

Your Honours, thank you for giving me an opportunity at the end of this trial against me to address you with several words. In Yugoslavia, in a state where I was born, some 13 years ago a tragic conflict broke out. I was 23 years old at the time. Just like all people of my age, I desired peace and I had a number of plans for my future. The last thing on my mind was war and bloodshed. I knew about the war only what my parents told me, and they told me very little about the war. I didn't pay a lot of attention to that. At the time I believed war to be something from a distant past, something that happened way before I was born.

Frankly speaking, until the very last moment I believed that I would be a member of a generation that would live its lifetime in peace. I grew up in a socialist system. At school I learned about brotherhood and unity between various peoples living in my country. However, I knew that a number of my ancestors perished in the previous war. I knew about the Jasenovac camp. However, at the time I was convinced that that was part of a distant past, something that did not concern me. I had peaceful relationships with my neighbours, Muslims and Croats. We lived together and socialised together, and I even had girlfriends that were non-Serbs. My parents never reproached me for that.

In the beginning of the 1990s, things changed abruptly. Radio, television, press, everything was full of threats against Serbs and against Muslims, depending on whose media it was. Suddenly we started splitting along the lines of our thoughts and ideas at the time. It is difficult to comprehend it right now. Believing that we were faced with the same threat as Jasenovac was in the past, I responded to the mobilisation. I was young and strong, and exactly these kinds of people are needed in every army. I wanted to defend my people, and the last thing on my mind was attacking somebody else.

In late spring 1992, I ended up in the intervention platoon of Prijedor police. Terrible things were happening in Prijedor, and I would like to forget that. My neighbours and friends, Muslims, had to leave. As a policeman, before the 21st of August, I escorted and was – provided security to several convoys leaving Prijedor. I cannot say that Muslims fared well there, but I know that most of them reached their destination safely.

In the morning of the 21st of August, I was told that I had to escort another similar convoy. I didn't think that -- I apologise. I did not think that anything particular was going to happen. However, that's not how it was. At the order of the commander of the Intervention Platoon, who later was killed at the Bihac front – and I don't wish to mention his name now – we separated two bus loads of military-aged men. They were killed at Koricanske Stijene between Skender Vakuf and Travnik.

I participated in separating and killing these innocent people. I have sincere remorse with respect to that, and I wish to offer my sincere apology to all the victims and their families.

Your Honours, I hope that you will believe me. I did not commit this because I wanted to commit this or I enjoyed doing this. I did not

hate these people. I did it because I was ordered to do so. My commander, who enjoyed great respect and had a lot of authority, was present personally and issued these orders. In those moments, I could not muster up enough courage to disobey the order. I can tell you now what would have happened had I refused to carry out the order; I assure you that they would have killed me right then. I hope that you believe me, Your Honours. All of my friends from the Intervention Platoon who could testify to this are afraid for their own future and they don't wish to testify. I cannot reproach them for this.

Your Honours, in the past war, I was an ordinary rank and file soldier. I did not have a rank. I fought at many battlefronts and I behaved in a dignified manner. I faced many enemies and was wounded three times. I have never been a coward in this war and it is very difficult for me to face what happened at Koricanske Stijene. I asked to be transferred to another unit because I did not wish to kill innocent civilians. I spent the rest of my war service as a soldier who never committed anything similar to what had happened at Koricanske Stijene. This is the most difficult time of my past, and I would like to raise everything that had happened. However, I know it's not possible. I have in the meantime married and I have two children. I have lived after this in a dignified manner and have not committed any offences. I know that all of those families who lost their loved ones on the 21st of August, 1992 can see me only as a murderer and perhaps will think that my apologies are insincere. I can understand them for believing so, and I am prepared to serve time in order to pay for this.

I hope that my confession will aid in ensuring that such things are never repeated in our territory. I know that by doing so I can help in some way remove some of the burden that I've been carrying for 11 years; however, I know that this will stay with me until the day I die. Once again, I offer my sincere apology to all of the families, and I thank you, Your Honours, for allowing me to address you. Thank you.