

INTERVIEW WITH ENVER TALI

Pristina | Date: October 3, 2015

Duration: 153 minutes

Present:

1. Enver Tali (The speaker)
2. Lura Limani (The interviewer)
3. Kaltrina Krasniqi (Camera)

Transcription notation symbols of non-verbal communication:

() - emotional communication

{ } - the speaker explains something using gestures

Other transcription conventions:

[] - addition to the text to facilitate comprehension

Footnotes are editorial additions to provide information on localities, names, or expressions

Part One

Lura Limani: Mr. Enver, can you tell us a bit about your childhood, where were you born, when were you born, and something about your father, mother and early childhood memories?

Enver Tali: My childhood was a little bit heavy not because someone tormented me, but because of the times, the times tormented me. Like all Albanians, I lived through the Second World War. During the Second World War, I was a third grade student at a Serbian-language primary school. Then, the Second World War broke out, it was then that Italy entered Kosovo and our region. And, they [Italians] opened Albanian schools and an Albanian administration... the Albanian school, so, when the war broke out, I left in the middle of the third grade that I had started in Serbian and started the third grade again in Albanian language.

My father was, for his time, a great intellectual, a renowned administrator. At the time, he had finished school in Greece, in Thessaloniki and he was an administrator in great demand. And he knew how to be useful in the family, he knew how to be useful also to the world outside the family. For his time, he had quite an authority. But he didn't get arrested, he wasn't running after the [political] parties, after those, because he had a bad experience. They poisoned my uncle, my father's brother, because he was a member of the Communist Party, not before the war, but much earlier than the war. And he was a technical pharmacist, however there were no technical pharmacists at the time, but pharmacists, he was regarded as a pharmacist.

In one of the troubles with the state at the time, in fact with the fall of the Communist Party in the illegality in the year 1920 or 1921, he also falls – my uncle I mean - in the illegality together with a doctor, doctor Pera. As if there were no other communists in the region of Gjilan, he and doctor Pera get persecuted. Doctor Pera and he ran to Kumanova as masters of medicines, as pharmacists. A Macedonian Serb hired him, what do I know, at the time there were no Macedonians, but Serbs. And he had hired him to work in a pharma... as a pharmacist in a pharmacy, but the pharmacy was located in the basement because it was working illegally.

Then, in that kind of basement, of course three years later, he catches a cold, he gets pneumonia. In those times pneumonia was quite dangerous. So they bring him like that to the family in Gjilan. He was back with the family, even I got to know of the Serbian doctor from back then, he was the father of a footballer whom you don't know of, "Miça the Pharmacist," as they called him, because he was good at the drugstore. Instead of curing him, he poisons him. He poisons him, so that my uncle dies from poison, but

one dared not mention such thing.

And this family, as I say, has suffered. My father was an administrator at the time, an administrator in high demand, in such demand that lawyers of the time would hire him for work, instead than working for the state, they paid well. And the Second World War started at the time and father left, there was no soliciting, there were no practising lawyers at the time so father started to deal with trade.

Back then the main trade in Gjilan, but also in Kosovo and Albania, since Kosovo had united with Albania, even in Shkodra, was tobacco. In the region of Gjilan there was a great deal of tobacco manufacturing. So dad collected tobacco and sent it like that to Shkodra. Therefore, our material conditions were better than any other time during that period. Until the last war, which is the Second World War, when *Četnik*¹ partisans entered Kosovo, and Gjilan as well.

When *Četnik* partisans [arrived], naturally I was turning almost twelve, I had finished the third grade during the time of Albania. I want to say that at that time, when the partisans came, I was ten and a half... hadn't turned eleven yet. I did continue school in Albanian, I didn't know Albanian, Albanian was not spoken in the cities, Turkish was. However, I did achieve a good command of Albanian pretty quickly since my grandfather didn't know Turkish. My mother and father knew Turkish naturally, but my grandfather didn't. I want to say that I gained a good command of Albanian very quickly, I was successful in school and so I finished the fifth grade of primary school. With five grades of primary school, it took five grades to register in the gymnasium.²

The gymnasium existed during the times of Albania, to be clear, it existed only in Pristina. It was called Gymnasium Sami Frashëri even in those times. They took the name Sami Frashëri since then. I had just finished fifth grade, I was entitled to register for the first grade of the gymnasium. However, in '44, by the end of '43, in the year '44 or what was it... yes...

Lura Limani: In '44.

Enver Tali: In '44, *Četnik* partisans entered. And upon their arrival, for the first two months, they went silent, they were quiet until they got organised and made their plans on how to deal with Albanians. Their plans were to provoke us a bit, so we would rise up, so to have a reason for stating that they were attacked by them [Albanians]. So like this, all people of the time, villagers and citizens, were in the mountains of Kosovo, let's say Gollak back then, because Gollak was connected with Gjilan.

During the time when people were already in the mountains, they [*Četniks*] were getting organized to commit massacres in the cities, to carry out massacres, whatever they could reach, children and elderly, women and... since those who were at war, those were... those grown up and able for war were already in

¹ Serbian movement born at the beginning of the Second World War, under the leadership of Draža Mihailović. Its name derives from *četa*, anti-Ottoman guerrilla bands. This movement adopted a Greater Serbia program and was for a limited period an anti-occupation guerrilla, but mostly engaged in collaboration with Nazi Germany, its major goal remaining the unification of all Serbs. It was responsible for a strategy of terror against non-Serbs during the Second World War and was banned after 1945. Mihailović was captured, tried and executed in 1946.

² A European type of secondary school with emphasis on academic learning, different from vocational schools because it prepares students for university.

the mountains, they didn't dare to fall in their hands. As I was saying, those troubles that they were able to cause came to the surface only later on, because my dad did not get involved in politics, I mean in those [political] parties of the time. And, yes, my uncle, my other uncle, the uncle who was younger than my dad, the deceased uncle, was younger than my dad, the one younger than dad, Babush, was a member of the Communist Party of the time. Still, one day, three months after the partisans entered, they rounded up young and old, the prisons were full, they were opening new places whenever possible. The offices they set up became prisons, they filled up the prisons and those offices with random prisoners, without any [court] sentence.

Besides those places, there were none left to take them. Dad was there, they took my uncle and those who were part of the movement, and dad, my uncle had seen what is behind the story of the so called Communist Party of Serbia. And he pulled out, immediately fled from Gjilan, went to Pristina. Zeqeria Rexha was a representative of Albanian education back then, they sent him as a teacher to Kaçanik. Dad got imprisoned, they held him a few days, they had no room for another prisoner, they let go half of those prisoners so they could take in new prisoners, and dad happened to be among them.

Dad went back home, yet very tired and sad. He was not able to escape and go, go, go into hiding in the mountains, or what do I know. However, he was lucky, an old Preshevar comes to... I don't know if you heard of Abdullah Presheva. Abdullah Presheva was one of the members of a party which suffered the same fate as the Albanian nation. I have seen it, as a child, not only I, but we went to look how they brought Abdullah out of prison, they brought him and sat him on some sort of a plank to rest, they had not let him walk when they let all the others prisoners walk.

(Coughs) Forgive me for... and there was Abdullah's friend who helped Abdullah out of prison during the war, he helped him get out of prison in the past, through connections, and he kept Abdullah in his house for five months until he got better and stronger. Then Abdullah went to the mountains around Presheva, and Abdullah was known for the fact that nobody dared to approach Abdullah and speak against Albanians. So Abdullah sends this tested man, this man who had also sheltered Abdullah, "Go and have a look at the situation in Kosovo."

While in Kosovo, they [Četniks] started to slaughter and kill, kill... that was the easiest job to do to any Albanian. Anyway, various methods of slaughtering were used back then, for example, Esat Berisha was slaughtered across the whole chest [pointing with his hand] and they set him ablaze before he was dead, still alive but unconscious. They threw fire at him as they would burn wood in the stove for the prisoners, it became, it became you know, a hell of a fire, and with those big shovels they poured it into people, they killed them this way.

If anyone happens to know Jusuf's father, an engineer, he is still alive. His father, I know as I have seen that place, as a child I have seen it when they put him on a stone plank and after they beat him, tortured him to extreme, they cut him open through the stomach and poured fire on him. They used various methods to massacre Albanians [inc.] but to massacre Albanians.

