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Houston, We Have a Problem!

By Bostjan Virc

What happened to you?
Some person from USA called me,
claiming to be my father.
Ivan Pavi.
You know what? I've lived my whole
life without a father.
I thought that he died.
I mean ...
I used to visit his grave
with his mother.
I think this is going to be a very
interesting journey. -Very interesting.
Even more so because I
haven't been there for 50 years.
Is Nataa coming to Pag?
-Yes, we'll meet there.
Great. I'm very glad.
-Yes.
Is it arranged? -Yes, it's all arranged.
I became a part of an engineer group,
which worked on development of
module for a multi-person crew.
as a part of Yugoslav Space Program.
I was assigned to a team of officers for
a counterintelligence protection
of this programme.
We had to evict quite a few villages
so that inhabitants wouldn't
work on nearby fields
and tourists wouldn't record
and take pictures.
When we enter, I'll show you,
that the 50 next meters, whole ...
Oh' it's the police. No problem.
We'll talk with them.
Are you ours? -Yes. I was hired to take
them through this underground facility.
I'm familiar with the situation.
-What is this? You are?
He's from USA. -American.
-Yes. -What's with the cameras?
We're filming something. Not right now.
Check this.
-What is the American doing here?

He's a ... -Historian.
What is he saying? -That he's a historian who is interested in this place as a part of the story about the space programme ... -Okay.
We're here. -We had complete equipment for testing, but the facility hadn't been ready yet. -It was still under construction.
After a few months of work in space programme, Tito unexpectedly visited Object 505.
Visits like this were documented by the counterintelligence for internal use.
Exploration and conquest of space and other planets is about the collective effort of inhabitants of the world to discover what kind of neighbours they have.
Tito demanded that the work be sped up and our engineers promised him that.
Our project was supposed to be better than the soviet Sputnik.
The realized project was called Triglav 1.
Our three-stage rocket incorporated numerous solutions by Potonik 'Noordung'.
Radar, take over the control.
We're losing visual contact.
Finished rocket flew all the way to stratosphere.
But we couldn't conceal the landing of the module.
It landed in international waters at the Italian border
Our ship encountered an Italian vessel which probably recorded the fact that our ship sailed into Italian waters.
Because of that, the Italians were guessing what our military ship was doing there.

Piglet survived the launching.
Hello? Nataa.
-iga, what is the number?
Yes, it's me, Ivan.
Everything is alright, we have arrived.
I'm in Croatia.
See you in Pag. Bye!
We'll see ... I think it's somewhere
around here, I don't remember well.
Yes, I think this is the building.
Exactly, it was smaller than others.
After the test launch of three-stage rocket
planning of a larger rocket began.
Money was, however, running out
and development was lagging.
Space programme was
apparently too expensive.
This was a big blow to us,
although we were
in a way prepared for it.
Yugoslavia would have to
take out loans.
The creditors always demand complete
documentation and financial plans.
Telling international creditors that we
were developing a space programme
was unfeasible.
Calculations of our
financial experts showed
that Yugoslavia would be
in danger of bankruptcy.
Major Hafner ordered me
to significantly embellish the report
meant for the Americans.
Although our programme was
going well it wasn't functional.
Is it true reports on Yugoslav space
programme were falsified
and shown in a better light?
Was this your order?
No. Reports on
Yugoslav space programme
were always realistic.
The scientist would perhaps

