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Interview with Vlado S. Zakula

Conducted by  
Judith Spiegelman  
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Interview with Vlado S. Zakula, UNICEF Drilling Adviser

conducted by Judith Spiegelman

on 12 February 1985, at UNICEF Headquarters, New York

Spiegelman: It's V-L-A-D-O Z-A-K-U-L-A, Vlado Zakula.

Zakula: That's correct.

Spiegelman: And where in Yugoslavia are you from?

Zakula: I am actually from Republic Kurvatska (sp?). Croatian Republic.

Spiegelman: And from what town or city?

Zakula: It is a small town, it is Korensa Kolt (sp?), it is near Pletesay.

Spiegelman: Could you spell Korensa please ?

Zakula: KOMRENCO.

Spiegelman: It's a town?

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Zakula: It is a small, small town.

Spiegelman: How many people in your town?

Zakula: Probably five thousand.

Spiegelman: Five thousand. And it's near?

Zakula: Actually, from Zagreb, it is 150 kilometers, and from the sea, 110 kilometers. It is between sea and Zagreb.

Spiegelman: And did you go to school in this town?

Zakula: Yah, I finished actually there eighth grade. And after that, war came. During war I went to army, 1942 I joined army because of the ...

Spiegelman: The Yugoslav Army?

Zakula: The situation was that we lost all our ... my father was killed, my stepmother died at the time and I stayed mostly alone. And the situation was that I not have another solution (but?) to join army.

Spiegelman: What year were you born?

Zakula: 1938. I was fourteen when I joined the Army.

Spiegelman: Was it a partisan army at the time?

Zakula: Partisan. Partisan. I was in Army up to actually June 1945 and I went out from Army ...

Spiegelman: But Yugoslavia would have been occupied by the Nazis, right, during this period?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: Were you underground at that time?

Zakula: Yeah. It was occupied and I was in the forest for ...

Spiegelman: You lived in the forest with other partisans?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: And they never discovered you? Which forests did you live in?

Zakula: I was mostly in Bosnia, and this part called Leeka (sp?) where I was born. But in that part was actually a lot of patriot because it was Italian ??? a lot of our houses and we don't have another solution. Most of us go in Army against Fascist(?).

Spiegelman: So you with a group of other partisans who were Yugoslav Army went underground and lived in the forests of Bosnia, particularly in what areas?

Zakula: In Bosnia, in Leeka ...

Spiegelman: Leeka, spelled ...?

Zakula: You know my spelling ... will be best if I write it.

Spiegelman: L-I-K-A. Yes, and were there other young boys like yourself?

Zakula: Yah, some of them were you know, some of us were actually ... my brother who was older two years of me (two years older than me) was in Army and he was killed in 1945 just before war finished. This my older brother. And my sister too joined Army, four of my sisters joined Army and two of my sisters were born just before war. One, 1940; one 1941. One of them don't know mother, don't know father because was born after father died, three months after and these three children and one brother who was born 1975 (?), three of them with other children were sent by British plane to Egypt.

Spiegelman: The British evacuated them to Egypt to, say, help them live through the war. How many brothers and sisters were you?

Zakula: All of us was ten. From one mother, seven. From stepmother, three.

Spiegelman: And how many survived the war besides yourself?

Zakula: After war, actually one brother was killed. But after that one sister died and one younger brother who was born in 1975, he was killed by electric.

Spiegelman: So, one brother died during the War. So that nine children survived the war.

Zakula: All of us was ten.

Spiegelman: And your one brother died as the war was ending. And your mother and father died also before the war?

Zakula: Just starting war. You know, when it started, 1941.

Spiegelman: Because of the war?

Zakula: Yes, he was killed. Many of the people was collected and was shot, about 130 (?) people.

Spiegelman: In your village, in your area?

Zakula: Yes. Actually the (???) was pointed to him but actually he was killed at that time. I don't know what the reason.

Spiegelman: They just took them to terrorize them. They said they were going to build a road and instead they took them and they killed them. And your mother?

Zakula: My mother died when I was three. I was very young when my mother died.

Spiegelman: And your father remarried.

Zakula: And then have three children after that.

Spiegelman: And how did you get into the water? What was your ... how did you start your water training and what was the water?

Zakula: Yah. I joined actually technical school after war. I finished two years secretary school and I join oil company school which was technical school for four years.

Spiegelman: In Yugoslavia? Government school?

Zakula: In Yugoslavia. Government school, yes.

Spiegelman: What was the name of the school? You call it an oil school?

Zakula: Actually, not oil school, it was called technicum for oil, for Naphta (?) we called. It was four years.

Spiegelman: Technicum for Naphta.

Zakula: Naphta means oil.

Spiegelman: And where was this school?

Zakula: This school was in one oil field near Bulgaria border, called Lendava.

Spiegelman: Lendava. Near the Bulgarian border?

Zakula: Hungarian border.

Spiegelman: And how long did you go to school there?

Zakula: Four years.

Spiegelman: Four years at the oil school for Naphta near Lendava, near the Hungarian border. Is drilling for oil a good preparation for drilling for water?



Zakula: This is the same, actually. After that I joined mining engineering in ....

Spiegelman: That's the place where the earthquake was?

Zakula: No, that was in Scorpia.

Spiegelman: Lubiana, I know the name for some reason.

Zakula: Yes, this is North part of Slavania, main town for Slavania Republic. We have six republics.

Spiegelman: Could you spell Lubiana, make my life easier when we transcribe it? L-J-U-B-L-Y-A-N-A. Ljublyana. You went to mining school for how long?

Zakula: For three years.

Spiegelman: So that was two years in secondary school ...

Zakula: Four years in technical school ...

