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S T A T E M E N T

by "Drago" Žikić from Pakovići

On October 5, 1992 I was in the vicinity of army positions with my wife and her sister. Somewhere around 12 o'clock an attack started from all sides. We ran through the corn fields until we reached an old house near the road leading to Skelani. Nearby, was the guardpost where I used to keep watch but they had all been killed.

I tried to pluck up courage and dash for the house but fire was heavy around us and I couldn't so I went on down the road under cover of the corn to another house. We waited there for 15-20 minutes to collect our strength and take a rest. There was shelling from all sides. They were all over the surrounding slopes some seven to eight kilometers away. The village of Pakovići lies in a depression surrounded by hills on all sides with the Drina river flowing below.

We waited for about half an hour and then I told the women, my wife and my sister-in-law, that we should crawl about ten meters to the river bank. My sister-in-law went first, then my wife then myself. I told them to go downstream to the boat and to hide there as there was no other way out, and I decided to stay and see what would happen. As they went down, the fire subsided.

When the shooting stopped I crept behind the arms depot and got to about 30 meters away from them. They were trying to break into the warehouse which had an iron gate. When the gate began to give way I ran for the detonator because I knew that the warehouse was mined. I wanted all of them to get in before blowing it up. However, when I got to about 10 meters from the detonator, about one hundred of them sprang out of hiding where they were guarding the warehouse. They grabbed me, beat me and dragged me to my house which was on fire. They knew who I was and they said: "...now watch us manager, burn down your house."

They tied my hands with rope behind my back and ordered me to guide them along Mlečvanska river. I had no choice. They were afraid that the fields might be mined. I went forward but they did not trust me. They thought I might be ready to kill myself and take them with me. Behind me went the Turk, or call him what you will, an Ustashi, Zulfo by name. I don't know where he came from, he was a tall, older man, dark, with a moustache and a rather long nose. I heard them call him by his surname Tursunović. He rode a white horse. They asked me: "Do you know who this is?". I said I didn't. "Yes you do, you Chetnik motherfucker", they said. They beat me from behind, they tightened the rope round my hands, they beat me with whatever was handy. Some with a rifle butt, others with a boot. The older man said: "Don't beat the old man, catch someone younger."

We crossed some 7-8 kilometers. When we came across a village they told children to throw stones at me. We came across people everywhere who knew me. They asked one of them "Do you know this man?". "Of course I do, it's our postman Drago". "What kind of a man is he?" "He's as good as gold". Hearing that one of them slapped him so hard that he fell. I can't remember everything. I know we went on and at some point came across a woman. They asked her too whether she knew me. "It's our Drago, the postman, she said, of course I know him" "What's he like?" "When he goes to the post office he takes care of everything." "Let him fuck your Surfa or Zurfa, something like that" he said. And so we went on until we reached a tap. They asked me if I was thirsty and one of them held me, because my hands were tied, wanting to let me drink but another one said: "I won't drink from the same bottle as a Serb", but they let me drink all the same. Then we went up a hill and I saw a dozen tractors there. They were big tractors all of them facing Fakovići.

They put me in a truck and I was brought to Srebrenica, which building, I don't know. They shut me up with four other people. It was dark and no-one beat me that night. The next day I made a statement in the presence of Mirzat, the manager. He

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told me it was best for me to tell them everything. "We know everything anyway so you might as well admit." He tortured and beat me. They took me back to the cell and the others asked whether they had beat me and I said yes. The next day I was interrogated by another man - a civilian working for the army. Whatever I said he said I was lying. He insisted I admit I had been using an "84". Then they would start beating us one by one. There were 7 or 8 of them. One of them would hit you hard but before you fell another would hit you on the other side. That man Mirzet, he was so strong that he must have been a karate wrestler. He ordered me to raise my arms and then he would kick me in the ribs. I fared no worse than the others, some of them passed out from pain. The worst part was in the evening when they returned from the field. They would come drunk, take the keys from the guards, come in and start hitting at us. I talked to one of the guards whom I knew, he was from Bratunac, and I said that I could understand them interrogating us because they were following orders from their command, but to beat us like that wasn't normal. He said he didn't know what was happening and that he would see. There was a man called Beli, he would come in with a pole in his hand and hit me on the head. Once he grabbed me by the hair and hit me from close up. There was nothing we could do but shut up. Every day when he entered the corridor he would tell his men and particularly two of them from Podravanja, "...beat the wits out of the old Chetnik". It wasn't easy for them, I begged them to beat me because otherwise they would get beaten themselves.

That last evening they took the young man from Smederevo out twice, and they took me out four times so that I fainted in my room. They came asking whether I was still alive. I don't know how many times they hit me on the head, but you know the old saying about the cat with nine lives. Since then however, I think it is even more difficult to kill a human being. During the time I spent there I think I received more blows in the jaw than an average boxer. I would fall but I would get up again. Three days before the exchange, to our misfortune, a grenade fell

right in front of the prison and injured one of the guards. We heard them cry out "Saša". After that they barged in furious, trampling and kicking us. The night before our release they called in the byo from Smederevo. I think they beat him for more than an hour. When they brought him back they yelled "Next!". I stood up and said it was my turn. But the guard pulled out his keys and said: "I know you, you are the manager and you will not get out of here for as long as I am here. You don't know me, nor will you ever find out, and it doesn't matter anyway." He locked the door and left. All this happened because about twenty of their men had been killed, Akif among them.

This Akif had talked to me saying that we had something in common, that the Serbs and Moslems were of the same blood but that he had been the one to set my house on fire. "I saw that your people had not burnt their neighbours' homes and your neighbours would not have done that to you either so I did it because I am not a local, I was sorry but those were my orders."

In the morning, around 9 or 10 o'clock they barged in and seeing that we had blood all over they ordered us to wash and get ourselves cleaned up because otherwise our people would not agree to the exchange. When we were ready a truck came for us. Then somebody walked up to the truck and said "The postman will get off." Then I climbed down they took me to an office and interrogated me all over again. They asked me whether I knew so and so and I said "Yes" because I knew they had a list. This went on for about fifteen minutes and then they said I was free. Then somebody called the young man from Smederevo. They kept him for about five minutes, when he got back on the truck they called him down again and this time they kept him for about one minute. He was covered in blood. His tongue was hanging out. They threw him onto the truck. One of them kicked me and said: "Can't you see that one your men is dying so we won't be able to carry out the exchange." We thought he was already dead. As we passed peasants along the road yelled at us: "The Turks fucked your women who gave birth to you and that is why you are so bad

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because you are half-breeds. You don't belong anywhere."

The road was blocked. The truck went through the fields. We reached the place where we were to be exchanged. I never expected to live to see the day.

In one of our conversations Akif told me that he had been in command for the attacks on ⁶Pdravanje and Fakovići.