Two Bullets for Pavelic The Story of Blagoje Jovovic by Tihomir-Tiho Burzanovic translated by Sinisa Djuric



### PRO-NAZI IS HUNTED

### rgentina Orders Arrest of Wounded Yugoslav

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## INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, Blagoje Jovovic, a long-time émigré from Montenegro, returned to his homeland for the first time in fifty-five years. As described in the Prologue, at the famous monastery at Ostrog, Mr. Jovovic made a startling confession to Archbishop Amfilohije: that in 1957, he had purchased a revolver and shot the leader of the Independent State of Croatia, Ante Pavelic, in front of his home near Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The parties responsible for the attempted assassination—which, after a two year interval, would take Pavelic's life—were never identified by the Argentine authorities, though most would presume it was the work of the Yugoslav secret police. The crime remains, officially, unsolved.

After hearing Mr. Jovovic's confession, the Archbishop encouraged him to speak to Tihomir-Tiho Burzanovic, a journalist, whose role, as he says modestly, was "just to write it down."

The following translation of Tihomir-Tiho Burzanovic's book, *Two Bullets* for Pavelic: The Story of Blagoje Jovovic appears with the gracious permission of Mr. Burzanovic, to whom the editors wish to offer their most sincere thanks.

## Prologue

**N THE LOWER MONASTERY** in Ostrog, in a dining room painted with icons, there is a portrait that depicts the eternal human sin of treachery: Judas with his thirty silver coins. This Judas has a goat's beard that reminds one of Lenin's, Hitler's mustache, a Papal hat, and a mole on his face like the one Josip Broz Tito had.

It was beneath this image of Judas that Archbishop Amfilohije and Blagoje Jovovic met.

Blagoje Jovovic arrived at Ostroske Grede from distant Argentina, and, he calculated, he had been away for exactly fifty-five years.

It was the feast day of Saint Spiridon.

"This is where I fought, this is where the headquarters of Colonel Bajo Stanisic was," Blagoje told him. From here he was dispatched on one of his war assignments, and if he hadn't delayed his return—if he hadn't left home first to change and rest up a bit—he would not be alive today. He would have been killed with Bajo Stanisic, General Blazo Djukanovic, Draza Mihajlovic's envoy Dr. Jovo Toskovic, and three young Stanisics, who went to their death after kissing the reliquary of Saint Vasilije... And over his corpse too the Partizans would have danced, and instead of a requiem a song would resound:

> Under two Ostrog rocks, Bajo's beard is waving...

"If I had only arrived a day earlier... But there is no death without judgment day," Blagoje said.

God had other intentions for Blagoje.

Beneath Mount Ostrog, in the fatherland he left more than half a century ago in the uniform of the army that was, by the will of the Allies, proclaimed a loser in a horrible civil war, Blagoje Jovovic told Archbishop Amfilohije his story, the story of an émigré who carries with him shadows of the past and who, beneath closed eyelids, evokes a dream with images of the village of his birth, the River Zeta, the brotherhood of the Bjelopavlici. It is the story of a man and history, the story of a lost birthplace, the story of the curse of spilled fraternal blood, a story full of hardship, work, courage and patriotism, Montenegrin heroism and beautiful Serbian *inat*, a story of Judases who repeatedly crucify God for their thirty silver coins, a story of revenge, a story fumigated by the smell of gunpowder, the story of Milos Obilic, kind and patriotic.

Blagoje Jovovic returned to Ostrog, to his native Kosic, to the cemetery of his ancestors, to a requiem for his martyred father, his uncle and brothers.

And it seemed to him that his fifty-five years of wandering and suffering were nothing more than a single moment. There was a lot of joy, but also a lot of sorrow on his reunion with his fatherland, which we didn't know—though he may have anticipated—would also be his final parting.

And as if in confession, he told Archbishop Amfilohije: "I was the man that killed Pavelic."

But let us begin the story of Blagoje Jovovic from the beginning, the way he told it to us. Our role was just to write it down.

#### TIHOMIR-TIHO BURZANOVIC

PART ONE

# Royal Emblems & Red Stars

**T HIS STORY I AM** telling you for the first time. I was in the army when I was caught up by the war in 1941, in Strumica, on the border of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Greece. There I shot Germans without anyone telling me to do so. For that I received a medal, but since the Royal Army perished, my medal perished as well.

In Strumica we were betrayed by our officers and we, the soldiers, were left to manage alone and return to our homes by any way we knew and could.

As with many others I went home—alone. They said, "There's nothing to fight for," so it would be the best for everyone to go home. I went to Montenegro and my village, Kosov Lug, in Bjelopavlici.\*

All through Macedonia nobody bothered me nor stopped me, although I was careful not to move by roads or through towns.

After several days of traveling and several sleepless nights, I arrived near Pec where I was stopped by Albanian Balists, who allowed me to pass shortly thereafter. While I was walking through the town I noticed there were more Serbian houses than Albanian, so it wasn't clear to me that the Albanians were armed, and the Serbs were in their houses, hiding.

<sup>\*</sup> The Montenegrin people were traditionally made up of some thirty-five clans. The territory inhabited by a clan—in this case, the Bjelopavlici, or descendants of Duke "White Paul"—adopted the clan's name as a sort of broader, geographic term.

I moved on. I remembered that my uncle, Stojan Jovovic, lived in a village near Pec. I asked some people if they knew Stojan Jovovic, but they all looked at me strangely.

Then one man approached me and asked, "Are you looking for Murat?"

I looked at him and answered, "Murat? No, I'm looking for my uncle, Stojan Jovovic."

"Well that's the same, boy! Around here everyone calls Stojan 'Murat,' that's his nickname. The Albanians named him that because both Serbs and Albanians are afraid of him."

This man took me to my uncle's house.

At the door I saw Uncle Stojan sitting, with a full house of men around him.

I told myself that this can't be good. Uncle Stojan sat me beside him and told me that the Albanians were preparing to attack Serbs in the village, that they were not to be trusted, even though they gave their *besa*<sup>\*</sup> not to attack until the end of the war.

"What a dark end! And it hasn't even start yet!" I thought as I watched the poor Serbs gathered, and none of them, except my Uncle Stojan, were armed.

#### EVERYTHING WAS GOING TO HELL

I spent several days there. I ate a little, rested and then continued my journey. Uncle Stojan didn't stop me. He too could see everything was going to hell, so he said, "Let Blagoje get to Kosov Lug alive and well. It's easier to fight your enemies when you're among your own."

My uncle walked me from Pec to the road for Cakor. We said goodbye and we never saw each other again. I remember, when we parted he told me, "If Albanians stop you, just say you're a nephew of Stojan Jovovic-Murat and nobody will bother you. The Albanians know Murat, they're afraid of him. At least that's how it was until now. From now on, we'll see!"

I parted from my uncle and continued on toward Cakor. On the road I saw columns of people, women, children... mostly Serbs and Montenegrins, but every step of they way they were pestered by Albanians who would ask them where they were going. People, all confused and scared would just answer, "We're heading for

 $<sup>^{\</sup>ast}~$  Word of honor.

Montenegro."

The Albanians, I could see, were satisfied, they let the people go. Kosovo and Metohija were being emptied, everything was going as they planned. The war had barely started, and they were cleansing Kosovo of Serbs. In all that commotion and misery, I slipped into one column, among the people, and I passed through the checkpoints with them.

I traveled that way, with some women and elderly men, for several days. I spent the nights under a clear sky. I didn't see a house or a bed until I came to Mojkovac, where a man allowed me to spend the night.

#### I ARRIVED HOME FOR MY FUNERAL

The next day—straight to Podgorica. When I would come close to houses, I would go around, over the hills to the Moraca River. I crossed the river in an old boat and went to towards Vranjske Njive.

I was tired, but when I saw Zeta and Glavica near Spuz, it seemed as if someone took me under my arms and I felt as if I wasn't walking, but that I was being carried home by someone, to Kosov Lug.

With all that running I caught up with a horse cart. The man on it thought I was running to catch him, so he shouted, "Come on! Sit with me to Danilovgrad."

I jumped on the cart, but I wasn't able to say a word. I couldn't believe that all the way from Strumica—all the way on foot—I had finally arrived home. I was beside myself with happiness. The cart was moving, I could only think of when I would arrive home, to see my family.

Then I heard some woman shouting: "Blagoje! Blago..."

I turned around and saw the wife of an old guerrilla, Zivko, the son of Suto Brajovic.\* It was my godmother, Zorka.

"Is that you Blagoje?" she shouted, but I just looked at her and didn't say anything. What could I tell her? I don't know who is it if it's not me!

"Do you know Blagoje, that your family is preparing for a funeral on Sunday?" Godmother Zorka asked.

<sup>\*</sup> With far fewer than a million people in the whole Montenegro, strangers could often be identified by their family, particularly (as the reader shall note) a well-known kinsman. The expression is less inelegant in Serbian than in translation.

"Why?"

"My Blagoje-someone told them that you are dead!"

"Who told them that, Godmother? You see I'm alive! Lets go to my home in Kosic!"

By the time we came to my family's house, the whole village had gathered there. They couldn't quite believe that I was alive.

My mother told me that someone named Resetar had told them I was decorated for attacking the Germans near Strumica, and that I was decorated posthumously.

"Mother, I did fight the Germans and I was decorated, but I didn't die, can't you see I'm alive in front of you?"

My mother looked at me, hugged me, and cried.

#### HITLER'S AND STALIN'S GERMANS

News spread that I was alive and well, so my house was crowded all day. I told everyone that came by how I had attacked the Germans without being ordered to do so. I remember thinking, "If I had waited for an order I wouldn't be among you today, nor among the living!"

They congratulated me for my courage, and I was glad as a young man. I was happy that people admired me and respected me, but I couldn't even guess what kind of dark misery I had come home to.

I told them the details of my encounters with the Germans, but some of them asked, "How could you shoot at Germans?"

I didn't understand, so they explained everything about the Germans and their leader Hitler, how he is the closest ally of Communism, the Communists and Comrade Stalin.

"Who says that? Communists?" I wondered. So I said, as if joking, "I don't know about *my* Germans, if they were Hitler's or Stalin's. I fought them anyway, so I'll ask the Comrade Communists to forgive me this time."

I thought people were joking, but later my cousins said that some intellectuals and students who studied in Belgrade came to Kosic and that they were making a lot of trouble, that they were propagating Hitler, Germany and their politics. That propaganda wasn't being spread by the Communists and Communist Youth just in Bjelopavlici, but all over Montenegro.

During those first few months, people were always hearing the story about how Hitler was the closest ally of the Communists. And Belgrade was in ruins, half of Serbia in slavery—God forbid the kind of people they were!

And look at it today, after fifty-five years away I've come back to Yugoslavia, and I hear that we were all collaborators of Hitler—all except the Communists! Could you be sane, if you couldn't come to your fatherland for half a century and you fought against the Fascists, on the side of the Allies—because the Communists marked you as a traitor? And these people would have killed anyone for Hitler and Germany, because the Allies were part of the system of "rotten Capitalism."

Those stories spread by the Communist Youth and the students annoyed a lot Serbian nationalists and our old guerrillas, who met regularly in the house of my uncles, Father Ljubo, the priest, and his brother, Savo Jovovic.

I used to listen to those conversations. I felt especially sorry for Nesko, the son of Bajo Jovovic, the famous guerrilla. He was very bitter about all of that. He suffered because of those conversations and was bitter about the Communist betrayal, because he was a great Serbian nationalist and as such he didn't like Germans.

Communist eulogies lasted only until Hitler attacked Russia. Then the Communists started a new story: Hitler was now a criminal and the Allies were no longer from the "rotten Capitalist system."

#### NOT WITH THE COMMUNISTS, NOT WITH MILOSAV

The Communists were caught off guard when Germany attacked Russia. There were great arguments in Father Ljubo's house. Uncle Savo and Father Ljubo argued fiercely on one side, and on the other was the famous Communist Bosko Tonkovic, an immigrant from Kosovo. (His real last name was Brajovic.)

Among the Communists, the sons of Marko and Mileta Jovovic stood out— Stanoje and Malisa were their names. They were good orators, and they played football well, so they were popular. Stanoje could also sing well, and later he became a capable officer.

I liked my uncles, but I also liked Bosko Tonkovic, I guess because he was a

refugee from Kosovo, so I kind of felt sorry for him.

I remember it as if it was yesterday. On a July day, we heard that the Russians were fighting great battles against Hitler. The Communists asked the people to gather on Glavicica, on the property of a teacher, Zivko, the son of Suto Brajovic. Everybody came, both Communists and nationalists. In the name of the Communists, Milosav Babic spoke first. A high school pupil, he presented himself as the political commissar for Bjelopavlici.

He apologized to the nationalists. "You were right when you attacked Hitler and I apologize for my words about Mother Russia. Comrades, lets be united, we shouldn't allow any divisions among us. We should all stay together in solidarity." With those words he finished his speech.

Then my uncle, Savo, asked to speak. "I was fighting in the first war and I will fight in this war too, but never under the leadership of the Communist Party. There's even less chance that I will fight under leadership of the son of Radoslav Babic—Milosav!"

Not only did he want nothing to do with the Communists, he didn't want anything to do with Milosav Babic either!

When we parted—Communists on one side, nationalists on the other—I went to see Father Ljubo and Uncle Savo.

I told Savo his speech was inappropriate. He responded with fury.

"How was that inappropriate? I wanted to say what I think! How can the son of Radoslav Babic be my commander?"

It was no use talking him into it.

Bosko Tonkovic waited for me in front of the house. He wanted me to walk with him to the house of Nikola, son of Tomica Jovovic, where he was living.

Bosko asked me to show the Communist students, who had never served in the army, how to handle a rifle and how to shoot.

I could see that misery and misfortune were coming.

#### HOW TO FIRE A BULLET

The next day Bosko gathered together a group of young Communists and asked me to tell them all about weapons, armies, and war. I could see the Communists knew what they wanted! They didn't have a stronghold among the people, nor were they appreciated much, but they were aggressive and well-organized.

I felt ashamed by how little they knew, but I agreed to train them. They respected me, because Bosko Tonkovic described me as a young man who was an officer and who could teach them a lot. The Communists were very responsible and disciplined and it was easy to work with them, even though they were very ignorant.

The first thing they asked me was how and why a bullet was fired! I showed them, they listened to me, they were all ears. I remember how Bosko Tonkovic, in particular, listened to me. He knew nothing, and he looked at me as if I was God, he looked funny because he couldn't understand anything, and he was well over thirty.

And when we would finish talking, Bosko would talk alone with me and ask me again to show him how to shoot, how to aim.

When we finished our course, we would go to see my uncles and brothers who were Serbian nationalists and respectable men, seventeen of them had college degrees. Among them there were teachers, priests, professors, colonels, officers of the general staff, lawyers...

The arguments were fierce whenever Communists and nationalists would meet, and there were some really sharp quarrels. In fact, all those arguments revolved around one issue—who would lead the resistance movement against the Germans and the Italians. The Communists skillfully turned the arguments to their side and looked for any opportunity to persuade the nationalists to stand under their command, so they could ultimately win over the support of respectable men, and through them the common people.

However, the nationalists weren't quite naïve either. They were proud and honorable men, they respected religion, tradition, customs. Even back then I had a feeling they would rather die than allow someone to play with them, or let themselves be led by men who weren't respected by the people, men from "thin" families who it was undesirable to have relatives married to. How could the worst become the best?

Among nationalists back then there was both order and hierarchy. They were real Serbs, they always kept their word. In contrast, the Communists—at least our Communists—could only fish in the mud and wait for fast opportunities.

Thus the days passed, but not one day went by without Communists and nationalists arguing about who would lead the resistance movement.

There was no agreement, and all conversations would usually end when Savo

Jovovic got up and told Father Ljubo, "Let's go Father, I won't be led by Communists and Milosav Babic, even if it costs me my life!"

#### WHAT DID YUGOSLAVIA EVER GIVE TO MONTENEGRO?

As with all things in life, even arguments and disputes fizzle out and come to an end. We came to a point when we had to choose a commander for the Kosic company. Both Communists and nationalists agreed that a man should be chosen to be the commander for everyone.

Back then nobody even dreamed that we would one day be divided into Chetniks and Partizans. Back then you were either a Communist or a nationalist, but we were all unanimous in our desire to defend our fatherland.

It was decided that the man with the highest rank should be named as commander. That was Petko Jovovic, a major in the Royal Army, the brother of Jaksa and Marko Jovovic, who were respectable men, teachers and great nationalists.

After his selection, the nationalists were satisfied, but the Communists wouldn't rest. They kept going from house to house, propagating Communist ideology and organizing their party cells.

One day, Bosko Tonkovic asked to speak with me and suggested I join the Party and train Communists for warfare. I thought about it for awhile. I knew Bosko, he was a good man. I thought, "We're all in this together, both nationalists and Communists." And my father and uncles were famous guerrillas in the first war. They knew how to wage war. I decided to go with the Communists and train their young men how to fight. I was young too, but at least I had finished military school.

When I accepted, Bosko was very happy. We began immediately to planattacks, training, meetings.

At the Communist meetings Bosko took me to, I was bothered most by the talk of some guy, an engineer, who kept repeating like a parrot that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia didn't give a thing to Montenegro.

"They promised us roads before the elections, and after the elections—nothing!" he shouted. "They built schools for the first four grades, so we were neither a peasant nor an intellectual. In a word, they made us Montenegrins pure proletarians!" I was Bosko's friend and I liked him, but I didn't like to stay too long with these others. I was bothered by how much those Communists attacked authority and how nothing was good enough for them.

#### HOW I BECAME A SKOJ MEMBER

One day, the Communists told me that on the recommendation of Bosko Tonkovic, I had become a SKOJ member. To tell you the truth, back then I didn't even know what SKOJ was. When I was accepted, I was told that I, as a young SKOJ member, must not speak to anyone about our organization and its tasks. And when they told me not to mention anything about SKOJ to my mother, my father and the priest when I go to church, I stood petrified and wondered, "My God, what kind of a miserable organization have I been accepted by?"

When they told me that—and not just me but everyone they accepted—I raised my arm and asked to speak, I wanted to say something to them, too. Just as I raised my arm, Bosko nudged me and asked, "What will you speak about?"