Spiegelman: In the Naphta school ...

Zakula: Three years in the mining engineering.

Spiegelman: And you came out and you were then, what, a mining engineer?

Zakula: Actually, drilling engineer.

Spiegelman: And what did you get, a diploma.

Zakula: A diploma. And I join geological survey of Ljublyana.

Spiegelman: What were you looking for?

Zakula: I was doing mostly prospecting for minerals, for coal, for copper, for iron, for different minerals.

Spiegelman: In what year did you get this diploma?

Zakula: In 1955.

Spiegelman: So that was ten years after the war, and in that ten years you did all this?

Zakula: Yes. In 1955 I joined the geological survey and I was for one year in geological survey and then I changed to Sarajevo. I was in Sarajevo with company called Geostrage.

Spiegelman: It was a government company? And what was it?

Zakula: Government company. You know this company was doing similar job: water drilling, mineral - mining company minings.

Spiegelman: Geoistrage. a government company looking for all of these different minerals. And that was in 1956 now?

Zakula: Actually that was 1957.

Spiegelman: And so you changed. You went from this city to that. You changed jobs.

Zakula: I was working mostly in the field. Once I was posted in Tuzla. This is a mining center where our company have one big regional office and I was technical chief or technical director, however you say it. We had there a lot of work in the salt mining. We get the salt from the mining and we do some grouting for the dams and some prospecting for the coal and about 25 up to 30 (?) drilling rig was operating under my supervision.

Spiegelman: 20 to 30 drilling rigs for salt?

Zakula: For different things.

Spiegelman: And you were director?

Zakula: Not director, technical chief.

Spiegelman: You were technical chief for a mining and drilling operation.

Zakula: For one part, not for all company. Let us say I was sent to one mining center and I stayed there for two years as technical for about 25 to 30 drilling was operating in that area. In Tuzla, this is mining center.

Spiegelman: And where did the water come in?

Zakula: There we was working the same for the water ... You know when we were working in the salt mining we drilled hole the same as for water. Some of the water will be due(?) there, not so much actually. But water or oil is the same. You know I finished school for the oil. But mostly I was working in Yugoslavia for mineral exploration and for some water. And after two years I was transferred to the main office in Sarajevo. I was there as adviser, something like that for them, and then my job was going very well. I would go to different parts of the country and help them. I was ???? posted the end of my coming to Ethiopia. And I was sent by Yugoslav government in March 1962 to Ethiopia.

Spiegelman: The Yugoslav government sent you to Ethiopia for the government? What was the government doing in Ethiopia?

Zakula: The government sent me to help for Ethiopia. You know, the Ethiopia government asked for the experts.

Spiegelman: I see. The government asked and they sent you. Without UNICEF, there was no connection with UNICEF?

Zakula: No, no.

Spiegelman: And the year was 1962.

Zakula: Yes. I stayed there in Ministry of Mines. Actually first I was gold mining for three years. After that I was in Eritrea and doing some ... after that I was posted as Head of Drilling Section in Ministry of Mines.

Spiegelman: I see. So you were still in the minerals at that point?

Zakula: Yeah, but they do water the same. And then three weeks drilling rig when I was in charge of. In 1974, if you remember in Ethiopia some of the parts of the country, but mostly North part revolt(?), and Eritrea ...

Spiegelman: Yes, Stephen Green was there at the time, did you know him?

Zakula: Yes, yes. And drought was very bad and I resigned from the government because it was not possible when change came, I was ... (?) and I can't contract for nobody, nobody want to pay me and I saw that (???) ...

Spiegelman: You mean when the government of Haile Selassie went out, when he died, or they replaced him with the new government?

Zakula: Yes. With this new government it wa very difficult to work, it was nothing in order you know. Many people were in prison, everyone was afraid.

Spiegelman: This was the new Socialist government that came in 1974.

Zakula: Yes. And at that time, Mr. Roger Stapleton, who was UNICEF Consultant at that time in Ethiopia. Before that he was actually for two or three months with mineral survey in Ethiopia working with me. And he offered me a job with UNICEF. He said, 'why you not join UNICEF' when he (??) I will leave.

Spiegelman: Yes. You would have gone back to Yugoslavia.

Zakula: Yes, I was attempting to go back but he offered me job in UNICEF. He said you know country, you know ... And I came and I apply. But the government didn't give me the release, the government wanted to keep me.

Spiegelman: The Yugoslav Government?

Zakula: No, no, no. The Ethiopian Government. I don't know what was reason but I very difficult get release from them and I went to the Minister and I talk with him and I said I am not leaving Ethiopia, I am staying here, and then I got the release and I joined UNICEF ...

Spiegelman: As what?

Zakula: As Drilling Instructor.

Spiegelman: Were you then a Master Driller?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: And that was in the beginning of 1975. But you had been in Ethiopia since 1962. So you are there 23 years as of this month?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: So, what does a Master Driller, a Drilling Instructor do? Tell me what your life has been like since 1975 when you joined UNICEF.

Zakula: When I joined UNICEF we didn't have drilling rigs first. And Roger Stapleton was actually get sick. He was posted there as Chief, Water Section, UNICEF, and he was sick and I was replacing actually, doing job. UNICEF would send me in some of the area, let us say, Balé (sp?). I make protection of the spring ...

Spiegelman: Could you spell Balé, and, what area of Ethiopia is that?

Zakula: This is one of the provinces, and we have some of the area where is the people without water. We discovered some of the springs, and we capped the springs, built a reservoir to bring some water for its ??? carry, and this Roger Stapleton start some of the hand-dug wells in Harare.

Spiegelman: Harare was a drought-stricken area?