occasionally exaggerate a bit.
But they were never
intentionally falsified.
Buyer-to-be mustn't
have been deceived.
I was falsifying sketches,
embellishing the results of test launches.
It is possible that certain technical
details were presented in a multisided way.
We reckoned NASA representatives
would be excited to come to Yugoslavia.
And so they came.
NASA delegation was
impressed by our programme.
Tito decided to offer the programme to
the Americans for a certain sum of money.
Americans would, as is the
custom in capitalistic states,
try to lower the price,
but we wouldn't relent.
We demanded 3 billion dollars.
The public didn't know what
Tito received this money for.
This is the Pag island,
I was born here.
I got married here and
now I'm here again.
Tomorrow you'll be seeing your daughter
for the first time since ... -First time.
I have never seen her,
I don't even have her photo.
I don't know how she looks,
but I think we'll sniff each other out.
My daughter. -Good day.
-Martina, pleasure to meet you.
Ivan, are you alright? -Yes.
Matej, will you give him a hand?
-No problem.
This is my daughter Ana,
doctor of science.
Since 1983 she had been working
for Yugoslav Security Service.
Later she worked for Slovenian Security
Service, this occupation runs in the family.

That's right.
Tito was a proper operative.
He could sell something
while keeping it a complete secret.
Everything located at the Institute -
documentation, sketches, equipment,
was to be given to the Americans.
They came up with a plan to transport
the rocket and module
and everything else to a neutral country.
That country was to be Morocco.
Tito's fleet served as a
great disguise
and we managed to cross the
Mediterranean Sea without problems
although Italians and French were
monitoring the sea traffic
and also inspecting vessels.
The sea was calm and we encountered
no problems on the way.
At some point, Tito visited the adjacent
cargo ship via a pulley.
Maybe his wife Jovanka was bothering him
and he chose to withdraw.
Jovanka could be quite annoying at times.
Especially when dealing with us,
members of Security Service.
We can go together for a bit
but then I'm going onward alone.
Where are you going?
-I'll go fulfill my father's wish.
What is it? Am I asking too much?
I'm visiting someone.
-Okay. Your father's friend perhaps?
He's not his friend, he used to be
his operative contact.
I'll call you. -We'll be here.
Let us know when you're finished.
Deal? -Yes. Bye!
Tito stayed in Morocco
for two days.
In this time, all the cargo
had to be unloaded from the ships.
That didn't happen in Casablanca

but rather in a nearby US military base.
In a covert way. Americans loaded
the crates into their ships
and transported them to USA.
We realize that growth and
development is only possible in peace
and that peace is a prerequisite
for existence of socialism,
international cooperation
and global advancement.
Moroccan King couldn't directly
ask Tito and his staff
what were they doing. Intelligence
agencies don't function that way.
From this document it is evident that
King didn't know what was happening.
Did you obtain it from your father's
colleague? Okay, I'll stop asking you.
As a token of gratitude, Tito
gave each of us a gun like this
and thanked us for cooperation.
We returned to Yugoslavia by
different means of transport
because Tito continued his
tour of African countries.
Citizens of Yugoslavia,
my comrades,
new nuclear age and
breakthrough of man into space
caused people to be afraid of the
genius legacy of human mind.
Maybe some of this will be
used outside of our country.
But we are not troubled by it, because
we are not only at the forefront of
great success in development of socialism
but also have the best chance
for further progress,
elevation of standards of living and
creation of better future for all of us.
Let's go. Towards the sea,
if we make it.
We can go there,
to the left.

Actually, no.
To the right. -Where?
If we manage to make it.
-Take care, he'll fall. Wait.
Stop for a bit, think and look around.
-Let's go left.
I took you here because this is where
I conducted my first experiment.
I constructed a boat ...
-Really? -Yes. Out of a barrel.
A barrel? -And I set sail. Had my
father not pulled me out of the sea,
I would have certainly drowned.
I received a harsh beating from him.
I believe you, if you came
all the way here with a barrel.
Did we come here just
because of the barrel?
Yes. This was an important
episode in my life.
You could have told me
about it in a hotel room.
Tito's personality is multi-faceted and
rich, like Yugoslav socialist revolution.
They are unstoppable.
I thank you in the name of communists
for all that you've so successfully and
with revolutionary ardour done so far.
We wish you a great deal
of health and many more years
so you can continue leading,
inspiring and stimulating us.
Americans were furious.
-What did they say?
That we sold them an
underdeveloped programme.
The Institute was alarmed.
A direct line with USA was established,
we worked night and day.
Cooperation with CIA didn't go
according to our wishes.
There was too few of us.
Extremists tried to reach
Tito's apartment,