Dad... the guy who came from Presheva, he knew dad as many knew dad in the region of Presheva and Gjilan since he was in isolation with other people. Also, Gjilan was the center of Gollak, of Karadak, of... so he knew dad well and he had worked, he had come from Presheva at the time, had escaped from the

Bulgarians, had come to Gjilan and worked in Gjilan, he knew dad well. And he says, "I came, Abdullah sent me to see how the situation in Gjilan is." He says to Rexhep, "Rexhep," he says, "nobody can tell you what is the situation in Kosovo, but you have to go to the commander for national defense." At the time, the headquarters of national defense included all working craftsmen, they were under the national defense's command. At the commander's, dad knew the commander too, him too, because he was from Tankosiç, near Pozharan.

Lura Limani: Say his name again.

Enver Tali: Name, I can't recall, I used to know it, but I cannot remember. I tried to find these names but... he says, "And tell him that Abdullah sends you to ask for me because there are no literate people that can run the administration of the municipality of Presheva." And he goes to him, he says, "Abdullah sends me, he is asking for Hysen Tali," Hysen was my father's name, "Hysen Tali," he says, "to run the administration there in Presheva." Without... because Abdullah had a reputation, without hesitation, he calls a follower who took him to Presheva, dad goes to Presheva with an escort on horseback. He doesn't meet Abdullah, he doesn't even go to see Abdullah, not to mess up things. "I shouldn't mess up things for Abdullah," he says. And, he stayed, he stayed 15 days in Presheva, from there he went to his cousins' in Skopje. Our cousins lived in Skopje. Our cousins were well known in Skopje. Ermira Tali,³ that is how... they held their grandfather's family name, Ermira, who is she, even today Ermira is talked about. She was a member of the Macedonian Committee, a person very... she did her Masters in America, and now she is doing her Ph.D. there. And so on... so dad goes to his uncle's. His uncle Selim was in Skopje, Selim's son was Mehmet Ali. Mehmet Ali was very skillful in trading, he was well off.

Yes, and he stayed in Skopje for six months. In Skopje, the Deputy President of Macedonia was a writer, Qemal his surname, he was the Deputy President. My father knew the Deputy President. However, more... disturb [inc.] ...he didn't want to... to cause any trouble to the President of Macedonia. He waits till the job announcement, I don't know how they did job announcements at the time, I don't know, they advertise for, advertise that Albania is hiring tobacco experts and he turns up... Tobacco was a big thing in Gjilan, and he turns up and says, "I am a tobacco expert," and this and that. They don't hire him... not because of his expertise, but they don't hire him because, "We have plenty of people to be hired here! You can manage for survival," and this and that and they don't hire him.

Three months after, the same announcement again... the President of Macedonia somewhere is out of the office, while the Albanian Deputy President is there, he goes to him. He says, he tells him about his troubles straightforwardly, "I cannot go back to Gjilan because they killed many people and they are waiting for me too... if you can make it possible for me to go to Albania."

Crvenkovski⁴ of Macedonia was the Minister of the Interior back then. He phones Crvenkovski, our Albanian guy and says, "I am sending a man to you so you can grant him permission to cross to Albania

³ Ermira Mehmeti, a member of Democratic Union for Integration (BDI) in the Macedonian Parliament.

⁴ Krste Crvenkovski (1921-2001) was a Communist political leader in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. He was a leader of the League of Communists of Macedonia (July 1963 - March 1969).

for his own affairs.” He dares not refuse him, because he is a Deputy President, a Prime Minister. And so he issues a permission to him, which I have seen and read, “*Bez prava povratka*” [No permission to return] back to Kosovo and Albania. It wasn’t Albania in fact, but Kosovo. So he remains in Albania, works in Albania and dies in Albania. During that time... while he was there, sometimes for around four months, when it got messy because it got bad, Ranković left or what do I know, during that period, he came to Kosovo and stayed for four months and people knew him, all the old people knew him. He had a great time. After he left Kosovo to go back, shortly after, dad died. So this is it, I was left without a father too.

Lura Limani: When did he die?

Enver Tali: I think dad died in the years... in the year ‘80, I am not certain, but I would say he died around ‘81. So I was left without a father, you know. I was in Pristina, I registered in Pristina, as a child who had finished primary school and who wanted to continue school. But I had some other troubles.

Part Two

Enver Tali: There was plenty of time to grow up and go through father’s death, even though he was in Albania. On December 20, 1944, war broke out inside the city, the well-known war of Gjilan, and big massacres were committed there on children and sick and old people, on everyone they could. My grandmother was killed in that war.

Lura Limani: Grandmother?

Enver Tali: Yes, my grandfather was killed too. My mother and the children had fled to a neighbor’s house, supposedly more, in a house in Shtruhëre [unclear reference], a safer neighbor’s house naturally. So, those two [grandparents] were stuck in the house. The Serbs came in and found them, they killed them, and left my grandmother dead in the yard, in the house yard. Grandfather was taken outside the house yard, there is a small water ravine nearby, and they dumped him in that ravine.

Then an old lady came, another old lady from the neighborhood. “Hush, hush, hush,” she says, “they started to kill people.” She had seen the killing of my grandmother and grandfather, because she was limited in her movement and could not go out. “Whom did they kill?” “*Adile kadin, Adil kadin,*” she says. You know, *Adile* was the name of my grandmother, *Adile kadin*, at the time they were using this word *kadin*.⁵ “Yes, *Adile kadin* and *aga*⁶ Tal.” My grandfather’s name was Myftar, however, as we tend to shorten and change names, nobody called him Myftar, but Tal. Tal, yes Tal, and they could not call him just Tal like that, hence they called him *aga* Tal.

Thus, everyone knew him, both in the *rreth*⁷ and in the city and everyone knew him as *aga* Tal. And she says, “They killed *aga* Tal, they killed *Adile kadin* too.” My people ran after *Adile kadin* and so on... since I

⁵ Turk.: *kadin*, woman, lady.

⁶ *Beg, Spahia* and *Aga* are Ottoman titles. *Beg* or *Bey* (great), Ottoman provincial ruler but also, when included in the last name, a sort of honorary title. In this case however, *aga* is just a title of respect, and it denotes seniority.

⁷ *Rreth* (circle) is the social circle, includes not only the family but also the people with whom an individual is in contact. The opinion of the *rreth* is crucial in defining one’s reputation.

was only a child, I wasn't allowed to go out, however I lurked and managed to get out and see. I got out in the yard, I saw my grandfather killed and there were people in there. We picked up a dead grandfather lying killed in the mud, we took him and placed him on, how to say, it is not a terrace, as it was made of planks and we laid him down for a while, then indoors, in one of the rooms, we laid down the dead grandmother. We ran off again to the neighbors'.

However, I went to my neighbor's, my neighbor's son was four or five years older than I was. "Come," he says, "let's go and hide." "Where should we hide?" They owned horses. Because of the horses, they had grass sheds, what do they call it, hay sheds, so he says, "Come, let's climb on the hay shed, and crawl inside." "Okay!" [I said], being younger than he was. My mother didn't know, nobody knew. We got up and climbed into the hay. He went to a corner of that room, removed some grass and entered the hole, just like that, he hid on his feet, he put the grass on his head {points to his head}. I couldn't do what he did since I was younger. I gathered some hay and spread it, I lay down, covered my head with hay, and my feet were outside.

When they entered to search for someone, they didn't find anyone in the hay shed. They found me, and drag me by my feet. They took me, got me out of there and took me to the yard, ... not the yard, the street. They shot a lot of people by the stream. There were seven or eight old people from my neighborhood tied up, I knew them because they were from my neighborhood. They tied me up with those old people, to shoot me. Three people were guarding us with some kind of Russian automatics... machine guns that can stand on the ground on three legs. And they were armed up to their teeth. So they tied me up too, but they tied me up by the edge [by the wrists]. In that period, a military unit of Shaban Haxhia entered in Gjilan, Shaban Haxhia's brigade was from Albania. And there was a fraction of them, they came to save people since they found out that people were being killed, Albanian people, so they came in groups to the city.

Lura Limani: One question, the ones who were killing, were they Serbian partisans or Bulgarians?

Enver Tali: Serbs. Bulgarians did not kill, all of them were Serbs. They were... since you reminded me of this, they were two brigades of *Četnik* who were supposedly caught hostage by partisans... but all the same. They removed the *Četnik kokarda*⁸ from the hats and held them hostages, and placed a five-pointed star emblem on them. The *kokarda* was removed, replaced with a five-pointed star and they became partisans. They acted and killed under the directives of Serbian commanders, of course.

And us... They killed what they could, so it was our turn to be killed. However, behind our tied up backs, Shaban Haxhia's partisans were approaching the bridge on that stream. They were armed. "Don't move, don't' move, don't move!" They yelled. They raised their hands. "Don't move, don't move!" They raised their hands. We turned to see [them] and they had the five-pointed star, how could we trust them. But anyway, because they spoke Albanian, we had some hope. When they came closer, "Who are these?" "Enemies," they said, "*neprijatelji*, enemies, enemies." I was standing next to the leader of the group.

