, the colleagues, the nurses. Fantastic, tireless, we all live as one. We brought back hundreds of soldiers to the line. We brought back sons and daughters to their mothers and parents to their children. Many tears and much pain was seen in our hospital, but there were more life and happiness. I gather my energy from such hell, from these people, these tragedies, this happiness.

We work with much more enthusiasm these days. Our forces are going to Igman. It is getting on well for them. They are beating the ones that used to bring death to these people here.

17th of July, 1993.

This story and this page is dedicated to the boy of seventeen years of age, called Pedja. That is the name of my son. My son is in Nish and this boy originates from Vrelo Bosne. In fact, he originated from there.

Pitched battles are fought for Igman the whole day. We hear thundering. A pitched battle. They are going to this “mountain of death” after twelve months. It cooked our goose, and there is firing on us from it again, on the hospital and around it.

About five in the afternoon, the fanatics, out of despair and impotence aim at the hospital. One grenade hits the yard of the neighbouring house. Mother and son. The son’s name is the same as that of my son. His father Zika is on Igman. He fights for his family and his home. His wife and his son saw him out this morning. They worry about him out there on Igman, where we can see and hear a pitched battle. They are in their house. A direct shot. A grenade fell between the two of them, on some two or three metres. The boy is clinically dead. We immediately intubate, reanimate and massage him. His mother, also seriously wounded, is crying and asking about her son. The heart is beating again, the boy is alive. He is taken to the operation room instantly. I operate him. The ribcage, the liver, the kidney, the intestines, the left hand, more than thirty wounds.

I finish the operation. Maybe it sounds a bit rough, but the operation is done technically well. The boy is taken to the Intensive Care, but he doesn’t wake up. One eye pupil is wider than the other. There is fear in my eyes. I have seen this many times before, and I know how it looks like when the brain is damaged, contused. Something is going on in his brain and I am afraid that he is never going to wake up.

My colleague Chalich operates the boy’s mother in the other operation room. This is also a serious operation. Several tenths of injuries. This is the picture: the boy and his mother are in the Intensive Care. Next to each other. The beds four and five.

The mother dies right after the operation. The boy wakes up. He starts breathing regularly for a moment, mumbles something and turns his head towards the bed where his mother was a couple of minutes ago. Something terrible! Unbelievable! A tear in his eyes and the only words he speaks clearly: "My dear mother!", and then he becomes numb again, his eye pupil widens, his pressure is barely measurable. We try everything. Hours of struggling for his life in the Intensive Care. Heart massage, intubation, artificial breathing, medicine – nothing can help. He dies. He dies slowly sinking. He died at four o'clock in the morning. Before that he turned his head once again to his mother's bed. That moment his heart stopped beating. This is not a story. This is the truth.

Six o'clock. This is the situation: father Zika comes back from Igman. He was told that his wife and his son are wounded.

"Doctor, how are they?" I take him to the nurses' room. I tell him: "Zika, sit down." He starts to panic. He asks: "What happened? What is going on?" "My friend I have to tell you that both your son and your wife passed away." A desperate cry, a scream, grief. His scream is heard much further from the damned Igman and the Serbians it had destroyed. The poor man is crying. We are speechless. Zika suddenly gets up, he wants to go, to burn his house down, to go crazy, to commit a suicide, and then he sits down and says: "I don't want to go anywhere. I want to be with them. Where are they?" Screams and panic.

He came as a tired warrior in the green camouflaged uniform with the white T-shirt with the red stripes on it and the red ribbon on his right epaulet. He came to surprise his family with the good news that our army had succeeded. He found no one. He became alone in one moment.

This day is similar to many other days in these two war years. A day of grief and sadness. For a moment, I say to myself: I can't do this anymore! But then, new wounded patients come, new victory, new happiness. I am back to the line, and there remains a scarf. The next one is always harder for my soul and my heart. Please, God, let this be finished and stop taking children's lives anymore! Spare them, at least!

18th of July, 1993.

Sunday. A quiet day. Fine and sunny. Muslim hordas on Igman are attacking again. Granades fall on us. How much longer will it last? How many more mothers will weep? Every house in the Serbian Sarajevo has the black flag on it. There is no breath for weeping. Mothers are the only ones who can still cry. The screams are not heard anymore. Hearts and souls cry in silence. The explosions and the gunfires are heard only.

22nd of July, 1993.

It's 11.45.p.m. These are the days of great battles of the Serbian brigades led by general Mladich. These are the battles for the main peaks and they are fought against "the

Turks." It happens on Igman, above our heads. Our warriors have much success. They make "the Turks" run from them.

Today a great battle for Zuch and Sokolje began. Detonations, major battles, a decisive battle for predominant peaks, for the hill which holds together the Serbian parts: Vogoscha, Rajlovac, Ilidza, the hill that controls the road to Pale and Serbia.

Thunders are all around. A great thunder of our cannons woke me up this morning. There were injured soldiers. Zeljko Grujich, a young man, 1969. has wounds of the ribcage and the stomach, a serious wounds of the liver and the lungs. I operate him. The operation lasts for two hours. It is extremely difficult. I succeed in saving him. I know that he will live.

Right after that a young dead man is brought. He was only twenty one. He was a military policeman and a soldier. He was somewhere on Igman. He was climbing down the mountain for a long time, about two hours. His friends were carrying him on their arms. They used a horse for a part of the road which is, by the way, the only means of transportation from the peaks of Igman.

Radojica Simanich, 1968. Vogoscha. A serious wound of the ribcage. The operation being successful. Zoran Jovanovich, 1979. Only fourteen years old, a boy. He was shot by a bullet fired from the Muslims' positions, in the center of Ilidza. Everything is so near that you never know. I drein his ribcage and he is all right.

Captain Randolph Lemmon, a good friend of mine and of all the Serbians from the Serbian Sarajevo, a French legionarie went away today. He went to Korzika. We were together for six months. He was a true friend of ours until the end. A French. A sad farewell. We watched the French legionarie with tears in our eyes, the soldier of the world, saying goodbye to the Serbian hospital and its staff. Kisses and waving. To our : "Do vidjenja"¹⁰ he replies in Serbian: "Akobogda!"¹¹ A dear friend is gone. A great friendship remained. Thank you for everything, for the support, for helping Serbian people. Your friends, the Serbs from Ilidza, wish you the best. May God be on your side!

What does tomorrow bring? God, please, spare the children! Don't let them suffer! I still remember the boy of fourteen who was shot in the ribcage while playing in the centre of Ilidza. Many children have been injured during this war and I am afraid of their coming to the hospital. They make special scars in our souls. We can hardly get over them.

I write but it becomes more and more hard for me to do it anymore. Does it mean that I am ruined by the horrors of this hell or I am just dead tired? I haven't got time for anything else except for blood and wounds.

23rd and 24th of July, 1993.

¹⁰ Serbian equivalent for the English: See you again!

¹¹ meaning: God willing!

It's five o'clock in the morning. Some may wonder why I am writing at this hour. Well, it's because I finished the last operation half an hour ago. We don't know for days, nights, hours. Is it five in the morning, three in the afternoon, ten in the morning, are you in the operation room, are you sleeping or writing? There is no regular time for working, sleeping, socializing. You have to steal some free time, even at five in the morning.

So, here I am, writing again. I couldn't write anything for the whole day yesterday.

Pitched battles are still being fought around us, for Zuch and Sokolje. Twelve hours detonations are ravaging on the Sarajevo basin. The wounded people are coming non –stop.

A boy from Milichi, serious wounds of the ribcage and the stomach. A boy from Vogoscha, the stomach. A young man from Ilijash, the ribcage and the stomach. All this in an hour. I operate one at a time, all of them are well. New wounded patients come. The battles for Zuch, for Golo Brdo on Igman. The important thing is that our soldiers have occupied the peak Golo Brdo and that they are making progress constantly. The enemy has got many dead soldiers and is running away in panic. The battles last for all night. Heavy detonations.

A wounded patient comes from Milichi. His lower part of the arm is pierced. Fifteen minutes later another young man comes from Srebrenica this time. A serious head damage. Its right side is paralised and he is only twenty one. The battle is going on, there are thunders everywhere. A brave soldier from the elite unit, Svetozar Kashikovich is brought from Ilijash. He is seriously wounded. I operate the stomach and the ribcage, extremely serious injuries, major damages of the stomach organs and the lungs. His mother and sister are here. They are beside him. They look at him with fear in their eyes when he gets out of the operation room. His sister is by his side day and night. At one o'clock a.m. I tell her to go and have some rest. His mother was disturbed so much that she had to be brought home to take some rest and calm herself down. I knew that I was going to work all night and that my room would be free so I wanted his sister who was sitting beside him for hours to go there and take some rest. I open the door of the room at five in the morning and see that she is not there. I see her sitting near The Intensive Care, watching her brother through the glass.

25th of July, 1993.

Sunday. What a day it was! The day of the official truce, from ten a.m. Detonations are thundering all around. Twelve operations in the general anesthesia one after another. At the same time, more than forty eight wounded go through the hospital without being operated, getting other kinds of medical treatment. The operations are complicated, you can't tell which one is more difficult.

On the 26th of July I worked until three o'clock in the morning. I could barely walk to my bed. I thought I would sleep for days but I knew that I would be lucky to sleep for a couple of hours. Twelve operations, one by one, without having any rest.

Anto Ramljak, 1963. Lepenica, serious wounds. Savo Simanich, 1939. Nedjarichi, a serious wound of the ribcage. Bozo Slishkovich, 1953. Kreshevo, the stomach injuries. Nenad Rajich, 1966. Kiseljak, a serious wound of the stomach. Nikola Bagarich, 1933. the stomach injuries. Anto Maksimovich, 1964. Dobroshevichi, a serious wound of the big blood vessel of the leg.

I “do” stomach, ribcage and vaskular surgeoury. Mladen Kablar, Pale, 1972. a stomach injury. Budimir Savich, Vogoshcha, 1964. a wound of the ribcage. Nevenka Subotich, 1958. A nurse from Vogoshcha, a serious wound of the ribcage with much lost blood. She was saved in the last minute. She lost much blood in The Intensive Care, although it was being given to her constantly, while waiting for her turn in the operation room. It was a metter of seconds. Fortunately, I had finished the previous operation quickly. Nevenka was brought to the operation table immediately. I opened the ribcage, stopped the bleeding and she was saved. It is horrible when you can help but there are not enough surgeons and operation tables while the patient is waiting for his turn. This is not an ordinary queue for the cinema ticket or bread, it is a queue for life. The most horrible queue of all! At the time of war, young people, women, children, soldiers wait in front of the patients’ rooms and the operation rooms. That is why I can’t forget this. I will never forgive the doctors and surgeons who ran away from here leaving their people, and I can’t understand surgeons from Serbia, Yugoslavia, Montenegro and the rest of the world, for not helping. Do they know what it means to queue for life and death? Do they understand how it is to choose between these two? You choose one patient and you know that the other one is sentenced to death because you haven’t enough time to help him. These are the hardest decisions in one’s life and one has to react quickly. How does one choose? There are basic surgical principles, principles of the certain emergency levels, and what to do if the both patients are emergency cases, if the both of them have serious liver bleeding, or one has stomach bleeding and the other one has the ribcage bleeding and it is certain that they will die if they are not operated within a half an hour? Which principle to apply? You are the one to decide. Sometimes you choose a younger patient because he has a whole life ahead of him, sometimes you choose the older one because he has children. He has to live for his children and that young one has nobody to live for. Sometimes you choose a child or a girl. Sometimes you give life to a woman so that she can be with her children, sometimes you save a girl, so that she can live and give births... Horrible dilemmas! I wouldn’t wish this even for the worst enemy; to be in the situtation in which one has to choose between life and death.

Radomir Radovich, 1942. Ildza, is from this series of twelve operation. A serious wound of the ribcage, stomach, small and large intestines, pelvic injuries. Mira from Rajlovac, a sad woman, hit by a sniper in the ribcage. She doesn’t want to live, she lost her son. she says:”Doctor, let me die!”

“No, Mira you won’t die, you will live!” She survived. Djordjo Stupar, Vogoscha, injured stomach, ribcage, huge bleeding, an extremely difficult operation.

That’s this series of twelve operations. I don’t see how I can manage this. I shall repeat this, is because I get energy from the Serbian people, who resists the world and “The Turks”. It fights for justice and truth.

Today is the 8th of August, 1993. I haven’t written anything for ten days. Many things happened at every moment. Events happened and we were very busy. Many wounded people, many operations. There are battles on Igman. It is thundering above our heads, on some five hundred metres to a kilometre. This is a unique hospital. The enemy is on some several hundred metres from us, in the half of Igman.

11th of August, 1993.

At four o’clock this morning a new truce was arranged again. Our Army is leaving the mountains Bjelashnica, Treskavica and some parts of Igman to the UN. Do we lose something in that way? Our goal was not to aim at the enemy from Igman and Bjelashnica, but to stop the grenading of Ilidza and Hadzichi by making the enemy leave these mountains. Another task was to prevent the transport of munition which came to Sarajevo across these two mountains. We have reached our goals. If the Muslims try to come back and occupy Igman again with the help of the UN, what, in fact, scares us the most, then “may Alah help them.”

Yesterday was the first day of the truce and we had two dead and two wounded people. Rajlovac, sniper. We always had more casualties at the time of truce than in battles.

3rd of October, 1993.

It has been a long time since I wrote anything in this diary. Times are bad. Nothing is going on better. It can’t be like this for ever. The truce is in effect and people still die. Fear, suffering, uncertainty.

Six o’clock p.m. There is screaming in the hall of our First Aid Station, hysterical and inhuman. I am having dinner in the kitchen next to the Ambulance. A couple of young men are carrying the body of a young soldier. As they are putting him on the bed I see that his head is injured. A horrible sight. Half of the brain is out and half of the skull is missing. I can see his eyes through the skull. Two boys are on the floor, screaming and weeping. One of them repeats in the state of shock: “Don’t let my twin brother die!” Brothers Vukadin, born in 1975., twins. The boys with golden earring in the left ear were coming back from Bjelashnica, after fifteen days. They were coming back to their Ilidza. Singing and happiness on the truck. And then the overpass on the railway approach between Zoranovo and Ilidza smashed the head of the seventeen – year– old boy Darko Vukadin when he peeped out to see his Ilidza. He couldn’t be saved. I would have given anything in the world to save him! The nurses, who got used to the sights of death and blood, the sights which would make a

scenario of the horror films in normal life, these nurses are crying now. The boy's mother and sister come. Screams and weeping. These were the last twins in Ilidza. I heard that there were eight pairs of them. There are no more twins in Ilidza.

And then, by chance, as it usually happens in wars and such similar situations, this morning twins were born; one weighed 950 grammes and the other one 1.025 grammes. The smaller child died several hours later. Oh, God, this is your creation! You created man, but can man put up with this anymore? Where are the limits of human suffering? What about brains and broken bodies, and what will happen to the souls of the nurses whose uniforms are covered with blood and pieces of brain and faces with tears and grief.

Serbian women, sisters, your suffered bodies and your exhausted and sad souls, all this blood and parts of the bodies of Serbian children and soldiers, all that will be engraved into the space and the time of Serbian people, its future and survival! My souls, I will love you for ever!

8th of October, 1993.

I worked for these past couple of days. A woman, Dushanka, 1953. Wounded by a grenade in Vogoshcha. She was operated. Her large intestine was seriously wounded. She is well now. Then, a man fallen from the roof of his house (this also happens in wars), the stomach was wounded, the intestines and the liver were torn apart. I operated him. He is well, too.

Two members of the HVO – I start the operation at ten a.m. and finish at five p.m. Two very difficult operations. Both of them survived. Marko Chalaga, 1952. from Kreshevo and Drago Trogrlich, 1956. also from Kreshevo.

Another member of the HVO, Miro Berovich, 1961. from Kiseljak. His ribcage is wounded. In the state of shock. His liver, gaster, small intestines are torn apart. An extremely difficult operation. He survived. The Croats are lucky to have this Serbian hospital in their neighbourhood. It saves their lives. And how they return? They attack Serbian people in Krajina and threaten them. Because of the way we are, merciful and kind, we Serbians are eternal and undestructable.

12th of October, 1993.