Zakula: Yes, yes.

Spiegelman: And was Bale also a drought region? Are they both in the North?

Zakula: Yes, a drought region. Both of them actually — one is South, and one is South, we can say. And I continue: when Roger then took sick leave I continue these hand-dug wells and I helped for



some of the voluntary organization, German voluntary organization, for water project in Shamana — it was one place trying to get water and was drilling wells without water, it was so dry.

Spiegelman: Was this hand-dug?

Zakula: No, no. This was drilling, you know.

Spiegelman: Is it hard rock in Ethiopia? Everywhere?

Zakula: Yes, this depends, you know, it is so different, from place to place. And we receive rigs somewhere 75 in October and I drill at that time two wells to try rigs in Addis Ababa for leprosy hospital, we try to help them you know and try to rig and we drill at that time 75 and we start operating this rig.

Spiegelman: Were you then teaching local Ethiopians how to use this equipment, is that what a master-driller does?

Zakula: Yes. You know this was new technique in Ethiopia, modern rig which had never been seen there. When we start actually we request from the Government to get the young people to teach them from the beginning because with the old people it was difficult to, when we started with 5000 it seemed possible to ...

Spiegelman: With older people.

Zakula: With older people. Older drillers which would have another rig and you know some on other system. But it was a system without air. And we request Government to educate people ...

Spiegelman: What did they need?

Zakula: Technical school or at least minimum twelve grades. Some of them was two years university. And we spent sometimes with them in the field and we sent them to the training course for six months.

Spiegelman: Who ran the training course?

Zakula: These young people we sent them to training course and passed some theoretically (??), in Ethiopia.

Spiegelman: How deep do these rigs go?

Zakula: These rigs, actually, are perhaps 320 meters, not more. This is about 1,000 feet.

Spiegelman: And it's hard rock, mostly what you are talking about?

Zakula: Yeah, yeah. This is hard rock where we was drilling the (??) well, but sometimes we drilling in overbed, not solid rock, you know. Gravel, sand, it's not solid. And we get water in mostly in one of the areas where we were separating from the hundred meters up to 4200 meters.

Spiegelman: Which is in feet, how much?

Zakula: Yeah. This is from 200 feet to 300 feet.

Spiegelman: And this is the deepest that these drills go?

Zakula: No, no. These can go up to 500 meters.

Spiegelman: Which is, in feet?

Zakula: 1,500 feet.

Spiegelman: Now, how many Ethiopian drillers could you estimate that you have helped to train since 1975 — ten years?

Zakula: Yeah. We train a lot of the people. Because I was with Mr. King, sometimes Mr. King was working with me, one British instructor too, under UNICEF ...

Spiegelman: He was also a master-driller. What's his full name?

Zakula: Anthony King. He's presently in India for UNICEF.

Spiegelman: So, between the two of you, what would you estimate that you, more than, and how many wells — if you looked at the ten years — how many people, how many wells, and how many villages or towns have gotten safe water?

Zakula: Wells we drill 400 wells.

Spiegelman: And mostly they were deep wells in hard rock?

Zakula: Yeah, most of them actually; it was in the deep ? area. One of the problems was in the that area, sometimes was very rough roads. We drive our vehicles 40 kilometers, this is seventy miles, for two and a half days to move, to get to this place.

Spiegelman: And does the rig have to also come over, do the rigs have to come unassembled, and have to be assembled?

Zakula: Not actually, we are driving them.

Spiegelman: You drive them.

Zakula: We drive them and meet ?? seventy miles to pass two and a half days, and sometimes you know ...

Spiegelman: Two and half days to cover 30 miles over terrible terrain, is this to Wala in Tigre.

Zakula: Sometimes we have problems because of the political situation. We start drilling in the morning and in the evening we must move rig to the town and again in the morning to bring back.

Spiegelman: Because there was guerilla fighting ...

Zakula: Because you know nobody want to take risks. Actually, I don't believe that guerilla will ... actually we meet guerilla several times in that area. But it didn't attack us because these people knows that we are helping for the population, rural population, nobody attack us.

Spiegelman: Did you meet them at night or during the day?

Zakula: In the night, once in the night they came to my camp.

Spiegelman: You live on the site when you do this drilling?

Zakula: Mostly on the site, but sometimes government not permitting us, says you must live in some small community where there is the army and we drive 40-50 kilometers daily to the spot with drill and come back in the evening. But many times from the beginnings I stay in the spot where is I drill I move.

Spiegelman: How did you meet these guerillas? I mean did they come to your tent? Did you have a tent?

Zakula: Actually, caravan.

Spiegelman: A caravan? What do you mean? Is it like a camper?

Zakula? Something like that.

Spiegelman: Do you sleep in the camper?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: And did they come to you?

Zakula: Yeah.

Spiegelman: Did they have guns and how did they look?

Zakula: The same as army.

Spiegelman: They look like an army? They look like the Ethiopian Army?

Zakula: Yeah. The same. But mostly young people, very young people.

Spiegelman: What did they say to you?

Zakula: Asked me ... was looking if we have some government car there because all of our cars have this UNICEF plate, UN plate.

Spiegelman: Is it the UNICEF decal with the mother and child?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: And did they know what it was?

Zakula: Yes. I believe because most of them was educated, you know with twelve grades, or university graduate some of them, you know. Not very good English.

Spiegelman: And do you speak English to them?

Zakula: English, English, actually because most of them speak English.

Spiegelman: They speak English? And you were up in Walo province, and they speak English to you? And what was your reply?

Zakula: (Laughter)

Spiegelman: So what was the conversation between you?

Zakula: No, no, I didn't want it (conversation) so much.

