

Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW WITH SHABAN PAJAZITI

Pristina | Date: May 26, 2007

Duration: 15 minutes

Present:

1. Shaban Pajaziti (Speaker)
2. Adem Pajaziti (Interviewer)

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

Adem Pajaziti: Something about the time of the Second World War, when they sent you to Bar, there, those sufferings?

Shaban Pajaziti: Yes, first we went, they took us, they sent us to Vushtrri, we stayed there for a week, we went together and started for Kukës, Prizren. And there we started walking to Albania and went to Tropoja, I didn't take notes of every place we were.

Adem Pajaziti: How old were you back then?

Shaban Pajaziti: Back then I was around 20 years old, something like that.

Adem Pajaziti: 20 years old. Was anyone from Çubrel with you?

Shaban Pajaziti: Yes, of course there were.

Adem Pajaziti: What about from Skenderaj?

Shaban Pajaziti: Yes, yes, there were. There were people from Çubrel, there were many of us. It was Ahmet and Sadik, Asllan as well, Halim Dajaku and Isuf Katorri too. There were people I knew, there were many of them. When we went to some water [creek], we crossed, before going to Shkodra. Seven-eight of us got in, I remember that the water was pretty difficult, it was troubled and huge. We went out that way, we went to the castle of Shkodra. We spent the night there.

Adem Pajaziti: You spent the night in the castle?

Shaban Pajaziti: Up there, in the hill, in the castle.

Adem Pajaziti: What was there, tents or what?

Shaban Pajaziti: No, to be honest, there were even tents, there were...

Adem Pajaziti: Where did you sleep, in the houses, were there houses or not?

Shaban Pajaziti: No, we didn't sleep in houses, we just slept in the field.

Adem Pajaziti: In the field, in the castle?

Shaban Pajaziti: Yes.

Adem Pajaziti: Did they... were you surrounded by military forces or not?

Shaban Pajaziti: Yes, yes they surrounded us with military forces.

Adem Pajaziti: With escorts?

Shaban Pajaziti: We were escorted there. There were *shkije*¹ with weapons, armed, on two sides, we were walking in lines of four, going, battalions, battalions, the battalions were 20-30 meters, 50 meters long. Again we crossed another water in Shkodra and climbed the ridge, it was like that while we were going. When we went to Bar, we were the first battalion, it was I, for example, with my friends and the whole battalion, we were the first. The others were coming after us, with command and discipline. Wherever we'd stop to rest, we'd sit like that, tired, in lines of four people, always going like that.

Adem Pajaziti: The military forces escorted you on two sides?

Shaban Pajaziti: On two sides.

Adem Pajaziti: How was Bar? Was it rocky, or flat?

Shaban Pajaziti: No, Bar was down there in the runway, close to the sea where we went down.

¹ *Shka* (m.); *shkinë* (f.), plural *shkijet*, is a derogatory term in Albanian used for Serbs.

Adem Pajaziti: You went down the slope on the rocks. Was it rocky while you were going down?

Shaban Pajaziti: It was downhill to the sand road. When we went down to the planes, we sat, they made us sit in the street just the way we were. And the battalion after us, we could also see them, they were 50 meters from us. One of them stood up, a kind of water tap, there was a tap just close there, they stopped to rest just like us, and then all of a sudden a gunshot was fired, we heard the loud bang of the gunshot, in the battalion behind us. Back then, we knew nothing, there were military forces in that...there, in Bar, in that city. They suddenly came, I still wonder how they managed to be that close, they turned the *mašinka*² on us, they pulled the *mašinka* towards us, *trrak*. We were sitting, no one was allowed to move.

Adem Pajaziti: Did you have any arms at all?

Shaban Pajaziti: No, not at all, none of us. Then we saw them, there it became, it became noisy, some *drugarica*³ came, saying, “*On je bio borac ‘41 partizan* [He is a 1941 partisan].” We saw an officer come, he was wearing English clothes.

