

# Oral History Kosovo

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## INTERVIEW WITH SUNČICA ANTIĆ

conducted by forumZFD

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Duration: 162 minutes

Present:

1. Sunčica Antić (Speaker)
2. Nataša Govedarica (Interviewer)
3. Vjera Ruljić (Contact person / fixer)
4. Boris Šebez (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

**Nataša Govedarica:** I would ask you first of all to present yourself I with your full name and tell us when and where you were born and something about the origin of your family.

**Sunčica Antić:** My name is Sunčica Antić, I was born in Kosovo. I lived in Kosovska Kamenica until 1999. My parents were born there and so on. Actually I was born in Gnjilane and in 1999 lived in Kamenica. Due to the war I had to leave like many other families, I had to leave my hometown but that is part of life for many families that went through it. Kosovo, I was born there, that is where my eternal soul is. That's where many good things happened in my childhood and my young age. That's where some sad things happened as well. What can be done, all that is life. I was born in a modest family. I had friends both from school and the neighborhood, with whom I hung out, I shared some of my girly secrets, some of my stories, our lives we have...that was exactly a coexistence that we had, regardless of the nationality and we were really connected and I am not sure whether will you understand me, but I was, at least I, I was honest towards them with my entire soul. Well, how did they view me, that is something different.

**Nataša Govedarica:** So, are you describing now your life in Kamenica?

**Sunčica Antić:** Yes, in Kamenica.

**Nataša Govedarica:** Early childhood...what are the first memories that you could share with us?

**Sunčica Antić:** My childhood was really nice. Careless childhood days as for any child, the games, close to the parents, near the family, friendship with children, careless days. My childhood was really nice in comparison to many other children who didn't have that. My childhood was really nice and I had... my best memories are from childhood.

**Nataša Govedarica:** In what period did you grow up?

**Sunčica Antić:** I was born in the distant 1971.

**Nataša Govedarica:** Well, not that distant.

**Sunčica Antić:** But until the '90s, my memories are wonderful, a girl's age, school age, socializing, going out. That was all great, that is the best part of my life and memories.

**Nataša Govedarica:** I've never been to Kamenica and I don't know how big it is. Did you attend elementary school in Kamenica, where did you go to school after that?

**Sunčica Antić:** Here in Kamenica I went to elementary and high school. Kamenica is a small town, a modest place, everybody knows each other. Neighbors, friends, relatives, we all hung out together. A normal life, to me this period is beautiful, beautiful. I remember with admiration that part of my life, as a child hanging out with a neighbor's children, the first cherries, the first fruits. We shared and we just looked forward to the spring and fruits and better, better weather to go out and walk with our girlfriends, we talked and revealed each other some of our secrets, we spoke about everything, about some problems and some hopes and our desires, and what we're going to do in life. We talked about fashion, about first loves.

**Nataša Govedarica:** Do you remember what were your wishes from that period, what did you hope you would become, what were your wishes?

**Sunčica Antić:** My wishes were so very modest. To be alive and well, to have my work and my family and that's it. I didn't have some big ambitions, but modest. Then, I thought at that time that way. To finish school, to work and to have a good marriage, to live beautifully. It's every girl's dream to have a good family and a good marriage, an harmonious marriage and to have a lot of children and a normal life, to provide a normal life for themselves and their families.

**Nataša Govedarica:** What kind of student were you?

**Sunčica Antić:** Well, I was very good and excellent, it depends, but in principle I was a solid student.

**Nataša Govedarica:** And after elementary school did you succeed in continuing your education? What did you choose?

**Sunčica Antić:** Well, after elementary school I went to the Pedagogical College in Gnjilane, I started it, but due to the political situation there, I left it. During that period, in the 90's, there was some turmoil. I was placed in the students dorms. It was not safe for us students there, at least my parents thought it was not safe for me, since we lived in one part of the students dorm, the students, but in the second half there were refugees from Croatia, and there had been attacks on refugees and so there had been some incidents. My parents thought it was not safe for me and so I left school, afterwards I found a job, I started working and that was it. Later, when it all calmed down, I didn't perhaps have the will nor the ability, after I got married and had a family, a child, so I didn't go, but my sister continued and completed her education in that dorm, she remained in the student dorm and she finished, and I stopped.

**Nataša Govedarica:** Is that your older sister?

**Sunčica Antić:** No, the younger.

**Nataša Govedarica:** Is it only the two of you or you had...

**Sunčica Antić:** Just my sister and me.

**Nataša Govedarica:** And tell me, those are the early '90s, when...

**Sunčica Antić:** Yes, yes.

**Nataša Govedarica:** I am not sure I understood the nature of the incidents, who was part of it? It is clear that the situation was changing.

**Sunčica Antić:** Well, you know what. Since refugees from Croatia were accommodated in the dorms, the settling of the refugees did not suit Albanians. They did not welcome them, did not accept them and then there were often attacks on them, a Molotov cocktail was thrown or a window broken or tear gas thrown, and there've been problems non-stop and my parents didn't consider it was safe for me, because I'm a woman. They told me to come home, to work and I started working and left it at that.

**Nataša Govedarica:** Where did you start working?

**Sunčica Antić:** Well, I worked, I had a store in my house, so I opened a shop. In the beginning I worked at the Textile Factory, Gnjilane had a company, so I had a good shop of textile, curtains, knitwear..

