

Notre détachement attendait beaucoup de cette action, et plus particulièrement la liaison de notre territoire libéré avec ceux des détachements de Romanija et "Zvijezda", Mais, à la place d'unités de partisans, la vallée de Krivaja fut envahie par des unités de tchetniks, parmi lesquelles la brigade "Cerska", sous le commandement du Capitaine Račić et d'un grand nombre d'officiers. Leur arrivée accompagnée de pillage et de violences dans les villages musulmans, amena des troubles dans notre territoire libéré, qui n'en avait jusqu'alors jamais connus. Malgré tout, la liaison avec l'Etat-major général et les détachements de partisans de Bosnie Orientale, put cette fois-ci être établie.

Durant la première semaine de Janvier 1942, notre détachement recut l'ordre, avec la brigade tchetnik "Cerska" de Račić, et au cours d'une large action, de pénétrer le plus possible en avant vers Tuzla. Ceci devait servir d'introduction à une plus large opération, où devaient participer les détachements de Birač et de Majevisa, et dont les buts étaient Tuzla et son bassin houiller.

Pour cette action, le détachement dépêcha son bataillon de choc. Malheureusement, les tchetniks ayant renoncé, à la dernière minute à y participer, notre action ne put être menée à bien. Au cours du combat à Turija, l'une des compagnies de notre bataillon de choc perdit 15 combattants, parmi lesquels son chef, Miloš Kupres. Pero Dokić, commissaire politique du bataillon de choc, y trouva également la mort. Les pertes de Dokić et de Kupres, furent certainement les plus cruelles connues par notre détachement depuis le début de l'insurrection jusqu'à ce plus récent combat. Cela se passa à l'aube du 13 Janvier 1942.

Au cours des mêmes combats, trois des partisans de la compagnie, blessés, avaient été faits prisonniers. Nous avons pu plus tard procéder à un échange avec des soldats allemands.

Je n'ai mentionné que les plus larges actions accomplies par le détachement d'Ozren au cours de l'année 1941, et du mois de Janvier 1942. Je ne me suis pas attardé sur les conflits, escarmouches et actions journalières, sur les actions dirigées contre les voies de communication et les lignes de chemin de fer: Doboj — Tuzla; Doboj — Zavidovići; Sarajevo, et Zavidovići — Olovo. C'est au prix de grands efforts, que l'ennemi réussissait à maintenir le trafic sur ces lignes. Et, étant donné les circonstances, un trafic régulier ne pouvait même pas y être envisagé. L'offensive ennemie du 3 au 12 décembre, n'ayant en rien amélioré cet état de choses, ni même réussit à repousser notre détachement un peu plus loin de ces importantes voies de communication, il dut envisager une nouvelle action. Il tâcha d'inclure cette action dans le cadre d'une large offensive qui avait pour but de nettoyer la Bosnie des partisans, et liquider notre territoire libéré où opéraient les détachements de partisans "Birčanski", "Romanijski" et "Ozrenski". Cette opération est connue sous le nom de deuxième offensive ennemie.

En rapport avec l'action susmentionnée, dans une étude appellés "Lutte contre le mouvement insurrectionnel sur le territoire sud-oriental", le Sous-colonel allemand, Ernst Wisaupt, envoyé par le haut-commandement allemand avec la tâche de recueillir des renseignements sur l'insurrection en "territoire sud-oriental" soit en Yougoslavie, cite,

entre autres, l'avis du Général allemand à Zagreb, Gleze Horstenau: "L'industrie militaire allemande était particulièrement intéressée par la région Sarajevo — Zenica — Tuzla..." C'est pourquoi il avait plusieurs fois proposé qu'une partie de la 718ème division allemande quitte Zagreb et Banja Luka et que l'on "permette à toute la division de se concentrer dans la région Sarajevo — Doboj — Tuzla..."

Déjà au cours des préparatifs de l'offensive, le commandant du "territoire sud-oriental", le Général allemand Ler, donna l'ordre, le 6 Janvier, au général en Serbie, le Général Bader, sans attendre le début des opérations dans la région sud de la Bosnie Orientale, "de briser la résistance des insurgés, à Ozren, au sud-est de Doboj..."

C'est ainsi que le Général Pfortner, commandant de la 718ème division, essaya, au moment où les préparatifs de l'offensive étaient encore en cours, d'exécuter les ordres du haut commandement. Avec trois bataillons de la 718ème Division, plus quelques unités oustachi-domobrani, il attaqua le détachement d'Ozren par Puračić, Gračanica et Zavidovići. Mais l'ennemi était attendu dans chacune de ces directions, et il dut regagner sa position de départ, non sans avoir enregistré de lourdes pertes.

Au cours de cette journée de combat, les Allemands comprirent qu'ils ne viendraient pas à bout du détachement d'Ozren avec de moindres forces. Et ces unités leur étant nécessaire pour l'exécution de leur plan contre les détachements de Birčanska et Romanija, elles furent réintégrées dans leur régiment. C'est ainsi que l'opération Ozren constitua la deuxième partie de la Deuxième offensive.

L'ennemi commença l'offensive contre les détachements de Birač et de Romanija le 15 Janvier, venant de Tuzla, Zvornik, Višegrad et Sarajevo, et une fois cette partie de l'action terminée, mis en train les préparatifs pour l'attaque contre le détachement d'Ozren. Déjà le 24 Janvier, il commença à regrouper et concentrer les forces devant participer à cette action.