"Well, to ask them how I can't say a thing to my mother and Father Ljubo, since they didn't bring me up that way."

Bosko stood up and said to that Communist, "Comrade, he was accepted on my recommendation and I will speak for him."

And Bosko said something quickly, and I didn't even speak, but I listened until the meeting was over. When we left the meeting, Bosko started describing how I should behave as a member of the Party.

"Well, I'm not interested about that, Bosko," I interrupted, "but you need to tell me—what is SKOJ?"

"That's the Union of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia, they'll fight the invaders and Fascism and we are its members and fighters."

We walked further, but I was still bothered that I couldn't say anything to my mother and Father Ljubo. I thought about it for awhile, and then asked, "Bosko, you still haven't told me why I can't talk about SKOJ to my mother and Father Ljubo."

Bosko looked at me as if he had expected that question. "I see, Blagoje, that you like Father Ljubo very much."

"True, I like him and I could never hide anything from him, nor from my

mother."

"Listen Blagoje," Bosko told me. "If we were to tell you to kill an enemy of the people and you told Father Ljubo, he would say that it's a sin and that you cannot do it. That's demoralizing for you and for our fighters!

"It's the same if you told your mother. She'd say, 'Don't do it son, he has a mother too, who would cry for him, as I would cry if someone would kill you. Blagoje, son, don't kill anyone who is a Serb and of Serbian kin!""

"That's right, Bosko," I agreed.

"There, that's why you can't tell anyone what we're doing and planning."

I wanted to tell him something else about that, but he changed the subject.

#### MAJORS SMUGGLE, SKOJ MEMBERS COMMAND

Then they asked for me. A directive came to remove Major Petko Jovovic from his position as commander of the Kosic company and they proposed me instead. I asked, "How can that be, well I'm just a soldier, and after that not even an officer, how can I have command over a major, a high officer? That's a disgrace and I will not accept it!"

I told that to my father when I came home. He listened to what I had to say and then said, "Lets go see Petko about it."

When we came to his house I told him, "Uncle Petko, the Communists asked me these things, and I wouldn't try to replace you even if I were crazy."

And he said right away, "But you should accept it! That's how we will know what the Communists are planning to do. And I'm tired of everything anyway! They keep telling me how we royal officers are doing fine, but my wife and two children have nothing to live on!"

Major Petko carried tobacco on his back in a bag, and from that smuggling he fed his family.

I persistently refused Petko's proposition, but my father had already decided the matter. "You will accept, if the Communists offer it."

After a few days the Communists came and made their proposal, because, as they said, "We want a young man, skillful and capable." Thus I, sometime in the Autumn of 1941, became the commander of the Kosic company.

Immediately we fought in some minor battles. After one of those battles,

Bosko Tonkovic came to me and said, "You're young, there's a bright future ahead of you!"

And he told me how Yugoslav officers, led by Arso Jovanovic,\* were preparing for a battle, how the Communists were planning to liberate a town.

Bosko asked me if I would go to Pljevlja, because, as he put it, that would be good for me.

I accepted, but just as an ordinary soldier.

#### COMMISSARS AND STONE CUTTERS

Many volunteered for the Battle of Pljevlja. I told my father that I was going to fight, but he scolded me. "You should have asked me first, Blagoje, son!"

I-the commander-should ask for permission from my father!

During preparations, my father and I went to see our meadow, under Mount Glavica. All business there was supervised by Pero Begovic, our godfather.

When we cleared the meadow, we gave it to Djuro Cagorovic and his uncle Stanko, who were distinguished stone cutters, for their cows to graze in.

"Fine, Djuro," my father said, "you can let your cows graze on my meadow, but you still haven't finished that tombstone with a saber you promised!"

Djuro told him that the tombstone was finished, it was at Mirko Begovic's house and that he'd send it tomorrow or the day after by horse cart. The other parts, the cross and the rest, would come later.

"Please do that, because I want Lazar in his lifetime to see how it will look and know that his tombstone is finished."

Professor Milos Jovovic had asked to write some verses on Lazar's tombstone. Djuro assured us that both the cross and the cover with a saber would be finished in a day or two.

We didn't know that we would need a tombstone so soon.

Djuro asked me if I was going to Pljevlja, mentioning that he was a great Communist. He bragged to my father, Jovan, the son of Lazar Jovovic, an old guerrilla, "I never served in the army, and I've been appointed the political commissar of the Bjelopavlici company!"

<sup>\*</sup> Arso Jovanovic, an officer in the Royal Yugoslav Army. He joined the Partizans and as Chief of the General Staff was responsible for organizing their army. After siding with the USSR during the Tito-Stalin confrontation in 1948, Jovanovic was killed, officially while trying to cross the border to Romania.

And after he praised himself enough, Djuro asked my father to tell him something about warfare, because, as he said, he "knows nothing about war."

"Djuro, I'll tell you everything, but I would like to go to Pljevlja too, to follow my son," my father said to Djuro, the stone cutter and commissar.

#### WHEN A MONTENEGRIN EXECUTES A MONTENEGRIN

That's how it happened. One day the army left from Bjelopavlici for Pljevlja.

Near Njegovudja, for the first time I saw Communists shoot one of their own.

They brought two men who had, allegedly, betrayed the Party and were about to be executed. They were reading this order and it didn't seem sane to me. How can you kill a man because of the Party? Aren't we fighting against the occupiers, Fascists, Hitler?

One of them was not tied up, he could have run away, because nobody wanted to shoot anybody for the Party. In the end they were shot and for the first time I saw a Montenegrin killing another Montenegrin. Because of the Party.

The next night was cold, it was a harsh winter and two or three young men fell dead from exposure. A doctor came by and told us that we had to tap with our legs when we were standing, so our blood could circulate. That was so horrible, I saw a man fall dead, from frost.

We crossed over the Tara River, by night, to the mountains. We rested during the daylight hours, as the airplanes flew overhead, since the Italians had already found out that we were going to Pljevlja. And how could they not know, since the attack had been talked about for three months, and they had plenty of spies? Those airplanes just passed over us without throwing out any bombs. The following night we approached Pljevlja.

#### OUR STRUGGLE DEMANDS WE SING WHEN WE ARE DYING

We were told that by six a.m., we should be awake to attack the town's fortifications. The Bjelopavlici company attacked the Great and Small Bogisevac,

and next to us there was the squad from Lovcen, with Peko Dapcevic.\* As the largest unit they were supposed to watch the entrance to the town.

That night they told us we must learn a song. I didn't know what it meant until I went to Italy in 1943. It was the song "Bandiera rosa." In Italian.

Early in the morning we began our attack and then, while we were cutting wires, we were supposed to sing *"avanti populi, avanti rosa, bandiera rosa, bandiera rosa, bandiera rosa..."* and attack the fortifications.

Before the attack, the commander asked for volunteers to throw hand grenades. They would go first and cut the barbed wire. I volunteered. They gave me scissors for lacerating the wires and told us the enemy may shoot at us, but we could not fire one bullet at them.

After I volunteered, my father Jovan, an old guerrilla, wanted to go in my place. He asked Djuro Cagorovic, but they didn't let him, they said, "Let him do it, Jovan, he's younger."

Besides me, Ilija Dragovic volunteered too, I think he was a teacher. Some Skerovic also came with, he had been a sergeant in the Yugoslav Royal Army, but he was expelled, because he was a Communist.

In the presence of Ilija Dragovic, the commander of the company, Djuro told me that since I volunteered I should be the leader of the hand grenade section too.

I accepted that. Young, eager for affirmation and for war, I was glad they put so much trust in me.

We moved by night, but we had very poor lamps. When we got near enemy positions, we began cutting the wire. The Italians apparently heard us and started shooting. They wounded some of our fighters, luckily nobody got killed. After we cut through the wires we went forward, near the bunker, and threw our grenades. At the Great and Small Bogisevac, the Italians surrendered.

Much later, when I talked about my participation in the Battle of Pljevlja to Momo Vucekovic, who was the ambassador to Argentina, he wondered aloud how I, a Chetnik, could have fought at Pljevlja. He said, "Blagoje, I was there too." Therefore we were war comrades. And now he was the ambassador to Argentina and I was an émigré; he's a hero and I'm a "traitor to the people."

We passed Bogisevac, both Great and Small. In other places there were many dead among the Partizans, but none from the Bjelopavlici brigade, though there were a few wounded.

<sup>\*</sup> Peko Dapcevic, a veteran Montenegrin Communist and volunteer in the Spanish Civil War. Dapcevic organized and commanded the First Army during the war, becoming one of the most senior Partizan military leaders. He was named Chief of the General Staff in 1953, though he was later demoted due to political troubles.

The next day, the Lovcen squad entered the town of Pljevlja first, but then Italians moved in with tanks and maimed them badly.

Well, it's not nice to talk about it now, but nothing would have happened to them if they had listened to the officers of the Royal Army, who had a good tactical plan, but Montenegrins wanted to prove themselves, and then die for no reason!

After the Italian counterattack, we had to retreat.

#### MOSA PIJADE EATS MILK AND HOMINY

During the retreat we stopped in Zabljak. There we met Mosa Pijade,\* as well as Marko Savicevic, who was killed by the Communists after we left.

Marko Savicevic was a great man and a great orator, which is why they killed him. He was in the way of illiterate fools.

Mosa knew my father Jovo, and he remembered me too. Mosa got to know all our customs when he came to Montenegro. When we came, he only ate hominy and milk. Maybe later, when nobody could see, he ate meat or something else, I don't know, but in front of soldiers he only ate hominy and milk.

Mosa told my father and I that we should stay on at Zabljak.

"I need you and you should stay here," said Mosa, whom Montenegrins called "Maso."

"Maso," my father told him, "you yourself said there is trouble in our land and the Italians are moving towards Bjelopavlici. The people need us there too."

Mosa-Maso asked me to stay.

I told Mosa that I'm going with my father.

Bosko Tonkovic didn't want me to leave either, but I told him, "I have to go with my father, he told me to. I have to obey my father!"

Then Bosko said he wanted to come along with us. Mosa Pijade then stood up—he had a white beard back then—he grabbed his beard, and paused for a moment. Looking at us, he gave a speech and in the end, bearing in mind that the majority wanted to return home, he said that all members of the Communist Party must not return.

<sup>\*</sup> Mosa Pijade, the doyen of the Yugoslav Communist Party, often jailed through the pre-war years. Pijade fled Belgrade after the German invasion for Montenegro; he was especially at risk of Gestapo arrest due to his Jewish background.

"Whosoever even thinks of returning home will end up like those two who were executed in Njegovudja!"

Me and Bosko, my inseparable friend, parted for the first time.

Those executions, those threats by Mosa-Maso... I was worried, I saw things going in a bad way, but still, it was hard for me to admit to myself what I saw. I accepted my position as commander of the Kosic company, under the condition and with firm assurances that there wouldn't be a fratricide. And that was how it all started...

#### WITH IVAN MILUTINOVIC IN PIPERI

From Pljevlja and Zabljak we returned to Kosic.

Milosav Babic, who was the political commissar of the company, told me one day that we must go to Moraca, that we must fight—actually to intercept a large column of Italian trucks that were on their way to Podgorica with food, clothing and some other merchandise.

That battle wasn't difficult, we blew up the road, and rolled big boulders at other points. The trucks stopped, we shot at them, but didn't kill anyone. They all surrendered.

We carried the merchandise by night. A lot of people and soldiers came to help carry it, but even today I don't know where so many people came from. And when we came across the enemy, there was no one.

When I came back from that battle I was told that I had to report immediately to Ivan Milutinovic\* in Kopilje, in Piperi. He was the commander of the Zeta squads.

Before I left my father told me, "Watch yourself, Blagoje, and don't always run to be the first to throw hand grenades, let someone go in front of you. You shouldn't always be the first."

When we arrived at Kopilje, we were received personally by Ivan Milutinovic. I think he was about forty years old then. I remember that he was healthy, with a broad chest.

He said to us right away, "Fine, you go and report to Moraca."

<sup>\*</sup> Ivan Milutinovic, a veteran Serbian Communist and member of the Central Committee. Named party chief in Montenegro in the Autumn of 1941, Milutinovic held a number of posts during the war. He drowned in 1944 after a vessel he was traveling in hit a floating mine in the Danube River.

I found out that we were supposed to attack Major Djordje Lasic,\* who started an uprising against the Fascists in Vasojevici, and later went to Moraca.

One of those going with me, a well known Communist, approached and said, "Jovovic, looks like we're about to attack our own brothers."

"Never," I told him.

"I will never participate in fratricide," he agreed, and he just nodded his head.

#### HANGED OVER MORACA

We had to go over the Moraca River. They gave us two wires. What were we supposed to do with those? We stretched the cables over the abyss to get to the other side.

A man crossed over before me. There was a strong wind, it was winter. They gave me leather gloves, and I went... The abyss, the Moraca foamed below, and I with a backpack, with a machine gun... When I reached half-way, I thought, "Can I do this?" I didn't think I could make it.

Somehow, I gathered my last strength...

On the other side, that same Communist was behind me. Now he said, "Don't say so arrogantly that you won't participate in fratricide!"

When we reached our destination, I said, "Comrades, we should know where we're going, whom we are attacking."

Someone said to wait, the commander would be arriving. The commander came and said that there wouldn't be an attack after all.

And that guy just kept repeating to me, "Don't say that, Jovovic, that you won't allow us to fight against brothers. It would be better for you!"

Djordje Lasic was a cadet in the military academy of my uncle, Stevo Jovovic. He was in the best class and first among them. I could not believe we were going fight such a Serb and hero...

But the fratricide had already begun. In my village, Kosov Lug, the first victims would be Major Petko Jovovic, his brother Marko (he was a teacher, his son is now an ophthalmologist) and Bosko.

<sup>\*</sup> Djordje Lasic, an officer in the Royal Yugoslav Army and kinsman of Arso Jovanovic. Like Blagoje Jovovic, Lasic led a combined Chetnik-Partizan unit in the early days of the war, but in October 1941 was named by General Draza Mihajlovic as Chetnik commander of Montenegro.

#### THE RED STAR WILL NOT BRING US ANY GOOD

We reported to Kopilje, but they just told us to go home. I returned to Kosic.

We fought against the Italians who pushed past Danilovgrad and further on to Niksic. I was assigned elsewhere by Mida, a great Communist who, if she was a man, would have already made general. Mida told me that I had go to Rziste.

I remember, in Rziste, a man in the uniform of a Yugoslav officer approached me.

"Young man, where can I find Blagoje Jovovic?"

"Who are you?"

"Young man, don't be rude, just show me where Jovovic is."

"I'm Blagoje Jovovic!"

"You are the son of Jovo, the grandson of Lazar Jovovic?" The man changed the tone of his voice. "Such a young man... I'm assigned to your unit."

I felt a little embarrassed. They were all older than me, and I was their commander. He was a reserve officer and a teacher.

"I am Vojislav—Vojko Saranovic," he introduced himself.

We sat down. I asked him, "So what do you think, Vojko, how will things develop?"

Vojko looked at me and said, "Red stars, red stars... that will lead us nowhere... and I came to you. Bad times will make an eagle spend a winter among hens."

We sung a song:

In our small county, There are no priests even for heresy And poor Father Ljubo Had his beard eaten by leprosy...

Vojko and Father Ljubo were friends, although they were political opponents. Vojko used to tease Father Ljubo with that song, since the priest was such a radical.

#### TO KILL A PRIEST AND A TEACHER

Half of the company remained in the village to defend the people from the Italians, and the other half went to Rziste. I was leading one group, and Bako Jugovic Brajovic the other.

One day, when I replaced Bako, Milosav Babic told me that Savo Jovovic, Father Ljubo Jovovic and Nesko, the son of Bajo Jovovic, should be killed.

Savo and Nesko were guerrillas and heroes, and Father Ljubo was a respectable nationalist. Communists respected them, but they hated them too. But that they were planning to murder them—that surprised me.

I protested against that.

"You said you will never allow fratricide, and under that condition I accepted my position as commander of the Kosic company. We cannot proceed this way!"

Milosav looked at me, smiling all the time, and said, "We are doing them a great honor with this!"

"Honor? To kill them?"

"Well, we'll say they were killed by the Italians!" Milosav Babic said.

"I won't do it!"

"What do you mean you won't do it? "

"I won't kill them, let Bako do it, I won't do it!"

Later I found out Bako didn't want to do it, either.

But Milosav Babic didn't give up. He was looking for me at the house of my companion, Svetozar Filipovic, called "Cvejo." As I wasn't there he left a message for me to strengthen the guard the next night, because we were supposed to be attacked by the Italians. He also specified that there should be three men on guard and that I should check on them regularly.

Cvejo gave me that letter from Milosav Babic, and I showed it to my father who said, "All right, I'll be the guard."

#### WOE UNTO YOU SAVO, BROTHER

I sent my uncle with my father, and Dusan and Savo Djurovic, very good and honest men. It felt awkward to give orders to my father and my uncle, because

they were older than me, but they did as I told them and went to guard Lazine, in front of the house of Petar Simonovic.

I went to check on them with Cvejo during the night. As we were walking, we heard shots.

"What was that?" I told Cvejo to hurry.

When we got there my father told me, "I think the Communists killed Savo and Father Ljubo! Shots came from the direction of their house!"

I wanted to check first and told Cvejo to go from one side of canal, and I from the other, we reached the house of Spiro, son of Tunjo Lakic, a great hero.

And we heard women wailing, they were screaming, "Woe unto you Savo, brother!"

We were twenty, thirty meters away.

I ran to my father and shouted, "They killed Savo Jovovic!"

Father cursed something, then cursed the Communists. He threw his rifle, and went to see what happened.

#### HOW CAN I NOT GO TO MY UNCLE'S FUNERAL?

Savo was killed by deceit, vile trickery. He was first invited to the headquarters of the battalion for an interview. He went there to report. When he was told he should go to main headquarters, it was a certain sign that he would be killed. Savo knew that, he told them he was old and could walk by night, and that he would get there in the morning.

However, the Communists insisted and he had to go.

Savo got dressed, and took his gun, because he knew what was about to happen, but it seems that he believed that he would be able to kill at least one of them.

As they went, a certain Tomasevic and two Communists followed behind him. When they came near the house of Spiro, the son of Tunjo Lakic, they found water, the stream had risen. They told Savo to jump over first.

