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OŽEGOVIĆ, Milka  
Former Yugoslavia Witnesses Documentation Project  
Serbian  
RG-50.585\*0030

In this interview, Milka Ožegović, born on March 15, 1928 in Bosanska Krupa, describes her experience of the war period from 1941 to 1945. In her horrifying story, Ožegović describes diseases, escape from the enemies, the loss of her closest family members, and many other predicaments of the war.

File 1 of 1

**[01:] 00:30:19 – [01:] 07:31:07**  
**00:42 – 07:59**

Ožegović says her full name and place of birth as Bosanska Krupa, March 15, 1928; answers that on April 12, 1941 she lived on the same street; says she was hidden in the attic when the Hungarian army came in with tanks; mentions that the Yugoslavian army waited for the Hungarian army under the bridge while she was watching the scene from the attic; describes that the first tank was damaged so the Hungarian army fled the tank and afterwards all the tanks returned towards Srbobran; describes that on April 13, 1941, the day after the battle, Hungarian civilians came from Temerin and took all the locals out of their houses to welcome the Hungarian army; mentions that there is a memorial near Srbobran dedicated to all people who died on that day; mentions that her uncle died that day, struck by grenade in his back; mentions that a family which used to live near by died on that day as well; continues with her story and says that she left the village with her family afterwards; mentions that the local people were saying how Hungarians from Temerin were coming and killing anybody they found in the house; describes how her family took things they could put on the horse carriage and moved to Stepanovićevo; answers the question how she found out that the Hungarian people were coming and killing people in the village and explains that the families who lived at the entrance of the village saw that the Hungarians were going into houses so they ran and warned all the villagers to hide; says she did not actually witness Hungarians going into homes; says that her family consisted of her parents, three brothers and two sisters; describes that when they came to Stepanovićevo all men over eighteen years old were recruited and taken to Vrbas, then Bačka Topola, and from Bačka Topola to Belgrade; answers the question who recruited civilians in Stepanovićevo and says that the civilians from Zmajevó came and requested that all men over eighteen years old come with them to Zmajevó; says that they belonged to the Hungarian government; describes how her family moved to Bosanska Krupa afterwards.

**[01:] 07:31:08 – [01:] 16:12:11**  
**08:00 – 17:03**

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Ožegović says there were many families, including her own, that moved from Sirig to Stepanovićevo; mentions her uncle's family was one of them; mentions that other families stayed in different places while her family and her uncle's family moved to Stepanovićevo; describes the journey from Sirig (village in the South Backa Distirct of Serbia) to Stepanovićevo and from Stepanovićevo to **Srem**; mentions that local people would give food to the refugees; mentions that no one bothered them on their way; mentions that the Yugoslavian army used to sleep in their house and on the day when the tank was damaged they put their civilian clothes on and went to their own homes; answers the question why her family moved to Bosanska Krupa and explains that they had no choice but to move ; explains that Bosanska Krupa was her homeland where her grandmother, grandfather, and two uncles lived; describes that they arrived to Bosanska Krupa in May and that in August Ustashe, "Ustaše,"(members of a Croatian revolutionary movement), arrived; describes how her mother kept money hidden under her armpit when Ustashe came; remembers how one of the Ustasha, "Ustaša" (singular member of the Ustashe), took the money away from her and wanted to cut her with knife but he let her go when Ožegović's little sister started to cry; describes how they burned the house where 21 members of her family were staying; says that their neighbors warned them that Ustashe were coming and killing; explains she recognized members of the Ustashe because they wore black uniforms and had the letter "U" on their hats; mentions that a group of five came to her house; says when they arrived they asked for the men but the men were already hiding in the woods; describes how Ustashe made them leave the house and then the Ustashe looted their house and took whatever they wanted; describes how the Ustashe took out the food they had in the house and mixed it with poison; describes how her family moved to her uncle's house after that but Ustashe came there too a few days later; says they were warned that Ustashe were coming and all of them left the house; describes how her aunt was left behind with her baby near the fireplace and how Ustashe burnt the house together with her aunt and the baby in it; remembers that when she arrived next morning at the place where the house used to be she smelt an awful smell; says that the smell of burnt human flesh is much worse than the smell of a burnt animal; mentions that after that night they spent many nights sleeping in the valleys and bushes; describes how Ustashe burnt down the house by adding more wood to the fire in the fireplace and closed the door of the house where the mother and her baby were left to burn to death.