Bad days, the worst for me as a surgeon from the beginning of this war. As a man I experienced even worse, horrible days for my tormented soul and body. Around ten difficult operations for one night. I save lives. The Serbians are queer people to all, even to themselves. I operate both Serbian and Croatian soldiers. One is being carried out of the operation room and the other one is being carried in. One is Croatian, the other one is Serbian. We "do" everyone. We operate them wishing to help no matter which nation they belong to, and we are in war. Blood is mixed on the operation table, on the floor of the operation room, in veins.

The Intensive Care is full of wounded patients, both Serbian and Croatian. I believe in man, and I believe that Croatian patients will feel the gratitude towards Serbian doctors, Serbian nurses, Serbian authorities, to the people that make it possible for them to be healed here. But, I also believe that their country and their authorities won't feel the same way. They don't know for gratitude. I believe that they would return this with the meanest and ungrateful manner. I believe that their country and the authorities will express their gratitude for everything we have done here by stabbing us in the back. Border areas for Serbian people as well as for us.

The battlefield of Sarajevo is burning – Vogoshcha, Rajlovac, Igman, Kasindolska street, Nedjarichi. There have been more than fifteen wounded Croatians from Kiseljak and Varesh for the last couple of days. We operate day and night. Is God with us? The most difficult operations are successful. This is the happiness and satisfaction that make us survive all this. The joy that wipes away all the hardships, sweat and the pressure that our profession has.

There are grenades, machine guns, bazookas outside. NATO airplanes fly low above the hospital. The hospital is in the core of the war, in the foot of Igman, at the range of bullet from the most fierce battles of the battlefield of Sarajevo. And what do I feel? I write from moment to moment expressing my feelings. I am not sure what I feel or don't feel at this moment, but I certainly know that there isn't the end to this war, to this hell. I see blood, suffering, death. I see the hell of war, hunger, dead children. I can't see anything clearly. Written on the 20th of October.

29th of October

It's nine o'clock p.m. I watched the News on TV Belgrade. Not a word about the war and the battles on the battlefield of Sarajevo. Complete peace.

And just half an hour ago two young dead soldiers were brought to the hospital. One of them was born in 1971. and the other one in 1959. Sniper from Dobrinja, IC – device, at night. Victims from Nedjarichi. Is this peace?

I am going to Nish in a couple of days, to see my family, my friends, my town. I guess this is the end of my diary, or just a middle of it.

I know something for sure – it isn't the beginning. This diary is written in one notebook, actually in one half of it, the other half consists of the notes about my operations. Both halves are filled and here they are meeting in the middle of the notebook – the names of the operated people and my diary. This is the end of this notebook.

Grenades are thundering outside. Our forces are paying Dobrinja back for Nedjarichi. Two young men are being avenged. Blood for blood, mother's grief for mother's grief. The war is still going on, the peace is far away.

25th of December, 1993.

The third year of war is coming to its end. It started in 1991. in Krajina. The war in Krajina and this war are one and the same. It has just changed its location. We couldn't hold it within the borders of the rivers Una and Sava but I hope we will manage to keep it behind the borders of the river Drina.

I went to Krajina in the month of August. And in five, six days we are entering 1994. 1991.,1992.,1993., and here comes 1994. and the peace is so far away. I haven't written anything for a long time, not because nothing happened but because I was having a personal crisis these past two months, I fell into some kind of monotony or I just needed some time to get used to things. Overwhelmed with emotions, with people's sufferings and tragedies, I needed some time on my own, I had to be silent for a while. Everything around me is so crazy, so terrible. Where should I start from? I should start from all that has happened so far. I will start with death because everything here starts and ends with death. Boro Stanishich, a great young man, father of a little kid Igor, a great soldier from Ilidza and the Serbian Republic, died as bravely and gloriously as he lived. I remember Boro, I saw him two days before his death, he was calm, modest, great. The famous transporter driver, a participant of many battles, always the first in everything. He always went in front of the infantry, being the heart and soul of Serbian soldiers. It is the young man who passed over the column of twenty cars with his transporter, risking his own life, all in order to prevent one of our soldiers from the crazy idea to ride the car first and then start fighting. This is the man who approached the wounded with his transporter in the battlefields, pulling them out and risking his own life at the same time. He died bravely in Ulog. God save his soul! The soul of Boro Stanishich, Serbian soldier and warrior!

Fierce battles are being fought around Sarajevo, Olovo. Liberating the Serbian land the soldiers from the brigades of Ilidza, Igman, Ilijash, Gatak fight together. The battles are fought these days at the very approach to Olovo. The enemy is attacking Ilidza. Grenades are falling. There are a lot of wounded and four killed. People are relaxed and go out to streets where they are shot by snipers.

I mentioned Boro Stanishich and only fifteen days after his death his cousin was brought to the hospital. He was hit by a grenade in Ilidza. I operated him. Small intestines, large intestines, ribcage, liver. He died two hours after the operation. It was too much for his head. The blast damaged its brain and the young man died. Seventeen years of age. The grenade fell into the center of Ilidza.

There are battles everywhere. There are gunfires in Zucha and around Ilidza, Nedjarichi, Hadzichi. There are battles in parts of the battlefields of Ilidza, in the area of Azichi, Stupa, Nedjarichi. My two friends Terza and Nikola have been wounded. "The meat paste." Fortunately his legs are intact but his feet are seriously wounded.

General Mladich paid us a visit today. He never announces his arrival. The military truck of the Puch make stopped in front of the hospital. He went out with one soldier to the entrance. He was interested for one wounded soldier Gachanin Ognjen Todorovich. He saw the hospital around and said hello to everybody – to the staff, the doctors, the patients, the people who came for an examination. He said a word to everyone. Later on, he sat for a while with us, the staff and the doctors. We talked about the hospital, life, everything. He was delighted by our hospital. He said that he hadn't known how big it was and how wide range of medical services it provided. He was impressed by the staff, too. He said that it was in the high level even for the peaceful conditions. He told us that Europe and the world would soon understand that it wasn't so easy to attack the Serbs and that this was the hardest war for the Serbs because so far they had never been alone and without any allies. Without anyone except for some volunteers. And these are his exact words: "Here is the doctor from Serbia. Doctor you can't even imagine how much your presence means for the morality and the strength of me and of these people. Thank you!"

Thank You, General Mladich, for using your strength and knowledge and the strength of your Army in defending the Serbian children, the Serbian homes and the Serbian land!

And what do the nurses, the people, the staff and the patients talk about General Mladich? He is great, direct, natural, he observes everything, he is brave. But everyone fears that something might happen to him because he is always the first, not only on the line, but also in the attack, in the battle, in the action.

The night on the eve of the Serbian New Year. I came back from Nish, this morning at three o'clock. I received the October Prize there from the City Hall. I received it for the accomplishments in medicine. This is a special award, which is considered to be the greatest in the city. It was a great ceremony. My friends from the Serbian Sarajevo were with me. We were welcomed nicely and appreciated with sincerity and warmth from my town and some important people. Nish has always been a town that sympathizes with the destiny of the people from the other side of the Drina. My hospital, too. I am happy because my friends from the Serbian Sarajevo felt it, too.

By the way, it was horrible, today in Ilidza. Grenades started falling around eleven a.m. I was there at the moment. I could have been hurt. I went back to the hospital. Very soon after that several wounded came from the Police of the Kommander Karishik. They were wounded in Zucha. Fortunately their lives were not endangered. There are many of them from all parts – Srebrenica, Bratunac, Ilidza and other towns.

It is a New Year's Day. The hospital is full of wounded, without any single free bed. Serbian heroic songs are being heard through the halls. It is an awful contrast of life and death, blood and happiness.

I operated today a boy from Vares, a Croatian – lungs, diaphragm and liver. His name is Sladjan Rankich, 1972. He came here at the last moment. He is alive. Another life as a gift from me.

12th of February, 1994.

It has been a month since I haven't written anything. Many things have happened and I didn't put it on paper. Several brave guys died, many of them were wounded. As for the military situation, it is the same. Bazookas and snipers are "working" . several difficult operations. Especially difficult and sad was the struggle for the life of the brave Serbian soldier from Igman, Strahinja Shtaka. Seriously wounded in the pelvis and stomach, he was brought from the position after three hours. The struggle in the operation room lasts for five hours. Fourteen litres of blood. Unbelievable! We can barely stop the pelvic bleeding which is literally torn apart. Kidneys don't function. Frightened children – the son of fifteen and the daughter of thirteen years of age are waiting outside the operation room begging for their father's life. He survived, nevertheless! He is being carried out of the operation room to the Intensive Care. He is speaking and waving to the children. Happiness, joy. And then the kidneys stop functioning, they were too long without blood, they can't accept the function. Three days later we urgently transport him to Belgrade. Good news is coming from there. There is hope. He is recovering. It is incredible how he survived! But thirteen days after the operation the news is that he died!

Oh God, please, I am calling you for the thousandth time! His struggle for life and his will were so strong! One more life has been extinguished and two more orphans are left. And how can one then think about the blackmails from the West? How can one agree to ultimatums? What ultimatums, planes, bombs? You European snobs and hypocrites, how can you commit an aggression against these suffered people. They are not scared of you, they have always withdrawn all ultimatums!

It is six in the morning. Planes were flying over Sarajevo last night. Six hundred years ago when we stood up to the Turkish Osman Empire, Europe betrayed us. We are defending ourselves now and we are alone again. This time we are defending against the Turks from Sandzak. Europe is threatening and blackmailing us again. This brave people who has always been victimized for defending its freedom is being threatened again.

Europe, I wish you suffocate with your own stench and disappear in your own decadency and hypocrisy as the old Rome did. The Rome after Neron and Caligula. These people will live, survive and win! Our victims and our orphans, mothers' eyes with no tears and the brave heart of a proud Serb are the guarantees for that!

And you, the state of France, well known as the symbol of freedom, justice and equality, a former friend, you should be ashamed of this period for ever! You accepted the

blackmails and the ultimatums forced upon the Serbian people! We could have never expected that from you and we certainly never forget it.

We are not afraid neither of the “Turks” nor of NATO threats. The truth and the justice have always been on our side. Somebody else in our shoes would be making and arranging shelters right now. Instead, we are laughing at you and your threats, your steel birds, your weapons, tones of explosive. The Serbs are the people of heaven, and what about you? What are you? Barbarians once, barbarinas forever!

17th of February, 1994.

Hide – and – Seek. Who do they think they are to play games with us? This people is calling you to come. You arrived here a year ago, as UN, and welcomed with a smile. Ask Captain Lemmon, Lieutenant Peres and many others. The experienced legionaries cried when leaving us: “Goodbye, friends. Goodbye, Serbs! Take care and don’t give up! Our hearts will always be with us wherever we go.”

You can come now with bombs and death and you will see the other side of the coin! You will see what you have never seen before! This people is not afraid of anyone, it doesn’t hide in shelters, it doesn’t run away! Everybody behaves normally. Come, finally, don’t threaten us anymore, we are waiting for you! If you are smart enough you will give up your idea. Otherwise, you will go through hell.

24th February, 1994.

Sunday. The day before the Ultimatum. I listened to Clinton’s speech last night on Muslim TV. He said that the decision on the Ultimatum was actually the decision on the Air raid at the Serbs in Sarajevo and its surrounding area. The American Nato planes have been flying over Sarajevo since last night. It is midnight now. We prepared ourselves for the raid, blinded the windows, took care of transport and went to sleep.

4th of March, 1994.

It is 6.35 p.m. What happened? Nothing! We have given in again. After Ljubljana, Krajina, after Kukanjac’s Sarajevo, after Igman and the magnificent Serbian Army who was approaching Sarajevo. The American psychoanalysts were right again. Not the American military strategists, because they weren’t able to attack the Army of the Serbian Republic. Just the psychoanalysts. We have given in again, and we shouldn’t have. The Army of NATO came. Sarajevo was “in medias res” of this war and of our existence. Serbian destiny was being solved there. We gave way in May, 1993. but we shouldn’t have done it in February, 1994. What were all the victims and the great victories for?! I hope that time will tell. We agreed to their conditions and accepted to remove the artillery, Serbian forces and safety. What will happen to us? But, we are Serbs, unpredictable and like Phoenixes. Oh, God let the Serbian pride wake up again, the strength of the centuries, let the Serbian heroes be resurrected. God, please, let the Serbs remain Serbs! They win even when there’s no way

out. God, this is our last hope. But, why should we live in hope forever? Six hundred years passed after Kosovo. Will “the Turks” win and we end up again playing national songs of glory on guslas¹² and telling stories to our grandchildren?

I don't want songs, stories, guslas and glory! I want my people to live! I want freedom for my friends, sisters and brothers. We are fed up with glory. We want victory and the Serbian land.

I hope this is not the end of my journal. If it were so then it means that Serbian mothers would again give birth to Serbian Obilichs and embroider the needlepoints with the scenes of Serbian victorious battles while the Muslims' flags would be fluttering on the spots for which we gave our lives. Igman would not be the same again. I don't want that. This people doesn't want it, either. I believe it would not be so, or else we, the Serbs, brothers and sisters from Ilidza, Nedjarichi, Kasindolska street, Ilijash, Vogoscha, Hadzichi, Rajlovac, Rakovica, from all these small and big places around Sarajevo and in Sarajevo, us, the Serbs from the Serbian Sarajevo won't be there anymore to see this.

I am positive that we will defend the Serbian land with our bodies, that we won't let it be ravaged by the enemy. If it is necessary, we will again cover the Serbian destinies with our blood and red peonies. God, I pray that I be able to write the new page of my journal!

16th April, 1994.

It is 3.30 in the morning. I haven't touched my journal until last night and then I turned the page for which I had prayed.

The Serbs are in armours again. The tears of Kosovo poured out the Serbian grenades and the Serbian armours. Our heart and soul, the centuries of suffering, gave us strength to rise again and prove to the century – old enemy, to the false friends and to all good and evil of the world, that nobody and nothing can destroy us. The Serbian Army has appeared like a ghost on the banks of the legendary river Drina, bloody and green, filled with tears and glorified with the Serbian victories. At that very spot, at the artery of Serbia, the Serbian Army, the army of descendants and the warriors of Kosovo, Chegar, Cer and Kajmakchalan,¹³ will return to the Serbs what belongs to them. And the phantoms of the Earth, the false peacemakers have finally realized that they cannot frighten the Serbian soldiers and the people. Their weapons got broken against the armours of the Serbian soldiers.

In a very short time they learnt a lesson, which they should have learnt a year ago.

25th of April, 1994.

1994. – a war year. My story is called Dragan Josipovich.

¹² gusla – Serbian and Montenegrin national instrument

¹³ these are the famous places where the Serbian army had victorious battles in the past

An officer of the Army of the Serbian Republic, a commander of the famous brigade of Sarajevo – Romanija corps. His four little girls are back there in Serbia, in Vojvodina. A hero, a knight and “Sindjelich”¹⁴ a commander of the glorious Ilijash brigade, heart and soul of the battle for Drina and Gorazde, the avenger of the bloody waves in Drina.

This is my story about a man, a living hero, a hero in war, who defends all that is Serbian with all the strength of centuries and the blood of the ancestors. The enemy’s blood runs cold from him. A man, a father of four daughters, came to fight for the Serbian people. He was on the most horrible battlefields, always on the first line, always at the front. He was sometimes several hundreds of metres behind the enemy’s line. An idol for his soldiers, he is always in front of them and with them. He was born in Krajina, a Yugoslavian by nationality and the soldier of the Serbian Republic.

Everybody likes him. The soldiers adore him. He is an embodiment of all the Serbian heroes. He is not on the TV, radio, in the papers. He is always in the middle of the enemy’s fire. His name is a legend and safety, and, therefore may God save him for this people and this country! He is the last Mohican and Don Kihot, he is Obilich and Kosanchich.¹⁵ He is the core of everything Serbian and simply a hero. He came here last night from Gorazde to visit some of his wounded soldiers. “The ordinary soldiers”- who are his children, his soldiers.

He was at the place where I live, in my room in the hospital. We talked about some ordinary stories, two ordinary guys with the same destinies and thoughts. We talked about our children, about people, about our destinies and our future. We were having coffee, with a lot of sugar, for we both like it that way. A surgeon, two years in war, in blood up to his knees, and a hero, a warrior, two years in fire and death. They were sitting alone and making coffee in the room that looked like a student’s room.

