



# THE DARK SECRETS OF SHTF SURVIVAL

**WARNING  
GRAPHIC  
CONTENT**

The Brutal Truth About  
Violence, Death, and Mayhem  
You Must Know to Survive

**BY SELCO BEGOVIC**

# The Dark Secrets of SHTF Survival

*The Brutal Truth About Violence, Death, and Mayhem You Must Know to Survive*

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## Introduction

There is that famous survival “rule of 3s” that goes something like, “You can survive 3 minutes without air, 3 hours without shelter (in harsh weather), 3 days without water, 3 weeks without food...”

But I never read any survival “rule” about how long you can survive, for example, by eating grass or spoiled food in 1/3 of your needed daily caloric amount, while you are under constant physical threat, while you are under lot of stress because your kid probably has pneumonia and there are no antibiotics, your rifle is not working, your roof is leaking on your head, there is no electricity and running water, and each day is hard work to fulfill necessities for bare minimum of existence... necessities that you did not even think about it while system was there....

There is no rule for that, and if someone gives you general rule about it, he is lying, because there can't be rules determining how much a human being can push on in hard situations that go for weeks, months, or years.

There is only you, your skills, your mindset, and the people around you who will either help you or harm you (probably combination of both).

Generally speaking, people can adapt to the most difficult



situations. The problem here from my experience is actually that period of adapting.

In that shocking period of adapting you have far too many chances to end up dead, or to make big mistakes, because the period when everything goes from “normal” to “not normal” is pure chaos. Most of the people go through it with their minds and actions in “normal” operating philosophy.

When “not normal” become your new normal, you are there.

By reading other folks’ experiences, you can at least minimize that adaption period because you can have a glimpse of how harsh, dark, and brutal a real SHTF may look. You will know more of what to expect, and most important:

**“Smart people learn from their mistakes. But the real sharp ones learn from the mistakes of others.”**

~Brandon Mull, Fablehaven

After reading this book, you may think, “How all this exactly can help me?”

Honest answer is, “I do not have clue how exactly this can help for each one of you who read it.”

I do not know where you live, how many family members you have, what kind of rifle you own, and how good or bad you are at coping with time when it all goes to sh\*t. I do not know what kind



of neighbourhood you are living and how far (and if) you have that nice cabin with all your stash hidden somewhere. I do not know you and your surroundings so I can not give you exact advice in lot of things, and who ever is giving you that advice without knowing all above is a funny man.

But I can exactly say what to do in order to know directions and measures that you need to take in order to be more ready when SHTF

You can read this book and see and understand how I went through all of that, and how bad was, what kind of people I dealt with and how, then think about your situation and you'll see directions, measures, and solutions that you need to take.

Nobody can do that for you, you need to stand up and do it.

## Foreword

I first met Selco several years ago when I interviewed him for an online course I was teaching. Of course, I'd heard of him – pretty much everyone who is involved in preparedness has heard of him.

That's because Selco is “the real deal.”

He pointed out some things I hadn't considered in my preparedness plan and we talked at length. I learned so much for him that I made major changes to my plan.

I'm a preparedness blogger. I have been writing and researching about this topic for nearly a decade now and have been living this lifestyle for more than two decades. I strive to provide the best information I can through a combination of research, common sense, and practical application of information.

But the truth is, I'm limited by the information that is available. No place I used for research wants to publish stories and articles about the true brutality of a chaotic situation in which every day is a fight for the chance to merely survive. And I'm also limited by a lack of personal experience with true SHTF scenarios.

But Selco has lived it.

Selco is where theory meets reality.

He has seen people kill for fun. He has watched people become so

desperate for food that they do things we'd consider unthinkable in normal times. He has experienced being so thirsty he drank from a puddle because there was truly not a single drop of fresh water available.

He has lived through a kind of hell we can't even fathom in our worst nightmares. And he's been writing about that hell for decades himself. He's been dredging up stories and memories from those dark times to try and prepare the rest of us for exactly how bad things can get.

If you aren't familiar with Selco, he survived the Balkan War of the early 1990s as a young man. He lived in a city under siege by snipers that was cut off from the rest of the world.

There were no supplies.

There was no food.

There was no running water.

There was no sanitation.

There were no laws except survival.

These stories are a collection of his memories from that horrible time. Selco's first language is not English, and this book is written in his own words. The stories are only lightly edited for clarity. This is as close to a conversation with a war survivor as most of us will ever get.

Many of the stories in this collection are from Selco's old blog and are now unavailable anywhere else except in his books. They are in no particular order. You can pick this book up and read a little bit at a time without losing the flow.

Nothing is off limits in his memories of that dark time. Why? Because it's essential to understand exactly how bad things can get so that you are not paralyzed in shock on that day that it actually happens to you. If you know what to expect, you'll be more likely to be able to act despite the horrors that are occurring all around you.

Read these stories and understand that human nature can be incredibly dark. Know that when the SHTF the rules change dramatically. Knowledge is power. Knowledge is survival.

*Daisy Luther*

*TheOrganicPrepper.com*

# PART ONE: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR PLANS AND REALITY

The media manipulated people, bombarding us with fear and hate" during the Balkan Wars

Media is a very powerful and useful tool and we as preppers lean on it in making our opinions and decisions.

Many survival strategies, bug-out routes, survival storages and whatnot are built on what we figured out based on information that media gave us.

I belong to a generation that once believed, "if it was not on TV it did not happen." Today there are many more choices, but in essence, it comes down to the fact that if it is nicely packaged and repeated for enough number of times, most of the folks are gonna believe it.

Because of the ways of modern life, we tend to want information very fast and accurate, and the accent is on fast. We want "flashy" and useful, and the accent is on flashy.

There are many more choices, sources, and opinions for how we get information and from what media – but still, not too many things have changed. We are still very easy to manipulate with through the media.

We begin to hoard information wanting to know more, but what we get is a lot of junk, with occasional pieces of gold. Also, often information is planted there in order to "move public opinion" in

the direction that someone powerful wants. It is pure propaganda.

### **How the media worked right before SHTF**

As I said, in my time (weeks/months prior SHTF) the situation was a bit different, because of the number of media outlets available, but a lot of things can be pointed out that look similar to what we see today.

The ways how people get manipulated through the media/information probably never changed for ages, it simply got more sophisticated, and we people get more “plugged in” or simply more dependent on it.

Now when I look back, it is very easy to see that we were fooled by most of the media and pushed in actions that were not smart, but in that time, it was invisible to us. The media manipulated people, bombarding us with fear and hate.

It is hard now, to sum up how all that looks, how media did the job, but some points can be described.

### **They heated up the situation.**

We were bombarded carefully with loads of information about changes that were coming to us.

It was not only about the political system. It was also about the importance of our opinions. After some time of this, folks simply



started to believe that our opinion could make a change, or that our opinion was important.

After that, we were “fed” through the media that there were great differences between us, and that the differences were actually so big that they might be a problem for our future life in this region.

In reality, you can point out huge differences between any groups of people, or political options anywhere in the world and still, that does not mean it needs to end up in blood. But we were led to believe that blood was the only option for solving differences.

### **They increased the fear.**

The next stage – and it was presented in a way that was so intimidatingly logical – was fear.

Fear of others, fear of differences, fear of those who wanted different things from us.

Media can put great amounts of fear in you, by careful and very subtle hints. Sometimes, you do not even realize you are in the middle of that process (of intimidation) since one day you woke up and felt afraid

Fear is a very powerful motivator, and under the influence of fear, you can be compelled to do a lot of things.

We all know that fear can also save your life, so it is not always a

bad thing. But I am talking about the fear that the system may install in you over a period of time, in order to manipulate you.

Every system in the world plays with that, more or less.

It can come in many forms. In my case, it was about fear of those who were different than me. In your case, it could be the fear of losing some rights, or similar.

### **They increased the hate.**

Hate often comes with fear. And it comes again often as a solution to fear.

Just before S hit the fan in my case, the buildup of hate was so dense that you could feel it in the air.

And once real hate is there (mixed with fear) you can be manipulated in such wild things that you could not have believed possible.

Hate also can be good motivation, but only in very small doses, because it “spends” you very fast.

What is really more important here is the fact that general hatred clouds your judgment.

Having clouded judgment is totally against any mindset of being a prepper.

Whenever you find yourself in a situation when you feel that you

generally hate groups of people, options, or states, stop for a moment and go through serious mental check: Are you being manipulated by someone and what are the reasons for that?

I witnessed many times innocent people being killed because a public opinion was formed that “it is OK”, and it was scary how fast that opinion was formed.

As the violence and fear progressed, it was easier to be even more manipulated by the media.

**You have to use common sense.**

I am not saying that you should trust no one and sit at home with tin foil hat but be careful what you trust when it comes to media.

Use common sense and try to build your own network. Find groups of people who share your view of life.

Big media players have their own agenda usually, and that is the reason why they are big. They know their job very good.

Part of the solution is fact that today, we have huge choices when it comes to information.

The internet offers every man the opportunity to look at and offer opinions.

Of course, that also can be part of the problem because often there is too much information.

## **Look for a person, not a system.**

I think I was something like 11 years old when we had school event in the name of one of the big battles of WWII.

There were flags, an orchestra, speeches from local communists, and we kids with small flags.

The speeches were about the noble fight, heroic acts, love to the motherland, patriotism...

Together with politicians, on the stage was standing an old guy, a survivor of the battle, a man who held highest military decoration of the WWII. He was a hero of the people.

After some time, a politician said, "Now we are gonna ask our hero of the people to tell us few words about that heroic battle."

The old guy took the microphone and said, "Well, son, it was a complete and absolute shitstorm"

In that moment politician took the mic and gently pulled the guy away, saying into the microphone, "We are sorry, our hero needs some rest..."

We were absolutely stunned by the old guy words. He was supposed to speak about sacrifices, the bright future of our country, how we all need to be communists, higher causes, etc.

But in fact, the old hero simply went out on stage and spoke the

real, cold truth. It was bloody hell, and for him, in that moment, fancy words were not important.

I think he was too big a legend to worry about what he was saying.

Also, I think that event was the start of my doubts in any system. It was a really small start, but it was reinforced in years that came later.

The point of this story is not about war heroes or communist societies or the fact that the US is different from my region.

The point of the story is to look for real people always and to form your own circles in acquiring information. Don't just listen to big media.

The real truth about how the fight was you could hear from that war hero, not from politicians and media.

**Be warned.**

For many years I did not watch TV or listen to the radio. I choose my points of information the on the internet, and still, I do find myself sometimes forming opinions based on some ridiculous information. It is in human nature to act like that sometimes.

But be warned. It becomes dangerous when you start to act based on completely wrong information, or to form your whole survival setup on it.

There is no sense but common sense when the SHTF

One of the biggest “feeling” that I get from my readers about their worries and problems when they think about possible SHTF there (wherever they are) is constant feeling that everything needs to have sense once when SHTF.

People (quite understandable) are projecting their own life into their possible SHTF.

You have family, kids go to school, parents have job, life have direction, and some meaning.

New car, your kid got a scholarship, nice lawn, retirement plan.

Even if you have a “hard life” there is still direction and sense in it, you have feeling that things have sense, even when they are bad (like no job temporary or similar)

So, people imagine when SHTF lot of things gonna have direction and meanings too, some kind of sense.

There is my pantry, there is my bug out location, there is my rifle.

There are gonna be bad guys (that needed to be shot) there are gonna be good guys (you are one of them) and there's gonna be clear line between them.

In reality SHTF, real SHTF mess up things so hard, so your pantry is no more your pantry because you have to leave it to save your

life, good guys are bad guys too and vice versa, and you are actually one of them.

One day you are good other day you are bad, simply because your kids are hungry, and there are no clear instructions what to do, just good old pushing on and on every single day.

It is completely new world, and if you are projecting so hard your normal life (and rules) into SHTF you simply won't last long.

Most of the preppers will need to adapt and overcome.

Adapting and overcoming are most used words in survival community but not too many people understand real meaning of it.

It is not (only) learning to live in world without electricity, it is also learning not to do only good things (as we understand it today) in order that your family may live.

Whenever I read words "I'll do 'that' when SHTF I feel bad, because in essence you do not know what you'll be forced to do, but you will have to do it when day comes, because on that way you adapt and overcome, not by sticking hard to your imagined "I'll do only that".

Survival does not need to have large sense, just lot of small everyday common senses.



The things that will surprise you most when the SHTF

I recently ran one of my newest courses, called “A Mile in My Shoes.” This is where I take a small group of students to the city where I survived the war and take them around and physically show them the realities of what was faced. A lot of lessons are learned during the course and most importantly (and what I hoped for) students come far closer to realizing the ‘reality’ of a true SHTF situation.

I thought I would share with you the ‘top 5’ surprises that the students encountered, meaning things they had not thought about or realized before the course but had to accept and come to terms with during...

**1) How ‘Close’ the fighting will be.**

This picture, taken very close to my house, was one of the 'front lines' for some time. One side was in houses on the left of the alley, another side (enemy) were in the right-side houses.



This seems INCREDIBLY close (and it is) but then realize, there were times when the 'dividing lines' were even closer than this.

When you put that into the perspective then you can start to think about new reality because there is nothing very static and sure when SHTF, one day the house next to you can be completely safe, another day there might be someone inside who wants to harm you, or simply you'll never be sure how safe and secure are your surroundings.

It is the most dangerous aspect of urban SHTF because you'll have a lot of people in a relatively small area and you'll have a higher demand for (very limited) resources because the 'system' is gone.

Now when you add to that calculation the fact that a lot of

houses are going to be being destroyed, you get to the point that you never know anything for sure, where is someone and what intention they have.

That is especially important if you planning to survive urban SHTF alone (lone wolf theory) so you can get a feeling how hard that's going to be.

## **2.) The 'Enemy' will look, sound, and speak like you.**

They may even have been your long-time friends but are now on the 'opposite' side. Fighting here was divided by all sorts of reasons, race, religion, affiliation, heritage, politics, and often a big mix of all these things.

'Sides' were always changing as well. That's just the 'enemy', when it comes to Survival you will fight to get what you need or protect what you have from whoever...

Having the idea that some foreign forces will invade your country, forces that will look, act, speak completely different then you, and people from your surroundings are mostly just fantasies, especially when we talk about the USA.

That may be the case, but you're going to have a lot of 'local' fighting and surviving before that.

Strong systems are going to have a "bigger and longer" fall, there are way too many people and weapons in the US for some foreign

force to choose to invade and pacify the country... it is impossible.

What is possible is to “push” some country into the chaos, in order to turn on themselves, suffer hunger, prolonged chaos and similar, and maybe then to invade.

In the end, it all comes to you and people who want to harm you. The fact that the people want to harm you were people who you use to know does not make it easier.

Do not expect Martians or Russians. Expect people who look, act, and talk like you, who want to survive just like you.

Again, we come to the point that you will be forced to fight with your neighbors and fellow countrymen for resources.

### **3) How “busy” an average day was**

Fighting for survival is an all day, everyday task. You are constantly hunting, scavenging, gathering, finding information, looking and checking things. All while the most stressed you have ever been and under constant threat. All while being hungry and thirsty.

There is no ‘day off’ or ‘break’. This is the big difference between a soldier and civilian in war. A soldier has a job to do, and all his other needs are taken care of. He can just focus on his one job. In a civil war, you (and your group) need to cover all the tasks, all the time...

If you served in Army, you had clear orders, topics, outside of that you did not need to think about too many things.

You had “backup”. Your job was to do tasks, and someone else takes care of all the other things in order for you to finish your tasks successfully.

In SHTF you are the first unit, rear, and back up. If you fuck up and break your leg there is no medical evacuation. If you did not find food (or any other resources) there is no service who will do that for you.

It is a hard time, and the day is full of “acquiring” things and finishing jobs.

Shooting at someone may look like a fun idea today, or romantic in some way. It is maybe more romantic than to think about how to manage your waste or bathe or lower your kid’s fever in the middle of SHTF.

You are everything when SHTF because the system is gone.

#### **4) The level of the threat**

In SHTF almost everything is a threat to you. Yes, easy to understand threats like sniper, gangs, angry neighbors etc., but the lack of food, complete lack of hygiene, level of contamination, risk of illness and injury, being found, being informed on, being tricked, getting captured and many, many, more make up a larger amount of threats than most ever think of.

Just start to imagine every 'supply' you take for granted (fuel, electricity, water, stores, emergency services etc.) being taken away and not knowing when it will ever come back.

Then imagine the worst person you have ever known, someone you would not trust to help you in any situation.

Now imagine everyone around you is like that person. Then imagine everything you climb on, through or over can hurt you, and that everything you touch has the potential to make you ill...

Did you get all that? If you do, you are maybe about 40% of the way to imagining the reality...

The level of threat is going to be a BIG shock to you in the beginning. If you survive that shock it is good because then you get yourself into the mode of real surviving.

No matter how well you are prepared you will go through that shock. With good preparation and the correct mentality, you can minimize that shock and make it shorter.

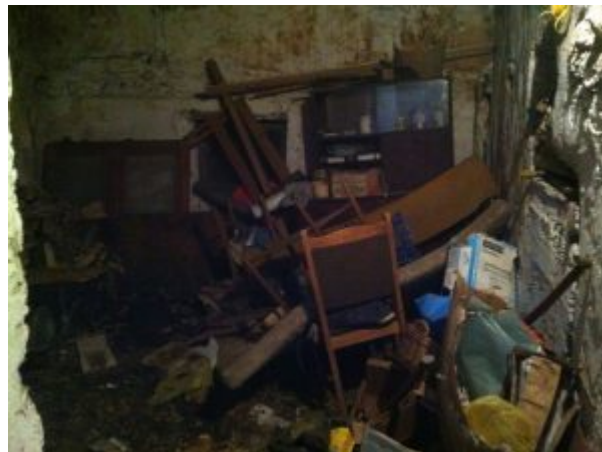
That is the real point of preparing.

## **5) The reality of defending your assets**

I know. All the points mentioned don't bother you that much, as you have a nice house, lots of supplies and you're ready to fight. But how is your plan working once your house or apartment looks like this...?



And inside like this...?



Anyone who is 'fit' must go out a lot to find things for everyday survival. How you protect all your stuff when you are not home?

What about when one day a big group comes to ask you how you're doing so OK, and what you have there? To protect your stuff from them is a clear death sentence. What will you do then?



You have to have the right mindset. It means the difference between defending something and getting killed and adapting yourself in order to survive without it.

You have to accept the fact that maybe you'll be forced to survive only with your skills.

Understand that in SHTF, every house in the city is going to look like this, or worse – not even be there. In my city, there are many houses you see like this. You see them because they are made of stone or concrete. You don't see the wood buildings because they all burned down.

The rude awakenings that you'll have to face when the SHTF

For years I have been following news from the survival "realm" all over the internet. One thing is for sure: every day in those years when I read survival "news" I could conclude, based on the headlines, that the world is going to chaos and end in the next week, next month or next year.

And still we are here discussing the same things. Yes, we have all the comforts and commodities. Let's say we are doing fine.

But now, for the first time, I have a feeling that the world is going to chaos really soon.

Too many things are seemingly "moving" inside global calculations, and this time we could be close to a "big one".

No matter how much food, ammo, training, and skills you have, when SHTF you are gonna be surprised. Most of us have been in the mode of preparing for something that is not happening for years, and when it finally happens there is going to be a period of a shock for the folks, and in that period a LOT of people are going to die.

Since most of the folks who read my stuff and subscribe to my courses are from the US, things that are written here are meant for them mostly, but not exclusively for them.

Every now and then I get questions about similarities between

the situation in the US and the Balkans before SHTF. And I have read a couple of good articles about the same topic lately.

Since I have a lot of people that I can call good friends, and they are from States, I am going to point out some things about my Balkan SHTF and possible US SHTF.

There are some serious and worrying parallels, even we are talking about two different systems.

### **The System**

*“The people have always some champion whom they set over them and nurse into greatness. . . . This and no other is the root from which a tyrant springs; when he first appears above ground, he is a protector. . . having a mob entirely at his disposal...” – Plato*

I have lived in a system and country where we believed that we are all equal. Different nationalities, different religions etc. Melted all together to make one “big and prosperous” nation, to be great and equal... united.

And then leverage of world forces simply changed, and suddenly we are being taught that differences between us are more important than similarities and “one nations”, old battles from history are been taught again, one group suddenly is more important than other and so on and so on.

And then came “leaders” or saviors that led us against others.

After years of carnage, here we are again with almost the same leaders.

I have been through the war and met many folks on every side shooting because they have been told that the other side is evil, and yet all sides are the same at the end.

Rich are richer, poor are poorer. Nothing changed. Nobody learned anything.

### **Big Circles and Small Circles**

Again and again, there is a big circle and small circle. You may have the illusion that you are controlling things in a bigger circle, but it is only an illusion. What kind of government you're going to have and what kind of politics they use in the next years is not up to you. You just have been smartly led to believe that you can make the change.

It is like that...

In the end, it all comes to the matter of power and possession, and you are a just small piece of everything, you are only a small part of the tool.

Over the years I have learned that it is more important to have one more month of food stored or one more skill learned than to waste time on worrying who is going to be elected.

It is a waste of time because when SHTF they all gonna do the

same more or less. They will oppress people and take their rights and liberties very easily.

## **Your Rights**

Living in a society where you have certain rights and freedoms for years is a good thing.

The bad thing is when SHTF and you lose all those rights in a single day, and you find yourself so shocked that you simply do not know what next to do. You had those rights for many years, it became totally natural for you to 'own' it.

Having lots of conversations with friends from the US, I concluded that the majority of common folks simply do not understand that all your rights can be lost in one day.

And not by the evil invaders from the space, or the Russians or whoever. Your government can take it. All in one day.

The majority of folks simply do not see this as a possible option, and even preppers there who understand it may look like 'weirdos' because of this viewpoint.

Do not get me wrong, I would love to live in a country where I can buy weapons easily, where I have rights to protect my home, where I can say freely (more or less) what I do not like.

I like that very much. Actually, I admire it.

What I do not like is feeling that most of the people think it is

written in the stone and it cannot be changed.

In short, the things that I like most about the US is going to be the biggest 'loss' in the US when SHTF, and not only the US.

When SHTF there is going to be a lot of surprised people, a lot of shocks.

### **Your Perception of Future SHTF**

I can not get rid of the feeling that a majority of people see SHTF as big fun, shooting while drinking beer, with additional testing of all of their cool gear.

I see that in blogs, comments, forums, documentaries, movies...

I had more than one participant of my course who told me "this is not fun, it is hard, and not so pleasant".

I had people who have been preppers for 30 years and never considered the fact that when SHTF it is going to be smelly all around you.

There's been a man who advises a skateboard as a 'good' transport through SHTF city, a man who thinks that 30 brand new gold coins are going to get him through problems on his bug out trip and so on and so on.

Now I am not mocking the people who stated all the above. What I do not like is believing in "facts" that are not checked.

If you never been through SHTF you may not have the idea that it is not fun, but quite hard and unpleasant. Where do you think people and dead animals are going to be buried? Where will the garbage be taken, human waste and everything else? A foul smell is going to be a constant.

Don't you think offering someone a brand-new gold coin for safe passage won't bring some "Ooooooh maybe he has more of those interesting funny unusual gold things with him" attention?

Why don't you try to have 10 cheap gold rings in your pocket instead, and offer on every "checkpoint", one that you directly pull down from your finger with the words "here take my engagement ring, just let me pass?"

Is a guy going to think "Ooooooh, maybe he has more of those his engagement rings in his pocket"?

Same things go with the trade.

Examples are numerous.

Common sense is something that is missing mostly in "mainstream" prepper movements, and I understand that it is business, it is about money.