L'offensive contre le détachement d'Ozren débuta à l'aube du 27 Janvier 1942. D'après des données qui ont été vérifiées, participèrent à cette action; la 718ème division allemande, renforcée du 697ème régiment, de la 342ème division allemande et une partie des 2ème et 3ème corps d'armée des "domobrani" (en gros la 4ème division des "domobrani") ainsi que de quelques unités d'oustachis, parmi lesquelles le bataillon de Francetić. L'ennemi disposait d'une artillerie d'environ 60 canons, 3 trains blindés, d'unités de génies, ect... A l'encontre du détachement d'Ozren, qui disposait à ce moment-là d'environ 1200 hommes, répartis en quatre bataillons, l'ennemi partit à l'attaque avec plus de 17.000 soldats parfaitement équipés. La bataille s'engagea sous de dures conditions climatiques, une neige épaisse et une température très basse.

Le plan de l'ennemi était de se répartir en trois groupes: avec l'un "de barrage" fortifier et assiéger la vallée entre la "Bosna" et la "Spreča" près de Doboj, et avec les deux autres, venant en direction de Tuzla et Zavidovići de coincer notre détachement dans le triangle formé par les deux fleuves et les voies de communication de Doboj, et de l'y anéantir.

L'action était menée par le Général Pfortner, commandant de la 718ème division allemande d'infanterie. Les allemands avaient pris sur eux le plus gros de l'action, laissant aux "domobrani" le soin d'assiéger et contrôler le territoire nettoyé par les allemands.

Le détachement, bien que mis au courant du plan ennemi et de ses concentrations de troupes qu'au dernier moment, (27—28 Janvier), put se préparer à temps et attendit l'ennemi de pied ferme. Contrairement à l'offensive de décembre, où il n'avait devant lui que des unités "domobrani" et oustachis, et mena le combat de front, le détachement dut cette fois adopter une toute autre tactique. Conscients de la supériorité technique et militaire des unités allemandes, nous avons décidé de n'engager nulle part de combats importants, mais d'entretenir constamment une série de petites attaques, de provoquer de fréquentes escarmouches et portant le gros des forces vers le massif d'Ozren, et les dirigeant à l'arrière des unités allemandes, d'attaquer les "domobrani" et oustachis qui avaient déjà pris position dans certains villages.

Quoique l'offensive réussit au premier moment à reprendre à notre détachement certaines de ses positions et à lui infliger des pertes sensibles (environ 150 morts et blessés), il en sortit vaincu. Ceci fut rendu possible par la nouvelle tactique empruntée.

Le seul combat de front mené au cours de cette offensive par le détachement, fut celui du 1er Février, près du village de Donja Brijesnica, que nous provoquâmes intentionnellement afin d'empêcher la colonne allemande de gagner le massif principal d'Ozren, ce qui aurait mis notre détachement dans une situation grave. Les Allemands, combattant sur des espaces découverts et enfonçant dans le neige jusqu'à la ceinture, durent changer de direction et au lieu de se diriger vers Micijevići et Vasiljevci, emprunter le versant nord de l'Ozren vers le Monastère d'Ozren — Petrovo Selo et vers l'Ouest. Tous les autres combats du détachement, sauf ceux des deux derniers jours de l'offensive devant Doboï, eurent le caractère habituel de la guerre des maquis.

Les allemands marquèrent la fin de l'offensive, le 6 Février, en se retirant sur Doboï. En ce qui concerne le détachement, durant les derniers jours, il avait passé à la contre-attaque sur l'ensemble du front. Malgré les pertes mentionnées, le détachement sortit de cette offensive nettement plus fort. Une grande quantité d'armes et de munition avaient été saisies durant les combats, principalement aux "domobrani". Au cours de l'offensive, l'ennemi eut environ 400 soldats mis hors de combat.

Le succès du détachement et l'échec de l'ennemi (en premier lieu des allemands) au cours de cette offensive, est d'autant plus notable quand on pense que le Général Pfortner disposait de forces 15 fois plus grandes et du temps nécessaire pour mener l'action à bien, donc de toutes les conditions promptes à lui assurer le succès. Voici les rapports ennemis sur le résultat obtenu:

Dans un rapport détaillé écrit à l'issue des combats, le Colonel Gustović, commandant de la 4ème Division des "domobrani" dit:

"Malgré tout, nos compagnies conservent les positions qu'elles occupaient au début de l'action, tout en étant dans un état de grande faiblesse

physique et ayant à faire face à des attaques violentes même, farouches, de la part de l'adversaire . . ."

Le rapport de l'Officier de liaison de la 718^{ème} Division allemande est encore plus intéressant: à la fin de son rapport, il dit:

"L'opération "Ozren" n'a pas réussie, car les insurgés, loin d'être désorganisés, continuent à constituer une entité homogène sur la montagne de l'Ozren . . . Il est vraisemblable que le groupe insurrectionnel d'Ozren recommencera bientôt ses activités comme auparavant, si ce n'est sur une plus large échelle . . ."

Le Sous-colonel Wishaupt, que nous avons déjà mentionné, dit au sujet de cette opération: "L'action sur la montagne d'Ozren n'a pas amené les résultats de nettoyage prévus. Ceci ne pourrait être réalisé," constate le chef de l'Etat-major, chef de la lutte contre les forces insurgées du "territoire sud-oriental" — "qu'en faisant tomber l'ennemi dans un petit encerclement."

Et voici comment, d'après Wishaupt, fut résumée la situation par le Commandant général plénipotentiaire en Serbie.

"La tentative faite pour éteindre les foyers de l'insurrection en Bosnie Orientale n'a pas réussie. Il faut s'attendre au printemps à un soulèvement général des Balkans, avec l'aide des Anglais." (Wishaupt, pages 131—143).

Malgré le fait que le détachement d'Ozren soit sorti de cette offensive vaincu, il ne lui survécut que deux mois et dix jours. Durant ce temps-là, le détachement combattit continuellement, menant à bien plusieurs actions sur les lignes Doboï—Tuzla et Doboï—Maglaj.