"You know these paths, teacher, you should go forward," Tomasevic told him. And those two stood behind him, in silence.

When Savo jumped over the creek, Tomasevic fired. And he killed him, there, in the creek, from behind.

All of this was described the way it happened by Tomasevic, later, when he

deserted the Communists.

That morning when they killed Savo, Milosav Babic came to our house.

"Blagoje I have good news for you," he said. "You have been assigned by headquarters to lead a company to fight against Bajo Stanisic, who rose up in Ostrog when he heard that Communists are killing nationalists."

"I will never accept that. Bajo Stanisic was the commandant of my military school in Bileca and I won't shoot at him!"

"What do you mean you won't? That's an order!"

"I won't shoot at him, nor any other Serb!"

Milosav Babic just stared at me.

"It's not an honor that headquarters is sending me to shoot at Bajo Stanisic," I added. "I will never accept that. I won't shoot my brother and commandant."

Milosav Babic acted as if he didn't hear me. He changed the subject and said that headquarters had forbidden me to go to Savo's funeral.

"How can I not go to my uncle's funeral?"

Milosav insisted. "Tell your father that he cannot go to the funeral, either."

"If you have the courage," I said, "then you tell him that, but I'd think about it a moment!"

Angrily, I went inside. Not long after that, the Communists came and asked for my machine gun. I didn't want to give it to them. I had captured it from the Italians. "Communists didn't give it to me," I told them.

But the Communists, as Communists, insisted on taking my machine gumas they said, there is no private property of weapons in war. What could I do, I gave in to their demands and gave them the machine gun.

After that, Father Ljubo's niece came to me. She asked what he should do, if I could help him in any way.

I told her that the Communists would come to Savo's funeral and would say, "Father, in the name of the Communist Party we deprive you of freedom!" And if he didn't surrender, they'd kill him.

Later my father came. He also asked if there was any way we could help Father Ljubo.

Help him? How? I could only help him by escorting him to Danilovgrad. The only thing I could do is go with him to make sure nothing happened. Since everybody knew me, I could be of some help if he ran into Partizan guards.

It was already morning. Father Ljubo left and sent me a letter saying that he didn't need me, because he decided to go alone, without an escort, to Danilovgrad.

#### FIVE GRAVES OF JOVOVICI

My father invited many friends to Savo's funeral. After that funeral, a few days later, the Communists killed a whole family of Jovovici, a father and three sons.

When he heard about it, my grandfather had a stroke. He couldn't believe that Djuro Jovovic was killed, that his three sons were killed, and moreover that they were killed as traitors.

Partizans first went to kill Djuro's son Nikola. They came at night, knocking at his door.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Partizans," one of them answered.

"We've gone to sleep, you can't expect me to let you in at this hour."

"Open up or we'll throw a grenade in your house!" one of the Partizans shouted.

Nikola started unlocking the door, but the Partizans shot through it. And so they killed him. His wife started screaming, and then the Partizans killed her too.

Then they went to get Djuro, they took him with his two sons to headquarters.

From there they took them to Keca's pit...

When he saw his sons killed and thrown into the pit, old Djuro jumped after them himself. Into Keca's pit.

A father, his three sons and his daughter-in-law. They killed them. All of them.

Those were horrible times.

Grandfather Lazar, when he heard about it, went insane and started to invoke the dead, and by superstition one who invokes the dead will soon die himself. He became very ill that night and died before morning because of the murder of Djuro and his sons and daughter-in-law, especially because the Partizans had announced that they were degenerates.

My father, Jovo, gathered several respectable Jovovici, Brajovici, Djiknici, neighbors, flag carrier Jaksa Filipovic, Nesko, the son of Bajo, who was a famous guerrilla... All those men came to our house. They invited me to the meeting too.

It was horrible back in those days, people were afraid of Partizans everywhere, because of these heinous crimes. We decided to establish contact with Bajo Stanisic.

They asked me if I agreed with that decision, and I said that I did.

#### THE DEATH OF LITTLE VLADO UNDER A PLUM TREE

That same day the Italians were shooting at us, one shell fell behind our house and killed my cousin, Vlado, Filip Jovovic's son, a thirteen year old boy.

I never saw that kind of death. Vlado leaned back on a plum tree with a book in his hands, it seemed as if he was reading... He stayed that way. His mother called him for dinner, but he didn't make a sound.

"Vlado, Vlado!"

Dead.

When they got near him, it was obvious that he was already stiff.

An Italian shell that fell between two houses killed him, from a piece of shrapnel...

I had just arrived, I had been over the Zeta, at headquarters... I was just in time to dig his grave.

At headquarters I had met Radomir Babic, my cousin. He had been there but we didn't know before then, we only knew of Mosa and Djilas.\*

Radomir was a big man, he used to work in Podgorica, a director of finances. When I met him he had some kind of strange wolfskin hat.

He asked if he could meet with my father.

"Blagoje, what do you think? How could this situation quiet down, how could this situation improve?"

How should I know?

And he told me, under the condition not to tell anyone else, that they had decided to appoint me commander of a youth battalion.

"There were other suggestions, but Djilas and Pijade want you, even though you are young."

Through the night they buried little Vlado. Old men and women.

The next day, the Italians came again.

#### **REUNION WITH MY MACHINE GUN**

While Cvejo and I were digging a grave for Vlado, some man came and asked me

<sup>\*</sup> Milovan Djilas, a member of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Djilas was dispatched to lead the uprising in Montenegro in July 1941. He became Minister for Montenegro, vice president and chairman of the Yugoslav parliament after the war before becoming Yugoslavia's most famous dissident.

to report to headquarters. I told him fine, as soon as I finished digging, I'd be there. He came back and asked me to report to headquarters, urgently. Then Mida Brajovic came, and her sister Olga Jovovic, the daughters of Zivko and granddaughters of Suto Brajovic.

I went with Cvejo, but I didn't tell him where we were going. We were on a boat with Beba Brajovic, who liked me very much. I was greeted by them saying, "Hello to the best Marnic, the best Jovovic!" As I was shy, I felt a little uncomfortable being praised so much. Then Miso told me that some people in high places had mentioned me, with a promise that he'd talk to me about it later. I think he wanted to tell me that I was supposed to be appointed commander of the Montenegrin youth battalion. We already knew it was supposed to be a big battalion, in which every fighter would have an automatic weapon.

There were a lot of weapons there at headquarters. I saw my machine gun. I looked around. One guard was standing there. I told Cvejo to take as many weapons as could carry.

"Why? Those aren't our weapons!"

I said I'd tell him later. "Just grab them now!" I took my machine gun and put it on my shoulder. I said to Cvejo, "Take them!" Nearby, a young man watched us, but he didn't say anything.

I filled two bags full of ammunition and I couldn't carry any more. Cvejo also took as mach as he could. We took those weapons back to my house.

We didn't have much food back home, and I was tired and hungry.

I told Cvejo that there was some smoked ham in the house. Mother came, I told her that Cvejo and I were hungry, and she brought us smoked ham, cheese and bread.

#### HE IS NOT A COMMISSAR TO US

After he ate, Cvejo fell asleep. Then Jaksa came.

"Don't wake up your cousin!"

"I have to!" I said.

"Let your mother tell him you left with us," Jaksa said. That seemed suspicious. I called my mother and told her to wake Cvejo up when I left. Jaksa told me that he came to ask me what I thought about being a commander. I asked what Milosav Babic thought about it.

"Milosav has nothing to think about," Jaksa replied.

"But he's a commissar!"

"He's not a commissar to us."

Now what was happening?

When we arrived, there were many men there. Dark, one lamp on a table. And they told me, "All of you who are Communists have to cross the Zeta within forty-eight hours."

We were supposed to report to people in Kosov Lug who would take us to the other side of the river.

"What is this about, did you talk to Bako, what are we going to do?" asked Cvejo, who had just shown up after following us.

"I've decided to go with Commissar Milosav Babic," I said. "I told Bako and Jaksa, but they said that he is not a commissar to them!"

"So that's how it is. Well then, I'm going with you," Cvejo said.

Confusion everywhere.

#### BAJO STANISIC, RELJA PILETIC AND JAKOV JOVOVIC

The Communists were preparing to attack Bajo Stanisic. I just couldn't understand that. I felt like I was drunk when I heard what they were preparing for. To go and kill Serbs...

One day, I think it was in February 1942, I decided to visit Bajo Stanisic, I heard that he was near Ostrog.

When we met I asked, "Colonel, Sir, do you remember me?"

"Whose son are you?"

He knew my father and my uncle, who was a general staff major in Belgrade. "Jovo, son of Lazar Jovovic," I told him.

"I remember," Bajo said.

I attended Colonel Stanisic's school for officer training in Bileca. I was a cadet in the anti-tank school where we learned about the new Czech-made cannons, they were modern back then and good for anti-tank combat.

In the meantime, my father, because he was an old guerrilla, had been elected the commander of a nationalist company from Kosic, which was the first to be organized. Everyone was splitting between nationalists and Communists. When the nationalist Kosic company was formed, several other companies followed, from Zeta to Susica.

Then Major Relja Piletic arrived from Podgorica. He demanded that we settle accounts with the Communists—even a child, if the child was red. When some of my cousins objected to that, heavy arguments broke out.

That was the first time I saw Jakov Jovovic. He was blond. He came with a horse cart, stood up on it and spoke. I didn't know he was such a good orator. He gave a speech which amazed even Major Piletic.

"Major, Sir, though we are of the same rank, I cannot allow you, in the place where I was born, to shout at my people from Kosov Lug," Jakov said.

After that, Jakov was nominated as commander of a battalion.

Bajo Stanisic was the commander of Bjelopavlici. After a while he was acknowledged even by the Herzegovinians. Thus Bajo became the commander of the entire area including Cetinje, Podgorica, and Niksic, and Jakov Jovovic became commander of the Bjelopavlici Brigade.

Then I met Perisic, who was the "Duke"\* of Herzegovina.

When I went to Bajo I didn't have a rank or a position.

#### A BEARD PROTECTS YOUR HEAD

The Communists were soon driven out of Montenegro. That year, 1942, without the Communists around, was relatively peaceful.

The following year, 1943, I was assigned to the headquarters company commanded by Jakov Jovovic, where I was given the rank of sergeant. Having been a commander in Communist units, among the nationalists I could barely make sergeant.

The headquarters company was armed with automatic weapons and it had fierce fire power. There were thirty men, well-armed. We had plenty of hand grenades and some small mortar cannons, given to us by the English.

In 1943, just before the capitulation, the Italians captured Jakov Jovovic in

<sup>\*</sup> After the final rupture between nationalists and Communists, General Draza Mihajlovic, leader of the Chetniks and War Minister of the Yugoslav government-in-exile, named a number of his lieutenants *vojvo-di*, or "dukes," which corresponded with the leaders of the most prominent Chetnik units. A number of other Chetnik commanders would later claim the title "duke" for themselves.

Podgorica. He was set up by some "loan sharks" who collaborated with the Germans. And that headquarters company, in which there were many men from Cetinje—Jakov was married to a woman from Cetinje—went to liberate him.

At the time I was under Mount Ostrog, with Bajo Stanisic. There were a lot of soldiers there, from everywhere.

Jakov escaped from prison wearing a cassock, and he had a beard. When he was on his way out, he blessed the guards and escaped. The cassock was brought to him to prison by some woman.

Jakov was a capable man, a good fighter, orator and a real actor.

#### GENERAL BLAZO DJUKANOVIC WEARS A SHORT COAT

The Italians capitulated. General Blazo Djukanovic arrived from Cetinje to tell Bajo that he didn't want to be a commander, that he left Cetinje when he heard Germans were coming and he couldn't wait for them anymore.

Bajo told him, "You, general, will stay here and command."

After the capitulation of Italy, we went to Bosnia. We were fighting in the Sutjeska Gorge and we nearly captured Tito. General Blazo Djukanovic also came with us to Bosnia. He was a little overweight. He was always wearing this short raincoat... When we went through Bosnia, I remember that well, General Djukanovic wore a short coat, and it was such a harsh winter and so full of misery, you couldn't believe that a man could survive with such a wardrobe.

Blazo left Cetinje and decided to go with us without anyone demanding anything. Bajo Stanisic respected him and he didn't make one decision without consulting Blazo.

I remember, once, going up this hill. As we were walking my foot got trapped between two rocks. I couldn't pull it out, or I would break my leg. I didn't know what to do, so I untied the laces and pulled my leg out. I lost my boot. And since I couldn't walk half-barefooted, I took off the other boot too. I walked that way for several kilometers until we found a house and borrowed some shoes. And the snow was very deep. Today when I remember that, I don't know how I endured, without being crippled or getting sick.

#### WHEN ROLJO EATS

When we received rations, we got our food and they told us, "That's for three days." There was a musician with us, he played a trumpet, and we called him Roljo, that was his nickname. And Roljo ate well, he ate everything that was supposed to last for the next three days. I shared some of mine with him.

Since he didn't have food the next day, Roljo started to beg. He came to me and said, "Give me some."

"Roljo, when you're spending, you're really spending. You ate it all at once, you won't get anything from me!"

He was very hungry... He endured for awhile, but the third day he couldn't take it, he had a nervous breakdown. Foam started coming out of his mouth.

One man gave him a drink of water, but Roljo told him no. "Give me some bread!"

When more food came and they told Roljo "That's for three days," he saved enough to last four.

#### BACEVIC ON THE LEFT, DJURISIC ON THE RIGHT

I fought at Neretva too.

I heard how these Communist historians say five thousand Chetniks were killed there. That isn't true. Those are Communist lies.

I remember how one Partizan told me before the end of the war: "Woe unto you if you lose, you'll be guilty, condemned for everything you've done and for everything you haven't!"

That's what happened in the end. Today when I hear what they wrote during the fifty-five years I was away, I can only laugh at that kind of rubbish.

At Neretva we had losses, but not in very large numbers.

At Neretva many Communists were killed. But they don't write about that.

At Neretva we Chetniks didn't see one German or Italian.

We fought against the Partizans.

I remember on our left side there was the squad of Chetniks from Herzegovina, commanded by Duke Bacevic,\* and on our right side was Pavle

<sup>\*</sup> Petar Bacovic (sometimes called "Bacevic"), Chetnik commander in Herzegovina. Bacovic was killed at the end of the war when his unit was massacred by the Ustase after promising safe conduct through their territory.

Djurisic.\*

They accuse us of collaborating with the Italians at Neretva, but the Italians gave their weapons to the Partizans. If we were collaborators then they would have given those weapons to us, the Chetniks, not to Tito and the Partizans.

There are documents, among them a report that Biroli, who by order of his headquarters, gave weapons to the Partizans and Tito. That also happened in Podgorica in 1944, when Italians gave their weapons to the Partizans, and then they attacked us with Italian cannons and mortars.

And they really surprised us, because we knew they were a poor army and we didn't think they had those kinds of weapons.

#### A HILL FULL OF OUR CORPSES

Imagine this—we were near Kolasin once, and at night airplanes were flying over us and dropping weapons to the Partizans with parachutes. And we could clearly hear someone shouting in Serbian.

In the morning we went to see what kind of parachutes fell on the Partizan side. With my luck, I got to do that. About twenty of us left. We were ambushed by Partizans. They killed us in such way that only two of us survived. Me and one other Chetnik.

I have never in my life seen so many dead men in one place. They were killed just to get the weapons the Italians dropped for the Partizans.

This is how it happened. We were running down one hill, and Partizans all of a sudden started shooting at us with machine guns. They killed everyone. Only me and one other man survived, who was wounded. I carried him on my back, Vujo was his name.

The Chetnik brigade commanded by Jakov Jovovic was never beaten, not in a single battle, nowhere, it didn't even have any dead, only wounded.

Once near Neretva we captured fifty Communists, and when they surrendered one of them started to beg us, "Don't kill me, Serbian brothers, the Ustase killed my whole family and I went to the Partizans to save myself from the Ustase."

<sup>\*</sup> Pavle Djurisic, an officer in the Royal Yugoslav Army and later Chetnik commander in Montenegro. Together with Petar Bacovic and others, he attempted to cross Ustase-held territory in the closing days of the war to reach the Allies, but was disarmed and killed.

Jakov asked him, "Are there any more Serbs here?"

"Yes!"

"Do you know all of them?" Jakov asked him again.

"Yes, I do!"

Then we separated the Serbs off to one side, the Croats on the other. We took the Serbs into our brigade. When they joined us we called them "Chetnik volunteers." Dujo took care of the Croats. He was a fanatic.

And we took those "volunteers" with us from Neretva and they were always at our side in battle. Later, Duke Djujic\* asked for those "volunteers," and my father sent them to him, over the sea, to Sibenik.

#### ITALIANS AND PARTIZANS TOGETHER, AND WE ALONE

It's a lie that they, the Partizans, were victors at Neretva. Jakov Jovovic's Chetnik brigade didn't lose a single battle at Neretva. And the Partizans retreated all the time. The Herzegovinian Chetniks pushed the Partizans towards us, and we pushed them further, and when they saw they had no way out, they did a clever thing and fled in all directions in groups of three.

When they were running in small groups like that, it was hard to look for them and that way they could save themselves, by running at night and breaking through our positions any way they could.

In those battles neither we nor the Partizans respected wounded much, we killed and they killed too, whoever we found. "Battle for the Wounded." Yeah, right...

Do you know what really happened at Neretva?

Bajo Stanisic and Blazo Djukanovic were our commanders at Neretva, they were leading the Montenegrin squads, and Jakov Jovovic was the commander of Bjelopavlici Brigade.

We got an order from the General Staff and Draza to destroy the rest of the Communists who had escaped from him in Serbia, where they had been surrounded.

There were victims at Neretva. But the Partizans were just running away.

<sup>\*</sup> Momcilo Djujic, a former trade unionist and Orthodox priest who became Chetnik commander in Dalmatia. Djujic succeeded in leading a contingent of some 10,000 Chetniks across Allied lines in the closing days of the war and later emigrated to the United States.

That they killed five thousand Chetniks—that's just a lie. And rubbish! Only some Chetniks from Montenegro were killed. And in our Bjelopavlici Brigade there were no dead, just wounded—Nesko, the son of Bajo Jovovic, seriously, and Father Ljubo Jovovic lightly.