After they cut the rope for me and for the others, [I heard] them saying "Enemies, enemies – *neprijatelji*," he hit me on my shoulder {pointing at his shoulder} and got me up, as I was weaker in my condition. He

⁸ *Kokarda* is a metallic army emblem used by *Četnik* soldiers, who wore them distinctively on their hats.

got me up a bit and said, “Is this child an enemy too?” He had a gun in his hand, he killed the three of them without a word, those who were waiting for us.

He killed the three of them, they set us free, we got out of there, along them. Some of the soldiers were with us in the house where we stayed, slept and rested. But meanwhile, we heard two clear rapid machine gun fire, fired from automatic and machine guns... and we were told that it was others who were roaming outside, because those others were bringing people to tie them up and kill them along us. However, they told us, those who were tied up with us, that they [partisans] had gone to get more people. They probably caught those who were helping our cause. We heard two machine gun fires that lasted for a long time and they said that people who came from Albania were also executed, they killed them.

So, I saved my head, along with some others, although many were killed. Two persons killed, whom I knew, were lying in front of my feet, my street neighbors, neighbors from the city and the apartment building. A lady, a neighbor of mine, was heavily injured, she was wounded by an automatic weapon when they shot to kill her. Two days... she had a child, a daughter. And we were told that she is dead, but then it turned out she was still alive, she endured for two more days and then died. The girl grew up (smiles). The daughter grew up and got married... they had injured her, the bullets hit her somewhere {points to the foot}, it scratched the back of the foot, so she had to limp like that in order to walk. She got married in Skopje, had children and a family. This is how our people suffered in those times, I mean Albanians in general.

Lura Limani: And after that, when did you start school in Pristina?

Enver Tali: Well, I will tell you now, we will get there. After the war, my mother didn’t let me sleep with my grandmother, because I liked sleeping with my grandmother, and my grandmother liked sleeping with me. My mother wouldn’t let me, she said, “No, if the bomb drops where I am, he will become an orphan. If it drops on him, I will be left without a son.” This is how she would convince herself and she didn’t let me sleep with my grandmother. However, even in that situation, they robbed us blind. They took everything they could from our house. Furthermore, they pulled out the electricity measure unit or how they call it, however they didn’t cut off the cables, and it was left hanging there, so they didn’t take it.

What was left, they left the *paja*⁹ box at the gate next to the street, my sister’s *qeiz*,¹⁰ so they could come back for it later. However, our people arrived before them and collected the box, nothing was left inside, yet they did rescue it. The only thing rescued was that box and nothing else. However, the neighbors lent us some duvets and mattresses so we managed somehow.

I remained there for 14-15 days, and then Behija came, a well known partisan in that part of the city. She was, she was not Serbian, nor Albanian, but Bosnian, the daughter of a *myfti*¹¹ from Gjilan. He served as *myfti* in Gjilan and had... besides the four-member family, he had Behie as well. But when the Albanians came, Albania took over, they ran to Bosnia. She had fallen in love with one of our neighbors here, and so she stayed for his sake, for a guy whose name was Vesel Rexhepi. So, she stayed here to participate in the

⁹ *Paje*, bride’s trousseau.

¹⁰ *Qeiz*, clothes and embroideries that fill up the bride’s trousseau.

¹¹ Arab.: *Mufti*, a Muslim legal expert who is empowered to give rulings on religious matters.

war, Vesel was fighting in the war, and she was fighting too as a partisan back then.

So she came all the way from Pristina to gather arms and ammunition, I am not sure what the story was. Regardless, she came to visit us as a neighbor. My mother told her, "Take Enver with you to Pristina." But I also had an older sister and she then says, "Take Hajrija," that was my sister Hajrija, "take Hajrija and save her." And she did take us both.

My sister went with her in a Fiat vehicle, while they put me in some truck with ammunition and where I carried no gun with me, but they brought a young guy, someone younger than I was, in the same truck. He had some guns and stuff, while I had ammunition yes, but no weapons. Nevertheless, we got in that truck and we departed our way. It was the date 21, 22 or 23 immediately after the war, two weeks after... I want to say that in the beginning of January, in the beginning of February of the year '44 we headed to Pristina. I was in the truck with Rexhep, Rexhep was his name, the neighbor's son. In fact, they were from Bujanovac, but had moved here. During the time of Albania, Bujanovac was left to the Bulgarians in Serbia, so they came in Gjilan during the time of Albania.

We departed, a big Italian OM, Italian OM, a big and long truck, heavily loaded, however, lots of snow in the road. And the snow continued to fall, so the truck got stuck on the road. It got stuck and the wind was blowing snow in the roads, so the truck could not get going. We attempted to do something, but to no avail. We stood up, besides the driver there were three people in the cabin. I knew one of them, he was of the Llazon family, so I knew him. They went out, got inside the cabin since it was cold outside, they left us in the truck. My mother had wrapped me well in warm clothes so I didn't feel the cold. Then the evening came, the truck was not moving, they left, only Rexhep, the neighbor, and I were left there, we stayed there. Cold or not, the day dawned.

Before it dawned, Rexhep told me, "Let's get down and make a tunnel of snow," clean up the snow, and get inside the snow tunnel, "in case the Serbs turn up." We heard some heavy gunfire near Ferizaj. And we were afraid, so we had to get inside that tunnel, get inside. We entered, with our heads above the snow while our bodies were buried in the snow. We were looking in the direction of Ferizaj across the street, when we spotted two people approaching, two people walking, but I couldn't identify them. As they came nearer, we noticed that it was a woman covered in a veil and a man with her. So when we noticed her veil, we realised these are our people and we are not in danger. We got out of the tunnel. "What is going on *bre*?¹² "No, those devils are celebrating Christmas and thus fired guns because of that." In those times, anyway, they did fire guns (smiles). They left and we were stuck there. Later on, the same people approached us behind the truck.

They took us to Ferizaj. They took us to a house in Ferizaj, the family in the house happened to be our neighbor's in Gjilan. They took us in, gave us food, a warm home, they did us a lot of favors, thus saved us, in other words. However, no news of Pristina yet. We slept over that evening because nobody came to pick us up. The next day, they organised around 16 livestock, that's what they said as I do remember this, cattle, bulls, whatever they had in order to pull the truck out of the snow. So they pulled out the truck and came for us. They came and got us in the truck, meanwhile my sister and the others were told that the truck exploded and we were finished, we were dead.

¹² *Bre* - colloquial: used to emphasize the sentence, it expresses strong emotion. Similar to the English bro, brother.

My sister was... actually both of them, since my other sister and Behie had arrived within a day with the Fiat. So they went beserk, thinking how they lost their brother and how... when we finally arrived there, their joy was greater than sadness, so that is how I joined my sisters. However, back then the food was scarce for everyone. Those who didn't work, were receiving 350 grams of bread per day, so 350 grams of bread per day. Those who worked received 400 grams of bread per day. And we, who moved there, hardly received three grams of bread. However their portion... my nephew, you might happen to know Shpend Bajrami, he is the son of Zeqir Bajrami. Zeqir Bajrami was a geography teacher in the gymnasium and later on started to teach at the university. And since his son was a young child, so he gave to us those 300 grams of his, to my sister and me, for survival.

A few days later Vesel, this Vesel who got us in a truck... actually he took Behie and put us in a truck. Since he came often he did see, he realized that because I was a child, he couldn't find me a job. Eventually they decide to find one for me, so they take me to work in a bakery, in the bakery of a Serbian guy, a Serbian bakery. Does anyone want to lean back? {addressing those present} No (smiles). And so he sends me to work at that bakery. It was difficult to work in a bakery in those times, there was this long stick with a rag for cleaning up the stove. I wasn't able to do it, although he brought a box to lift me up, I still couldn't, it was hard. So he, the Serb, fired me, out of caprice, otherwise he needed help. He fires me, I come home, "He fired me, *bre*." "Alright." Vesel arrives and finds out that I was fired, "Come on, let's take you somewhere else."

Ibrahim Prepolli was a carpenter back then. But his carpentry was under the command of *Narodna Odbrana*,¹³ the bakery was under *Odbrana* also. I went to work for Ibrahim Prepolli, it was winter, snow, chaos. However, I could not carry those thick long shanks, I couldn't drag them. So for a few days Ibrahim carried them himself and then fired me (laughs). And again Vesel didn't stop, he had found another job for me to work as a barber. I was doing well there, since there weren't many who would come and cut their hair and shave in the barber's shop, but some officers with ranks who fought in the war and had lots of money.