Qui plus est, il avait réussi à étendre le champ de son action au secteur de Trebava, comme à ceux de Krivaja et Gostović, envoyant à Gostović une compagnie, et à Trebava quelques unités, de la force d'un bataillon. Ce qui n'avait pu être réalisé ni par les allemands, ni par les oustachis, malgré toutes leurs tentatives et toutes leurs victimes, le fut par la honteuse trahison des tchetniks, provoquée dans une large mesure par les occupants et leurs collaborateurs. Ce qui arriva au même moment à un grand nombre de détachements en Bosnie et dans d'autres régions du pays, arriva également au détachement d'Ozren. L'on savait depuis un certain temps que Draža Mihajlović était en contact avec Nedić, à travers certains de ses officiers, et que celui-ci, par l'intermédiaire du Major Dangić, du Capitaine Čuković et autres officiers, était en rapport direct avec les allemands. Déjà auparavant, certains commandants tchetniks en Bosnie s'étaient mis en liaison avec les autorités oustachis, leur proposant ou acceptant des offres "d'armistice", sur la base d'une lutte commune contre les partisans et contre les communistes. Aux mois de février et mars, une série de putschs eurent lieu et la lutte s'engagea ouvertement, dont le but était de mettre en déroute et d'anéantir chacun des détachements de partisans en Bosnie orientale et centrale.

Le détachement d'Ozren se trouva longtemps isolé des autres, poussé en avant, et, en gros, abandonné à lui-même. Assaillis quotidiennement, manquant de cadres, les dirigeants du détachement n'avaient ni la force ni les moyens de consacrer plus d'attention au travail politique. Malgré tout, tant que le détachement ne se trouva pas isolé, les éléments tchet-

niks et leur propagande n'obtinrent pas de grands résultats. Mais après la perte d'Olovo et l'arrivée d'un plus grand nombre de formations tchetnik dans la vallée de Krivaja, ceux-ci donnèrent plus libre cours à leur propagande, offrant aux soldats fatigués et aux paysans épuisés de faire la paix avec l'occupant et les autorités oustachis. Après l'offensive ennemie de février, cette propagande prit de plus en plus d'ampleur.

Devant cette situation, l'Etat-major du détachement demanda à l'Etat-major général une aide politique et militaire. La venue du Premier Bataillon de choc de Bosnie Orientale ne put changer l'état des choses, d'autant plus qu'entre temps on en était venu à une lutte armée ouverte avec les éléments tchetniks. Grâce à une trahison tchetnik organisée, une attaque sournoise fut effectuée le 18 Avril 1942 contre le bataillon de choc et l'Etat-major du détachement. L'Etat-major général, en raison de la situation identique prévalant à Romanija, rappela le 1er bataillon de choc de Bosnie Orientale et ordonna la concentration des forces partisans, si bien que notre détachement abandonna finalement la région d'Ozren.

Beaucoup de nos camarades, ne voulant pas accepter la nouvelle situation demeurèrent à Ozren. Dirigés par le commandant-adjoint du détachement, Todor Panić et par d'autres, ils attaquèrent le 11 Juin l'Etat-major du détachement tchetnik d'Ozren, nouvellement formé. Mais à la suite de trahisons et de préparatifs insuffisants, cet essai fut marqué par l'insuccès et par de lourdes pertes.

Le détachement des partisans d'Ozren fut reformé le 21 Juillet 1943. Sous le commandement, d'abord de Mehmedalija Hukić, puis d'Ignjat Radojčić et du commissaire politique Sima Lukić, il prit une part active aux combats menés au cours de l'année 1943 et au début 1944. Il se distingua particulièrement au cours des combats menés au moment de la première libération de Tuzla, et sa défense fin septembre, et durant les premiers jours d'Octobre 1943. Au cours de la deuxième attaque sur Tuzla, les 17—21 Janvier, le détachement se manifesta particulièrement par ses combats dans la région de Kreka. Quittant Tuzla assiégée, le détachement se retira en protégeant la retraite des autres unités. Au cours de durs combats dans le secteur Dubrava — Vukovija — Požarnica, le détachement fut pour ainsi dire réduit de moitié et resta sans commandement. Trouvèrent la mort ou furent grièvement blessés au cours de ces combats: le commissaire du détachement, les commissaires de deux bataillons, un commandant de bataillon et presque tous les commandants et commissaires de compagnies. Ce fut là la raison pour laquelle notre détachement fut supprimé. Ceux de ses hommes qui avaient survécus furent répartis dans diverses unités du 3ème Corps d'Armée.

TODOR VUJASINOVIĆ,

Deputy to the Federal People's Assembly

ORGANIZATION OF THE UPRISING AND MORE IMPORTANT ARMED ACTION ON MT. OZREN

At a meeting of the Military Committee for the region Tuzla, it was decided that I should organize and take charge of operations in the Doboј, Maglaj and Gračanica sector, coordinating the activity of the Party members of that region. I think that this was the last meeting of that committee that I attended. We held the meeting in a small forest on Mt. Pločnik, on the property of Mujezinović, where most of the Party leaders of Tuzla had taken refuge. Besides Uglješa Danilović, regional delegate for Bosnia — Hercegovina, Ivan Marković-Irac, Cvijetin Mijatović, Pašaga and myself, attending this meeting were representatives from most of the Party committees of the Tuzla region.

Uglješa brought with him the latest directives. He explained them in detail, informing us of the Central Committee's instruction to begin at once forming groups which would lose no time in taking armed action. That day the different sectors of operations were fixed. It was also decided that day to move the Regional Command somewhere in the vicinity of Šeković. Irac, Cvijetin and Pašaga were to go first. As for me, it was agreed that I should stay behind on Mt. Ozren, in charge of the activity of the communists in Doboј, Maglaj, and Gračanica with a view to carrying out the directive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia as soon as possible.