But folks, choose carefully what advice you are taking as a real.

For the average, beginner prepper, the USA looks like paradise. A place where you can look and find the correct information, also



look and find correct equipment for future SHTF, but that also brings risk because there is more false and wrong information and mindset than right.

Personally, I like what can be found in the US because, in most of the cases, I know what is good or bad, but for beginners, it is much, much harder.

## **Conclusion**

It's difficult to write some kind of conclusion for this very hard topic, because it is wrong to put things right with a generalization:

It is going to be very ugly, much more ugly than my SHTF experience here, simply because of the 'fall' when SHTF going to be bigger. The "distance" between modern everyday life and life in SHTF for the USA is WAY bigger than in my time. The majority of folks are "soft" and too dependent on the system.

The 'Survival Movement' is big business, and it has become more (much more) about selling items to make you believe that you are prepared than about learning and gaining knowledge.

Wrong perceptions about SHTF (or at least not checked and "experienced" beliefs) are rooted so hard, they have simply become the 'accepted truths'. A LOT of these 'truths' are simply false and there for earning money, not for survival.

A good thing is that you have much more options about choosing

and owning weapons, but this option can 'bite you back' if you have weapons, but with the wrong mindset, 'truths' and knowledge, simply because a whole bunch of bad people is going to have weapons too.

The majority of folks are not ready to bend the rules and adapt. There is a lot of talk about adapting, but then suddenly you get the whole bunch of folks who are thinking "I'll do that" or "I'll never do that" instead of "I'll do what has to be done (adapt to the situation)"

Working with other folks. You need to work with other folks, to have friends, group, connections-before SHTF. Survival alone is for really tough mother... keys.

People prepare for SHTF, but not really, they are preparing for the romantic, movie version of SHTF. They want to feel cool and comfortable when SHTF, which is not a problem by itself. Problem is that they want that at the expense of real knowledge and covering of real basics. So, you have a man who has a fancy and really cool rifle but does not know how easy and fast in a real fight it is to use 500 rounds, so he ends up without ammo in a week. Or has a generator but does not have a clue how to light a fire, or the differences between fuels for a fire in terms of heating, smoking etc. Many examples...

Do not look for higher reasons for the situation. You may have political options today, factions, candidates, government. But when SHTF all that are empty words from some other distant

time. When SHTF you will have yourself and people who want to harm you. That is it.

So, folks, make sure you are preparing for the realities. I would encourage you to start 'fact checking' your plans and preps today...

How reality will affect your skills

Recently we held a physical Urban Skills course in Croatia. I was exceptionally happy with how well the course went.

Students were there to learn various skills. Personally, I found a lot of skills very important in preparing for SHTF, but what I want to highlight most, to them, and all others is that the skills that they learned before and, on this course, need to be set 'inside' SHTF circumstances.

What do I mean by that?

One of the big myths about SHTF is that your skills will work and solve problems in SHTF in the way that you imagined. In reality, it is clearly not like that.

As some of the students learned when SHTF (and we tried on the course to bring conditions as close as possible to the real SHTF) every 'learned skill' worked differently. Here are just a few examples.

### **Water Collection**

Skills 'says' that you need to collect water in several ways, for example, rain from the roofs using tarps and similar.

Then you need a container to 'transport' that water, like bottles, flasks and similar.

Then you need to purify it with gauze, pills, boiling or whatever mean suit you...



But...

You cannot collect water because simply there is no rain for weeks.

You cannot set up tarps because you are hiding inside an abandoned apartment for days while there are not so friendly folks outside on the street.

## **Traps**

You set up some dangerous trap in front of your home with this you can kill any approaching 'enemy'...

But...

The amazing trap that set up for your scenario is simply a trap that will 'injure' the enemy in a way that he thought was thereby 'chance' or 'mistake'.

Let's say he tripped on some shit that looks like it was there because the building was destroyed weeks ago, not something that, on reflection, he realizes was smartly set up by you, therefore he has no idea you are actually there and are actively defending.

## **Trade**

You have items that someone else needs and vice versa, you go find the guy, exchange goods and all is fine...

But...

You end up waiting to wait for correct information for days, and then after you get there, finally to the right place, you get 'played' by someone who trades you packs of cigarettes with nothing inside.

Or even worse, he shot you in the back because you assume that he is honorable.

## **Weapon**

You have a most modern weapon and a bunch of ammo and you feel safe...

But...

You find out that on the 15th day of SHTF you end up with a club as your primary weapon because you assumed that 1000 rounds would last for months, or when someone attacked your home you forget to take your rifle with you when you ran.

### **The reality is ALWAYS different**

This list can go on and on for every item stored or every skill learned, but in reality, things can and often do work like this. For all those saying 'this can never happen, events from the course prove otherwise. *Reality* proves otherwise.

One student asked me if it was true that I drank water simply from the puddle of water. I said yes, with my shirt as a filter only.

Now that does not look like some skill for sure, not some survivalist purifying water, but it is the truth. Even if you have the means to treat water, are you confident in it? Have you thought about the water you really will be sourcing...?

You need to understand that each and every skill you have will be 'disrupted' somehow in real SHTF, so you will be forced simply to 'shorten' procedures.

Is it good?

No of course not, but it is much better than to be shot in the head while you are setting up a tarp outside your home...

Skills are important, yes, but the mindset for knowing what skills to use and when – that is all that is about here.

If you do not get a sense when and how to implement each skill, there is no sense in knowing any of it.

I am promising you, that every one of your skills will be performed in a different way in real settings when you do not eat well, do not sleep good, with a lot of fear from the known and unknown.

Make sure you are training for the realities, not the fantasies...



Getting the truth about current events

On the television, you hear:

*“In the last 48 hours, 4 people have died in a local hospital from flu type “XYZ“. Hospital representatives state that there are no reasons for panic, and they have formed a special committee, that will closely monitor the ongoing situation and keep the public informed.*

*From our anonymous sources, we have found out that 4 more people are in the same hospital, currently in a very bad condition. These patients are suffering from the same type of flu virus. Our source states “they (hospital managers) do not know really what’s happening or how dangerous the developing situation is“.*

*Experts we have contacted, state that people need to protect themselves with masks and avoid public places with large crowds.*

*Stay tuned...*

*Our channel will give you the latest updates about the situation...”*

## **What Does It Really Mean?**

Imagine this news shows on your local TV station, and

background images show people in biohazard suits carrying some heavy looking objects in big black bags. There's a man who is supervising the burning of a big pile of something.

You are a prepper (obviously) and this news story causes you great concern. You may conclude that it is time to get “out of Dodge“, go to your Bug Out Location (BOL) wearing your masks or bio suit if you have it, ready to shoot at whoever may try to stop you.

Nothing too bad with that – if you feel it is time to run, then you run, that's it...

The likely reality to this ‘story’ though, is that 4 people did die from the flu, but just like every year. A huge number of people dying from the same annual flu, mainly older folks with chronic illness (not mentioned by media), or patients in already poor condition.

The hospital really did form a special committee to make contact with the media, simply because the media pushed the hospital staff really hard with a lot of questions about ‘this situation’.

The “unofficial source“ in these stories is often some guy who wants to have his piece of fame by telling the simple fact that there are “more people in the same bad condition“ (just like in any hospital, anywhere, anytime).

The ‘expert’ who the media contacted talked about simple and common-sense facts that “you should have a mask on and avoid

public places“ if you want to stay healthy and protect against flu or cold or anything similar.

But if you put that statement with background pictures of people carrying big bags in bio-suits, the same statement now has a completely different ‘sound’, yes?

You’ll likely find the background pictures were a couple of years old, showing some dead cows being disposed of a local farm, because of a cow disease.

### **You need other sources than the mainstream news.**

The point of this story is not to tell you to ignore the news if you hear that people are starting to die locally, but to think first about two key points:

1. Research or try to research what is really going on. Have your sources or know people (trusted) who have their trusted sources.
2. Understand that the media is usually not there to help us, they are there in order to make more money, and nothing is cooler like the big fat headline of ‘dramatic’ news.

Sometimes reasons behind running such a story can be really simple and “funny“, like selling 100,000 masks that someone has stored somewhere, or to provide vaccines etc. Sometimes it is nothing, just a big ‘headline’.

And yes, sometimes it is gonna be real. If you do not have other sources then yes, trust your instincts.

But please, do not “stay tuned” in front of the TV waiting for the next update... Go research on forums, ask friends, find sources... do something, or bug out. But do not “stay tuned” as popular media recommends it.

### **Timing, Places, Reasons and Examples of (Mis)Information**

One of my fears and at the same time an essential ‘decision point’ when I (and you) should go into full survival mode is not when SHTF, but when folks realize that the sh\*t Is really hitting the fan.

From that moment the rules are changing, and you can expect anything.

What does that mean?

It is good when you realize, as a prepper, that the SHTF ‘moment’ has occurred, and act accordingly, even if other people did not realize that yet. It is not so good when you realize this fact later, at the same time as the general population.

I have seen people burning other people’s houses, sometimes with people inside, just because they like that: They had an expression of joy and happiness on their faces, they wanted to do that for their whole life, but of course they did not have chance for that, simply because system was there to punish them hard even for trying to do similar things.

But they did that and similar things when they realized that SHTF, and there is nobody to punish them.

They enjoyed it.

Do you want to be there when they realize that?

So, an example would be that you could (and should actually, as a good prepper) realize that SHTF way before that kind of people begin to realize.

Use of that timely information could save your life.

The big difference between you (prepper) and a non-prepper is that you should have that information before them and react to it.

And you are most probably not going to get that information by using “regular” media, at least not in time to have an advantage over the other folks, especially bad kind of folks.

You should plan to use the maximum information in the best time, to go into the let’s say “stealth” survival mode and leave the area, while there is not yet a need to go to the ‘full’ survival mode of needing to do bad things to achieve your objective.

At least that would be the most desirable outcome.

**Everything is time-sensitive when the SHTF.**

Information and misinformation have value, the value of it can

rapidly change depending on the timeline when you get it (or give it).

Just to repeat 'valuable information' is often very 'time sensitive'.

Let's say the story from the beginning of the article is true, in that a pandemic is really starting, and you received that information before chaos happened before everything fell apart, all city services stopped before people start a stampede out of the town.

In that case, you could have enough time to easily leave the area to your BOL or to even stop by the stores and buy everything that you need in case you did not prepared enough.

You know that S. Is going to hit the fan in 3-4 days and you can be prepared very well for that and watch from your BOL how the world is going to sh\*t through the chaos.

Or you know that the pandemic 'news' is serious misinformation, you could just go and buy a huge amount of face masks and sell it to the folks who think a pandemic is really happening if you want to make that kind of money.

In both cases, information is valuable because (again) you get it before others did.

### **(Mis)Information, Rumors, Myths and Fear**

Fear is a thing that moves people in different directions. It is a

natural thing and almost everybody has fears or gonna experience fear in some situations.

In terms of SHTF fear can be coped with or minimized with things like training, confidence (in your skills, preparedness etc.), or simply some of us gonna experience more fear than others.

One of the biggest fears that I experienced and saw other people going through, during the SHTF was fear of the unknown.

That “unknown” was many different things, but most of the time it was induced by a lack of information or wrong information.

What does that mean?

It works on many levels.

For example, sometime after the SHTF, rumors started that poison gases were used in some parts of the region.

You could not point out clear sources who were there or experienced it, but everybody talked about it, and people feared this a lot.

As a result, in one period you could easily “conquer” one building full of folks by throwing in a smoke grenade only, they all just run of the building in panic.

In some cases, people just set rugs on fire in order to make smoke.

Yeah, it sounds stupid now, but what do a bunch of civilians know about poisonous military gases and how they look or work?

Fear is a big thing.

In your case it can be something else, do not underestimate the power of misinformation and fear when you are thrown into the collapse.

When SHTF, myths, and rumors take place because people use it as an advantage. For example, in a situation when information is planted that 500 armed people coming to your part of the town and that they will be killing everybody they find.

Or like a popular myth, like “fact“ that drinking strong alcohol will help you not to freeze in cold environment.

Local warlords used to plant rumors in order to take business from each other in things like selling smuggled food or smuggling people out of the town in exchange for gold.

In among all this, know you will also be strongly tempted to lie to yourself, by telling yourself that everything is going to be OK, things are not going to go to sh\*t because the world cares what is going on, and little babies cannot die because lack of simple medicines at the end of 20 century.

As a conclusion, false and real information are there before and after the SHTF.



And it is weird, but sometimes it is harder to find good information in “normal times“.

The point is that you need to follow what is going on, but not just run for the information, rather to carefully choose and check every piece of it.

When SHTF you are gonna work based on small pieces and bits of info's, and errors are gonna happen, you cannot avoid it.

What you can avoid is your need to trust in some information simply because you are too well prepared for that.

You are gonna know how to survive in the cold and be ready for that. You are gonna know what are the poisonous gases and how they work, or simply you are gonna have your small garden somewhere and you are not gonna have a need to go and check some suspicious info about a guy who is selling food somewhere.

Preparing is (again) the key, and in many scenarios Knowledge truly is power.

Signs the SHTF is happening for real

How do you know if the SHTF is actually here? One of the cornerstones of survival is how to recognize that a situation has gone so bad that the S is truly going to hit the fan.

Basically, we are talking how to recognize that it is time to bug out or hunker down because it is going to be bad.

I call it “survival mode” (no, it is not invented by me), and it means that you at some point based on your own observations, feelings, the situation around you, events, etc. going to are going to jump into that mode where you gonna implement actions based on different priorities than everyday life.

It is personal, but it may include:

- no longer going to work and school
- bugging out
- bugging in
- using violence on “first shoot, then ask” philosophy

In short, you are putting into action decisions that you prepared for a long time because S did hit the fan.

### **How do you know when the real SHTF has arrived?**

One of the members of the Prep Club Facebook group asked a very good question about this, and basically what she asked (in

very shortened version and paraphrased) was: “How am I going to recognize that it is time to leave my job because the whole situation is going to s\*\*t?”

The easiest (and pretty lame and lazy) answer is that you need to leave your job as soon as you see something bad is happening around you, and go home, bug in, bug out or whatever your plan is.

But it is lame because something bad is happening all the time around us – people being robbed or killed, folks losing jobs, cars being stolen, food poisoning, protests, political scandals – not to mention terrorist attacks happening more often and the migration crisis.

But you still need your job to pay bills. Your kids need to go to school. Violence and bad things are always around us, but that does not mean you’ll have to quit your job and bug out. If you do that, you are achieving nothing.

So, we are actually talking here how to recognize the “big event”, a real SHTF event, when you need to jump into that survival mode and stop worrying too much about your regular day-to-day life.

The real fun here is that there is *no universal answer*. There is no specific point at which you will recognize it, but definitely, there are some things to pay attention to.

**Remember the two frogs.**

A well-known story is about the two frogs. One is thrown directly into a pot of boiling water, and of course, the frog immediately jumps out of the bowl and runs away.

The other frog is being thrown into a pot of cold water and then water is gradually heated to point of boiling, and at the end, this frog died.

When the water is *gradually heated to the boiling point*, the frog does not realize it is gonna die.

Most of us are frogs in a big bowl of water that is gradually heated to the boiling point and let me tell you, that water is getting pretty warm.

You really need to be the well-prepared and smart frog to realize that the warm (and maybe pleasant) water is going to be deadly boiling in a very short time.

Get out while the “water is still pleasant”

I believe the term is “strategic relocation”, or in other words, it is moving to an area where the situation going to be better if SHTF.

It is not bugging out when SHTF. It takes very carefully planning. You are looking for a new place to live, a job, a good environment for kids, natural resources, and a good home, etc., today while times are still (more or less) normal.

It is quite specific for each person based on the region where you

live, job opportunities, family circumstances and a lot of other things, but in essence, a few things that I would look for are:

- smaller communities
- places where you already have some network (family, friends...)
- availability of resources ( land, rivers, woods, hunt...)
- reasonably far away from big infrastructure
- laws that allow you freedom (or absence of restrictions) like farming, weapon carry, homeschooling etc.

Keep in mind that again it is not bugging out, it is living in circumstances where you gonna have a much better starting point when SHTF.

You still have to work for a living, and the kids need school etc.

### **Signs that the SHTF has actually arrived**

Since most of cannot afford “strategic relocations” we are forced to stay and hope to see on time that S gonna hit the fan, and hopefully jump on time into that survival mode and act accordingly.

I am in the same position.

I am not talking here about obvious signs that something bad has happened.

If you hear a huge explosion and there is no signal on TV

suddenly, no internet or electricity, you do not have to be a prepper to realize something bad has happened, and you are already in the middle of it.

Here are some of the signs that the SHTF has actually arrived.

### **Freedoms and rights are disappearing.**

You usually feel like your rights and freedoms are something written in stone, and you may be right.

But in terms of signs of a coming huge SHTF, keep in mind that when your freedoms and rights that are really important are taken away from you, the S is going to hit the fan soon.

And again, probably it is going to happen gradually enough that the majority of folks will not go out on the street to fight for those rights.

In fact, it may happen in a way that the majority of people will welcome it, under some new laws that “save lives” or “keep them safe” or similar.

But the result is going to be same. Your rights and freedoms are gonna be taken because you are gonna be easier to manipulate then.

### **Polarization, hate, and violence are on the rise.**

I have mentioned all of that before, more than once, but prior to SHTF it is going to be worse when it comes to hate because

again, a lot of stuff you cannot see clearly when you are in a state of hate or fear.

A lot of things can be moving in the background while you are coping with disorder, hate, and violence.

**Your access to information will be limited.**

Your free access to independent information will be “shrunk”.

Independent media will be harder and harder to find, or you will be fooled, and you will think that actually, you have access to free information while in reality, it is junk, propaganda.

The shutting down of free media and people who hold information will disappear. These are some of the last signs, and again, most people will welcome it. Independent media will be almost “demonized”.

**Watch the behavior of people in the know.**

I will give you some examples.

I had a friend who worked for the secret police before the war. He ended up in the sieged city together with me.

He did not have a clue that things were gonna get so bad, even with his position and his access to the information. He simply was fed bulls\*\*t by people that he trusted.

On the other hand, I had a friend who, prior to the war was a

smuggler of different kind of things from Italy, such as marijuana, electronics, and whatever was popular at that time.

He knew something bad was gonna happen, and he bugged out in time to Italy.

In his “job” he had connections with people who “pushed” things for other people who were pretty powerful criminals. Based on moving on those “goods” and information, he simply concluded something bad was going to happen.

The point here is to keep your ear to the ground and see how things and events are moving around you.

Most probably you are not going to see things coming on TV on mainstream media, but if you have a buddy in the police force who will let you know that a lot of equipment is being delivered to them or a friend in some not “legit” places who can give you good information, you can conclude a lot.

There is no specific advice here, but a network of friends with information from the right places is worth much more than a TV network.

**You may miss the signs. I did.**

I have seen all the signs above, and I failed to run. I ended up right in the middle of SHTF.

It is not only important to see and recognize signs. It is important



to believe that it can actually happen. Because after I saw all the signs, I just said to myself, “Oh, it cannot happen here. Somebody somehow is gonna solve everything.”

It is very hard to trust in something that you did not experience before. Only now do I believe that a lot of horrible things are possible.

## The scars of survival

Every New Year is a year further away from my survival experience during the war. And it's another year closer to the next SHTF situation that can happen anytime.

After my course launched in 2013, I enjoyed all the discussion and feedback I got for my survival course and for my writings. At the same time, I went through very dark times again. Depression and some anxiety caught up with me.

Most of you here are more experienced survivalists and preppers and many of you have a great bug out plans, have good amount preps in their storage and understand what signs to look out for.

At some point, when you have things in order, I hope everyone does not forget to live life at the current moment, without worrying about SHTF.

Survival is a double-edged sword. You want to be mentally prepared for the worst-case scenario, but nobody can without having been there. Sometimes when I read survival forums, I see people living in fear, even though life is not bad for them at the moment. If I have any wishes for everyone it is that people get serious about survival and preparedness but also enjoy good times as long as they last.

Anxiety, depression and negative thinking can take your energy away before anything starts. This is a post I wrote to put my

feelings and thoughts in words. It was negative, and I wasn't going to share it.

But now it makes sense to highlight the price I had to pay for becoming a "survival expert" without wanting. You should know what kind of scars constant struggle for survival can leave.

### **The scars left behind**

I am kind of a dead man. Emotionally, I guess. I caught myself during my regular walks yesterday evening 2-3 maybe 7-year-old girls looking at me and giggling.

I needed a few seconds to realize why. While I was walking next to the playground something just caught my eyes. 30 centimeters long green grass was slowly moving because of breeze, and smell entered my nose. I guess I froze and stood paralyzed.

I did not see the joyful and noisy playground anymore. Instantly I was moved back, 20 years ago and one other picture was in front of me. My cousin and I are walking through the wet green grass. There are maybe 7-8 dead people around us, freshly killed in that grass.

And smell from the grass was so powerful and it is a good smell. Like spring, like freedom. It smells like youth, like young girls and boy teenagers drinking wine and listening to guitar playing.

It was impossible to comprehend and put together smell of grass and dead folks in the grass at the same time.

I do not know for sure for how long I stared at the grass next to the playground, but I had strange look probably because kids were giggling. One man, a father probably, came and looked at me then quietly moved kids from my vicinity. I figured that I probably also had strange and not so nice glare in my eyes.

I never know what is gonna be, and when.

I met a guy from the same area where I was during the one period in the war. The guy was looking young, but he wasn't a kid. We were talking about war and hard days. I asked him "do you remember Siljo, he died from wound infection? "

The guy was starting to look confused. Then he told me "Damn man, I was born that year when he died". I mean damn, he was something like a 20-year-old dude.

**I'm still living that war.**

I am still living kinda in war. 20 years have passed but I still see myself as a guy from that war.

I remember everything. Every dead guy. Right now, I can smell that rotten smell of gangrene that took one guy's leg, and his life later.

It is still in my nose, and 20 years have gone by.

Those 20 years are gone like in a dream, everything after that war is like dream, in terms of being blurry, and I keep catching myself

asking “What was that yesterday?” about something that happened yesterday, and I do not have clue.

When I walk out every second guy or woman I see remind me of somebody from that time, someone dead. When I hear kids laughing out, I hear screams inside me.

Loud music from the car that just passed me reminds me of song that was played on big speakers after calls for surrender as part of enemy propaganda. Hell is not burning fire. Hell is an impossibility to forget things. Hell is seeing these things in front of you again and again.

I caught myself thinking that the best days of my life are over, not because I had it, oh no. It is because I am not able to feel real joy anymore. My tasks in life are blurred, and I think all that I want is to go somewhere next to the sea and lay down and watch how clouds are moving and then sleep and sleep.

Something entered in my chest 20 years ago, and it is burning like hell from time to time, it is literally choking me and terrifying me. It is the rage, it is sorrow, and it is tiredness. Pure horror it is. It is there, and I cannot kill it. I can somehow fool it and cheat it for some time. But even when it is not burning, I can feel it.

When it burns, I live through it all again and again. Sometimes I use walking to kinda exhaust it. I keep walking and walking or go to the gym and move weights to exhaust me. Sometimes I notice my kid and see that my empty stare is scaring her.

I do not have friends these days because there are no common topics. I am alone. I am afraid of rage somewhere hidden inside me, I can feel it, but I do not have clue when it will erupt and against who. I have feeling that it will be blind rage when it comes out.

I think about a good friend. He was one of the toughest people during the war. He lived for some time good after the war and we went shooting together in the forest.

He was preparing as well. He did not do anything that made his life worse. But suddenly, just a few months ago he simply stopped to care.