I went with a broom, a broom stick or whatever it was. I was sweeping after the men. They would give me a dinar or two and that's how I made enough money and got through life somehow. Then the payment was the same, the payment was one *zembil*¹⁴ twice a week, they gave me oil, beans, sugar and rice that I took to my sister. I fed myself with those and I survived, I mean I survived the hunger. Meanwhile I was waiting, there were talks that the gymnasium would open soon. Three months later, on 15 March 1945, the royal¹⁵ gymnasium Sami Frashëri was opened. The first day, that is, on 15 March, I went to apply for the gymnasium and got accepted. In a short while, they opened the dormitory for students, I went to the

¹³ *Narodna Odbrana* (National Defense) was a Serbian nationalist group created on October 8, 1908, as a reaction to the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the time, it was concerned with the protection of ethnic Serbs in Austria-Hungary. To achieve their goals, the *Narodna Odbrana* spread propaganda as well as organized paramilitary forces.

¹⁴ Turk.: *Zembil*, shoulder bag.

¹⁵ Anachronism, this was the name of this school during the war.

dormitory to continue my life through the gymnasium, in the dormitory.

So, living that kind of life, I managed to get in the fourth grade of the gymnasium. But in the fourth grade of the gymnasium there was a history teacher, Gjon Serreqi. Gjon Serreqi was known at the time, he was executed. When he came to the gymnasium, he was restless, he wanted to establish something, he did a few things in the city. Even there, at the gymnasium, he had formed a group against the Serbian regime of the time. And there were two in that group, two who were famous there. One of them, the third one, was pulled back since they did not accept him, Mehmet, Mehmet Pozharani.

Mehmet Pozharani [Kurteshi] was the father of Sami Kurteshi,¹⁶ the Ombudsperson before the current one. His father, a very nice man, a man with extremely noble ideals, with a right soul. And so he came to me and told me, "Listen, we are thinking of working on something." Ahmet Malisheva, Rexhep Kurteshi and Mehmet Pozharani were in my class, Pozharani was his name, and he was in my class. Mehmet came over and said many things, "It is going through my mind, what do you think?"

At the time you can imagine, I was angry about all the mess they did, in other words I wanted to win over them and get revenge, "Yes, *more*."¹⁷ The former pledged in the presence of, in fact, Gjon Serreqi. Now, because I had declared... Ahmet Malisheva. Ahmet Malisheva was from Gjilan too, I also had him in my class for five years in primary school. We were older, as some of them were taken from those schools, the religious schools, and brought to the school, they got enrolled here and scored quite a success, being achievers, they caught up with us. And then we had Ahmet, Ahmet Malisheva was our leader, so I had to pledge to him, only I, while they had pledged to Gjon Serreqi. I pledged, so I became a member. However, nobody knew that story.

Lura Limani: Did this group have a name?

Enver Tali: The group... I'm coming there now. Because Rexhep Kurteshi had convinced Ahmet that they should include one more person in the group. That person was a very dangerous man, he has cooperated with every devil against Albanians. Rexhep came and said "We will accept Xhavit Shabani," also from Pozharan. I said, "Who?" "Xhavit." I said, "Never! It can't be done; it can't be done." Rexhep and Ahmet had already accepted him, but we did not agree to it, Mehmet and I couldn't agree to it.

When the school year was over on May 30, no it was June... May, May, May... yes, as graduates we were given 15 days of time off to prepare the *semi-matura*,¹⁸ the *semi-matura* exam. The evening we finished school, the day we finished the fourth grade of the gymnasium, we appeared at the gymnasium, actually a bit late. We turned up at the gymnasium but there were no lessons because we were given time off to prepare for the *semi-matura*. They had arrested them, Rexhep and Ahmet, Mehmet and many others, Karolina, Fran, and... Not sure if somebody knows her or not. Yes, girls and boys of the gymnasium, the

¹⁶ Mehmet Pozharani Kurteshi. First Ombudsperson elected by the Kosovo Assembly on 4 July 2009 for a five year remit.

¹⁷ Colloquial: used to emphasize the sentence, it expresses strong emotion. *More* adds emphasis.

¹⁸ Old set of examinations given to students after the fourth year of elementary school.

yard was full, the yard of OZNA¹⁹ of the time. OZNA was near the gymnasium, it had a nice and huge yard. They took all of them out in the yard, Xhelal Orana, in case somebody knows him, and Nexhat, they were both diligent students. Nexhat Orana finished the faculty of Math and Technology Science in Belgrade, while Xhelal finished Technical Science. He was an engineer who used to work in Skopje. So at the time they were already students, yet they were imprisoned despite not being involved.

They were in prison, in the evening they put us in prison too, and they summoned me for an interrogation. So I went, "You against the people, and against us, against..." whoever... I said, "No *bre*, I have nothing against anyone." I was trying to tell them that I liked them, but God forbid they were not believing it. Anyway, I was beaten, they held me for a few days, I was still too young to appear in court so they let me go. The others were sent to court and got sentenced considerably, but I escaped without prison. Also did Xhelal and Nexhat, since they weren't members.

Yes, 74 of them got sentenced there, out of those 74, three or four of us got to prison, four of us got imprisoned. They released me, four remained, they were five in fact, four left. Two of them were sentenced, the other two were released, Ahmet was sentenced to three years, Rexhep to two years, and Xhahid Gafurri was from outside [our circle], if someone knew that family, Xhahid was part of our group, and he was sentenced to five years in prison, and he did serve those five years in prison.

And then I got expelled from school *doživotno*,²⁰ not to return anymore. I stayed out of school for two years, for two years...After two years I wanted to get employed in Pristina, to find some kind of job, I was bragging that I was able to work. However, at the time we had a headmaster from Korça, a very nice headmaster, a very nice Albanian.

Lura Limani: [Headmaster] of the school?

Enver Tali: Yes, of the school, the gymnasium. I can't recall his name either, anyway, once I met him [the headmaster] in the *korzo*²¹ and I was with two friends, while he was walking with a few teachers and professors. He separated from them and approached me. "Come," he said, "here!" And dragged me from them. "Did you send the papers to enroll in school?" I said, "No I haven't, because they told me I no longer have a right to education." He then said, "Bring your documents to the gymnasium by tomorrow." He registered me. He enrolled me in the fourth grade again, while my friends had moved pretty far, [I was] the generation of Fehmi Agani²² and alike. They had moved further, still I got accepted somehow, I got accepted like that. I got accepted but with some difficulties. Often they asked me to go to a demonstration, but I dared not as I was summoned for interrogation, and I could have dragged down others who...

¹⁹ OZNA, acronym for Department of National Security, Yugoslav security service notorious for the persecution and establishment of a regime comparable to the KGB terror in Russia.

²⁰ Srb. *Doživotno*, for life.

²¹ Main street, reserved for pedestrians.

²² Fehmi Agani (1932-1999) was one of the pre-eminent Albanian intellectuals of his generation. An accomplished writer and teacher, studied at Belgrade University where he earned a doctorate in sociology.

And when it came to registration, I got registered in the fifth grade after I had finished the fourth. So I got registered in the fifth grade. I had finished the sixth grade with good marks. In the eighth grade there was one... he taught us history, Zeqeria Rexha's cousin. Anyway, it seems that he was sent to Belgrade to study history. For four years in a row he did not receive a scholarship, but a salary, and so he finished that, only with an empty index²³ with him, getting away without passing any exam, but he was one of them. He was again appointed professor of history, a lecturer. He could not stand me, he really couldn't. I was afraid he would cause some harm to me. So I had finished seventh grade though we hadn't received the results yet. He failed me in seventh grade, failed me in the exam. Doable or not, I had to take the exam. We passed, there was an exam at the end of the term.

They had established an [exam] commission, Idriz Ajeti²⁴ was a member of the commission. A Russian lady who taught history at the Serbian gymnasium, and two others whom I don't know, examined me. The Russian lady had filled the front of a classroom... there are some classrooms near the stairs in the gymnasium, plenty of secondary schools professors, both Serbs and Albanians there, had come, as it became a big deal. She had filled the classroom with maps, historic maps and for 43 minutes, not 45...I did check the watch, for 43 minutes, she appeared in front of those who were present, crossed her hands {crosses his hands on the chest}. "*Gospodo* [Gentlemen]..." because they could speak [Serbian], they were Russian bourgeois who had fled during the Revolution.²⁵ "*Gospodo, čiste savesti,*" she said, "*potpisujem* *pet.* [Gentlemen, I do give him Five²⁶ with a clean conscience.]" Idriz Ajeti, "No, not Five but Four," our Idriz said. "Whatever you want," I was thinking out loud, just so I can get away from this twat. And up to this day I don't know what the grade was, was it Five or Four. This is the story, and yes I did get to fifth grade.