**Nataša Govedarica:** Was that some family tradition? Did your parents work in it before or did you start with it?

**Sunčica Antić:** My mother worked there in that period before me. She was a teacher by profession actually. She worked for some time as a teacher, for years, but as the classes were reduced because there were no children, she lost her job. After that, she worked in a factory. That is the RIK Karačevo, the ceramics plate factory. She worked as an employee on labor issues and labor relations, and when the factory came under bankruptcy, she lost her job and so she had previously had a grocery shop, but then it closed and then I worked in the textile shop and later opened this private shop, the family one.

**Nataša Govedarica:** How did the business go? You started really early, you were young.

**Sunčica Antić:** In principle, it was nice, the income was good. I worked from dawn to dusk, until it got dark. That was in the house, a family business. We all worked and helped each other, so the shop did well. We were satisfied. It suited me, the job was in the house and I could finish other obligations as well around my child and with everything else and I also had the full support of my parents and husband, so everything was as it should have been.

**Nataša Govedarica:** You have the details on the fulfillment of the girl's dreams. How did you meet your husband, how was that in your town, at that time? Did you know each other from the same town?

**Sunčica Antić:** We are from the same place and we all knew each other and we all hung out and we all walked in the *korzo* together, we walked, but that was just on friendly bases. We hung out in a friendly way and one New Year's Eve we started dating, that's how it started. We didn't date for too long in fact, since we knew each other and spent time [together] for year, there it was. And so after a brief dating we decided

to get married, we got married here in Kosovska Kamenica, in St. Nikola Church. Later, after a year or two we got a son, Stefan. We baptized our son here in the church of St. Nikola. So, we lived normally there, we worked. My husband worked in the Battery Industry of Gnjilane, but he was always helping in the shop, he went for supplies, worked and all that. I think he was doing more than I did, because I had commitments around the child and around the house. He worked at his job and he also worked in the shop. A normal humble family.

**Nataša Govedarica:** When was your son born?

**Sunčica Antić:** He was born in 1997. He was born in Gnjilane.

**Nataša Govedarica:** How far did you live? Did you separate from your family, from your parents or how did it look?

**Sunčica Antić:** When I got married, for maybe a year, a year and a half, I lived in the house with my husband's parents there. It's not far, maybe a kilometer. It is ten minutes from one point to the other. We were near, but later when we opened the shop it required much more time, much more work and effort, and since I had a little baby someone had to take care of him and my mother took care of the child, and then we moved to live with my parents. Since I have no brothers, my parents were alone, my sister got married and then they help with the child and the shop and with everything that was needed, with everything, whatever was needed they would step in. So we worked and lived with them normally, it was nice and that period of life remained in my memory as very nice. I had a good marriage, I lived well. My husband appreciated me, respected me, loved me, there was mutual affection and mutual understanding until '99. But what can we do? Wars do what they did and my life changed on July 31 as a house of cards, on that one day my whole life decayed and was lost and changed and would never be able to be as it used to be, some good times which I remember gladly and that I can never forget, but what can you do, all this is life.

**Nataša Govedarica:** Which are those moments you spoke of when you said, "Moments which I can't forget?"

**Sunčica Antić:** I cannot forget all the good times, let's say. My life, my whole family was there, they were all alive, healthy, and every day we saw each other, socialize, helped each other. We were all for one and one for all. So, parental love, love between my husband and me, kinship love, love of neighbors. I think all that was, I think, ideal, perfect, and now in one day all this collapses like a house of cards. I remain alone with a child, my mother dies, my husband disappears, I lose my job, lose my shop, I remain without a car, the house is attacked, disaster. So in one day it turned 360 degrees. Everything that was once nice and fine and normal in life, because every family has to live normally, build relationships on love and honesty, understand, all of that is ruined in one day for me. And so there are these moments when unfortunately I remember the bad things and events, and there are beautiful moments that I kept in my heart and I will have in my heart all my life. What can be done, it's all life. What happened cannot be changed and we will see now onwards how it will be.

**Nataša Govedarica:** What happened on that July 31? We are talking about the year 1999, right?

**Sunčica Antić:** The year 1999. On that July 31, I was in Vranje with my mother. My mother was in the hospital for nine days, she had a stroke. All nine days I was with my mother in the hospital, and my husband and father came. My father was [there] at night, and I was with her during the day. The woman was 51 years old, she was very young, but all these events, the bombing, all of it affected her health, and the woman could not bear it, it was stronger than she was. She is sensitive, her heart could not handle it and had a stroke so, those nine days I spent with her, but the ninth day she dies. When my husband and I went in the morning to the hospital, my father was there with her, and he tells us that mother died. Nothing, my husband and I and my child went to Kosovska Kamenica to inform the family and to take all we needed to take over mom from the hospital.

We left to go home, but there was some traffic jam on the road and we took some secondary road on the way home. My husband has the bag and me and the child, and my aunt was with us, since she came to visit my mother and my uncle stayed with my father to do the paperwork in order to retrieve the body as soon as possible, so that there would not be any complication. When I came home, we arrived, my husband immediately took what was needed, he took the money, left us at home, we informed the relatives of what happened. The relatives of course came to see what would we do, how we would do it.