He laughed when he saw that I slept on the couch next to which I had put a chair for my legs because the couch was too small for me. I thought then that he probably didn’t have a proper place for sleeping. He barely took off his boots in the last twenty days. It is a soldier and a commander who won in many battles.

We talked about the ordinary human destinies, and I remembered something: “...I could then buy second hand books for my children... “ or : “ When I go to sleep and the ringing of the phone wakes me up I get scared that I would hear bad news that some of my soldiers were wounded or killed.”

Dragan Joksimovich, I wish both for you and for me that our dreams and plans come true. As long as there are you, the Serbian soldiers and the Serbian people, we will make progress and keep the faith!

¹⁴ he was the famous Serbian leader in the battle for Chegar

¹⁵ another hero of the Serbian past; from the time of the Turks

This is my first story about a single man. I have to tell another one about a man who gave his life for his homeland, who became a legend, Zoran Borovina.

We had our coffee. You didn't want to drink brandy because you told me that you drank it only at home. And what was the last time you were at home?

Calmly, in his camouflaged uniform covered with dust, mud and sweat, but with the strength in his lively eyes, Josipovich got into the military car, waved and went away. Where?

And now there are several short stories about the sad events that torture one's heart destroying and awakening one's goodness.

The first one was written on the 28th of April, 1994.

The sound of an ambulance siren. We all come out to see who will be carried out of the ambulance. The van comes from Ilijash. I always pray in these situations that it isn't a child. But, it is a child this time. It is pale, with blue lips, large blue eyes, blond hair.

I see a television camera. They are shooting. This is the truth about the tragedy of the Serbian people. A thirteen – year – old girl, a beautiful girl, Sladjana Milanovich. She was shot by a sniper when she was driving a bicycle, from the distance of three, four hundred metres. Who could aim at the child? He could see her blue eyes, her twelve, thirteen, fourteen years, when he aimed at her pelvis and destroying her life.

Fighting for her life. The operation room. Where is the limit between life and death? My experience tells me that there is no hope. The operation. I open the stomach. A blood geyser. The heart has stopped. I massage it, and it starts beating again. I collect blood with a large piece of cloth and squeeze it out; I connect the blood vessels and stop the bleeding. The work is done technically good, but the life is gone. The only thing to wait was for the blue eyes to die.

Desperate parents are waiting outside the Intensive Care. I tell them the truth. Her father cries, beating his breast, and the mother is shocked and totally lost. The father gets down on his knees and kisses my shoes all in blood begging for his child's life. I help him to get up and tell him that I have done everything I can. It was 8 o'clock p.m.

It is 2 o'clock a.m. Death. I tell the parents. A moment of silence, then a scream. A desperate cry! I will always remember it. That scream, losing the last hope – it can't be expressed with words. I am afraid of it all the time. One more child is dead. More sadness and pain for all of us. How can one endure this any more?

The second story, 2nd of May 1994.

A seven – year – old child. It has been only a couple of days and again sirens, parents' screams, death. My children, why do you suffer? You were playing when the grown ups started this war. Did they think of you?

Little Nikola Radojevich, from Vrelo of Bosnia, found some explosive in the cellar of his house. My colleague Pejich and I are operating together. I am "doing" the stomach, the

ribcage, the right arm; he is “doing” the left arm and the face. Difficult and horrible. We are working automatically, only our eyes are showing how horrible we feel.

He died two hours later.

The third story

Two young men from the position in Nishichi. The enemy’s bombs. One of them lost the lower part of his arm. He has many wounds, breathing spontaneously. The other one has wounded legs. We operate the first one, he dies an hour later. The hole in the head made by a splinter. The other one stays alive.

The fourth story, 4th of May, 1994.

11 o’clock a.m. Sirens again, Ilijash. Srdjan Vujadinovich, 1962. The mine exploded while he was crawling. His both eyes are shut, blood is everywhere. He shouts that he can’t see begging me to save at least one eye. I am all alone and not sure for I am not an ophthalmologist. It is the first time that I am doing this. I wash them thinking what is wrong. They are full of mud. After a thorough washing a young man cries out loud:”I can see with my right eye! I can see the lamp! I can see, doctor, I can see your fingers!” The left eye is wounded. I put the antibiotic and dress the wound. I send him to the room. He was lucky. One eye is OK, maybe the other one, too. We will transport him to Sokolac, to the ophthalmologist.

Those were four stories for five days, and God knows how many more of them were for these past thirty months, for these nine hundred days. My heart is broken. Only my arms and brain are left. How long will they obey me? When is the end to this hell? Will I ever go out of it?

13th of May, 1994.

Friday, bloody Friday. It seems that only sad stories become a part of our lives. The story about Nena Kuvach, thirty – year – old warrior, about the sad day for the Serbian soldiers in Nishichi. It was the attack “Swallow” against our dispersed lines, held by the members of MP from Ilidza. There are killed, disappeared, wounded. They fought until their munition ran out.

Two women in the same day, a mother and a daughter. They were taking some coffee to our tank’s crew. Suddenly, a direct shot in the tank. The two of them were killed together with the crew. The wounds were fatal.

That Neno Kuvach was the father of three children. The eldest child has just started to go to school, the two younger, the twins are four years old. Our little Dada, a twelfth grade student of the Medical school and the nurse in our hospital, has lived with her old granny for fifteen months at the foot of Igman, in Vrelo of Bosnia. Neno is her uncle, her granny’s only son. He took care of them. He was the only safety for them. Dada was going home around 3 p.m. and saw a familiar wounded soldier in the hall, Neno’s friend. She asked

him about her uncle. The man told her that he was killed. Screams, crying. Everyone was deeply touched by her pain. "I had only him, I have no one else! What will I do without him? I can't live anymore. He was dearest to me!"

14th of May, 1994.

More wounded. This is a story about Zoran Zuza, a journalist from "Srna." He came to Ilidza from Pale, to meet his mother in Kasidolska street, after two years. She had to go back to Sarajevo because her relatives were kept there as hostages.

Around 13.30. near the UNPROFOR transporter vehicles were queuing to cross "the blue road" from Ilidza to Lukavica. While he was standing next to the car he was shot by a sniper through the stomach. The members of the French Battalion were just standing there, watching him lying. They were standing there for fifteen minutes without helping him. Then, the ambulance from Ilidza came and took him to our hospital. The eye witnesses say that the French soldiers were aiming their guns at the Serbs when Zoran was shot.

He arrived at the hospital without any sign of life. He was immediately taken to the operating room. A catastrophe in his stomach – a half of the liver was torn, the right kidney was pierced, the stomach was full of blood, about three litres. I sewed the liver, took out the remains of the kidney, stopped the bleeding. I always believe in victory over death. I was a pessimist this time. Zoran woke up. He talked. He was alive. A God's miracle!

On the 15th of May in the morning Zoran is feeling fine, no more bleeding. It seems that he will live. Dear God, it is both yours and my work. I feel funny. After a thousand of operation I am exhausted. Maybe I am immodest but at one moment I felt so close to Him, a miracle maker. This is a momentary feeling, but Zoran is a miracle, indeed. Who saved him? Now I don't know even myself. My hands, my experience and knowledge or something else?

18th of May, 1994.

Battles, the war, offensives again. Nishichi. I was in the operating room from 15.30. until 21.00. – three abdomens: Radich Zoran, 1968. Vogoshcha, a serious wound of small intestines. Jeftich Borislav, 1972. Ilijash – a serious wound of large intestines. Djurdjich Dragoslav, Podlugovi – a serious wound of liver and kidneys.

26th of May, 1994.

Obrad Popadich, my best friend, a comrade, a war comrade, chief of Staff of Ilidza's Brigade. He led the way of the Serbian soldiers from the beginning of war. He was a real hero. The liberator of Ilidza. Shoulder to shoulder with his commander Zoran Borovina he liberated Zoranovo – Otes.

He was taking part in the most fearful battles. Igman, Gorazde, Nishichi. He died there, in Nishichi. He was also born there. A hero and a legend. He was killed while attacking Muslim trenches and bunkers. He mowed down by a burst of fire in front of the enemy's bunker. He was there for a couple of hours until his fellow soldiers got him out. Two more

soldiers died – little Novak, nineteen years old, the son of once famous swimmer Atina Bojadzi, and the young Tomich, eighteen years old, who was wounded two years ago. They were killed while trying to get out the dead body of their commander.

The news of Obrad's death came quickly through Ilidza. Disbelief and regret. An hour later a hundred of soldiers gathered in front of the Headquarters in Payton demanding to go at once and take the dead body risking their life if it's necessary. They didn't want it to come into Muslims' hands. They succeeded.

Bojan Pejich died with Obrad, too. He was young, twenty years old, from Vrelo of Bosnia. He managed to crawl to our trench where he died, having been shot in the ribcage. Exerting his utmost efforts he dragged himself to the place where his friends were. He didn't want the enemy desecrate his dead body.

Obrad, my friend, the day before you died you were at the hospital. We talked and laughed. The night before your death I called you about 11 o'clock to tell you that I was going to Nish in a couple of days and that I would come to you the following day to arrange for the car and petrol. You told me to come in the evening at your place, because you would spend the day in the hills. I said then: "Don't let anything happen to you before you take care of the car and petrol. " We laughed and the destiny did its part.

You left your wife Milana and your unborn child. You would have seen him in three months. You were buried on the 27th of May. The rain was pouring heavily, it was a flood. We all were soaked wet as if we were swimming in the Bosnia. What was funny, was that the rain was falling only above the cemetery, above Vlakovo. All the other places were dry. The crying of your wife and your sisters, the tears of your friends, your fellow soldiers, people.

I don't believe you are dead, Obrad Popovich! You are not dead. You still live in our hearts. Goodbye my dear friend, I am going to miss you!

2nd of August, 1994.

The day of the patron saint, St. Ilija. The intertwined happiness and sadness, victories and defeats of the Serbian people have always coincided with the days of the great saints.

Nishichi. The raging battles have been fought since yesterday afternoon. There were wounded and killed people, many destinies and ordinary stories in the last two months, about which I didn't write anything. False peace and everyday death. Monotony, apathy, depression of the people and the surroundings. I am surprised that nature blossoms and the Sun still rises. People are depressed. Two and a half years of suffering, death... and now nothing happens.

Then comes the tricky European plan. Surrender. They offer a complete defeat instead of a deserved victory. They offer us bits and pieces calling us "raja".¹⁶

¹⁶ hist. coll. – non-Muslim subjects (under Turkish rule)

How can one accept that, in whose name? In the name of dead children, killed sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, in the name of their graves. And what do they suggest us? To move from the centuries old hearth, from Kupres, Ozren, the left bank of the Neretva, the Drina. How? How to move the graves of the dearest ones? To leave them behind! They gave their lives so that we could stay here and we stayed! The only possible and honorable way is to stay with them, however we can.

Today I started to write about Nishichi and the great battleson that plateau above Sarajevo. A raging Muslim offensive. We have a lot of killed, wounded. Muslims moved their lines towards us, towards Sarajevo. We succeeded in stopping them. A great number of wounded patients in the hospital. We have been operating for two days without having rest. My foot is in plaster. Seven days ago I broke my ankle in Nishichi.

I work, nevertheless. I was operating a young man, a Serbian soldier from Milich, for more than four hours. His name is Djojich Aleksandar, 1960. He was brought to the hospital in the state of shock. The nurses thought at first that he was dead. I came down to the First Aid Station with my foot in plaster and in great pain, looked t him, checked his pulse and saw that it was still beating. He was in a state of a serious, chemoragic and traumatic shock, with the wounded ribcage and stomach. We massaged the heart and the eye pupils lessened. I said: "To the operating room." "Who is going to operate him, doctor?" "I am, who else?"

A serious wound of the ribcage, diaphragm, spleen, large and small intestines, bladder, big blood vessels. I was operating this boy for four hours, with great effort and pain, standing on my left foot with the right leg leaning on the chair with pillow on it. I had to endure it and I did. The young man came here without pulse and blood pressure, with serious wounds of the ribcage, stomach and pelvis. He same into the operating room dead and got out alive. There were two litres of blood in the ribcage and one and a half of it in the stomach. He got eight litres of blood during the operation. I sawed the lungs, diaphragm, took out the smashed spleen, removed the part of the small intestines, sawed the large intestines, stopped tha bleeding, sawed the bladder.

He talked this morning , no bleeding, diruesis – a liter until noon. Thanks God, he was literelly taken away from Death. I feel pain in my knee. I have decubitus. My foot hurts also, I can't endure the pain without an injection. But, what is pain comparing to human life?

We transported him today to Pale and then further to the Military Academy in Belgrade. I hardly hold out to the end of the operation having to stand for four hours with a broken foot. This is another proof of the great need for surgeons. If I hadn't operated him he would have died. I am still working. If I have to I will manage it without legs.

3rd of August, 1994.

You remember the story about Neno Kuvach, father of three kids, a soldier from Ilidza. Forty days after his death his mother got his dead body. He was beastly stabbed by

the enemy. He was buried into the Serbian land. I ask myself again: "How can one leave this land?"

4th of August, 1994.

Certainly the saddest and the most unfortunate day in my life and in the lives of millions of Serbs. A hard decision. They are playing with the destiny and lives of the Serbian people. I see today here six dead, six killed Serbian boys.

The "Turks" are attacking like mad, inspired by the Serbian disagreement. The last night assembly of the Serbian Republic agreed to say "yes" to death and "no" to the surrender. They didn't have any choice, they chose death. The other option was surrender, I know that for sure!

I am a surgeon, a volunteer for three years in the battlefields, a Serbian (as they call the Serbs from Serbia) and a Serb. I know this people through and through. They didn't have any other choice.

The answer from Serbia, this morning: a blockade at the Drina, a border line. Why? I can't understand. It is probably something beyond my comprehension. Everything else is of no importance for me.

Meanwhile, dead Serbian boys are being brought, the ones who tried to defend their homes, children and mothers. Houses with people are only several hundred metres behind their backs. Nishich plateau is shaking, the Serbian part of Sarajevo is shaking, Doboje, Brčko, everything Serbian is shaking.

It is 5th of August, 1994. Half past midnight. I have just saved one life – Opachich Nebojsa, 1966. From Ilidza. The ribcage.

We are not giving up, yet! My leg hurts, especially the right knee which I keep on a chair, because of the plaster on my foot.

6th of August, 1994.

Saturday. NATO planes are attacking noisily. They are trying to frighten us. Nobody is frightened, though. People are so disappointed, apathetic...

After what happened two days ago nothing can scare them anymore. We took four tanks from the "Energoinvest" early this morning and transported them to Nishichi. There is dark and fog outside. They couldn't notice us from the planes. They were passing behind the hospital waking us up.

The planes passed over us the whole day yesterday. At 18.30. they threw the deadly load somewhere on Igman. We heard detonations. We have been cut off from the world for forty eight hours. The phone lines are dead.

7th of August, 1994.

A difficult operation. Danilovich Radojica, a boy from Banjaluka, 1975. His left upper leg is totally destroyed, the bullet came into the stomach and caused serious wounds of

pelvis, small and large intestines. The struggle for his life lasts for hours. I feel pain in my leg under plaster. My knee on a chair troubles me. The boy is saved. The bullet is taken out. The small and large intestines are sawed, he left his right leg but he is alive.

8th August, 1994.

More wounded soldiers. The operation of a stomach, everything's fine. The intestines are sawed. My leg still hurts.

At 15.30. a dead woman is brought. She was shot in the centre of Hadzichi. A dentist, Gospich Tanja, 1958. was coming back home from work to her children. The bullet got through one hip and went out to the other side. She probably died at that very moment because the bullet cut the pelvic main artery and the abdominal aorta. She was from Ildiza and worked in Hadzichi.

Two children are waiting at home. Son is ten years old and daughter is eleven. Their father was killed in the beginning of war. Little orphans are waiting for mother that will never come.

Tanja's mother – in – law came to the hospital. She is actually her mother – in – law's sister. An old woman of seventy two, the only relative. The children are with her. She is weeping. Who is going to take care of the children? She is old and there is no one else to look after them. They lost their father, and now their mother is gone. The nurses are crying. We are all deeply touched. You poor little children, little orphans! If I were God himself who can fulfil only one wish I would give life to your mother. Sadness, war, orphans, children – death and horror!