Spiegelman: No, I'm interested in what they said to you, who are you?

Zakula: They know. These people know.

Spiegelman: They know who you are?

Zakula: Yes!

Spiegelman: They know your name and your nationality and they know why you're there. But did they act as if they knew or they questioned you?

Zakula: No. They didn't question me because I believe that they know, first of all, if these people want, can cut (?) me always, if I sleep there or not, in daytime can come because I was very far from the road, you know in the rural area, working. Some people said, 'why you staying in the camp?' I was afraid for car, you know I have some trucks there. And I told them, 'why, why I not stay, it is better if I need them.'

Spiegelman: Were you there alone?

Zakula: Well, some people were hiding themselves.

Spiegelman: Who were the other people?



Zakula: Our workers from the water resource. Workers. From the government.

Spiegelman: So they knew that it was a government-sponsored project.

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: So how long did the guerillas talk to you?

Zakula: Yeah. For some five, six minutes only, was talking by walkie-talkie, because they find some seventy people in ... to learn reading and writing, how you say? In the evenings, government try to organize ...

Spiegelman: Literacy class?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: I don't understand. The guerilla came to you or a few of them in uniform. They looked like the Ethiopian Army. They knew who you were, but still you had a conversation with them and what happened with the walkie-talkie they were carrying?

Zakula: No. Somebody informed them that they found in this literacy camp and find some seventy people or something like that. And, this fellow who talk, said 'take them some and let them carry some ... from the store ... some wheat, some sugar ...

Spiegelman: Ah! They use these people, they force them to do this work for them.

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: While he was talking to you someone had identified, someone had found these seventy people nearby.

Zakula: And it was two government cars in this place and was burned these two cars and take some of the food and the ?? that was carrying them release them, free. Because some of the part, Walo, still is a guerilla center, you know, probably four years, three years, was occupied, and is still guerilla center.

Spiegelman: Now this was in what year?

Zakula: This was in '78 or '79, something like that, I can't remember now.

Spiegelman: Have you had other contacts with the guerillas in your drilling work, since then?

Zakula: I passed once, with Thomas Eequal (sp??) who is UNICEF technical, he was responsible for the construction of hand wells in UNICEF. Presently he is in Uganda.

Spiegelman: Thomas Equal?

Zakula: He is Programme Officer in Uganda now for water.

Spiegelman: What nationality is he?

Zakula: Swedish. Something like that, "Equal". I forget spelling.

Spiegelman: E-H-V-O-L. EHVOL. Yeah, or something like that?

Zakula: And we went to visit all the rural area which is very far from the main road to see how wells are operating.

Spiegelman: These are wells that you already ...

Zakula: What we already made, you know. And we went to make survey of all of them actually. And once we passed through one area which is under guerilla and nobody stopped us actually. But we passed through towns that was already taken by guerilla. And we didn't know actually, and when we reached there, people were surprised how we had come through.

Spiegelman: And this was when?

Zakula: This was probably '81, '82, something like that.

Spiegelman: Did we get the number of wells and the number of villages and the number of teams, some estimate that you think? Or you want to send me that information? Do you think in this ten years, more than what?

Zakula: You know, we make ...

Spiegelman: You and Roger Stapleton? The two of you together.

Zakula: You know we make a lot of wells actually. Villages, a lot actually villages, but sometimes these maintenance problems, if a pump go wrong, it takes time for government to send people, not enough people, not enough cars, to do this in all parts. Because in Walo let us say, when we were operating in 1980, I took both rigs. Actually Walo and Tigre were under me. Mr. King was changed to Balé.

Spiegelman: In 1980, you were in Walo and Tigre both, the two worst provinces? The two most dry provinces?

Zakula: Yes. I was alone and now I had, like this place, two hundred kilometers from this here, another three hundred fifty kilometers. Now in between the time had passed and this road not so safe sometimes and again in another side we have some projects, and that means I must visit all this area and I make monthly, actually yearly, I make about 60,000 kilometers with the car. If I want to have everything in the ?? I must sure travel a lot.

Spiegelman: It would be useful to know the number of wells that have been drilled under you.

Zakula: 380.

Spiegelman: Does that mean 380 villages.

Zakula: Not actually because many villages get more wells.

Spiegelman: So how many villages do you think? And are you talking about Walo and Tigre? And that you alone have supervised.

Zakula: Walo and Tigre, yes. Up to 80, me and Mr. King together.

Spiegelman: Up to 80, the two of you together. That was before. Or is this 80 of the 380?

Zakula: From 1980, myself alone ... 1981, fifty wells ... myself alone make about 150 - 160 wells since 1980.

Spiegelman: In approximately how many villages? And do you know how many people they served?

Zakula: I don't know exactly now figures. Because I believe that Mr. Martin have our reports. You know I have not thinking with my drilling certificate, but it was a lot of people, actually. But sometimes in the area, in Tigre, I went to inspect one village, and people was going eight kilometers for dirty water, to get dirty water! But I receive letter from UNICEF that we shouldn't go to Tigre because of the political situation but I went, I said, 'okay, let's go'. And three days we spent and we drill well for these people because I was so sorry for them, carrying water eight kilometers and we drill well, we spend three days.

Spiegelman: Do you remember the name of the village?

Zakula: Yes! Kurvater. It is about 4,000 people. K-O-R-B-O-T-A.

Spiegelman: Korbota, a village of 4,000 people in Tigre. And how did you come across them, Vlado? How did they come to your attention?

Zakula: Yeah. I heard the situation very bad. And I went with small car to visit with one Ethiopian ????. And we find out that through this critical ???, come and I drive, because I didn't have driver I drive rig ..

Spiegelman: You drove the rig.