Adem Pajaziti: Who was murdered, would you know?

Shaban Pajaziti: Yes, we know, some guy from Gllabar was murdered.

Adem Pajaziti: Did you know his name?

Shaban Pajaziti: Ah?

Adem Pajaziti: Did you ever learn his name?

Shaban Pajaziti: No, to be honest we didn't know his name, just that the officer came towards us, passed through us and went to the battalion where the *stražar*⁴ was murdered. Back then two-three people...

² From Serbian, *mašinka*, submachine gun.

³ From Serbian, *drugarica*, comrade.

⁴ From Serbian, *stražar*, guard.

Adem Pajaziti: Let me just ask you one question, the guy from Gllabar, did you witness the guy from Gllabar being murdered?

Shaban Pajaziti: No.

Adem Pajaziti: You didn't witness it, did you?

Shaban Pajaziti: No, I didn't witness it, just that...after it I saw them come...

Adem Pajaziti: Yes, but did you see the man, did you see him?

Shaban Pajaziti: We didn't see him being killed, because they were far from us.

Adem Pajaziti: But you saw him after, right?

Shaban Pajaziti: I saw him on that day and in that moment, slow down a bit. They, the officer went and tried to kill the guy from Gllabar with a pistol. The two friends, the guy from Gllabar among them, he... they had had taken the gun from him, from the guy from Gllabar, his friends took his gun away. Then the guy from Gllabar had a pole, the officer attempted to shot him but he couldn't, because of the two other guys, they stood between them, while he was trying to hit him with the pole, the guy from Gllabar was trying to hit him with the pole.

Adem Pajaziti: The officer?

Shaban Pajaziti: The officer, and while coming, while coming, while coming, crowded as they were in groups of three-four people, they came in front of us. He was not farther than two meters from me when the officer hit him. I just saw him suddenly fall on his back, with his legs and hands folded, yellow as wax, I saw him with my eyes, he was close to us, to the battalion, the ones of us who were in the front. As the officer got closer and hit him on the forehead, he lifted him like...he lifted his head up, the automatic gun moved his head, the pistol moved his head... He fell down totally lifeless, yellow as wax, he fell that way that his corpse seemed like it has been adjusted like that.

Adem Pajaziti: Can you describe the guy from Gllabar, was he a big man, was he skilful?

Shaban Pajaziti: To be honest, he was not small, he was a big man.

Adem Pajaziti: Big, skillful?

Shaban Pajaziti: And he wasn't...he was pretty old, not much, not as old, somewhere around 50-60 years old.

Adem Pajaziti: Did they say why that incident happened, why?

Shaban Pajaziti: The guy from Gllabar wanted to drink water there. Then the officer, the *stražar* hit him with the *dimgjik*⁵ of the gun, and he turns the gun to him, he turns the gun to him and shoots the *stražar* to death. Then his friends caught the guy from Gllabar and took the gun from him. Then they arrived...

Adem Pajaziti: You just said it, yes.

Shaban Pajaziti: The officer I told you about earlier. And we were...

Adem Pajaziti: Then the officer continued to clean his sweats. Did he clean his sweats?

Shaban Pajaziti: The officer was cleaning his sweats just when he said, “*Deset za njega* [Ten for one], ten for them, there will be a shot for the one who killed him, he was a partisan from ‘41.” As the four of them were coming in a line, he said “*Još deset* [Ten more], ten more,” he said, “more.” He caught him and they left, they left, they became ten people, nineteen people, he caught me as well, but thank God this crossed my mind, one of my friends had his rucksack, he was just two meters far from us, and to me it sounded like he wanted me as well, and I stood up, I took my rucksack and turned around, I joined them and sat down. 19 went. They took 19 of them. One of them was from Rakiniq, another one from Kostërc, these two were the only ones I knew, as for others, I didn't know any of them, I only knew those two who went.

Adem Pajaziti: Alright, that is to say that the officer asked them to take you as well?