Our phone connections with Yugoslavia are still dead. We are completely cut off. It is nine O'clock p.m. I go to the operating room, I operate an abdomen, a stomach.

Three more patients are waiting for the operation. The first one – a kidney, the second one – a wounded stomach, the third one – a fracture of a leg. I finish the large intestine quickly, in forty five minutes and the two others go into two operating rooms. My colleague Chalich, an urologist is operating in one room and a traumatologist is in the other one. The First Aid Station is full of wounded people. There was an all - out general attack on Ilijash, and the wounded say that Muslims are attacking crying out loud: "Come on, brothers!"

It is 1 p.m. They are still coming.

9th of August

10 a.m. An old man, a civilian, Sekula Balorda, 1917. The ribcage, a serious wound. Both operating rooms are occupied. I operate him in the First Aid Station. It is hard both for me and the patient.

Kokorush Milan, 1969. Ilijash – a serious penetrating wound of stomach with the damage of many organs. And then, a boy, Lemez Mladen, 1990. Five year old, Vogoscha –

serious wounds of stomach and the both hands. The kid found an undamaged detonator and activated it. It exploded and the child received serious wounds of the stomach and the hands. We operated him, my colleague Sekulich and me. Everything will be fine.

A Muslim offensive is carried out in the Serbian part of Sarajevo, in Doboj, Brčko. At the same time NATO planes are bombarding us. The incredible "coincidence"?! But this people and these soldiers are made of steel. They fight bravely, putting up with everything, they don't surrender. Ten days of fierce resistance, a lot of killed soldiers and civilians. The sky and the ground are burning day and night on the plateau of Nishichi and above Ilijash, but the Serbian soldiers of the Sarajevo Brigade are holding up the attacks. They are alone in their fight against all!

It has been peaceful for two days. We are expecting the attack from Igman.

15th of August, 1994.

Today is my sister's birthday. I hoped I could have wished her a Happy Birthday. In Nish, in my Nish, in my Serbia. So close and yet so far away. The phones are dead. We have been disconnected for fifteen days. I can't hear from my children, my parents. I am maybe incapable of understanding this politics. Maybe it had to be this way, maybe it should be like this. Maybe this is the only way to fulfill our dream. But I can't agree to it, I can't accept it. I just can't!

The wounded from Nishichi and Ilijash are still coming. A wounded volunteer from Zemun came. He is fortunately slightly wounded. There are more Serbs from Serbia.

Happy Birthday to you, my sister!

Pedja and Nina, my children, I am alive!

How are you? How are your mom, granpas and granmas? Love from your dad.

These words were written on 15th of August, 1994. at 18.45.

They can't take away our thoughts. It is good that science hasn't developed that far. But our hearts have been taken away, the hearts of this suffered people.

20th of August, 1994.

I have been operating for three days. Soldiers from Herzegovina, Gacko, Bileća, Trebinje, Srbinje, Nevesinje. More than a thousand of them have come here to help. They defeated the Muslims, moved the lines from Ilijash onwards to Breza and further to the Serbian part of Sarajevo. there are wounded and killed.

A brave young man, Ivkovich Rajko, being recently married, is seriously wounded. We are fighting for his life. He dies, nevertheless. His wound was fatal. His commander Mastilovich, seriously wounded himself, the splinter went through his head. The legendary commander and the brave soldier were brought here together.

Brave men from Herzegovina. They move across the Serbian Republic and fight against the Muslims. They are far away from their homes. They just move on and never stop. Solid, calm, ordinary people, I wouldn't like to be in their enemy's shoes.

20th of August, 1994.

It is eight p.m. From 17.00. to 20.00. – seven wounded and one dead. The dead Serbian soldier from Gacko, Boljanovich Kosta, his parents' only child, was killed on Chemerno. Two more people from Gacko, three from Trebinje and one from Ilijash are wounded.

Young people are fighting for the Serbian Republic, for the Serbian Honour, the Cross, the Freedom, the Families, the Homeland. This is the day of the famous historical Serbian battle at the Cer. These are the true sons of the Serbian people.

22nd of August, 1994.

The wounded people from Bileche are coming. One is dead – the head. Bajchetich Milan, a member of the group of volunteers from Radovich. The other one in a coma, with six to seven splinters in his head. His family name is Kapor. Three soldiers are slightly wounded and there is a soldier from Semizovac with wounded arms.

Fierce battles are being fought on the mountain Chemerno.

29th of August, 1994.

More battles. Young Serbian soldiers die for the freedom of the Serbian Republic and their people. The hospital has been full of the wounded patients for these last seven days. The battles are raging. I will never forget a young man from Trebinje, Milovan Knezevich. While his leg was being cut off, under spinal anesthesia, listening to the sound of the saw he said: "We can't give up! I have given myself. I am rejoicing in life and in my children's love for me." His son started school on that day. He has one more son and a daughter. "Somebody will probably take care of me, now." When he found out that I was a volunteer from Nish he said: "Good for you! You are not like them." And to my: "Let's get them together" he replied: "Never more, my friend, to fight against brothers. We did it once and look what happened. Never more!" The saw was cutting his leg off and its sound was howling through the night under Igman and through the Serbian Republic and hopefully across the Drina to approach the Serbs in Serbia. Yesterday, a young man from Gacko, Sliepchevich Aleksa, twenty one years old. His foot is gone. He is silent and calm. He's been in the war since Vukovar. His parents came from Gacko today. They travelled day and night by trucks and on foot, however they could. Hard peasant's hands are holding the young soldier's hand. Mother is kissing her son's foot pressing her soft cheek on it. She recalls bathing him in the tin trough. A room of the village cottage in Herzegovina heated by the fire of dry wood which gleams on the white wall with the icon of the Holly Mother and the icon lamp on it. She remembers kissing his little toes like all mothers do to their babies. Tears are rolling down

her face which shines on with love and tenderness. She is still afraid of her son's condition. Is he really all right? When I came back to the room two hours later, I found her sleeping in an unoccupied bed next to her son's bed. She still has a kerchief with her hand under her head. She probably slept very often without a pillow. The father is sitting on the chair, smoking. God knows how many of them. Yellow fingers and yellow moustache. He is looking through his sleeping son for the first time after two days. What is he thinking about? Nobody knows. He is probably thinking about the centuries of suffering and the struggle for life with a question of whether they would ever live in peace. How many generations of fathers thought about the same question while looking at their wounded, crippled and dead sons, and how many more generation will think about it?

Hey, Serbia, wake up! Your best sons are bleeding!

I mentioned a while ago a young man Churchich Milan, nineteen years old. He died in the Intensive Care this morning. The skull, the brain. The phones are dead. His poor mother, father and three sisters don't know about it yet, and they won't find out until a day after tomorrow when his body arrives on a truck to Trebinje, his hometown. The weeping will be echoing in Herzegovina karst. Maybe his mother felt something and stopped while milking the cows early in the morning. She may have felt some pain in her chest hearing her son calling her.

Heroes' mothers, I admire you! You are Serbia! You have always been that! Serbian mothers!

31st of August, 1994.

A young soldier Aleksa Slijepchevich went to Belgrade, to the Military Medical Academy with his parents this morning.

I hear that the father of the brave soldier Rajko Ivanovich, right after his son's funeral took his gun and went to the mountain Chemerno to fight in his son's place. How special these people are! Such brave people can be born only here, in the land where the soldiers have been dying for their freedom for centuries. Their ancestors' spirit lives in them. It is the century - old strength. This is Serbia, too.

2nd of September, 1994.

It has been peaceful for the last couple of days in this area. I am thinking about this war hospital. I have written a lot about the war, the wounded patients, but I haven't written much about this hospital's staff.

Modesty is the most valuable virtue of these diligent, humane and restless medical workers. They have lived in the hospital for twenty two months. I love them all like my family. My colleagues, each of them being a specific personality, work hard day and night. They have hard times, different to those before the war.

Pejich, our manager, a hard working man, has always given everything for the patients. Nevertheless, hard work shows its effects. He is worn out.

Popovich, an orthopedist and Anushich, a traumathologist – there is a lot of work for them. They work hard every day. They were used to good living before the war and now they live in horrible conditons.

My colleague Ilija Chalich, an abdomen surgeon, came to “Zica” at the end of 1993. He works with me shoulder to shoulder.

Saratlich, a neurosurgeon works hard, never complaining. He has two little children. He always manages to be on time with his old “Volkswagen” reminding me of some cartoon hero.

Vujichich, an anesthesiologist, has been working hard since the first day. He is always calm. It is very important for our work, but as any other anesthesiologist he is a bit in the shade.

Family Malinovich, Milenko, an urologist, and his wife Ranka, an anesthesiologist, came from Sarajevo four months ago. They work with us.

Mira Boshkovich, a surgeon, in a couple of months a urologist, my first and best assistant. I couldn't have put up with all this without her. She knows in advance about my each move. She knows everything about surgery and she hasn't yet specialized. Three years of working – day and night. She assisted me and everyone else. She certainly did the biggest number of operations. She has never showed tiredness or dissatisfaction by any gesture or a word. Her body is incredibly fregile and there is so much physical and spiritual strength in it. She is wonderful. We all like her very much.

There is the rest of them. Zorica Vujisich, a peditrist, reactivated from her retirement, full of strength and will. She means a lot to the kids here and to us all, because it is very difficult to deal with a sick child, and she knows everything about children.

The doctors beginners, Olja, Slavica, Snjeza, Dushka, Tanja, are here, too. They have worked a lot since the first day and they are now quite experienced.

There are wonderful nurses here, too, I won't give all their names because there are many of them. They are conscientious, devoted, true friends, diligent – you can always confide in them even when it comes to surgery. For these past three years they have learnt so much that they would be able to do the job of a surgeon. They do everything in the Intensive Care, the First Aid Station, the operating room, the patients' rooms. They constantly change jobs with one another and therefore can do everything. A patient is completely safe with them. Whenever a doctor is too busy they can take care of a patient.

There are other workers who make the hospital function – the drivers, real pals, who risked their own lives many times transporting the wounded patients on the dangerous roads where the Muslims were aiming with their snipers and machine guns.

There are wardens and all the others without whom this hospital won't be what it is now.

3rd of September, 1994.

A wounded soldier from Ilijash has been brought. Rosuljash Mihajlo, 1962. He was wounded in Rajlovac. He was shot in stomach and pelvis. Fatal wounds. A huge opened wound in the left side of the pelvis, its entrance being in the middle of the stomach; he is barely alive. He can still talk; he tells me that he is from Ilijash, that today is his daughter's sixth birthday and that he was in a hurry to come home. My daughter is six, too. I send him immediately to the operating room. I open his stomach while he is still conscious. I have to steal every second. I work very fast and pray to save him. I don't want him to die on his daughter's sixth birthday. Her every next birthday would remind her of her father's death. I succeed! He is alive! Three hours of incredible struggle for his life: small and large intestines, pelvis, blood vessels, bones... He is ready to be transported next morning. He will certainly be fine. The bleeding is stopped, his condition is vital, he can talk. His wife and daughter have come to visit him.

Thank you, God, I saved one more life and one more child didn't lose its father! I should have gone to my friend's engagement party. His name is Srdjan Milanovich a soldier from Ildza with one leg. I postponed my visit for seven a.m. and that saved Mihajlo's life. If I had gone he wouldn't be alive now!

6th of September, 1994.

I had a free day and night. Two days ago I did many operations, three them being extremely difficult.

I didn't go out of the hospital for seven days. I go out once in ten days in order not to go crazy. I live in the hospital, I sleep there, work and spend all the time there. I never go out too far. I am always prepared to be called on the telephone.

On the fourth of September at 11.50. Rajko, our driver, comes into my room and says: "Laza, come quickly to the Ambulance, they have just brought Vasa Jeremich!" I go down to the Ambulance in couple of seconds. Vaso is seriously wounded; he says to me: "Laza, it's over. " His stomach is growing in front of my eyes, he is bleeding fast, going away.

I shout that they take him straight to the operating room. I run through the hall, putting my working clothes on at the same time and come to the operating room in less than a minute. The anesthesiologist massages the heart and says to me that Vasa has died. No way! I start to massage the heart putting all the efforts in it. I am looking at Vasa thinking at the same time about Obrad Popadich. I wasn't able to help Obrad, my Godfather, will it be the same with Vasa? I massage very hard, almost breaking his ribs... A miracle! His heart starts beating after two minutes. I open his stomach only with my gloves on without a working

coat; Vaso is still in his uniform, with his shirt unbuttoned and his pants unzipped. I find his arteria mesenterica, the vein and some smaller blood vessels being torn apart. I connect the blood vessels. He is alive. The heart is beating. A miracle! I saw the small intestines, cut off one part of it, connect it again...He is well an hour later. It was yesterday and today he is better. I am happy for him and his children, for one more victory over death.

Dear Obrad, your son was born ten days ago. You couldn't see him and I know how much you wanted him. Your Godfather Vaso will stay alive and help your wife Milana and your son Obrad – Bata as much as he can. I thought about all this while I was operating Vaso Jeremich. Only God knows how many times I cursed myself for not being able to save your life Obrad. Vaso is feeling well now. The wheel of fortune keeps turning.

When I finished the operation a young man from Zvornik, Djokich Goran. The ribcage. A new operation, a new battle, a new victory. His father came here from Majevisa today to see him. His father and brother are on Majevisa and he is in Ilijash. The mother is in Zvornik. This is the destiny of the Serbian families.

7th of September, 1994.

A day in hell. The wounded people from Iliđa, Zvornik. Nishich plateau is burning. More than twenty wounded in a half an hour. I operate a young man from Zvornik, Krajishnik Ranko, twenty five years old. His stomach is torn apart, half of his intestines are ruined.

In the other operating room - a struggle for one leg. Blood, blood, blood...

8th of September, 1994.

It is twelve o'clock. I dedicate this page of my journal to Sima Herzegovac, nicknamed Munja. He is sixty two. An old man, with grey moustache, of small constitution but with a great heart and soul which is seen in his opened blue eyes. I have known him for more than a year. A great soldier. He volunteered in all the battles. He knew Igman like the back of his hand. He was the guide and the soldier of the special units. He went yesterday to the mountain Chemerno, to a great battle has been going on for a month. He was told not to go. But nobody could persuade him to stay.

His dead body was brought here today. A hero died, an old man, glorified in poems and unified with many other heroes from our history. I am sad. I am so sorry for him! His son lost a half of his foot a year ago. He is still under rehabilitation. He is still fighting for his lower leg. This old man had only a grandson. And a grandson had only him. He started school ten days ago. The boy reminds me of my son. I operated his appendix a year ago. He has been visiting me every fifteen days since then. His name is Milan. He sits for a while and then goes. He hasn't got a father and I hear that his mother remarried. He is so little and yet so mature. It's been a year now since we first met. I always give him a bottle of brandy for the old Munja and a chocolate for him. When I haven't got anything I give him some money. He doesn't want it but I somehow make him take it.

His grandpa was brought dead yesterday. I remember the old man when his grandson was in the hospital for the operation of the appendix and after that his wounded son. He came from Igman in his old JNA uniform all in mood. He came like that in every two to three days to see his son and his grandson. He was everything to them. He is dead now. His son is far away in isolated Serbia, in the hospital. We can't inform him about his father's death and little Milan is alone at home. He is probably back from school now.

The phone is dead. Why? Is it because the wounded Serbian soldier who fought bravely against the Muslims shouldn't be informed about his father's death? Or is it because a little seven – year – old boy isn't allowed to hear from his uncle who is his only relative now? To feel that he isn't alone. Who cursed us and when?

9th of September, 1994.

It is nine o'clock in the evening. Ten minutes ago our Ambulance came back from Zvornik. It had transported two seriously wounded patients from Zvornik operated and saved in our hospital – Goran Djokich and Rajko Krajishnik. A short and terrifying news from our nurse: there are no antibiotics in Zvornik not even penicilin or garamicin. These are the fundamental, the cheapest and the simplest antibiotics. Without them the patients' condition will go worse in twenty four hours. What is even worse they have only one litre of physiological solution and half a litre of glucosis and the two patients need three litres every day. Our two litres of solution and glucosis were literally taken by force. It is horrible and sad!