It was also agreed at the same meeting that I should get ready 10 rifles and 20 hand grenades. These arms were to be turned over to the Party group of Kreka so that they could begin operations, that is an attack on the mine and power plant in Kreka. Pero Miljanović, a miner, and Franjo Marković, Irac's brother, were to come for the arms.

It was decided that I should be the one to go to Mt. Ozren because I was the only one who knew something of the region. My mother's Father my grandfather, Jovan Bajić, had come from Ozren. I had spent my school vacations in Trbuk, Panjik and Brezici. After leaving prison I had spent some time in Bosansko Petrovo Selo as pay clerk of a timber enterprise and organized there a local trade union, a group of firemen and a reading group. When the German troops entered Zenica (where I had worked up until the war) and I had to leave, I returned to Ozren where in Kakmuž my wife was a school teacher. I had already made a start in that region in gathering information on concealed arms, in bringing into the Party

certain sympathizers I had known earlier, and in acquainting the people in general with the Party line. Those were the main reasons I stayed there.

There were Party organizations in Doboј, Maglaj and Gračanica. In addition to the Party groups I had organized in Bosansko Petrovo Selo and Brezici, the group in Trbuk (Dušanka Vajić) and in Bočina (Miloš Nedić) and the abovementioned Party organizations were to be the main pillars in the organization and preparation for the Uprising in this area. Immediately upon arriving in this region I made contact with all these organizations and groups, with the exception of the Party organization in Doboј. Fikret Dedić headed the Party organization in Maglaj. Pero Dokić (Doko), student of agronomy helped him during the summer vacation. Velo Šuput headed the organization in Gračanica. The Secretary of the Doboј Party organization was Mehmed Vejzović, and a technician, Josip Jovanović gave him a hand. Connected with this Party organization there was a rather strong Party group in a couple of villages to the north of Doboј (Osječani and Kožuhe) with fifteen or so new Party members and sympathizers. Čedo Jaćimović, student, headed this group, and in the summer he was assisted by Ismet Kapetanović, a high school graduate.

At the last meeting in Tuzla it had been decided that Josip Jovanović was to leave Doboј immediately to join and help me, getting me in touch with Čedo Jaćimović's group.

The abovementioned meeting was held early in July. It was necessary to take action quickly. At the outset, however, certain events made the whole situation far more complicated.

First, Pero Miljanović and Franjo Marković came for the arms we had prepared. Milovan Gajić and Mićan Peić went with them to help them carry it to Husin. The arms, however, were not fated to perform the task which had been assigned to them. The men carried the arms almost to Husin and hid them in some hay nearby. By accident the owner of the hay found the arms and declared them to the ustashi authorities.

The second event was for me far more serious. At the end of June, Petar Dokić was arrested and together with him, other members of the Maglaj Party organization, Asim Lasić and Šahbeg Smajilagić. They were held in the prison of the gendarmes' barracks in Maglaj. Of the Maglaj Party members only Fikret Dedić and Brišo Obradić were still at liberty. Shortly after, the police in Gračanica arrested Velo Šuput with a group of Party members and youth members and took them to Tuzla prison. And just a day or so after my return from the meeting in Tuzla, Čedo Jaćimović and almost all the members of his group were arrested. The police were also searching for Josip Jovanović and several other Party members from Doboј. All of them were taken to the court prison in Doboј. At the very last minute Josip Jovanović managed to escape and join me on Mt. Ozren.

These arrests reduced the number of Party members we had been counting on by more than half. And now besides our work in organizing the insurrection, it was necessary to do everything possible to help our comrades escape from prison. Fikret Dedić in Maglaj and the comrades in

Doboj were given this task. Dedić was preparing a group to come to Dokić's aid when he was being led out by the guard. Dokić, however, managed to escape by himself one night and join me on Mt. Ozren.

In Doboj things were more complicated. But nevertheless with the help of Enver Ruždija, an employee of the District court, we got hold of the keys to the prison, and with the aid of Mujo Kafedžić, a tavern keeper (who managed to keep the guard occupied), Hasan Čolić, a member of the youth Party group, entered the prison, opened it and gave our comrades a pistol and two hand grenades and helped them make their escape towards Trebava. At almost the same time the Tuzla police released Velo Šuput. Somehow he managed to reach Serbia but without putting us in contact with the comrades in Gračanica. Later we kept in touch with them through a student named Šiljić.

At earlier meetings of the Military Committee I had proposed that the main target in our plan of operations should be the old sugar factory in Usora and the arms depot in Bare near Doboj. When the old Yugoslav Army capitulated large military units were disarmed in the region between Brod, Šamac and Doboj. These weapons, munition and equipment were for most part stored in the sugar factory warehouse and in the building I mentioned above. It was estimated that about 100 carloads of arms and equipment had been stored there.

The comrades agreed with my proposal. I took on the elaboration of a plan of action.

At the very outset I realized that it would have to be a plan of large-scale action. While talking with the people in various villages we were depending on, we found that the people in general were more for joining in large-scale operations than in small, isolated acts of sabotage. Of course, preparations for both kinds of action took somewhat more time and needed more people. In agreement with my comrades I started drawing up a plan without ceasing to guide organizational preparations.

The target of our operations, as I have said, was to be Doboj, not only because of the munitions depot but also because Doboj was an important road and railway junction. To ensure success, it was necessary to attack Maglaj at the same time (to block the way from Sarajevo), Gračanica (to prevent a surprise attack from Tuzla), and to prevent attack from the north and from the direction of Derventa and Šamac, it was necessary to tear up the railway tracks, to take the stations in Johovac and Rudanka, and take the gendarmes' stations in Podnovlje and Osječani.