Zakula: I drove the rig. It was roads in quite bad conditions and we reach there, and we drill one well and in the back ...

Spiegelman: You drilled one well?

Zakula: Only one well, because I said put electric motor pump ...

Spiegelman: Motor-driven pump?

Zakula: Yes. Mono-pump. And ??? there was about 2.7 liters per second and ...

Spiegelman: And in three days you found water?

Zakula: You know we was working from morning up to night.

Spiegelman: How many, you and who else?

Zakula: Yes, about six of us altogether.

Spiegelman: Did any of the people from Korbota help in this?

Zakula: Actually we didn't ask them (laughs).

Spiegelman: Why?

Zakula: You know, we can do everything.

Spiegelman: And who were the other five besides you?

Zakula: These were Ethiopian people.

Spiegelman: From the Ministry of Mining?

Zakula: From the Ethiopian Water Resource Construction.

Spiegelman: And among these four thousand, how many were women and children?

Zakula: A lot of children. I can't tell you exactly. We tried to give them well water. I said, "All right! It doesn't matter. I bet one year will work, but still it is working."



Spiegelman: Why, because it only had the capacity for one year?

Zakula: No, I was speaking, after one year we can turn back and try to help.

Spiegelman: Was UNICEF angry at you for doing something that was outside of what they wanted you to do.

Zakula: No, I informed them, I said to them ... Mr. Thumbrum was at that time our director, or representative. And I informed them that I went because the situation was very bad and when we returned back we drill three wells, but I didn't put pumps ...

Spiegelman: Three wells in other ...

Zakula: In other places where it was the same. I didn't have time to put pump, but in Tigre and I turn back to the Walo.

Spiegelman: What was the reaction of these people, now they had gone eight kilometers, now this well was how much closer to them?

Zakula: Yeah. It was in the town.

Spiegelman: Right in the town of Korbota.

Zakula: Yes. Near the school, actually.

Spiegelman: And what was their reaction when they ...

Zakula: People was so happy you know --- killed for us some sheep and bring for us ...

Spiegelman: You had a big celebration?

Zakula: Celebration, yes. Two sheeps.

Spiegelman: And what did you drink?

Zakula: I drink actually ... they brought some of this local ... "tala", it's called. It's beer, local beer. It tends to make them satisfied.

Spiegelman: And was the whole town, did the children and the women join in this celebration?

Zakula: Not all but many of them was. You know before, some years ago it was drilled one well nearby but the Ethiopian Water Authority spent 11 months but didn't finish. I don't know really what was reason. Eleven months was spent in drilling. But I drill about a hundred meters far from that one.

Spiegelman: How are you guided to know where there really is water? Whether it's worth drilling? Did you have to make many borings until you found it?

Zakula: No, no. You know at least we have some experts. If you work long time and you work as a hydrogeologist and you learn something ...

Spiegelman: Are you a hydrogeologist?

Zakula: No, no.

Spiegelman: Well, who was the hydrogeologist?

Zakula: No, I located well. Task I supposed to do.

Spiegelman: How do locate a well?

Zakula: At least we look at the possibility. Sometimes I have this air photographs, and in these air photographs I see there is water coming, all this drainage ...

Spiegelman: Who takes these water photographs?

Zakula: This was taken long ago. We borrow from some of the offices. If water is also ??? from the government mapping mission.

Spiegelman: From the government mapping mission.

Zakula: For the area where it is difficult to get water we see at least more possibilities there is ...

Spiegelman: And are you able to do this or you need to find someone to ...

Zakula: No, I can do. Because I was doing, for me it is not so ...

Spiegelman: Is this what you were doing in Yugoslavia?

Zakula: Yeah. I was doing some, you know. I didn't say that I was hydrogeologist but at least I located several wells. And I find water.

Spiegelman: On the average, how long do you have to drill, to make sure you have a deep enough source of water to make it worthwhile to do this drilling?

Zakula: Sometimes we make this testing well, but I'm not doing so much this testing well. We at least, many of the areas we know. We have some ?? that we can find water very easy, but in the area, Assadote (sp?), it was very difficult to find water and many well was drilled.

Spiegelman: Assadote? (sp?)

Zakula: Yeah. From this here to Assat (?), to Red Sea. In that area it is very difficult, and it's very hot, and very difficult to find water and Mr. King was doing a lot of the wells in that area and many of them was dry. But usually I am refusing to drill sometimes — we had from UNDP one hydrogeologist — sometimes he located the right — and I told him, 'please, drilling very expensive job.' And please let us surely make this study to avoid — at least to find best place to get some site, and best possibility to get water. And sometimes I am refusing actually. If I don't agree, I don't drill, if I notice if it is not easy to get water because from the expertise of my colleague, King, sometimes he was following hydrogeologist and he drill many of the wells — dry wells, you know. I said, 'this is not good.' Let us try near, in that area it is probably best possibility to make these dams, underground dams, under (??) dams, I don't know how called, to close water — during rainy season water will pass, a lot of water will pass. Now if you close river, and water will stay in the sun, and we make hand-dug wells so people can use this water ...

Spiegelman: Hand-dug wells, yeah. Now you been in Ethiopia when it is been in the middle of a terrible drought and famine. Have UNICEF and you been working in those areas that are the worst? Have you seen the famine and the drought?

Zakula: Sure. I saw in many of these shelters, you know, people die, sometimes 120 people die in a day. What is one of the problems in Korum, let us say, I was sent by UNICEF representative and chief of water section — we went actually together — in 1983 and make there well same in the camp because —

Spiegelman: In the refugee camp?

Zakula: Yes. And we make well and give them water on the spot, but what is problem, if you make for ten thousand people, water, once will come sixty, seventy thousand ...