So, my husband took the money, clothes, what was he needed to take in order to retrieve the body in Vranje. He called my uncle and they headed there. They set off, turned on the car, went out. I remember that image all my life, they went out of the yard in reverse, they, the KFOR escort, went after them, of course, this is the main street, because we lived in the center of Kamenica. They went, and the rest of us stayed to prepare, it is the custom for the funeral, what it takes for a funeral. However, an hour later we heard that there was some chaos in the village of Koretin. I immediately had the feeling that something happened to them, I did not know how it happened. Nothing.

But my father and uncle were waiting for them to bring the clothes and money for the funeral expenses and they were gone for several hours and of course he took the car, paid some man, and all that was needed and he came. We knew right away that something was wrong with them. Moreover, we heard that there was some chaos, there were demonstrations down in Koretin. This is a town three kilometers from my town. This was the path that my husband took every day since he worked, in the last period he worked. He worked in the Battery Industry of Gnjilane that had a plant in Toponica and Koretin on the border, that's where it was. Every day the man went to work.

So, they are gone. We immediately reported their disappearance to KFOR. They told us to come back in an hour. After an hour I went again, nothing. They did not undertake anything and then I felt it in the depths of my soul, I felt that something happened, that... They would have contacted us either by telephone or a message. After an hour or two, chaos started in the streets, noise, throwing stones at the house, shouting. We clearly knew that it was something, that something happened to him. I assumed that they were kidnapped, but did not believe the worst would happen. I thought now that there is something human in men, so that they will find a common language, because we lived for years with Serbs and Albanians normally. Never, never any problems, at least my family did not have any, because we have always been on good terms with them, not good, but solid, because my mother is a native of Donja Šipašnica [Shipashnica e Poshtme]. It is a place with six Serbian houses. I grew up, so to speak, my entire childhood, when I went to my grandmother's, I spent it with my Albanian girlfriends. I hung out more with

them, so to speak, and had more Albanian girlfriends than I had friends of Serbian origin. But anything is possible, something that a human cannot imagine even in her worst dreams.

Again, we go every hour and then they will not listen to us, will not even talk to us. One interpreter, he was an Albanian, he was very arrogant and rude and treated me as some, I do not know how to express myself, as a crank who came to ask something, not as a woman with a problem who has come to report a loss in her family. He just shook his hand and nothing. He did not want to talk, he did not want to talk to a man who was from my town, Momčilo Trajković. Back then he was appointed as coordinator, because Serbian-Albanian relations were disturbed but because he lived there, worked and knew the people, he was the coordinator for negotiations and he really went every hour with me. But in vain was he appointed as coordinator, when they don't hear him. We were not allowed to enter the police building, but had to stay outside the police building, until I fainted there in front of the station, and they let me in and gave me a glass of water.

And there was one Russian soldier, an Aleksandar, and I told him the story. He told me the story about the film by Emir Kusturica, how he was delighted by that movie, so I do not know, I do not know what it was, he literally did not listen to me because when I said they are certainly in Koretin, no other place, because all the events are there, that he should let us go there, send the police to see what happened, to see how it happened, he said, "We do not take civilians." First, he said he didn't know where Koretin is. I said, "How do you mean you do not know, give me a map I will show you where it is." I said, "Here it is, three kilometers away on foot, people walk [there] every day." "No, we do not drive civilians, we cannot do anything about that, come after an hour." We went there every hour, no information, but the riots went on through the streets, madness, it was a disaster.

We buried my mother the next day. We had no information about my husband Negovan and uncle Novica. We knew they were in Koretin, we knew it, they couldn't have been anywhere else, there are there but where are they, what are they, what happened to them, all are silent. I called all my friends I knew, both Serbs and Albanians who were of some influence, and ordinary people I had contact with, because they all know me and I know them, although they are more familiar with me because they were buying everything they needed [from me]. With everything I could, I helped them and even when they had or did not have money, they all paid, but when they didn't have money they paid later and that's normal, we are people. We are not here for a day. We have to survive an entire life.

So, I also called some of my friends, my father called. Some people told me right away, "You know what, Sunčica, we can do nothing to help you. These are dangerous people, we cannot." "Sorry," I was told in a fair way, "do not ask of us to help, we cannot help." Nothing, I thank them for that, they were told frankly and I knew what I was up to. Then my father called some of his directors, with whom he worked, because my father worked in a high school as a secretary. We have the information that they are in Koretin, but whether they are alive or dead, where they are and what is with them we don't know. I called a friend of my mother, she told me she would try to help, "Do not worry, I will ask." Okay.

We started the motorcade, we moved escorted by KFOR, to bury my mother. Therefore, we leave the yard. The funeral car went forward, we went after. This image, which was then, after seventeen years, I now behold, I see all their faces and exactly how I was shaken and lost, but I see exactly all the people who

were present there, all my neighbors, my friends, their children and their sisters in law, their aunts, their sisters, their husbands, all were standing by the streets and applauded. It was a big applause, perhaps a thousand people and instead of expressing condolences, it is the basic custom, or at least I thought so, knowing that I was until yesterday in a solid relationship, they did that, their children, the family, all applauded and I could not believe their behavior.