11th of September, 1994.

The wounded are coming. This is the beginning of every day and of almost every page of this journal. At high noon, a seriously wounded Commander of the Special unit from Srbinje, Gojko Jankovich arrived. He is being brought by his soldiers, taff and resolute guys. They are standing by his side all the time.

"Doctor, this is a great man, do everything you can to save him!"

We go to the operating room. They carry him running across the yard. Then they stay outside waiting. They were there as long as the operation lasted, for four hours. We are in a great hurry. The heart of the wounded commander stops beating. I open the ribcage with scalpel and massage the heart directly, in the tamponade of blood. I make the cut to stomach. The liver has doubled its size and it starts cracking in front of my eyes. I cut the pleura and the blood flows into the ribcage. The heart has been released and it starts beating: slowly at first and then more and more fast. The liver stops enlarging, there are some holes left from which the blood is still running out, and then it starts to reduce slowly. I am sawing it. I hardly manage to stop the bleeding with the available material. The sawing ribbons would best fit here but I am doing it with the ordinary threads. The commander is alive, after all. The operation lasted for four hours. He is in the state of shock: talking, asking for some water. His soldiers are with him. I tell him that he has to be transported to the

Medical Military Academy by a helicopter. I know that he had a heart attack three months ago.

The soldiers are running to get the helicopter. They succeed in finding one from Pale in half an hour. He is then transported by the special UN vehicle in forty five minutes to Pale from where he goes to Belgrade. I call Pale. They say that he got there stable.

One more twenty four hour – battle for life is finished. New soldiers are coming, new soldiers for Serbia, the right one, the one where the Drina would never become a border line but an artery of the Serbian lands.

17th of September, 1994.

I found out today from two soldiers in Srbinje that their wounded commander Gojko Jankovich survived a very difficult operation, that he is well and that he came out of the Intensive Care to the Cardiac Ward of the Military Academy. I am happy that one life is saved and proud at the same time because our hospital has been given compliments for its work from the Academy.

There are still battles in Nishichi. Our forces are close to victory. The “Turks” are defeated. Four wounded patients came from Nishichi last night. An interesting company: one of them from Subotica, one from Pale, one is Russian and one from Ilijash, Sarajevo. The Serbian army of volunteers, the true one, with no limitations.

23rd of September, 1994.

NATO planes are here again. This time they are attacking our positions in the Serbian part of Sarajevo. It is only four kilometres from the hospital, in the village Dobroshevići. They missed their targets. They fired two rockets and used the rotation cannon from the plane AD – 10. Two Jaugars were attacking, too.

Two days ago the Muslims were aiming at us from Sarajevo. They were firing from Bashcharshija and other places in town. We had to fire back with our heavy weapons. This thing with the NATO planes is a UN answer. It all seems somehow arranged and synchronized. I watched through the window of my room, from 18.00. to 19.00. the planes diving and making circles and then I heard two heavy explosions.

All the world’s media including the Muslims’ are reporting about the NATO – airforce attack on the Serbian positions around Sarajevo. The Headquarters of the Serbian Republic Army announced that it will respond by attacking the positions of the UN. The situation is becoming “hot”. It seems that the UN are finally finishing the transformation into the NATO – forces. I have been here for a long time. This is an extremely dangerous situation! When I am being asked what I am doing here I always cite the words that explain it in the best way. I can’t really remember whom these words belong to, but it goes like this: “Human life is just a fading light in the historical pace, but to understand and accept consciously the seriousness

of the historical moment is nothing else but a matter of dignity, human existence, pride and individual morality.”

18th of November,1994.

It is 22.00. I wrote continually until the 23rd of September. I haven't written anything for the last two months. So many things happened, so many destinies, so many tragedies. So many litres of blood soaked this suffered land.

I was at home, in Nish for ten days at the beginning of October. I had two scientific works to read at the Yugoslavian Congress of Orthopedists. I was with my children. I love them and miss them very much but I also love my suffering people. Thousands of looks and are pointed at me. They are looking at me fearing that I might leave them.

I will never desert them until this whole thing has been finished neither because of my profession nor because of my patriotism.

Pitched battles from the Drina to Krajina. The same situation in Sarajevo. A raging Muslims' offensive called "Freedom '94". Many things are going on.

Work, blood and death, many victories, too, have separated me from my journal. These two months have passed very quickly. I looked at my notebook with the names of my patients and now I continue writing about them. This chronology will, maybe, give the best picture of what was happening in this bloody war:

Stojanovich Zoran, 1961. a brave man from Vranje, a volunteer, a hero that participated in the battles on the plateau of Nishichi, the roof over our house. He is the father of a four-year-old girl. He was seriously wounded – the explosive wound of the stomach, his kidney being torn apart, as well as his spleen, diaphragm, lungs. I saved his life. He visited me ten days ago with his beautiful wife and an adorable daughter. He is again in the battle.

I operated a brave volunteer from Sombor, a Hungarian, Seketi Robert, that same day. He lost a half of his foot, and we joked about it because the size of his feet is fifty.

After that I operated a young Milan Davidovich, twenty five years old, from Kakanj (he now lives in Ilidza), a father of two kids. He is well now.

Marjanovich Nikola, 1965. from Ilidza. Serious wounds of the stomach and the spine. He was operated and is well now.

Vukovich Slobodan, 1970. from Ilidza. His pelvis and the large intestines were wounded. It was both God's and my fight for his life. Serious bleedings. The tamponade of the pelvis with six metres of bandages. His parents are weeping. I explain to them that I have just saved him from a certain death but that there is twelve hours to wait in order to be sure that he is saved. He succeeds. This is one more saved soldier in my column.

A Russian, Jurij Sharapov, a hero and a volunteer. His liver is torn apart. He is operated and saved. We send him to the Medical Military Academy in Belgrade.

The UNPROFOR transports the five of them to the airport. The Russian is with them, too, under false name. They somehow find out that he is Russian and refuse to drive him. "If you don't want to drive him we won't allow you to drive the others! We will cease to collaborate." Arguing. They give in eventually.

He is all right. Everything is going to be fine. We get the information from Pale that he got there and was sent to the Military Academy.

I am reading this text now, in November, 1995. and I add this: as major Jurij Sharapov is concerned, some ten, fifteen days ago I was told that some Russian had been waiting for four hours. I went out of the hospital.

"Zdravstvuj, doctor!" I recognized the major. He was seriously wounded a year ago. He was a bit thinner now, looking good though. He came to thank us for saving his life. He knew that we had to persuade French to drive him across the airfield.

I thanked him for coming here as a Russian, an orthodox, a friend to help the Serbian people in this awful war. I thank him for spending here three years giving his blood and health for us.

He was in a hurry going to Pale, to some new battles. I gave him a bottle of brandy to share it with his friends, Russians, our brothers.

The journal goes on: Bjelica Borislav, Nishichi – the ribcage, a slight intervention, everything is all right. Mirich Srdjan, 1965. Ilijash – his thigh artery being torn apart in the length of some ten centimetres. By – pass, and his leg is saved. He walks normally now.

It was a very complicated operation in the war hospital, on the operating table where there were still the remainings of the previous operations of intestines, fecals,etc. An operation like this can't be done in such conditions, it is impossible. It has to be done in the operating room where nothing else had been done before, only the clean vascular interventions. Our tables are always a bit dirty because there is simply no time for cleaning them completely. There is no order, clean things don't come before the dirty ones.

We connect arteries by graft which I was given by my hospital in Nish. I got a hundred centimetres, enough for saving ten legs. If I hadn't brought it with me I would have to cut off this boy's leg. We have asked for prostheses from UNPROFOR for a year now but they don't give them to us. They have given enough materials for two hospitals to Muslims in that time.

I deal with all the surgical diseases apart from the wounds; My patients are from one to ninety years old. I operate ulcers, intestines, hernias, apendixes. I barely have some sleep. If we were machines made in Germany or in America we would be dead now. The Serbian machine is indestructible and the best of all.

Boskovich Bozidar, 1943. – serious wounds of the thigh blood vessels and the stomach. I operate him. The granade fell near him, at several metres. It was a strong blast. He dies six hours after the operation. I can't help him; death is stronger. I finish the operation.

I look at him knowing that he has no chance. In the situation like this a surgeon is helpless. It crosses my mind how his family still hope for his recovery. Their crying still echoes in my head breaking the hearts of us all. I see tears in the eyes of the experienced nurses and doctors.

Shtaka Boshko and Grabovac Zoran, two civilians, the workers of "Elektroprenos" from Blazuj, near Vrelo of Bosnia. They are wounded near the hospital, at some two hundred metres. I am awakened by strong detonations on the seventeenth of November at 7 a.m. Grenades are falling all around the hospital. They are aiming at us. Tens of heavy explosions. None of them hit the hospital. "Elektroprenos" is hit. Two seriously wounded soldiers and one slightly wounded. There is neither fear nor panic. We receive the wounded patients early in the morning and do our job. We are fighting for life. Shtaka survives and Grabovac dies. We are being aimed at from Igman the same one that we gave up to UNPROFOR, the one that was considered to be a protected zone.

That night the Muslims announce that we fired at Sarajevo. A couple of hours later, around twelve o'clock a wounded man comes from Ilijash, Popich Pero, hit in the heart by a sniper. We operate him at once. The operation of the ribcage. Everything is fine. Right now life is winning in the battle with death.

I came in the operating room at 4 p.m. and got out at 7 a.m. I operated Mirjana Kravljacha, 1948. While she was working in the field the enemy's sniper hit her in the pelvis. All the blood, five litres of it in the stomach; fighting for life. It was a matter of seconds. We managed to save her. She was dead at one moment. We saved her from the certain death. These victories give us strength to live and work. Ten days later she dies. The reason for it was a thrombosis. A blood clot that came into the blood vessels in the pelvis was floating through them and closed the main artery causing death in that way. We are all so sorry!

There are many operated patients in this period. I have gone through many hardships with them. I live with them and their relatives. A big Muslims' offensive is going on around us. They are attacking the plateau of Nishichi, Treskavica, Bjelashnica from Igman aiming at us from Sarajevo. They are also firing at Majevisa, Doboje and Vozuća the river Una and Brčko. They announce proudly their successes on television. Our counteroffensive starts. We beat them on the Una and make them withdraw to Bihać. There is a hundred of their dead soldiers. America and the West threaten the Serbs with bombs. Ten days ago they didn't do anything about the Muslims' attacks from the protected zones.

The enemy's attack on Nevesinje was a disaster. One hundred and sixty dead bodies are along the road to Mostar. We stopped the offensive on Trnovo and the plateau of Nishichi. Haris Silajdžić is crying for help and he said a month ago that the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina didn't need any help from the West.

22nd of November, 1994.

It is 4 p.m. In the rare moments of my free time I watch the TV. "The generation 1999" A teenage movie about the students of one school who drive some fabulous cars, have machine guns, pistols, chains and beat their professors. Their professors bring robots to punish them. A science fiction movie, one might say. Strangely, in the middle of this movie a siren is heard. The Ambulance is stopping in front of the hospital. I go downstairs quickly.

A boy, thirteen years old, Boris, hit by a bullet in the head. Jelena, a fifth grade student did it. She killed a seventh grade student. They had some fight recently. She took a gun from her father and killed the boy. They have obviously ceased to be children. This war did it to them and to all other children here. That's war and its truth. This is not a science fiction. Life itself becomes a fiction.

28th of December, 1994.

This hospital is a stage, a reflection of the war in the Serbian part of Sarajevo. To get to know what is going on inside its walls means to become acquainted with the whole area from Igman and Nishichi to Nedjarichi. There are many seriously wounded soldiers here. Their number is greater when the battles are going on and at the time of the temporary truce it is smaller. There are also the soldiers visiting them. Their stories are here, too. One gets to know all their destinies and life stories here. The tears of the closest relatives and their rejoicing in surviving. The hospital – the halls and rooms of life and death.

This December was quiet in this area. There are less wounded patients, there are more of them with the ordinary diseases. The atmosphere reminds one of peace. The war is forgotten for a moment. The staff can feel again what it looks like to work in peace. It can recall the civilized life and the time before the war. A strange metamorphosis happens suddenly in thinking and appearance, the people start living the ordinary peaceful life. Will they really start living the normal life like that when the war stops? I am afraid it won't be that easy. The war has changed people, their way of thinking and living, destroying many families and many lives. It has caused a lot of pain. It has taken a lot of dearest ones. There are many homeless people who lost everything. Every day one or two lives is taken by a sniper or a stray bullet in this time of truce.

The hospital "Zica" covers a huge area. The front line is very long – some two hundred kilometres. There are many civilians, many soldiers, too many weapons and too much munition. And the enemy who doesn't spare children and women is on the other side of the line. Many people are mentally exhausted. Many incidents and accidents happen – I don't know how else to call the situations when a neighbour shoots a neighbour, a Serb kills a Serb, a citizen attacks its fellow citizen.

A couple of days ago, around 11 p.m. there is shouting and screaming outside the hospital. I run to the First Aid Station and see ten scared people that I know, crying. Their

friend, little Vuja, is wounded. Dragan Vujovich, a war veteran, an experienced warrior of the Serbian Guard from Ilidza. He was seriously wounded in Otes in December, 1992. He is lying on the table in the First Aid Station and the blood is coming out of his mouth. A bullet went through his head, there is no sign of life. I have known him since my arrival on Ilidza. I operated him, healed him. His wounds were finally healed these days after two years of treatment. He was always in good mood, smiling – and now, after two years he is dead, lying on the same table, in the same room, where his wounds were dressed a hundred times. I am looking at him feeling anger and fury. This is the feeling that surpassed a long time ago a feeling of sorrow for the lost ones. I can only feel anger now for the defeat, the loss. The war did it to all of us. There are no ordinary feelings, tears, sorrow – there is only anger. Little Vuja is gone.

His mother and sister are crying outside the hospital. They are desperate. His friends are crying and his legendary Commander of the Serbian Guard Zoka Kapetina is crying, too.

It was a tragic day. The day of his wedding.

His friends and fellow warriors were all at his wedding party. The war, alcohol, firing. “Ninety nine”, Zoka’s gun fired and Vuja fell down. The groom in the arms of his young bride. She was pregnant. A fatal accident. Little Dragan Vujovich is buried in the Serbian land for which he fought. His Commander, led by a destiny’s unfortunate hand lost a mate and himself. The mother lost her son and the sister lost her brother.

There were many tragedies like this in the war that brings only evil. One can feel it only if one is a part of it. Warriors and people in war know about these tragedies and pray for peace.

2nd of January, 1995.

A New Year. It is the fourth New Year in the war for me. I welcomed four New Years with the gun firing and bombs. Is this a year that we all were waiting for? Two years ago people wished on another peace. Now – their wish is that this year is better than the previous one. They are cautious and distrustful, but they are still hoping.

On the first of January in 1995. a four month truce was arranged. Can it last for that long and then turn into the permanent peace? It depends on everybody especially on the world’s leaders and their interests. If they finally decide that it is enough the war will stop. If this is only a game and a strategy the war will be even more horrible in the spring. God help us! We all hope, but no one is sure what will happen. We often believed in these false truces which were arranged for the enemy to organize better or to avoid the certain defeat. He would then attack again. We will see soon anyway. I hope too. I believe in the positive outcome and don’t believe in it at the same time. I am no fortune teller, but I strongly desire for peace. I wish peace for this people, for this suffered land. Peace for children. The last moment for it has come! We are facing a cataclysm!

World leaders, try to understand! You have to stop your war games or it would be too late! If there is still some feelings in you please save the children!

26th of May, 1995.

“The anti – truce” has started. Snipers and grenades on the battlefield of Sarajevo. There is a dead or wounded person every day. The furious battles have been going on since the end of March. “The Turks” wanted to surprise us and take Majevisa but after some successes in the beginning they were defeated.

From the first till the fifth May in 1995. – the West Slavonia. The Serbian people experienced NDH (the Independent State of Croatia) and Jasenovac¹⁷ again. This time instead of holes there were dredging machines and a massive tomb. Jasenovac, Pakrac, Okuchani, several thousands of dead civilians. Masacred women and children, ran over by tanks on the road from Okuchani to the Sava and the Serbian Republic. The same thing happened in many other places. Treason!