Spiegelman: Is that what has happened?

Zakula: Yeah. These people are coming from the areas that are not under government control and we didn't have time to go there you know, because it is not safe to go, to provide for those people who are coming. This is our problem and in this area where we provide water, people coming a lot, people from another area.

Spiegelman: And you can't stop them? They come to live, or they come to get the water and leave?

Zakula: No water, no food. Because the last two-three years it was very, very ... only two or three days rain.

Spiegelman: In the whole — in the last two-three years?

Zakula: Yeah, not in all area, but I said in some of the area, in the North part of the country.

Spiegelman: And in Korum, only two to three days rain the whole year?

Zakula: I am not talking about Korum, Korum the same but from Korum, all these people not from Korum, all these people coming from very far area. Some of them going to Gundor part (sp??), some of them coming to Korum.

Spiegelman: Gundor.

Zakula: Actually UNICEF people were helping in both sides, in the Gundor side and this side. We have ...

Spiegelman: Why, the Gundor side is under guerilla control?

Zakula: No, no, no. Not actually, but the same situation, you know, (???). Sometimes it is not so good, sometimes it is possible to go.

Spiegelman: Gundor is like this? G-O-N-D-A-R. That's a province.

Zakula: Now in Wolo, we have several shelters: Korum, Elemata, Kobo, Bati, Meele, Ahse-eetah, and Harp. Now most of these place we have wells.

Spiegelman: Wells have already been dug?

Zakula: Yeah. But because of the shelters, many people come which means you must do something else. And in Korum, we find two springs. Once I visit there and we discover two springs and in my report I recommend to the government to cap these and UNICEF ordered immediately pumps and I believe it is already finished. And this water will be pumped from the springs which is ?? about 3 liters per second to the reservoir, from the reservoir to the shelter. And it matter the same if some action because it's already our wells which was UNICEF-drilled and without ?? pump. We suggest the pump and provide the shelter with water. In Kobo, the same, we took some steps.

Spiegelman: So are you now shifting your work to the refugee camps to provide for the people who are coming to centers and refugee camps rather than over in a countryside where they were.

Zakula: UNICEF actually was involved in implementation of the programme up to end of 1983. From 1983, government took everything. Now



we are mostly advisers to the government. I visit these camps, where the government asked me to go, and making recommendations and asking them, controlling this, please, to give them my advice. But the last one month I was mostly in the West part of the country near Sudan border, where government have intention to shift it, for about a half a million people from the drought area to area where at least there is enough water.

Spiegelman: The government wants to shift these people from the area near the Sudan border to where?

Zakula: No, no, to there. Wola to Sudan border area.

Spiegelman: Really? And is it better over there?

Zakula: Yeah, I believe that it will be better at least, I don't know, it is completely low land — it's very low and, but it's on the border and the land is not very good land, probably these people come, and it will be difficult probably to get used.

Spiegelman: Is it a lot of people, is it a million people?

Zakula: Should be about half a million. But still didn't bring them, now shipping them in another place, in Bale, in Jima. But this is called Elebaber. Elebaber now, government preparing houses and I went with one Ethiopian geologist and one German hydrogeologist and we study, we survey area.

Spiegelman: So you are now involved in their attempt to deal with the crisis, in resettlement schemes, and water ?? figures, but the actual providing of water to the lands where they left which now have nothing, that stopped, do I understand you correctly?

Zakula: Not stopped. Because this the government is doing. We get everything from the government, from the end of 1978, we are not involved in the implementation of the programme.

Spiegelman: You are only a consultant now?

Zakula: I am now an adviser to government.

Spiegelman: You are not active on the drills, or in the camps, or working with the training.

Zakula: With training, yes.

Spiegelman: Do you speak Amharic?

Zakula: Some, you know (laughs).

Spiegelman: How did you deal all these years with the Ethiopian technicians, and the young people ...

Zakula: You know all of them talk English. All schools there from the poor, class is in English. Every subject in English.

Spiegelman: What I am interested in also is Korbata and those places. When did you deal or speak with the people of the villages? And did they want a say as to where the well would be?

Zakula: No, no. Nobody did. But at least I know some. But always I take with me somebody, geologist, or an Ethiopian who can translate things. But I can't find myself, you know. I can't say that I know it very well but I can ask them what is the problem, why you are not taking water from here, or to tell them that water which they are using is not healthy. We have a lot of problem with motor pump, if we install motor pump, this motor pump should be, you know, collect money from the people for the fuel and now people don't like to pay, you know ...

Spiegleman: They don't have the money to pay?

Zakula: Yeah. And prefer to go again to drink probably very dirty water, instead of taking this.

Spiegelman: Well then maybe, what is the solution, to have another kind of pump that doesn't cost money?

Zakula: Yeah. This pump, this is what we are doing, actually, UNICEF. We trying for all areas, to put hand pumps which not cost nothing. But in this case, we must always put more wells. It depends on the population, you know ...

Spiegelman: Do you use the India Mach II pump?

Zakula: Mostly.

Spiegelman: Made in India?

Zakula: Yes. We imported about 200-250 last year. And we are installing them. It is quite a good pump and it's very useful actually for ...

Spiegelman: And can a child of four really use the pump?

Zakula: Yeah. I saw that all these young people can do. Yes.

Spiegelman: What was your most satisfying experience, Vlado, working in all of this?

Zakula: Yeah, I said I was very happy when we get water, let us say, when water coming in, and all people, hundreds and thousands of them taking water from ... already it is dirty water, and the compressor we take out ...

Spiegelman: You mean when you are sludging the well ... they take that water?

