

Beginning of War and First Major Casualties

Croatian transcript:

Zoran: Kad te druge opcije se... Kad su se druge opcije iskoristile, nije ostalo drugo nego je preostalo to da se sve to rješava ratom i vojskom. Počelo je tako da su teritorije gdje su srpske manjine bile u većini, tojest enklave, hajmo reći, kasnije su nastale enklave, dakle, teritoriji gdje je bilo puno Srba su proglašene srpskim autonomnim oblastima, postavljali su se balvani, barikade na saobraćajnice, tj. na prometnice, i... I sad su tu počeli prvo nekakve, ono u manjem obimu sukobi neke policije sa nekakvim pobunjenim, sa parapolicijom, sa milicijom, je li, imali smo policiju i miliciju. Onda se naoružano stanovništvo uključilo, onda su počeci tih vojnih jedinica. I, i s jedne i s druge strane je bilo provokacija, znači bilo je delegata koji su bili poslani u neko selo da, ne znam, ispale dva neka raketna projektila na selo ili iz tog sela, da bi rat eskalirao, tako da, ovaj... To se, masu toga se još ne zna, nije isprocesuirano, ovaj. Nekakvi hrvatski dužnosnici još uvijek se pozivaju na neke ove imunitete, ali prije ili kasnije će se i to saznati.

I, najpoznatiji, u svijetu najpoznatiji dva su, u toj prvoj fazi rata do, do tog primirja, grad Vukovar koji je bio opkoljen, osvojen i pregažen i ljudi pobijeni, i bio je Dubrovnik koji se uspio odbraniti, ali je bilo dosta žrtava, bio je opkoljen i onako, dobro izgleda na televiziji, jer je puno ljudi znalo za Dubrovnik i ranije jer je bio neko turističko odredište, lijepi stari grad sav od kamena, tako da nekako svjetskim medijima je zapao za oko. Često su prenosili slike iz ta dva grada, znači Vukovara zbog velikog razaranja, a Dubrovnika zbog razaranja i zbog njegove slikovitosti.

Aleksandar: A gdje se Vukovar nalazi?

Zoran: Vukovar se nalazi na, on se nalazi na Dunavu, znači usred ravnice, sjevernog dijela Hrvatske, blizu granice sa Srbijom, a nije daleko ni Bosna. Znači taj neki, *de facto* je nekakav centar tog ravničarskog dijela bivše Jugoslavije. I tako, jedno mirno mjesto nekih baroknih građevina i nekakvih riječnih ribara i tako se pretvorio u noćnu moru. I tako te fotografije Vukovara, prizori iz Vukovara nakon tih vojnih operacija liče na to kako je izgledao, ne znam, dijelovi Staljingrada, dijelovi Berlina, dijelovi Kelna, ne znam... Da ne kažem Dresdena... Nakon Drugog svjetskog rata.

English translation:

Zoran: When all other options were... When all other options were used, there wasn't much else than to resolve it all with war and through military means. It began by proclaiming those territories where Serb minorities where the majority of the population, or so-called enclaves - later they will be called enclaves, so, those territories with a large Serb population - Serb autonomous regions. Wooden beams were placed on crossroads as barricades, and... And that's when the first minor clashes between the [Croatian] police

and the rebels, or the para-police, or militia. So there was police on one side and militia on the other. Then the armed population got involved, which marked the establishment of military units. There were provocations on both sides. They¹ would send their minions to a village to, I don't know, fire a rocket missile or two at a village or from a village in order to escalate the war. A lot of the details are still unknown and the cases are still not fully processed. Certain Croatian officials are still claiming [political] immunity, but the truth will be revealed, sooner or later.

The most famous or the two most famous events in the first phase of the war up until the ceasefire took place in the city of Vukovar which was besieged, conquered and then destroyed with many casualties, and Dubrovnik, which was successfully defended, but with a large number of casualties because it was also besieged. Dubrovnik looked good on television, since a lot of people knew of it before because it was tourist destination, a beautiful old city completely built out of stone, which captivated the foreign media. They would often report from those two cities: Vukovar because of the destruction and Dubrovnik because of the war damage and its earlier splendor.

Aleksandar: Where is Vukovar situated?

Zoran: Vukovar is situated on the Danube, in the middle of the plain in the Northern part of Croatia near the border with Serbia. Bosnia is relatively close as well. So, it was essentially the center of the plains region of former Yugoslavia. In essence, a peaceful place with Baroque architecture and river fishermen turned into a nightmare. The photographs of Vukovar, the images from Vukovar after the military operations looked very much like parts of Stalingrad, parts of Berlin, Cologne, even Dresden, after World War II.

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¹ The speaker here refers to military commanders, politicians, etc.