The sixteenth of May. Pitched battles started around Sarajevo at four p.m. They want to block the road to Pale. There is fire in the whole area of Sarajevo. A furious grenading started at 4.30. p.m. Grenades are falling into the center of Ilidza.

24th of May, 1995., 10.30.a.m. Enemy's grenade hit directly the Economic School during the gym class. There is a hole in the roof which is two metres wide. There are eight wounded girls, two of them with serious wounds. Fortunately, there isn't any dead student. All of the students were on the other side of the school yard. Ten minutes earlier there were a lot of kids on the spot where the grenade fell. Luckily, they went away because their teacher didn't show up. If they hadn't gone on time they would have all been dead now.

A warrior wounded in stomach comes from Igman, Radojevich Blashko, 1949. Vreoca. His liver is torn apart. I operate him. He is fine.

Right after that a warrior comes from Hadzichi. Davidovich Luka, 1945. The ribcage. A serious wound with huge bleeding, three and a half litres of blood. The operation is urgent, a difficult one, the patient is saved.

14th of June – 2nd of July, 1995.

It has been three years since the first battle for Sarajevo. The Serbian part of Sarajevo, the Muslim part of Sarajevo, the two parts of the city are more separated than they would be with the Berlin wall.

It started in April, 1992. and now it is June, 1995. I came here in October, 1992. where thousands of grenades and millions of bullets fell. The battles have lasted for three years. People have been on the front line all the time. Women, children, warriors. The hospital

¹⁷ a place where the Croats committed a genocide on the Serbian people in the Second World War

and the school. Everything here is on the front line. Thousands of people died in this valley. I became a part of it.

I wrote every day, almost always the same day when things happened. This time I couldn't do it. The reason for it is not that I didn't want it or hadn't anything to say, but I simply hadn't enough time for writing.

From the fifteenth of June to the second of July hundreds of wounded people were brought. Many operations. Every day ten to fifteen on average in both operating rooms. There was not enough time for sleeping. Whenever I sit down I sleep some five to ten minutes.

What we all expected and knew happened. The Muslim forces – sixty thousands of jihad – warriors surrounded the Serbian part of Sarajevo. There are many forces inside the city, too. We knew that they would attack us with all their available potentials. They have been announcing the so-called deblockade of Sarajevo for a long time. What they really want is to expel the Serbs from Sarajevo, to destroy a hundred thousand of Serbs, kill them, expel, burn down, cut their throats... They threaten to do it!

We know that they are going to attack in ten to fifteen days. Some information tell us that this will happen between 9th and 15th of June. The information is true. We know for sure that they are well armed, that they have brought tens thousand of grenades to their positions, that their artillery is strong, that they are ready, that their khojas encouraged them with the Muslim phanatism, to die for it. We know that their plan is to lose five thousand of warriors in order to conquer the Serbian part of Sarajevo. This is the battle with five thousand plastic bags which Alija Izetbegovich prepared for his soldiers whom he is ready to sacrifice in order to destroy the Serbs in the Serbian part of Sarajevo.

Five Muslim corps surrounded us, their best units. They are filled with poisonous hate towards the Serbs. We know that and we are waiting for them. Our forces are much weaker. There are sixty thousand of them and the number of our soldiers is fifteen thousand. Nevertheless, we all believe that we won't give up, that we will win. If only one part of the line from Nishichi across Vela to the hill Kokoshka, across Igman to Vrelo of Bosnia, Nedjarichi, Rajlovac, if only one part of it gives up it would be then a bloody Muslim fiest. Behind this line there is a hundred thousand of civilians, a hundred thousand of the Serbs. But the Serbian warriors are ready and calm, like they have never been before, they believe in victory.

The attack began on the fifteenth of June early in the morning, at two o'clock. Before it, on the fourteenth of June in the afternoon, two seriously wounded soldiers and one dead are brought to the hospital. They were from Nedjarichi. Two wounded patients are father and son. The father has no arm, the son's feet are broken. The father, born in 1938. Ilija, lost his right arm. His son, born in 1965. Momchilo, in the state of shock, with ruptures of small and big intestines, huge bleeding in the stomach and a serious wound of the left leg.

The father repeats: "Please, just save my son!"

We operate them at the same time. I "am doing" the father's arm. I have to cut it in the shoulder; it is smashed and destroyed. My colleague Popovich cuts the son's leg because it is completely smashed. I then go down to the other operating room and "do" the son's stomach. Two hours later they both are in their beds. The father without his arm and the son without his leg, both of them in life danger.

There were a lot of similar events in this war. Many times the father and the son were hurt and the mother son, at the same time. It is always difficult for all of them. The father who is himself in the bad condition looks at his wounded son. The young man, handsome and tall, legless and in life danger. This happened on the fourteenth in the afternoon.

And then the night came, and the ground opened at half past two.

It is thundering like never before, canonades are heard from the mountains, across Nishichi, Vela and Zenik, from Igman, Nedjarichi, Rajlovac. Everything is burning all around. I have a feeling that we are in the middle of hell, where lava is melting.

Tens of wounded people come to the hospital. We operate the seriously wounded at once. Borovich Miodrag comes among the first ones, born in 1968. from Ilijash – his ribcage is wounded. During the drainage of the ribcage he loses three and a half litres of blood. His heart stops in the Intensive Care. We bring him back by a quick heart massage and transfusion. We take him to the operating room. Minutes and seconds are important. I take away a part of the lung and the bleeding is stopped. It is an extremely difficult operation. His lung is removed, but the young man is strong, he can make it. I am hoping for his recovery.

He made it. He went to Pale tomorrow and I heard that he was recovering well. That was a struggle where seconds were of vital importance for one's life.

Many other patients come soon after that. We forget about Berovich. If I hadn't written it down I would have soon forgotten about his name because of the great number of patients that come here every day.

Around a hundred of patients came here on the fifteenth of June. There are a lot of wounded civilians, because the enemy is mercilessly grenading Ilidza, Hadzichi, Ilijash. I hear that Ilijash and Hadzichi are on fire. The enemy tries to scare us by aiming at civilians and makes our warriors wonder what happens to their dearest and desert the line.

Jihad – warriors are coming like crazy. Their infantry is big and strong. Our warriors are brave and persistent, though. They know that they have to protect their families. They strike back severely. The battles are cruel – they fight hand to hand, with knives and bombs in some places like Vela and Nishichi. The Muslims are trying desperately to break through our lines. They can't believe that the Serbs don't give up easily.

Five grenades fall some fifty metres away from the hospital while I am operating. The hospital is shaking, the instruments are clanking. Everyone is calm. The anesthetist brings a bottle for the ribcage and says: "This is the second." I respond: "No, it is the fourth" thinking of the grenade. He says even more calmly: "I mean the bottle, not the grenade."

15th and 16th of June have been the most horrible days for this hospital and for this area, the Serbian part of Sarajevo, the civilians and the soldiers. Everything is booming. Wounded patients come. We fear that the Muslims break the line somewhere and attack the civilians. And then the news comes: "We are doing fine, we don't let them get through!" This makes us stronger and fit enough to continue our work in the hospital more vigorously. We hear that hundreds of dead Muslims are lying in front our trenches but that they don't stop attacking. We are all certain that we will make it, that we won't give in. There are a lot of wounded people. We know how strong the attack is and how strong their forces are but we also know how courageously our soldiers are fighting back. We hear that there are many dead enemies lying around our trenches in Nishichi, Zenik, Vela, on Kokoshka, Nedjarichi, Vrelo of Bosnia.

16th of June, 1995.

The grenade explosions are being heard all day and night. The infantry battles are being fought. Lightnings. The sky is burning. Seriously wounded soldiers are coming. We transport the operated patients four times this day to Sokolac and Pale. We work like machines.

I went to bed around three this morning, after twenty four hours of work. At five a strong canonade of grenades starts around the hospital. I jump out of bed because a grenade falls on twenty metres away from the hospital entrance. I am still keeping the splinter that I found on the stairs that night. It is a miracle that none of them hits us. If the roof was hit than the whole floor would be destroyed.

Grenades are flying some fifty metres over the hospital and falling down. More than ten heavy grenades around the hospital. Everyone is working inside it, however. The patients are lying in their beds. The operating room is busy. I look through the window and see an empty yard. Only the driver of the Ambulance is parking it in the safe place.

More than a hundred and fifty wounded patients have come this day. Fifteen difficult operations. Sharenac Lazar, the stomach. Stanojevich Zoran, a serious wound of the leg, the amputation. My colleauges Popovich and Pejich are working. Djukich Stojan, an extremely serious wound, the rapture of kidneys, spleen, diaphragm, the bleeding in the ribcage, a deep shock. I operate the diaphragm, remove the spleen and one kidney, do a drainage of the ribcage. He is alive. I am working with my colleague Sekulich, a plastic surgeon and one new doctor who has just started working here.

Right after that a new wounded patient comes, Prstojevich Djordje, 1937. with a serious wound of the stomach. His friend Parlich Danilo, thirty five years old, died of the same grenade. Petrichevich Dragan. Djokich Stojan from Nedjarichi – an explosive wound of the stomach, with the rupture of the liver and the wounded eye. We operate the liver and send him to Sokolac for the operation of the eye.

A commander, Josipovich Dragan comes. I wrote about him some time ago. He is wounded in the ribcage, with his lungs being damaged and suffocation. I act quickly, take care of the ribcage and then make the lungs function again. He starts breathing. While he was driving his car on the road between Srednje and Semizovica he was shot. His lung was pierced and five ribs were broken. He made it by crawling a hundred metres into the bushes. He was taken to the hospital from there. I hope he will be fine. He is fine, actually, but with the wound like this one must stay ten days in the hospital. Two days later he wants to go.

“I have to be with my soldiers, I have to connect the lines, to defend the position of my brigade!” He knows that he is needed there. As a doctor I am aware of the fact that he must stay in the hospital, but I nevertheless allow him to go because I also know that it would be bad without him in the battlefield. Josipovich Dragan is a living legend, a commander and a hero, his soldiers’ idol. There is a panic among his soldiers now that he is not with them. His arrival with the drain and two bottles in his hands means a lot to them, because there is a legend about his immortality.

Two wounded ribcages come after him – Lukich Veljko and Zdrale Boshko. A drainage is done. Trifkovich Bratislav, 1973. – a serious wound of the stomach and the rupture of the liver. Novakovich Zoran, 1949. Vogoscha. A bullet got right into spine but it didn’t damage it. The colleague Saratlich takes out the bullet. Everything is fine.

Popovich Jelka, a woman, a civilian. Serious wounds of the small intestines and the stomach. Zivkovich Savo – a serious wound of the stomach, a wound of the aorta and the vein. We try everything but death is stronger this time.

This day has been hard and black. An extremely difficult day. But the news is still good – our forces don’t withdraw, dead Muslim bodies are near our trenches, they are still coming in waves but our soldiers are holding the line.

One of the most difficult lines is from Vela to Kiseljak, where the Serbian warriors of Rakovica Battalion are resisting vehemently the ten times stronger enemy. Unfortunately, their commander Slobodan Bratich is killed early in the morning. He was the brother of one of our workers. He has been always admired by his soldiers. We all feared that his soldiers might be demoralized by his death. But the opposite happened. This was a motivation for them to fight more bravely and defend the positions more eagerly killing many Muslim “specialists” known as heroes in propaganda.

This Battalion stopped one of the most severe attacks and together with the plateau of Nishichi had probably the most important role in the breaking of the Muslim Offensive.

17th of June, 1995.

The pitched battles are still being fought. Our forces are resisting the attacks bravely. The Muslims are being killed in the counterattacks. The morality of our warriors is more and more strong.

I haven't had any sleep for three days now. We are all happy because of our army's successes.

The eighteenth of June, the same situation. The nineteenth of June is the also the same. More than four hundred of patients go through this hospital. Our Ambulance has been taking the operated patients to Sokolac. They are being transported from there to Belgrade, to the Military Medical Academy, The Urgent Center and The Orthopedist Clinic "Banjica".

The road is extremely dangerous. The Ambulance is being aimed at all the time. Our drivers and the nurses that accompany them are very brave. They are passing today the most dangerous road in the world, that's for sure. Every time they set off there is a risk that they never come back. They are fearless because they feel responsible for the patients. God is with us. They always return safe. The truck and the van have been hit twice so far but no one was hurt.

On the twentieth of June we are doing a difficult operation. Perishich Milorad, 1963. from Sokotac. The explosive wound of the stomach with huge bleeding, I have never done something like this before. There is a bleeding everywhere. The lungs are destroyed, the diaphragm is smashed, there is a liver rupture, a massive rupture of the gaster and the spleen, a rupture of the main arteries, the pankreas. I am cutting the stomach in four places at the same time. I am trying to stop the bleeding in time. I am operating the liver but the bleeding continues. The gaster is operated but it starts bleeding again. I see the spleen. I am taking it out and find the blood vessels... The pankreas is "done", too. I find one more blood vessel. A lung is finished, too. After three hours and twenty eight bottles of blood the bleeding is finally stopped. The young man is alive. Miracles happen sometimes.

The twenty first of June. The battles are still going on but they are less intensive. There are so many dead Muslims that the attacks are not so strong as they were before. Our warriors are firm and steady. We hear that dead bodies begin to smell on the fields of Vela, Nishichi, above Hadzichi and on Igman. They can't take them away. Our soldiers are asking them to do it because they smell really bad but the bodies remain where they are. There are three thousand of the Muslim fanatics who are expelled from their lines.

That day: Lukich Nenad, 1953. – a seriously wounded stomach. Mojsilovich Tihomir – the same kind of wound. My colleague Chalich is working. Savich Milorad – a wound of the ribcage and the main arteries of the left collarbone. Shikuljak Momir – the explosive wound of

the intestines. Bojanich Radovan – a wound of the small and big intestines. Markovich Miroslav, a young member of the Special Units from Ilidza – his right half of the ribcage is destroyed together with the armpit artery. He was saved at the last moment. It was a matter of minutes. A struggle for his life. The bleeding was stopped and the blood vessels connected. He is alive.

Young Surla Mihailo, also a member of the Special Units from Ilidza – serious wounds. The amputation of the right leg, below the knee. The right hip destroyed, the left lower leg smashed, the stomach, the ribcage. He is in the state of shock. Markovich Miroslav and Surla Mihailo, two members of the Special Units of MUP¹⁸ from Ilidza rushed to surround the Muslims and destroy them in the place where the line was cut through in Semizovac, on the road Semizovac – Srednje. Our brave boys managed to surround and defeat them. Two members of the Special Unit were killed there. One of them is the husband of our nurse Milanka. We recognized him. We knew how hard this would be for her.

There are sixty nurses in our hospital; fourteen of them lost their husbands in the last three years. Many of them lost their brothers, too. This war is cruel. Screams of sisters and wives seeing their dead or wounded brothers and husbands are heard in the halls every day.

The Muslim Offensive is stopped. There are thousands of dead Muslims. But they are still attacking. They choose a different place every day. There are ten wounded soldiers in our army and several operations every day. We are all exhausted but we don't pay any attention to it. If the soldiers can make it in the battlefield so can we here. We can manage even without sleeping. More than ten thousand grenades fell on Ilijash. Hadzichi is destroyed. Grenades are thundering on Ilidza. Our nurses from Hadzichi and Ilidza come to work under the rain of grenades every day. It is a miracle that nobody has been hurt so far. Our doctors are under the rain of grenades every day – on the way to the hospital, in the hospital or in their apartments.

Doctor Anushich was in his flat when a grenade destroyed the upper floor. Some grenades fell close to the bus that takes our workers to the hospital, and yesterday one fell on the bus stop. If it had fallen an hour earlier nobody would have survived it!

The enemies are furious for their Offensive was stopped by our forces, their best units were almost destroyed and their four corps were defeated by Sarajevo – Romania corps so now they are aiming at civilians, destroying the Serbian towns, killing the Serbian children and women.

This only makes our soldiers stronger. Our enemies think that by destroying the civilian aims like schools, hospitals, villages they would destroy the morality of our warriors,

¹⁸ MUP – the Ministry of Police

but they are wrong – it only becomes stronger. They don't realize that the price for such evils will be too high for them.