Zakula: Sure! Otherwise they must go very far, you know. In some areas it's very difficult.

Spiegelman: So they hang around the site while you're drilling?

Zakula: And we try installing the little pump. Installation of the pump to provide water immediately. From the beginning we was doing it. My ten wells, first wells I install all of them. Then I install pump immediately. But later, we got some group that was going after us, to do all this construction job, but at least now it is quite organized there. We have people who are installing pump, we have people who are drilling, people who are testing well, people who are making reservoir, if needed. We put some of the windmills in the area where there is enough wind.

Spiegelman: What does the windmill have to do with the water, with the well?

Zakula: You know, in area where there is enough wind, we try actually, we put two well in the Walo, and we find out that it's quite good. You get water without pumping, without nothing.

Spiegelman: Can we get some pictures? Of the windmill, and can we get pictures of you, do you have any pictures of working on the drill or with the people?

Zakula: Yes. Yes.

Spiegelman: I haven't explained to you really that we have a Pictorial History, and we are talking to a publisher in two weeks — we've already met with them and what I would like to do — do we have more time to talk? —

Zakula: Yeah. I have time.

Spiegelman: OK, wonderful. I want to use somebody like yourself and a little bit of your history and I know that the Master Driller is only one of many people that works on the water programmes. But to tell it from how you see it. Because it's a Pictorial History, we need pictures of you on the site with the Ethiopian technicians and especially with some of the people who got the water, if you have that village — Korbata — if anyone took pictures, or something like that, or some of, especially children. But you are really our focus. From your experiences. Now I don't know, are you married?

Zakula: You know, my wife died. I have two children, but I am widower.

Spiegelman: Where are your children?

Zakula: In Yugoslavia. And your wife died some years ago?

Zakula: Yeah. About 14 years ago.

Spiegelman: Before you went to Ethiopia?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: And when do you see your children, Vlado?

Zakula: Every year I visit Yugoslavia. Every year.

Spiegelman: Do they ever come to Ethiopia?

Zakula: Yeah. My son was in American school there for two years, in Ethiopia. But when the situation get very rough there I sent him back.

Spiegelman: You have a son, and how old is he?

Zakula: Twenty-nine.

Spiegelman: And his name is?

Zakula: Boyan.

Spiegelman: And you have a daughter too?

Zakula: Yes. Her name, Rada.

Spiegelman: Are any of them interested in water, in drilling?

Zakula: Not so much.

Spiegelman: Is is a lonely life?

Zakula: Not actually, no.

Spiegelman: You are among strangers?

Zakula: I enjoy actually. I am very happy to work in the field. I am now not happy because I mostly in Addis and I didn't see — you know where you make report and send, and give some recommendation — this is not what I want to do — I want to do something. I want to be there and see people happy, when you give them water. But if I go and make my report and recommendation, and probably sometime nobody cares. This is what I don't like, you know. I was very happy but the time came, you know, we must give for the government, we can't run this project for always. Government now able to take over and actually this is policy of UNICEF to let the government to ... But I said presently I am not so happy that this is my job.



Spiegelman: Right. So your happiest days were when you were on the drilling rig yourself and working with the other technicians.

Zakula: Sure! Sure.

Spiegelman: And are you also involved or were you involved with the maintenance problems on the wells. Did you go back and see the same wells?

Zakula: Yeah. I always go actually. I control and try to send. You know when I was in the project, many times I send my people who were working in the drilling, I said, 'please, go to repair this pump, or to install pump,' and I never waited because governments sometime have so much job, or sometimes ???? order themselves in other area. You know, let us say, administrator of area. He have sometimes, his policy, he says, 'look here you must provide water for this year or for another town.

Spiegelman: It's a big job, the maintenance on these pumps?

Zakula: Quite ...

Spiegelman: How do they let you know? Is there a system with a postcard?

Zakula: No, no, no. I always visit, I always go. This is why I spent so much time. You know I am interested for all wells which were done by UNICEF. This well ??? water for population. And for this reason, I am going into the area where there is never a car passed, you know. Never. Where I go you know I must have very good car first of all.

Spiegelman: It's not a jeep?

Zakula: No, I had good car but I said at least I must, I have always good car and UNICEF providing me with car. And I said I go in the area and I see which well not working, if well not working, well at least I can send somebody immediately. 'Please go, repair this.'

Spiegelman: Even if it's in guerilla area.

Zakula: Sometime, I can't think about if it is guerilla or not (laughs). I am not so afraid, you know, because if I am afraid, I would leave Ethiopia.

Spiegelman: Tell me, when you were in the forests of Bosnia, when you were 14, 15, 16, 17, did you have any close calls?

Zakula: Yes, I was shot here.

Spiegelman: You were shot? In the chest?

Zakula: Here it went in, here, out.

Spiegelman: A bullet went through here?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: Did they see you? Did they know they shot you?

Zakula: You know, ten of us was going, I was first, leader, you know for these ten people, and Germans, they wait for us and all nine of them died and I was only shot. And I stayed in the ... And I never see doctor, you know. I lost a lot of blood ...

Spiegelman: You were nine? And they were all killed and you were shot?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: And you lay with them as if you were dead?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: Is that what you say?

Zakula: Yes. And after that I went to the ... I lost a lot of blood, but after that I actually ...

Spiegelman: Because the bullet went right through.

Zakula: Yeah. Here it is broken a little, I have sign, big sign ...

Spiegelman: A big scar.

Zakula: Yes, but I don't have problem.

Spiegelman: How many days, hours were you lying there?

Zakula: You know, I can't remember (laughs).

Spiegelman: What year was that?

Zakula: I was this leader of ten people, this was '44.