When man gets caught in wild river and there is danger of getting drowned, without any help he can fight longer or shorter time, and eventually he will simply get released – flow free in the river, then he will get few short but tremendous moments of peace, of watching to the sky, then he will drown and die and is swept away. My friend did just that. He just surrendered, I still try to swim.

I cannot eat, all food tastes the same, actually no taste at all. My mouth is dry, I feel like I chewed sand. It is what it is.

What I want to say is that there is enough darkness out there. Whatever puts you down in the future, remember to swim and not give up.

# PART TWO: THE SHOCKING REALITY OF SHTF

In a violent urban survival scenario, the violence is the easy part

When times are hard, people show all kinds of their characteristics or their real face. Call it whatever you like.

That is another reason why it is not so popular to write about the details of that time.

Some people did bad things and survived. Some people did good things and died. Some people just acted strangely at that time.

People later do not want to discuss that, they do not want to remember it. Over time, a man can really force himself to believe that he did not do some things, even if he did them.

No happy gatherings of a group of people who survived all that, nothing like big reunions with barbecue with cheerful talks about “how it was then” and drinking beer.

When we sit somewhere together, we do not talk about these times too much.

If we really go into something from that time, we usually lie to each other. Everybody of us who survived has something particular that he does not want to talk about or to remember.

Often this is something embarrassing or very bad or cruel that one did. It made sense back then in a survival situation but today



when you have food on your table it is hard to understand... even for yourself.

I had a friend who was a pretty fearless guy when it comes to some tough situations, fights, life and death situations, man to man combat until the end, and hard stuff like that. He was easy with violence. But what he could not stand was the time frame between the launching of rockets and detonations when the rockets exploded.

To explain it a little bit for folks who have never been in a war: there was something like shelling by surprise from multiple grenade launchers. So, you hear distant “bum“ sounds, some 15 or 20 separate sounds, deep sounds, every maybe 1 second or less, by the time you hear maybe six of these sounds of grenades launching, they are starting to hit already.

An explanation is too poor, words cannot explain it. But usually that kind of shelling was used on an area like a street and the whole area within 200 – 300m in this street was a death zone. It was hard to predict what area they had shelled before the grenades hit.

So, in real life, if you find yourself in the open at that moment and the shelling area is where you are, you do not have too many chances to live. Sometimes people jumped for cover and broke their arm or leg doing this to find out grenades fell in a different part of the city. That few seconds between first “bum“ and explosion where the grenades hit felt like an eternity.

I could swear that it lasts for hours, not seconds. So many things to think about in those moments.

Anyway, my friend could not stand those few seconds whenever he was caught in an open area. Every and each time he would lose control of his body functions (he sh\*t and pee in his pants).

He would cry after that like a kid. He hated himself every time after that, but he could not help it.

Feeling in your stomach when the grenades fall around you, is like you want to puke and shit at the same time, a lot of people say that is because of huge vibrations, but it is pure and a real sense of terror, and complete lack control over your life.

And remember, he was no coward at all. Each and every one of us had his horror moments when you just were lost, when you just surrendered completely.

I have seen few times that people blow other man's brain out with bullets, and later even make fun of that. Then later those same people throw up when they have to eat macaroni infested with worms, dead worms cooked with macaroni.

For me maybe worst thing or thing that I hated most were some smells. Constant smell of burnt things. Not ordinary smell of wood or coal fire but the smell of a lot of things set on fire. Heavy and greasy smell that somehow just go directly in your stomach, like a lot of dirty things are burning but with very slow fire. There

is nothing to compare it with today. The stench of rotting meat of dead bodies came into that as well.

The closest thing would be like somebody set fire to a huge pile of city trash today. But still, it is not so close to that.

Especially in the morning smell was heavy. Very often I just woke up and had to vomit as soon as I smelled it. It was something stronger than me. Actually, it did not have anything with the fact how strong or weak I was.

### **You have to know your breaking points.**

Every one of us had own small breaking point, most of the time violence was an easy part of our time when we tried to survive.

When you prepare for a possible SHTF scenario do not get lost in too much technical stuff. Try to get to your limits. Try to know your breaking points.

I have a friend who comes from a troubled background and was involved in some crime in his late teenage and early adult life. He is really nice guy today but because of his past violence, blood and gore come easily to him. But he has real problems when it comes to seeing or smelling poop.

I work in emergency services, so I took him along to some jobs when I knew it would be messy in a very unpleasant way for him.

Turning around a homeless guy who is too drunk to move and

has sh\*t himself and been lying in that at the same place for two days is special experience... especially for someone who has a real problem with poop.

You get an idea of all of this. I think a lot of writing about survival today is about gear reviews and buying another gun and that is fun, I know. But going to places where it hurts you today... where you can push your limits is time very well spent.

Do not expect to “overcome” all of them. Some things always get you but knowing about this and being mentally prepared for it, makes big difference in stressful survival scenarios when many things at the same time test your limits.

Why many preppers will die

Survivalists and preppers are (or are supposed to be) by definition something like smart folks, people who do not trust mainstream bullsh\*t, who follow their own path to be winners at the end.

Actually, in reality, the truth is different.

We all like to say that we are special but just like everyone else we fall under the influence too.

### **The biggest mistake preppers make**

How many times you or some prepper you know built or formed an opinion without even checking it? How many times have you bought some item and stored it just because you *think* it makes sense, not because you *know* it makes sense and you checked on it.

It is often an easier way to believe others and you can not try everything yourself, of course.

One of the most stupid things or worst mistakes that you can make in prepping is to become “mainstream”. Slap label of prepper on you and you start to think you are smarter than others. You may think that preppers and survivalists cannot be mainstream because it is not logical, but yes, we can.

We gonna buy bag for BOB because someone said “it is best for

BOB” usually without checking who is the guy who said it. Or we gonna say “I have the best gun for SHTF” because someone put a huge amount of money for marketing it. If most preppers look at their storage, they can find items they know the theory of using it, but never used it.

The problem here is not buying these things. The problem is with how you formed your opinion. Many survivalists think they know, and they have a plan but that makes them in reality less flexible to consider all options.

When SHTF and you realize quickly that you have completely wrong boots (or weapon, or BOB or whatever) you maybe still can fix it if you act.

Changing way of thinking (or plan...) is harder.

### **Here's a story about a man I knew.**

There was a man who before SHTF was owner of few cafes, pretty wealthy man. He was involved in some crime business and you could hear from time to time how he was involved in some fight, or he was arrested or served some time.

Sometimes he was out of the country for months or year, rumors were that he was something like a professional thief, specialized for breaking into high class homes, jewelry and safes and similar.

Those stories were rumors only, but in his cafe in town all guests were his crew, and going there for coffee was not forbidden, but

also was not a bright idea. If you entered there (probably) nobody would kick you out, but atmosphere and faces there clearly would tell you that you are an outsider.

In short, he was something like a “tough guy” in the city. Weapons, secret gambling, prostitution etc. The guy with his crew.

On first rumors of troubles he started to sell his cafes I guess in order to leave the area, but he was too late. When SHTF, and groups and gangs started to form, he simply gave his cafe to the leader of one group in exchange for protection.

Later when that leader and group were destroyed, he found himself imprisoned for some time. A lot of people around were robbed and tortured or killed.

He immediately agrees to write a statement that he is “selling” all his cafes to the leader of the new group, of course in exchange for the life and freedom. They had it anyway, but they needed that piece of paper for a time after the war.

After that, he was something like “lone crazy dude” through the rest of the SHTF period. He was nobody.

He survived everything and after that, he needed quite some time, a few years to prove that he was forced to “sell” his cafes.

Eventually, the court gave everything back to him.

Soon after that he sold everything and emigrated somewhere, probably to a place with less chance for another SHTF event.

My friend talked with him before he left the country and after some time, they touched on the subject that a lot of people wanted to know about.

Why did he go down so easy? Why did he not resist at the beginning with his crew? Why did he not have his own strong group during SHTF? Things like that.

He had the original answer: “Every time they were stronger than me, I simply had to let it go”.

**Things are not worth your life.**

His story is not so unique, but I know much more stories about how folks got killed because they refused to leave their home (and run) when under attack by several people armed with firearms, while they were unarmed, or armed with pistol or knife, clearly outnumbered.

I read every day on web sentences like “having this gun will save you when SHTF” or “with this BOB you cannot lose when SHTF”. Of course, this is marketing crap from people who want to sell you something.

Please do not get yourself killed or allow your family to die when SHTF just because you put your “perfect” BOB on, your “zombie survival” rifle in your hands and went out to save the world.



Do not get killed because you “draw the line and here you stand your ground” for example when they attack your home or your storage. Do you really want to die just to hold onto *things*?

In the world of survival, a number of people are gonna blindly believe in their equipment, or just blindly stay where is impossible to stay. They think they are much higher from folks who are gonna take the smartest option (however bad it could look).

This is why many preppers will die. Regular folks will run but some preppers take so great pride in their plan or equipment they do not make the right decisions when it matters because of their ego.

I am not the dude who is living in a tree armed only with a kitchen knife and a big mouth. I also have BOB, BOL, equipment, weapons, and plans.

But if I see that my SURVIVAL is in question, I am ready to say f\*ck it to everything.

Sometimes to survive means not to win but to give up and wait for the next chance. Do not expect to be a winner all the time.

## What We Ate and How We Got Food

At the beginning of everything, most of the people did not have any significant “stash” of food in their homes.

In other words, the majority of common folks had food a or couple of days in their pantry and that was it. There were exceptions to that because the process of collapse did not happen in a few hours (in terms of suddenly there is no food in the stores).

When the chaos started, people looted stores after a short period of everyone buying things in a panic. Still, the majority of folks did not manage to get a decent stash of food from stores. Some did not want to believe that they were gonna need a stash. Others did not want to go out and participate in looting because it was dangerous. But I think the most obvious reason was that all food from stores was taken very fast.

In beginning period of SHTF, events unfold at a very fast pace. Actually, events go one after another so fast that if you find yourself lost in one event at the end of several events, you ask yourself, “Why in the name of God I did not go out and buy a whole bunch of food while I still could do that?”

### **Gardening was difficult.**

Yes, it was an option, but the percentage of food from a garden was low because of a few reasons.

It was a city, without enough land for significant food growing, and the second reason is that even people who had some land (small gardens near houses) needed time to grow food there.

People usually did not grow food there in normal times, flowers, tea, maybe some particular kind of tomato, salad greens, and similar.

I remember going and checking gardens for tomatoes because people had tried some new sort of tomato close to their home, not as a way to have food, but as an attempt so they could see if it was OK to have it somewhere before they had a bigger piece of land for growing (before SHTF in a peacetime).

So yes, gardening was an option, people used every part of the available land, but that was not enough, and it was like you are checking every day how your tomato is growing, and you wait for it, but then you pick it and realize you have food for only a couple of days.

We were not prepared at the time to use every piece of land for food growing. It takes time to establish that.

Still, it was precious, and it was protected just like your home, in the same way.

### **We survived because of MREs.**

There was no schedule for food drops, at least no real schedule because it was all based on rumors like, "Tonight they are gonna

drop food from airplanes.” If you asked, “Who told you that?” the answer was “a guy who heard it from guy who heard...” So, of course, it was completely based on luck.

Sometimes, it would “fall down” every second night, or you heard it had fallen somewhere, it would be “I heard it from a guy who heard it...”

Sometimes it was 3-4 times per week. Of course, they dropped it, but that does not mean we could find any of the food. Other people would simply grab it before you.

Some folks headed for the hills every night in order to wait. People would choose one guy from family to go up every night and wait.

If those food drops had any schedule there where they loaded planes (as I understand later, the place was in an air base in Italy) it was completely lost on us down in the city in the chaos and empire of rumors.

You need to understand that in that time those planes were not the only ones to fly, so sometimes we were out waiting for food, but actually other planes bombarded us.

But very early we learned to recognize the low humming sound of food planes, distant but powerful.

Now when I look back, it is weird how we trusted some of that information. For example, if we heard that food was gonna be

dropped that night in some particular part of the city, some small area of some hill, people would go there.

A reasonable man would have thought, “Oh, so some poor ragged guy in the middle of civil war and information blockade suddenly has info on where several huge military airplanes are gonna do some operation?”

Not to mention the fact that the whole city together with all the hills looked to those people in the airplanes like small dots.

It was nonsense. But we were hungry, scared, and in the middle of chaos without any real information, so people trusted in a lot of things, especially in good news.

Do not underestimate the power of rumors in hard times.

“Food drops” were performed for many cities in this area during the hardest part of the war. They helped on different levels.

Even today I find one of the happiest sounds to be the sound of MREs raining on a hard surface.

I did not know the technical details (and still don't) of how exactly that worked, but most of the things that were dropped would break apart in the air, so on the ground, it would “rain”.

It was like a lottery to be in the middle of that rain because the MREs were good stuff, and valuable, even though some of the

bigger stuff coming down could kill people. (It happened more than once with bigger packages).

MREs were meals all in one package: food, sweet stuff, matches, even that hot sauce that was pretty handy when we want to add taste to some weird food that we ate or to mask a bad taste.

### **Foraging and hunting are overestimated in urban survival.**

When it comes to foraging for plants, I know it is a popular opinion in some circles that you can survive and live by foraging.

In terms of urban survival, it is, in my opinion, overestimated if you are an average man.

Maybe it would work if you have lots of knowledge about edible plants, and maybe if you have many resources of those plants and are in the wilderness.

We were average urban folks. Our knowledge about edible plants was limited to the one or two usable plants that could be used for homemade tea.

For example, yes, we used pine needles for tea. It sounds great today, it is good healthy tea with vitamins and so on, but you can not live on it, it can be in addition to your food, but not your main resource.

Older folks jumped in with their knowledge. They were folks that in those times remembered WW2 and hunger, and people usually

listened to them when it came to what plant you could use for food.

Plants like nettle and dandelion were used, and in the worst periods, people simply started to use any available grass mixed with small amount of flour.

Eating plants and herbs in that time was not a case of healthy living. It was a matter of not having anything else to eat.

It was the city, so hunting or trapping anything more complicated than a pigeon was not really an option. The other reason was that it was city in the middle of a war, so real trapping had its own complications like shelling, constant noises, and similar.

If your situation is extreme, hunting or trapping can be about trapping pigeons or shooting a stray dog.

### **We also scavenged for food.**

When the SHTF, especially in the beginning, some houses became empty. People left or died inside (for whatever reason, for example, shelling). Then folks would go through the empty houses and scavenge for food.

One memory from that time is the endless stench of rotten food (there was no electricity for the fridges). In the beginning, you could find food in that way.

If you were lucky sometimes you could find a bigger amount of

food. Sometimes you came upon a house where the ex-occupant clearly hoarded food in the first days of rioting.

That period of time did not last for long. The stench of rotten food was pretty much substituted with another kind of stench. Soon there were more dead people than spoiled food in the city.

But even later, you would never know what you could find in destroyed and abandoned houses. Maybe few cans of food hidden or forgotten somewhere under the rubble, or in a destroyed fridge.

One thing interesting from that period (when it comes to scavenging) and also very important in prepper terms is that I witnessed and was part of something that I can call the transition of scavenging or maybe resetting the values of goods.

It goes something like this:

First people ran riot on stores and looked for valuables like gold, money, TVs, stereos, cars...then as they realized the situation, they looked for weapons, fuel, then candles, batteries, and food, then they'd dig up some gardens for few potatoes.

People needed some time to realize what was really important. It didn't take very long but sometimes even a few days, or a week is important.

I have seen people running from a mall with items that, in few days, would become most ridiculous items to possess (and to take



from a burning mall) in the middle of a collapse, things like a TV or a laundry machine or a music collection of a famous band.

The majority of people could not imagine what was coming, so they could not fathom that a bag full of AA batteries was gonna worth more than 50 laundry machines.

For example, the laundry machine was usable only to plug a hole in the wall from shelling or to reinforce the door.

I am not advocating that you go out rioting and taking stuff from malls and stores when SHTF, but let's say that if you find yourself there, think about what is useful to take in prepper terms.

Here is one example: if the SHTF again here, there is parking machine in front of my home that gives you an automatic ticket when you sin here insert coins. As soon as I see someone busting it open to take money from inside, I will go and take the small solar panel from it (it is solar power operated). While other people think about money inside, I am thinking about solar power on the outside of it.

### **You stretched things to just keep your belly full.**

Over time, it gets important to have some food, or in other words to have your belly "full" of something so easiest solutions were to water food down, or to mix it with plants.

In other words, we ate a lot of "soups." For example, if we had a

small amount of meat and rice, but we have water and some plants, we would make a big pot of soup.

In some cases, it looked more like tea (a lot of hot water with a small amount of food inside) but it solved the problem of how to make something big out of small amounts of something.

When a situation is hard – when it is hard and demanding on both psychological and physical way – you cannot really ration yourself. You need to eat something, because of the simple fact that you can not operate if you are not fed. So, we ate a lot of very low-quality food, and yes, we were always more or less hungry.

The food we ate was not tasty or good, but it kept us alive.

It was a matter of economic thinking. It was not about making it delicious because we had scarce resources like wood for fire. and simply because often it was impossible to make it delicious.

It was brought down to the level of getting your stomach full of something, so you can continue to operate one more day.

### **We cooked with fire the whole time.**

We cooked with fire, a stove that used wood, and often an open fire in the yard. It was a constant equation of heating and cooking with low wood resources.

For example, if we needed to get a fire for heating it was used at

the same time for cooking. A small open fire on the yard was used in weather when there was no need for heating.

### **There was a black market for food.**

There was a thriving black market for food and it was a matter that changed all the time based what was available in the city at a given moment.

For example, if food drops that week were good you could find MREs cheaper. Other times, all you could find was suspicious-looking meat cans without manufacture or expiration dates on them.

Nothing was fixed and for sure on black market, not even fact that you gonna survive the trade not to mention other things.

(Again, it was a matter of levels, so there were people who “owned” the market (people with strong organizations, firepower, and connections). Sometimes they dictated the “pricing” of food in the city, and sometimes there were common folks who could offered you few cans of meat or two MREs from their stash.

Sometimes you could run into a man who was offering you “powdered eggs” but in a dark, not secure environment (you are trading with unknown armed people for example), you needed to be sure it is not some useless powder. There were scams and you needed to be sure who you were trading with, how secure the place was, and what you were actually trading for.

## **Things to know about eating when the SHTF**

There are options of foraging for edible plants and hunting or trapping some animals in the city when the SHTF, but do not count on that as the main resource for your food, not in the long run.

Acquiring food in urban settings comes down to the idea of taking food from other people – either people that are not there anymore (empty houses) or people that are still there (through the trade or attack).

All of the above options (just like lot of other prepper activities when SHTF) usually are not fancy and romantic/friendly.

When scavenging through deserted places, you can get injured and that injury can get complicated when there is no medical care. During a trade, you can get scammed, ripped off, or simply attacked and injured or killed because of the resources you possess in that moment or due to a lack of careful planning.

By attacking other people to get food (if you find yourself that desperate or if you wish to go that way) you are risking, of course, being killed.

In the end, it comes again to the idea that you need to be prepared very well for SHTF with your stash of food or your small garden where you are gonna choose what to have and how to use it in the most efficient way. You should minimize the need to go out and scavenge, at least until, you figure out some things.

## What Hunger and Thirst is Really Like

Smart folks wrote a lot of studies about how hunger and thirst affect your mind and body. I think majority of them never experienced it on the long-term, so all that, while it is correct, still cannot explain some things.

In most of the serious prolonged events, your problem is not going to be being completely out of food and water, because those kind of problems are easily solved by you ending up dead because of no water and food at all.

The real problem actually is being forced to “operate” under the condition where you have less food and water than needed and lower quality of it.

What that means?

It means for example that you need to combine crawling, hiding, and shooting for two whole days without any amount of water or food, because situation caught you without it.

Now you can say, “I will endure two days without water and food. I can do that.”

For sure you can, but remember that you need to “operate” in a very sharp way, under a lot of stress. You need to kill or be killed.

It is not like sitting in your armchair for two days waiting for

water and food to come.

And you need to add ALWAYS more factors that gets the situation complicated.

For example you'll be hungry and thirsty for two days while fighting under a lot of stress PLUS you gonna have case of diarrhea, or you gonna be completely soaked because it's raining, or you gonna have some nasty cut...

Another thing is that the quality of food plus the low amount of it over certain period of time gets you into the situation that you are almost constantly craving something.

It can be a simple thing like you are constantly need ing more bread, you are taking some amount of food each day ,but it is simply not enough, so you are constantly actually hungry.

**Hunger is also a psychological thing.**

So over time, you learn somehow to „switch off” that feeling of craving all the time, but it is like you are killing a whole bunch of other emotions together with that feeling too.

So it does not need to be anything “tactical.” You do not have to be involved in fighting, you can be bugged in at your house for days or weeks waiting for better times.

But with low amounts of food and especially water it will eventually kick you. Even if you can stay low and hidden (without

too much physical activity) it will kick you psychologically and it can drive you to make some stupid decisions, just because you want to go out and look for some particular food somewhere.

**We ate things that most people wouldn't think of as food.**

It is a matter of levels. Sometimes I get questions over mail asking if we had cases of cannibalism, and the answer is no. People need to realize that the road to that extreme is very, very long.

There are many bad things to eat before getting to that extreme (even if you are willing to go there) and people do not realize that.

I ate spoiled and old food of different kinds, expired food (cans of cookies from military storages that were expired for decades), food with worms (cooked together with those expired cans), grass that was boiled in water, leaves from trees. We ate different kind of meat, pigeon for sure, and I am quite positive cat meat once, and rat meat once probably.

## Being in a city under siege

When the SHTF there might not be army outside shooting at you, but there might be gangs who prey on you to get your supplies. Being under siege feels like someone takes the ground away you walked on.

Nothing is like it was before. When you defend your home, you need to have mindset change. Home is not a cozy secure place anymore. Home is the place you chose to defend yourself and loved ones. You will feel very different about the place you used as defensive base forever.

To stay protected or to try to protect against firing and shelling required some skill, knowledge and in lot of the times good luck.

### **The violence was shocking.**

I can say that at the beginning people acted very brave. But on the other side that was not courage, it was more like lack of knowledge of how easily a man can be killed. People went out like kids with water pistols only that getting wet might be own blood or blood of friend on you.

I watched few times a man attacking another guy who is hiding behind some cover. Attacker is just running towards the guy behind cover and constantly shooting. The other guy behind cover just leans forward for second, gets timing right, and kills the foolish attacker.



When you have bunch of civilians with lot of weapons, some strange situations can occur. Remember I am talking about people that most of them did not know too much about war, fighting, tactics, and everything else.

We did not have some smart philosophy of street fighting, especially not in the beginning. But as the time goes by, some of the obvious things get figured out or learned if you like.

If somebody wanted to attack someone who is inside house, most usual way was to use RPG or hand grenades on some of the openings to shock people inside and create some shrapnel flying around.

Quite often, guys used human shields to get to the house. A lot of people got killed because they thought it is not OK to kill some poor prisoner in order to defend the house.

Imagine that three bad guys come towards you and they push two older women in front of them. Terrible situations. After some time, most shot at everything that looked suspicious... no matter what.

Most of the fighting in the city was like shoot and hide, fight while moving, like fighting with shadows, they are everywhere, and each shadow can kill you. You often fight people who you do not even see good, so to walk or run lightly was the key.

Often you do not see enemy and shoot at whatever. Sounds bad but in lot of the situations very good thing was to shoot at

anything that looks even close to suspicious, and in most of the situation not even stop later to check.

You never know how well you hit. Just grab your stuff and move.

Move...

Move...

Move...

I remember that. Always on the run.