Once again I want to say, and I would repeat it even in front of Communists and in front of God and the people: we fought the Partizans alone, nobody helped us, and the Partizans' allies at Neretva were the Italians, from whom they received their weapons.

Bajo Stanisic was in charge, but in every decision, Bajo consulted with Blazo. "What do you think, General, is this all right?"

The Partizans retreated from Neretva to northern Bosnia. Many of them were killed at Neretva, so many that it was horrible.

During our battles with the Partizans at Neretva, we didn't see any Germans, anywhere, and what Partizan "historians" write, those are just lies.

#### DUKE DJURISIC ON A WHITE HORSE

Bajo Stanisic was a good commander, but Pavle Djurisic was really a hero. He wasn't much of a speaker. Once I listened to him speak in front of a formation of soldiers...

A lot of men were in front of a church in Spuz, we were supposed to attack the Partizans somewhere around Piperi.

Pavle stood in front of us, lifted his rifle and exclaimed, "Heroic soldiers, I can't speak well, I speak with a rifle in my hands! Forward heroes! Follow me!"

Indeed, I watched him go into combat, he went mad, it was unbelievable!

He feared nothing, just went! First. Charging! Shooting! In front of everyone, on a white horse. And bullets missed him. He was shot only once, when he was returning from Albania. Even then they wouldn't have shot him if he hadn't been ambushed from behind, but they couldn't kill him, they just wounded him.

Pavle went through some fierce battles. Once, when we were attacked, he was standing, he took a position by a rock and shouted at us to move. Shots everywhere, shells fall, and he just stands there and shoots back. He wasn't even scratched.

I remember with Djordje Lasic, a great commander and hero, if a rifle fired

in combat, he was wounded. Lasic had hundreds of wounds on his body.

Jakov Jovovic was intelligent, an excellent speaker, authoritative. But Draza would get very angry with him. Jakov would every now and then visit Cetinje. Draza didn't like that, he hated officers who "engage in politics," and these departures of Jakov's seemed to Draza like some sort of politics.\* And then one day he forbade him to leave his unit. He made it clear: if Jakov ever went to Cetinje again, he'll be stripped of his rank and command.

Later Draza Mihajlovic decided to replace Bajo Stanisic as chief of headquarters with Vlado Djukic, who was a General Staff officer.

#### A CAMP FOR CHILDREN IN LIVNO

I remember one horrible scene. When we went through Bosnia, we came across a camp. That was in Livno. In a field that had been fenced in with barbed wire. And inside of that fence there were children between five and seven years of age. They were naked. In that camp, Ustase doctors performed medical experiments on children. They were little Jews, children of Jews killed by the Ustase.

We saw those children... Their stomachs fell out and were hanging between their legs. Skeletons, living skeletons. Only their eyes were this big... They looked half mad, they just trudged around in circles. They were living skeletons of children, not children. That was in the Winter of 1943. For two days we saw how those children lived, it was horrible.

In 1944, there was a lot of fratricide, so much it's a disgrace to talk about it.

Once, an Italian told me that his people weren't like the crazy Balkan folk, edging to kill each other.

I always avoided talking about the details of the battles with the Communists, that's a disgrace... Brother against brother. But some men are not ashamed of anything. The crimes of the Communists were horrible... Those who have no fear God have no shame.

In 1944, the Communists entered Kosov Lug for the second time. They hadn't been there since February 1942. We and the Communists were alone now, the Italians were gone, they capitulated, the Germans were gone... My late father was at headquarters. I was in Danilovgrad, with my cousins. One morning we heard

<sup>\*</sup> Cetinje, the historic capital of the Kingdom of Montenegro, was a stronghold for Montenegrin separatists and advocates for the deposed monarchy under King Nikola.

the news that the Communists had entered Kosov Lug from Zagree and Bandici.

My father asked Jakov what to do, and Jakov said, "Attack them. When you see my three tracer bullets you should start attacking!"

Jakov went first, with ten men. And we were supposed to follow behind them.

#### THREE TRACER BULLETS

I tried to think of how I could move through the Communists' positions. Maybe I could eavesdrop and learn the password and response.

I told Jakov to let me go first, because I could handle Communists easier.

And we set out, ten meters between us. In case something happened, we wouldn't all get killed this way.

I went forward. I found the Partizans quickly. What should I do now?

And one of the Partizans called out, nervously, "Pass! Pass quickly! What are you waiting for?"

He had no idea that I wasn't one of them. He couldn't believe that someone would dare move straight at them like that.

We passed.

That way, through the Partizan guards, all the way to the Susica.

I saw how they had stolen our cattle, pigs... They were singing, shouting. Most of them were drunk.

Ten of us, deep behind their positions. All with automatic weapons, we spread around... One tracer bullet flashed, a second, a third... When three tracer bullets were fired, Jakov pushed at the Partizans from the front. They started running at us, and we shot at them.

Then they started running away everywhere! They left both the cows and the pigs behind, just to get over the Susica alive. One of them couldn't swim and I think he drowned in the river.

We heard that the Germans were advancing from Savnik towards Niksic, and we left with two squads to ambush them.

We cut in front of them and fired. Then they surrounded us. They killed our commander, Grozdanic, who was a sergeant in headquarters company. They killed several others, too. With my men I began to retreat. You couldn't attack the Germans from the front. Bajo Stanisic told us that a million times. You could only surprise the Germans, attack them in groups of three, as the Communists did.

#### SQUARE CAPTAINS UNDER MOUNT OSTROG

Bajo's headquarters was in the Lower Monastery in Ostrog. I was in the first tent next to headquarters. My father was there with several officers—captains popularly called "square captains." There were four of them. The chief of headquarters was Vlado Djukic, a General Staff officer.

After some time an envoy from the General Staff of Draza Mihajlovic arrived, Dr. Jovo Toskovic.

We had two radios there, later I took one and gave it to Major Lasic.

When we were traveling to Lasic, through Piperi, we ran into the Communists. Some of us were on foot, some on horses. Scouts in front, the radio equipment on two horses.

We had one man in our unit who liked to throw grenades. We called him "Mortar," he carried weapons for Vukola Vukotic, from Cetinje. Vukola was a lawyer I think, he was very popular in America, died only recently...

Vukola Vukotic shouted to Mortar, who carried his guns, "Mortar, give me my weapon, damn you!"

The Communists heard that and called out, "Comrade commander, the Chetniks have mortar cannons too!"

We entered a battle with the Communists. We fired with the automatic rifles given to us by the English. We passed through Piperi.

#### THE KING ON THE RADIO

We spent several days listening to the radio. We didn't know much about what was happening. My father sometimes told me bits of information... We were very surprised when we heard that the King was asking everyone to join Tito, and said that those who refused would bear the stigma of shame and treachery.

What was this? How was it possible? "The stigma of shame and treachery?"

One of our neighbors cried, "Nobody can bear the stigma of shame and treachery!"

During those days father allowed me to go about with Jakov, but later Bajo asked me to stay with him.

One day I found out that, by order of the General Staff, Duke Pavle Djurisic was authorized to send a mission to Italy, to make contact and negotiate with the Allies. Sicily and southern Italy were already occupied by the Allies. And Draza Mihajlovic made a promise to the English. He guaranteed that they could invade our coast, because from Bar to Herceg Novi there was not a single Communist. We were supposed to arrange everything with the Allies, to secure a bridgehead for them, to be the advance guard for their invasion.

Jevrem Saulic was appointed as part of the delegation. He was a great Serbian intellectual from Niksic. Also with them were two English officers who were sent from the General Staff and, I think, two American officers. Ratko Parezanin also went with them. He was a Ljotic supporter\* who lived in Montenegro because he was married to a Montenegrin woman.

Parezanin used his position to send aid to Montenegro...

Ratko Parezanin had come in 1943. He was a good journalist and writer, he gave me a book called *The Death of King Alexander*. He was a good friend of Jakov Jovovic.

### THERE FAR AWAY, THERE IS SERBIA

I remember those difficult days, no help at all. The English didn't send us any-thing.

While the Italians were in the towns, at least they fed the people.

Now, nothing. Nowhere, nothing. And then Parezanin went to Serbia, returning quickly with aid.

Ljotic's supporters were well-organized, they had many intellectuals among them. They had the ideology to defend themselves from the Communists. And the best Serbian publication abroad was *Iskra*, edited by Ratko Parezanin.

<sup>\*</sup> Followers of Dimitrije Ljotic, head of the Yugoslav National Movement (commonly known as the *Zbor)* that fought both the Chetniks and the Partizans. Ljotic was killed while fleeing Yugoslavia at the end of the war.

And later, Jasa Ljotic, until the Communists killed him, hanged him in some hotel or apartment in Germany.

We went to seek aid from Nedic.\* Serbia was so far away! From Podgorica we went with a cart over Albania, we first came to Skoder, then to Kosovska Mitrovica. Pavle Djurisic was captured and imprisoned then, but he somehow escaped and went to Sandzak. We continued our journey to Vrnjacka Banja.

Draza Mihajlovic sent a message that he wished to receive Jakov Jovovic, for the second time. Because there were still some misunderstandings between them. Others also went to see Draza: deputy governor of the Zeta region Dusan Vlahovic, Stevo Jovicevic, the father-in-law of Jakov, and adjutant of Pavle Djurisic... I was glad that I would see Draza, because I had gone to Vasojevici to see him once, but I didn't make it.

We were received by Draza's chief of headquarters, Zaharije Ostojic, who was a Montenegrin. He asked me, "You are Jovovic?"

I said I was, and he asked if I'm related to Stevo Jovovic.

"I'm his nephew," I said, "from his own brother."

We entered, and Draza said, "So, you are the nephew of Stevo Jovovic. Stevo was my first commandant."

Stevo Jovovic was greatly appreciated both by Draza and Nedic, who appointed him to be an inspector of the Serbian Guard. Draza was full of praise for Stevo, who was very useful after he returned from captivity in Germany.

## **BELGRADE BOMBED BY THE ALLIES**

It was the end of the war and we were supposed to save Serbdom.

How? With whom?

Someone named Piletic contacted the Russians, but they didn't want to talk, unless we joined with Tito.

During those days, in Belgrade, there were negotiations to smooth over differences and conflicts that arose between the Chetniks and Nedic's supporters.

Draza told us that Stevo Jovovic had paid his debt for Serbdom, by helping both the people and the army.

<sup>\*</sup> General Milan Nedic, War Minister in a pre-war Yugoslav government and, under German occupation, puppet prime minister of Serbia starting in 1941. Nedic was captured by the Partizans at the end of the war, who claimed he committed suicide while in captivity.

I was told that Dr. Toskovic had recommended me to Draza for an officer's rank, because I was a good fighter. But I didn't know about that, and Toskovic had already been killed by then. Draza accepted the suggestion, although he often resented suggestions for promotions. But for me, they say, he offered the rank right away.

When we came to Belgrade, it was a horrible sight. Two days earlier Belgrade had been hit by Allied carpet-bombing.

We looked for Stevo Jovovic, but were told he had resigned and went into the forests with Draza. However, Stevo came by the next day and asked after my father. He invited us to his place, since all of the men gathered there. We met Pavle Jovovic, who was a parliamentary representative, bearer of Karadjordje Star, and was also a Minister of Agriculture. We also found Savo Radovic, a brother of Andrija Radovic, the president of the Montenegrin government. Also with them was Pavle Boskovic, who said he didn't remember me.

Jakov told them that he had asked to see Milan Nedic. Jakov asked us to go with him, but no one else. He knew Nedic would see him because of Stevo, whom he valued a lot.

### NEDIC CRIES, WE CRY TOO

We were received by Nedic.

An old man, with a long, red face. White hair, short, half-bald. He held a speech in honor of our coming and said he cared a lot what people in Montenegro thought of him. He told us that in the first days after the capitulation they asked him to be the president of this enslaved Serbia, to save at least something, but he couldn't accept that.

When the Croats reached Zemun, he was the only one to defend the rest of Serbia. He, and Ljotic also, but we disagreed with him on that.

"I was an army general, I was chief of the General Staff, I was Minister of Defense, I was everything a mortal could be in Serbia. When they bombed Bitolj, as Minister of Defense I was removed from office. The Italians bombed Bitolj by mistake, instead of some town in Greece. I asked for an apology, so they dismissed me."

He continued to wail at us. "I was everything, except the King of Serbia and

Yugoslavia, since I was sworn to loyalty to the House of Karadjordjevic and if that was ever offered, I would never do that."

He was aware of the imminent end, and how that end would look.

"I care a lot what Montenegrins think of me."

Jakov stood up, looked up, remained silent for a moment... And then began to talk.

"They will remember how you told them: if they hold Mojkovac for 24 hours, they will do a lot for Serbdom..."\*

Jakov talked with such emotion that Nedic cried, and I started crying too.

Then Nedic said, "I did everything to save Serbdom, but I couldn't save them from the Communists. Maybe the people will thank me for that, but politicians certainly will not!"

## WITH THE IMPRISONED PATRIARCH

When we finished with Nedic, Jakov asked to see Patriarch Dozic\*\* who was at that time in Pancevo, in a monastery.

We went to see the Patriarch in civilian clothing, in a state automobile.

Nikolaj Velimirovic was with the patriarch. That was in June, July 1944.

The monastery was barricaded. When we came to the entrance, the guard didn't let us in. Jakov started to yell at him, asked him if he was a Croat or a *Volksdeutscher*, insulted both his father and mother, started to threaten him.

"The days of freedom are coming, you'll pay for this!"

But he didn't let us in. We got in the car and went back to Belgrade.

We could see the patriarch the next day but only for a few hours. We came to the monastery again, that guard greeted us, and Jakov told me, "Look at that scoundrel!" And he started cursing again.

When we entered, Dozic began to tell us how he is the only head of a church who is imprisoned. But, frankly, at that moment, he looked more like an officer than the patriarch.

Jakov asked if we could help him escape.

<sup>\*</sup> In World War I, the Montenegrin army held the Austro-Hungarian army at bay at Mojkovac, providing time for the Serbian army to retreat and later regroup.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Patriarch Gavrilo Dozic, spiritual leader of the Serbian Orthodox Church. A Montenegrin, he was held under house arrest for several years before the Nazis sent him to Dachau.

Dozic replied that some Ljotic supporters had the same suggestion.

Nikolaj Velimirovic surprised me in a way. When we entered the monastery it was sunny. We went up the stairs, and he was waiting for us there. I never saw such long beard, his beard was white, and the sun was shining. At first I thought he had a golden beard.

He approached us to kiss us and said, "Lucky me, here come my Serbian children."

Patriarch Dozic gave us a cross and said, "This is a wooden cross, but when the day of liberty comes, come see me and we will replace that cross, not with a better one, but with a more free and proud one."

From his words and his gift I was simply hypnotized, I never had that kind of a feeling in life.

## MAJOR LASIC WITHOUT TEETH

From Belgrade we went to Sandzak, but some soldiers with Turkish hats wouldn't let us pass. Jakov looked for Pavle Djurisic to give him the message that he was recognized as the supreme commander of Montenegro and Sandzak.

From Sandzak we went to Kolasin, traveling by night. There we met Djordje Lasic and returned to Danilovgrad.

In 1944, the Germans bombed Podgorica. I think Lasic was killed during that bombing. He was a fierce warrior. Lasic was a great hero and commandant, but he didn't like to be called "duke."

There was not a place on his body where he wasn't wounded. His teeth were all broken. Lasic was a great hero, a great soldier and a great Serb.

Lasic wasn't killed by a bullet, but a bomb fell near him and his wife and they both died from the explosion. To me, Lasic was the best Serbian duke after Bajo Stanisic, but Bajo also didn't like to be called *vojvoda*.

Pavle Djurisic came to Podgorica, and Jakov Jovovic recognized him as commander. Pavle Djurisic was a great warrior and he had every right to be named commander of Montenegro and Sandzak.

## PREPARE, PREPARE CHETNIKS

Towards the end of the war a mission was appointed that was supposed to arrange the invasion of the Allies on the Adriatic Coast. However, that first mission was a failure because the Germans discovered it and killed them all. A second mission was supposed to be appointed.

In Ostrog I heard that Jakov Jovovic was assigned to this new mission, to go to Boka Kotorska to meet with the nationalist leadership and give several speeches, to boost their morale and confidence in the nationalists and the Allies.

The same day, Dr. Jovo Toskovic, a great intellectual and historian and the envoy of Draza Mihajlovic, invited me to go with him to meet with Djordje Lasic. He liked me and valued me as a young man. From there, he would give us a contact to go to Serbia.

He sent me home to rest and get ready for the trip. We brought two pairs of boots, because there would be a lot of walking ahead.

Toskovic told me to report to him within three days. I accepted and went home to Kosic.

When I came home they told me that we should escort Jakov Jovovic, who was supposed to go to the coast. I escorted them to Zagaraci, to the house of my aunt, from where they went on without me.

I stayed with my aunt overnight. Sometime around three a.m, someone started pounding on the door and shouting.

"Blagoje! Blagoje!"

"What is it now?" I opened the door and saw Cvejo, breathless.

"A great battle! With Partizans from Zagaraci!"

I got ready and left with Cvejo. I passed my Italian prisoner, whom we called "Nero." I captured him in battle and ever since then he had been in our unit.

Nero was already shooting. It was a fierce battle that lasted until morning. I couldn't imagine that any of us would be left alive. At dawn, we saw, nobody was even wounded.

### NEVER CLOSER TO DEATH

And just when we thought the battle was over, the Partizans started throwing

grenades. They were throwing Italian grenades, the ones they got when the Italians armed them. Those grenades we didn't consider very dangerous, because they would explode whenever they would hit an obstacle. And there was no chance of a grenade reaching us without hitting a branch or a tree.

While grenades were exploding around us, I saw Nero and told him, "Don't be afraid, these are your Italian grenades, they won't kill you!"

He just laughed.

And just as we were talking, a grenade flew at us. A piece of shrapnel gouged my finger, and the next one landed right beside Nero. It crippled him in such way that his guts fell out. Nero was killed right there. I watched Nero die before my eyes, and I couldn't help him.

Then, behind a rock, a Partizan appeared. With his hands up. And with a machine gun.

"Comrade, I surrender!" he shouted.