In preparing for this operation we divided up the sectors. Pero Dokić, together with Boža Spasojević, Sima Malinović, Dušanka Vajić and Miloš Nedić, was in charge of the Maglaj sector. We put Josip Jovanović, who was to be helped by Čedo Jaćimović, Ismet Kapetanović, Simo Lukić, Stanko Panić and the Doboj Party organization in charge of the Doboj sector. I was to take charge of the Gračanica sector and the rear as well as to guide other organizational preparations at the same time. Preparations were to be completed by the first week in August.

Preparations were coming along as planned in my sector and in the Maglaj sector. At a meeting we held at the end of the first week in August, Josip Jovanović said that the Doboj sector was ready too. We then set the date for the Uprising for the night between August 15th and 16th. We gave everyone their positions and their definite tasks.

The Maglaj sector: operations led by Pero Dokić with the help of Boža Spasojević. The plan was to take Maglaj at any cost, destroy the bridges and railway tracks between Glogarica and Trbuk.

The Gračanica sector: operations led by Todor Panić with the assistance of Milovan Gajić, Miloš Lazarević, Vojin Panić and Sima Lukić. It was their duty to take Gračanica, Petrovo Selo (the gendarmes' station and the railway station) and if possible Maričina, and to destroy the bridges and railway line leading to Doboj.

I was to lead operations in the Doboj sector with the aid of Josip Jovanović, Ismet Kapetanović and Čedo Jaćimović. The plan was to prevent attack from the north by taking the gendarmes' stations in Podnovlje and Osječani, the railway stations in Rudanka and Johovac, destroying bridges and railway lines, with our main forces attacking Usora and Doboj, with the aim of seizing as much equipment as possible from the sugar factory warehouse and the depot in Bare. The rest we were to dynamite and also to damage the railway depot and repair shop.

A day or two before the fixed date, however, Josip Jovanović told us briefly that it would be necessary to postpone the attack, because otherwise the village of Trebava would not be able to take part in the operations. We had to postpone the attack until I could go and investigate. But at the very moment I was preparing to leave, Pašaga Mandžić accompanied by Ratko Vokić arrived from Šekovići. They arrived on August 18 in the night. On behalf of the Command he criticized me for having postponed the attack. When I told him about the situation and about the preparations, we both agreed that the attack should begin on the night between August 22nd and 23rd. A day after Pašaga's arrival, a group of miners from Husin arrived. After their attack on the Ustashi Headquarters they had been forced to leave Husin, taking with them their arms and equipment.

The Uprising in the Doboj, Gračanica and Maglaj sectors did begin at dawn on August 23, 1941. Everything went according to plan except that Pašaga took charge of operations in Doboj in my place. To guard against all eventualities I took part in the beginning of the operations in Gračanica, at the same time guiding and coordinating the operations as a whole.

Regardless of the fact that we did not succeed in destroying a single large railway bridge, it may be said that the Uprising was a complete success. After a certain amount of munitions and foodstuffs had been carried off, the depots in Usora and Bare were dynamited about 100 carloads of food and equipment. As a communications centre Doboj received a hard blow from which it did not recover until after the war. A strong Ozren Partizan Detachment grew out of the Uprising, which, in one of the enemy's most sensitive sectors, managed to inflict considerable damage to the occupying forces and the ustashi authorities. It must be

admitted, however, that the organization of the Uprising can be criticized for not having made the most out of the breadth and scope of the people's Uprising, which in areas north of Doboj ended in defeat and capitulation. Insufficiently organized, those areas rose up in arms, drawn along by our operations. When strong German and ustashi-domobran forces advanced against them, the rebels — peasants — left to themselves without capable leadership, were unable to withstand the attack. There were many victims of ustashi terrorism in these regions — the terrible price they paid for their participation in the Uprising.

The Uprising of August 23 covered the region between Zavidovići in the south and Derventa and Modrič in the north, Miričine in the east and Bukovica and Johovac in the west. On September 1, the territory liberated by the Ozren Detachment included the area between the Bosna, Spreča and Krivaja rivers — a triangle bounded by Zavidovići, Doboj and Puračić.

The success of our operations brought us recognition and approval from the Supreme Command. The Tuzla Partisan Detachment was praised for having shown exemplary bravery in taking the towns of Doboj, Maglaj, Zavidovići, Ljubljaničica and Gračanica and "for having raised the spirit of the oppressed people". Of course this also included our detachment which was fighting on the territory of Tuzla³).

At one of the first consultations of commanding officers and other Party members, the detachment received recognition for its organization of both its military units and the rear lines. Detachment Commander was Todor Vujasinović, and Commissar, Pašaga Mandžić; the Maglaj sector command — Boža Spasojević and Commissar Filkret Dedić; the Doboj sector — Cvijetin Todić and Commissar Josip Jovanović, and the Gračanica sector, Todor Panić. These forces soon grew into battalions. At the very outset the detachment had 700—800 rifles at its disposal, and the ranks grew with every day, in every battle.

From the very beginning the Ozren Detachment was dealing the enemy increasingly vigorous blows, so that Pavelić's High Command had to give special attention to our region. This is best illustrated by the fact that soon after our attack the Fourth Infantry Division was ordered to Doboj, concentrating its forces against our units, with the aim of defeating us or at least forcing us to withdraw far from the communication lines in the Bosna and Spreča river valleys.

In addition to regular operations of greater or lesser significance, each of our sectors had the task of carrying out at least three acts of sabotage each week on the Doboj — Tuzla and Doboj — Maglaj — Zavidovići railway lines. These communication lines, of considerable importance to the occupiers and the ustashi authorities, soon became a serious problem, which hindered military operations. Our activities obliged the German command to direct constant attention to our territory and to maintain armed units there.

³) In the very first directives our detachment was known as the Second Battalion of the People's Liberation Partisan Detachments of the Tuzla region.

