

USHMM Archives, RG-50.468*0007

Sava Petrovi} comes from the Serbian village Veliko Nabdje in Slavonia whose inhabitants were all rounded up by the Usta{as on 11 August 1942 and deported to Jasenovac. The women were soon killed or sent to work in Germany and the males put in Jasenovac 3. Twice Sava survived by sheer luck.

He rejected the allegations in Tudjman's book and in the mentioned statements incisively giving examples to the contrary.

About the assertion that Jews "played the regrettable role of denouncers and provocateurs" Petrovi} said that he was not provoked by any Jew and added that in the Chemical workshop he worked during two years with several Jews "who were people who wanted, could and knew how to be helpful when it was needed".

To the allegation that Jews grabbed the positions in the administration for their own interest, Petrovi} gave the example of engineer Polgar who he said was a good man. When Petrovi} was assigned to forestry works where Polgar was the chief (Grupnik), he fell badly ill with typhus. Polgar has helped in keeping Petrovi} clandestinely in the barrack. Sending him to the "hospital" he would be certainly selected for liquidation.

He refuted Tudjman's writing that Jasenovac was established as work and not camp. He said that transports of prisoners were arriving at all times to Jasenovac and that the number of inmates was held steady at several thousands. "Jasenovac was a well tuned machinery for the destruction of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies" - he said.

He described several cases showing that not only the old, sick and weak were selected for extermination but also able Serb and Jewish craftsmen. They were used for productive work needed to the Usta{as (tailors, shoemakers, repair of vehicles, production of bricks, chains, of food on farms, even of small arms) but the craftsmen were not spared. The ultimate aim was the extermination of prisoners.

Petrovi} said that his paternal uncle Petar Petrovi}, a skilled locksmith working in the Jasenovac metal workshop (Lancara) was taken one night to the bank of the river Sava to be killed with about 200 to 300 other inmates. They were ordered to take off their clothes, their hands were tied with wire and taken one by one to a loading platform where Usta{a specialist for throat slitting were waiting for them. The uncle was saved in the last moment by the chief of his workshop who said that he was needed for an important job which he started. He was taken back and related to his nephew what happened. Others were trewn into the river with their throat slit.

Petrovi} told also about the mass murder of the forestry workers with whom he was until May 1943. From April they were felling trees near the village Gradina on the Bosnian side of the river Sava and Petrovi} had the duty to bring them food from the camp which he carried on a horse. One day he was not cleared at the exit gate. He was told to take the food back to the kitchen, the forest workers would come back. They did not. Petrovi} learnt from Milo{ Despot (whom we also interviewed) who worked in the river transport group that in the morning of that day the forest workers entered the barge but were not

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taken to the other bank of the river. On the barge they were told to hand over their axes and saws, their hands were tied and their throat slit. The corpses were thrown into the river. The capacity of the barge was 100 to 150 people. At this occasion the head of the forestry group, the Jew engineer. Polgar, was also killed and Sava's other uncle Milovan Petrovi} (37) too. . I asked Sava if the slaughtered forestry workers were exhausted and no more good for work, to which he replied:" This was genocidal killing. There was a steady influx of inmates into the camp and the Usta{a policy was to let them live the least possible."

Petrovi} said that the same happened on a minor scale in his chemical workshop. When he was assigned to it there were 13 professionals and workers (6 leftist Croats, 4 Jews, 2 Serbs and one leftist Muslim). Their number was gradually reduced by killings to 5 .

In his book Tudjman quoted also from Ante Ciliga, a Croat from Istria who long before the war was in the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, was extracted from Stalin's jails by the Italian Embassy Ciliga was deported to Jasenovac but released and lived in Zagreb until the Summer 1944 and even visited Nazi Germany. In his book "Alone through Europe in war" (Rome, 1978) Ciliga wrote that the Jews "who had a monopoly hold on the highest administration" used to "take the initiative for the preparation and provocation of not only single but also mass slaughters of Gentiles, communists, partisans and Serbs", which was quoted by Tudjman without any reservations.

Petrovi} commented: "This is a lie. I would like to ask Ciliga what was his merit which earned him the release from Jasenovac and life in Zagreb".

It should be mentioned that Sava Petrovi} was really never a communist. After the breakthrough from Jasenovac he joined Tito' Army but did not remain in it after the liberation. He went back to farming and left the Communist Party, which he was invited to join while soldier, because "bad people from the village were in it".