

the tape transcripts as “seventh-hand witness” is just bizarre—surely anyone can see that they are the primary evidence we have for what took place during the first days at Medjugorje.

Fr Rupcic also quotes Fr Zovko as saying, after having read Fr Sivric’s transcripts: “This is not my composition.”¹⁶⁷ So he is saying that Fr Sivric made up the transcripts. But what about Daria Klanac—did she also make up her version of the tapes? And the person effectively accusing them of this, Fr Zovko, has been episcopally disciplined three times, and in 1985, was forbidden by Bishop Zanic to celebrate Mass or to preach at Medjugorje. Who therefore is more likely to be telling the truth?

The Visionaries as Reliable Witnesses?

Fr Rupcic makes a further criticism of Fr Sivric, regarding those parts of the tapes which are unclear: “Since all the participants in these taped conversations are still living, it boggles the mind that the author does not attempt to fill in or clarify those missing parts. The participants to the conversations were all available to him at the time of his sojourn in Medjugorje.”¹⁶⁸

Surely, though, it would be asking too much to expect the visionaries to remember later exactly what they had said while they were being recorded. What guarantee do we have that their recollections after such a period of time would do anything to clarify what was on the tapes? And that is assuming that those recollections are reliable, whereas there is evidence that some of their later accounts contradict what is on the tapes, as in the case of the discrepancy between the reason given by the visionaries for going with the two social workers on 30 June, and the later accounts of this incident that were circulated. This is what Vicka said to Fr Bubalo about this outing: “Two girls came for us about two in the afternoon. And, they offered to take us about a bit in their car. Not suspecting anything, we got ready and left.” However, on the 30 June tape, when asked by Fr Zovko if someone else had told them to try “another hill,” Vicka explicitly says, “we chose the place and the rest and we didn’t need anyone to tell us what to do,” while Jakov adds: “We marked the place.”

Fr Bubalo challenged Vicka about this discrepancy saying: “It’s uncomfortable for me, but I must. Lately I replayed some of the cas-

settes including that conversation with Fra Jozo. And, I came across one of your assertions that does not agree with what you just told me. ... you told me here, and you always maintained it, that the girls tricked you into that outing."¹⁶⁹

Vicka attempted to explain all this away, but the fact is that her later account does not tally with what is on the tapes.

This is what Denis Nolan says about this incident: "As the hour of the apparition drew near, the social workers refused to take the visionaries back to the village. The visionaries forced them to stop the running car by threatening to jump out and then witnessed the apparition on the roadside."¹⁷⁰

It is unclear where this story actually came from, but perhaps it arose out of a desire to emulate the way the children of Fatima really were kidnapped by the Mayor of Ourem on 13 August 1917. Whatever its origins, it clearly bears about as much relationship to reality as Jakov's claim that one of the policemen had pulled out a gun and threatened to kill them. In fact, this story clearly puts Vicka in the same category as Jakov—a young fantasist who cannot be relied on.

Another example of this type of thing concerns the "anniversary" of the visions. This is commemorated on the 25th of each month, although the first vision actually took place on 24 June 1981. But the 25th has become important for Medjugorje supporters, as the day when the monthly message from Marija Pavlovic is communicated to the world. Fr Bubalo also asked Vicka about this point, and was told that, in 1982, "the Virgin herself decided it." He pursued the matter asking why she had said this, and was told that the "Gospa" had said to the visionaries: "Why, my angels, isn't it clear to you that we really met that day for the first time."

But the only problem with this response is that it contradicts the facts as revealed on one of the other tapes transcribed by Fr Sivric, since all the visionaries were *not* present on the second day—Ivan Dragicevic was missing. This is clear from his interview with Fr Cuvalo on the afternoon of 27 June 1981. In this, after describing the events of the first day, Ivan says: "The first evening I was with them, the second I wasn't." And further on, he was asked: "Did you go [to the hill] the next day," to which he responded: "No, I didn't." And finally, towards the end of the interview when Fr Cuvalo again

asked him what happened on the second day, and if he had gone to Podbrdo, Ivan responded: “The second evening I didn’t go. I worked in the field, I was picking tobacco leaves.”¹⁷¹

So the explanation given for the change of day by the Vision, that they “really met that day for the first time,” isn’t tenable, and once again Vicka’s recollection of events is faulty.

Fr Rupcic also says: “The true sources still today are the living people, the partakers of those events: in the first place, the Seers, their families, and the Pastors and Assistants. The author, nonetheless, relies on a few taped conversations involving some of the direct witnesses.”¹⁷²

This betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of what constitutes reliable evidence as opposed to the unreliable variety. It must be apparent that tape recordings of the events done within a matter of days, even allowing for certain sections which are unclear, are a far superior source of evidence than recollections gathered months or even years later.

The Silent “Gospa”

The conversation of the “Gospa”—or rather the lack of it in the early days—is an extremely important point to note. There was apparently no message for mankind during these days, a point which disturbed Fr Zovko. In speaking to Mirjana on the evening of 28 June, he got a negative response to the question: “And she does not say anything?” He then continued: “She never says anything first if you do not ask her a question.” To this Mirjana replied: “Nothing. First of all, we ask her something.” This prompted Fr Zovko to say: “So there is no message. Good, Mirjana!”¹⁷³

Similarly, in his interview with Ivanka on 30 June, Fr Zovko was still worried about the lack of any message from the “Gospa,” and particularly about the lack of any specific prayer for the visionaries. He questioned Ivanka on this point, but her reply was negative. He responded by saying that in previous apparitions, such as Fatima, there had been a message to pray the rosary. Ivanka’s retort was extremely revealing: “Nothing like that! She answers all that we ask her but nothing else.” One can sense the frustration in Fr Zovko’s answer: “But how is it that she doesn’t say anything new to you, but