even using weapons in the process.
Because of the assassination attempt
we decided to return to Yugoslavia.
With that, the negotiations
were terminated.
Tito was very pleased that
the action concluded successfully,
because that was a sign that
Yugoslavia was not to be played with.
Tito also warned Kennedy
that their security system
had certain deficiencies.
People don't like America.
I talked with the late Kennedy.
I was the last head of state
that talked with him.
He was killed one month later.
He asked me about my
impressions of America.
I told him I wasn't too
fond of their democracy,
because president isn't
omnipotent. He's elected.
So it's not that easy.
There's the church. It should be
the third house on this side.
Good day!
-Good day. -Are you filming?
Yes, a documentary.
Then you have to film this tavern.
It was made for documentaries.
Come in. -Shall we?
Let's go. -Thank you.
I'll move that. You guys sit down too.
-We are a film crew.
Sit down. He can't be the
only one sitting at a table.
You too. -I'll come.
Just ... -Anything to drink?
What will you have? -If he'll
allow us. -Can they?
Do you have fruit juice? -Juice
in a tavern! Black or white wine.
That's how it is here. We moved all the old

stuff we found in this house down here.
We got apartments upstairs. -Is this
your house? Are you the owner?
It is, we bought it from
a family 30 years ago.
We refurbished everything,
installed Italian tiles ...
Who did you buy it from?
From Pavi. You can recommend us ...
Did you by any chance know Ivan Pavi?
He is ...
This is a nasty place, like any other.
Everyone talks behind each others back.
What happened to him?
Supposedly he drove off
the road near the ferry and died.
It ended badly.
Some say Serbs killed him.
All kinds of rumors.
I can only tell you
what I heard. I have no idea.
Mom had hard time being
alone. She remarried.
But she kept the surname Pavi.
She married some
Svetozar, he was a pilot.
He was a good man.
He treated us well.
That's the most important thing. -But they
couldn't make it work. They divorced.
Why? -Couldn't make it work.
-Couldn't make it work? -Yes.
How did you take it?
-I just kept watching my mother,
who didn't believe you died.
I think she was waiting for your return.
-I'm so sorry. -Me too. About everything.
Americans didn't want it to be known
that our scientist were
helping them out.
The case of Ivan Pavi
was special.
We made it look like he didn't
make a turn while driving a car

and crashed into the sea. Corpse was said to have been retrieved from the ocean and a closed-casket funeral was arranged.

His wife was of course also invited to the funeral. She was pregnant at the time. When I arrived at the Institute, an urgent meeting was called in a conference room.

I was running late so I kissed her quickly and left.

Were you allowed to say goodbye to her? -No.

We left conference room, boarded the plane and were flown to NASA Center in Langley.

My wife and I never saw each other again.

Much later Hafner told me that I had a daughter.

I'd like to know why was I separated from my father.

There's no programme in whole world that is important enough to warrant taking away person's freedom of choice.

It would be different if it was your choice.

But if you are forced ...

Prof. Novakovi ended up on Goli otok, as far as I know.

But he returned to his family.

What benefit could he provide to family considering his situation?

This is a long story. -Don't worry, we would be okay with it.

Would you want to meet Ivan Pavi?

It would be an interesting encounter, especially because we could talk about things we weren't allowed to talk about back then.