In eighth grade there were troubles again. Ismet Deiri, if someone knew him, Ismet taught us math and he was very strict. He was strict, but I did perform well in math, I did not have trouble with math. Ismet failed me in eighth grade in the math exam. Fine. I went to pass the exam in the fall. Ahmet something, the chemistry teacher was called, he taught me chemistry, he was my classmate until the fourth grade of the gymnasium, and now he was teaching me chemistry. When he started chemistry classes, probably I was influenced by...and I said to him, "Ahmet don't eat shit!" Excuse my language, "Toying with me as they did, because I will shoot you and all." "Hehe," he laughed (smiles). So we went to take the math exam. I did pass the math exam, the chair of the commission was a Russian who taught at the Serbian gymnasium. I still remember the assignment in Serbian because of that Russian, "*Izvodjenje pitagorine teoreme*" [Application of Pythagoras' theorem,] that was a piece of cake. Then there was an assignment from analytics, and there was no... one more assignment from analytics, trigonometry, some long assignment, so I did solve that as well.

Before we get to Belo Sokolovci and Ismet Deiri... yes, so I solved those too on the spot... because they gave us one to solve on the spot. I delivered that assignment to the Russian. "No, no, no!" Ismet

²³ Booklet holding course transcripts.

²⁴ Idriz Ajeti (1917-) is a writer and academic.

²⁵ A few professors were Russians, see the paragraph below.

²⁶ Grade A on an A-F scale (Five-0).

approaches and looks at it, there was no mistake. He said, “*Pitajte kandidata čijom metodom...* [Ask the candidate on which method he bases...].” I remember it like today, “*Izveo Pitagorinu Teoremu*. [He solved Pythagora’s Theorem].” The Russian repeats it for me. “*Ja sam imao pitanje ‘Izvodjenje Pitagorine Teoreme’. Ja sam izveo.*” [I was assigned the task ‘Application of Pythagoras’ Theorem. I solved it.] Nobody spoke a word, but Shyqyr Qehaja, who taught history and who was from Pristina. He approached Ismet Deiri and pretended to whisper in his ear, though you could hear him saying, “He has out taken you Ismet, so sit and hush” (laughs).

Yes, he left, turned his back on him, however they acknowledged the eighth grade and I graduated. I graduated with the math exam. That... that pressure by Ismet Deiri, came from Ahmet Maloku. Ahmet Maloku was not able to fail me. They, they were teaching pedagogical courses at the time, the teachers.

These two teachers from the pedagogical courses were sleeping in the dormitory of *Normale*,²⁷ and that is where they made a deal. He said to the other, “You fail Enver for me,” so he did fail me for real. He really failed me, but he then had received two-three blows and he was afraid of me, he was frightened, he walked scared, while I was waiting for him, I always waited for him.

He was walking along the *korzo*, he separated from his friends there, where the museum is now, next to the museum there is an alley down the road, so his friends left him there and he was alone. And there was no... he saw me, there was no way out, so he got going, he was engaged to a girl who lived in that street and was on his way to his fiancée and to his future in-laws. So while going down, I caught him and hit him hard with my fists. The door was shut and so he ran away, he was kicking the door and the in-laws came to open the door, then I turned away and fled without trouble.

Lura Limani: This happened after the exam, right?

Enver Tali: After the exam, after the exam. So, I had no problem, I only know that the only ones who saw that, were those who happened to be around, nobody else. Thus, this is how I finished the gymnasium and made it till here thought all these vicissitudes.

Part Three

Lura Limani: So, now you can continue with the professional life.

Enver Tali: I had finished the gymnasium, and now I was constantly thinking about studying. I wanted to pursue math, to study math, so I enrolled in the Faculty of Math in Belgrade. However, I had no scholarship, no money, I wouldn’t say I was poor, but on the edge of poverty more likely. For about a month I was illegally sheltered by Xhelal Orana and Nexhat Orana, in their dormitory, in their dorm, however that could not go on like that, illegally the whole time. I stayed there for about a month, and then after a month I got out. After a month I left for Pristina. There was no Faculty in Pristina at the time, so I tried to enroll, find a job and enroll in the Faculty of Skopje, something like jurisprudence or similar. I

²⁷ The *Shkolla Normale* opened in Gjakova in 1948 to train the teachers needed for the newly opened schools. With the exception of a brief interlude during the Italian Fascist occupation of Kosovo during Second World War, these were the first schools in Albanian language that Kosovo ever had. In 1953, the *Shkolla Normale* moved to Pristina.

thought of studying something, but no math, thinking one doesn't need math in private life, I didn't reckon so.

I got employed. I was employed in the Institute of Social Security. At the time there were no literate people, anyone literate was able to get a job easily, still, it was difficult for me to get a job. In fact, I got employed a bit later at the Institute of Social Security. However, I got employed, there was one touristic enterprise, a hotel and a touristic [spot] in Gjilan... [I was working] as an archivist, keeping records. I worked for two years there, and then got fired. I was looking for a teaching position, however they didn't hire me there, it wasn't for me. "Unsuitable," they would say. I started to look for a job, to work anywhere, anything, I would say, some job where I could get a basic living salary. And so I got employed in this...place I mentioned earlier.

Lura Limani: The Institute?

Enver Tali: Yes.

Lura Limani: The Institute of Security?

Enver Tali: Of Social Security. I met some good people over there, very helpful, in fact I can say that I didn't do a thing for the whole three years, because they wouldn't let me. They did all the work for me, they were doing the work while I was only going up and down so I told them, "You guys are going to leave me without bread, *bre*. I need to learn something." "Learn math!" they would say. Anyway, I had a nice time there, but I was fired from there too. They fired me. After being fired from the Institute, I was constantly thinking how I should study math. I did not enroll in math, I didn't because I didn't have the means, I had no... [financial] means.

I got acquainted with my current wife, she had just graduated from the Visual Arts College in Skopje, so [she was] a painter. However, she wasn't in a good political position [she was also "unsuitable"]. And so, after getting married to her, she was receiving a salary, I mean, she was employed. Though we had only one salary, still, it was much better.

Lura Limani: What is your wife's name?

Enver Tali: Nesrine. And then my sister got employed, she was 14 years old. But they were not granting her a job, no employment for her. So someone told me, "Let's increase her age, make it 16 so she is able to get a job." So they increased it, made it 16, and they hired her too. She began to receive three thousand dinars of child benefits, or whatever it was they received for children. At the time whoever got a job, if they had a dependant, they would get three thousand dinars. I was also getting three thousand dinars. So I went to enroll in school with those three thousand dinars, in the Faculty. I was doing really well at the Faculty, but then I got sent to prison.

Lura Limani: Why did they send you to prison?

Enver Tali: Eh?

Lura Limani: Why?

Enver Tali: Because I was "unsuitable" (smiles).

Lura Limani: Did something specific happen at the time?

Enver Tali: Say it again?

Lura Limani: Did you do... have you undertaken any specific action during that time, before prison?

Enver Tali: Yes, of course. The father of this guy, Liburn, in case you heard of him, Kadri Halimi, a great ethnologist, used to teach ethnology in Belgrade at the time. He and I, we, set up... and some others set up an Albanian organization for the national unification with Albania, with the goal of national unification with Albania and liberation from Serbia. And so it went on.

Lura Limani: Were you active in Skopje or in Pristina?

Enver Tali: In Pristina, in Pristina. It continued like that for some time, then I left Skopje because of my material situation. I left Skopje, though I did pass some of the jurisprudence exams, actually that Roman Law subject was the most difficult one in Skopje. Only Bardhyl Çausi and I passed that subject in the first term, otherwise no other was able to do it the first time around, I remember now.

Hence, we were active as much as we could. However, my wife and I went to Belgrade, after being invited to work in Gjilan for the promotion of cultural, artistic activities there. They sent me to Belgrade for a monthly training to see how they did the work over there. When I got back from Belgrade, my uncle was still alive back then, and had come to wait for me at the bus station and told me, "Run away from here because they have imprisoned all your friends." "What have I got to do with my friends in prison?" "I'm telling you to run away from here in case you do have any connection." I didn't move, they were sent to prison sometime by the end of February, beginning of March, while I was sent to prison in April, that is, when they captured me and sentenced me with prison time. After I served my sentence, they set me free, however, without any hope that I would be able to do anything in life. What I wanted to study was math, and since we now had my wife's and my sister's salary, I went to register in math as a full time [student]. Back then, University math was taught in two parts, in two, what do they call it...?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Semesters?