I look at him. Nero was dead. That wound was hurting me. I didn't know what to do.

And while I was thinking what to do with the surrendering Partizan, he lifted his machine gun up. And pointed it straight at me. To kill me! I was frozen... And then... Nothing! The machine gun jammed on him. I stood like I was petrified. He was surprised.

Suddenly—a shot came.

I thought, "Someone is shooting at me!" Then I saw that Partizan fall. Dead. I looked around and saw he was shot by our men.

That Partizan had shot Misa Dabetic, took his machine gun and went on to kill us, thinking Misa was dead.

We found Misa wounded. I told him how the machine gun jammed on that Partizan. Miso just wondered and said, "Well, it never jammed on me!"

### SMOKE ON OSTROG

We captured several Communists. Jakov and Cvejo went on to Boka Kotorska to ready the ground for the Allied landing. I came back home to prepare for the trip to Serbia, with Dr. Toskovic. When I came home, we saw a lot of smoke rising from the direction of Ostrog, fire could be seen too... In that smoke and fire, General Blazo Djukanovic died with Bajo Stanisic, colonel and Chetnik duke. There was a song about them:

An army is leaving from Niksic The squad of Bajo Stanisic. From Vinici of Obilici Heroes of these lands Like Blazo Djukanovic—a hero.

Only one man survived, Blagoje from Vasojevici. When they were taken to be executed, he was lucky, he wasn't hit by a bullet, but fell down and pretended to be dead, even when they took off his uniform and boots. They threw him in a pit. He used the opportunity when the Partizans weren't paying attention, "resurrected" himself, and started running. They all shot at him, and again he wasn't hit... He was hiding in the forest for three days, and then our headquarters came. I heard from him how everything happened.

The situation had been hopeless. Ostrog's bells rang in vain, seeking help.

Nobody went to help the surrounded Chetniks.

The Partizans didn't offer Bajo Stanisic ordinary surrender terms, but to become one of them. They would give him a sector to command if he recognized their supreme headquarters. Bajo refused.

Then they promised they'd let the Chetniks go home, only if they surrender, not to spill fraternal blood. They came out and surrendered their weapons. The Partizans took them to Lower Ostrog, interrogated them—gently—and gave them dinner... And then in the middle of the night, they took all of them out as if they had to, the Germans were advancing—and shot them all.

General Djukanovic surrendered, he didn't want the sanctity of Ostrog to be desecrated by a battle in which the Chetniks had no chance. Draza's envoy, Dr. Toskovic, surrendered with him. Over his corpse the Partizans celebrated the most, taunting, "Come see Draza's minister!"

And Bajo Stanisic was hit by a bullet while he was shooting, he died in a window of the monastery.

Three of his relatives didn't want to be captured alive. They committed suicide...

Blood was spilled beside the reliquary of Saint Vasilije, fraternal blood.

I spent more than a year at Ostrog with Bajo. And I was saved only by

chance. If I hadn't left home to prepare, I would have been killed like Dr. Toskovic, who was waiting for me at Ostrog to go to Serbia.

There is no death without judgment day.

#### UNCLE'S BEEN KILLED

In August of 1944, a great misery beset my house and family. I never spoke about our battles and the fratricide, but this I want to tell you.

On that miserable day I went over the Zeta, and with two, three men shot in the direction of the Partizans. I saw a large group of our men arriving, they were on large rubber boats that the English had thrown to us. The entire Kosic company was there, and some from headquarters company. I watched as my uncle, Dusan, was going forward, and when he came near me I told him to look out, to go slowly. He was to my right some ten meters, and two, three meters forward.

We came to a house when he said to me, quite calmly, "Blagoje, they shot me."

"Get down!" I saw them aiming at him.

"Don't leave me to the Communists!" he begged me.

"Come on, you know I won't!"

I watched him sitting, helplessly.

Another rifle fired. I saw he was hit again.

"Ah, another one shot me," he said, and fell.

I saw Dusan lying dead. Horrible scene.

#### CALM DOWN, FATHER'S BEEN KILLED TOO

At that moment my father arrived. I saw him give a bag to Bosko, son of Grujica Brajovic, and tell him, "Take good care of that, Bosko, my honor is in there!"

Later I saw that there were some papers in that bag, letters from General Ljubo Novakovic and a lot of correspondence with Bajo Stanisic, Blazo Djukanovic... Those letters were thrown away later by my family...

To get back to that horrible day.

I told my father that I would go first. To get out of there. He didn't let me. He said he would go first. He was on his knees and elbows, and moved that way, not getting up, and carrying a rock in front of him.

Partizans opened fire. I saw sparks flash out of that rock. Father hid behind it.

When he rose a little to move, a female voice from the other side shouted, "Watch out, Uncle Jovo, don't move at all!" A Partizan woman had recognized him.

"What was... Who said that? Blagoje-"

"Some Partizan woman!" I shouted. "Get down!"

He got down, waited a while... When he got up again that voice shouted, "Get down, Uncle Jovo!"

At that moment, just as he rose, a machine gun burst caught him.

Swept him away.

Woe unto me, Father!

I saw men were starting to abandon their positions. I shouted, "Fine, you can go, if you don't want to wait for nightfall, but I won't leave my father and uncle!"

Bosko Brajovic said, "I'm staying with my son!" Milan Brajovic said the same. Several other Brajovici stayed too.

I wanted to tell Savo, an active officer and the commander of the Kosic company, what had happened and I went in his direction. I met my brother Dimitrije, called "Mito." He told me that our uncle was killed.

"Calm down," I said, "father's been killed too!"

He screamed.

Not far from there I saw my brother Veljko, he was 12 years old, carrying a rifle.

"Who gave you that rifle?" I yelled.

The poor kid got scared, dropped the rifle... Then, old Captain Savo Jovovic arrived, I asked him to cover me and not to allow the Communists to shoot at me.

"I will pull out uncle and dad as soon as night falls," I told Savo.

I got back to my position—and everybody ran away! Only a few men stayed behind.

Night came. I ordered the men to prepare hand grenades.

Lets go!

I started to shout as loud as I could. "Forward, first battalion, to the right! Second battalion to the left! Throw grenades!"

We fired and went forward and managed to pull out both Uncle Dusan and my father.

We passed through some corn and met up with Savo Djurovic. I thanked him for his help. I carried my father and uncle over the Zeta and brought them home.

Partizans were shooting at us the whole time.

There was a large funeral, with many people. The column of people and soldiers stretched from Kosic to Danilovgrad. Pavle Djurisic was also at the funeral.

We came to the cemetery, and Father Ljubo looked around and said, "This many people never came to see anyone!"

Over the grave of my father, Professor Milos Jovovic spoke, one of the most educated people in our village. Milos was the editor of Chetnik Ravna Gora organ 707. His son, Ranko Jovovic, was a well-known Serbian poet.

#### ON ROUGH SEAS

Several days after the funeral, an order came from General Staff to appoint a mission for negotiations with the English. Dusan Vlahovic, the former deputy governor of the Zeta region, was appointed as president of the mission and Jakov Jovovic as his deputy, also Father Ljubo, and me with them as a representative of the Chetnik youth.

In the beginning of September 1944, the delegation left for negotiations to Italy, but not all of us went. From Kotor, Father Ljubo returned to Kosic. Later he went on a scamper to Kocevski Rog. He didn't return.

First we went to Podgorica, and there, in the old part of the town, to Chetnik headquarters, located in the house of Zarija Filipovic, a teacher. Jakov Jovovic was his close friend. We were supposed to go to supreme headquarters, to see Pavle Djurisic, but we were told that Duke Pavle Djurisic was in a hospital in Krusevac. He was wounded by Partizans when he was returning from negotiations. He asked the Albanians to let his units pass peacefully over Albania, to Greece. Pavle Djurisic was supposed to give us documents for the trip.

We left Podgorica, to Cetinje, and later to Kotor. We spent two days in Kotor. There we met Captain Peterson, who was part of the mission to General Draza Mihajlovic. We traveled in a small boat, *Tender* was its name. The night we sailed out there was a great storm, so we had to turn back. The storm was ferocious. We sailed out again, somehow got out of Kotorska Bay, but we couldn't go any further, the sea took us somewhere near Dubrovnik. When we saw that we had no other options, we decided to go ashore.

We sailed toward the coast, and the man piloting the boat came out of the engine room and told Jakov, "Captain, water's flooded the engine!" And then he cursed God.

Everyone jumped up: who is cursing God?

Someone shouted, "Throw the heathen into the sea!"

In that miserable storm, bounced around by the sea, we had all become religious.

And they would have thrown him overboard, if Captain Jakov Jovovic hadn't given an order on the deck.

"People, he has to get us to shore with this boat, and when we get there you can kill him, but for now, let's save him and ourselves!"

When we reached the shore, standing on dry land, we all forgot about his cursing, and about God.

When the weather changed, we sailed out again. But, instead of Bari—we had to cut through waves—we arrived at Taranto.

That was an awful voyage. When we saw the Italian coast someone shouted, "There, land!"

Just as we jumped up from happiness, others shouted, "Come on, people, those are just clouds!"

It was like Columbus' expedition to America.

When we went ashore, an American captain was waiting and took us to their club.

We were immediately offered dinner and, dead tired, we quickly fell sleep.

The next day, the American officer told us that the course of politics among the Allies had changed, and that we, the Chetniks, were now under the jurisdiction of the English. He directed us to Bari.

Thus from the evil path of war, I crossed to the path of an émigré.

At that time I didn't know that I wouldn't see my homeland again for the next fifty-five long years.

#### PART TWO

# I HAD ONE ROSE

**T HE AMERICANS SENT US** to the English. Our delegation reported to a base in Bari, and there we held discussions. Jakov Jovovic pretended not to know Italian, they brought a Jew to be an interpreter. Jakov halted the negotiations—the interpreter was lying about everything!

The interpreter apologized, the English officer apologized, and thus our "negotiations" ended. The English took us to some camp, five, six kilometers outside of Bari, I think it was Carbonari.

From Yugoslavia they started slandering us, all kinds of lies about us—even that we Chetniks were preparing an attack on the English when they landed on Adriatic Coast. And in all of that misery, the Russian mission got involved. The Russians demanded that Jakov and other members of the delegation should be arrested.

It was already the end of 1944. For the six months I was in the camp, they kept interrogating me. They knew more about me than I did. They asked me about my childhood, then they reminded me of things I skipped. They knew all kinds of details. Where did get their information from?

## HE WHO SINGS DOESN'T FEEL LIKE SINGING

After six months they released me. I went to a camp near Lecce, where the Royal Navy was located, looking for Jakov and the others. There I found a colonel from Niksic, I learned from him that Jakov was in Rome. The colonel gave me money for the trip. In Rome we looked for Jakov, we found him in some sort of prison. We kissed each other as I asked him, "What are you doing here?"

"They hid me from the Russian mission, to prevent the Russians from extraditing me to the Communists in Yugoslavia."

He gave me the address of a woman in Rome, where some money from our mission was left. I was thinking, "Who in all of this confusion would save your money?" But the woman counted all of it for me. She was some honorable woman.

I went to see Jakov, I told him I did what he asked. I asked him what would we do next, and Jakov—started to sing! What was wrong with him? Had he gone nuts? I listened, and he was singing so the guards wouldn't understand him. I sat next to him, we started singing together.

"Theeere iiiis ooone ooof ooour miiisions iiin Rome, looook theeeere fooor soooome Ci - Ciganovic, hey!"

"Aaall riiight!"

After that, they wouldn't let us see Jakov, so we "sang" over the fence.

I went to say goodbye to Jakov, when someone shouted, "Jovovic, Jovovic!" "That's me."

They arrested me on the spot and put me in a camp with Jakov. I was there for about a month.

One day they brought some people from Serbia, from Stojadinovic's government,\* some secretaries, nice people it seemed. They got to like me. I wrote some patriotic lyrics on a wall of the barracks, they read it and said, "Only a Montenegrin could write this kind of patriotic poetry!"

We found out that one person in that group was a commander of the Banjica camp. A criminal, murderer. A real rebellion broke out in the camp.

"We are patriots and national fighters, we don't want to be in the same place with criminals and murderers!"

The English started to negotiate with us. We accepted everything, even extradition to Yugoslavia, even to stand trial, but to be with the villains of

<sup>\*</sup> Milan Stojadinovic, Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of the Royal Government between 1935 and 1939. Stojadinovic held several posts in the Nedic puppet régime during the war, escaping afterward to Argentina.

Banjica-no way!

The English accepted our terms, and housed the two groups separately.

#### JOSIP BROZ AND ZIVKO TOPALOVIC

After a month they released me. I contacted our mission in Rome, headed by Adam Pribicevic, a good man and a great Serb, who helped me a lot, and not just me.

He was the brother of a Serbian politician from Croatia, Vlado Pribicevic, who was even a prime minister in some sort of Serb-Croat coalition.

Adam also had his party before the war, during the war he wrote a lot about the Ustase's crimes...

I also met Zivko Topalovic, the former president of the Socialist Party and the Socialist International. He was a very respectable man. He tried to contact Tito, who was supposed to receive him when he flew from Vis to Italy, and Zivko told me to get ready, to go with him as an escort. And we went to those negotiations, but Tito didn't wait, he had departed suddenly for the Soviet Union.

In Rome I also met an extraordinary man, Misa Popovic, a medical student, a dedicated revolutionary. Intelligent, educated, a great speaker, passionate, resourceful... He switched through all of our armies during the war. He was a Communist, and went from the Partizans to Chetniks, he was with Nedic, then with Ljotic.

"Money, money, money, and then the whole world!" Misa quoted Napoleon. And continued, "And I always said to Serbs: unity, unity, unity, and then the whole world!"

I got a job then in Rescamp 56 as a quartermaster, I saw to it that Misa got a job there as well.

He told me how, once, with Sekula Drljevic,\* he went to see Ante Pavelic.

#### WHEN I DECIDED TO KILL PAVELIC

We heard that Pavelic too was in Italy, and Misa suggested that the two of us

\* Sekula Drljevic, a leader in the Montenegrin separatist movement during the war.

Two Bullets for Pavelic

should try to find him, and kill him.

Misa took me to some meetings, dance parties with the English. I met his wife, who worked for the Intelligence Service center in Rome. Through his wife Misa joined them too. Then they started recruiting me.

We talked about it, we asked if the English would help us find Pavelic, that we were prepared to kill him. Misa's wife told our story to some Jews she knew, since the center was crowded with Jews. They invited us over and asked if we could transport a Jewish woman from Austria across the border to Italy.

We made a deal: if we did that, then they would help us find Pavelic. We heard he was in the Vatican, but now they had moved him to a convent.

They accepted the proposal.

Wearing English uniforms, we got to the border, stayed around there, there were various armies there—English, French... We met some French soldiers, talked about the friendship between the Serbs and the French from the first war. Thus, the French agreed to help get our Jewish woman over the border, we should only have to look for them at the border crossing... That turned out pretty well, mostly because Misa spoke French fluently. All of that happened in Bolzano in 1947.

We found the Jewish woman in a hotel. She was the wife of some high official, and they tried to get her across the border twice before, and failed. And now, she didn't want to come with us, she had lost all confidence. We managed somehow to persuade her to come with us, everything went as planned, but some French policeman came by, or whatever he was. She was turned back, they wanted to arrest us, but those French soldiers saved us, they returned us to Italy. We were angry and bitter because we didn't make it, we sat in a bar at the Italian border. And everything would have finished well, but Misa was restless, got into an argument with some policemen. I couldn't calm him down, there was trouble, Misa wanted to fight with the policemen, they arrested us, they tried Misa...

"Fine," I thought, "now they'll take us to Rome, where the Intelligence Service will save us," but they locked us up in a local prison instead.

Damn! No more fooling around, now we're really in trouble.

Some woman came by there to clean up, I started to talk to her and showed her some money. If she goes to my friend Ljubo Kovacevic—we lived together and told him about our situation, I would give her some money. Ljubo knew enough to get us back to the English. But, I told her to ask Ljubo his father's name and to tell it to me—to make sure she didn't trick me. She came the next day, shouting, "Radonj, Radonj!"

Ljubo's father's name was Radonja. I gave her the money. The English intervened and released us.

However, the deal with those Jews was off, because we failed to complete our part of it. That is how my first attempt to track down Pavelic failed.

I wouldn't step on his tail again until Argentina, through a certain DiFranchesci, a journalist.

But, lets back to Italy.

#### IN THE USTASE CAMP

After that affair, they took us to Sicily, by train to Calabria, then to the island of Lipari. On that island, in that same camp, the Ustase had been trained to destroy the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Lipari was very crowded, people from everywhere, difficult conditions.

On the second or third night I heard from somewhere, in the distance, from land, a train. And a song. Serbian. Some Serb was singing with a clear, strong voice coming over the sea. He was singing that old song from the Banat.

> I had one rose, one rose, the flower of May. I pinned it to my chest, for the whole world to see. But one night in May, the wind blew, a storm blew, It ripped away my rose's petals I was left with a naked stem.

I listened, sorrow grabbed me by the throat... for my native village, for homeland.

Misa asked, "Can you hear this, Blagoje?"

I couldn't answer, a groan came out of my chest, my eyes were full of tears.

I could still hear, from even greater distance:

"I had one rose ... "

The whistle of a locomotive, a dark and a deaf night in foreign land...

## SUGARCOATED HUNGER STRIKE

Fine. We decided to start a hunger strike. I said that we should buy a bag of sugar, secretly mix it with the water—we'd last longer that way. And I smuggled a letter to Jakov Jovovic, to inform the public of how many political prisoners there were on Lipari, under what kind of conditions we were living—that so many years after the war, in Europe, there were still concentration camps.

There were a lot of Ljotic supporters in that camp. Misa went to them, and there was a real Serbian scene. There, in the camp, we started to turn on each other, as if we didn't share the same fate. They attacked Draza, I defended him. Misa got involved in the argument.

"You Chetniks were a common mob and cannon fodder! Ljotic was a gentleman, a politician and an intellectual!"

He bit me for my soul. I never wanted to speak to him again after that.

Even though we didn't speak, one day Misa sent me a note that the English had intervened, that they would release the two of us, that an airplane was coming for us, to go to England, to learn the language there and that we would be assigned somewhere in the Intelligence Service.