Many patients with the wounds of heads caused by splinters come to the hospital this time. Our brain surgeon Saratlich is working day and night. There haven't been so many wounds for the whole time of this war as for these past ten to fifteen days. Almost every second to third patient comes with a wounded head.

One of the most horrible days for me was the twenty ninth of June, 1995. Vasich Andja, 1948. From Nedjarichi is brought around twelve o'clock. A grenade from Kasindolska street. It fell next to her house. It blew up her right upper arm. Nothing was left but a piece of muscle and skin from the elbow to the shoulder. I am doing the amputation of the arm which is always the most difficult thing for me. It is hard to amputate a leg but it is even worse to amputate an arm.

I have just finished it when a child comes from Vogoscha. Radich Darko, 1982. He was in the cellar of his home when it started thundering and a heavy grenade fell right next to the house. He ran out to see what happened to the house. Another grenade fell the same moment and the child fell. He was wounded badly. (The enemy has got a new strategy: to fire several grenades on the same place so the destructive effect is greater).

The child is brought to the hospital in the state of unconsciousness. Brain prolapsus, breathing is weak. I put the drain in the ribcage. The stomach is growing, it is being filled with blood. The kidneys are destroyed. There is blood instead of urine in the cateter. The right hip is smashed. We take him to the operating room. I open him. there is bleeding in the stomach and the ribcage. The heart is not beating. I massage him five, ten, fifteen minutes trying to bring life back to him. He is being given blood, but nothing can help. The child is dead! Tomorrow, on the 30th of June, is his thirteenth birthday. He was burried that day. Born on the 30th of June in 1982. and burried on the 30th of June in 1995. on his unfortunate birthday!

Wounded patients still come. This time from Nedjarichi. Our soldiers are making a great break through. Early in the morning soldiers from Ilidza go to attack the object known as "Elementara" or "Betonara". It is the most important strongpoint in this part of the front, in the city. The Serbian warriors, brave like mad run into Muslims' trenches, take over "Betonara" from where the whole city can be controlled. There are no victims, only several wounded. Two captured Muslims – a commander and a warrior. Eleven Muslim dead bodies remains in trenches. The Muslims are running away.

Dragan Kulina is brought. Operated. He is well. Josip Bubak is brought, too. The ribcage. Also operated. Recovering.

The capture of "Elementara" lasted from the morning until the evening on the twenty ninth of June. The Muslims tried four times to return. But our brave soldiers don't give up. They defend the position. The Muslims become weak. They finally realize that they lost this

important strongpoint. They tried to break, destroy and defeat us. They didn't succeed in it except for the small part around Semizovac. We won. There are more than a thousand dead. We are progressing now. We moved the line onward in Nedjarichi and Nishichi. Our soldiers are full of confidence. They believe in the ultimate victory.

From the twelve o'clock of the 29th of June until twelve o'clock of the 30th of June I did seven complicated operations. I mentioned the woman who lost her arm, the child and then the two ribcages, the abdomen, and another one and in the morning the third one.

On the 30th of June I am operating Momchilo Glishich from Ilijash, 1967; an awfully complicated operation, in technical sense – extraordinary. His duodenum which was outside the peritoneum was hurt. One kidney was wounded, too. There is a huge bleeding. I am working with my colleague Chalich for almost three hours and we manage to save the boy. We believe that there won't be any consequences.

On the 30th at night several wounded soldiers come from Zenik where the enemy tried to make a break – through. I do three drainages in five minutes, one in every room. Every one of them is well, but it is sad. One of our soldiers died. Pushara Djole – a bullet in the stomach, probably the stomach aorta. He was dead when he came here.

We hear that Hadzichi is on fire. The Serbian towns Ilijash, Hadzichi, Nedjarichi, Rajlovac, Ildza are destroyed. Hundreds of grenades fall every day. It is odd that there is no more victims. But the citizens are cautious and disciplined, they don't come out of their homes.

1st of July, 1995.

A relatively peaceful day. Then, around three o'clock p.m. a wounded soldier from Ildza is brought. Hit by a splinter. A member of our tank's crew. He went to wash his hands and was hit. He's got a serious wound of his left lower leg, but he'll be fine. His name is Krsmanovich Boro, from Kakanj. A tough guy. He keeps asking about whether he will lose his leg or not. I say: "You will keep your leg." He is happy. A colleague Anushich finishes the operation. The leg is fine and warm, the circulation is good, the bones are connected. It is going to be all right.

In the evening, at nine o'clock wounded civilians start coming from Hadzichi. It was peaceful the whole day which was obviously the Muslim plan. They waited until the evening for the ones who wanted to go shopping to some stores that work at night. They shelled the civilians with grenades at nine o'clock. There are four to five of them. The most seriously wounded is Jovanovich Lucija and her son Jovanovich Zoran, 1976. The son is not as bad, however. His wounds are not penetrating. But we are struggling for his mother's life. Serious wounds of the stomach, the liver, big and small intestines, the pelvis, the ribcage, the arm, the head. It is the second of July today and she is a bit better, we hope she will make it. The son is in the other room. Last night he asked me: "Doctor, how is my mother?" The colleague

Chalich finished the operation last night. It is hard to say what will happen to her. When I came into the son's room this morning he didn't ask me anything. He is afraid to ask.

Malinovich Radisha, 1978. is here – a serious wound of the right thigh bone. Then, a boy Shakota Jovo, 1977. – a serious wound of the ribcage and the stomach. He is well now. There are several slightly wounded, without penetrating wounds. Their life is not in danger. Two grenades, serious wounds, a whole night work. The civilians are being hurt all the time. Our towns are being damaged, too, but our soldiers hold the positions firmly and decisively.

3rd of July, 1995.

What is the matter with this world? Last night, in the chaos of death, ruins, grenades and sorrow, while grenades were falling my colleagues and me were jumping with joy because of the success of Yugoslavian, Serbian basketball players in Atina. Divac, Danilovich, Djordjevich. We were happy for it like a man in a desert for seeing a drop of water. We won in the Finals of the European Basketball Championship. Victory!

We are the best!

At the same time we are greatly disappointed in the behaviour of Greek audience, our brothers; they were hissing our hymn. They should have done it to Ustashas. They used to be our friends! Why? But we don't think that this is the whole people, these are only the fans. Many great Greeks came to the first line to say hello and give us the courage to persist in our fight. Greek priests also came to give us their support. The Mayor of Atina came, too. No one of the Serbian Mayors has come here.

Our soldiers were singing, firing, rejoicing in the victory.

The third of July. Seven o'clock in the morning. An Ambulance siren. Explosions and grenades outside. A seriously wounded young man, Teshich Milan, four bullets, a burst of fire, Hadzichi. We have been fighting for his life for two and a half hours. I know that there is no chance from the start. He dies. Has he got any children? Who is going to cry over him? I have no time for thinking about that.

Doctor Chalich is operating a six – year – old child in the operating room on the ground floor. Vitor Slobodan. His stomach is wounded by a grenade. A complicated operation. He was hit on the terrace of his home. He is alive. We hope for best. He will make it! The operation is successful.

Hadzichi again. One more boy comes, Miljanich, nineteen years old. Browing again. The pelvis and the stomach. A complicated operation. He is alive. I operated his brother three years ago. I wrote about him, the boy with the wound of the ribcage, being twice clinically dead.

The arrival of our basketball players at nine tonight. Magnificent! We are all happy. Our hearts and the hearts of the soldiers are full of joy. We remember once again the

marvelous victory of our players in Atina. It is the same situation here, we alone – against the whole world. And we are the best!

It is thundering outside. The battle. What a contrast – between life and death and joy and sorrow. The whole Universe is in one place. What is going to happen to us tonight, tomorrow and the days that follow? We are going to win! We will stay here! But where is the end to all this?

It is one o'clock after midnight. Slobodan Vitor, six years of age. Life is fading away, the eye pupils are wide, the puls and the pressure can't be measured. We give him immediately blood, oxygen, liquid. Reanimation! He is back. The eye pupils narrow. It is unbelievable, he is going to make it. "Can I have some water, please? You didn't give me anything to eat, for Christ's sake! Give me at least that small bottle of water!" After two infusions his blue face and white lips begin to get the normal colour. Is he going to survive? Will he see the next morning? Will he win death? A Browning bullet is like a half of his foot.

I am writing this in November, 1995.

A couple of days ago a kid was here for a check up. He is running and trying to hide. His mother can't catch him. "I don't want any surgeon! I don't like surgeons. Some other doctor can look at me but I never want to see any surgeon in my life!" He was operated two more times in Belgrade, and he is running now like nothing had ever happened.

If this were the only victory of this hospital and its staff we would be the happiest in the world. And how many such victories did we have in this greatest hospital in the world in the previous period?

4th of July, 1995.

It is five o'clock in the afternoon. The Serbian wounded soldiers are coming from Nedjarichi. The conquered positions towards the running knot of Stupa are held firmly. The enemies know what they lost and now they are throwing grenades immensely. One grenade has seriously wounded five soldiers.

The first soldier called Struja was brought. Serious wounds of extremities. Fortunately he had on a bullet proof vest. He is not in life danger. He tells me: "Laza, Pichnuti is wounded (this is the nickname of Sinisha Andrich, 23 years old). We have three more wounded." Sinisha was not brought. I go to the operating room to operate a boy from Bratunac.

I have had strong pains in my back for two days. I barely finish the operation. They carry me out together with the patient. He is in the bed number five and my bed is number one. I still feel the pain. My comrade Srdjan Milovanovich is waiting for me outside the operating room: "Sinisha is dead, Laza!" It is a shock for me. Though very young he was my friend, a great guy, always joking. Everybody likes him. He is a brave soldier. I can't believe that he will never come here and say something funny and makes us laugh.

On the fifteenth of June he was helping his father on the front near Rakovica in stopping the most vehement Muslim attack in that part of the battlefield of Sarajevo. he was wounded. Slightly. He was killed today on his line, in Nedjarichi.

Goodbye, dear Sinisha! Many tears will be cried for you.

5th of July, 1995.

I am lying motionless. It is four p.m. A funeral, Vlakovo, the Serbian graveyard. I hardly manage to get up, sit in the car and go to the funeral. That's the least I can do. This is for Sinisha Andrich. I come to the chapel walking with difficulty. Nails are being hammered in the cover of the coffin. The coffin is poorly made, with no paint on it. I am sorry I didn't see Sinisha. It is better that way, maybe. I will always remember his smile. He is being carried to his tomb. I go to the hospital. The last goodbye.

The rain drops are beginning to fall, the sky is crying. His fellow soldier, a brave boy Jasko is being buried at the same time. He was killed with Sinisha. It was his wish to go to the most dangerous line in Nedjarichi. He didn't have to go there. His wife and his father are crying. Two great young men Sinisha and Jasmin are going away, to heaven.

12th of July, 1995.

Saint Peter's day. Srebrenica was liberated by the "Serbian eagles", the soldiers of the Army of the Serbian Republic. Terrorists have been coming out of that "protected zone" killing the Serbian civilians for three years. They were protected by the UNPROFOR. They didn't think that the Serbian patience won't last forever and that there would be no one to protect them then.

Last night it was thundering in the valley of Sarajevo, from Vogoscha to Nedjarichi. It was a desperate try of the losers. They are aiming at the Serbian settlements, the civilian targets. They have no chance against the Serbian soldiers.

On the tenth of July, at five p.m. a six – year – old girl Jelena was brought from Ilidza. She was wounded by a splinter in her flat. The stomach. Everything is fine. The girl is very bright, knows everething. She doesn't cry. She asks question like an adult.

There is nothing new in the West, Erich Maria Remark. Or: children are suffering every day in the Serbian part of Sarajevo, Doctor Lazich.

It is the month of August, 1995. It is hot because of tones of steel of Ustashes' howitzers, VBRs, NATO planes which destroyed the radar systems and the navigational systems of the Republic of Srpska Krajina, also the rockete systems. Tones of steel, hot steel fell this beginning of August on Knin, Lika, Kordun, Banija. My Banija, where I spent twelve months fighting together with the suffered Serbian people for freedom, woods, fields, stables... For life. Simple life.

Petrinja, Glina, Kostajnica, Dvor are on fire. Ustashes' armada is destroying Srpska Krajina which is completely alone. Some call it a treason, the others say they ran away. They

neither betrayed nor escaped, they were attacked by the Ustashas' armada which has been given the weapons from the West for four years. Well trained it attacked the poorly armed and not numerous Serbian people. The great number of the rest of Serbian civilians was watching it calmly. Srpska Krajina was in the arms of the enemy in a couple of days. All that I have been fighting for and the Serbian people in Krajina for the last four years disappeared in one moment.

It couldn't disappear in just one moment. The world wanted it that way. Ustashas' dirty hand did the job for this expansive world. What can be said? I am sorry. I feel bad about the Serbian people. I sympathize with each of the sufferers on the roads in the Serbian Republic and Serbia; with hundreds thousands of suffered children, women, old people – those driving tractors and those in cars, those walking and those on horsebacks, those that are driving cattle on the asphalt roads to Serbia.

I suffer together with the people that lost their homes, their homeland, searching for the exile. Half a million of Serbs have become refugees in a couple of days losing their forefathers' homeland and their country. There is no Serbian Knin, Serbian Glina, Dvor, Kostajnica, Vrgin – Bridge, Vojnici, there is no heroic Lika anymore. Ustashas destroyed it all.

And we, Serbs should feel bad about this. We should be ashamed for letting down our people. I am feeling awful as a doctor, as a man and as a soldier of the Serbian Republic of Krajina, I am very sad and I have every right to feel that way. At least I have that.

Is the civilized world looking at this column of men, women, children and old people with bundles, half a million of them, Serbian refugees running in front of the Ustashas hordes and their knives? Can it feel anything? No, it can feel nothing! We are watching their televisions, CNN, BBC, Euro – News and all the others we can; there isn't a single sign of sympathy – only because it is the Serbian people. If it were a case about a hundred of Muslims or Croats the whole world would be angry with Serbian barbarism. What is half a million of Serbs? Nothing! Isn't this similar to Hitler's philosophy, to Auschwitz? What were Gypsies, Serbs, Jews for Hitler?! Nothing! A million, two, ten millions, nothing!!! Concentration Camps, death, hard work. Hundred Serbs for one German! Isn't this the same thing? What is half a million Serbs comparing to a hundred of Muslims or Croats?!

When a hundred of Muslims or Croats is in question the whole world knows about it; television, newspapers, politicians, poets, writers protest, strike and are shocked with the Serbian barbarism. And when Serbs are victims? They are just cattle. And cattle is to be slaughtered and killed.

You "civilized, barbaric Europe! German, Norman and Saxon barbaric tribes were your recent history. You have not come far since then. Your technology and science, the way

of life, buildings and bridges developed, but you are still a barbaric land. Insensitive and rude.

I wonder what happened to my friends from Krajina. One family from Krajina is in Nish, in my family's home. I spent some time with them in Dvor, in 1991. A man, his wife and two children came to my flat with some of their personal things. They have been there for several months.

I saw them on the 23rd of August when I visited Nish. We talked. What is their future? Who are they? They feel like strangers, Serbian refugees in Serbia. They are desperate, they can't see a way out. Their forefathers had built something, they themselves had a life and now they are left with only a few pieces of clothes. How can one start from scratch? The number of such broken families in Yugoslavia is not known. There are many destroyed lives and tragic destinies. There is much despair and grief. How to start a new life? This is the question they are asking themselves all the time. Krajina is in Ustashas' hands. There is no one there anymore. There are many deserted homes, fields, forests, dead bodies of old people who couldn't escape. There are deserted towns and places where the Croatians don't want to return to. Serbian people lived in Krajina before the war and made ninety percent of the whole population and now they are driven away. Ustashas think they can bring their people there. It is not easy to do.

Although I have always been an optimist I think that we lost Krajina for ever. We shouldn't have let it happen. In 1991. I believed and I still do that Serbia must be defended in Krajina. Krajina has always defended everything Serbian. We will see in a couple of years what it is to happen. I hope I am wrong but I am a pessimist now.

I am proud of the Brigades from Banija and Kordun where I spent thirteen months of war in Krajina. They fought bravely for several days. Ustashas ran away from Karlovac and Sisak in front of the Brigades of Banija and Kordun. But Knin was defeated unfortunately and Ustashas came to men of Banija and Kordun from back. They fought bravely not wanting to let the civilians fall in the hands of the enemy.