Enver Tali: Not semesters, but first and second degree. I did finish the first degree, and so I started looking for a job. Nobody was hiring me. Nobody was hiring me, even though back then math was a subject with a deficit of teaching staff. If one had completed a first degree in math, that was quite an achievement, however, no job. So I got a bit disappointed, because I was never disappointed, neither frightened *bre*, and let's say I was going for a second degree and still couldn't get a job, what do I do then.

And so I quit... I took some exams of the second degree, the third year, but then we [I] quit. I was touched, so to say, some kind of disappointment even though I rarely got disappointed in life, but I made a mistake this time around. So I quit, I quit and went home. I served my sentence, have I already told you? And some of them respected me secretly, some wanted to gain points through me of course, but [this phase] did pass, I passed it somehow when I moved with my family to Pristina. Because in Pristina, because I have lived in Pristina since '45, but then I left for Gjilan. And then I left Gjilan and came to Pristina again. I wasn't doing anything in Pristina. I sold the house in Gjilan. But that was little money. I wasn't working, I lived on loans. But I had a friend there.

Hence, I came to Pristina, and I couldn't find a job there. When I sold my house, I learned a craft, to cut scrap, to straighten it, scrap for construction, I mean. It was sold by kilos, those who started working with it earlier, who started doing business earlier, would get three hundred dinars per kilo. I dropped it to two hundred and eighty dinars, as I knew many around and I was more or less loved by others, I had plenty of work. Although scrap was not straight like nowadays, straightened, you had to cut it and bend it. But there were those *baullat*²⁸ up to one hundred and twenty kilograms, you had to lay it down, then tie it somewhere and pull it, straighten it and then cut it according to the project. My parents would fetch jobs for me, and then I would cut it based on those jobs, bend it, straighten it, people would come and pick it up. However, I never had any trouble of the sort where someone would say to me that it was shorter or longer or...

Once someone brought his plan, he didn't do the house according to the plan, but [the scrap] expanded by one meter on one side, so the scrap was shorter by a meter. When I took it to him, "You have damaged me, *bre*." "What happened?" "You did it shorter," he said. So I take the piece that he had brought, I measure it and I say to him, "Go ahead and measure it." He measured it and then came to his senses. He said, "No, it's not your fault, I have expanded the building on this side by a meter." "Well, that is something else." Still, I said, "You won't be losing anything, since there will be other people who will need scrap with these measurements," I said and, "I will swap it, take it from another customer and cut it for you." And so it happened, I didn't damage him either because I put it to use, on the other hand I easily got through this situation.

So like this, I was working with scrap, and it did pay off, the work with scrap paid off very well. Because I was in a bad state, living off my wife's salary, my sister got married and so I was left only with my wife's salary. I paid house rent, the situation was bad, but when I started to work with it [scrap] I got through, I got through a great deal. So I took loans to build the house and loans were of help, and my friends were helping too. Whenever a loan came up, since I wasn't entitled to a loan, and not being in a job, they [my friends] would make sure to find someone who would lend it to me [on their name] and so I never owed them because I was doing well with scrap.

So that is how I built the house, I built the house and lived well, a good life. Sometimes they summoned me to prison, not prison, but they detained me for three-four days and then let me go, being "unsuitable." of course I didn't do anything to put in danger my children and family's life. So they would let me go, in other words, all good.

Lura Limani: What years are you talking about, the '50s or '60s? What years are we speaking about?

Enver Tali: What years?

Lura Limani: Yes, what years approximately?

Enver Tali: Ah, years...I started this house in the year '79. I was given this land, it was given to me by Omer Qerkezi, who was the director of these parcels. And Omer was my classmate, four years of gymnasium together, and so he helped me. When I took the first loan, I said to him, "I will pay off the debt." But after

²⁸ Rolls of metal rope

the first loan he said, "Don't pay the debt now, but start working on foundations because another loan will come later and..." and that is how it happened.

Yes, as I said, my friends helped me, no, they didn't help me without letting me pay, but I paid them back once I was able to. When the house was finished, then I started working [finishing touches], some annexes here and there, some improvements, that part there I did it myself {points to the other side of the house}. I made it myself, without anyone's help, and I managed. I managed to do many things, I managed through work.

So I moved into a new house, and talks of our activities broke out. It started, the arrests started, the catastrophe started. One late evening around morning, before dawn, the entire neighborhood was surrounded, our neighborhood was surrounded by Serbian police. Someone had given them my address, but at the time [the house] had no façade yet... the houses were unfinished, some houses were just at the start and... so it was difficult to find it. They came to look for me by name, by the first letter E. They entered in the first neighbor's there, at the foot of the hill where we took a turn. "Find us Enver Tali." "I am not Enver Tali, here's my ID," and nonsense, "Where is his [house]?" If he showed them or not, I don't know now. That is why they headed to this building. Now, when they arrived at this building, my entrance is downstairs as you have seen, whereas Emrush's is upstairs. Now, it is easier to go to Emrush's than go down the stairs and look for someone.

I did hear them, I heard them because I was working on something till late, and then when I went to bed I was half asleep and half awake. When they came, they came by truck, they came by jeeps to...it was besieged around here. I got up to see, it was besieged, so I said, "I am finished." However, I didn't hassle them, I was working downstairs, I didn't wake up my wife and kids, they were sleeping upstairs. They went to Emrush's, they went in to look for Enver Tali and he says, "I am not Enver Tali." "Who are you?" "I am Emrush," he says... I can't remember his surname. And he says, "Here." [shows them his ID] and the commander gets nervous, the one who was leading them, "Come on!" to the police. The police... I went to a toilet downstairs... I climbed to a small window there and I watched the movement of the police partially. I see they have assembled and are ready to leave. It was dawn by now. They were ready to leave, the trucks got started, they were getting in their jeeps and departed. Nothing could be seen.

Now I, the neighborhood saw it and they knew something. There was some sort of a tap to wash the face and the body, I took a towel and went outside to this tap in the neighbor's yard. I wanted to wash my face before they wake up, I am washing my face in his yard. A guy called Zenel Kastrati - he is in prison -, he had seen the whole scene, he watched it from the other side across, across the duct, from across the valley {points in the direction across the house}, and saw what was happening here.

When I went outside like that, he couldn't sleep anymore. "Hey Enver, hey Enver!" I turn around, it's Zenel. "What is it, Zenel?" "Come, come," he said, "Right now, right now." I said, "I can't see you now because I found out that they raided Emrush's house." I told him, "Wait a minute." He went and I washed my face and with a towel on my shoulder I went to Emrush's, I entered and there were his wife and he sitting at the kitchen table looking grim. "Good morning." They, "Good morning." "Good morning!" They stood up, "Tet tet tet [mumbling]. More, did you have any guest today?" I said, "Tonight huh? No bre, what guests." The wife said, "The police came." "What did the police want?" I said, "In those hours." "No," she said, "they were looking for..." "Whom were they looking for?" Emrush started to mention other names, but Enver.

The wife said, “No Emrush, no, they were looking for Enver.” “Eii,” I said, “there are many Envers in this neighborhood, leave it alone.”

I went out of there, and went to Zenel’s. “What happened? Did you survive?” “I did,” I said, and then he said, “What will you do now?” “Now fill the tank with gasoline, get ready, I will get ready too, now you pack me in your car and take me to Skopje.” “Yes and?” “If they do catch us, you are a taxi driver, I have hired you as a taxi driver.” “*More,*” he said, “even if they take me with you I don’t care.” He is a very nice man, but he got into some trouble. And so I come home, I don’t disturb them, they are still asleep. By the time I got ready, she [the wife] was almost awake, “What?” I told her, “I am going to Skopje for some time, then we will see where I end up.” “OK,” since she also realized that...

And then at Zenel’s I got into a car for Skopje. He was driving through villages and some narrow streets, he was skilled in these things, he took me across the Serbian border to Macedonia. Once I arrived in Macedonia, I went to my uncles’, they jumped from joy and I said, “What are you happy about? I am a fugitive.” I said, “What if I get into trouble, what if you?” since they also suffered in prisons. My oldest uncle, the deceased one, was the same age as my dad, he served eight years in prison the first time around, then another three years the second time around. And Ermira’s father, whom I told you about, no, it was Ermira’s grandfather, while Ermira’s father who was a lawyer, a graduated lawyer, served five years in prison. I mean this family of mine has suffered in prison, because of Serbian nonsense. “Welcome, very nice.” So, I stayed for one month. They fetched a fake passport for me to leave for Turkey. I used that fake passport to get to Turkey. When I arrived in Turkey, I notified their government.