However, there were normal people who stood for a minute, paying homage to the deceased, as it is the custom. Also, some of the cars stood in the queue, as it is the custom. Everyone is human, his or her own personality and a person for themselves. Everyone behaved as he or she thought should behave. I saw people who behaved normally, but the behavior of the first neighbors affected me a lot. I couldn't erase this inhuman behavior from my memory in a lifetime. We buried mother in the cemetery, I did not have time to be next to my mother on the last moments, to be with her, because I went to KFOR every hour, and so, I called people I knew. I did not manage to find out anything.

While we were at the funeral, the aunt and uncle who came were at home. They lived in Belgrade and came "down there" for the funeral. They were in the house. A lad from the neighborhood came and told them to surrender their arms and leave the house, and we were still at the cemetery. When we came home, they told us what happened and how it happened. We do not have weapon, neither have we where to go, nor do we do know where to go since we are missing two family members.

Again, I call this friend of my mother. "Well, I will see now, I'll call this one, I'll call that one," she told me in a nice, good and polite way, while everyone knew what had happened and how it had happened. From that behavior, it was obvious that something had happened, but I did not want to, I could not or did not want to know that this is so in my soul. I do not know, everything happened. She tells me in a nice way, not to worry. I asked her if they live, where they are. If just they are alive, I thought in my soul, so what, how can we get in touch, whether they ask for money, what do they want, what have they done, what have they done. They did not do anything wrong. They were in good terms with everyone, they did not owe anyone. What is their fault formally, I don't know to explain, since they behave with them in such a way. Only the fact that they were Serbs, but I don't see any evil in that. And that Albanian friend of my mother tells me not to worry, they are well, alive and have eaten and drunk. So, she told me all that in a nice and polite way. Instead, they were dead. She told me in a polite way, but I could not believe nor...we continued the search and my father asked one of his colleagues, once they worked together, that man worked in SDK. My father also worked there once.

An Albanian, I'm grateful to him to the sky, if it weren't for him and he didn't help us, it would have been hard for us to find them and what would that be. He said, he took the car from my brother in law, our car, because he said he had heard that something had happened, because when they went into that crowd, my husband and my uncle, they were pulled out of the car in front of the crowd, but maybe they also stopped randomly, they knew someone and they thought people wanted to express condolences or something. Everybody knew them, they might have normally stopped the car and stopped to talk to them. It has never been proven, I do not know how, only they know, their souls know that. The man took the car from my brother in law and after ten minutes he came back and said to my father, "In such and such a place, there are two bodies. Whether it is they or not, I do not know," he says, "I just heard that there are two bodies up there."



We went to KFOR again and reported it. They sent an ambulance, however my father didn't tell me that there were two bodies, but he just said he's going there with my elderly uncle to see what happened and how it happened. I stayed at home with my child and my grandfather. There were people there, as they came for my mother's funeral, there were still people there. So I wasn't alone. They went with KFOR with that ambulance and after ten minutes the ambulance passed and I immediately knew they were dead, the ambulance passed near the house and left. On that moment I felt sick, I could not believe what had happened. When they went there, above where Koretin is, where the trail is, where they were taken to the grove to be killed, they almost decided to return. They saw that some four-wheel car had passed, yet the tracks of the wheels disappeared, that means they were taken on foot to a nearby grove of trees.

There, I was not there, that's what my father told me, when they reached it, after two days they ran on a body. It had a gunshot wound on the forehead, on the belly, and was in a state of decay. It was my uncle. First, they could not recognize him because of the heat, two days had passed, gunshot wounds and perhaps their souls did not want to believe it was he. They saw that it was he, but where is Negovan? Perhaps fifty meters away in the second bush, and my uncle had a blindfold on his head, and his hands were tied. In the second bush, they found my husband Negovan and he was blindfolded as well, his hands tied and on the sides, as he fell on his knees, there were several gunshot wounds and that body was in a state of decay too, but less, because it was in the shade. There was a grove of trees and here was open and on the sun.

I told you that the ambulance brought in the bodies. They placed them in the municipal building, the post office building. I missed telling you that every hour, when I went there, when I wanted to get in touch with anyone from KFOR to talk to, they didn't protect us at all as they should have. Because our downfall, of my family I mean, started when KFOR arrived. Because until KFOR arrived, during the entire period of the bombing, the bombs were falling and we and the Albanians were hiding, and at the end we were socializing and they were coming to my shop, were shopping, we intended to save all from the bombing. However, after KFOR arrived, it became hell for me personally, for my family, and much later many other families that experienced a similar fate as my family did. Because when KFOR arrived, they came with their military vehicles in a convoy. Of course, they were welcomed as liberators. They welcomed them with flowers and they were followed by the young men from the KLA and arrived by our house because it is in the center, and parked there. My late husband, as a welcoming sign, brought a pack of beers and few cigarette boxes, offered them all, we talked normally. They came as a peacekeeping mission here, we have to live normally and that's it.