Spiegelman: And you went to some farmers and you went somewhere where they took care of you? You said you never saw a doctor?

Zakula: You know some woman find me because many people were in the forest and my sister was giving me, "X's", you know, here. You know, some primitive ...

Spiegelman: Your sister was in the group?

Zakula: Yeah. I find sister was there in one group, you know.

Spiegelman: She found you?

Zakula: Some woman and she brought me there. And it was a lot of this  
... it was already spoiled, my ... infected. These animals, how  
do you say, small animals was here.

Spiegelman: Maggots?

Zakula: I don't know how in English ...

Spiegelman: Lice?

Zakula: Not lice. From the flies, what you get, small, like this?

Spiegelman: Ants?

Zakula: Not ants. Not ants. You know it's very small, like this, about  
one centimeter. It was going and eating this.

Spiegelman: Good lord!

Zakula: But, I at least survived.

Spiegelman: You survived! So this was your preparation for working in Ethiopia.

Zakula: Yeah. (Laughs)

Spiegelman: Do you ever think about those days in the forest?

Zakula: No, no. By chance, actually, I get into drilling school. I was playing football, soccer, and this team was calling me to play for them and I joined school, you know they was paying me.

Spiegelman: You got a soccer scholarship at the Naphta School? Because you were a good soccer player?

Zakula: Yeah. Quite good. Quite good. When I was young.

Spiegelman: So the team for the school wanted you to play and that's how you got into the school? It was by the back door? Is that what you think?

Zakula: No. Actually I told them that I not like to play only soccer, I want education and the school said 'okay' and this how I got into the school — how I became driller.

Spiegelman: What do you play in soccer? Which position?

Zakula: Number 3, this back.

Spiegelman: The back. Do you have to be very strong for that?

Zakula: Whew! (Laughs) Yeah. I played in many of the towns in Yugoslavia. You know I didn't have that much time for what I must learn and we ???? so much and we travel always by train and other people played cards and I was learning in the train.

Spiegelman: So you went all over Yugoslavia playing soccer for the team. This is amateur sports?

Zakula: Amateur, amateur. At that time.

Spiegelman: At that time.

Zakula: Now, no ??? in Yugoslavia. Everyone play for money.

Spiegelman: Yes, the pictures, Vlado. If you have a picture of you playing soccer, that would be wonderful. Playing soccer and ... you're going to leaving, and what can I ... let me show you, what else did I really want to ... What else do you remember from

Yugoslavia after the War? Did you know about the international tuberculosis campaign in Yugoslavia? Do you remember some of the milk programmes?

Zakula: Yes, I remember. This was '48, '49.

Spiegelman: Did anybody you know get a BCG vaccination after the War or milk or cod liver oil or shoes — some of those things?

Zakula: Sure. No, no, we get. We get. I remember this packet with the food, you know, help. And we get ???

Spiegelman: Anybody in your family? Receive any shoes or coats, especially shoes.

Zakula: I believe that my sisters, younger sisters, you know which was after all, very young, I believe they get. Because it was in the government boarding school, or something like that and these people we get. And my younger brother who die by electric accident.

Spiegelman: Oh, well now here, this doesn't have the correction. We are having a section here on the water. Do you think you will get back into the field to do any more work directly on the ...?



Zakula: I will try, I will try. Actually I was trying to help the government with ???, to go in the field and stay with the group — training on the spot for ???. Now we got some students, which the UNICEF instructor was teaching them. We hire one instructor for four months and it is my job now to spend some time in the field to teach them.

Spiegelman: Because you're a foreigner, you're a European, you're a white man, they have been occupied, they were a colony of Italy — is there any kind of resentment between...to overcome?

Zakula: Never. I never feel this.

Spiegelman: Now what should I give you so that you remember to please try to ... are you going back to Ethiopia right now?

Zakula: You know, I will be for some time in England, two days, probably four days, but after I will visit my children in ...

Spiegelman: Maybe you can find a picture playing soccer? Do you think you can find this?

Zakula: I have one from '47, but with the group, you know, I don't know this, I am, I can put ???

Spiegelman: You're standing in the group?

Zakula: I will try to find. My sister probably have. But for the drilling, I have when I was operating rig, when I was trying to help ...

Spiegelman: In Ethiopia?

Zakula: In Ethiopia. Actually I will send but you will choose ...

Spiegelman: Yes, and then we send it back to you. I'd rather have you in your uniform, even holding a soccer ball if you have it, by yourself. If not, if it's a big picture, let's say, like this with all people, 30 people, I don't know whether that would be very helpful. But if it's you with three people, or five or seven people, then we could say "playing soccer" or even drilling in Yugoslavia or training. So we have a couple of pictures, the life of one, as a young student, then drilling in Ethiopia, and then maybe celebrating with people. Now with the refugee camps, so it would kind of be ...

Zakula: If you write me ... and whom I can send here.

Spiegelman: "Vlado, playing or in soccer uniform. At mining school. Or, at mining school. Drilling in Ethiopia - in Ethiopian village, especially drought area. Vlado drilling especially with Ethiopian trained staff and then Vlado and villagers taking water - right? - especially children. but you're stationed now in Addis?

Zakula: Yes.

Spiegelman: I guess we need photos. This will be black and white. If you have color, if you have slides, then we have to made a conversion.

Zakula: Okay. I will send everything what I have. I try to find ...

Spiegelman: But especially if we have the name of the village. Right?

Zakula: Yes, I will write.

Spiegelman: And then "we need name of village". Ethiopian-trained staff and then we would need the names of people that are with you in the picture. Do you have a little staple there?

Zakula: Yeah. In this address I will send.

Spiegelman: Well, I thank you very much.