Lura Limani: What year is this?

Enver Tali: How?

Lura Limani: What year did it happen?

Enver Tali: In the year... in ‘79, yes. In ‘79... at the beginning of the year ‘79 I think, at the end of ‘78, sometime around that.²⁹ The war hadn’t broke out here yet, there was no such danger. I stayed there for a month, they fetched me a fake passport, and with that fake passport I went to Turkey. Two of my sisters had moved to Turkey with their families. I was warmly received by my sisters, I had nephews there. So I went to one of my nephews’ and stayed for ten months, I had a good time, I had a great time. However, I wasn’t doing anything, I was like a dead person. So I did some thinking over what I might do here, to establish the Albanian Lobby here in Macedonia.³⁰ They had established some organizations here, Kosovar organizations, I mean Albanian, and so I made a connection with them, I made contacts.

One day I made contact with a Turkish organization, purely Turkish. Those Turks had established an organization to show solidarity with Bosnia, because the war in Bosnia was going on back then. So I said, I want to make contacts with them, as long as they are so considerate about other people, I am also a stranger for them. I go there, they welcome me nicely, I knew Turkish more or less. And I said, “I didn’t come to...” because they ordered drinks and... something to... I said, “I didn’t come here to eat and drink,

²⁹ The speaker is most probably referring to 1988 and 1989.

³⁰ The speaker means Turkey.

but for business.” Ah, but that was unimaginable for them, so they hosted me very well.

That organization was composed of academics who were... pre-doctorate, what was that, Masters, they were all Masters and Doctors of Science. The chair has finished two faculties, the Medical Faculty and History. The Secretary had finished Economy and held a Masters Degree. They welcomed me, they accepted me very well, extremely well, and now they want me to write and take part in those meetings, after I had introduced them to the situation. But, I said, “I have gone to the Turkish government, I told them that I don’t have a passport, I told them that, fine,” I said, “the Turkish government knows this.” “Don’t worry because we will take care of this.” They were all intellectuals who wrote speeches for Turkish leaders.

I had a good time with them. When I went to the second meeting, the chair says to me, they called me Enver Bey,³¹ “Enver Bey,” says he, “Do you accept to...” no, “From today you are my tutor,” *hocam* they say in Turkish, “My tutor.” I kept silent, because the Secretary said, “Enver Bey,” he said... since they had discussed and agreed with each other meanwhile, and as I have two sons abroad, the youngest one was in England at the time, Kujtim was in America. “One of your sons,” he says, “Is in America, the other one is in England, but do you agree to have another son in Istanbul?” I didn’t speak a word, I didn’t respond to him either, however, they truly took care of me as if they were my near kin. On everything that requested my attention, I approached them first, “What is this?” Not only they explained it to me, but they also undertook action regarding that issue. I got established quite well.

I formed a Lobby ... an Albanian who lived there, he was my classmate, that scoundrel, he is dead now, pardon me. And in one of the meetings, one of our meetings, at the Lobby I formed, they were PhD candidates, I had lawyers, businessmen, tourists as friends... I mean I had a lot of businessmen, all Albanians, they were all Albanians but naturalized in Turkey. At the fourth meeting, that Albanian, a classmate from Pristina said, “Enver,” because he didn’t call me Enver Bey, we were childhood friends, “Enver” he said, “I have to confess something to you.” “What do you want to confess?” “In case a Christian turns up to become member of our organization, I will abandon the organization.” And I said, “Do you know that I am a member?” “Yes,” he said. “Do you know that there are Albanians of Christian Catholic and Orthodox faith? They are my brothers from blood. Do you understand?” I addressed him. He was all grumpy, so he wanted revenge.

Thus, the fourth meeting was held without me...[no,] the fifth without me. He and the rest, they got cold feet, so on the fifth meeting, the Albanian organization that I had set up falls apart. Fine, it fell apart anyway, now I had the Turks whom I knew. “I am without a passport here, do you know that?” I said. “Yes, you did tell us.” “However you didn’t do anything even though I told you, so now I have to repeat myself.” “What can we do?” “You can do something, allow me to open a representative office for Kosovo here.” “It can be done...” “It can’t be done...” “But I am not saying we should open an embassy, but a consulate, a Kosovo representative office.” “Well, we shall see.” After four days, they come back and say, “You can open your representation office.” Hence, I opened the office.

³¹ Bey, Turkish title for chieftain, or leader of small administrative units of the Ottoman Empire.

However, I was struggling with our Kosovo Albanians. That representation office, that stuff was all paid by Kujtim, they didn't move a finger ... [they were] only eager to take and give nothing. Still, I wasn't saying a word. Once I opened the representative office for Kosovo, they told me, "Do not place any symbol outside the building, however, you can place whatever you want inside." So I said, "I am not placing any symbol, but what about the sign that shows that this is the representative office for Kosovo?" I said, "We have to put that sign in Albanian and English." "Why?" "Because when people come from Kosovo, how do they look for me? Where am I?" And so they allowed it. On a metal plaque I wrote down [for] all Albanians living here, "Kosovo representation in Istanbul, Republic of Kosovo in Istanbul," in English too, so in both languages. I placed it at the gate of the building, and another one upstairs at the entrance door of the apartment, or what did they call it, a building...

Part Four

The [Kosovo] representative office marked a great success. Every... many states recognized the representation. It was recognized unofficially for its operation, but they invited me for meetings and talks with Americans, British and Germans except Russians, to whom I did not give my attention, neither to Serbs, or Bulgarians, and some others in this regard, while I had open doors for others. My life was more pleasant though more difficult, yet it was more pleasant there in Turkey, I couldn't do better than that, not because I had to eat or not, drink or not, the whole essence was the work I did, the work I was doing came to the surface. That was my best food ever.

For example, when war broke out in Kosovo, we had to shelter people who were fleeing Kosovo in camps. They were accommodated in the best camps available at the time in Turkey. There was a camp set up at the border for twenty thousand people... I forgot, I am forgetting the names now, and numbers. And the camp did accommodate twenty thousand. The camp was set-up for Bosnians at first, considering that the war in Bosnia broke out earlier, however after the war in Bosnia ended, the camp was empty. However, that camp was meant for seven thousand people only. But now it was twenty thousand people, it should accommodate twenty thousand people and it was readjusted by Turkey. They expanded the camp with food, beds, and everything else possible, some comforts for those people.

I requested a clinic, there are some mobile clinics, something huge with... clinics with doctors and so they brought all these types of clinics to the camp like that... the refugee camp I mean. However, there were no camps set up for women, and there were a lot of women, they were pregnant, you could tell, and so I tell him, a doctor who was their chief, I said, "Well, do you see that we have women here who are about to give birth, then there are other women who cannot go to all the clinics since we don't have means to do so," stuff like that. "Yes, yes, yes." And they brought the mobile clinic for delivery, and they brought everything possible, they brought it, and I was very pleased.

Now, the clinic could not keep up with all the work, wounded people started to arrive, the war broke out, and injured people came with it. I informed the chief of Istanbul hospitals and told him, "What do we do with the wounded?" "Enver Bey," he said, "you send me the diagnosis by telephone, I will designate the hospital where they can issue..." It [the camp] was full of ill people with diagnosis, you just needed a diagnosis, there were wounded ones, sick ones. However, apart from those who were running out of war,

all Albanians from all over, from Albania and Macedonia and Presheva Valley, was treated without a penny, not only the injured ones, but also those who were ill, ill people who arrived. The hospital was full, one of the hospitals was full of Albanian patients, they even called it *Arnaut Hasanesi*, Albanian hospital.

Although I didn't lack a thing, I never brought it to the point [for others] to think twice about me whether I'm saying the truth or lying, this or that, everything I said, openly, I openly said it, the good and the bad. But I had great support. However, our Albanians came, let's say, once we received twelve injured. And they notify me that twelve injured had arrived, "Take them to hospital X," because I couldn't do these things on my own, but I had the support of Albanians and their organizations... free and interested in the Kosovo cause. And I tell them, "Take the injured to hospital X and then from there he knows where to take them and what to do." In the afternoons, I found time to go and visit the patients. I didn't have any money because Kosovo was not helping me, Kosovo didn't help.

Lura Limani: Were you in contact with people from LDK,³² with the Bukoshi government,³³ were you in contact?