[01:] 16:12:12 – [01:] 24:15:15  
17:04 – 25:26

Ožegović mentions that there is a book which describes everything that Ustashe used to do and remembers that her grandmother together with her son and another 50 people burnt in a house; mentions that only one man escaped through the basement of the house; explains that Ustashe found her aunt in the house while she was putting the baby on her back and getting ready to leave; says that people were fleeing the other houses of the neighborhood as well and Ustashe were burning them all down; remembers how her family spent many nights sleeping outside; mentions how one night they were totally wet because it was raining very hard; mentions that Ustashe came at noon and left in the evening; says that after few days a group of people came and told all the people in the neighborhood to come with them to the River Una (between **Corjuk** and Radici); mentions that people made a scaffolding and crossed the river to Radici and then went from Radici to **Podgrmec** where partisans were waiting for them and placed them in different houses; remembers that there were six people helping others to cross the river; explains

that there were people on both sides of the river pulling the scaffolding by a rope; remembers a girl with long black, braided hair who slipped from the scaffolding and was drowning; mentions that there was a man who drowned trying to help that girl and his body was found later near Bosanska Krupa; mentions that there were both civilians and soldiers who were drowning in the River Una; answers that there were ten people living in her uncle's house; again mentions that there were five to six Ustasha who came to their house and that all of the family members managed to leave the house except her aunt and her baby; explains that she left the house through the other door in the last moment and hid in a bush; says that she did not hear any gunshots, just the sounds of raging fire; explains that Ustashe were coming in silence in order to catch more people in the houses; answers the question and says that after crossing the River Una they arrived to Radici and the day after they went to **Srpska Jasenica** where a committee was formed which divided refugees and placed them in different houses; mentions that her mother and her youngest brother were placed with one family while she, her sister, and brother were placed with three different families; mentions that the house where her mother and one brother were placed was further away while her, her other brother, and sister were placed in three houses which were next to each other; says that they spent four years living with these families and during the fourth offense they fled to Grmeč where they were with their family; explains that those houses belonged to families who used to live there; mentions that on June 28 they left Bosanska Krupa.

[01:] 24:15:16 – [1:] 33:56:08  
25:27 – 35:31

Ožegović says that the houses they were placed in belonged to local people and that all women with children were divided and placed in those houses in **Srpska Jasenica**; says they spent four years there; says there was war activity during that period; describes how during the fourth offense they ran and hid in the Mountain Grmeč; mentions that the Germans were also there so they had to turn back home but the Croatian Home Guard, "Hrvatsko Domobranstvo," (Domobrani- Croatian army forces in collaboration with the German occupation) gathered them all and sent them to Bosanska Krupa; mentions how all women of age 18 to 60 were sent to Germany; mentions that it was snowing and she still has scars inside her cheek from sleeping in the snow [*shows the side of her face*]; describes how German soldiers were coming to the family she was placed with; remembers that she suffered from typhus at that time and that German soldiers thought that she belonged to partisans; says that owner of the house replied that she was not a partisan but refugee and when German soldiers heard that she was suffering from typhus they left; describes how local people ran into the woods on the Mountain Grmeč when the army was coming; explains that she recognized German soldiers because they had different uniforms and had better ammunition than Ustashe or Domobrani; says that she could not understand the German language and therefore did not know what the German soldiers said; explains that she heard gun shots during her escape to the woods on mountain Grmeč and that there was bombing from aircraft as well; says that she escaped to the mountain Grmeč together with other civilians; describes how once she stepped on the corpse of a 10 year old child because she failed to see it under the snow; describes how that was a horrible experience for her when she realized that she stepped on a child corpse; describes how that time was the last time she saw her mother; explains she never found out how and when her mother died; adds that at that moment she also saw her brother for the last time but she never heard anything about his fate either; mentions that she

tried to get some information from Red Cross but she failed; says that from mountain Grmeč she came back to the same house in **Srpska Jasenica**; mentions that German soldiers and Domobrani went into that area, but Ustasha did not; explains that Domobrani were the Croatian army; describes that Domobrani used to have different uniforms and hats; explains that local people were not running away from Domobrani and German soldiers because they were not bothering them; describes that they were coming in the houses asking for partisans; describes how the grandmother of the family in which her sister was placed used to reply to Domobrani and German soldiers that partisans are just like those hidden in the woods; describes how a family that she was placed with had a partisan son who was in the house at the time suffering from typhus; describes how his family had to take him out to the woods when they heard that Domobrani were coming and that saved his life; describes how one of the soldiers tossed the sheets around in his bed with his gun to make sure that the son was not covered underneath the sheets; mentions again that they did not bother anybody except partisans; says that she contracted typhus when she came back from the mountain Grmeč in April; adds that it was after the offense and that all her hair fell out but it grew again later; describes that there were people who were dying of frostbite; mentions a young woman who was strong and tall and whose feet were affected by frostbite; describes how the girl made a mistake by putting her feet in hot water and died later; mentions another young woman whose brother escaped from the house that was burned down and describes how her feet had such bad frostbite that she could walk only on her toes; goes back to the story when German soldiers came while she had typhus; mentions that that happened at the beginning of April and that she was laying on a palliasse; again mentions how the man said that she was not a partisan but a refugee; describes how German soldiers left since they found neither partisan men nor ammunition in the house; explains that after the offense German soldiers and Domobrani came only once and no longer since the family was protected by partisans after that occasion.