This is where I would like to finish this journal. I started it in the August of 1991. and its end could be now in the month of August, 1995. What Fortune's game is this? How strange life can be sometimes. The hot month of August, 1991. The Sun, freedom, Serbian resistance and Serbian victory. The hot month of August, 1995. Tones of hot steel are burning the air above the Serbian Krajina, they are burning down the Serbian land, the Serbian wood, destroying the Serbian towns.

This is the end of the journal but I would like to add a post scriptum with the following title:

NATO – air forces are attacking the Serbian land!

I had been in Nish since the 23rd of August in 1995. I thought of going back to Sarajevo ten days later because I felt that something was going to happen. NATO was giving us ultimatums. They demanded from us to withdraw our heavy artillery around Sarajevo. But we live around Sarajevo. Our space is twenty kilometres wide and they want us to move the artillery twenty kilometres away from Sarajevo. Where should we put it? In the territory of Croatia? Or in the Muslims' territory? On Pale, they say. How can we defend the Serbian territories from there? We can't survive here without the artillery. Our artillery means safety to us, because hordes of Muslims are attacking. More than sixty to seventy thousand of them from the outside. How many of them are there from the inside, from Sarajevo? We have to defend ourselves. Our number is small. This hundred thousand of people would be run over without the artillery. They suggest that we act from the background. We have no background. It is only ten kilometres long. Muslim and Croatian territory is behind it.

We can't withdraw the artillery because a hundred thousand of men, women and children would fall into Ustashas' hands. We can't accept that. NATO know that. That's why they presented us an ultimatum like this.

I was listening to the News on the radio in my flat on the thirty first in the morning and jumped out of the bed. Belgrade TV announced: "NATO forces are firing at the Serbian positions, the Serbian part of Sarajevo, Ilidza, Vogoscha, Hadzichi, Ilijash. Planes are throwing tons and tons of bombs and grenades. Human casualties are numerous."

I tried to get through to Sarajevo at that moment, Ilidza, Vogoscha, Pale. There was no one. The lines were dead. My family, parents, wife are worried: "There is no reason for you to go there now. You came here by chance. You'll die if you go there. You have given a lot so far. Wait for a day or two!"

"No, I won't die", I say. "Maybe, I will though, but I'll die here if I stay one more day and listen to what is happening there. I have to be with this people, they need me!"

I got into my car the following morning around 3.30. and was in Ilidza in the afternoon. I was driving from the Drina to Ilidza in the time of the strongest NATO attacks, only two hours after the road on which I was going had been attacked: from Sokolac, across Kaljina to Srednje. I came to Ilidza fearing that my friends were killed. What happened to Ilidza? What happened to people and the hospital? It made me happy to see that everybody was alive and the hospital was in its place.

When I think about it now it doesn't look so horrible but then, listening to the news about NATO planes destroying the Serbian land, the towns...I decided to go there immediately. I was not afraid. I only wished to be there.

Someone may ask: "What is so great about it?" my answer is: "This people deserved such a decision. They were big in their fight and I made such a decision thanking to its shine and purity. I wanted to share in the destiny of the Serbian people."

I would never forgive myself if I hadn't been there, in the hospital in Ilidza, with this people, when NATO began to destroy the Serbian population.

I witnessed the bombing of the hospital on the 8th of September. We were afraid of NATO planes but we feared more the special forces from Igman.

The eighth of September. A beautiful day. Warm and sunny. A real Indian summer. It is 12.30.a.m. Patients are sitting in the Sun in front of the hospital. Some people are waiting for the bus. Two little kiosks selling juice, chocolates, fruit. Many people outside the hospital. Suddenly horrible detonations are heard from the church in Blazuj approaching us.

Grenades from Igman! I shouted: "Everybody in the shelter, under the stairs!" I manage to get to the half way to the hospital when a grenade falls next to the entrance. Everything is shaking. Dust and smoke. I hear the breaking of glass, screams, some more explosions. And then grenades gradually move away.

There are frightened faces of nurses and patients all around me. I am in the middle of that crowd. I hear screams from the frontyard. I want to go there but my legs are too heavy. It is not fear, it is a shock. Then I say to myself – you must get out, you can't stay here! Go out and see what is happening to those people. My legs begin to move by themselves.

I see a wounded nurse with blood running down her cheeks. I see that it is a slight wound. Then I go to the yard. Clouds of dust. Someone is telling me: "Don't go out!" I go to the left to see what is going on in front of the hospital. Horror... Several patients are crawling, bleeding. Some dead bodies. I stop for a second. Two nurses, one doctor and one technician come along. I tell them: "Don't go out. Let's wait at least a minute. Don't let us die in vain."

After ten to fifteen seconds we get out. there are no more grenades. we carry the wounded, the dead bodies. Slightly wounded patients crawl to the hospital. Chaos! The First Aid Station is full of people. We are giving the first aid. There is no help for some. There were six babies at the time of bombing, we were very lucky that nothing happened to them.

The same French and English who when passing by used to stop here and have a drink at Ljubica's, today threw their deadly present here.

Ljubica and her husband died of their grenades, in their kiosk, at work. Did they hear the crying of their seventeen – year – old son, who lost both his mother and father. Why both of them? Why didn't at least one of them stay alive?

The French gave us an incubator for our babies. The same French are killing the people here, doctors, nurses, destroying our hospital. What are they? Beasts?

The bombing of the hospital wasn't accidental. The fact that there is no other object in the surrounding area except for the church confirms that. You always say with pride that you never miss your target for more than five metres. If you didn't aim at the church and the hospital then you missed the next target, the Barracks of the Igman Brigade, for the whole eight kilometres.

By the way, NATO planes are constantly flying over the hospital day and night, and we never know when will they throw their deadly load on us.

Hadzichi. Tens of rockettes hit that small place. Men, women and children are killed. Vogoscha... Iidza... Many are killed by their rockettes, bombs and guns. Horrible detonations are heard every day from the direction of Lukovica. We watch on television: the Faculty of Law is destroyed.

The NATO bombers are destroying the Serbian places and wonder how these people walk calmly downthere.

Nights are the most dreadful. From twelve o'clock until five in the morning they throw their fatal cargo. They are aiming at roads, bridges, factories. They also fire at the munition warehouses. They turn nights into days. The whole valley of Sarajevo is glowing. It is hard to describe how it looks like when the bomber planes are flying over you howling and throwing bombs with hollow explosions. There is fear whatsoever.

We have some wounded patients but also the ones under stress, especially children. They come here scared, screaming. The parents are hysterical.

I noticed an interesting thing: in the last ten days more than fifteen children suffering of constipation was brought here. Normally, one child with the same problem came here within a month. This time fifteen of them was here in the last ten days. Fear caused the cessation of the intestinal functioning and the stomach flatulence. This hasn't probably been scientifically described so far. It can make a good theme for some Congress of psychologists – "NATO Air Force and its effects on children".

We watch on television the destruction of the welfare of the Serbian Republic – its TV towers, the communication systems, bridges, roads, factories, farms. More than seven hundred of such objects were destroyed in the last two weeks. More than three and a half thousand of combat flights. It is the greatest number in such a short period since the Second World War.

It is five o'clock in the morning. The Ambulance arrives. A twenty seven – year – old young man is being brought. His family name is Galinac. He is from Vogoscha. Very seriously wounded but still alive. He recognizes me: "Doctor Laza, don't let me die, please!"

I tell him: "You'll make it friend. We are going to operate you and you'll be fine."

He asks me: "Hey, doctor, how is my sister?"

"She is here, don't worry, just relax."

I go out and ask some people about his sister. They tell me that he was hurt by a NATO rockette on one of the bridges between Srednje and Semizovac, at three o'clock in the morning. His sister was killed right there. Seven days ago his twin brother was killed and burried in Pale. He was there with his sister to see their brother's grave and they were coming back home in the cover of the night.

A NATO bomber plane threw its deadly cargo on a bridge between Semizovac and Srednje. Unfortunately their car was nearby at the time of bombing.

“Will I ever see my kids again? My two boys. Doctor, will my children lose their father?” “Galinac, don’t worry. Everything will be fine.” – I tell him.

I can’t help him though. He dies a half an hour later.

A little while after that man comes, frightened and worried. He wants to know what happened to his son and daughter. He was transformed into an old man in one moment. He lost his twin sons and a daughter in seven days. He’s got only his two grandsons.

What are you doing? Why are you destroying these people? Who wanted you here? Nobody is fighting against you! Why are you interfering? You have just destroyed one family! You say that you don’t aim at people, that you destroy only the material objects. This family is enough to make you war criminals. You accuse Karadzich, Mladich, Martich, and God knows who else of being war criminals. What is the name of your General? What is the name of the General Secretary of NATO association? What is the name of the pilot who launched the rockette and killed two young people leaving two kids without parents? One father lost three children! Are you not then the worst war criminals in the world?! But, since you have all the power in the world and the mighty have things their own way, God is on your side.

One day I will be a witness, I will testify to the crime of the NATO pilots and their Chief Commander, Smith is his name I think. I will bear the witness to the crime of Willie Class and NATO, about the crime of Butros Gali. You are all war criminals, gentlemen!

These days, while I am writing this an International Conference in Dayton,

I simply can’t write about the Western Bosnia, about the fall of Drvar, Petrovac, Mrkonjich - Town, Sanski Most, Shipovo. I don’t know what to say. How did it happen and why? Did somebody plan it in advance? I am positive about one thing, though: the Serbian warriors were left alone there, like the Serbs in Krajina. They couldn’t resist the numerous regular soldiers of the Croatian Army, Croatian guardists, Croatian Council of Defence, Muslim forces and NATO air forces. Their heavy artillery couldn’t resist the forces for quick interventions. They had to withdraw their troops to Banja Luka. And when one think about it it is strange how quickly the 51:49 ratio came up. Immediately after that the Conference is organized. It is all too well synchronized!

The Conference – a spectacle!

I am writing this on the 21st of November, on the Day of St. Archangel. It has been announced that the peace is achieved. I see a hotel “Sarajevo” which once was called “Belgrade” on the Muslim TV. Celebration, champaign. They are celebrating. Our television reports that there is a celebration in Banja Luka. They are showing Pale. There is no one there. No one is happy in Ilidza. People are scared and doubt in the good nature of the negotiations.

I am scared, too. I am scared of the negotiations where the main say belongs to the Americans and all the westerners who, trying to be neutral, are playing the role of peace makers. It was only yesterday that they threw bombs on us. The wolf may lost his teeth but never his nature. They didn't succeed with their bombs and now they try as peace makers. I am a pessimist because we Serbs can endure all the hardships in the time of war and lose everything in peace. I fear to think what these negotiations may bring to us. I hope, nevertheless, that it will be fine. Serbs have been hoping for ten centuries now and this hope doesn't come true. Only the fear seemed to be justified.

God, give us peace and let this be the end of the war, because it is the most important thing, after all! Let us fight for our land in peace.

Help us St. Michael that the peace arranged on your Day will last. What can be more said? Let there be peace for the Serbian Republic, the Serbian people, Serbia, the Balkans and the world. The peace of God. I hope this word is the right one, with the true meaning in itself.

I finish this journal with this sentence tonight. If the situation changes then another journal will be written, probably more horrible, with more blood in it, but a shorter one. Because the casualties will be greater then. I repeat once again, I wish that the peace is real and that this is the end of both the war and my writing!

I wish peace for all the children in the world as well as for my children. Because this war has been a flame that can blaze up again any time. Let this flame be extinguished for ever on this day. Let the world start a better life together with the Serbs in it.

I will go back to my Nish, to my children, my friends, live, work and tell of the most beautiful epopee, about the great courage and the beauty of the Serbian people and about its magnificent struggle. I will always carry in my heart this people and the place where I spent three years.

The biggest reward for me would be if this land remains Serbian and my people would live happily, if the destiny of the Serbian krainas won't happen to them. This would be the greatest reward for me. Then I will come here to see my friends and talk to them about the war days and say: "God forbid that this happens again!"

As the final conclusion I would like to cite what I wrote on a piece of paper on the fifth of November in 1994...

I have heard some words of a song on television around 9 p.m.: "Have you ever dreamed about your home town?" I dream of it every night. I dream about my family, my children, my street... When someone asks me how I manage to live here, under Igman, having been separated from the family for two years, I say: I am here, in reality, with my people, and at night, when I go to sleep, I am with my children in my dream. When I wake up in the morning I can't tell the difference between the reality and the dream.

Miodrag Lazich: THE JOURNAL OF A WAR SURGEON

Knin 1991 – Serbian Sarajevo 1995.

It has been already written about the insanity of the war in Bosnia and it will be written a lot about it in the future. Many will speak and lighten up from different angles the great misery of the people from this area. The testimony of Dr.Lazich is hardly going to be surpassed in its directness and sincerity of describing the evil that happened here.

Dr. Lazich's Journal is a journal of horrors but at the same time it is a monument to Man. It tells about horrors because it is written by a surgeon from the front line in the war where the countless number of men, women, children and old people die in pain and become crippled often both physically and mentally. On the other side this journal has a monumentary character because it describes a superhuman struggle of the medical workers in the hospital "Zica" in Blazuj, for the patients' lives – which is also an homage to medical workers in general, the ones that stay in the shadow during wars; it is known very little about the hell these heroic people go through.

In that light, Dr. Lazich shows an astonishing and endless love for Serbian people in the time when the Western civilization brings it a disaster. In the roots of this love is Lazich's self - consciousness of the great heroic history of the people to whom he belongs.

This Journal has been written with the great heart of a man – a great fighter for life. It was usually written right after the events which it describes, in the conditions that can be hardly imagined. Therefore a certain unpolished thought, a repeated and an unbalanced word carrying an explosive emotion can be found. Nothing has been changed, though, it all remained as it had been originally written – which certainly makes this work more striking.

Because of all this Lazich's Journal will surely be read much, and as the time passes by it will become more and more valuable record of one tragic period, the time of evil and disgrace, the time of undestructible man.

And the most important of all: this Journal is a strong protest against the madness of war in general.

Jovan Lubardich

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Miodrag Lazich was born in Zemun, on the 31st of May, 1955. where he finished the primary school. His father, a Military Officer, was transferred to Nish. Lazich graduates here from the Secondary school and Medical Studies. As a student he was actively in for sports (handball and football). He specialized in Surgery at The Medical Military Academy in Belgrade when he was thirty and became one of the youngest surgeons. He worked in the Military Hospital in Nish for a year and then moved to the Surgical Clinic of the Clinic Centre, Nish, where he still works.

Accepting the invitation of the people of Srpska Krajina he goes there as a surgeon volunteer in July, 1991. and works for a year in the war hospitals in Dvor on the Una, in Glina and in Kostajnica. He takes part together with the soldiers in the break – through of the corridor.

He comes back to Nish in July, 1992. to his family, his children Pedja who is six and Nina who is four.

There is a war in the former Bosnia and Hertzegovina. He goes to Pale as a volunteer to the hospital Koran in September, 1992. One month later, as the Chief of the Surgery team, he goes to Ilidza and starts his work in the hospital “Zica” in Blazuj. He plans to stay for a month but his stay lasts for forty months. As the only surgeon for stomach and ribcage he works in the widest area of the battlefield in the Serbian Republic for almost two years(five counties with more than 100.000. inhabitants). Together with several surgeons, general doctors, and the rest of the medical staff he makes an example of heroism of “people in white” (the Journal testifies about it in the best way). Apart from the exhausting work and the writing of the Journal he also writes 16 scientific papers and takes part on three big international congresses where his work attracts great attention of scientists. He was given the title of Primarius in 1994.

Patriarch Pavle decorated him with the Order of St.Sava. He has many other medals.

In February, 1996. He leaves Serbian Sarajevo and goes home, to Nish. He says:” I am sorry to leave. I am proud for I was sharing good and bad with the heroic people of Serbian Sarajevo. Their tragedy makes me sad and breaks my heart...”

Dr.Lazich's son Pedja, is ten now and his daughter Nina is eight.

Dr.Miodrag Lazich works in the Surgical Clinic in Nish. He is the Chief of Torakal Surgery with traumathology.