However, some failures occurred. I think there were too many, there were too many victims and KFOR didn't attempt at all to protect and help. Perhaps those people don't know the area, don't know the people, maybe they are afraid for their own lives. I can't know that, but this affected a lot my family especially. They didn't help us, nor protect us at all. When I went to speak to all since there was the American KFOR, Russian KFOR, French KFOR and KLA members, they were all there, I told them, "Come on people, let's not create hatred. Until yesterday we lived, and we have lived after as well. We aren't living for a day. Life is in front of us, why do we create hatred?" They looked at me as some, as some lunatic talking and told me to go, "What life? Never again, never again!" And just laughed, it was strange to them. I don't know what was strange to them, when I told them, "We have lived and we have to live so what"...it has

been proven and they will have to live, the ones you like it, as well as the ones who don't. Neither they, nor we have where to go. The ones born here can't [leave], where will they go, and in every country, everyone has to live. If we are democratic, it means life for all people. It is so, we all have to live. We all have a right to life. Every person has to live and manage. Some will do better some worse, as they know and can, but everyone has the right to life.

The bodies were placed in the post office building. My uncle goes again, my older uncle and the brother in law and my father to retrieve the bodies since they were there, they had been photographed there. What was the procedure, I don't know. But all were there as well, the American, French and Russian KFOR and KLA members, we retrieved the bodies. No paper was given, no document, we got no name and surname. I forgot to tell you that when you found the bodies, the wallet was pulled out from my husband's pocket, and his and my ID cards where in the wallet, because we were travelling and I gave it to him when we crossed [the border], his and my ID and there was money, how much I don't know. He always had [money] because he carried the turnover from the shop and everything. And my father found it and took those ID cards and the wallet as a remembrance. But on the other part, behind, in the right pocket, there were 500 Euros. They didn't find it when they searched them, they did not take it from them, they didn't remember that there are in the back pocket. He put it there because that money was supposed to be used for mother's funeral. That was the money intended for that purpose.

We bring the bodies into the house, we plan how to bury them. There were shooting for the entire night from all sides, shooting, shooting, shooting, a catastrophe. That is, the earth and heaven came together for the many shootings from firearms. Somehow, on August 2<sup>nd</sup> we found them, in 1999, on August 3<sup>rd</sup> we buried them in the local cemetery in Kosovska Kamenica escorted by KFOR. We buried them, but for me, my family, my child and myself, the suffering does not end there. There is again a new tragedy in all that pain that I have experienced, so, the death of my mother and my husband and my uncle, because my uncle as well. He was my mother's youngest brother, the man was 40 years old, he was almost 40. My husband was almost 33. Two young lives were gone in such a cruel way. That cannot be wished on the greatest enemy, I could not wish that on anyone, on no one on this earth and not even on the greatest enemy who caused so much evil to me. I do not hate anyone. Who hates someone, that one has problems with oneself, with his own soul and own character, and I do not hate. There are the ones in charge, there are courts, there is at the end that one up there, God can see and he can charge all as deserved. But what can be done, two young lives perished and my mother, fifty-one years old. That was a relatively young woman. My uncle left behind two minor children and his wife, my husband, me and a two and half years old child. So we had just started, the beginning of life, we had just created, formed a family to live normally, to give birth, to create. Here is our life, you know, theirs but also mine turned 360 degrees and it means disaster, just worst and worst.

Now it was a question of survival, because after their death there were more and more attacks on my house and my family. Why was this so, I cannot say. I cannot know even after all this time what kind of threat and danger was I to them. I, a 27 years old woman with a two-year-old child, and my father and grandfather, who did not do anything to anyone. They are not offensive people, they are modest, calm people, but it is as it is. They threw those Molotov cocktails, stones, shoot at the house on a daily basis. I could not, since the house in which we lived, where the shop was, we lived there, however, behind there was my grandfather's house and I had to go to grandfather's house and to the garden to take something,

but in no way [I had to go] to the street. Fortunately, we had a shop, we had food, and therefore we could survive.

In that period, we were not even feeling like eating. Survival was important. During the day, it was bearable, but the night was, how can we survive and how will we make it to the morning. I'm telling you, shootings, bomb throwing, hand grenades, fires, those Molotov cocktails, shooting, shot the house, but ok, we survived all that. If I go to the garden, some kids would see me and they do like this to me. My child was in the house, afraid, but what can be done. That is how it was for some time but since August 9, we already got used to that. We could not, I say I got used to, that was on a daily basis, we did not have where to go. That is it, there is no more. On August 9, around 10 o'clock in the evening, I put my child to sleep and all of a sudden, a grenade hit our house and all doors and windows were dislocated from their frames. I did not know where I was, I just saw the child screaming, totally lost, but fortunately we had curtains and that glass did not cut us, but it was stopped by them. We were lucky, well, I do not understand the fact that the grenade hit the balcony on the third floor and fell down on the floor. Fortunately, it did not hit the roof. Had it hit the roof, everything would have burned down.

In that moment I just grabbed the child, went into the street. I had nowhere to go since they shot me million times and I said, "Here I am," and nothing else. The child is crying and from the neighboring buildings across the road all the inhabitants of the buildings and houses it seems in the moment of the explosion went outside to see what happened, how it happened. When I said, "Here I am," I went out, then all at once they went inside. Did they feel ashamed or what? I do not know. All inhabitants went inside, and the German KFOR was ten meters away, in front of the school. It did not react, nor did they ask me if I needed anything, no, no, no. Later, as nothing had happened, I went into this other grandfather's house, because this one was not good to live in and that night ended like that, and the following day in the morning all the Serbs who lived in those buildings left their homes. Only we remained there.