Besides daily skirmishes and fighting, in the first months after its formation the detachment carried out several military operations which bore witness to its fighting ability. I think that some of them deserve mention.

Between September 10 and 16 the detachment carried out several quite important organized attacks on communication lines between Doboj and Maglaj and between Doboj and Bosansko Petrovo Selo. This operation was at the same time a counter-attack, the Germans and the Domobrans having prepared and attacked from the direction of Doboj and Trbuk. The very first day of battle, a German reconnaissance detachment on bicycles and a battalion of Domobrans were defeated near Ševarlije and Trbuk whereas near Karanovac an armoured train, several bridges and railway crossings were destroyed. Transport with Sarajevo and Tuzla was cut off for several days.

At the end of September and early in October our almost daily operations on the railway line gradually became more frequent as well as our efforts to remove the crops harvested in the more level regions, chiefly in the Bosna and Spreča river valleys.

At the end of October the General Command for Bosnia and Herzegovina planned an attack on Kladanj, an important stronghold of the ustashi, the "Ustashi Alcazar", as the ustashi called it in their propaganda. The Ozren Detachment was also to take part in this operation. The detachment was to send a unit of 150 to 200 fighters to join the Birča Detachment in attacking Domobran units in Djurdjevik and Stupari. Our unit was to cut off the route between Tuzla and Kladanj and bring pressure to bear towards Živinice whereas Čiča's Romanija Detachment together with some chetnik detachments was to attack Kladanj. The attack was set for October 29.

The Ozren Detachment sent a unit of 180 selected fighters led by Pašaga Mandžić and Todor Panić over Mt. Konjuh. It carried out its orders, cutting off the route to Tuzla and the water line. While that unit set up an ambush and brought pressure to bear in the direction of Živinice, the rest of our detachment's units covered the region towards Miričina, Dubošnica and other strategic points on the Tuzla — Doboj railway line. On October 30, a successful attack was made on an express train headed for Sarajevo between the Trbuk and Riječica stations, at the foot of Mt. Paklenica.

The attack on Kladanj, unfortunately, did not proceed according to plans owing to the fact that the chetniks failed to join the operations. Attacked from the rear, from the direction of Kladanj, the Ozren Detachment withdrew, crossing Mt. Konjuh, Pašaga and Todor Panić received minor wounds in the last battle, but while withdrawing Pejo Marković, company commissar from Husin, was gravely wounded. He died on the stretcher and was buried just under the summit of Mt. Konjuh⁴).

Our activities and pressure on important communication lines forced the Domobran General Headquarters to issue the following order to the

⁴) This was sung about in the song "High on Konjuh mountain, the wind murmurs, sings..."

commanding officers of the 2nd and 3rd corps on November 2: "Owing to the attacks on the Doboj — Maglaj — Sarajevo railway line I order: a) the commanding officers of the 2nd and 3rd corps to examine and take the necessary measures to safeguard transport on this line . . ."

At the same time, General Izer, commander of the 2nd Domobran corps, was ordered to draw up a plan of attack on the Ozren detachment. He started work on this immediately. But because a train was derailed near Doboj almost every day, the enemy did not have time to wait. On November 15 the forces in Doboj with a few newly-arrived reinforcements tried to take the village of Lipac, located in the triangle formed by the Bosna, Spreča rivers and the communications lines. In the fierce battle which lasted two days, the enemy was defeated, leaving behind about 80 dead and 40 prisoners. Colonel Alikadić, who led this operation, also died in battle.

According to General Izer's plan, Operation "Ozren" was to have taken three days. The enemy used the operational force of the Fourth Domobran Division, that is 16 battalions, over 60 field guns, several tanks, three armoured trains and several aircraft. At that time the Ozren Detachment numbered about a thousand fighters, in four battalions. The battle lasted, almost without interruption, for nine days, from December 2nd to 11th. The enemy was defeated and forced to take the defensive. In course of fierce battle, the Ozren Detachment managed to defend the territory the detachment had liberated earlier. Only the villages of Lipočka Glavica and Baića Kamen near Trbuk were lost. The enemy had to admit the failure of this attack. The final report on this battle reads: munitions used — 373,998 cartridges, 3,935 shells, 635 howitzer and 1,157 field gun shells, 1,395 trench-mortar shells, 2,324 handgrenades . . ." etc.

During those nine days the Ozren Detachment managed to seize from the enemy 1 field gun, a heavy machine gun, 17—18 lighter machine guns and over 200 rifles. Enemy losses amounted to 350, wounded and dead. Our losses were severe too, about 120 dead and wounded.

This attack found the Ozren Detachment ready for battle, hardened by action in September, October and November. The high fighting spirit of the detachment was one of the reasons the detachment accepted a frontal battle against far superior enemy forces, 7,000 strong. An incident which occurred during the battle testifies best to the fighting spirit of the partisans. Our supplies of ammunition had been largely exhausted during the battle. While fierce battle raged on the Maglaj group was left almost without ammunition. We decided to send a platoon of the third company of the battalion which would make its way past the positions held by Hadžiefendić's legion and attack a Domobran group in Banovići from the rear and try to seize their munitions. The platoon led by Miloš Kupres carried out its orders, defeated the Domobran group, took 23 prisoners fully armed, seized several crates of ammunition and handgrenades, and made an attack on the mine. The platoon then returned to liberated territory leading the prisoners and several horses which had been taken from the mine and loaded with the munitions. At the very last moment we were able to supply the partisans in the Maglaj sector with munition. Kupres had only 12 men with him for this operation.

One was seriously wounded during the battle with the Domobrans and died on the way back to liberated territory.