Grudges tend to
disappear as you grow old.
We have to open it down there.
Is it far? -Right at the end.
Which grave?
-We've arrived. It's here.
Your grave.
See. -Who's lying down there?
-Probably no one.
I don't know. -Why would
there be anyone inside?
He would visit our engineers behind
closed doors. He was assuring us
that we weren't forgotten, like
the veterans of Sutjeska battle.
There was a big celebration.
Decorations were being awarded.
No one mentioned us, 26 engineers.
Like we didn't even exist.
Pavi's wife committed a suicide
couple of years later.
What was your
mother Vesna like?
I think she never stopped
mourning her lost love.
Did she ever talk with you
about Ivan, your father?
Yes.
That's all she would talk about.
Excuse me.
I think she didn't manage
to go on with her life.
I'm very sorry about that.
Nixon acted pretty arrogantly
and even demanded that Tito
returns couple of million dollars.
Nixon was bothered by Tito's
nonchalant smoking of Cuban cigars
which were sent to him by his
friend Castro directly from Cuba.
The dynamic of constant work and occupation
leaves me with no time to grow old.
I'm not afraid of anything.
Tito got scared and started

thinking how to return the money.
Such a high sum was obviously unavailable,
so alternative solutions were considered.
Expert analyses showed debt
could be paid off by exporting cars.
The leading men of Zastava from
Kragujevac were very surprised when
Tito proposed a production
of a luxurious, modern automobile.
Engineers there were given the task
of materializing his idea.
Yugoslavia and USA have been successfully
cooperating for a number of years.
I'm convinced our partnership
will only grow stronger
to our mutual satisfaction.
Thank you.
Mister ... -Wait for us to drink
and then translate.
Couple of years later, we
accompanied Tito to Zastava,
where he was given keys
of the newly produced car.
The situation was
rather excruciating.
Tito immediately gave keys to assistant,
saying this car wasn't suited for him.
He was visibly disappointed.
They evidently made a mistake
of not updating Tito on
the development of their car.
Yugo offers the best value
for a very low price.
May our Yugo have
safe and calm journey.
Goodbye and good luck in America!
With a new constitution, we are entering
a new phase of our struggle for socialism.
We learned about this plan.
It was about the so
called destabilization,
based on a known doctrine
of low intensity conflict.
Until the institution of national

security doesn't change,
it's pointless to talk about the transition
to a normal, democratic society.
We mustn't forget this
institution is here and working.
I remember your iek very well.
He was under the control
of our National Security Service.
Because of his advocacy for very
radical, philosophical ideas
Yugoslav People's Army
considered him a bigger threat
than an Ustashe, Chetnik or
Slovene Home Guard terrorist.
Until relations between Yugoslav People's
Army and politics aren't solved
it is cynical to talk about
a transition into modern country.
Maybe I don't feel as well
as I used to
and I'm not doing what
is expected from me.
I fear the day
when expectations will
dwarf my abilities.
I was returning to Belgrade
from Ljubljana that day.
When we arrived,
we took a taxi.
We were wondering why our
taxi driver was so quiet.
He had tears in his eyes.
We didn't ask him what happened
because we already knew it.
This was just a confirmation
that it really happened.
Why aren't you here
Why aren't you here
When on the young field-flowers
Speechless midnight strings the pearls
Desire flies through my chest
Why aren't you here,
Why aren't you here
Why aren't you here

When a dream gave me tranquility
And the soul is preparing for peace
My love is starting a song,
Why aren't you here
Why aren't you here
My love is starting a song,
Why aren't you here
Why aren't you here
It suddenly appeared to me that
not only my career, but also
my whole life became worthless.
Everything we fought,
worked and sacrificed for
practically disappeared.
When in 1991 I realized
that everything was falling apart
and whole country
was dissolving
I tried to return.
I flew to London,
but the flight to Zagreb
was canceled at the last moment.
I couldn't get to Zagreb because of
the attack by Yugoslav Army.
I had to return to
where I came from.
I'm glad we finally found
each other. -Me too.
Are you alive? Go!
-Run!
That's Jovanka's grave.
-Where? -Over there.
Shall we go? -Okay.
Let's go, dad.
Are you hungry, thirsty?
Let's go somewhere ...
-Tito can go to hell.