### **Psychology in urban warfare**

Fear was one of the greatest allies of fighting, so if one of the groups wanted to kill or expel other group from some street, position or building, the usual method was to talk to them for hours over the megaphone device.

Maybe from this perspective looks ridiculous but if you listen for hours or days for one and same story how you are gonna be treated good if you surrender yourself, after some time a lot of folks are gonna start to believe in that.

Or in other case you may listen for an hour what that guys gonna do to your family and you if you do not surrender yourself.

**It's hard to imagine how wrong things can be.**

After watching a video of Syria and the people in Homs some

memories came back. Some dark memories hide deep inside of me. Not easy to get to them. But this is one that came back.

My friend got caught with his buddy in one house, actually two of them are left something like behind enemy lines, in basement of destroyed house. An enemy group, some 150-200 men was doing sweep through that street, robbing and killing civilians who had not time to run. He said to me that they spend two days in basement, covered with all kind of junk, watching outside through small opening, few meters from opening was a corpse of a little girl, maybe 10 years old.

In order to see if somebody was coming to their basement, one of them needed to be constantly at that small opening, watching. He said he managed to watch atrocities that those people did to civilians and somehow push that deep inside his brain, over the time, to put these memories away. But to stare at a dead kid all that time, with her eyes wide open, her blond hair, he almost lost his mind.

One of them had a pistol and few bullets, other one had a rifle , 30 bullets and a homemade grenade (made from unexploded tank grenade).

They make agreement, if they see enemy is coming to the basement, they gonna fire everything and blow themselves with that grenade. Nobody came into their basement, though. A burned house was not interesting for other guys. After two days, the enemy group just pulled back.

They survived the war, both of them. One of them became drug addict, lived very fast for a few years, and died from an overdose.

Other man is still my friend. He is in his mid 40s, prepared, armed, strong, skilled. He has two kids, boy and girl, teenagers. Both of them know how to shoot, and how to defend themselves.

I can only write stories here. The reality is a whole different thing. Once things turn ugly, some things can feel so wrong they cannot be understood or processed with normal mind.

Actually, there is no way to deal with that.

Sometimes with friends we can speak about these things. Sometimes we laugh. Other times some of my friends are quiet for days, I do not know, I have periods like that too.

I think none one of us is dealing too good with that, maybe pushing it away from time to time, I have for example some periods when I am too aggressive, easy to explode, rarely now, but I still have those times.

I hope we all never have to go through this again. But if the time comes, I'm ready and you should be too.

The dirty truth about water and sanitation when the SHTF

When there was no more running water, just like most other things (especially when it comes to non-preppers) it was a matter of levels and layers.

The tap water was going on and off for a few days before service went completely off, so people had a few bottles of drinking water stored. But of course, most of us thought everything going to be restored very soon so nobody had considered storing big amounts of water.

When it comes to lack of water and being unprepared, the levels and layers that I am mentioning meant that you first looked and asked for tap water (clean) for drinking. Then collecting water from rooftops sounded like a good idea. Then drinking directly from the river was good if there was no other source. And then, finally, when there was no other source. you simply drink dirty water even when you were sure it is quite dirty.

It was a matter of low resources, desperation, and of course low skill levels.

Our main sources were rain and the river.

### **How we collected rainwater.**

It was not anything smart, especially in the beginning.

The gutter system normally took water from the roof through pipes into the underground collectors and sewers. When we concluded that the running water was not coming back, we simply sawed off a piece of gutter and pushed it inside the main gutter that led from the roof system (on the side of the house that looked inside the yard). Then we collected water inside a barrel.

We just used the water collection system that was existing there already, and just cut it off at a lower point, before the water was “lost.” We redirected the water into a barrel.

It is actually pretty amazing how much water you can collect from the roof during one summer storm. A lot.

When it comes to that system of water collecting our main problem was lack of containers, because even if there is a huge amount of water to “catch” from the rain, we did not have enough adequate containers for that.

Probably if we were prepared in a smart way for that, our water problems would have been easier.

**We had to purify/filter water for drinking and cooking.**

We did this in two main ways: boiling and filtering.

Filtering of the water was very rudimentary. We did not use any real filters, and people did not know how to make anything too complicated.

The most complicated filter that I saw in those times was a slightly changed version of a “bottle ” filter with rocks and sand with added cloth inside.

We used cloths for filtering, or gauze. If water was visibly contaminated (particles) we would repeat the procedure until the water looked satisfying for us.

Boiling was a widespread method of making water drinkable, and often the quality of stoves and fuel for it were “measured” by the time needed for water to boil.

**The rivers and streams were contaminated even before the SHTF.**

River and streams in cities were polluted (if we talk about drinking) before the war because poor care was taken of it, and it was mainly because of industry.

When SHTF, that kind of pollution went down because of obvious reasons (everything stopped working) but other kinds of pollutants were there. City services did not work, and many people lived next to that river (upstream too). So, it was polluted with everything, including bodies from time to time.

We drank it, sometimes even without boiling and filtering. I survived it, but I was sick many times, probably because of that.

**Cleanliness was very different then.**

By the standards from before SHTF and standards today we were not clean most of the time, because most of the time we did not have enough water for that.

By the standard of that time (SHTF) we managed to use very small amounts of water to keep ourselves as clean as possible.

Most of the time it was something like sponge bathing with a bottle of water.

It was a joke at that time. Often people would say, “I just had shower using wet napkin only (from MRE)”

Years later I saw a similar scene in a movie, and it brought memories back.

And actually, it is a great thing to have a huge stash of those ready for SHTF.

When it was safe, we used the river for that, or people sometimes simply get naked in their yard during the rain.

**There were many sanitation-related illnesses.**

Everybody was at least once really sick from diseases that probably were caused by lack of hygiene, bad water and bad food.

Diarrhea, vomiting, exhaustion...

A lot of people had a couple of times heavy episodes of that,



because simply, the whole chain of hygiene was really bad and broken.

Either you had problems with waste disposal, or bad water, or bad food, or simply you lacked personal hygiene.

It was a constant problem.

Sanitation problems were solved in a way that people would just throw away garbage from their own houses, as far as possible, or burn it when it was possible.

Because the system was out (of taking out garbage from that point) the result was that city was suffocating in garbage.

Diseases were inevitable.

Just like any other diseases they treated depending on knowledge and resources. In essence, people would try to cover it with medicines if possible and available, and with natural remedies.

Also, the sick person would be separated from other folks if possible.

Often method (and pretty stupid in that time because other bad factors) was to just leave a sick man to clean on itself, without food or anything, just a really small amount of water.

**Latrines were important.**

Very close to our house, through the destroyed building, there

was small piece of land, which was “hidden” from all sides. We used that as a simple “dig a hole” latrine. Later we built something like primitive field latrine.

It was a simple hole in the ground covered with wooden boards, with channels leading away.

It worked more or less, but we had the good luck of having that place with enough “ground” close to home where it was pretty safe for spending that time there.

Folks use toilet everywhere that was available. Inside toilets were mostly out of use mainly because of the lack of water.

Of course. it contributed greatly to the city being a very dirty place.

## My Experience with Precious Metals During a Collapse

I am aware that with this article, I might kill (or at least threaten) a few “sacred cows” but from time to time I do write similar articles about this topic. There are a lot of misconceptions about the usage of precious metals after a collapse.

I am aware too that my experience was my experience and that in some of your future experiences things might work differently when it comes to precious metals, but still read the article and think about it.

Precious metals are valuable, but not in the way you may think.

### **What do you mean by “collapse?”**

There are maybe differences in what one person might imagine when they think of “collapse” and what I imagine by hearing that word. Even today, there are systems in the world that are actually “collapsed” – but in reality, those system are still functioning; they are just functioning in a horrible way. They are on the brink of the collapse, but they are still functioning.

To an average person from modern western society, it looks like everything collapsed, to the person that lives in that mess it might be a hard time, but it is definitely not full-on collapse.

For example, I currently live in a society and system that you might describe like “SHTF”. There are car bombs, political

murders, 50% unemployment, terrorism, corruption on every level, poverty, organized crime, an immigrant crisis, the constant threat of new war, etc., etc.

Some people say that the SHTF is here already, but it is not a real collapse. There is a system still there, it is a crooked, corrupted, and completely wrong system, but it is there.

I consider it a real collapse (SHTF) situation when (for whatever reason) the system actually collapsed, and trucks (with goods) have completely stopped moving.

It does not have to necessarily be a war like I experienced. There can be a whole lot of other situation that can produce that kind of prolonged collapse.

A serious weather event, a natural disaster, an EMP, an economic disaster event, etc.

When I share my advice about the usage of precious metals I am thinking about this kind of event.

**In the middle of the event, you want things with real value.**

When collapse happens, basically you have two options (when it comes to precious metals) either to give them up for food (or ammo, water filters, antibiotics or whatever) at very low rates (bad rates for you) or to wait for some kind of system to return and then use precious metals (at good exchange rates).

It is a very simplified explanation, but it is like that.

In a real collapse, people want to trade stuff that they can use immediately, and the reason for that is surprisingly simple – it is because they cannot obtain stuff for immediate use in the regular way, like buying from shops and markets, and they still have to eat, have water, medicines, and similar.

People want stuff that has real, immediate value and use.

So as a result, in a real collapse stuff that can get you through that collapse is usually not precious metals. It is stuff that has immediate use and value.

Again, those precious metals have good (or even great) value when some kind of system returns, but it is usually later, and you need other things of immediate use and value to wait to for that moment.

**There are always exceptions.**

Of course, there are exceptions to this above, but those are not rules, those are exceptions.

There were people who had enough power (force) to have plenty of resources, so they simply traded those resources and took precious metals from people at really really good rates (for them, not for people). Then they hid those PMs, protected them with enough force, and they waited for the system to return. (for war to stop).

And yes, they are rich people today. They had immediately important resources at a good moment, and they had enough to sell.

I sold some jewellery at that time to people like that. I sold golden necklaces for a couple of cans of food. In normal times one of those necklaces would be worth maybe 1000 cans of food, but those were not normal times. The guy had food, and I did not. I had precious metals. He could set rate – I could not.

So as an exception, yes, you can have, and even deal (trade, collect) precious metals when everything collapses and wait for a better time and better rate, but you need organization for that.

But if your whole prepping plan is having PMs and hoping that when the SHTF some kind of trade system will jump in where you are gonna buy stuff with your silver coins like you do with money today, then your planning is wrong.

**At some stages, precious metals can work well.**

There are some early stages of SHTF when money is already not good, but immediately valuable things (food, ammo, meds...) have not yet jumped in as a priority.

At that time, precious metals can work for bribing, paying for small things, solving problems etc.

But even then, if you end up at some check point where 3 guys

are standing guard and you want to offer them a bribe in order to pass the checkpoint what are you gonna offer them?

A collectible coin or your wife's golden ring? You have to be careful. Even then, have things that are ordinary. You want nothing that needs to be checked very hard or nothing that will make them suspect you have a lot of those things with you.

At that stage, you are best off to trade usual everyday jewellery, cheaper golden or silver rings, necklaces etc.

## **Conclusion**

I am not actually against having precious metals, but I am against the way this is presented in the survival realm today.

Precious metals have their place in the world of prepping, but they will not solve your most immediate problems, or at least it will not solve it in a way that many preppers imagine it.

On the list of items that I want to have when SHTF again, precious metals are there, but a long way down on the list of priorities.

When your loved ones get hurt or killed

For a man to have a family means a lot of things. Family means a lot of work and worries, but also a lot of happiness. A good family means support when you are having problems, or you are in some difficult periods of your life of course.

When SHTF it can work in both ways, too, bad and good, but definitely having a family will help you more than being alone.

There is one other side to that. During SHTF when anarchy and fighting for survival means violence and you see people close to you get hurt or killed.

Lots of people here in my country have gone through that, including me, and of course after first reactions that are common to all of us (grief, anger, sadness...) we react differently.

How we managed to cope with the pain formed our whole future life.

It formed us, destroyed some, and even gave strength to few.

When you lose someone because of illness or old age or a traffic accident, maybe you may accuse the bad health system or even God, but eventually you will say "It is life, we are all gonna die, it is how it is supposed to be."

But when you lost someone close because someone shot him



during a fight between two opposite groups (because they are different, or because they hate each other, or just because one group wanted resources from another group) it is different.

Or let's just say that you are watching your close friend or family member dying because you lack some medicine after everything collapsed. But you know that there is medicine for some people there, and no medicine for others, because of power, wealth, politic or religious reasons.

It can change your whole perspective of life. It can put lots of RAGE in you.

And it is RAGE written in capitals. It lasts for years, and it can drive all your decisions. It can consume you at the end.

I've seen (and still see) lot of people here with it.

### **Two examples of how people handled the loss**

One example would be the guy who watched how his family was killed just because they are different nationality from the killers.

He survived because he played dead, later he said that actually, it was not about playing, he simply was shocked and paralyzed. He was 13.

He survived his wounds and grew up into a man whose mission is to prepare for the next SHTF event, next war.

He finds his meaning of life in preparing for the next SHTF, but

with lots of hate and rage. He became obsessed with hating other groups of people, the ones who killed his family. And actually, in the end, he became like them. He is alone now, no family, just hate.

All his life has become about preparing for revenge. Rage and hate are driving him. He keeps talking about a big day of payback. His mission is to make other people lose their families like he lost his.

Another example is the man who lost his daughter who was 9 years old. She suffocated inside burning house that other folks set on fire, and he survived.

He had a period of hard drinking, and then after that he turned himself towards religion. His life is now about love and forgiveness. He is in some NGO that is trying to create a dialogue between victims from all sides. He is alone too and obsessed with his mission.

I drink coffee with him sometimes. He is not really preparing for the next SHTF event because he is believing in “nonviolent solving of problems” and similar.

Both guys’ stories are examples of how things can end up.

I sometimes drink coffee with the hateful guy too. Where he gives me “adrenaline“, the other guy gives me “peace“.

I like both of them for what they are but if you ask me now, I

think that for the future SHTF event, they will both run into major problems with their ideas.

The first one is blind because of his hate, another dude because of his love. I think (and that is only my opinion) that they both take wrong lessons from their experiences.

**There is another option.**

It is not all about love and not all about hate. You may call me an idiot but yeah too much love and faith into the people may (and will) kill you eventually too.

As I said, I've lost family members and friends too, and I had my portion of coping with that. And it was not perfect, I had periods when RAGE "colored" my life dark red and when all my actions were driven by it.

Luckily, I overcame that. I have not gotten rid of my RAGE but toned it down, so rage now. Probably it is not even possible, but I kinda learned to control it. Sometimes it still controls me, but it is rare.

I like to think that love and hate are parts of life (rage too) and too much of each one can misguide you actually. It is just me, maybe I am wrong. At the end of the day, survival is about having options.

Use your love to form strong connections with your group. Use your hate to have energy and motivation to reach your goals. But do not let any of these emotions control you.

Have a good time with people close to you in the coming days. No matter what your mission is, nothing is worth being alone.

## Dignity: the line between human and animal

I want to talk about dignity and what it means in a survival scenario.

Before I talk from own experience, read the excerpt below from the diary of Lieutenant Colonel Mervin Willett Gonin<sup>[1]</sup> who describes what happened after his unit freed the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp during the second world war.

At the moment of his writing every day hundreds of people still died, and it was a place of pure horror.

*It was shortly after the British Red Cross arrived, though it may have no connection, that a very large quantity of lipstick arrived. This was not at all what we men wanted, we were screaming for hundreds and thousands of other things and I don't know who asked for lipstick.*

*I wish so much that I could discover who did it, it was the action of genius, sheer unadulterated brilliance. I believe nothing did more for these internees than the lipstick. Women lay in bed with no sheets and no nightie but with scarlet red lips, you saw them wandering about with nothing but a blanket over their shoulders, but with scarlet red lips. I saw a woman dead on the post mortem table and clutched in her hand was a piece of lipstick.*

*At last, someone had done something to make them*

*individuals again, they were someone, no longer merely the number tattooed on the arm. At last, they could take an interest in their appearance. That lipstick started to give them back their humanity.*

The importance of still being human and not become complete animal is often overlooked part for people who prepare for long-term survival. I had over one year to fight against becoming like rats around our house during the war.

### **Expect to become more like an animal.**

You can have all equipment ready for SHTF, ammo, weapon, gear... you can even be perfectly well-trained in a lot of different skills and fields. And still, when the SHTF, you can end up dead in the first days just because you refuse to believe what's happening.

It is that state of mind when a man simply does not want to comprehend the new situation. Or he is not able to.

It can be one quick life-threatening situation like folks attacking your home and you just waited a few seconds too long to shoot some attacker, and then you are dead, end of the story.

Or it can be the whole process of failing to recognize the new world around you and new rules (or absence of rules) and then again you are just not doing the correct things for the situation. And again, you end up dead.

An example would be that when SHTF you are trying desperately to have and use power generator and light all rooms in your houses just because it means a normal life for you.

That normal life is gone and trying to bring it back in that situation usually means more troubles.

Holding onto all comforts and behavior you are used to can be dangerous.

To make long story short, what I am trying to say is that you may be trained and equipped like Navy SEAL member and still you can be killed easily from some 70-year-old dude, with even older rifle just because you were surprised when the SHTF with amount of destruction and violence and you did not see that old dude coming (or being so evil).

On the other side, that old dude maybe lived through a couple of SHTF events in his life, and he knows when it is time to act without hesitation and mercy.

There is still a fine line you have to walk between losing your human side and becoming a pure animal.

**SHTF is very dirty.**

One of the things that changed a lot when SHTF is fact that everything became really dirty.

It was something like a slow process. First people tried to keep it

as clean they could, but without all normal services, like garbage trucks, running water, and all other community services that make normal living, soon it simply became impossible.

Later all garbage was used somehow, but in beginning, it started piling up everywhere. When you add to that ruins on the street, human waste and dead bodies it was a very ugly picture.

After some time, we started to accept dirt outside and then it was a priority to stay clean and keep clean only inside that small circle inside your home. And when I say “clean” I do not mean “clean” like today. Maybe as clean as we could be.

### **The smells were terrible.**

For example, simply moving through the city in the middle of the night meant that you needed to crawl, jump, hide, walk ,or run through all kind of things, and very often some real nasty and dirty things.

Many times, I was hiding on places so dirty that stench was almost paralyzing. Once, in the middle of the night, I jumped behind some wall because of sudden shelling, and when I jumped there, I realized that I had landed on a dead guy.

His face was smashed with the broken wall and partially buried. The place there was so small that I had to actually lay on him for some 20 minutes. He died probably when a wall from the house collapsed after some shelling, who knows.



Fire from the shelling was so strong that I actually loved that dead guy and that place at that moment. I almost hugged him while I was trying to be as small as possible because pieces of steel and rock were flying around me just like some crazy rain, while my stomach was rising and floating from the detonations and smell.

All I was saying at that moment was “thank you, thank you, thank you” like some magic words. And I even was not aware who did I give thanks to, that dead stinky guy, my brain for noticing that small space, or God for saving me.

Today years and years later I still carry that smell inside my nose. But I did not move from there before the danger was gone. It is survival and luckily, I was already used to dirt enough to just stay with that dead guy.

### **Some people just stopped caring.**

Some folks just stopped caring about cleanliness and hygiene completely. So, for them washing and cleaning become something like a not-wanted luxury. They went complete animal.

They simply stopped caring about these things. I also knew some guys with a look and smell so awful that even that dead guy smelled like perfume store.

It was easy to surrender to stuff like that, I mean in trying to keep yourself clean.

But it was stupid not only in terms of the hygiene and illnesses, but also by surrendering yourself you admit that you do not care anymore. And when you admit that you are only a few steps from becoming an animal with what you do, too. People gave up on themselves.

For me being as clean as I could be was something like preserving one of the last connections with “normal” life – with life before sh\*t hit the fan, when things like neighbors, breakfast, cars, etc., were just things we took for granted. When it felt like things were always gonna be there unchanged.

Of course, I was aware that being clean is important in order to stay alive because all of the disease problems, no doctors, no hospitals etc. But on some psychological level, it kept me sane and it kept me a normal man.

Even in a survival situation, you need to still care about a few little things to keep your dignity, to keep your spirit up, to not lose yourself. If you stop caring about everything it is like a disease that eats you.

When I came back from trading or scavenging in the city, I would clean or wash myself thoroughly in my yard before entering my house, again of course, because of common sense, hygiene and diseases. But maybe even more important, I tried to keep all the chaos and violence, the suffering outside of my home on some psychological level.

I tried to keep everything outside of my home, like some ritual. I would keep the clothes outside in a bag, my boots were in one corner, never entering my room. etc.

One of my relatives wears pink slippers when he was home sometimes, he would say that he just felt that everything is fine when he wears them. It was spooky and strange to see him in pink slippers while outside world is going to hell, but we all have some strange ways, I guess, to keep ourselves sane. Maybe wearing those slippers after he was forced to shoot some folks kept him sane, reminded him of some normal times when grandma wore them in the evenings.

**But sometimes you had to be an animal to survive.**

On the other side, as I said in the beginning, if you stick too much to old habits you are not doing the best for survival either.

So, if I had to be an animal, I was an animal. It was about survival. For example, there was a period when I ate just to survive, like an animal, without paying attention to what I ate or how.

If I found some food, I ate it in a quick way, if there was some food with worms in it, I would eat it in the dark, without looking at what I was eating.

The point was (and still is) to be a man but to be ready to be animal if you are forced to be animal, and that's it.

It comes down to being flexible and adapting to the situation.

I hope this helps to crush the idea some Hollywood or fantasy survival scenarios show that survival is about being a complete animal. No, it is a fine line to walk.

You can (and you should) have as many hand sanitizers, soap, disposable face masks etc. as possible, but still end up dead if you are not ready to accept fact that one day you might have to eat roast rat or pigeon to not starve. You might be forced to “hug” dead guy in order to survive.

When the next collapse comes, many people will wake up to reality and struggle to be human like they were or become animals.

As a skilled survivalist, I hope you will walk a fine line in between. The people who were walking that path were – and I’m sure will be in the future – those who have the biggest chance to survive.

[1]

<http://www.bergenbelsen.co.uk/pages/Database/ReliefStaffAccount.asp?HeroesID=17&=17>

When you survived but you are dead inside

Survival is not only hard on your body but can also kill you inside. So, you survive but you are a just empty shell. You all heard of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) but I call this just being dead inside.

But it does not have to be like that. First, let me tell you about Alek.

I have known Alek for many years now. I met him during one hiking trip I did with my survival group here. He was something like an outdoor instructor. Later I heard from other folks that he went through some crazy stuff during the war and that he was a member of one of the groups when he was just 15 years old.

We never talked about that before. Anyway, that kind of topic here is very unusual to discuss. Many have blood on their hands and it brings up bad memories. If we talk about that period, we only mention some funny and stupid things like, “Do you remember the tree leaves we smoked as tobacco, man? “

And we laugh.

But at the same time, we are remembering in our thoughts how someone got killed or similar. You laugh because you don't want to cry.

We were spending the night in one of the mountain houses, some

of us brought families, others were alone. During the day, the kids spent time in a small amusement park in the woods. He was there as something like a park ranger.

The night time was for a big campfire, barbecue, and drinking.

One night, a few of us were next to the fire. Most people had already gone to sleep. The other guy and I talked about hunting, rifles and stuff like that. He was quiet.

Suddenly he asked, "Do you remember that smell of a wound when a man gets badly shot in the abdomen, or when he gets shrapnel in the same place?"

We both went quiet.

I remembered the smell, but I did not say anything. I could almost taste the metallic taste of blood and some hard and sharp smell that stays in your nose, the smell of p\*ss and sh\*t too.

I smelled it a few times.