Enver Tali: With whom?

Lura Limani: Did you have any connections with the Bukoshi government?

Enver Tali: I had connections with the Bukoshi government. I let Bukoshi stay in my house for 13 years.³⁴ Once, when I approached him for help, "No, no, no," he started to mumble, so I gave up, I put it aside. And anyway, Bujar Bukoshi remembered to help me, and without my permission, without asking me, I started receiving around three thousand Deutsch Marks a month, for three whole years. I swear here in front of you, those telephones, I had four phone machines in my office, a phone bill more than three... during the wartime, over three thousand dinars, three thousand Deutsch Marks was a monthly bill.

Yes, my older son helped me, even though, in his situation in America, and in a difficult position, he had to sell the car, his own vehicle, so he could send me money for Kosovo. Then he got again into the stock market, he was known for his work. He was helping me, he supported me, there is no doubt there.

Those eight, as I started to tell, they were hospitalized, and I went to visit them. That little money I had left... when I saw that few transistor radios were falling to pieces, they were hanging loose... I bought ten or twelve transistor radios for little money. I thought of sending some of those, since they couldn't understand Turkish, so at least they could perhaps catch a radio station in Albanian and be entertained. I took those transistor radios, the one that... two of them who escorted me, I told them to distribute them, to distribute those transistors. Two of the patients came close to me, in fact they didn't come near, they made a sign to approach their bunk beds. "Hey man," one of them, not even comrade, or Enver, or mister, "They told us not to get involved with you." I didn't ask who told them so, or what had they been told, I

³² The Democratic League of Kosovo (Albanian: *Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës*, LDK) is the second largest political party in Kosovo. It is a conservative and liberal conservative party.

³³ Bujar Bukoshi was the Prime Minister of the Kosovo Government in exile, founded after the Kosovo Parliament declared Kosovo a Republic in 1990

³⁴ It is unclear whether Bukoshi was a tenant or a guest of the speaker, and which period he is referring to.

only said, “Man, explain yourself what did you come for, then you can go and tell that very person how did we treat you here.” I never saw him again; I never saw him again.

They brought an injured guy who was hit by a metal bombshell, the bombshell had hit his spine. The spine was wounded so badly that he ended up backwards, he could never get on his feet or hands, he could only lie down. They had taken him to a hospital in Titograd [Podgorica], and they couldn’t do a thing. They took him to a hospital in Tirana, and nothing again. And then I explained the state of this guy, and asked what to do next. I told them, “Bring him over.” We brought him to the hospital and now he had to be fed on his back, while turning his head around so they could feed him. So, they brought him. “You,” I said, “Do you have an older brother?” “No.” “What about an older sister?” “No,” he said. “How young is your father?” “He is fit,” he said. “Here’s the phone. Do they have a phone?” He was from a place in Peja, from the region of Peja. “I will find the phone [number] if there is one,” he said. “Tell you father to come here as soon as possible and to call on this phone number.” His father came the next day. I told him, “You will get in a room with your son and provide service for him. There are people who can serve him, however I don’t think anyone can serve your son the same as you would. Thus, you have to stay here.” “Oh,” he said, “Yes.” Bed and food on his expenses.

So now I was thinking, he has to pay for his own expenses, he smoked and stuff, so I went to a guy who had money, who was working, was economically in good standing. I told him, “You, send 200 Deutsch Marks a month to a certain place because we have an injured person there and we have brought his father here to take care of him, however he has expenses.” “Ah, no problem.” So I told him, “You should send it yourself, not through me.” Because if he gave it to me, then that would raise doubts about me putting it in my pocket. He supported him this way. I mean, for everything, for every single thing, Albanians here in Kosovo, I mean in Turkey were taken care in the best, the best way possible.

Lura Limani: When did you return to Pristina? Did you return after the war?

Enver Tali: Yes, I did return in May 2003, though I continued, there were still ill people, injured people around. How could I leave them, how could I turn my back on them? So I continued until May 2003, May of the year 2003. I had exhausted my son’s resources. So I shut it down, I closed it and I handed over the keys, I returned to Pristina. I returned to Pristina, but I didn’t get involved anywhere, no, I didn’t get involved anywhere (smiles). I have seen during the war that there were many of those who didn’t work for Kosovo and the liberation of Albanians, but came to make a name for themselves and to stick their hands in somebody else’s pocket. I didn’t allow this to myself, I didn’t hang out with them.

When I returned to Pristina, just before I had returned to Pristina, Jakup Krasniqi³⁵ came over. I didn’t know him prior to then, neither did he, but he had heard of me. So Jakup comes to look for me, and they tell him, “Here’s his telephone number, call him.” So Jakup makes a call, the telephone rings and says, “I am Jakup Krasniqi.” I heard the name Jakup Krasniqi. “Yes mister Jakup, I’ve heard of you, go ahead.” “I came to meet up with you,” he said, “Yes, *more*.” “I don’t know Istanbul, I don’t know where to go,” he said. “Where are you? I know how to get around in Istanbul,” I said, “I’ll come to your place.”

³⁵ Jakup Krasniqi (1951-) is a Kosovo politician, former President of Kosovo and former Chairman of the Assembly. He was one of the leaders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

He told me where he was staying, so I went. He had his own bodyguard who escorted him, he was there too. He stood aside. He said, "My war and life fellows send me to you because we are considering you to be one of our cadres." "What cadre are you talking about?" I said. "Well, you know," he said, "work for us, you know." So I said, "You have damaged Kosovo, and the whole nation so badly, that they cannot get back on their feet again. You have established various parties, you have fought each other... each other so much, that Belgrade would have payed heaps of money to achieve that. Therefore, none should cast their hope on me. I will still serve, yet I will serve my people, but not guys like you." I paid for his coffee and got out of there.

When I got back to Pristina, they had started some initiative to establish the municipality of Pristina. They had appointed the Mayor, the deputy Mayor, I knew them. The Mayor of the time, when I was in bad relations with him, he was a member of UDB,³⁶ he was a member of UDB. "I," he stated, "was not in politics. I have no clue about politics," this and that and then he stated, "I am only asking for you support." I didn't say a word. Then the one who became deputy Mayor - they had given those posts to themselves - he knew me, but pretended not to. He told me, "I can deal with you easily," he said, "You will get connected with us here." I looked at him and said, "You are addressing me like this, check what the papers have written about you first" - the papers had written about his theft - "Those journalists did not get an answer to that yet, you cannot speak to me like this, without answering them first." This guy... the one who spoke to me was deputy Mayor, the third person was the secretary. Him, I knew well, since I was in isolation with him at the time, for three months I shared a room with him. He was a nice man, a wise man, a quiet man, who got involved with them, so I said, "You are like the shepherd after the sheep with them." And he started laughing and got embarrassed of what I said. He passed away, in case someone knew him.

Lura Limani: Finally, I would like to ask you when did you go to America and what is it that you do there now primarily... because for the moment you are back for a short visit, but can you tell us a bit when did you go to America and how is your life currently?

Enver Tali: I live in America now. I went there, to America, because of some trouble, because I got ill, I got leukemia. Do you know what leukemia is? And, suffering from leukemia I had myself checked in Pristina and Skopje. In Skopje they told me, "There is no medication for you here in the Balkans." No medication for me in the Balkans. I approached my sons and told them my situation. They came and picked me up from here and took me to America. They paid insurance for me, without me being there. And thanks to that insurance they admitted me in the hospital, admitted me for treatment. If it weren't for them, I would have been forgotten now. So now, even though I am not entirely cured, as you can see, I still do have some trouble, however I am alive. This is how I ended up in America.

And so I remain in America now, time after time I feel nostalgic for Pristina and Kosovo. And doctors are giving me... in the beginning, I was allowed only a month to visit Kosovo, now they have given me, they have increased [this time] to six weeks, I go back and forth. In six weeks time, I need to go back again. I start a therapy, as they call it, and then the therapy does tire me a bit and then it gets better. This is how I live, this way, I don't know if I was clear.

³⁶ Members of UDB, *Uprava državne bezbednosti* (State Security Administration), with the additional "a" for *armije*, Yugoslav army.

Lura Limani: Yes, yes.

Enver Tali: In case you have something else?

Lura Limani: That was it, thank you. Thanks a lot for your time.

Enver Tali: My honor and all the best.

Lura Limani: Thank you for sharing this much time with us.

Enver Tali: Not at all.

Lura Limani: I am aware that you are a little tired since you had to speak for so long, but... probably you got used to.

Enver Tali: Yes, without being tired you cannot achieve anything. Nothing is achieved...

