

SRDIĆ, Dušan
Former Yugoslavia Witnesses Documentation Project
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In this interview, Dušan Srdić, born in Makovac on June 14, 1924, describes his impressions and experiences of World World II within the region of former Yugoslavia, as a native. He describes his first memories; from the bombings of Belgrade at the time of his early adolescence, through the end of the war, during which he actively participated in fighting and became injured. In addition, he describes incidents of persecuted civilians as well as Serbian soldiers who were retreating from regions of the recently declared autonomous country of Croatia.

[01:] 00:30:00 – [01:] 10:52:00

He states his name, place, and date of birth; describes his first memories of World War II, mentioning the bombings of Belgrade, Kragujevac, and Niš, and comments that Croatian cities were not bombed and that national identity was enforced; explains how the war developed in the region later on; mentions how the German army was passing through Karlovac on the second day the war started, cutting through the northwest front; comments on how the Croatian army started disarming Serbian soldiers who were trying to run away; describes how German soldiers looked and how were they armed; explains how one of the German soldiers knew the native language and was trying to console them, telling them not to be afraid; explains how Serbian soldiers, while fleeing, were taking away civilian clothing from surrounding houses so they could navigate freely through the forests; states some of the names of soldiers he knew (**Matijević Pavao**, **Cvijet Đuro**, etc.); talks about a speech that Ustaše [Ustasha] bands held upon the declaration of the Autonomous State of Croatia, a speech that his father participated in; comments that the speech was held by Mile Budak, Jure Francetić and Andrija Artulković who announced that a third of the Serbians must be baptized, a third must be banished and the rest who would not obey should be murdered; talks about his life during those events; explains how policemen were roaming every village, threatening that whoever does not surrender his weapons would be killed immediately; recalls how Slovenians were chased off to Slovenia and how a group of Slovenians ranging from one hundred to one hundred and fifty people was hosted by the municipality Krnjak.

[01:] 10:52:01 – [01:] 20:03:00

He explains who the **žandari** (the rural policemen) were; says that he knew about the arrival of the Slovenians because they were being transported and divided according to municipalities; explains how the municipality mayor **Dragan Mujić**, who was in a secret plot with the leaders of the Ustaše bands, announced that a speech was going to be held in Krnjak, and used that opportunity to call for volunteers to bring food for the Slovenian refugees—who would become victims of the plot; explains that the public notary, **Dmitar Tomić**, who would be murdered as well, warned his father that a raid on the Serbians was being organized; comments that nine people from Makovac attended the speech in Krnjak but none of them

came back home alive (**Mihajlo Simić, Simo Simić, Mihajlo Potkrajac, Stevan Majčević, Stevan Živković, Đurač Simić, Milić Vukobratović, Pavao Knežević, Teodor Uzalac**); explains that he knows, from his father, that the people who went to Krnjak were murdered; says that random women on the road witnessed how Ustaše trucks would stop if they saw people on the road and would throw them in and carry them for execution—Miloš Mandić, Stevo Gajciša, Mišo Đurić were all carried by those trucks and later on murdered; comments on the number of people that were taken off and murdered.

[01:] 20:03:01 – [01:] 29:38:00

He explains the difference between the Ustaše bands and **Hrvatsko domobranstvo [Domobrani]** (Croatian home guardsmen); explains that he and his family were hiding around Petrova Gora (Petrova forest) and Klokoč during the frequent raids; comments that on December 1, 1941, an Italian offensive set off from Karlovac to clear the terrain, burning houses on its way; mentions some of the people the Italian forces brought to Krnjak; describes how they abducted his father; explains how his house was neither burnt nor robbed; explains how the partisan squad **Debela Kosa** attacked the Italian forces by an ambush; comments that out of vengeance, the Italian soldiers slaughtered all the people that were brought to Krnjak at the same place they were ambushed the previous day; talks about a person named **Boro Mihajlović** who was then 18 years old and was the only one who survived the killings in Krnjak.

[01:] 29:38:01 – [01:] 42:47:00

He explains that the Ustaše raids were temporarily terminated during the winter; explains that a Ustaše–**Hrvatsko domobranstvo** squad was formed in February, but was defeated by the first and second brigades, in which he participated as a pathfinder and guide; describes how 90 civilians were murdered and a lot of churches were burned in Vojnović by Ustaše bands; says he was twice wounded during the war; explains how partisans never committed crimes against civilians, but on his journey he would frequently see corpses killed by unknown causes; talks about when a commander of a partisan brigade killed a soldier because he was collecting apples on Croatian soil; explains how he welcomed the end of the war because he was wounded; explains how after the end of the war Tito ordered units not to liberate regions they were operating in during the war, out to vengeance; explains how, due to orders, the 8th Division, of which he was part, was sent to Ilirska Bistrica in Slovenia.