In mid-December, we received word from the General Staff for Bosnia and Herzegovina that a major action lay ahead of us. In a few days an attack would be made on Olovo. The Romaniija Partisan Detachment and the "Zvijezda" Detachment and several chetnik units were to take part in this attack. According to orders, our detachment was to take part too. We were to attack the enemy's rear lines in the Krivaja river valley between Zavidovići and Careva Ćuprija, then to take positions near Zavidovići and prevent the enemy from sending aid from that direction to Olovo.

Our detachment carried out its orders with success. The detachment's shock battalion took Vozuće where a whole Domobran company together with three officers surrendered. The gendarmes' station was taken as well as the above-mentioned positions near Zavidovići.

Our detachment expected much from this action, primarily that the territory we controlled would be linked with the territory held by the Romaniija and "Zvijezda" detachments. But instead of partisan units, several Chetnik units descended into the Krivaja valley, among which was the Cer Brigade under the command of Captain Račić and several officers. Their plundering and raiding of the Moslem villages gave rise to general discontent which had been totally unknown in our liberated territory. Nevertheless, contact was made with the General Staff and the partisan detachments in eastern Bosnia.

In the first half of January 1942, our detachment together with Račić's Chetnik Cer brigade received orders to direct our operations towards Tuzla, drawing as near to the town as possible. This was to be the first part of a major action in which the Birčani and Majeвица detachments were to take part, the target being Tuzla and the mines nearby.

Our detachment got its shock battalion ready for this operation. But because the Chetnik units pulled out at the last minute, the undertaking was unsuccessful. In action on Mt. Turija, one of the battalion companies lost 15 fighters, one of whom was Miloš Kupres. Pero Dokić, political commissar of the battalion, was also killed in action. The loss of these two fighters was undoubtedly our detachment's greatest since the time of its formation. This happened at dawn, January 13, 1941.

Three wounded partisans were taken prisoners in that battle. Later we exchanged German soldiers for them.

I have noted some of the major battles fought by the Ozren Detachment in 1941 and early in January 1942. I have not included daily encounters, skirmishes and attacks on communications and railway transport on the Doboj — Tuzla, Doboj — Zavidovići, the Sarajevo and Zavidovići — Olovo lines. The enemy was obliged to exert considerable efforts to safeguard transport on these railway lines. Under the circumstances railway transport could in no way be considered regular. Because the enemy attack of December 3—12 had failed to improve the situation or even to force the detachment to retreat somewhat further from the railway lines, the enemy was obliged to plan another attack as

soon as possible. This was to be a major offensive with the aim of ridding eastern Bosnia of partisans and taking the territory held by the Romanija, Birčani and Ozren detachments. This was known as the Second Enemy Offensive.

In a report entitled "The Battle against the Insurrection in the Southeast", Lieutenant-Colonel Ernst Wishaupt, who had been sent by the German High Command to study and gather information on the uprising in the so-called southeast, i. e. Yugoslavia, mentions the "conclusion" drawn by the German general, Gleze Horstenau that "the German war industry was very concerned over the Sarajevo — Zenica — Tuzla region..." He had already proposed that the German 718 Division leave Zagreb and Banja Luka and that the "entire division be permitted to concentrate in the Sarajevo — Doboj — Tuzla region..."

While still preparing for the offensive, General Ler, commander for the southeast, ordered General Bader, commanding general in Serbia on January 6 to "break the resistance of the rebels on Mt. Ozren, southeast of Doboj..." even before the beginning of the operations in the southern part of eastern Bosnia.

Thus it happened that while still in the midst of preparing for the main offensive, General Pfortner, commander of the 718 Division tried to carry out the orders of his superior on January 9, 1942. Three battalions of the 718 Division and a corresponding number of ustashi domobran units attacked the Ozren Detachment from the direction of Puračić, Gračanica, and Zavidovići. The enemy, however, met strong resistance at all points and with heavy losses was driven back.

In that battle the Germans realized that it would be impossible to defeat the Ozren Detachment with lesser forces. And because those units were needed in the operations planned against the Romanija and Birčani detachments, they were withdrawn to join their regiment. Operation "Ozren" was then postponed to be included as the second part of the Second Offensive.

On January 15 the enemy began its attack on the Romanija and Birčani detachments, approaching from Tuzla, Višegrad and Sarajevo, and at the end of these operations, began to prepare for another attack on the Ozren Detachment. On January 24 the enemy began moving its troops and concentrating them for this attack.

The attack on the Ozren Detachment began at dawn on January 27, 1942. The enemy troops included the German 718 Division, with the 697 Regiment of the German 342 Division, parts of the 2 and 3 Domobran corps (the Fourth Domobran Division), and a few ustashi units, among them Francetić's battalion. Enemy artillery numbered 60 field guns, 3 armoured trains, engineering units and so forth. Enemy forces, numbering 17,000 well-equipped soldiers, attacked the Ozren Detachment which at that time had about 1,200 fighters, organized into four battalions. The battle was waged in the dead of winter, in deep snow with the temperature below zero.

The enemy troops were divided into three groups: one was to take the Bosna and Spreča river valleys near Doboj, and the other two were to attack from the direction of Tuzla and Zavidovići, force the detachment

into the triangle formed by the rivers and communication lines near Doboj, and to destroy it there. General Pfortner, commander of the 718 Infantry Division, was in charge of the attack. The German troops were to bear the brunt of the attack whereas the Domobrans were to occupy and strengthen their positions in the areas already taken by the Germans.

Although the detachment learned of the enemy plans and the concentration of their forces at the very last moment (on January 27—28), the partisans were ready for the attack. Whereas in the December offensive the detachment had had to deal only with Domobrans and ustashi and it had been able to accept open combat, the detachment applied completely different tactics this time. Conscious of the military and technical superiority of the German troops, we decided not to accept a big battle anywhere but to hold them back with small and frequent attacks, to move the main force towards the Ozren massif and then to go round the German troops and attack from the rear the Domobrans and ustashi who were beginning to strengthen their positions in the villages.