After that, the next day from inside my grandfather's house I heard some bang out there in the garden, mine and our neighbor's, something exploded, I did not know, and all of the sudden a crowd of people gathered towards my house and entered my garden, to tear me apart. I did not know what was going on. Then one black American member of KFOR came, and he was looking into something, looking. An Albanian interpreter came and asked me what that was, as if I had thrown a bomb at some girl. They accused me of having thrown a bomb, a hand grenade and some Albanian girl was wounded in the arm. "People, I never saw a bomb in my life apart from TV." He was like, "You did it, you did it," and he got me upset. How rude was he! In that moment I looked across the street, in the building there was a bank and one Albanian neighbor, I remember him, he worked in the bank Jugo Banka, and he noticed it, I guess because they were all ready to get into my garden and tear me apart, to lynch me. I had nothing to do with that. I saw that he said, "Bring back the people," perhaps he said that it was someone else that had thrown it, and at that moment I argued with that interpreter. I said, "First of all, what you are doing is not nice, you are not interpreting properly. I understand English too, I understand Albanian as well, I grew up among Albanians," and he just left.

And that was it, after that, we had to leave the house, my child and I. My father and grandfather remained in the house. My child and I left the house but now it is my father's turn. Later, they reported him as a terrorist, as this and that, they made up so many things, that he has guns, and this and that. KFOR arrived,

arrested him, and kept him for 24 hours in the House of Culture and insisted that he plead guilty. "People, neither did I do anything, nor I have arms there, you go, you can search the house and if you find something, take me to trial and if not I can't, what can I say." They did that for 24 hours, they made a chaos in the house, the paneling was all taken out, the steps, the floor, up where the blinds box was, they looked into the well, looked in the roof, they looked everywhere. For 24 hours my father was still and they were searching and found nothing, at the end they let him free, someone had reported him that he did that.

I will miss to tell you also that the man who went with me, Momčilo Trajković, who was appointed coordinator, he was also accused later of being a rapist, everything. I did not see this, I only heard of it since later I went to Serbia. They say that they took him through the entire town in chains and spat on him and shouted bad words and all that. For two and more years, I do not know exactly how long, the man was in the Bondsteel base, not guilty nor responsible for anything, and later it was proven he was not guilty. But that's how they presented him as some criminal and he had to suffer, being not guilty nor responsible. I stopped when they searched the house, when there was a search. They turned everything upside down, and yet they found nothing and since they didn't find anything, it stopped there. I live in Serbia normally and my father lives there. There were attacks, but he did not want to tell me anymore. Perhaps he did not want me to worry.

After a year, I went back, after I had moved to Serbia, and went to take some of my stuff there. When we loaded the things, when I came here to my house, we were moving an armchair and there was something in it. What is that? Something fell from one of the sides, we turned it around and they had put a pen with a microphone. They thought that there [would be] who knows what kind of talks. Who knows how did they accuse us, what features did they give us, they thought that there are political talks going on. What kind of talk could a woman with a child have, and I found that pen with a microphone. I am sorry that I did not save it, but back then, at that moment, I was angry and threw it away, but I should have saved it.

I came here to Serbia. In Serbia, life was hard without a house, no job, with a small two-year-old child. Where shall we, how shall we, what shall we. It is hard to live even with some income and let alone with just a bag in the hand and with all the troubles that I carried in my soul. For some time we were placed at my uncle's, until we managed. My father never left the house, he stayed there. And that is it. In 2004 again the same events. 2004. There are fires, the lower part of our house is burned, ok, the shop was already destroyed back when my husband disappeared, because they were throwing stones, breaking glass, and it was a catastrophe. Then those glasses that were hit by the grenade, my father had repaired all that and the doors and everything as the house needed to be in a livable condition. In 2004, on March 17 my house was burned again, it was targeted again. The entrance door was burned using gasoline, so it burned out and they climbed up on the floor and placed papers and gasoline and burned some children's toys, some photos. And in that moment my father put my grandfather in the car and left the house. Fortunately, they survived.

My grandfather's house was the same. One room literally burned down, but I don't know, this house in which we lived, in the upstairs floors, despite all the paper and gasoline spread around and the paneling on the sides of the steps, only the carpeted burned, the rest didn't want to burn. So a part of the house remained, it was not destroyed. It had marks of smoke but it could have burned down entirely. So it was

really hard for my family in that period of time, the hardest period of my life which marked me and my family for the entire life, which changed from the foundations my child and me, we don't have a normal family, all that is somehow different. Where families are normal, where the children are alive, that is something more beautiful and better. Therefore, my child lives with the handicap of having one parent and his father was killed in such a cruel way, innocent and not responsible, but what can be done. He was unfortunate to end his life in such a way, he and my uncle, young lives, for the families to be destroyed, hatred to be created among people, wars were waged and no one won anything.

We all lost, both Serbs and Albanians. Always good and fair people suffer in war, the ordinary people, and the others somehow survive and have a better end, and wars never brought any good to anyone. So many victims, so many destroyed families, so many destroyed properties and the one who advocated war, that's the greatest crime. May God never have anyone live through a war. That is the worst thing in life. This crime was never brought to light, perhaps it will one day, the truth will be revealed, it will be known. Everyone knows it, it is all known, many were there and now they are no longer, we can't change anything, we have to keep on living. For instance, I go "down there", I visit my house, I go during the school holidays, and I stay there. Some of the neighbors say hi, some are very correct and we talk normally, regardless of the fact that they are Albanian and that is all, that is a matter of personality, how is one educated and how one views the world.