The first time when I smelled it, a shell exploded hitting the building entrance behind me and some men from the neighborhood. A rain of shrapnel was flying towards us. One guy got shrapnel, pieces of wall and steel fence in his stomach.

And all kinda mixed up at that point of his body, I mean it was a just bloody mess, like if someone put blades from boat motor engine in his stomach and turn it on, all mixed up.

He was young and strong, so he screamed a lot and yelled. Later I figured out that in fact I was almost deaf (from detonation) for some time and that helped me to not listen to all his crying.

He grabbed one guy's hands, and that guy had real hard time to get his hands free again.

At that moment you just want to get the hell out of there because you can die too, and nobody wants to look in a dead man's eyes who begs for help you cannot give. Everyone just ran and hid. And he did not die fast. He was screaming and crying, and asking "am I going to die? " and we all just wanted it to be over at last.

People mostly do not die like in movies. No heroic last words, messages for fellow comrades, country, or similar. Mostly they cry for their mother.

After these pictures came back for seconds in my mind Alek continued telling us his story:

*I remember that moment when I first saw wounds, big wounds and mixed smell of everything, burnt flesh, blood, puke and sh\*t and I think I smelled something else that I think was pure horror. At that moment my childhood was over, and suddenly I become a man. I was 15 years old.*

*I lost my father during one of the shellings and the local group took me as their member. In that time, they called that "courier" (messenger) but it did not have too much to do with delivering messages.*

I was something like a mascot for a group, but very soon I went to do whatever they did, and I did not see anything wrong in all that killing. Of course, alcohol helped and drugs too. One by one gang members were killed, or “disappeared” but I stayed until the end.

Those guys were family to me. I did not even notice that most of them were pure animals. Actually, I did not even understand that they raised me into the same animal. They were great to me, cool guys.

To everyone else, we were something else. Monsters probably.

When it all ended, those from the group who survived disappeared from the region in fear of revenge. I moved from that region and I did not come back for ten year. Even then when I briefly visited the town, I always looked over my shoulder.

I become interested in hunting and weapons. For years I was searching for more and more “exotic” ways to kill animals, with different kind of weapons. I traveled all around the world in search of that.

Then I met someone, and I got a kid. Suddenly I found- or I thought I found out – what is like when you have someone of your own, somebody that really belongs to you. And I really wanted to belong to them too, but it did not work.



*She told me that I'm a "freak" and do not know feelings of any kind. And she left. And At that moment I lost all interest in hunting. I could not kill animals anymore. Even shooting at the shooting range was too much for me. I hated it suddenly.*

*I found peace in the woods. I am living practically in the woods, without real friends and many contacts with other people. I am spending my time in the city only for buying food, then again, I am in the woods. I think I found God in the woods."*

He had one more beer and went away. I was thinking about his words.

A few days later I discuss everything with a good friend and when I told him about Alek's words that "he found God in the woods" and how that gave me the creeps somehow. My friend told me, "He surely found something in the woods, but it is probably more devil than God"

I asked, "Why?"

He said that all his talking about exotic places and exotic ways for killing animals in foreign lands were lies.

Yeah, after the war ended, he left the region and spent ten years doing what he learned to do best.

Killing, but not animals. And this time killing on contract and for

serious money. Rumor was that he was quite popular in that “business”, with some terrible methods.

Everything else was true, he did have wife and kid. And yeah, he did retire and found something in woods.

To survive some big SHTF scenario and continue to live later in a “normal” world is not so simple.

You can not just put a clear boundary between some periods of your life and stop thinking about bad moments.

Imagine an earthquake hits your area and all the plates in kitchen fall down and most break. You can quickly stuff them back into the cupboard and keep them there, but they are still broken. You can hide them, and they are still broken. Putting things away does not fix them.

When we are born, we learn to trust people. When you experience what people can do or even what kind of animal you can be, it destroys this trust and it is hard to rebuild.

It often stays with you for the rest of your life. You just try to live as normal as you can and that's it.

But it is always there.

It is an everyday thing. For example, everything is cool and OK but then, for example, something “kicks” me back into that time. Some smell, maybe, or a sound.

I was walking on the street a few weeks ago, and I heard the sound, it was a mixture of whizzing and humming noise that was coming closer fast.

I almost jumped behind a car, and it was a sound of helicopter toy that 5-year-old kid was “launching” some 30 meters from me, in my direction. But for me, it was sound of one of the improvised rocket-bomb devices that were used often during the SHTF. I learned to recognize it and act at the same moment. “But it was 20 years ago,” you gonna say. Well for me it was like yesterday. It is every day.

When you are taking coffee in some coffee shops and you “catch” yourself that you are watching other guests and assessing them.

“How dangerous is that guy?”

And, “He has 9mm Glock in that small bag.” (We have lots of concealed carry here. I do, too)

Or, “That dude in the black jacket has a butterfly knife in front pocket.” ,

And “That guy is guarding his back while he is reaching for change, he dropped on floor – gun stuffed in his back-belt. “

Etc., etc.

You can say “get a life.” I will say this is my life now.

Do you think that you can go through months of collapse and a

whole bunch of life-threatening events and then come clean from all of that and have a normal life?

You can't. It is not romantic like that at all.

Telling others how it was and how it is gonna be again – helping in a way that I find some sense in surviving all that, other than having my life. It's a mission I feel good about.

Breaking some stupid myths about what SHTF is gonna look like helps too. Everyone who wants to read this stuff is possibly one more person who is gonna be prepared more tomorrow when things get tough again.

I slowly glue my broken parts together again, also writing this here today.

Writing is my therapy and for you who read this it is what is called “primary prevention” in psychology. That means exposure to real scenarios help to prepare you mentally for what can happen. It is a win-win situation.

Just never forget your mind on the battlefield or one day you wake up alive but empty.

## Why I missed the best time to bug out

The best way to survive is not being close to any problems. During the Balkan War, I missed my chance to bug out in time. I ended up surrounded by the enemy army and trapped in the city for a year without power and regular resources. Everyone was fighting for the little what was left. That we were being shot at by snipers and artillery from enemies did not make the experience any better.

There are many reasons why people fail to bug out.

There can be many reasons you don't get out, like failure to recognize that S. gonna hit the fan, blocked streets on the way out of the city, problems convincing everyone to leave, or just some special events you want to stay for.

I mention many times why I failed to leave the city before everything became blocked. I simply did not see the signs, or even if I saw something that looked serious to me, I assured myself that everything gonna was gonna be OK in a short time.

### **Here is the mistake I made.**

And of course, the media was there to tell us that everything gonna be fine, nothing was gonna escalate etc. It was like that, but as the time goes by, I am able to see one more mistake that I made that contributed to my choice of staying.

Actually, it was not really a conscious choice because I failed to see that I had a big choice to make back then. We humans like to go with the flow and that is what I did. There was no choice actually made, just years later when your freedom is taken you realize you failed to make the right choice.

So, the big mistake I made was the fact that I was simply fascinated about how events are unfolding in front of my own eyes. It was kinda mesmerizing.

You know that feeling that you are going to be part of something big, something that it is gonna be part of history books?

I had that feeling on some subconscious level, I guess.

It was like being part of an event that goes like this:

- **Day 1:** Today we lost the ability to phone outside town, sporadic shots were fired the whole day, on the TV there is no news from our city, which is weird...
- **Day 2:** I just saw a tank on the street, went to check is there anything left in the store to buy or take, but actually there was no store anymore. The tank was slowly rumbling over the street, and a guy who was standing next to me said, "They gonna ruin the asphalt with that beast" like that was important. That guy still thought in old terms, as we all did. I think he thought that it is temporary, and tomorrow city gonna need to repair that street because the tank ruined it, and we all pay that through our taxes, and so on, and so on.

- **Day 3:** Our first neighbor shows up with a rifle and said “I’ll gonna shoot that motherf\*\*\*er. “ I asked him, “Who?” He said, “Anyone who approaches my house.”

In the beginning, it was like being in a movie, but pretty soon we all were like, “F\*\*k, people are getting killed for real here.”

One day after another day, the events unfolded, one more dramatic than the one before. It is a bit like slow collapse that we experienced now, changes coming step by step, even in a short time. But it was all exciting until one point and then it was too late.

This is what happened.

***One day it was simply too late to leave.***

Now you need to understand that this was not the only reason why I stayed in the city, it was not even most important. But still, it was one of the reasons and one of the reasons that can be easily overlooked.

I see and read that lots of people still make similar mistakes. It is *interesting* for them to stay and see what is going to happen.

For those of you who were part of some SHTF event, whatever it was, some natural disaster or similar, you may understand what I am trying to say.

**The SHTF won’t wait for you.**

It is the fact that the timing of events is not going to wait for you. It is going to unfold on its own, and at the end, it is simply gonna overrun you if you are in its path.

You will be left behind to sit through the consequences or you will be destroyed.

People often act like the world is spinning around them, and like nothing bad is going to happen to them, while in reality, you and I are nobody in the bigger picture. When you get more experience as survivalist and prepper you maybe even become arrogant and think you know what you deal with and can stay and wait.

I was young then, and my blood reacted differently to gunshots, screams, or hearing about attacks or defense, or pride and similar, so I can blame that too. But still, it is easy to fall into the thinking of “staying to see what happens.”

Oh, it was interesting for sure. Especially in the beginning, before I realized fact that people died in great numbers and that there is a huge possibility that I could be killed too. When I still thought it would not be a big event, that it would soon be over.

Later it was all about trying to survive. It was like constant running for your life. You become a very humble man if you almost lose all control over things around you.

And remember the saying: “May you live in interesting times.” Remember that it is as much a curse as it can bring you excitement in good times.



So, if you see that “interesting times” are coming to your neighborhood, just leave the area. It is much better to be “bored” but alive somewhere else.

## Gun Confiscation: "Here's How It Might Actually Go Down"

After reading a couple of articles about magazines/weapon news from New Jersey – actually, after reading a lot of comments from people on that news- I have the urge to write this article. It is written from the survivalist point of view. There is, of course, the possible danger to get comments like “What the hell do you know Selco? You are not American, shut up!” Because I am going to be “poking” a few sacred cows here.

So...

**Right now, this is not the rise of communism.**

“Stalin is coming.”

I do not think this all news is about “rise of communism” in the US, and also, I do think that you still live in a land with a lot of great rights and liberties, which is very cool.

What is not cool is the fact that you are moving in the direction of slowly “shrinking” of those rights. But it is still very far away from a “communistic evil empire”, so I do not see sense in having big headlines about Nazis and such other than scaring people for whatever reason.

### **Weapon rights and the government**

I see here something which is much more dangerous than the

fear of communism.

It is how people react to news or new laws about any weapon limitation. It's how they talk about what the majority of them are planning to do.

Government at its core has the urge to control people in whatever way they can. If you are more armed that means you are less controllable.

But if you are acting in a way that you are screaming from the rooftops how you “will defend your right to have (whatever) weapon (contrary) to the newest law” and how you’ll “be proud to own I, and to show it” you eventually are not doing yourself any favors.

Do you really think that when the time comes that the government will send two pale clerks to search your home looking for whatever weapon?

Nope.

**Here's how confiscation might actually go down.**

Here is how it might actually go down. This is one possible scenario:

First, you'll be labeled as a terrorist, some weird guy who wants to overthrow the government. Maybe your photo will be posted

somewhere stating that you are very sick, and that you pose a danger to society.

If you are a member of some group, let's say a prepper group, you all will be labeled as terrorists first, and through the media, you can be portrayed as a domestic terror cell, to the point that your next-door neighbor will help police to get you.

Do not underestimate the power of the government machine. You may truly be a fighter for constitutional rights and a real patriot, but in 3 days you can become a crazy terrorist that citizens will actually hunt down and shoot like a mad dog.

The point here is there is no point of publicly “yelling” about what you own and what are your rights to own.

Of course, you need to own weapons that you think it makes sense to own.

But why does everybody else need to know that, including government and government services?

## **The 2nd Amendment**

The 2nd Amendment is very cool, and I like it very much, but here is the ugly truth:

It works only if the government wants it to work.

One day, when the government does not want it to work anymore it will be out of order, illegal, or even terrorist to practice it.

Sorry, it is not your inalienable right. The government lets you THINK it is your inalienable right.

Actually, you do need to protect that right. You need to defend it.

But again, not in a way that you gonna portray yourself as a terrorist. I mean, I will own what I want to own, and only I am gonna know that until the day when I need it very badly.

### **Owning weapons**

There used to be a law about weapons here, where I live, before the war. And yes, you could own a weapon, but it was such a hard law that actually not too many people owned legal weapons.

And right when the SHTF, first thing that happened was the confiscation of legal weapons, based on lists of who own legal weapons.

Now what people could do then was to say, "This is my legal weapon. I have a right to own it, by the law." And those who did that usually got shot.

There were 20 heavily armed guys at your door asking nicely for your weapon, to be turned over to them in the name of "law" as an effort of a government that wanted to calm down a chaotic situation.

Sometimes if you said no, those guys would simply destroy the whole house with RPGs and bombs. And guess what that meant?

Folks who owned legal weapon lost them even before the big SHTF. And a lot of guys who owned them in an illegal way hidden somewhere still own them when SHTF.

Illegal and legal have different meanings in different times and based who says those words, so think about it.

I am not saying that it will go like that there where you are. What I do say is you that you need to think a bit outside the box when it comes to owning things.

### **My thoughts on this**

For many years I found it ridiculous not to have an illegal (not traceable) weapon stored somewhere safe for the bad times.

When SHTF and when (if) guys show up on my doorstep to confiscate my weapon what will I do?

I will give them the weapon that they know about. What else I should do?

Practice my rights?

Nope.

I have more of that stuff. It's not worth it to fight over the one they know about.

What could be coming for the future?

Again, I do not really see the government taking away all rights of owning a weapon as a possibility there. The tradition of firearms is simply way too big, and also the number of weapons is too big, too.

But what is possible is the rapid shrinking of that right through some big event, in an effort of getting things back to normal.

When something big happens and there is big fear and terror, people are ready to “give away” a lot of rights and liberties in exchange for the feeling of safety and security. This is wrong of course but it is how things work.

So actually, you never know, anything is possible.

One bad side of having rights and freedoms for a long time (in owning weapon) is thinking it is always gonna be like that.

Or thinking it must be like that.

The “good side” of not having good gun rights is having a tradition of having ALWAYS hidden somewhere an illegal weapon. Always.

And only you know about it and maybe your family.

There is no need to brag about that anywhere else.

Going it alone... Some things to consider

It is very hard to survive alone when the SHTF, especially in urban settings.

I've written numerous posts about the advantages of having a trusted group when SHTF.

Still, I get questions about how to actually survive alone when SHTF, or how to be a lone wolf. Yes, some people managed to survive alone when the SHTF, but in much lower percentage and at a much higher price (and effort).

So, based on my experiences of what I saw, and what kind of folks survived alone (and how), here's some advice for all you lone wolves out there:

### **Mental Strength: Having a Cause**

Being alone in hard times gives you many more chances to find yourself without emotional or psychological support when you need it.

An SHTF situation will have a huge impact on your mental state and your emotional strength. And since you are going to be alone, you will lack that everyday small and big support from your family and friends in the group.

Do not underestimate the effect of this. If you forget, over time



you may well just turn into an animal, or simply get yourself in a state where you going to make some basic mistake and end up dead.

I was in group during my SHTF, and I had support from other family members, but still I had moments when I had doubts about everything, when I was so deep down that I could not see and sense and reason to move on, I had my own method for coping with that, together with support from close family and friends.

### **What you can do if you are alone?**

Find yourself a cause and purpose in the chaos that will unfold around you.

If you are a believer, a religious man or woman, you may have an advantage her, that can give you strength and sense in everything.

Other things help also, be sure to find out what helps in your case before SHTF because remember – you are going to be alone with your fears and doubts.

I knew a man who was alone during the SHTF, and he wrote every day in a journal about things that happened around him. He told me later that he started with that without any plan, over some time it became almost a way to make sense of everything, to carefully monitor all that was happening, and to preserve it in written form.

## **Mobility**

I already mentioned that if you are planning to be alone when SHTF, you need to be mobile, very much. So, what does that mean?

It means that you need to be ready to move more, in any case, much more than if you had a group.

Acquiring information, getting resources, scouting, etc. – it all comes to you only. You are everything in your survival circle.

That can change a lot of things.

For example, how much firepower can you have alone in defending your home against an invader? What about against 15 invaders?

It simply means that there is much more chance that you cannot defend your home because you are one man. There is much more chance that you'll be forced to leave (run) from your home.

It means is that you must be ready to have more. More than one shelter, more than one secret stash with ammo, weapon, food, etc. More than one option for almost everything.

You need more options because you are alone.

It is simple- a lone wolf needs to pay attention to same things just like any other group of survivalists, but much more and much

deeper. Because you will pay for your mistakes a much higher price, and usually only once and then you are gone.

## **Skills**

Every survivalist needs to have certain skills, group or no group. A lone wolf survivalist needs to have skills too, but again on a much deeper level.

He needs to be an expert in at least one relevant field. As a lone wolf you'll be forced (especially in prolonged SHTF) to form some kind of alliances to get stuff, or simply you'll be forced to join (for shorter or longer period) to some group.

When all your other valuables are gone (and you have more chances for it to be gone because you are alone) you will have that precious skill as a bartering value. Your skill will be much more important to you because you are alone.

Choose today, before SHTF, some skill that you feel best suits you and learn everything about it. Think about weapon repairing, gardening, medical skills, herbal knowledge... Become a real master of it.

One more thing about being alone and skills. The simple fact that you are alone requires from you much more effort and skills than having trusted friends or group, and it goes like that for every aspect of survival.

It takes much more time to gather firewood, start a fire, and

prepare food for you alone, than if two or three men do that. Not to mention how many skills have three men combined together comparing to one survivalist.

Let me give you an example, and it is a real-life experience. If two survivalists travel through an urban area and decide to spend a night or few hours resting in some ruin it is easily, they choose a building, check it, and take a rest with one man on watch.

If you travel alone, you will look for building, you will do that with more effort, it will take more time. You will look for a bit different type of building because there is one defender (you), you will have to make some traps (warning or killing) which will take more time, and you'll sleep with "one eye open" and so on...

As I said, both examples are from my experience and my SHTF. Being alone is not impossible. It simply requires more effort and skills.

## **Other People and You**

You are a lone wolf, but you will still be forced to deal with other folks, that is for sure. You will come into the situation where you have to cooperate with other people, or to trust other people.

My survival philosophy when it comes to urban survival is that urban SHTF means more people, and more people means more problems because you'll have to deal with them in order to survive.

That “dealing with other people“ when you are a lone wolf is much more dangerous than dealing with them while you are in a group.

It is simply because you are more vulnerable and less protected.

For example, if you are going to trade deal it is much more dangerous for you alone to make safe trade setup, as opposed to having you and two more group members with you.

With that in mind, you may conclude that you’ll be forced much more to avoid people because you are a lone wolf. It is simply safer like that. There is the reason why most of the lone wolves who survived SHTF were kinda weirdos who avoid people.

## **Aftermath and Consequences**

Again, let me explain through my experience and an example.

I survived SHTF.

I had PTSD for years, which drives my mind everywhere, from thoughts of ‘reasons for still being on this world’ up to the thoughts of writing the book.

I can say that I am pretty much not capable of living a normal everyday life. I cannot stand crowded places. In nice cafes I look for possible exits... in exchange for this pain, I am completely sure and ready for another SHTF.

But again, that does not give me the ease of living a normal life. I

have lost that ability a long time ago because I went through SHTF.

I forget the names of people, or streets or places. I even sometimes forget when exactly my kid was born.

But I remember so clearly how grown-up people cried before they died, gaping wounds and blood that always gave me “how much blood is there” thoughts, the smell of a building on fire, the crackling noise of fire and the glowing that mesmerized me.

And I remember much worse things. They are carved into my brain...

I am all that and I remember all that, even though I had the support of my group of family members. We cared about each other, about the mental state of each one of us.

I feel sorry for the lone wolf survivalist who will survive SHTF. He is going to be a mess.

There is a reason why most of the lone wolf types who survived SHTF were kinda weirdos who avoided people before and have a terrible time with the aftermath after...

As you might conclude up to now, there is no magic formula about how to survive alone when SHTF.

The rules of survival are mostly the same as being in a group, but

much harder or sharper in a way, with much fewer margins for error...

What an "average day" is REALLY like when the SHTF

A few weeks after the collapse came, all aspects of our normal life changed based on the new reality around us.

One aspect was “sleep cycle”- the time when we sleep and when we were awake and active.

One of the most basic rules that jumped in was that most of the activities got done during the night.

Some reasons for that were obvious, like danger from snipers. But also, the other reason (maybe even more important) was that over time it becomes very important to hide your activities connected to gathering resources.

To explain it more, when you have a lot of people in a small area (city) and you have less resources that are needed for that number of people, the fact that you HAVE something (food, water medicines...) needs to be hidden from people who do not have that.

The system (law, police, etc.) was out, and it was important not to give reasons for people to attack you because you have something interesting.

So, anything connected with gathering resources (wood, food, trade...) was finished mostly during the night.



Of course, violence mostly happened during the night too (violence that included “close fighting.”)

Activities in your home and yard were possible to be done in the daytime. For example, we would spend the day fixing our water gutter that goes from the roof, so it can go in a big barrel, but if we needed to climb on the roof and fix holes with tarps or to “funnel” it to the gutter, that needed to be done in the night time.

There was no “usual” time to get up, at least not in hardest period. Even if we did not have anything particular to do, we would be alert during the night time, simply because night time was full of different activities in the city, and you needed to be ready.

In our case (because we had more than 10 people most of the time in the house) we could do a schedule that meant not all of us needed to be alert all the night.

During 24-hour periods of time, someone was always sleeping, others were doing some job, but as a general rule nights were much more active than days.

Messing up with normal sleep cycle was a problem alone, and it contributed to the stress, feeling tired and stressed because you did not have enough sleep or enough quality sleep was a normal thing.

Sometimes close detonation of shells would wake me up, sometimes my relatives woke me up because it was my guard

shift, sometimes we would all be awake the whole night because of close shootings, and possible danger.

Sometimes I would wake up by myself because that day I did not have any particular duty to do, so I would stay home, checking things in the house, maybe trying to fix some things.

### **It was so strange not to have bread.**

Traditionally here (in Balkan region) we ate a lot of bread, and we eat it with almost all food.

It is actually strange not to have bread on the table, no matter what kind of food you eat, or what time of day it is (breakfast, dinner...)

It is a Slavic tradition from ancient times to greet dear guests with bread and salt (and right after that comes alcohol).

I am trying to portray the importance of bread here, and then when the collapse came, suddenly it became scarce (just like everything else).

I believe it was the biggest problem when it came to meals, the lack of bread, simply because we used to eat it a lot.

It was kinda a psychological problem for us too, not to have enough bread.

That was first biggest change.

Note: do not underestimate the power that food has not only in calorie terms but also in psychological terms. Having and eating food that you love makes things much easier. Store food in your prepper storage that you LIKE to eat.

Second thing was that the usual “schedule” of meals was lost.

It was very rare when we could all sit together to have dinner or breakfast, simply because someone was sleeping or someone else was busy with something.

For breakfast, we ate whatever was there in the moment. If the day was good and we managed to find something like an MRE or canned meat it was a good breakfast.

On bad days we usually ate “pancakes”. “Pancakes” were locally picked greens, mixed with water and very small amounts of flour (just to keep greens connected). It looked awful and tasted awful too.

The greens that people picked from nearest hills were supposed to be edible, based on rumors, or older people who had some knowledge about edible plants.

Another favorite at that time was “tea”. It was a big pot that stood on the stove, with water and local herbs inside, we called that tea or soup.