⁵ From Turkish, *dimgjik*, butt of the gun.

Shaban Pajaziti: Yes, the officer asked, pointed his finger at me {imitates the gesture of the officer}, It seemed to me that he asked them to take me as well, because I was among the ones who were already taken.

Adem Pajaziti: That is to say that he asked you to go as well?

Shaban Pajaziti: They asked me to go as well, but just as I stood up, I was the last one, 19 of us just went, I was the last one, the rucksack was in front of us but we didn't dare to go and take it, to move, the rucksack belonged to Ahmet. And this idea fortunately crossed my mind to slowly bow down and take it, until I stood up I took the rucksack and turned around to them. No one said a word, neither did the officer, because they already left. Just as they were leaving, he caught me, but thank God I survived, thank God they didn't see me, I don't remember what happened but I know that I passed. Then they shouted at us “*Dig'se* [Stand Up].”

Adem Pajaziti: Alright, but did you talk about it, that they might count the people and come back, did anyone among you talk about this?

Shaban Pajaziti: Not at all, no one knew, it didn't cross anyone's mind to even mention it, not at all. They left right away, the officer then says, “*Dig'se*,” swearing. He hit someone with *dimgjik*, because we walked in groups of four people, always. Then they sent us to a kind of Monopoly [Tobacco State Monopoly building], it was big, it was a Monopoly or I don't know what that thing standing in front of us was. We tightly got inside of it, in groups of two, we got inside.

Adem Pajaziti: Didn't they shoot you while you were there?

Shaban Pajaziti: Ah?

Adem Pajaziti: Didn't they shoot you with guns?

Shaban Pajaziti: No, not at all. They first sent the ones of us who were in the front of the battalion, we got inside that building. When it got filled we took the stairs, just when all of a sudden the gun was fired, *bërrrr*. Then we could hear nothing from the outside, time after time some bigger bombs, only the gunshot *vuuu, vuuu, vuuu*, echoes, echoes. We got inside that building which was located just near the street, then we stood up, I stood up, there was a big room with windows whose view showed the

front of the street. Many of us entered it, it got full, then we wanted to see what was happening there, I guess they saw us from there, and pointed the window from which we were gazing, in the wall of the other side, *brr*. We got shut, we sat down.

Then I went out of that room and went to check the other room, it was from...a kind of a cottage, there was a kind of a plateau over there, some kind of lawn going straight vertically up. It was...it seemed to me that it was somehow close, you know the cottage was up on the slope. I opened the corridor's window, checking if I could jump, because I thought I could jump to the cottage, to the lawn from the inside.

Adem Pajaziti: Where did you want to escape?

Shaban Pajaziti: I wanted to escape that way, there was no one behind there, only the mountain, the fields, plateaus and lawns. I checked down there, the land was far and I said, "No, I can't jump." One guy said, "Can we jump?" I said, "No, we are far, you can't reach the cottage." We stopped, there was only echoes, echoes. At some point he said, "*Prekini paljbu, prekini paljbu!* [Stop the fire, stop the fire!]" We could hear everything from the loudspeaker there. They stopped at some point. The noises were rarer outside, up from where we came down. Of course, there were some *japia*,⁶ there were some gardens, some huge olive trees [*ullij*], we could see them while walking down, you know, close to the road.

Adem Pajaziti: Somewhat, stars [*ylli*]?

Shaban Pajaziti: Olive trees.

Adem Pajaziti: Ah ok, olive trees.

Shaban Pajaziti: Yes. Anyway, they kept shooting there, while in the city they stopped. After they stopped, an officer came, he was wearing an English uniform.

Adem Pajaziti: Was that war long, all that massacre?

⁶From Turkish, *yapı*, house, structure.

Shaban Pajaziti: The massacre lasted for around half an hour, or less, it didn't last long, only gunshots. It didn't last long.

Adem Pajaziti: Aha. Yes, the officer came...

Shaban Pajaziti: The officer came...