I didn't want to go.

Misa sent me a note:

Blagoje Jovovic, if I was ever a friend to someone in my life, it was to you. I loved you as a comrade, as a brother, I never deceived you. And you don't have to trust me for anything, but just trust me on this. I, Misa Popovic, a ruined man, who was a member of the Party, because of whom his wife suffered when they interned her because of me, and my child died, I who left the Party, went to Duke Djujic, then to Nedic, then to Ljotic, who was with Sekula Drljevic... Believe me, Blagoje Jovovic, I am totally ruined, but believe me that I like you, don't be mad at me, please. I replied:

You were my friend, but I don't want to see you ever again. You or your Intelligence Service!

And an airplane came. Misa left, I stayed in the camp.

I was stubborn, rough, young... I would have forgiven him now. Poor Misa, I don't know what happened to him later.

## CHURCHILL WAS ANGRY WITH ME

Jakov Jovovic and his friends managed to do something after all. There was a lot of publicity in the press about the camp on Lipari, and they told me I would be released. What would we do then? We would be able to leave Italy, as immigrants. Whoever wants to. I also got a message from Jakov Jovovic, telling me I should go to Argentina, that I would travel with him, that I wouldn't have to wait my turn.

They released us. I went by boat to Rimini, there was some sort of athletic competition between the Allies. As if the English, again, considered us their allies. I applied for the high jump, I was always a good jumper. My result was about 170 centimeters.

Some Polish man was the best. Misin was his name. 175.

I watched the others jump, I saw it's important to bend your legs a little at one moment, then the jump is higher. I crossed myself and jumped. 178. First place.

The next day again. Competition in Riccona, with Polish, Bulgarians, Germans, Hungarians—everyone who was in captivity. That Polish man again. He jumped 173, and I 179!

An English major approached me. He asked me where I'm from. He spoke Serbian well.

I said that I was a Serb from Montenegro. He introduced himself to me.

"Randolph Churchill."

The son of Winston Churchill! He said that he was in our country during the war. He introduced me to a Russian, also a major, an intelligence officer. They took me to have a drink. I sat with them. They started to quaff whiskey, they offered me some, but I don't drink.

"What kind of a Serb are you when you don't drink?!" Churchill was angry with me.

You couldn't tell which one of them quaffed more, he or that Russian.

#### AND TITO WAS A GOOD BUDDY

I wanted to leave, but Churchill didn't let me.

"Why are you mad at me?"

"I know what you did in Yugoslavia!"

"My father is mad at me too," Major Churchill said.

He was on a mission to Draza, and they were strictly reserved with him, canny, official. He had the impression that they were hiding something from him. Later, with Tito, everything was different—whisky, singing, women... Tito was a good buddy!

"Don't tell me the Partizans didn't fight the Germans," he said. "I was in Drvar, Tito barely saved his neck there!"\*

He made a toast to me. They were drinking. They were drinking so much that after an hour or two, they both passed out on the table. The Englishman snored, the Russian hiccuped, an empty bottle between them.

I asked the waiter when the next train for Rome left. I sneaked out.

"Goodbye, Major, butcher of the Serbs! I'm glad I met the man who sold my people out for a double whisky without ice!"

### A PATRIOTIC MISSION FOR THE BEAUTIFUL CACA

In Rome I heard that Dr. Vlahovic had been arrested, from our mission, along with Bora Novakovic.

I paid a visit to them. They were very worried. Could I find out if they would be extradited to Tito, or if they would be released?

"If it's dangerous for us," Novakovic told me, "you just yell over the fence-

<sup>\*</sup> Reference to a German operation against Partizan headquarters in Drvar when paratroopers nearly captured Tito, who escaped through the back of a cave.

'Jakov!' And if it's all right—'Mira!'"

"Mira? Who is Mira?"

"I'm Mira."

When he was a little boy, he had curly hair, he was as pretty as a girl, so they called him "Mira."

There was also a Chetnik major, Rakocevic. His wife was really beautiful.

Caca was her name. From Cetinje, of the Matanovici, her father had a pharmacy before the war. That major made the English go nuts. In the middle of a drinking party he would tell his wife to get on a table and show her legs. For Caca they sold the Commonwealth, Churchill and their queen in the bargain. I went to see Caca.

Caca made a lot of deals to help Serbs with the English.

Pretty Caca took me to see some colonel. The Englishman looked at me like a butcher, jealously, he had a crush on Caca like a schoolboy. She calmed him down, said that I was her cousin, from an aunt. Yeah, right—from a male aunt...

"So, how many Allied soldiers did this... cousin of yours kill?" the colonel asked cynically.

"Well, he was a Chetnik under Draza Mihajlovic, they didn't kill Allies!" Caca charmingly pouted at him. The Chetniks never had a prettier defender.

We found out from him that our men would be deported to Germany. Not good! Definitely not good!

## THE GREAT ESCAPE

I sat down by the fence of the prison, holding a book and pretending to read. I only hoped that those moving around there didn't ask me anything. I saw "Mira" was being taken by the guards for a walk.

"Jakov!" I yelled.

A guard asked me in English what I was yelling about. I pretended not to understand. And Boro told me through the fence that they were taking him for a haircut, he would try to escape, it was over near the gate. They took him away. I waited, maybe I could help him.

It sounds like a naïve plan, but that prison was inside of a military academy, and at the gate there was always a crowd of people. If you can get in the crowd,

they can't shoot at you, and the gate was always crowded.

I saw Boro running through the gate. A guard was shouting behind him in Serbian, "Stop, I'll get court martialed because of you!"

"You should run too then!" Boro shouted back.

A patrol was running after him. I stood at the gate.

They caught me, and asked, "Novakovic?"

I nodded my head, they took my documents.

"Jovivic? Jovovic?!"

I just nodded my head, like an idiot. They pushed me away, and went to look for Boro... but Boro was already gone.

I went home, Boro was there, happy he escaped. Later I noticed that all my things were gone. The English had taken them. And my passport? Boro took out my passport, he saved it!

## **DOES SERBIA HAVE A SEA?**

Later I stayed with Slavko Velasevic, from Danilovgrad. I was waiting for a boat to Argentina. A new life. I almost never went out, avoiding trouble.

The landlady had a young daughter. She walked through the house every morning, in a transparent nightgown, singing. We stayed together one morning, and... We were in bed when her brother walked in. He forgot something.

I thought, "There's going to be blood now..." But he just apologized and walked out. I thought I was going to fall into the ground out of shame.

I stayed there for about a month. We boarded a ship. Mr. Jakov Jovovic, and two companions—me and Slavko Velesevic. Slavko didn't give me a moment of peace, he kept teasing me about my love adventure.

They took us to some third class ship hall and fifty people were crammed inside. We met a painter, who paid for us to move to first class.

We sailed out of Genoa in September 1947. With us, to Argentina, into emigration, sailed one of Pavelic's ministers, Dr. Ivan Jelic.

He was taken to the same table in the dining room as us. Suddenly a heavy argument broke out. Jelic, when we were introduced to him, moaned, "O, my Serbian allies!"

Jakov wanted to beat him up. "You won't sit at the same table as us, you ser-

vant of the Fascists! How can we be allies? While you licked German butts in Zagreb saloons, I bled in combat against the Fascists and the Communists!"

The captain intervened, Domingo was his name. He threatened to put both of them in the brig, that he would leave them at the next port-of-call. Jakov calmed down a little.

Music was playing in the saloon. Jakov took a microphone and began to sing.

"There far away, far away from sea, there is my village..." And then as loud as he could: "*There is Serbia!*"

People had no idea what he was singing, they applauded. Jakov wrote the lyrics down for them in Spanish and Italian. And Jelic with a red face approached the captain to protest because Croatia was being insulted in song.

"How can that be?" The captain didn't understand.

"Well, Serbia never had a sea!"

"Huh?!" The captain shrugged his shoulders, he thought Jelic was ranting. As if he could understand our Balkan rubbish.

In Buenos Aires we were welcomed by our former ambassador, Domnikovic. Goodbye, Europe. *Buenos dias, Argentina!* 

### RUNNING AWAY FROM THE PAST

A man from Boka invited us to stay at his hotel until we could manage on our own. But we stayed there only one night, the hotel was full of Ustase. Did we sail across the ocean so that we could socialize with Ustase? We went to a boarding house, the owner was Montenegrin. It was, I remember, on the corner of Livadia and Moreno streets. My first Argentinean address.

That Montenegrin owned a chair factory, I got a job there instantly.

I met a Russian actor, we were drinking in a bar, and one of his friends approached me when he heard Serbian, he asked me if I could write. And he gave me a job in bookkeeping for his firm, where the most people were from Dalmatia. They were cutting marble. I wrote for a little money, they cut marble for a lot. I wanted to work with machines too. Afterwards I cemented marble on facades, made stairs... From one flight of stairs I made enough money for three months of living.

I met a poet and writer, Dusan Petkovic. He was a friend of Colonel

Kusovac, who used to be our military representative in Spain.

Kusovac knew a brother of Evita Peron well. Evita's brother offered Petkovic and me a job in the jungle for an electric company, 1,350 kilometers away from Buenos Aires.

We were introduced to Evita Peron then.

Petkovic asked, "Are there any Indians in that jungle?"

"There are, there are, Indians are good people!"

"Well, I guess you don't need Serbs for that job then!" Petkovic answered.

We turned it down, although the job paid well.

I found an ad in the papers for a sailor, six months apprenticeship and training. They took my first salary for a uniform.

Some Dalmatian worked as a waiter, so I asked him about his salary, I wanted to be a waiter too. There were all kinds of people in that business. Senior German officers were especially appreciated as waiters because of their elegance and manners... I worked in Mar Del Plata, every *temporada*. That's one season, which lasted six months.

I didn't want to take tips. Everybody found that strange, some guests took my address and they sent me tips by mail when they returned home from vacation. I earned a lot of money.

With the Zivkovic brothers I opened up a restaurant near a car junkyard, where thousands of people passed every day. We made a lot of money one season, and the other... nothing. They closed the entrance to the junkyard, connected it on the other side with a highway, a desert, nobody came in anymore.

I got a job on a river boat, which from the Plata River to the Parana River sailed to the capital of Paraguay. I sailed until November, then they said we had to go ashore. The boat wouldn't sail anymore, the water level had fallen.

Then I got a job as a clerk... I had already saved up some money and the three of us partners bought a hotel. I became a *hotelero*, I was doing fine.

And then the past caught up with me. You can't run away from the past. I heard Pavelic was in Argentina. My blood started to boil. I remembered how I planned with Misa to kill him.

# Two Bullets for Pavelic

**WAS A HOTELERO, A** very successful one.

One day I bought a few newspapers and read an article by one of our journalists. That was Jose DiFranchesci, a Croat from Istria, he was a great Yugoslav and the president of the Association of Yugoslavs in Argentina.

DiFranchesci wrote that Pavelic was in Argentina, that he arrived dressed as a Franciscan priest, under a false name, that he was close to Peron, that he allied his Ustase with a criminal organization, and that he was doing dirty work for the régime—blackmail, terrorism, destroying the opposition.

In that article, Jose DiFranchesci wrote about how Pavelic was a parliamentary deputy in the former Yugoslavia, how he seized power as Mussolini's protégé, how he gave away Dalmatia to the Italians and Baranja to the Hungarians, how he killed more than 700,000 Serbs, 30,000 Jews... And he concluded by stating that Pavelic now lived in Buenos Aires, surrounded by Ustase bodyguards, a free man, that he brought a lot of money robbed from Serbs and Jews in Jasenovac.

When I read that, I could not calm down.

I went to my partners—the three of us owned the hotel together. I told them that I would be away for two or three days in Buenos Aires, to find my journalist.

I met DiFranchesci, I asked him how he found out that Pavelic was here, and he told me, "Well, that's not a secret, Pavelic moves freely and doesn't hide at all." He gave me another one of his articles.

I started reading.

One Yugoslav terrorist organization is being charged with organizing crimes throughout Argentina. That organization worked for the authorities of the now overthrown régime. Leaders of this organization are on the run and hiding.

He said, "This is about Pavelic's Ustase triads." I read further.

These are dark days in Buenos Aires, since its citizens have to fear each day because of terrorists and terrorist gangs that threaten the opposition parties. Many Yugoslav immigrants belong to these organizations. Veteran warriors, these people participated in World War II, they formed gangs, well-armed and well-trained, loyal to their leaders, in which strict military discipline rules, and which organize terrorist actions according to military tactics and strategies.

Further in the article, there was information about Ante Pavelic's activities in Argentina and his significance in helping the dictator Peron. I also read that the Croatian criminal was hiding for awhile under the name "Fabio," and that the documents he brought with him to Argentina bore that name.

I asked DiFranchesci where Pavelic was living.

He told me that he lived in a town 20 kilometers away from Buenos Aires, where, in one elite block, he had constructed buildings and luxuriant villas for himself and his men. All of this was confirmed by Jovo Hanjevic, an old émigré from Podgorica. He told to me how there's about a hundred big villas there, mostly the residences of pilots, and—the best he could—he described the position of Pavelic's own villa.

I decided to go there and check all that out myself.

But first, I had to prepare. I went back to Mar Del Plata and sold my share of the hotel—I knew I would need a lot of money.

### THE CRIMINAL SURROUNDED BY PILOTS

I started to grow a mustache, I bought glasses and put them on, even though I never liked wearing them. And half-disguised, I went there, to that town, to see where Pavelic's house was located.

I walked around a little, then sat in a restaurant. I ordered a drink and started to talk with a waiter—"This is a pretty pilot town," and so on—and then I asked, "Are there any Croats around, is it true some Croats live nearby?" Of course, I asked him that in Spanish.

The owner of the restaurant approached me, very politely, and said, "Yes, there are three houses nearby."

He walked me out of the restaurant and showed me. He also added how some great Croatian man was living there, their leader from the world war. And he pointed out the house with his hand.

I started roaming around that block. I was walking from house to house, looking at the other buildings in the neighborhood. I came back two more days and I looked around.

All of the time I thought, "Look at this criminal, look how well he lives! The pretty house he built from Serbian and Jewish blood!"

## ON THE CORNER OF CORIENTES AVENUE

I went back to DiFranchesci to talk with him a little more, and then I went to see Jovan Hanjevic. Hanjevic told me that he knew where the Croatian Ustase gather, in a certain restaurant. And that Pavelic came in there almost every day. I asked he if he would be ready to show him to me.

We went to have a drink in that restaurant. Later I went there alone a couple of times and I was sure: indeed Ustase gathered there.

Jovan pointed at one of them and whispered, "That one is Pavelic!"

That same day I decided to buy a revolver. However, in Argentina, when you buy weapons, they immediately write down your name in a book and register you. I postponed the purchase, I didn't want my name on any list of armed men. I would find a weapon on the black market instead.

I rented a room in Buenos Aires. A man named Marjanovic offered me work,

so I became the manager of a nightclub. I worked there for several months, asking around about Pavelic, groping through the Croat émigrés... One evening the consul from the Yugoslav Embassy dropped in with his wife.

"Is that you, Veljko?"

It was him. My school buddy, Veljko Cipovic.

Every now and then, I went to the restaurant on the corner of Corientes and Kajao, where the Ustase gathered. It was a big, busy, modern restaurant.

## FOR MONEY OR FOR THE PEOPLE

A few days later Hanjevic came to me and suggested that we should write to Chetniks in America and Canada.

"Why?"

"To let them know we are preparing to kill Pavelic and ask them to send us money!"

I told him that it was out of the question. I had money, I sold my share of the hotel. But he was persistent.

"We'll write to Serbian National Defense, they are all great patriots and rich men."

He mentioned Djujic, Jevdjevic, Jovan Djonovic... They would send us money.

I told him I wasn't going to do it for money. I wanted to kill the greatest butcher of the Serbs, I wanted to avenge Serbian victims, and I would do that because I'm a Serb, I would do that for my people. But not for money!

He kept on insisting—"We have to make money on Pavelic. What will we make money on if not this?"

To buy him for myself I offered him to get him an Argentine passport, because I had received Argentine citizenship in 1956.

He explained how he had volunteered in 1942 to go to war in Yugoslavia.

The government-in-exile was in Cairo, Hanjevic went there, saw how it was done, and quit. When he came back to Argentina, he barely had anything. His wife had married another man.

"I did all of that out of patriotism, and when I came back none of our people would even lend me ten dollars!" He had a daughter, but she was a story herself. He was unhappy and bitter. He kept saying how he did everything for Serbdom, and he got nothing for it.

"Blagoje, I am supposed to do something for Serbdom again, I am supposed to take chances, which means that I should get something for it! If there's no money I won't do it!"

## I WILL SLIT PAVELIC'S THROAT

Afterward, I went to see Vlado Ivanisevic, a man from Cetinje, a great nationalist and anti-Communist, whom I met in Italy, in Rome.

"Vlado, I'd like to talk to you."

I told him I had found Pavelic, I was following him, I was planning to do something.

He understood everything. The two of us searched for Pavelic in 1950 and decided he should be killed. That's why I went to him. But he surprised me.

"You know how it is... I have a wife and a daughter, if I get killed or locked away, who will support them? I don't have any money, neither do you."

Vlado worked in a construction yard, he lived hard and I understood him. Later he helped me a lot, with everything.

I went to see Milan Gacesa, a man from Lika. A good man, not very smart though. He liked to gamble, so I often lent him money. When he promised to pay me back, he gave it back the day he said he would. He told me how the Ustase killed his father, relatives, many friends. Later he went to take his revenge... He had dreams, hallucinations... As the experts would say, the consequences of war trauma.

"God forbid, if I would ever meet an Ustase, I would instantly... I would finish him off with a knife..." he would often say.

And now, when I told him that I knew where Pavelic is hiding, Milan jumped.

"I will slit his throat! I will throw his head into the Argentine government building!"

"Now, hold on for just a minute, Milan, this is the twentieth century, we are in a foreign country, it can't be done like that..." I tried to calm him down.

"Have you ever killed a man with a knife?" he asked me.

I was shooting during the war and I was a good fighter, I don't know if I killed anyone... but with a knife? I can't even slit a chicken's throat.