It was something like substituted for one of the traditionally

favorite meals in this region – soup. Just like bread, here it is a tradition to have hot soup with your meal.

Just like with sleep cycles, the times of meals were messed up. Also, the food that we ate for particular meals was messed up. We ate when we had the chance, and we ate what was available in the moment. For example, in normal times for breakfast here, we ate sandwiches or eggs. It was something to dream about during the collapse.

And yes, sometimes I simply did not have breakfast or dinner, or anything for a whole day or night.

Note: very soon people (when they had all ingredients) started to make bread in small pots right on the stove, it required not too much fuel and time, it was easy to make it (with flipping bread in the pot).

### **There were no jobs but surviving.**

In my case there no jobs you went to, because in that hardest period system was out completely. There was nothing like regular jobs in places that you worked prior to the collapse.

You could find a use for your skills if you had any, for example being nurse meant I had some knowledge and skills, and it was pretty valuable actually because I could trade it for food or other usable items.

When the system is out, any knowledge in some particular field is

important. For example, being able to recognize a broken rib or infection, and being able to help with whatever is available in that moment meant a real value that you could sell.

An important thing to mention is that in some other cities in the region where war was at the same time, some kind of system and government was still there.

In those regions, the government imposed something like “obligatory working “.

It worked in a way that, for example, if you were an electrician in a city company, the government could give you an order to work for free for some other company, military unit, or whatever.

In reality, it meant that some armed group or fraction could simply mobilize you and take you from your home.

My biggest skill in that time was my medical knowledge. Even when the whole system was out, even when there was no medication, there was use for my knowledge.

**There was no school for children.**

There were no schools in that hardest period in my place. The system was out completely.

There were some attempts from family members to try to keep up some level of homeschooling, but pretty soon it was clear that

we all had much bigger and more serious problems than homeschooling.

Kids simply lost that period when it came to school.

### **The chores were endless.**

People do not understand how much hard work is needed to get done things like water, food, heat, security because the system is here for us to take care of those things, so we do not have to.

We were ordinary city folks who did not have a lot of knowledge about stuff like how to go find a tree, take it down, chop it into small pieces, and bring it home somehow. Or how to collect water from rain or bring enough water from the river when that is impossible.

So, we learned that, but it took us time to learn. We were not preppers in any meaning of that word.

If you wanted to go to a hill close to your home and take down a tree for firewood it was all night job for a few people.

The first problem was that we did it in pitch darkness. After that, the next problem was to either to carry it in bigger pieces (and be slow and vulnerable) or to chop it down into small pieces (and spend more time in that place, which also was not desirable), or to leave someone to guard it while others took down pieces, or to go all together and risk that someone else took the rest before we get back.

As a carrying system, people often used homemade carts, very rudimentary setups made from an old baby cart or a wooden box with wheels from a baby cart, or similar. Or we simply would carry it on our back in bigger pieces and chop it later in our yard where it was much safer to be.

It was a heavy job.

Finding firewood was a constant job, so often while we were doing other jobs, we would collect it on our way, things like wooden windows and door frames from destroyed buildings.

Yes, there were days when we were good, we would have enough water, food, and wood. We were good.

But usually, we were always missing something.

When the system is out, way too much time is needed to take care of everyday needs.

If we had enough food, we did not have enough rain for water, so we took trips to the river. If we had enough water, then someone had a serious case of diarrhea and we were worried about that.

Not to downplay the physical threat, but preppers today usually focus only on the physical threat, on fighting, weapons, and similar, while there is much more to everyday survival.

One good example of the effort needed to get something done is trade.

In order to do trade, first you would look for information about someone who had some goods, then you'd check and recheck that information, then you'd take into consideration the risk of going there, then you'd make a plan how many of us were going and what we are carrying there, and then you'd go and do that trade.

It was a complicated and dangerous process.

### **Sanitation was totally different too.**

Close to our house, between a destroyed apartment building (we used that building sometimes as a guarding outpost or up-front layer of defensive ring of our house) and our house was something like a small park.

It was boxed (hidden) from 4 sides and pretty safe to use as a toilet by simply digging a hole in the ground.

After few months we built something like primitive latrine there. It worked for us during that time.

Toilet paper after some time become unknown, so we used what was available, clean rags and water and similar.

If you look at it from today's perspective, we did not do too much for personal hygiene.

It was a matter of taking quick sponge baths when we had time



and means for that and rare real bucket showers. But those were really rare.

When it came to our home, we did try to keep it as clean as possible. For example, we used one room for sick folks, we did try to clean ourselves in the yard and to take dirty clothes there.

Soap was possible to get in that time through trade, and in some periods things like alcohol pads were traded, but again the biggest problem was not having enough water for all our needs.

When you live for a prolonged period of time in those circumstances you kinda get used to the lack of hygiene. You do not like it, but you live with it, and even make fun out of it. Psychologically people tend to get used to the lack of hygiene, especially when everybody around you is in the same state like you.

It was again a matter of having bigger problems on our mind.

For the minor problems, there were things like fungus infections, very common simply because in some periods we did not have enough time to keep ourselves dry and clean. Small cuts were usually solved with alcohol (alcohol for drinking was more or less available).

Real problems were connected with bad food and water treatment.

There were days during the summer when it was almost

unbearable because of the stench that was in the city. A lot of bodies were not buried.

**Many family members lived in one home.**

It depends, but the tendency was that when the collapse came, relatives got together in the better house (between two families of relatives). So, for example, your uncle and aunt would come and live with you if their house was destroyed, or if your home was safer and better, or if you simply agreed that it was better to have more manpower together.

In my case, through that period, not less than 10 people were in our one house.

Usually, prior to the SHTF, living conditions and the number of occupants per house or apartment were the same as in any other European country.

One difference was that traditionally (prior the war) we did bring to our home parents when they got old, or too old to live by themselves.

For example, if you were living with your wife and two kids, and your parents are 85 years old, and one of them dies it was common to bring other parent to live with your family. You would arrange room for him and take care for him until his death, if you had a house big enough for that.

It was not the rule, but it was common as a part of the tradition.

Yes, we did have homes and pension centers for old folks where the state takes care of them, but it was kinda shameful to leave your elders there.

I am pointing out this as an explanation why when the collapse happened, people from the same family tended to quickly go together and form group. Suddenly you were in the same house with your grand-uncle. It was like that because strong blood tradition was present. It is not like that anymore. That tradition has faded away.

As a general thought, at first look more people meant more mouths to feed. But more people also meant more firepower, more working power, more support... It is about the skills, will, and mindset of those people.

### **We divided up our responsibilities pretty traditionally.**

Through the socialistic-communist society doctrine (in society before the war) it was strongly pushed that females and males were equal in any field of life, and people had that kind of mentality built.

But when the SHTF, pretty soon a traditional way of life jumped in. Women were staying home, taking care of kids and food, and men were going out more actively.

It was not rule, but it was usual.

Usually, women were the ones who knew how to make food from

something that did not look like real food or to make it edible, or to comfort sick or frightened kid.

Women were the pillar of everything.

I would say that we simply did things that each one of us was best in. It was not democracy. The person (not necessary the oldest) who had most organizational skills was in charge, simply because it make sense like that. Duties were divided between other members based on skills, strength, and sense of fairness.

But things had to be done if you wanted to be part of everything.

As I said, we were family, so we were closely connected from before, so we did not have any big surprises. We were not preppers, but we had that bond from before.

People of younger age would do the guard job, but a man of 85 years would not do that because we would do it much better then him. He would stay home that day and maybe take care of fixing the tarp that needed to be used for roof hole.

Note: There is a reason why I always advocate building your group way before SHTF, because in that way you get to know folks that your life may depend on when SHTF.

**There's one task we did every day.**

You could call it scavenging.

When SHTF in a serious way, you were simply always missing

something. Of course, you also missed important things, like food, water etc.

But you also missed (especially if you are not prepper) a whole bunch of small things that could make your life easier.

Some of those seem ridiculous. Like shoelaces, not only for shoes but also for oil lamps. But then you need shoelaces of a specific kind because the “bad kind” kinda melted and turned off the lamp.

You were looking for a simple crowbar because it is a great tool for taking down wooden door frames or similar. You needed small pot with lid on it because you want to take fuel from an abandoned car by making hole in the tank.

You were looking for spare batteries in abandoned houses, candles, wires, ropes, soaps... anything that would make your life easier.

And it is a process because you need to be sure... Is that house empty? Is it safe so it will not collapse on you (roof looked partially collapsed maybe)? Are you suspicious about booby traps because you do not know?

Simple things like a multitool (Gerber or Leatherman style) would make life so much easier in those days.

**I remember the homemade lamps.**

In that time, for a light people usually used homemade lamps. A simple glass with small amount of cooking oil, shoelace, and a tin bottle cap and you have lamp.

It burned with a “dirty“ flame, with a lot of thick black smoke, but the real problem was that it smelled bad. But at the same time, it smelled like doughnuts.

At least it smelled like that to us in that time. We had a lot of hard times sitting in the room, discussing something in very bad light, hungry but feeling like doughnuts are almost ready for eating.

Then I was imagining doughnuts because of that smell. Now, whenever I eat doughnuts, I always remember those survival lamps.

## The reality of gangs when the SHTF

To go out during the night and do things was dangerous. There were no rules and you did not know what to expect. We needed to go out to get things. Gangs and complete absence of any law was problem.

Constant shelling and snipers from enemy army was minor problem comparing to gangs. I think every city has criminals, people who live on edge of law, murderers, drug dealers, and those kinds of people.

### **In SHTF, the worst kind of people were in charge.**

They formed very fast some kind of their own private army, in some cases their number was in hundreds, they were drunk from feeling of endless power, because of them you needed to be uninteresting, small, invisible.

They had everything: food, guns, luxuries, they owned black market. If they wanted something from you, eventually they got that from you, your food, house, your wife. It does not matter what.

The best chance for you was that they did not notice you. Your other chance was that they see you have enough men and firepower so that what they want is going to cost them too much.

If you are expecting some kind of fair fight or honor in SHTF,

forget it right now. We just stayed away from them. There was not Superman or Batman in city who saved good people from bad. If we met them it was shoot and run.

Most of the gang members are still alive. Some of them through that power still have power today, some in private companies, some in politics.

To add more about gangs: Yes, they even had their own prisons, houses for fun, sometimes they abducted people for ransom, sometimes just for fun, there was no rule.

### **Typical Gang Members During SHTF**

It is very important to understand who is a typical member of gang in SHTF. As I already said before, worst kind of people is in charge in SHTF. Usually they take the lead, so you have then old criminals as a new gang leaders. Of course, you already figured they not gonna pay too much attention on moral issue or fair play.

In most parts of the world we already now in peacetime have gangs of all kinds. In SHTF, those gangs become something like private armies. People joined them, it is easier to take stuff from other people then to find it in a more “normal” way. So, you gonna have normal folks who lost faith, lost strength, and for them all that is left is to join gangs.

My point is to prepare you that in SHTF your first neighbor (who



is now for example car salesman) may be a very bad gang member. It was much easier to be gang member.

# PART 3: THE TRUTH ABOUT DEATH & VIOLENCE

## What you need to know about violence after the SHTF

Today I travel back in my mind. I write a lot about my preparations and assessments since the time I got trapped in my city and views on the future, but I will just now, write some about 'How It Was' back in that time.

Remember we were all thrown into that situation with no preparation, and found often that our allies were our enemies from one day to the next...

Violence is something that people like to talk about, and give their theories and opinions, but at the same time few of us experience the real 'deep' face of violence, being trapped in a prolonged a deteriorating situation.

You may have experienced bar fights, or home invasions maybe, shooting somewhere and similar, and those events can be life-changing situations for sure (or life-taking).

But I am talking here about violence so large-scale and long-lasting that it brings something like a 'new way of living.'

Overwhelming violence that demands a complete change of mindset.

I often hear, and I often agree, that violence cannot solve anything, and that violence only brings more violence. But when

you are faced with a man who wants to kill you, you are going to have to probably kill him in order to survive.

I hope that, at this moment, you will not care for philosophy, humanity or ethics, and that you just go do what you have to do, and you survive. Later you will cope with other things. This is how it works.

As I get older, I realize more and more that violence is the wrong thing. But at the same time, I also realize that I have to be more and more ready and capable to do violence when the time comes.

It is paradox maybe, but again it is how things work. I do not like that, but it is what it is.

## **Violence and You**

It is a way too big of a topic even to try to explain it in one article, but some things I must try to show you here.

There is a man, let's say we are talking about you here. An average citizen, a law-abiding person, and suddenly you are going to be thrown into a prolonged situation where you are going to be forced to watch and use exceptional levels of violence.

Do you think that you are going to be able to operate in those conditions with the mindset you had from the time when you were average law-abiding citizen?

No of course not. You will have to jump into another mindset in

order to survive.

Let's call it survival mode.

In survival mode, you'll have to not forget what it was like for you in 'normal' times. But you will have to push those memories aside in order to operate in a different mode – survival mode.

In a real-life situation that means for example that you'll maybe have to ignore panic, fear, smell, and noises in the middle of an attack and take the right steps in order to survive.

Maybe you'll have to ignore the screaming dying kid next to you, maybe you'll have to ignore your pride and run, or maybe you'll simply have to ignore your "normal" mindset. Maybe you are going to have to kill the attacker from behind.

There is a list of priorities in normal life, and there is a list of priorities in survival mode.

Let's just say that you are using your different faces and "small" mindset during your normal life and everyday business with the people around you.

Just like that, when faced with violence you'll have to use a different mindset, different face. Or another you.

## **Violence and Experience**

There is a strange way of thinking here for me, but since I have lived through the time when a huge number of people did not die

from old age, but from violence, I have experience in this subject. So here are few thoughts.

Experiencing violence over a prolonged period of time does not make you superman. Actually, in some way, it makes you crippled man, a man with many problems, both psychological and physical.

I do not put myself in way of thinking that I am in a better position now than people who died next to me, or in front of me. You may call me a winner or survivor but many days that 'title' sounds very hollow.

Am I lucky man? Yes.

Am I happy man? No.

But we are not talking in terms of quality of life. We are talking in terms of surviving or not.

Ethics, psychology, and everything else here is a matter for a couple of books to be written, and even then, you are not going say anything new. It is like that from the beginning of mankind.

What is more important about having experience in violence is that you simply KNOW how things are working there.

In a lot of things, you simply know what you can expect.

You know what chaos is, the best way of dealing with it, and you know what it takes to do things.

## **Preparing for Violence**

Again, there is nothing like real life experience. When you experience something like real violence, you keep that in yourself for the rest of your life.

What is best next to that? Other people's real-life experience.

So, it makes sense to read about other folks' real-life experience. Read a lot about that.

Physically training yourself is a great thing. You'll train to get yourself into the state that you are ready for hard tasks. So, of course, it makes sense to do that.

But training yourself mentally can be harder.

You actually can only guess how it is going to be, how it is going to affect you.

I can tell you that it is hard, chaotic. I can describe a situation to you, but can I bring you the feeling of terror in your gut when you feel that you are going to sh\*t yourself? Can I give you the smell of fear, the smell of a decaying body? Can I give you the feeling when you realize that "they" are coming for you?

No, of course, I cannot. You can read stories and real-life experiences and based on that you are going to "build" your possible mindset for violence situation.

You are going to build your "survival mindset".

But there is a catch there. If you build it too firm, too strong, and then there is SHTF and everything that you imagined doesn't fit the given situation or scenario and you are still pursuing and acting in the way that you imagine dealing with it you are going to have serious problems.

The situation will not adapt to your mindset. The situation will kill you if you are sticking too firm to your plan when it is not working.

You simply have to adapt.

It goes for any situation. If your plan and mindset are that you will defend your home until you die, you are going to die probably.

Whenever I heard people saying "I'll do that when SHTF " or "I'll do this when SHTF" I feel sorry for them.

When SHTF you will adapt and change your given plan according to the situation. Or you will not survive.

**It is same with violence.**

Violence is a tool that you are going to use according to the situation. It is a tool, not a toy.

Now to finish with a final thought. It can sound, from what I have written, that an SHTF situation is like a Mad Max movie. Everyone running around killing, hurting, doing things with no



consequences. In fact, this fantasy of a world 'Without Rule of Law' (WROL) is a big discussion in some circles.

For sure regular 'law' has gone. There are no 'authorities' or courts as we know them to deter or punish, BUT, during an SHTF situation you will find:

- **It is (especially in the beginning) like everything is possible.** The law is gone, you could go outside and see people looting stores, groups organizing (by street, or other facts like the same job in company for example) trying to either defend part of the town, or bring more chaos just for fun, sometimes you could not say what, both could bring violence and death to you. Over time the violence' becomes more organized and 'structured' to start to achieve certain specific goals (although there is always 'chaos' as well).
- **After some time, you look at the violence you encounter in two ways.** Violence happening outside your group, or inside your group (It is quite certain you will need to be in some sort of 'group' to stand any chance of surviving).
- **Outside your group, you just wish to be very 'small', invisible.** After some time, you do not pay attention to anyone doing violence to others, because, quite simply you are still alive, and want to stay that way. In terms of "I am still alive, I do not care what they do to that person, and how bad it is (your will and judging of good and bad is broken, you just care for your own life) it is like you care only for yourself while you are watching how others get killed, no matter what

you feel that it is going to come to you in the end (violence)  
you just care for yourself.

- **Leaders of the “bad” group (gang) have best chances to stay leader if members fear him.** So, in fact, he is most dangerous, vicious, sick bastard, nothing like a “reasonable” man. (Competition is huge in SHTF) Instilling discipline (through fear) and enforcing ‘your’ rules are paramount to holding your position as leader.

Various groups were interacting with the outside world and each other through fighting, exchanging information, trading goods etc., but every group was more or less a closed world, with trust only for those inside the group.

The forming of a group was quick, mostly because nobody expected this situation was going to happen, and so we’re not prepared. But very quickly we were literally ‘fighting for survival’. Any problems were solved “on the way” (bad members, not skilled, not obeying etc.) Sometimes through discussion and agreement, but always with the threat of violence as an option.

To finish, and to educate, as opposed to shock you: Many folks cannot think too clearly about the level of violence I am describing being involved in. Maybe you think SHTF is just like ‘Black Friday Shopping’ but every day. So, let me just give examples of the how far the world I lived in descended from ‘normal’. Remember this was a regular city, in a nice country in Europe, less than 25 years ago...

-People who never used violence before, did some 'hard' violence: normal people, dads, and mums, killing folks in order to save their families.

-Certain groups of people who look like they were just waiting for the SHTF so they can go out ("crawl out from beneath some rock") so they can fulfill their own fantasies about being kings of the town, imprisoning people, raping women, torturing folks in the weirdest ways...

-Strange groups organizing in whatever the cause they choose to name it, again only to gain power in order to have more resources (sometimes simply "gangs" of 50 people, sometimes whole militias of thousands of people) through terror over other people or group of people.

-Irrational hate towards the "other" – whoever the "other" could (or might) be (other religion, group, street, town, nation) because it is very easy to manipulate groups of people through hate and fear (from and towards "others"), if someone manipulate you that your kid is hungry because "others", he can do a lot with you.

Real life examples I saw:

- People being burned alive inside their homes (And people 'enjoying' watching this)
- Private prisons were made where you could go and torture other folks for fun, or rape women as a "reward"

- Kids over 13 or 14 years of age were simply “counted” as grown-up people, and killed as an enemy
- The humiliation of people on all different ways in order to break their will, for example, forcing prisoners to have sex between same family (like father and daughter and similar)
- Violence was an everyday thing, you could go outside and get shot not because you were ‘enemy’, but only because sniper on other side want to test his rifle.

It is a needed, but depressing realization, that people, even regular folks can become so cruel, so fast, BUT it is a very important thing to be aware of for anyone truly involved in ‘preparedness’.

## Understanding the reality of death

When I was young and under the influence of movies and books about fighting, war and dying somehow, I adopted views that death and dying is something unavoidable. I believed it was mostly noble and clean, and always had some kind of cause and reason.

Soon I realized that truth is quite different, and mostly there is nothing clean about it.

People like to think that death in combat is something like they see in movies because it makes sense, it gives you some kind of comfort. I have seen death and dying many times, both in combat and in bed at peoples' homes when working in emergency services, and I can count on one hand when it looked clean and "noble".

Buddy next to you who gets a few bullets in the stomach will usually scream a lot, smell a lot, and you gonna catch yourself thinking "Is he already dead? I cannot stand this..." and in the same time there's gonna be one more thought, prevailing. It is "Thank God it is him, not me, lying, screaming and dying..." and later you might feel guilty for thinking this way...

Dying people will call their moms, sons, wives... will hold to you with their hands like death is trying to drag them and you can

save them. Sometimes they will stare “through“ you like they already see something that is not from this world...

Sometimes you gonna see something like blame in their eyes. This time they are aware that they are dying, and they want to switch places with you. Why can this guy stay, and I have to go now? How unfair and cruel is this? This can not be real.

When SHTF be prepared that people will die around you, and it probably will look very different from the picture that you have in your mind now. And also, be prepared that looking at those deaths will change you on many levels. It will affect you. I have seen people that were changed in bad ways, also I have seen people changed in good ways.

But it will change you.

As I said, I have seen many deaths, and most of those deaths were violent. All that makes me more cynical, but every time when I catch myself being too cynical, I remember my motto that “generalizing things is not good.“ Then I remember the man, my good friend, who died some 5 years ago.

He died in a hospital from throat cancer. It was bad, and it was very painful. And what was worse it was very slow. He was “melting“ in front of my eyes, for weeks. At the end all that was left were skin, bones and his eyes.

I remembered those eyes from the days of war and chaos. He was a strong man, a lion. People had a picture of him that he is

powerful and ruthless. He was the inspiration for many to fight on.

And they were right. He was dangerous and fearless.

But what they did not know was fact that he hid and saved a whole bunch of people from a different enemy “group“. He did not do that for money, gold or anything else.

He saved them from death and private prisons and got them to the safety. In that time, he could easily lose his life for doing that. The only condition was that those people keep their mouth shut about who helped them. And they did mostly. After everything rumors were there, but nobody believed them.

Anyway, times changed. He lost his power after the war, and later his health too. Times came when he could use fact that he saves those folks, in order to gain money or power or similar.

But he did not do that. I knew him before the war, during the war, and after the war. I helped him once in smuggling a few those guys to safety.

He did not use that.

He was very poor when they found his cancer. He died as a poor man. Only a few people were with him when he died, including me.

And I think it is one of the rare occasions when I saw that some

man is very aware that he is dying, and still he is very calm, very peaceful.

He always believed in God, in Jesus Christ, so it gave him peace I guess, but I like to think that being a good man gave him peace. He saved those folks because he was a man like that, a good man.

He also knew what to expect from death. We, survivors of this time, have seen it too often to live under any illusion.

As I said, my faith in people is not strong at all, but whenever I lost it too much, I remember him and thought that comes to my mind is that even in the hardest times you can find good people, even in strangest places.

It does not mean to trust people – you should not. But in a big crowd of naive sheep, there are few exceptions. Look closely how people deal with the stressful situation around you. Look who believes in what Hollywood tells them is real and avoid these people.

The reality of death and dying will change them and it is hard to guess to what. Reality and our idea of life and death are often very different, and this can result in shock when you look at the ugly side of death. Shock paralyzes and scars souls.

I know this message is lost on many people who like to flip through weapon magazines and shop for new toys instead of learning about the ugly side of life.



Getting comfortable with death and how ugly, smelly, dirty and not noble it is, is essential for a survivalist to still make the right decisions and actions when it matters.