I had no documents in relations to the death of my husband, I already mentioned that. Since they did not give me any document when we retrieved the bodies, I could not get a death certificate. However, completely by chance, I got in contact with the employees of the Humanitarian Law Center and they helped, they, with the people from Pristina who work in that organization. So they helped me and I went to Kosovo and got that. At the same time, I was able to receive social benefits for the child and myself. And that part of life is the most difficult for me. That is a wound for the entire life. I had a surprise too. I was nicely surprised when I went there. Just as I was getting those documents for my late husband and with me was an employee of the Humanitarian Law Center from Pristina, a very nice woman, Sabina, while we were waiting in the hall a woman came to me, I didn't remember her, it must have been a long time I guess, a colleague of my mother, she was a teacher with my mother, an Albanian. She recognized me and said, "I have to say hi to my colleague's daughter." We talked, spoke and I vaguely remembered her and I was really glad that it happened, that is a very nice thing and it meant a lot to me.

### Part Two

I continued my life here in Serbia with my child. We came with only a bag and a two and a half years old child, unemployed.

**Nataša Govedarica:** You came to Belgrade?

**Sunčica Antić:** Belgrade. We lived for a year at my uncle's, my child and I. My sister also came with us. She was in the ninth month of pregnancy so we lived for some time for a year at my uncle's. My sister gave birth here, she was here with a baby for eleven months. After that she had to return "down there" to Kosovo because of work. I don't have a job, and live from the family pension that my husband earned working in his company. My son and I have a modest life. He is now a big boy. He finished high school,

started university. We are open with each other, we talk about everything. He often asks me about his father too. He has some memories, but very weak ones. He knows his father only from the pictures, he was two, two and a half, from the stories. Maybe sometimes he remembers some details, which flash through his memory and sometimes he asks me, "Mother, tell how was everything there?"

Every summer we go "down there," we spend time there. We stay with my father, he never left his house. Neither did my grandfather, while he was alive. He survived 2004, it was very close. Just as they left, they hadn't gone even fifty meters, the crowd came into the garden and made a chaos and my grandfather would have been a casualty, but he was fortunate that my father worked there in the school, it was immediately next to our house, and when he realized that those things were getting closer to our house, he turned on the car, got my grandfather barefoot in and moved a kilometer away from the house. That places is called Berivojce, where my sister is married.

They were there, but the protesters made chaos in the whole of Kamenica and they reached Berivojce, so my sister's house, and the shop that her brother and father-in-law had [been attacked]. That was destroyed, a catastrophe, while they were behind the house. Then in 2014 she was pregnant again. This was the second time that these kind of horrible things happened while she was pregnant with the second baby. There was destruction, it was a catastrophe. They were in one part of the house and until KFOR arrived, so, thank God they saved their lives. That has left marks on her and later she had the baby, she had to give birth prematurely and so on. But thank God that ended well. Thugs slapped my grandfather a few times in the street but they could have killed him, but thank God he stayed alive and what happened is passed.

My grandfather died, my father still lives "down there." I go every summer there. Sometimes I contact some of my Albanian friends. It depends on their education and worldview. Some of them do not say hi, some who applauded perhaps now see things differently, because you never know what time brings. They had some tragedies too. The husband of that neighbor died at work, that is something else and now she feels how it is when you lose someone. I do not have any contact with them. They do not greet me, I do not greet them, while with some I talk normally as we always had, and we have always been in good relationship, as nothing happened, because I did not have anything negative with them nor did they have it with me.

In 2014, I wanted to know where they were and where is the place where they were shot. I went to that place, I looked at it. Now that is private property. Some storage hall is there, since there is a grove of trees, but I am not sure whether that is a mill or something else, I just passed by there, I saw that. A storage hall, houses on the sides, that's it, what can we do. Nothing can be changed, just perhaps we need to learn a lesson from this that the war didn't bring any good to anyone, so that people will finally get it. I've said that when I went to report the case too, when my husband went missing, that we need to remain humans. Because when some mad head does something, not even a thousand smart ones can undo it ever, not even for some time, not for the entire life. The most difficult thing is when human lives are lost. That can't be undone, but everything else, the property, that can be all perhaps compensated. Some will get compensation, some will continue to live in misery, it depends on how people manage. But still, those are some worthless things. It will be gained again but human life is something most beautiful given from God and every life shall be respected regardless of everything. So my life story on the 31<sup>st</sup> goes in the wrong

direction and now I am trying. Since July 31<sup>st</sup> 1999, those events have marked me for my entire life, my child and me. Now I am trying to have some normal life, to build it with my child. We live a very modest life, my child is getting an education.

**Nataša Govedarica:** What makes you happy Sunčica?

**Sunčica Antić:** Sincerely, my child's success makes me happy. First of all, the fact that he is alive and well and that he managed to stay mentally healthy and able to build himself and his personality, as he should. Because after all that he experience in that period, thank God he has matured. I am proud of him as every mother with her son, but his success [is what makes me happy]. He is an excellent student, an exemplar child. Now he has finished high school, he started university, he won some prizes in the Computer Sciences competitions and so the success of my child makes me most happy. He is my entire life and for me there is nothing else apart from my child, his success, his life, because he has yet to live. Of course, we all have to live but his life is in the first place.