I told him it would be easy to kill Pavelic, but it would take a lot of skill to kill him and not get caught. I gave him some money. We met a few times, and I promised him that after the assassination I would buy him an airline ticket—to hide in some neighboring country. I forgave him for what he owed me. Thus, Milan calmed down and started to listen to me...

### THIS PAVELIC DOESN'T LOOK LIKE PAVELIC

I left my job in the nightclub, and started working at the Continental Insurance Company.

I was an agent. I insured factories, companies, cars, and when I was done with my work, I went to that restaurant and filled out all of the forms. And I looked for anything suspicious. The man I was told was Pavelic didn't look like Pavelic at all. I looked at Pavelic from old photographs: dark, young, strong. And this one was some old man, with gray hair, and a gray mustache. I'm looking at his ear in photographs and the man in front of me. By the shape of his ear I'd say—yeah, that's him, that loose lobe, that one roll. But then again... I had to be sure, I wouldn't want to kill the wrong man.

Milan told me, "I might be able to recognize him, but my sister would know for sure."

Milan's sister Mileva lived in Zagreb, she was married to a Croatian official, she saw Pavelic at a few receptions.

I took Milan to see Pavelic, would he be able to recognize him?

When he saw him he jumped as if he was mad! "Wait, you fool, you will ruin everything, calm down!"

I went outside—if the fool gave himself up, at least he wouldn't blow my cover.

The next day I took Mileva there. I didn't tell her anything. She looked around the restaurant.

"There, that man with gray hair!"

We had coffee. "Don't to look over there," I tell Mileva. "Don't draw attention to us." Fine!

Milan said he'll do it, he had a gun too, but the problem was my gun. Mileva said she had a revolver, lady-sized, she brought it in a white case. She would give it to me cheap, for the price she bought it.

I bought the gun, it was really cheap.

## THE WAY MY SISTER SAYS

I walked around Pavelic's house with Milan, and we made a plan. We would kill him in front of his house, where he felt more at ease and where he was less cautious.

Then, the next day, Milan took me aside.

"You know, my sister says you have a lot of money. She told me to ask for five thousand dollars from you, to leave to my daughter in case something happens to me."

"Milan, I don't have five thousand dollars!"

"My sister said that if you don't have the money, we won't do business!" "But, Milan..."

"There's no buts... Blagoje, it has to be the way my sister says!"

"Well, what else does your sister say?"

"That you got a lot of money from Chetniks in America, to kill Pavelic!"

I had that damn five thousand dollars, but I could see that "the way my sister says" would never end.

## LJOTIC SUPPORTER WHO CAN'T SHOOT

I gave him some money in case the fool got angry with me. For all I knew, he could have turned me in, anything could had been expected from that fool!

I had to look for someone else. I considered Dusan Petkovic. Dusan was a Ljotic supporter.

I would have done it alone, but Pavelic was always accompanied by one of his officers. I needed a man who would shoot that officer and I would shoot Pavelic.

I asked Dusan.

"How, Blagoje, when I don't know how to shoot at all?"

A few days later, in that Ustase restaurant, I was approached by a man who asked me, in Italian, if I was from Trieste.

I looked at him and snapped, "No, I'm from Udine. And who are you to interrogate me? Please leave me alone, can't you see I'm busy!"

I was rude so he wouldn't ask me anything else. The man left me to fill out my forms, but I could see—I would have to hurry up, I'd become suspicious, people would start asking questions, they'd find out who I was, if I hesitated too much, everything would go to hell.

### NO HEROES FOR BATTLE

I went to a reception at Sava Ratkovic's home.

Sava owned galleries and was a very rich man, he was into politics, he was a Peronista. He asked me to get into politics too, but I didn't want that, I was fed up with politics even when I was back in Montenegro. Ratkovic was a minister in a province in Argentina, then a deputy in parliament. He had a lot of money, but he liked to drink a lot too.

When his guests left, I approached him.

"Sava, do you know who Ante Pavelic was?"

"Come on, brother..."

"Was he a criminal?"

"Why do you ask me such a thing? Of course, he was a butcher..."

"And what would you do to help punish that butcher of the Serbian people?"

"Whatever it takes!" he exclaimed, adding, "You know I'm crazy when I get drunk!"

Indeed, he was crazy when he was drunk.

I told him everything.

"Let's go over there and beat him up good, lets hit him with a bottle over the head... But to shoot him, to kill him—I can't do that, I'm not that type! I'm already an old man..."

"All right, but if someone younger wanted to do it, would you lend him a revolver?"

"I would, Blagoje! But, my revolver is registered..." I could see how it was—there were no heroes for battle.

#### A PRIEST WITH LADY-SIZED REVOLVER

A little disappointed, I went to see our priest, who was sent to Argentina by Patriarch Gavrilo Dozic when he was in Rome. Father Ljubo Jovovic had been assigned to that church, but he didn't accept the position, and stayed in Kosic.

The priest was young, just ordained. Most people in his parish were loansharks for King Nikola, who planted cotton. It was at the same time both a Russian and a Serbian Orthodox church. This church was consecrated to Holy Trinity, but they called it the "Russian Church" since the Czar had sent money for it to our people. Both a Serbian and a Russian priest served there.

"Father, I've decided to kill Pavelic!"

He behaved as if I'd told him "good day." He asked me immediately—did I have a gun?

Suddenly the Russian priest appeared, and Father introduced me to him. "This is the man who will kill Pavelic!" and he told him everything.

I felt uncomfortable. Already half of Argentina knew! None of our people can keep a secret.

The priest told me, "Don't worry, no other Russian will hear of this!"

Then he asked to see my revolver.

"Let me try it to see if it's any good."

The priest went down to the basement, where he had some dry wood and took me and the Russian priest there.

He took the revolver, aimed at a piece of wood, fired two bullets and said, "This revolver is no good at all!"

I asked why.

He showed me the wood. "The first bullet didn't even enter the wood, and the second... barely."

It was the lady-sized revolver, and I saw myself its barrel was a little burned out.

"Fine, if it's no good, do you, Father, have a better one?"

"No, I don't."

"All right, then." I told him not to worry. "I will shoot him from two or three meters away and this revolver will have to do since we don't have a better one. From close range every bullet kills! If God allows, I will walk up to him and shoot him in the head."

"Be calm and do it like a man!" the priest told me.

I liked a revolver better than a rifle. A rifle could always jam. And then everything would be over, everything would be ruined. But a revolver—if one bullet doesn't do it, the other will, and you can always finish him off.

## BROTHER, I'M YOUR MAN

When I came out of the church I went quickly to the promenade and met Hanjevic there. An old man, he walked around there all the time to look at the young girls, which was why we called him "Balja's rooster."

Hanjevic approached me and said, "Blagoje, I found you a fateful comrade and a great friend for that business of yours."

"Who is it?" I asked him.

"Milo Krivokapic."

Milo Krivokapic lived with me for four years. A man from Cetinje, the son of Colonel Bajo Krivokapic. He lived in a colony of our people who planted cotton, but he didn't like to work. I knew he was a brave man.

We went to Milo's place and I told him everything. I asked him if he would be ready for action, and he agreed instantly. "Brother, I'm your man!"

However, I started to think about that a little, something about Milo was bothering me, and then I remembered the story of Jakov Jovovic. Jakov planned the assassination of Peko Dapcevic, when Peko came to Argentina. He gave Milo Krivokapic money and a gun to do it, but Milo went to the police and turned himself in.

The police arrested both of them but, since Jakov was a well-known and respectable citizen, and the Argentine authorities were anti-Communist, everything was covered up, and they released them both a couple of hours later.

I told Milo that I remembered how it was with Jakov and Peko Dapcevic. "Don't let that happen again!"

He swore to me. "No, brother, never... This Pavelic is a criminal and he

killed more Serbs than all Communists together... I support your idea of killing him, I will not betray you!"

I told him the plan and we went to the restaurant so that Milo could see Pavelic and his bodyguard, whom he would shoot.

"How are we going to do it?" Milo asked.

I explained that we couldn't do it in the restaurant. We would be caught. If we were follow him into the bathroom—a shot must not be heard there, and I can't slit his throat!

We couldn't kill him in the subway either, some of the passengers would get hurt.

"I thought, my good Milo, that we should do it in front of his home. He goes home by train and then by bus, and one part of the road from the station to his home goes through a park. There we'll do it! In front of the gate of his house! I will shoot Pavelic, and you will shoot the officer with him."

Milo was very enthusiastic about it. He accepted everything. He liked the plan.

For several days we went over the route on which Pavelic moved, from the restaurant to the train station, and from the train station to the bus station, and then we remained at the last station and scouted the route over which Pavelic moved with binoculars.

Later we followed Pavelic together. We would sit behind him and when he left we would go after him. We even planned where to run after we killed him. Milo accepted everything.

#### STORIES OF DRUNKEN USTASE

I was working on the details, every day I went to the restaurant, I listened to what the Ustase talked about. It's hard to believe how many disgusting things I heard from them.

They bragged about their horrible stories from war.

Two of them are sitting, and you can't tell which one is more drunk. The first one talks about how they killed Serbs throughout Slavonia and dumped them into the Sava River. The other starts in with a story how they met a Serbian woman who was pregnant. They asked her, "Are you carrying a boy or a girl?" She said she doesn't know. "Would you like us to tell you?" They made a bet for ten bottles of beer whether it's a boy or a girl, they took a knife... You can't even imagine what disgusting things they talked about.

I almost went mad when I listened that.

Then how they threw people into pits in Herzegovina, how they raped...

I followed Pavelic, sat close to him and his bodyguard—Jure was his name and listened to everything they said, they talked freely here, they knew nobody could understand them on the train.

Pavelic asked him where he was wounded, and Jure mentioned some place, in Slavonia I think. But how, when there was no fighting there?

"I entered a Serbian house and saw a woman there," Jure said, "pretty, a real lady. I ordered her into the bedroom. She didn't want to. I pushed her and said— 'I won't touch your children.' And then she went.

"I threw her on a bed and it was good... I do it and leave. I came back the next day. In the yard I saw a young girl, fifteen or sixteen years old. Even prettier and taller than the lady. I take her hand and head straight to the bedroom. But, the lady screams—'Can't you see she's just a child?' Just as I undressed the girl and threw her on the bed, the lady came in with a rifle. She fires two bullets, hits my leg, breaks a bone... My soldiers killed her immediately, and took me to a hospital, but—my leg is shorter now."

Everything was turning over... I thought, "I will shorten your head as well!"

And then I heard, it was on April 5, 1957, that a great celebration of the anniversary of the Independent State of Croatia was being prepared.

Well, you won't celebrate it this year, not while I'm alive!

#### THE POGLAVNIK'S HYPNOTIZING GAZE

Milo and I went on our assignment, checking every detail, when Milo, shivering, suddenly tells me, "Brother, he hypnotized me!"

"What do you mean, Milo, when you didn't speak a word with him?"

"He confused me," he says. "I don't feel well, I'm all sort of confused..."

"How can that be?"

"Well, can't you see how stares at us, hypnotizes us?"

Indeed, Pavelic would scrutinize everyone who entered the train or bus. He

would always sit in a corner and fix his gaze on whoever passed by.

I tell Milo, "Fine! Don't look into his eyes anymore then."

I explained to him how I, when I enter, put my glasses on, first look at Pavelic, and then at everyone else, pass by and sit. "You do it that way too!"

I decided that today was the day. But Milo begged me to postpone it. He wasn't ready.

All right, fine, one day won't change anything. I told Milo to go home, and not to look at him anymore, and I went to follow Pavelic.

And in the bus I sat on the seat next to him. And he talked to his bodyguard how his greatest success was that at that celebration, on April 10th, there would be "representatives of two Orthodox states—Romania and Armenia." I followed Pavelic to his home and then ran back to Milo. I told him we had three more days and nights to do this. Milo says he's ready. Tomorrow evening? Fine.

## SHOOT, KILL—THAT'S NOT SO EASY

The next day we got on the train, and then on the bus. We mingled among the people, it was very crowded. We stood in front of Pavelic on the bus. Milo whispered to me, "There, he's staring at me again!"

"Come on, he stares at everyone, Milo brother, don't look at him and everything will be fine."

"Something's ringing inside of my head and ears!" Milo said.

"Fine," I told him. "We'll leave it, Milo, for tomorrow, but tomorrow is the day before the last!"

The next day I told Milo, "Today is April 7th, remember well." And he was quiet, he avoided looking at me.

Lets go. April the Eighth. I told Milo, "Get in first!" I sat in a free seat and sent Milo to pay for the tickets, and saved him a seat next to mine.

When we were supposed to get out, I told Milo, "Lets go!"

And I took Milo to the exit of the bus, and there were some twenty people behind him waiting to get out. I got out and went after Pavelic. As I was walking, I turned around to say something to Milo.

He wasn't there. In that crowd, when he saw me get out, Milo stayed on the bus to another station.

I went mad, I was nervous. I didn't sleep well in those days, I had jitters, I could only think about how this assassination must succeed. I saw Milo was nowhere to be found, and I said to myself, "All right, I have one more night, tomorrow evening I'll go alone, whatever happens."

Later I saw Milo, who told me, "Brother, don't count on me, I really can't do it, I'm confused and I can only be a burden to you."

I was very angry. I even threatened him. "Be careful, Milo, don't let what happened with Jakov Jovovic and Peko Dapcevic happen again! To go along, and then spill everything to the police!"

And I bluffed, "If you turn me in, my cousin, Dujo, will kill you! Don't gamble with your head!"

We went our separate ways. That was on April 8th.

I went home knowing that the next evening was my last chance—April 9, 1957—and there was no more hiding from the word I gave to myself, even if I got killed.

# D-DAY

The next day I went to the station, and who's there but Milo?

I was angry and asked, "Why did you come to demoralize me? I'm finishing the job tonight, I don't need you!"

"Tonight I won't look at Pavelic, I'll be behind him and I'll be with you," Milo told me, saying that tonight, everything will be fine.

I left, not even listening to Milo, the whole time pictures of today's events in the Ustase restaurant running through my head. They brought leaflets, signs, they were distributing posters, preparing everything, because tomorrow there would be a great celebration. And, I swore, Pavelic won't be alive.

We got onto the bus. We sat together again. Pavelic, if there wasn't a free seat in the back of the bus, would sit behind the driver. When we came to the last station, I told Milo to walk in front of me. This time, he got out amid that crowd of people. But when we came close to the road to Pavelic's house, Milo was gone!

The coward, where did he go?

I'd made up my mind and there was no turning back. I followed the two of them and I was thinking about how close to them I had to be, how much time I

had to shoot Pavelic, to shoot his bodyguard. And if I would be able to kill Pavelic with a single bullet.

I was walking, I got closer and closer to them, I could hear them talking. At that moment I crossed myself and prayed to God and Saint Vasilije of Ostrog.

Just as I crossed myself, I heard his bodyguard say, "Poglavnik, I'd like to drop by the club now, you're close to home, I won't be long."

I could not believe God helped me so swiftly. And Saint Vasilije, too.

Fifty meters to Pavelic's house.

# PAVELIC FALLS AND INSULTS MY SERBIAN MOTHER

They go their separate ways, and I hide behind a big tree in the avenue. I can see Pavelic turn around, then continue walking, with a briefcase in his hand.

I follow him. At a fast pace. Almost running.

I was about seven, eight meters away. Pavelic sensed me, saw me... and started to shout.

"I'll fuck your Jew Serb Communist mother!"

I hear a shot, I don't know where it's coming from.

I don't stop. I run straight at Pavelic. I get two or three meters away from him and shoot.

Once. Twice. I shot him in the back, as he was running away. Twice.

He falls.

His briefcase lands in a garden.

He doesn't move, I can't believe he's just pretending, if there are two bullets in him.

At that moment a thought occurs to me—that it might be better if he were to stay alive, because they would put him in a hospital, people would see him and then he would have to be put on trial.

Should I hit him over the head? Then I saw that briefcase. Documents? It would be good to get those... on the other hand, if there's money in the briefcase, and I get caught and marked as a thief... And then I killed him because of money! I turn away from both Pavelic and the briefcase.

"Jure! Jure!" Someone's shouting.

And I'm being shot at. I turn around and fire back. I fired three bullets.

I started running around buildings, through a winding street.

People are coming out of their houses. Wondering, "What on earth what was that?"

Breathless, I shout, "Look at those idiots! Drunks shooting at everyone!"

I shout so that even those in their windows could hear me. "That man is either crazy or drunk!"

The revolver is in my pocket. I left one bullet, just in case.

I'm running.

Around Pavelic's house people are shooting and shouting.

I ran off the street, out into a field. I see Milo. He is standing and staring at me.

I continue running, and Milo is just standing and staring at me.

Later he told me how he was afraid to come after me, because he was afraid I'd shoot him, because he'd deceived me and left me alone.

Milo threw his revolver into a trashcan.

I didn't pay any attention to Milo. I'm running... And it was a really warm night. I run to the train station and see a train coming. I run as fast as I can.

I run into the station, but the train is already moving. One of station workers shouts not to get on the train, because it's already left the station. I leap off a stair and jump in.

# A SHOE FULL OF BLOOD

When I entered I was all sweaty. I went into a compartment and, as there were no free seats, I stood.

A young woman addressed me. "Mister, you don't feel well?"

"Yes, madam," I replied and sat on her seat.

When I sat down, I took a handkerchief out of my pocket. I looked at it—blood.

What is this, where did this blood come from? I didn't feel any pain. I felt an itch on my left thigh. I took off my coat and went into a bathroom. I could see everything. A shoe full of blood. I took off the shoe and washed it out.

I took off my socks and threw them into the toilet bowl.

I tried to find out where I was bleeding from, but-there's nothing.

I mustn't draw attention anymore. What else could I do, but to go back and sit?

Where did all that blood come from? I thought maybe I had been cut by a wire while I was running.

I could see the Argentine countryside through the window, and in my head, like a movie, the events came back: Pavelic running down the street, me shooting, Pavelic still running, I shoot him again in the back, he falls... And then I remembered that other shot. When I started running after him, aimed my revolver at him, and Pavelic started swearing, I heard, from somewhere, another shot. His bodyguard probably heard, turned around, saw what was going on, and fired... I realized I was wounded then. But I didn't feel any pain. It couldn't be that bad, since I could walk.

So, it was all over!