[01:] 33:56:09 – [01:] 40:43:09  
35:32 – 42:35

Ožegović describes how she knew that Domobrani took women to Germany; describes that when they were sent to Bosanska Krupa they were placed in a big hall and women were taken out; mentions that the woman she was placed with had three children and a husband that had died before the war started; mentions that the woman lived with her in-laws; describes how she [*the woman*] was taken away while the in-laws, together with Ožegović and the woman's three kids, stayed; the interviewer of Ožegović adds that in February when there was much snow, the army entered her village and caused many villagers to flee to the woods where they got frostbite; she confirms this statement; the interviewer repeats that she came back to village again; she confirms; answers a question when women were sent to Germany; says that she was forced from Grmeč to Bosanska Krupa; answers a question whom she was forced by to do so and says by Domobrani but she immediately corrects herself and says those were actually German soldiers; continues with her story and says that German soldiers sent them to Domobrani; answers a question and describes an act of imprisoning; says that German soldiers forced them to walk 20 kilometers to Bosanska Krupa where they were closed in rooms; says that German soldiers were leading refugees and riding by cars and tanks next to them; mentions how some of the people were able to escape through the woods and go back home; answers a question and says that they spent more than a half day walking from Grmeč to Bosanska Krupa; describes how one morning

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German soldiers waited for them at the entrance of the village when they were coming back from the mountain Grmeč and told them that they have to continue walking to Bosanska Krupa; says that German people were more decent to them than Domobrani or Ustasha; says again that Ustasha were the worst of all; answers a question and says that when they arrived to Bosanska Krupa they were placed in big hall where the families were placed on the floor; answers a question and says that they barely had anything to eat over there; says that when women were taken out, the rest of the families were put on towing car and sent to Cazin (town in Bosnia and Herzegovina); describes how some Muslim women who sympathized with them brought them clothes, bread, boiled eggs, and whatever other food they could bring out of the house to share with others; says that the guards did not beat and kill the prisoners but were there to enforce that no one escaped; describes what the scene of taking women from their families looked like; says that they were just taken out and the family knew nothing about the women anymore; says that those women were not told where they had been taken to but they found out from those women who were sending letters from Germany; mentions that some women came back from Germany and some never came back; says that she stayed seven days in Bosanska Krupa; says that when they arrived in Cazin they stayed in abandoned Serbian houses; mentions that she found corn and took it to the flour mill so they were eating whatever they could find; says that at the time it was proclaimed that those who had a letter from Germany could bring 50 family members with them and go to Cazin where they would be free; mentions that her sister had a letter from Germany from the son of the family she was placed with; mentions that they walked all day long from **Osretak [Osredak]** to Bosanska Krupa then **Srpska Jasenica**.

[01:] 40:43:10 – [01:] 47:06:17  
42:36 – 49:14

Ožegović says that she did not personally know the Ustasha who burned her uncle's house; mentions that there were no Muslim houses near her uncle's house; mentions that Ustasha were coming to Serbian villages from May until mid-August; says that group was actually a Muslim group who called themselves Ustasha; explains she knew they were Muslims from their dialect and speech; says she had family members who knew those individuals so they knew they were from the same village; mentions the **Babic** family whose houses were destroyed by Ustasha; mentions that some beautiful women were forced to marry Ustasha and give a birth to their children and after the war they could not leave the kids so they stayed married; says she did not personally know any of these women; explains that she heard about this practice from other women; describes the days after the fourth offense and the last days of the war; mentions that war ended in June 1945; mentions that people were coming for their family members; says that she found out that her father, who was in **Shetka** near **Nis**, and her aunt were sent to a concentration camp; says that her aunt was sent to Belgrade because she was 50 years old and there she found out where her husband and Milka's father were; says that she regrets that her aunt did not have a picture of her father; says that her father was a partisan but she does not know if he died in battle near Soko Banja or Zajecar; says that she went to Soko Banja in attempt to find out but she could not find out anything; says that she went to **Nis** to talk to the general and, in his notes, he found that in battle for liberating Zajecar one Serbian and one Italian soldier died; says their names were unknown; describes that she does not know where her ancestors died; describes that when she came back to Sirig she found her house was empty except for only hay on the floor which the Russian army used to sleep on in the autumn of 1944; mentions that

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her oldest brother joined the army and was kept in a concentration camp; mentions that three of them lived with her uncle and aunt from July until December; says that her uncle fed them pig and calf; says that they were sending a letter so her brother can be set free as their foster parent; mentions that they got some silverware and other possessions and then they moved to their own house; mentions that she was taking care of all of them but both of her brothers died after they had their own children; says that she cannot remember any post-war vengeance over Hungarians nor any post war trials when she came back to Sirig; mentions that Hungarians were prevented to live in **Curuga [Curug, Čurug]**; mentions that close to her house a new village was built where people named **Cangovi** settled; mentions that she does not know where they came from; continues with the story and says that after 1944 they ran away and the village was totally desolate; says that people who survived the war started coming back to their houses and they continued to live; says thanks for the interview.