We are, I was at least lucky, I had a happy childhood. With my parents, I grew up in abundance, in everything, a beautiful part of the life. But he was unfortunate that he has spent very little time with his father. He spent two and a half years [with him]. Does he remember or not, that he lived afterwards in harsh conditions. I can see that he misses his father. He never opens up, but I can see that he misses his father. All the background photos on his computer are of a man with a child, flying a kite, riding a bike, taking rollers, a father and a son, they go into the twilight or pass by a rainbow. Therefore, he misses his father a lot. He has only those photos as background on the computer. It means that deep in his soul there is a void that has marked him for his entire life. His misses a lot his father's love although I am trying as much as I can to offer the maternal, motherly love. That love I cannot offer to him.

I know what both maternal and paternal love are. I am telling you that I was fortunate to live with my parents in a normal family, while our family is broken into pieces. He and I live alone, we agree on what we'll do, how we'll do it, we make plans. I hope he will be a successful man. First of all, that he will be alive and well, that he will have a normal family, that we all will be alive and well, and that he will try because it is worth trying. If one tries, he will achieve something in life, to work fairly. I never tell him to hate anyone, no one, but to have friendly relations with all. Same for him, he is constructive with everyone. He never had any problem in school or likewise. A normal solid child. He grew up only with his mother, of course he has a problem and it is clear that he misses his father. That is it, and the rest I offer to him, as much as I can. Had his father been alive, everything would have been different. There would be someone to work and to make a living and have much better living conditions, but what can I do, it is like this. One flower doesn't bring the spring, but I am trying through maternal love to help him get over the hard moments that he had experienced when he was two and a half. In that period I was thinking, how will he understand that later, will he be able to get over that in his puberty? Now, what is happening in his soul I don't know. I can just see that he is missing his father. However, we cannot change anything.

**Nataša Govedarica:** Does he go with you to Kosovo? What is his attitude toward that?

**Sunčica Antić:** He goes. You know what, we have gone there all the time, even in the most difficult [moments]. And when we left, some ten to fifteen days after we buried my husband [there], we came here.

After that, I went there, perhaps every month, for my stuff. He went there on All Hallows, All Saints he went every year. When he was younger, he had more free time, when he went to the kindergarten. I think that we went four, five times, we went to Negovan's grave. He likes going to Kosovo, he likes it because he is born there. Where one is born, that's where it is most beautiful, regardless of the conditions, it is the most beautiful. So we go there, we go every single year, we spend every summer there, it is nice.

We have few days which I have for myself when I can I remember some events, but I try to have the good ones prevailing and I remember, I do not want to think about those things. The ones that did those things should think about them, they should question their conscience. It is not easy to destroy someone's life, it is not easy. Now, how do they think I really do not know. I just know that I don't hate anyone. That person that has been bad toward me and those people who have done evil and have taken the life of my husband, of my uncle, they should question themselves and their conscience and I will not judge anyone. There are courts, whether they function or not, perhaps one day they will start functioning and this will be resolved. Anyhow, we can't bring their lives back, but the truth shall be revealed, and it will be revealed. No secret ever remained hidden and the entire municipality of Kamenica, and there are 74 villages in the municipality of Kamenica, they all know it - that is known by all, seen by all, heard by all, many were present and the ones present should also question their conscience. Because hiding a crime is something very difficult, at least I believe that. Everyone should act as one knows and thinks that he should do.

I continue my life, as I should. I stay there, meet some friends, schoolmates, Serbs and Albanians, normal people, I mean they have normal views, wide views, culture, and I talk normally with them, and the ones who have a different view even say hi. I don't know, we will see, the time will show, what happened is gone and what will be we will see. I was unfortunate to go through the things I went through and I am not the only one. That's what comforts me. Many families from both sides have gone through very bad things. Some went through even worst things, some have not, but I am sorry for all the young lives that have been lost, especially for the civilians. It is another thing for a soldier to take the gun, to fight. Someone either will kill someone else, or will survive. A civilian, what? nothing. When one is at the wrong time in the wrong place, at least I think they were at the wrong time in the wrong place, they were unfortunate to run into some bad people, to lose their lives in such a tragic way, although they did not deserve it, but that's it, the truth is such. What can I say?

Perhaps people will become smarter and will not support wars anymore. So at least some generations can live without war, so that they can have a normal life, children have parents, can get educated, have better living conditions. But the politicians do their job, we the ordinary people suffer and so the war didn't bring any good to anyone, apart from perhaps the war dogs, perhaps it brought something good to them. To us, ordinary people, nothing. I don't know what I can tell you at this moment.

**Nataša Govedarica:** If that is all that you wanted to say you are not obliged to...

**Sunčica Antić:** I told you this in the shortest possible way as I remembered at this moment. Perhaps there are many nice things that I could tell you, but emotions prevailed now and memories, the nice and the sad ones, all of that has left deep marks on me. What I remembered at this moment I told you, perhaps I did not remember to tell you some events that are important. Perhaps there will be some other chance. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my life story.



Nataša Govedarica: Thank you for sharing it.

Sunčica Antić: Thank you and all the best.