I was strangely calm, indifferent about my fate. Did Gavrilo Princip feel this way, after he shot Archduke Ferdinand?

PART FOUR

# Blagoje, You Bitter Devil

**ARRIVED BY TRAIN IN** Buenos Aires, and went down to the subway. Nobody waited for me, nobody followed me. It seemed that everything went well. I went to see Dusan Zekovic at his house, in a poorer part of the city,

where mostly Polish people lived. I used to keep my things in a room at Dusan's place.

Dusan immediately embraced me.

"Talk, Blagoje, you bitter devil!"

"Tonight, I did a great thing!"

He looked at me, saw my leg... "Where did all that blood come from? That needs to be bandaged!" He asked Dijana, a Dalmatian woman in the neighborhood, to do it. I told her I cut myself on a wire.

She cleaned my wound, put a bandage on it, and the bleeding stopped. I looked at my pants. There was a bullet hole, barely visible behind a big tear. I got up to leave.

"Where are you going now, Blagoje, for God's sake?" Dusan tried to stop me, but it was too late, I couldn't keep myself in one place for too long.

I visited Father Radojica Popovic right at dawn. Father opened the door and immediately asked, "What is it, Blagoje?"

"I did what I promised!"

He embraced me, left me breathless, I thought I was going to die the way he embraced me. And, out of happiness, tears came to his eyes.

In the morning I bought several newspapers, leafed through them couple of times to be sure. There was nothing about the assassination!

"Well, are you sure you killed him?" the priest asked.

"Don't worry, Father. Pavelic got two bullets from Blagoje!"

I was nervous, just like Father Radojica, only I didn't want to show him that. We both knew the revolver was of poor quality, but I couldn't believe Pavelic could survive two shots.

I went out to buy the evening editions. And in *Review* I saw a photograph: Pavelic, wounded, on a bed, surrounded by Croats. It was a long article. In the introduction I read:

> Ante Pavelic, indicted for war crimes, describes his assassin and shows two bullet wounds in a photograph, with one bullet still lodged in his spine.

The criminal survived! Damn! I read further.

Ante Pavelic was wounded two nights ago near his home, in the town of Lomos de Palomar, by an unknown man, who shot five times.

Pavelic received us today at his house. At the door we were welcomed by a gentleman who said, "Our past and our present is Dr. Ante Pavelic, our leader!"

Two days ago was the sixteenth anniversary of the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia, a country created by Hitler and whose leader was Ante Pavelic, a Nazi. This leader of the Croats, for years in exile, built his secret organization for the destruction of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and in 1941, when Belgrade and Zagreb were occupied by Germany, at the peak of Hitler's power, he came back to Croatia where, under the patronage of Hitler and Mussolini, he fulfilled his dream of a Croatian state, that lasted as long as Hitler's power over Europe.

Italian writer Malaparte in his book Kaputt describes how he was received by Pavelic on one occasion and that his faithful Ustase brought their Poglavnik a basket of oysters from Dalmatia.

Those were, in fact, human eyes!

And as we remember what Malaparte wrote, this same Pavelic, surrounded by his family, friends and his faithful warriors, greets us with a pleasant voice, mixing Spanish with a little bit of Italian.

Pavelic looks old, he's about sixty, with gray hair, a little bit of brown in his mustache. He lifted himself a little from the bed, then moved back a little and, to our question if this was the first attempt on his life, he replied:

"No, there was also an attempt in 1930, in Munich."

"Do you suspect anyone?"

Pavelic replied that he doesn't know who is behind these attempts to murder him, but he said he's pretty sure that in both attempts the Yugoslav Communists were involved.

Pavelic's bodyguard didn't mention the celebration that was supposed to take place on Sunday, which was intended to commemorate the day of establishment of the Independent State of Croatia. He told us, "Croats aren't Nazis, as some say. We are Ustase, patriots and anti-Communists!"

\* \* \* \* \*

The first information received, that Pavelic was hit by two bullets, proved to be correct.

Information we reported that the wounds were caused by bullets that reached his spine, and with one bullet still lodged inside, was also correct.

Pavelic tells us about the attempt on his life and lies spread by the Yugoslav Embassy about him.

While he gets himself in a more comfortable position in bed, he tells us that his wounds don't trouble him.

Neither the Croatian leader nor the police could tell us anything about the assassin.

Then the paper repeated that there's a warrant for Pavelic's arrest, that he is

indicted for many war crimes, and added

Even though the assassin failed, one thing is certain: the attempt on Pavelic's life confirms that Pavelic lives in Argentina and that the Argentinean government will not be able to hide from that fact anymore.

It finished with a question: "Will Pavelic be extradited to Belgrade?"

The journalist didn't jump to conclusions about who shot the leader of the Croatian émigrés, and wrote that "Pavelic had many enemies, even among his closest associates—Croats."

The journalist asked Pavelic what connections he had with a criminal group called "National Alliance" and what connections he had with Peron.

Pavelic replied, "Ever since I came to this country I have never intervened, not in one case, not wanting to interfere in the internal affairs in Argentina—and I wouldn't be here today if I had done that. I never had any business with the Peronistas!"

He refuted "these sorts of lies" written by some newspapers, and added, "Would I be here, if I had done the things they accuse me of?"

The journalist asked Pavelic if he knew Kella, the leader of the Peronistas, and Pavelic replied, "Only by name. I never had any contact with him."

The journalist concluded, "We said goodbye to Pavelic. We had a feeling he wasn't disturbed much by the fact that he was wounded, that he thought that everything had ended well for him."

The article also mentioned how "this unexpected event pulled Pavelic out of anonymity. There has been renewed attention on certain memories which could become an indelible burden for Pavelic. This past can hardly be forgotten, because Pavelic is one of history's great persons of infamy."

#### THE BULLET IN PAVELIC'S SPINE

I took the papers straight to Father Radojica. I showed him the photograph of Pavelic lying on a bed, wounded. Out of happiness, Father Radojica started to shout, "We did it, we did it!" Because all of the newspapers would write about it, the public would be alerted, and they would have to turn the criminal over to justice. I did something for my people after all.

The priest asked me what would I do, where would I go.

I told him that Milos Brajovic was in the hospital and that I would go there, to stay beside him, where no one would look for me. Milos was in a private hospital, he had a difficult surgery.

I went to Milos. I bought many different newspapers—all they wrote about was the attempted assasination. They were guessing who shot him, but nobody knew for sure.

They wrote how the wounds were not entirely harmless, that the bullet in Pavelic's spine could damage his spinal cord, that surgery was necessary, but surgeons could not perform it, because Pavelic was a severe diabetic.

"That Serbian bullet in your spine, Poglavnik, won't be still for long!"

Articles like that, day in and day out. In the end I read that Pavelic fled Argentina, and that he was probably hiding in Spain, in a Catholic convent.

# A MESSAGE FROM RANKOVIC

One day Father Radojica came for me and told me that people from the Yugoslav Embassy had come to see him. Who? Cipovic, my school buddy—Veljko the consul. He came to see me when I ran that nightclub, he liked to drink and joked how it was his professional handicap. "The more I drink, the more I know!"

He was eyeing me when I grew a mustache and long hair, and he wondered about that. "Man, why did you deform yourself?"

"Well, I feel like it!"

"Damn, you really look ugly like that, like a German!" and started to quiz me aggressively about it.

I told him, "You'll read about it in papers someday."

Radojica told me that Cipovic had come to the church, asking, "Where's Blagoje? I can't find him anywhere."

"How would I know where Blagoje is?"

"Just tell him I know why he grew his hair and mustache," and he said he needed to see me immediately.

I didn't want to see him, I still didn't know what to do, where I would go, nor how I would manage.

The priest came again. Cipovic knew everything, he said that a dispatch came from Yugoslavia, Rankovic\* ordered him to contact me, to offer me passage to Yugoslavia.

I asked, "Which Rankovic? Is that the one who is Tito's number one criminal?"

#### WHEN YUGOSLAVIA PAYS

I met the consul anyway. Cipovic came in a taxi, which was really expensive.

"Drive, drive, when Yugoslavia pays!" I welcomed him with these words.

"Where's your mustache and long hair?" he asked me, and laughed.

He had a passport for me, to take me to Chile, where I would get another passport from the Yugoslav Embassy. Then I would board an airplane for Yugoslavia.

Why?

"Rankovic's orders!"

How does Rankovic know?

Well, Cipovic sent a telegram—to brag, he said. He was proud Pavelic was shot by a Montenegrin.

I told him I didn't want to go anywhere just then and that I wanted to stay where I was.

Cipovic asked me to meet him again, he showed me a new dispatch, he promised I would be given a medal, that I would get the rank of colonel, that I would be given a hotel in Boka, that I would be a director.

I didn't want any of that, period!

Cipovic was recalled to Yugoslavia, and some Vucekovic Tomo was appointed as a consul at the embassy.

He too offered golden hills and valleys.

I was sure nobody was looking for me, I was safe for the time being, so I refused.

An offer from the French Embassy also appeared, they were looking for the

<sup>\*</sup> Aleksandar Rankovic-Leka, a member of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party and, after the war, long-time chief of the secret police.

man who shot Pavelic, to move him to a safe place. I thanked them too. After that, every year I went to receptions at the French Embassy, they sent me invitations regularly for their national holidays. "You have friends at the embassy," they said, "and you are friend of France. France always supported the idea that Pavelic should be prosecuted for war crimes."

I was also contacted by Serbian National Defense, from North America, and they offered me the job as their treasurer, for life. I refused that too.

I received letters from all parts of the world. Djonovic, Soc and some other people wrote to me, but those letters didn't come directly to me, but addressed to Vlado Ivanisevic, a great Serb from Cetinje, and a certain number of letters were addressed to my good friend, a man of trust, Kujacic from Trebinje.

Stojadinovic too offered for me to live in Mexico through his connections.

"Yeah, so they can kill me with a pickaxe, like Trotsky?"

He laughed and asked if I would go to Switzerland.

Stojadinovic was once prime minister of the Royal Yugoslav government, he was a world class economist, he published the *Economist* newspaper in Buenos Aires. His daughter married Dusan Radonjic, from Cetinje. Radonjic inherited the newspaper after Stojadinovic's death.

That man proved himself a great Serbophobe. I wrote him a letter, cancelled my subscription, Radonjic's *Economist* smeared both Serbs and Serbia.

People were worried about me, many people knew what I did, they all thought the Ustase would go after me, to avenge their Poglavnik...

# THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF FATHER RADOJICA

I wasn't worried about myself—I had a plan to move to safety. However, I was worried about Father Radojica. Croats accused him of organizing the attempt on Pavelic's life. I'd written a letter to Archbishop Dionisije, urging him to move Father Radojica somewhere else. Archbishop Dionisije blessed the transfer, but everything was delayed—we didn't have a *peso* back then, not even for an airline ticket.

One evening Kujacic and I went to see Father Radojica, we asked him to walk us to a train station to talk some more along they way. Kujacic, a man from Trebinje, was a writer, he wrote one excellent play, I think it was called *Devastated* 

Home.

And he wanted to write a book about me too. He showed me letters from some Chetniks, from America. One letter said, "Those two bullets fired at Pavelic did more for Serbdom than our whole divided and quarrelsome community."

I didn't want them to write a book about me, and I asked Kujacic not to use my name in his text, but if he really had to, he should put the initials "B.J."

And so, we talked about everything with the priest... Father Radojica said he had heavy rheumatism, he could hardly walk, he was overweight, and he couldn't walk us further to the train station.

We agreed to meet the next day.

That next day—wait, wait, Father is not here. We had agreed to meet in a Russian church.

I was tired waiting for him so I went downtown. I met Novakovic, he was the owner of a bar, we asked after each other's health. I joked with him, and he stopped talking, and then asked, "You don't know?"

"Don't know what?"

"Well... Father was killed!"

What do you mean, killed? Novakovic explained to me that Father Radojica had fallen under a train at the station... And Novakovic told me that everybody said that Croats had pushed him under a train, that it was the Ustase's revenge for Pavelic.

The official version was that Father Radojica tried to get on a train, but was constrained by his rheumatism, sciatica, or whatever—he tried to hurry, and fell underneath it.

#### AMONG ORDINARY AND RED CROATS

I went to Father Radojica's funeral. Serbs were grumbling about something, they turned their heads away from me. Croats will kill them all because of me, the Argentine authorities will banish all of us because of me... And I thought I would be the new Gavrilo Princip. Serbian business...

At the funeral I met a lawyer named Kuveljic. He suggested we go to a Catholic church, to hear what the Croats there were saying about the attempted assassination. To see what they were planning.

"Are you afraid?" Kuveljic asked.

"Lets go!" I told him. I really wasn't afraid.

Some Croat was giving a speech, how Serbia was actually always Croatia, how Montenegro was from times immemorial "Red Croatia," and Montenegrins "Red Croats."

I swallowed that bitter pill, and remained silent. Kuveljic asked to speak. He was even more crazy than I was! He asked the Croats if they knew who shot the Poglavnik. They all started yelling. Some shouted, "We know, a Dalmatian did it!"

"No!" others shouted, "it was done by a Montenegrin!"

One of them stood up. "If I knew who he was, I'd rip out his throat with my teeth..."

Many of them swore to avenge their leader.

I was watching. They were all elderly men, with their lives already gone—the poor bastards, who could they avenge?

#### WHO WAS AT PAVELIC'S FUNERAL

I stayed there for awhile, then I went to Sao Curacao Island, near Venezuela, and boarded a ship, a semi-tourist, transatlantic ship, the *Tazio*. I liked it, it had a very nice library. As the Dalmatians would say, "My darling, I went to the sailors."

On the ship I heard that Pavelic, as a consequence of his wounds, died in a Franciscan convent, in Spain. There were only a few people at his funeral.

Great conflicts broke out among the Ustase. Even Luburic\* didn't come to the Poglavnik's funeral. There was a rumor that they quarreled over some money—even though he was tied to his bed, Pavelic didn't want to consign the treasury of the organization to Maks Luburic. Rumors started to circulate that Luburic organized the assassination, because of money... If there's a people worse than Serbs, they are.

Later, in Mar Del Plata, at a hockey club, I met a certain Croat. After awhile we became friends. He was Kvaternik's\*\* nephew. Whenever I asked him some-

<sup>\*</sup> Vjekoslav "Maks" Luburic, leader of one of the Ustase security organizations during the war and founder and the first commandant of the Jasenovac concentration camp. After the war he led the Croatian National Resistance, one of the longest-lasting and most violent Ustase successor organizations.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Probably a nephew of Slavko Kvaternik, head of the regular army in the Independent State of Croatia until 1943, executed after the war by the Partizans. His son, Eugen, was a founder of the Ustase and a rival of Luburic's as the head of a security organization. Eugen was also executed after the war.

thing about Pavelic, he would just wave with his hand, didn't want to talk—I could see he didn't like him.

Once I asked him, "Do you know who killed Pavelic?"

"If you want us to remain friends, don't ever ask me that!" he snapped.

He too probably heard stories about me, but he didn't care much for Pavelic.

# WHY FATHER DRAGANIC LIKED MONTENEGRINS

Many Croats in emigration were at the Poglavnik's side for money. He paid them, helped them, and promised them even more. Croats talked about how he had a lot of money, and when Pavelic, after his death, didn't leave a *peso* to anyone, many were very disappointed.

Us, the Montenegrins, Croats liked. They talked about everything with us, quite openly. Once, in Italy, I met the famous priest Draganic,\* who organized the transport of Ustase across the ocean, through the Vatican's "Ratlines," and who took good care of Pavelic, hid him, supplied him with a fake passport... That Draganic... his mouth was full of praise of Montenegrins. A cunning man, from the Vatican school.

To a certain Croat named Kajic, who always spat on Pavelic—"There, what kind of a disgrace Pavelic made for us honorable Croats!"—I asked, "Did you know Pavelic was killed by a Montenegrin?"

"A Montenegrin? No, I don't believe a Montenegrin would do something like that."

<sup>\*</sup> Probably Father Krunoslav Draganovic, chief operative on the Vatican Ratline from the monastery of San Girolamo, Rome.

# Epilogue

**R** OSARIO, ARGENTINA. JUNE 2, 1999. Blagoje Jovovic has died. In the name of the Serbian community, in an obituary in the *Freedom* newspaper, Vladimir Ivanisevic said his goodbyes to Blagoje.

In all his life, Blagoje Jovovic proved to be faithful and sincere Serbian patriot, a worthy descendant of Duke Bjeli Pavle. Because of his heart, all honorable and patriotic Serbs who knew him compare him to Gavrilo Princip. Serbian history has yet to write about Blagoje...

Our friend Blagoje was born in the village of Kosic, near Danilovgrad, in 1922, in the clan of the Bjelopavlici, to the well-known, patriarchal family of Jovovici, from the union of his father, Jovo, and his mother, Radusa Delibasic. Raised in the spirit of Saint Sava, Kosovo and the Serbian people, Blagoje lived with these qualities until the final moments of his life.

The Argentine part of Blagoje's biography followed: a capable merchant, industrious, materially wealthy, a founder and great benefactor of the Saint Sava Church, one of the founders of the Draza Mihajlovic Association of Veterans, a member of the board of directors of the Njegos Association... And in the end, our brotherly condolences to his wife Glada, his son Gavrilo, his daughters Marija and Gabrijela, his sister Ana, his brother-in-law Hector...

Blagoje died only few months after his visit—his first and last—to his birthplace.

"Only Providence sent Blagoje to visit us, for us to meet him and for him to meet us," people said in his native Kosic, at Blagoje's wake.

And one of the Jovovici, Strahinja, in his speech said, "Blagoje hasn't died. Blagoje has moved on to eternity. Blagoje has moved on to a place that belongs to him in Serbian history, beside Obilic and Princip."

Milos Obilic. Gavrilo Princip. Blagoje Jovovic.

This book about Blagoje Jovovic is a debt paid by those who heard his life story: the story of the man who fulfilled the oath he made to himself and Serbdom, the story of the man who killed the greatest butcher in Serbian history.

Seven-hundred thousand souls martyred in Jasenovac will pray the Lord to forgive Blagoje's sins, and to grant him a heavenly indulgence.

And we—the living—can we forget him in our prayers? We—who are taught hypocrisy, to turn cowards into heroes, and heroes into villians?

The End