## Common causes of death when the SHTF

I guess when you look all together, the most common cause of death was from the firing of weapons. It was a war after all, but on the other side if we talk about civilians in town then I believe in the beginning people died mostly from shelling and firing, then from all kind of diseases and malnutrition.

### **Snipers**

During the daytime people got killed from snipers on a regular basis. If you really have to go out because of something, there were places called sniper's alleys, so if you knew where to walk – or run actually – I guess you had some chance to survive the snipers.

There were of course open parts on streets or between houses where you had to run and take chances, sometimes just hoped that the guy on the other side with a sniper rifle had lunch break or something like that.

People got killed from snipers in many ways. Women sneaking to the river to get some things washed or to collect water, or just a guy who goes out in the open to check what is going on.

A guy who I knew got killed in one of the usual ways at that time.

First the sniper wounded the man in his legs and left him laying

there where he cannot move. The guy is calling for help, crying, then someone came to help.

The sniper wounded the first guy who came to help him, then wounded second guy who came to help them, then nobody else came to help them.

Then the sniper killed them all.

Usually “good” snipers did not kill people with their first shots, because nobody is gonna come to help a dead man. I since watched those kinds of situations in movies.

I’ve heard later that is a “normal” sniper strategy, but to see that in reality is something different. Especially with civilians, it is haunting.

It is true horror to hear a grown-up man screaming in pain, crying, asking for mercy, some people could not stand that.

On the other side, one of my neighbors, chronic alcoholic once walked 500 meters openly on street during the daytime. He was completely drunk, and sniper did not shoot him. I’m not sure why, but we have saying here that “God saves fools” so I guess that is the reason.

He survived everything, then died few years ago, from alcohol intoxication.

## **Shelling**

Shelling was another story, it was a constant thing. There was some time of peace, some time without shelling, but periods like that did not last more than a few hours.

All kinds of thing fell on the city all the time. I read much later somewhere that in the worst period of that SHTF, the city was devastated with around 500 shells daily.

People were torn apart, dismembered with shrapnel, sometimes people literally disappeared in some kind of mist or red fog and small pieces if they were directly hit.

Sometimes I remember that period like a constant rumbling sound and the smell of burnt things and flesh. I think nobody was safe anywhere.

A 125 mm shell from tank hit my house in the second month, and just took away big part of second floor. I realized then that some nylon heavy duty tarps can have great use in SHTF situation. That kind of destruction completely changed a man's opinion of ordinary things.

The same was the first time when people fired on me, when I heard the hissing sound of bullets close to my head. It completely changed my priorities in life.

I've read a book long time ago, not sure about title or writer, I think it was about soldier in WW2. He was listening about reasons for war, plans, and strategies, he thought about good things to fight for... But when he gets in his first firefight with

enemy, he realizes the whole truth and he shouted, "Oh my God, they are trying to kill me!"

I felt like that guy. When you realize that, a lot of things change.

### **Other causes of death**

In the worst period you could see a lot of dead people on the streets, people that were not killed from snipers or shelling, people killed from beatings or knife wounds.

The summertime was bad. We have summer temperatures sometimes 45 C here, so the stench was horrible. People buried their dead close to houses, usually in nearest park, or any clear ground without too much ceremony, sometimes even in mass graves.

Usually all those graves were exhumated after the war ended and then properly buried.

People died in all kind of different ways. My relative went out one night alone (yes, a mistake) to find some things and never come back. He just disappeared, nobody knows anything, but we have river in the city, 3-4 meters (10-14 feet) deep, and very fast so... he was killed and robbed by somebody probably.

There was a large number of missing people, just missing, nobody knows how or where. They are still missing.

### **Air bombardments**

Air bombardments were rare, but that was one of the scariest things in my life.

I remember maybe 10-15 air attacks, all of them during the night. A few attacks were helicopters with rockets, I think it was MI6 or MI8 helicopters, scary.

But real horror and in the same time somehow funny situation was airplane attacks with bombs. You see I think they used some old planes (maybe propelled engines, not jets) and I think they just dropped bombs out of them.

So, imagine, it was a pitch dark. I was going somewhere to get something to eat, and then I heard the sound of airplanes, a very distant and far sound, but still that sound gets your gut to vibrate. It is a different sound from big "MREs" planes). I looked at the dark sky trying to realize what the hell it was.

Next thing that I heard was a sharp and high whiz or zing of something falling from the sky, then the horror started.

As far as I remember, the time from the start of that sound to the explosion was 5-6 seconds, I'm not sure exactly. In that time, I am manically and desperately trying to hide somewhere, and there is actually nowhere to hide. All around me was pretty much ruins.

A few seconds can feel like a few hours. When that thing exploded your whole stomach is just going up from the power.

The feeling was horrific, because you never know where the

bomb is going to fall. The explosion from that bomb usually destroys the whole house completely.

Who ever got killed in big explosions, from bombs or shelling, usually stayed buried there, in the ruins.

**Some things just stick with you.**

I did not see too many violent deaths prior to SHTF so some things just struck me, some things can just move you from normal reality into some other way of thinking.

When I see man shot in the head from a close distance, from a rifle, man, that was hard, I was paralyzed.

The first thing that came into my mind was that man is such a fragile thing, so easy to kill. Funny maybe but all thinking in that situations come to lower scale, like to simple level thinking, very fast you just forget all reasons and higher causes, you just switch to some other mode, a kind of primal mode. It is hard to explain.

The rape of women during the shtf

One part of my SHTF experience and conflict is a topic that is not often discussed. You could read it in some war memories, or on some war crimes trials reports, but even there it is kind of “muffled” to the point that you can not understand full extent of it.

It is the rape and humiliation of women.

It is nothing new, and it has been used in all wars through the history, but again you’ll read about it here and there, and it is a bit hard to see how it was.

### **How rape was used**

Very soon at the beginning of the conflict, rape was used in different ways.

Often it was organized from the top, sometimes not, but it was widespread.

It worked on many levels, it destroyed people on many levels.

First, different armed groups and factions were organising something like private prisons, where people were imprisoned for use as a labor force (for example clearing the ruins, or reinforcing the lines of separation, or any other similar things).

And women sometimes were imprisoned in a weird version of



private brothels, where they were actually not willingly sold for fun.

Sometimes a local warlord used imprisoned women as a kind of reward for their soldiers who accomplished some hard task.

Sometimes they were literally sold to other groups...

The point that some groups did it as a organised job.

The other side of that was very usual when some armed groups get in some part of city or conquera village they would either kill or imprisoned the men, and rape all the women and leave them alive.

It was done as a part of destroying a community, because a lot of women were destroyed after that, which led to destruction of whole family. Some of them were left pregnant.

Sometimes it was done in an organized way, sometimes as a part of whole chaos and mayhem, but women were used as in a process of destroying the whole society.

**They were left with a stigma.**

Sometimes they even were stigmatised because of that years later.

There were number of cases when raped women immediatelly leave their kids after birth, and sometimes those kids grow up with that stigma on themselves.

Even though society did not want to give them that stigma, traditional mentality sometimes was stronger.

In other cases young people 20 years later when they realized how they were born went on a quest of finding their mothers. Sometimes they even went on a quest of finding the rapist (father) because not even close to all crimes were punished here.

The process of destroying women, and by that destroying family and society did not end with the act of rape.

It continued with suffering of women years later, they suffered because sometimes rapists were not punished, or they did not get enough help from society, or they were sometimes forced to leave their kid, because of pressure from their family..

It is a process that actually still last years after it is happened.

It is destruction that works on many levels and for many years. It brings down the core of society, and people who did it, those who organized it – usually knew it would work like that.

And yes, even people who were supposed to stop similar things were involved in that. There were cases of high-profile UN officers visiting some of those private prisons, but mostly it was “shushed” down.

What combat is really like

When SHTF, nobody told me how hard is gonna be and what things I would have to do to survive. There was no training or simulations.

Most of the stuff I was going through for the first time in my life. I was hoping it was only a temporary situation, that it not going to last for a whole year.

A few events opened my eyes, and somehow made me a survivor right at the beginning. I had the luck to understand in the very early stages how hard it was and what it takes.

During one of the first bigger events of killing in the streets, I was out together with my friend who also was a medical professional.

Fire from machine guns was on people who were standing in front of the main city bread factory, and people started to scream and run over each other.

My first impulse was to run to the nearest cover, but my friend got down to help some lady, so I stayed one meter next to him.

I was confused about my decision and not sure to stay with him or run. Bullets from machine gun hit him over his legs, and I saw how his kneecap exploded, it looked like some bad movie special effect.

He just looked at his legs, then at me, in silence. Even though it was just seconds, moments like this feel very long.

I took him by the hands and dragged him some 20 or 30 meters to safety. Only there I saw that he was missing his leg under the knee. It stayed with the dead lady on the street.

And only then he started to scream.

I used a belt to stop the bleeding. The ambulance still worked in that period. He went to the hospital and then evacuated from the city. He survived but never came back.

### **Lessons learned?**

In moments of chaos always listen to your instincts and do not hesitate.

Especially if you are involved in a situation when someone is shooting at you with high caliber machine gun. Just accept that people will die, and you have to survive. To help others is a great thing, to survive is even better.

Also, I realized that human being is so fragile and easy to destroy.

You must practice with gear.

Later I learned some things about weapons and how to use them, so I realize that more firepower does not necessarily mean more dangerous and better chance to kill.

Owning a weapon is just absolutely necessary in preparing for a survival scenario, even more in urban survival. You need to go and get as close as you can to the real stuff while you are doing the preparing and training for the SHTF, so it makes sense to go out and check your preps, to check your gear, and yourself.

For example, that pair of boots that you bought and store for bad days will not be used for walking only, it will be used for running, squatting, jumping, in mud, junk, blood, guts maybe or just running through a shallow river.

Everything that you have prepared and stored for SHTF will be pushed to the limits.

It is one thing to go out into woods nearby and do a recording of your weapon testing on some beer bottles with your friends, and after that concluding that particular gun or rifle is best for SHTF and that you are a dangerous dude because of your accuracy rates. Some people gonna put that clip-on YouTube and go home convinced that they are ready and prepared.

**In reality, you do not know if you are prepared until it happens.**

A lot of survival stores that sell things sell the idea of buy this and you are safe.

No, you are not. You can learn more about real urban survival scenarios to mentally be better prepared but the real deal when SHTF, reality always comes as surprise.

When the time comes again it gonna hit everyone like a hammer. The good news is that when you know you will get hit like that you can recover faster and use your skills, knowledge, and preps to make the best out of the situation.

Using a weapon in real life, in real survival situations, is something absolutely different from shooting beer bottles.

And if you could do some real training that is realistic that would be maybe going camping for 10 days using a trash bag like a tent, with 10 small cans of food, and 10 liters of water, and then walking every day for 10 km.

On the 11th day, run a few kilometers and then shoot and see how accurate you are when your body is wasting away.

And still, the most important thing is missing. While you are shooting at the beer bottles, they do not shoot back at you in order to kill you.

During some of the first battles in the city I was moving through the building behind a guy, we both had rifles.

He was sweeping the rooms and shooting, it was the closest to urban combat as it can be. At the moment when he runs out of ammo, he used his rifle as something between spear and bat.

Now someone could say why he did not just switch to the pistol? He did not have one, also he did not have time to look for ammo.

But there I learned how it is useful to have folded stock of rifle when shooting and moving in very confined spaces.

Also, I learned that rifle with pretty sharp parts at the barrel can be very handy. He stabbed a guy to the cheek, ripping his face down and finishing him on the ground.

One of the biggest misconceptions that the people who do not have fighting experience is what they just need to practice.

It is all about pressure. You need to learn:

### **1. What your weapon can take and how to fix it**

In terms of kicking, throwing, how often and when will it malfunction, what the most common malfunctions are, and how to fix it – and how to fix it in the middle of a fight. If you find yourself in the middle of fighting, and your weapon “jams” do not be, as we call it “zblesavljen,” or in English do not stand there looking like an idiot.

I have seen that: a guy is shooting and in the middle of fighting his weapon jammed. He stopped, surprised, and looked at the weapon in a “what the f\*ck?” state. And of course, in two seconds he ends up dead.

You absolutely need to know how to manage small weapon jams without looking at the weapon. You need to look at the target

while you are “repairing” weapon (clearing the bullet, switching to another magazine etc.)

Other option would be to MOVE immediately when your weapon jams, move to cover in the same second or to drop to the ground, or on your back, and switch to your other weapon. But you need to learn to do all of the above without thinking. You need to train so that this becomes automatic.

Small things like how quickly you can put your rifle on your back and a switch to pistol can be the difference between life and death. If you somehow “trip” yourself while you are trying to put the rifle on your back in order to take pistol, you can end up dead.

## **2. What you can take**

Remember this: while you are shooting at the bad guys, those bad guys will be SHOOTING AT YOU TOO.

So, shooting at the beer bottles in the woods with your buddies will not really do all the training you need. I do it often, but it just does not cover everything.

Fighting and surviving combat means constant moving and outsmarting the guys on the other side. You are gonna need to run, squat, throw yourself in the ditch, lay down in all kinds of sh\*t, and shoot at the same time, and probably fix your rifle from jams, or switch to another weapon.



Do some basic weapons training and learn about line of sight and how to get out off it.

In SHTF, a very great percentage of shooting is done without aiming. It is just spraying bullets.

It makes sense to do some airsoft or paintball in the woods to check how constant moving changes the whole game, and what kind of moving will help you to survive a gunfight.

For example, how often you shoot from your weapon with both hands, dominant and not dominant? In urban fighting, you will need to switch weapon around very often (moving through the apartments, rooms, around the corners etc.). When you are shooting behind the corner, and you are having a rifle in your right hand and corner is on your left side it makes sense to transfer the weapon to left hand. otherwise, it is dangerous to stick your left part of the body out in order to shoot from your right hand.

For all you of who have some military experience, this is basic stuff, but I have seen many guys who were killed in stupid ways.

A real gunfight is a dynamic thing. Adrenaline is a weird thing too, so people can do tremendous things while adrenaline is pumping, but also with lack of training and common-sense guy can do tremendously stupid things. I have seen a man who was pointing to something and he stood up from the cover and got shot.

### **3. How to train yourself**

Training is the key. You can not do anything else today except to train very hard. You can not experience real stuff today, of course, but you can take it as close to real stuff as possible. Go out with your friends and think about all possible scenarios.

Think about worst case scenarios. SHTF is not gonna wait for nice and sunny weather. You are gonna be maybe hungry, dirty. Maybe have to give up your shelter and food storage on the second day of SHTF.

Or you gonna be forced to use another weapon that you are not used to. Maybe you gonna be forced to hide for hours hidden under a pile of rubble and then you are gonna be forced to jump out and “kill” ten beer bottles. Sounds like fun? This is why resilience and mental strength is so important.

Maybe you are gonna be cold and thirsty and in the middle of the battle. One thing is sure – very rarely it goes the way that you planned. So just be ready for many options and do not panic when things go another way.

Want to get some funny-sounding advice? Get good at suffering while still being able to work towards a goal.

### **4. What weapon, caliber, stopping power, etc.?**

It is a hard question that I get asked a lot. But think about fact

that everything today is mainstream and commercial. And somehow it is more about what other people say is good and not necessarily about what you need and what is good for YOU.

You and your hand kill, the weapon is only a tool. I have seen the fight when a man with a knife killed the guy with a rifle. He had mastered fighting with a knife and had the will to kill. The other guy had a rifle, but he ended up dead. I also saw more than once people shot with rifle bullets still fighting and running for a good amount of time. Some of them were not even aware that they were wounded before someone else pointed that out to them.

What I am trying to say is, do not expect miracles if you own a weapon that is at the moment the most popular, cool reviews. It is about practicing, weapon mastery, and correct placement of bullets.

I said bullets for a reason. I have seen many things, but I did not see someone survive multiple shots in the correct place on the body. Have a weapon that is best for your case and achieve perfection in using it. Do not expect that people will fall back if you shoot them with one bullet from some widely popular weapon and caliber (not talking about shotguns).

So, I am not gonna tell you what the best weapon is because what works for me maybe does not work for you or others.

Having a weapon that is too rare, too good, or too bad does not make much sense for me. Do not find yourself in a situation when

you lose your weapon and pick someone else and then find out that you do not have clue about it, because your own weapon was special and rare. Just have what everyone else around you has, because of gun parts, ammo and looking like everyone else.

Your weapon is only a tool to survive. Be ready to lose it if you need to lose it and pick some other weapon from the ground in the middle of a fight.

I knew a guy who did some scary stuff with rusty shortened M-48. He was old and poor-looking dude. He played that part well until he would take out this old gun from under his coat and rob and kill people. Simple strategy but it worked for him. So, look around and think what works for you.

How terror is used strategically

It looks like there is no sense and order in what ISIS folks are doing while they are terrorizing people and burning them alive, stoning them to death, killing captured soldiers, or murdering women and kids. But spreading terror and pure fear makes a lot of sense in terms of strategy, especially in already “chaotic” times and territories where they are trying to advance.

Terror is a psychological game.

### **The “they-are-coming for me” feeling**

I have experienced for myself, more than once the feeling that “they are coming for me“. It is that moment when you are armed and ready, together with more folks, who are armed too, and we are all waiting for an attack.

And guys who are attacking are famous for the fact that they do not take prisoners, or that they have few sick guys who are collecting ears from the captured people, while they are still alive.

No matter how well you are armed and prepared and ready to fight, if you hear about their atrocities for weeks and then one evening you are forced to fight with them, it will have an impact on you.

You will face the stress of battle and also have to deal with your

own fear.

Of course, different people react in different ways, so some guys will break down or give up even before the fight, without single bullet flying through the air. They will even surrender without a fight and beg for mercy, even they listened to stories about “no prisoners” for weeks. Often, they are the people who can not imagine how truly evil people act. They think because they would not kill and torture other people, they do not know that nobody would. It makes no sense, but it is what terror does and why it works. It makes people act without sense, makes them do stupid things, and makes them confused and not logical.

Terror is an advanced level of trash talk in sports where one opponent tries to make the other one so angry that he loses focus. When it comes to terror, it is just fear that is used as a weapon.

I have seen that sometimes only rumor about some infamous unit coming to attack is enough that groups who are very well organized simply fall apart.

If you hear that there is a unit coming and they will torture and kill everyone in their way including your kids and your woman, you have two choices: To fight to the last or run.

In the movies, folks will fight to the last, but in reality, most of the folks will run. The difference is like walking on edge of the sidewalk or walking on edge of a high building. In both cases, you

walk on the edge but only in one case, a wrong step has much worse consequences.

A few times I asked myself why ISIS has so much success over there in Iraq and Syria. One of the answers is a terror. Nothing spreads so fast as terror.

I also think the idea you can have ultimate power over life and death of people makes many people want to join them. People get high on power and that they can decide who lives or dies. If this happens in a group, you usually find people trying to be more brutal than other people in their group to be the most respected and feared one.

You finally can rule over people, to judge, it does not have anything to do with religion, it is in human nature of some folks.

A few months ago, I read some US weapon forum and one of the members showed his rifle and said how he bought it cheaply and how it was probably used in the Balkan war.

On the rifle butt, there was still a small engraved sign of the unit visible. And strangely I knew that unit.

The unit was famous in war because they (like many others) did lots of bad things, like raping killing prisoners in private prisons etc.

But at the end, most of them ended up dead, killed like the people they killed.

Once people realize that bullets can kill you no matter how famous or infamous you are, it all gets easier.

People dealt with them, and today they are just some weird war memory with a symbol on someone's rifle butt. This is a lesson you need to keep in mind in situations when you face enemies that cause fear and terror in you.

- **First, you need to accept your fear and terror.** Some people do not accept it and try to pretend it's not there until it breaks out and makes them unable to function. Often in situations when it matters most.
- **Be aware of your fear and terror but also confident in your abilities to face this enemy.** This is an attitude that you need to show openly also to all members of your group. In groups emotions always get amplified.

Just like walking on edge of the high building you focus on the task at hand, the walking or fighting and forget about consequences for that moment.

Terror needs to be met with brute force before it spreads way too much to be contained. It is like a disease.

You can get sick from terror, just like from pneumonia, for example.

Symptoms are fear, panic, doing illogical things, or having the



urge to run away before even you realize who is your enemy and how you can defeat it.

This is why we prepare, practice and learn to focus on what matters to achieve our goals. Terror only works if you give it power.

3 things you need to know about killing another person

There are few things to understand if you are forced to kill someone or in if someone is trying to kill you.

Most of the people are unaware of them but it is important to understand them.

As I said many times before, most people simply did not face real violence before the war. I mean killing or fighting for life. That's good because we live in a society where those things are not needed.

On the other side, from the point of survival, if you did not go through serious violence before, then you lack that experience. You do not really know what to expect when SHTF.

So here is what you need to know.

**Are people easy to kill or are people hard to kill?**

Guess what? Both are actually true.

How?

It is simple, first forget about movie scenes where people are flying 10 meters back when you shoot at them with your handgun.

Not too much flying there, but when you shoot a man from close

distance couple of things can happen.

In some cases, he just flops down, collapses, and that's it. He is gone. And the most interesting thing from that experience is the sound of his collapse. It is sound like some big bag of something full of wet stuff and some solid elements going down. Pretty much what our body is.

It is a unique sound, and you will remember it for the rest of your life.

Let's say here that right placement of the shot, right distance, numbers of shots, and your training and calmness makes this happen.

In another case, you may find yourself in a situation where the attacker is coming at you, rapidly closing, you keep firing at him, distance is pretty close, and nothing happens... he is still closing in. You shoot and shoot, you are screaming or maybe you just think you are screaming. Something loud keeps exploding in your ears, and you are not aware whether that your gunshots or what. You are not even sure are guns being fired at all, maybe something is wrong with your gun. "That other guy's eyes are getting closer and he has a knife, he is huge, sh\*t what is going on? Am I going to die? God? Mom?"

And then he is down.

Was that a guy who was hard to kill?

Yes, later you figured out that you shot him like 6 or 7 times, but not in the correct places. He was huge, adrenaline made him forget the pain so...

Both examples are real experiences. There are so many factors that play into this.

So, with the questions about whether people are easy or hard to kill, I suggest a simple formula. If you are forced to kill someone, remember that it takes lots of factors to be in place to achieve that, but if you are in situation when someone is trying to kill you, remember it is very easy to get killed.

A long, long time ago, when I was a beginner at some things, and when I did not know anything about violence, and it was very clear that I would face violence, one old dude gave me advice about similar things. He had a pistol with one extra mag.

He said, "OK, when he is coming to you, you empty the magazine into him."

I asked, "What then?"

He said, "Then you reload and empty another magazine into him."

I asked " Both magazines?"

He said, "The first two bullets should do the job, but you just go ahead and empty both magazines at him."

Killing is a nasty job.

## **Reasons for violence**

This is a huge topic. But let's just say that it will happen, without going too deep into philosophy. Lots of the violence will be “understandable” in a way when SHTF. Fighting for food, water, land etc. And as a survivalist, you need to be prepared for it. It makes sense to expect it.

But lots of people will have problems accepting violence that will happen without real reasons.

In fact, as I mentioned before, there is a huge number of people who are waiting for SHTF to happen and to get violent without real reasons. Murdering, torturing, raping, imprisoning...

You may call them sick people, which they are, of course. But more important is to understand that today they are folks who drink beer in the local park or guys with whom you watch football games sometimes. They are your peaceful-looking neighbor. When SHTF, all kind of scum crawls out of their holes. So, accepting violence, in general, is hard.

It is easier when some people at least have reasons, but you can not expect this to be the case always. Prepare your mind for this.