Although at the beginning of the battle, the enemy succeeded in forcing the detachment to withdraw and inflicted heavy losses (about 150, dead and wounded), the detachment nevertheless came out of the battle undefeated. This was due to the new tactics which had been applied.

The detachment took on at its own initiative the only frontal battle in the whole offensive. This took place on February 1, near the village of Donja Brijesnica, when the detachment wanted to prevent some German columns from reaching the main slopes of Ozren, which would have put the detachment in a very difficult position. The Germans, trying to advance over open ground, with snow up their waists, after a day of fierce battle, were forced to change the direction of their movements and instead of advancing towards Mičijevići and Vasiljevići, to turn towards the northern slopes of Ozren, that is in the direction of Manastir Ozren — Petrovo Selo and further to the west. The rest of the offensive, except the battle near Doboj in the last two days of fighting, was characterized by partisan (guerilla) warfare.

This offensive ended on February 6 with the Germans withdrawing to Doboj. In the last few days of the battle the detachment began counter-attacking along the entire front. In spite of the above mentioned losses, the Ozren Detachment came out of the battle numerically stronger. Considerable amounts of arms and munitions had been seized in battle, especially from the Domobrans. Enemy losses amounted to 400, wounded or dead.

Our detachment's success and the failure of the enemy (especially that of the Germans) are even more remarkable when one considers the fact that General Pfortner's forces were fifteen times superior and that he had sufficient time for carrying out his plans. Certain reports made by the enemy officers refer to this battle.

In his lengthy report on the battle, Colonel Gustović, commander of the Fourth Domobran Division, writes:

"All considering, our companies held the positions they held before the battle, the only difference being that they are physically exhausted

and are forced to withstand fierce, almost furious attacks of the enemy . . ."

The report submitted by Lieutenant-Colonel Elblinger, communications officer for the 718 German Division is even more interesting. He ended his report with the words:

"Operation 'Ozren' did not succeed, seeing that the rebels on Mt. Ozren are not disorganized, but rather an even more united group . . . It may be expected that the Ozren rebel group will once again become active as before, if not more so."

The aforementioned Lieutenant-Colonel Wishaupt, referring to this operation writes: "Action in the Ozren mountains failed to yield notable results with regard to routing the rebels. This can be achieved only if the rebels are encircled in small groups."

And finally, this is, according to Wishaupt, the opinion of the German commanding general for Serbia. "The attempt to rout the rebels from their stronghold in eastern Bosnia, was unsuccessful. One may expect a general uprising in the Balkans with the aid of the English come spring." (Wishaupt, pp. 131—132).

But despite the fact that the Ozren Detachment came out of the offensive unbeaten, this success was short-lived — about two months and ten days in all. The detachment was engaged in active combat, constantly attacking the Dobož — Tuzla and Dobož — Maglaj railway lines. What is more, the detachment was expanding its operations to include the Trebava sector, as well as Krivaja and Gostović, sending a company to Gostović, and some units, with the strength of a battalion to Trebava. That which neither the Germans nor the ustashi, despite their efforts and sacrifices, achieved, the traitorous chetniks accomplished, with the ample aid of the occupying troops. It had been common knowledge for some time that Draža Mihajlović, through certain of his officers, was in touch with Nedić, and through him and Major Dangić, Captain Čuković and a few other officers with the Germans. Certain chetnik commanders in Bosnia had even earlier contacted the ustashi authorities, offering or accepting proposals for "armistice" based on joint efforts to destroy partisan detachments in eastern and central Bosnia.

The Ozren Detachment had been separated from the other detachments, exposed, and for most part left to fend for itself. Engaged in daily combat, extremely short in cadres, the leaders found it impossible to devote the necessary attention to political activities. But nevertheless, during the period when the detachment was isolated, chetnik agents achieved little with their propaganda. But after the fall of Olovo and the arrival of some larger chetnik formations in the Krivaja valley, the chetniks began to pay far more attention to spreading propaganda, offering the exhausted fighters and suffering peasantry peace with the occupying and ustashi authorities. That kind of propaganda began to give results.

In these circumstances the Detachment Staff applied to the General Staff of political and military support and assistance.

The arrival of the First East Bosnian shock battalion failed to change the situation, because at almost the same time fighting broke out with the chetniks in Ozren and Romanija. Thanks to the organized betrayal of the chetniks, the shock battalion and the Detachment Staff were treacherously attacked on April 18, 1942. When owing to similar developments in Romanija the General Staff ordered the First East Bosnian Shock Battalion to withdraw in order to concentrate the partisan forces, the Ozren Detachment was also forced to leave Ozren.

Many of our comrades in arms who refused to reconcile themselves to the new state of affairs remained on Mt. Ozren. The deputy detachment commander, Todor Panić and a few others led the fighting against the newly-formed chetnik Ozren detachment. But betrayal and unpreparedness resulted in failure at great sacrifice.

The Ozren Partisan Detachment was formed again on July 21, 1943. First under the command of Mehmedalija Hukić, and later Ignjat Radojčić and the political commissar Simo Lukić, it took active part in combat in 1943 and at the beginning of 1944. The detachment especially proved itself in the first battle to liberate Tuzla and its defense towards the end of September and the first days of October 1943. During the second attack of Tuzla on January 17—21, the Detachment gave special proof of its valor, in the Kreka sector. When the siege of Tuzla was raised, the detachment guarded the withdrawal of the other units. In fierce battle in the Dubrava — Vukovija — Požarnica sector, the Detachment lost almost half its fighters and was left almost leaderless. In those battles the killed or severely wounded included the Detachment commissar, two battalion commissars, a battalion commander and almost all the company commissars and commanding officers. For this reason the Detachment was dispersed. Its surviving fighters were assigned to various units of the Third Corps.