## **Accepting the Violence**

You may have the luck to live peacefully after seeing, experiencing or committing violence. Maybe you are built for

that. Maybe you are what people call a “strong man” inside and outside or only on one side.

I think I remember each man who died in front of me or next to me. I remember the sounds, the smells, the pictures.

I forgot names and years, dates and places. But I remember the moment when life goes from the eyes of a dying man. Or the deep last breaths from several people. Or the smell of defecation when a man is gone.

A few times I thought I felt something like a weird sensation, a couple of seconds after men’s last breath, something like I could feel his soul leaving him. Or I simply felt my adrenaline eruptions, or maybe I was losing my mind for a moment, who knows?

With time you learn to cope with those things, to watch people die, either people you loved or people who die from your hand.

There was an urban myth that one officer from the army was asked, “Captain, these young guys that we just killed in huge numbers, there are still kids left, they do not know anything, what do we do with them?”

Officer said “ We do what we do, it is our way of life“

It is death. And you simply need to cope with it.

That’s why working on your mindset for survival is so important

## The consequences of killing in a post-collapse world

About three years ago, the wife and kid of my friend were driving in their car, and at some intersection, they hit another car. It was a very small accident, both were driving very slowly and they only scratched cars.

In another vehicle, there were 4 pretty drunk guys and they immediately jumped out of the car and started to curse at the woman and kid. She locked the doors and called her husband.

The guys were young and drunk, and most probably they did not mean anything too bad other to look very cool and dangerous, but one of them pulled a knife in order to scare lady. It was in the evening and without too many folks on the street, and even a few people who came by did not want to interfere.

One of them did call the police. Her husband came very fast, maybe in 10 minutes and found them yelling at the car and his wife. The guy with the knife was piercing tires.

My friend jumped out of his car and broke the jaw of the guy with a knife with his boot, then beat other three dudes in few minutes. They suffered broken ribs, head fracture, jaw fracture, and a ruptured spleen.

Bystanders said that he started to strangle one of the guys when two policemen came. They separated him from the guy, but then he turned around and started to strangle the policeman.

Finally, the other policeman knocked him out with a baton. When he regained consciousness, he was in jail.

He got out of the whole problem thanks to the testimony of the bystanders, and he got a mild penalty because of attacking police officers thanks to his psychiatrist.

He is 170cm (5'6") and some 70kg (154 pounds) guy. You could ask everyone before the event about him and they would say, "He is a very nice and peaceful guy, someone who always avoids trouble, actually someone who is scared of violence, guy who trusts in the system and love between folks."

I was with him during the war. Our SHTF was 20 years ago and I know different. He was (and still is) one of the most dangerous guys I ever knew.

The point of the story is not to say that violence happens, you all know that. The point is that you never judge folks by the way they look.

To be more precise, really dangerous guys do not look for the trouble, they look at how to avoid it because they know what trouble may bring. It is the same with "psychos." If you come across someone wearing funny clothes and acting crazy, he is probably just playing. Real psychos try to look normal.

Back to violence. When you have experience in using violence, you may say that you join a kind of club of people, and that changes some things for you.



People do not like to be around folks who have killed other folks, no matter why they did it. It is an experience that changes you. Actually, once you did it you see that you are capable of doing it, and you know you are capable to do it again, and again. A big taboo is broken once you have killed. This is scary for people around you.

Some of those things are bad, but also other is giving you some advantage over the other folks.

Yes, you may be sure that after taking some lives you are not gonna be the same man. You are gonna be outside of that group of common people.

During SHTF, it makes sense to be known as a guy who is not taking sh\*t easily, but only to a certain point. After that point, your “fame” of being tough guy may attract other, maybe tougher guys who want to take you down only because that gives them more “fame”.

If the level of violence rises around you, you want to still “blend in”. Do not stick out as weak and not as extra tough. Maybe a bit more tough than average but that is enough.

Using violence in order to survive and using violence because you like it are two different things, and I have seen people who “discovered” themselves in doing violence because they like the feeling of power that comes with it.

I know a man who enjoys using violence. He was the family man

who started everything just like most of us when SHTF. He did what he had to do in order to survive.

Over the time, he started to enjoy everything. After some time, even his family members start to feel not comfortable in his presence because there is this guy who now has new option to act. He can kill and take life, just like that. This is scary for most people.

Keep in mind people talk about what happened. Just to process it or make sense. So, people will talk when you kill. Stories come back to your group. Some people get the wrong impression of you because they do not understand the situation, they do not understand the high after you took that life.

The guy I was talking about was no drug dealer or criminal mastermind. He was a normal family guy. He just found something weird and dark inside him when SHTF.

He died when he became too careless because he believed he was a way too strong and too smart. A 20-year-old woman stabbed him during a trade. He was too confident. It came as surprise for a man who was proud and famous for being a killer.

What you have to understand is that this feeling of being in power to take other people's lives can put some strange ideas in your head, and we all suffered from different amounts of that. But some guys forget that this is not what survival is about.

Today in our world most of the "tough" guys are tough because

other folks are saying so, they are living on that fame and other folks' fear. Reputation is everything, so most of the people believe in it and do not want to question it.

When the SHTF, having a man in your group or family who is something like a weird version of action hero is not advisable. I mean it is no contest that the body count and blind wish to do violence all the time, usually will bring you trouble.

In today's "normal" world, sometimes I walk in the evening. Sometimes I see some trouble in front of me – let's say I see some guys drinking and looking at me. When I see possible trouble, you know what will I do? I will avoid it, I will go to the other side of the street.

Now you can call me coward – I do not care – but thing is that I know if I get involved in a fight, I'll do some things without hesitation.

I am known for what I am capable of, and I am remembering (too well) what I did years ago when I was faced with violence. I would not have safety switches (or something that would tell me "OK, now it is enough") so I like to avoid it.

If you carry gun and brain at the same time, you avoid trouble, too.

One of the other things that my experience brought me is some weird ability to "recognize" dangerous guys, and I know some folks can see it in me too.

I am not talking here about some weird powers. I am talking about the look in the eyes that says something like, "Oh, I know how to hurt you very badly, I did that before. And I will do that again if I am forced too, and I'll do it very efficiently." Someone who has all possibilities including putting you in extreme pain or ending a life looks at you differently and interacts differently.

War vets with close quarter fighting experience from anywhere know perfectly well what I am talking about here. Convicts and others who lived in a violent environment know too.

At the end of the day, using violence is a very bad thing. It destroys you. It can also destroy the relationships with people close to you because it changes you and changes how people see you.

You can work on yourself on many levels for years, but still, that does not change fact that you are a simply different man from the majority of folks around you.

Years after the collapse that I lived through I may only think that I am like everyone around me. Actually, I am not, and in a split second, I am ready to turn back into what I was in that time. People who have not been there are thinking this is a good option to have... Selco is prepared... yes, but I carry this also around when I go to the park to relax and see families playing together. This dark side never leaves you.

## The truth about knife attacks

This is written based on my experience, seeing and dealing with knife attacks and wounds, both during the SHTF and during my work in the medical field.

It is not written scientifically or based on hard data. It is based on what I saw or did... what I actually experienced.

Often, we find, some same topics are viewed differently by different people, and it is perfectly OK to be like that, but when it is come to knife wounds and killing, in the end, a wound is a wound and blood is blood.

### **Knife (blade)**

There is something primal (can we say even mythical?) about a blade and I guess it comes from the fact that it has been used as a killing tool for many centuries. To be honest, for me it is the scariest type of possible fight – to be forced to knife fight.

Having a knife in your hand and pushing it into someone's body is a scary thought. It is very personal, on many levels.

As always, thanks to the movie industry, people imagine a knife fight is like two guys doing a whole bunch of fancy moves. In reality, it is mostly about who pulled their knife first and stuck it into the other guy. (Before other guy had a chance to pull his knife hopefully.)

## **Knife Fighting, Knives and Common Sense**

I know there are knife fighting experts out there, and I have never gone through some sort of experts training, so I cannot say the full impact of this.

But I know that if you are forced to into a knife fight with someone when the SHTF – if by the chance you have a pistol with you, pull the gun and shoot the man twice... Forget about ‘honor’ and ‘movies’.

Knife fighting (equal terms) means that you are almost surely going to get hurt. You will most likely get at least a couple of cuts from your opponent. Remember that even a small cut when the SHTF can kill you.

Accepting the possibility that people on the internet will call me an idiot, I must say that choosing your knife for SHTF as a weapon ONLY is a HUGE resource waste.

A good knife means a working tool and a weapon.

Also accept there are more usable weapons and tools out there, like an ax for example, in terms of multi-use. A knife plays its part in the bigger picture.

What I am trying to say is, do not get yourself too romanticized into a certain type of knife. When it comes to stabbing and cutting in fights, most knives will do the job, with the possible exception of a really cheap one.

When it comes to tools, then you should aim to choose the higher quality ones (and multi-purpose if possible)

In one period of SHTF, most of the knife fights I saw took place with simple kitchen knives, and I assure you those knives did the job bloody good.

The point here is to have the intention, and yes, to have guts for that. The type and style of knife are very much secondary to that...

Always you want to have common sense, and adaptability. For example, if you found yourself in a situation where a knife is your only weapon maybe it makes sense to make a spear out of it, to have some distance and strength. You can't just assume there is only 'one way'.

### **The ugly truth about a knife fight**

There are numbers and data from years of the research about bleeding and death from knife wounds and blood loss, and it worth your time to read this information, to know what is about and what you can expect.

On the other hand, there are real-life experiences and exceptions for everything, and you need to acknowledge that too.

You could see maybe in movies that if you silently move up on a guy from the rear, put your hand over his mouth, and stab him

with the knife in his back region or kidneys, he is gonna go down silently in two seconds.

Good luck with that, stabbing someone is actually a very noisy job, and there are variables like:

- Did you hit the correct place?
- Did you stab or slice?
- How long and sharp is your knife?
- Did you go deep enough?

On top of all this, you must understand you will need to add a lot of force to whatever method you use. It is definitely not like in the movies. People will fight for their life – literally.

Depending on the situation, you could hit the correct place (carotid artery for example) but the wounded guy could still have enough time to strangle you. I've seen it happen. Yes, he will die very fast from massive bleeding from a carotid artery – but the point is that he could still kill you before that happens.

So, you have an option of moving to the guy silently in order to kill him, great, but think, are you going to use your fancy knife in order to cut his carotid artery?

Maybe it can make more sense (and present better odds) to use a big rock and instantly crush his skull, with one strong blow, rather than take the chance of missing an artery and be faced with an alerted enemy with a knife?



If you do not have any good training about how to correctly use a knife, it is simply not very easy to achieve fast, effective kills.

### **More unpleasant facts about a knife fight**

More unpleasant facts about a knife fight are if you want to kill someone with a knife, it is going to be some serious requirement in terms of “working“ with your knife.

For example, a simple stab or even multiple stabs to the abdomen region will eventually kill the man, but not fast enough- it is a completely different story if you stab the man and then move your knife around- or dig, gouge and cut if you like. Messy job, but it works like that.

If you need to kill someone with a knife, and you get the chance to stab him, you need to be prepared that it will likely take multiple stab wounds. One stab rarely works unless you really know what you are doing.

The final sad truth is, that during the knife fight, when you get chance to stab your opponent, he has the same chances to stab you, so there is a very good chance you will be hurt too.

Make sure you are not ‘oversimplifying’ your options and training. Many preppers I hear carry things with them to kill folks or defend themselves. You need to understand your full range of defense options, train with your tools, and train with an understanding of the realities of these things in mind.

## PART 4: AFTER THE COLLAPSE

A lot of people wonder, did things go right back to normal when the war ended?

The short answer is no. The long answer is more important.

## What Really Happens After the SHTF Ends Is Not What Most People Expect

When finally, the SHTF was over, when peace came it was not like we imagined it.

It was very different from what we imagined it while we were in the middle of the SHTF.

It was different on many levels.

When peace came, we didn't believe it.

During the war, many ceasefires were signed, and many peace treaties, local or countrywide. Many times, high delegations from the EU came to our country or in surrounding countries. They held long elaborate peace conferences with local politicians and tried to make some agreements.

When the agreements were made and when we heard about it somehow, we hoped it could work. But it did not so the war continued.

To add to those real conferences and treaties we also had raging misinformation and rumors about peace settlements and treaties that actually never happened. So, after some time, and many "peace agreements" while slaughter continued, we simply kinda stop believing that it was going to happen.

And then one day one of those treaties kinda worked.

The war stopped.

It was not like it just stopped immediately one day. But through agreements, the shooting stopped, and through a very complicated process (that in a way still lasts) the situation started to move to some new kind of “normal”.

The fighting stopped, but since there were no real winners, it took time for some things.

For example, for months you could not go into some parts of the country with the “wrong” license plate or sticker on your car or similar...

### **We changed after the SHTF**

After prolonged living in the situation that we went through, people changed on many levels, and some of those changes are pretty much irreversible. What is even more important is that some of those changes are transferred to our children, to new generations.

On the mental level, we learned during the collapse that it may be actually dangerous to hope. For example, when it came to peace, we were disappointed many times, so people stop hoping, or at least lowered their expectations.

Hope and hoping in dangerous and prolonged situations sounds

and looks good, but in reality, it may blur your vision. It may push you to pay attention to things that are not so relevant for your immediate attention.

One day you may find yourself hoping and dreaming so much that you fail to protect your family or obtain food or similar.

It was weird but not hoping may help you to operate better every and each day by taking care of things that need your immediate attention (food, safety, security...). But on the other side, killing hope had a toll on our mental health, I think.

Life without hope is not much of a quality life.

So, when peace came, there were whole bunch of people who forgot to feel things.

They were conditioned to operate with a certain mental attitude in order to have the best chances of survival and no peace could change that, at least in the short term.

For a lot of people, it did not change ever.

It was not that people were not happy because there was peace, but we lost a lot of “ourselves” in that SHTF, so we changed.

You shoot, you run, you are afraid... you are cold and hungry, or you are dirty and sweating for days and months...and then one day all stops and you can go and buy things in the shop.

And you think, “I should be happy and yell and sing.” But

somehow you are numb and think, “What was all this about and what I am supposed to do now?”

How everyday life changed when the SHTF was over

It took months for some things to get back to normal when it came to infrastructure.

Electric lines in some regions were almost nonexistent anymore. Phone lines, sewage, water system... all that was destroyed or completely messed up. Some regions were so dirty for numerous reasons that diseases spread.

Roads were “opened” but because the infrastructure was bad, the normal circulation of goods did not happen overnight. It took time.

For example, it took some time for all the different goods come in, and prices slowly came back down to “normal”.

For years there were regions and parts of the cities where it was dangerous to go because of mines. Even these days we have here every month or two someone killed because of an old land mine somewhere in the woods.

Still, more than 20 years after everything.

How people were different after surviving the SHTF

**People changed.**

For a pretty long period, things were handled between people with brute force, and to have a weapon was important like to breathe air.

When peace came, that weapon was still with people, and attitude and old habits changed very slowly.

Even today every respectable home has an assault weapon here, somewhere hidden, but close at hand, even though it means 2 years in prison if you are caught.

People learned to use weapons and to “solve” problems with them.

From the point of survival, people learned a lot of good and useful things. I mean, you had a bunch of civilians who over the time learned to operate as a kind of military unit and to use different kinds of weapons, to recognize and use resources in our surroundings that most people would not even notice.

We learned to protect our homes or invade others if needed.

At the same time, we learned also not to respect authority (government) because (very simplified) authority will simply f\*ck you when it benefits them to do so and you will be on your own.

Police, government, law, become for a lot of people just words. They counted only on themselves because of the experience they went through.

From the survivalist point of view, a lot of good things maybe. But from the point of a normal functional society, a lot of bad things.

If you are a normal law-abiding citizen here, you are in the minority because most people simply use shortcuts in the corrupted society that war produced.

As I said, it is somehow “generational knowledge” so it passed on young people, too. Especially when it comes to not respecting authority.

Paradoxically living in a society like that is actually the recipe for a new SHTF. So, at the end, it comes to a full circle. The SHTF that brought a corrupted society and people that are trying to survive in it by their own rules, will most probably bring another SHTF.

### **What to expect after the SHTF ends**

After a real and prolonged SHTF, there is no coming back in a lot of things. Not when it comes to how you gonna feel, and actually what man (or woman) you are gonna be.

There may be celebrations, fireworks and whatever, but you will not be the same person. Survival will teach you a lot of things. You will be prepared for a lot of things in future, but even if in your case society and system rebuilds into something good and positive you will still be changed. And some parts of you that were good will be missing.



It is how it works. There are some skills and experiences you cannot gain without paying for them.

### **There was no real recovery**

After everything ended, after guns went silent and after roads opened again city started to live “normal” again.

But it was “normal” only for the people who have not lived through what happened. For the folks who gone through all of that and survived nothing was and will be like before.

Whenever you watch TV or read newspapers about people or places or whole countries that have gone through some shocking events, periods like war, earthquakes, famines or something similar, media folks gonna try to hook you with numbers of dead, cost of recovery in millions, amount of food that world is sending to the area, or number of troops that were needed to force opposite side to sign a peace treaty.

Most of the time it is gonna be news about facts, numbers, without too many pictures. I mean real pictures. Nobody wants to see the really bad/ugly real pictures.

Rarely some of the reporters gonna try to describe your stench of gangrene or to show you kid who is eating macaroni with worms who is happy because it is a real treat compared to what the kid is eating most of the time.

Or even some small and simple things like “how bad it is to be

completely wet in very cold weather, shiver and try to stay low for 3 hours because you need to hide”.

Anyway, the point of this is: there is no recovery after some things, I mean man can feel lucky because he is alive and went through that period and came out with all hands and legs still on his body. But real recovery is not how many aid packages are delivered to a country or area, or if the local government building has flowers in front of it.

If you plan for a survival scenario, don't forget that massive change is part of this.

I see in many survival forums and communities that people talk about freeze-dried blueberry muffins for breakfast, their big generators and what they do to keep life normal in survival scenarios.

I think this is just half of preparing and some people miss out on the other half.

Get comfortable with change and to live worse.

When I was recording an interview for [my course](#), I was joking with Jay that we should add a hell week to course. A training week in which people stay in the room, with just a few drinks, a bucket as a toilet, few grains or very basic food to eat and old piece of meat that is rotting for the smell.

This is of course too extreme, but you get the idea. Instead just

try to make trips to the outdoors. Get comfortable doing your toilet things out there if you have the chance and do this responsibly with digging a hole and covering it up. Learn simple living like humans had to for many thousands of years.

If you do not plan or prepare your mind to change all those times you spend learning about survival and preparedness might help you survive physically but you will lose yourself mentally.

What happened to many people I know who went through a hard time during the war?

Some of them are heavy drinkers, some of them are drug addicts, some are social “weirdos” unable to have a friend, unable to have a normal relationship. Some are normal on the outside but also have a very dark or dead side.

Some of them continue to live as they lived during SHTF, with violence, so violence became their job. It was like somebody draw a line in time and said: “OK before this moment lot of things were acceptable because SHTF, but from this moment we all need to behave like nice folks, no more killing, stealing...”

Some guys did not want to accept that, some could not some killed themselves, some continued to kill others.

Once you have hit another human in the face it is much easier to do that again. You broke down a mental wall that is not easily built up again. This is also true for more serious violence.

Plan for a way back to normality. Plan how to explain to your children why humans do bad things.

I have a friend who is working in an institution for orphans who have lost both parents in war, or kids who have been left by the mothers who were rape victims.

That friend went through a lot of terrible things during the war, and he found some kind of vent or relief in helping others. In his case helping adolescents, war orphans or teenagers now.

He gave up his own life to live for these people. He does not have his own family, he does not have too many friends or some private life.

He is completely going with these kids through all of their own disasters and successes, when some of the kids are receiving some award at school he is drunk from celebrating, when some of them get into drugs he is sick for days, devastated.

Other from that job he is not existing. If he loses that job, I am almost 100 % sure that he will kill himself. I help him sometimes, something like volunteering because of my medical background. Most of the kids actually now almost men and women, 17-18 years old.

The program is meant to work them through the “problematic” period of their life, teenagers’ years after they spent childhood in homes for abandoned kids.

Anyway, I've been called a few nights ago into one of those houses, the call was "one girl is passed out, having seizures, hysterical attack or something like that".

After we came to the place, checking the girl and talking with a lady who is their psychologist – leader, and after we ruled out any possible real emergency, we realized that girl- 17 years old had something like a panic attack. The girl was the daughter of a rape victim, her mother left her moment after she gave birth, hating her like she hated the rapist.

Through half-hour conversation and lot of crying and wiping tears away she told us that she broke up with her boyfriend that night, she was devastated because of that.

I made mistake and laugh at that with the statement that everything gonna is fine, and that she will have a boyfriend again and that is not the end of the world and it was only mild panic.

She yelled at me at that moment: "You do not know what real love is, real love can kill you, I can die because of this."

At that moment something struck me. I've seen a lot of bad things and lots of blood, and I guess after some time some things became normal for me.

But girl, 17 years old, born from hate, and left to be raised by strangers made me realize what I had lost.

Later that night I was trying to remember how it was when I was

16 or 17 when I had a first girlfriend, first kiss or first breakup with a girl. I could not remember too much, that kind of memories were pushed away by bad ones, I guess.

I and people who went through the things as I described are unable to see some things, things like real love and happiness. Things like that have been killed with all those kinds of atrocities.

Some of the folks realized that years ago and killed themselves, some with a weapon, other with alcohol or drugs. Other ones are still alive, living, walking and working as some kind of zombies, only pretending to be normal, but in some strange way, we have all been killed in that period.

I like everyone who survived that period had my portion of problems. I even tried to solve them with alcohol during one period, but luckily for me, I realized there is no sense in that.

Somehow because of my job in the medical field I learned that human is a very fragile thing, so human can be killed or die in many different ways.

Everyone's existence can be terminated in every moment, so I guess in some weird way I adopted some kind of philosophy that you can do whatever you want, but when your time has come, you are gone. This helped me. I take change now without getting stressed more or less at all.

That does not mean that you do not need to prepare yourself for every possible scenario, it actually means that when S. hit the fan

you are not gonna be in control of many things, people will die so you have to be comfortable with this kind of massive change.

You can only take care, as good as possible, about a small circle of problems around you, and your family, everything outside that circle depends on other things, bigger things. But inside that small circle, you need to do everything that you can to be prepared. Taking care of things in that small circle helps me to cope with things that I went through in my past. It became my life. I still consider myself one of the luckier ones, one of the rare ones, because I am channeling all of my experience and energy both positive and negative into preparing and talking about preparing.

I write to share what I know, and this also makes the bad time I have been through feel valuable. It helps me, and I hope you too.

I am preparing, doing everything to be prepared and ready when bad times come again, but for some emotional things, I am just like dead.

None of us who survived that period completely recovered. Some scars never go away so prepare to not keep on living life like always only. Also prepare to get hurt, get comfortable with change and experiencing pain

## About the Author

Selco survived the Balkan war of the 90s in a city under siege, without electricity, running water, or food distribution.

In his online works, he gives an inside view of the reality of survival under the harshest conditions. He reviews what works and what doesn't, tells you the hard lessons he learned, and shares how he prepares today.

He never stopped learning about survival and preparedness since the war. Regardless what happens, chances are you will never experience extreme situations like Selco did. But you have the chance to learn from him and how he faced death for months.

Real survival is not romantic or idealistic. It is brutal, hard and unfair. Let Selco take you into that world. Read more of Selco's articles here:

<https://www.theorganicprepper.com/category/preppers/selco/>

And take advantage of a deep and profound insight into his knowledge and advice by signing up for the outstanding and unrivaled online course. More details here:

<https://learn.theorganicprepper.com>