

## INTERVIEW WITH JOLYON NAEGELE

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Duration: 118 minutes

Present:

1. Jolyon Naegele (Speaker)
2. Anna Di Lellio (Interviewer)
3. Donjeta Berisha (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**

**Anna Di Lellio:** Can you start with your name, your... when you were born, where, and some memories of your family and your childhood?

**Jolyon Naegele:** I was born in New York, New York City, Manhattan, 1955, I grew up in New York. My parents were immigrants, my father was born in Germany, my mother in England, my father is half Jewish and was evacuated on a so-called Kindertransport to England in 1938 along with many other kids of mixed parentage, or entirely Jewish. Under German law he was known as a half-Aryan. He immigrated with his parents, who came out the following year, and his siblings, he immigrated with one of his brothers and his parents in 1940 during the battle of Britain to New York.

My mother was evacuated with some of her classmates in 1941 or so, or '40, to Canada, where she finished school and then went on to the United States for a year or two before returning to Britain in 1944. So, my father learned his English in England, my mother was English, so my accent is more north Atlantic than Manhattan. I...both my parents are artists, my grandfather was a painter as well, so we grew up in a creative environment, I, my three siblings, but being the eldest, what I wanted was out at an early age and at the age of 15 I travelled alone to the United Kingdom to visit relatives and just see a bit of the world. At the age of 18 I travelled to the European continent on my own for several months, staying in youth hostels and with friends and relatives and from the first time I visited Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia, saw the iron curtain, saw the reality that I read a lot about, and was very, very curious about, I finally saw it with my own eyes, and the following year I studied in the United Kingdom, in London, I studied Czech Language and Literature, my third year of University, junior year abroad. I was otherwise an International Relations major. I then went on to focus on, on International Relations as I said, and Eastern Europe, as a graduate student first in Bologna and then at Johns Hopkins University in Washington.

My first visit to the Balkans was while studying in Bologna. A group of students and a professor went to Belgrade to spend a week at the Yugoslav Institute of International Relations, where professor Ivo Mates explained (smiles) Yugoslavia's geopolitical situation and we first, I first had the, the most superficial of conversations about Kosovo and this was 1977, and Kosovo really wasn't on anyone's map outside the immediate region. In 1980, end of 1980, I moved to Europe to work as a reporter for

*Business International*, which had a weekly business *Eastern Europe* and the monthly *Doing business in Eastern Europe*. It was based, that office was based in Vienna and I started making regular trips into Eastern Europe. After I got my Masters, I travelled around the Soviet Union on my own for several, several weeks, alone, by train, got to meet people, test my Russian out...

**Anna Di Lellio:** What, what were your impressions of Yugoslavia in '77?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Well, what I saw in '77 was what I could see from the train between the Italian border and, and Belgrade and back, and it seemed to be rather relatively undeveloped and traditional. Belgrade itself reminded me of some cities in Czechoslovakia with the exception that it was... you could buy a Western newspaper at least on Terazija in front of the, from a newspaper stand, in front of the hotel Moskva. It was lively, interesting, freer than, than places in the Soviet bloc that I had visited. There were... certainly in the sense of consumers goods, the kind of shops that were open, you didn't see things like that in Prague for another five or ten years, so they were ahead of the game at that point and yeah, reasonable prices, farmers markets that were well stocked, etcetera.

I started working for Voice of America as a correspondent in 1984 and shortly little after began to travel to Yugoslavia. My...I was based in Vienna, my focus was basically all of Eastern Europe and as an American I needed a Yugoslav visa. I attended the trial of a Croatian war criminal from World War II, which was, I only attended, I think, one or two hearings but still, it was an experience. Actually shortly thereafter I finally got my driver's license, since there was a lot there to drive around Yugoslavia and the region, I came to Kosovo by car in April 1985, and... was impressed by the landscape, by the exoticness of the place, it was... less European than anywhere else I had been. I was still young and not that well-traveled in the region, so that was a lot that I really didn't have explanations for, a lot of what I saw. And communications were difficult. Very, very few people spoke English in, in Prishtina, in those days.

The wave of guest workers to Switzerland and Germany was just beginning so yes, you saw Swiss license plates particularly in, in Prizren and surroundings. I didn't speak Alb.. any Albanian, didn't really speak Serbian but I could understand some, based on my knowledge of Czech and Slovak, Russian, and I... traveled around, interviewed people...fell in love with Prizren, came back to Prizren and Peja and Prishtina several months later in the autumn, in September I believe, because I was curious and it was still newsworthy. I had been challenged while reporting in Romania, I'd spoken to an American diplomat who told me I was wasting my time going after the issues of the Hungarian minority that, you know, "Go to Kosovo if you want to deal with something, don't try to stir up trouble here." And I wasn't trying to stir up trouble, I was only trying to understand (smiles) the relationships, why Ceausescu was engaging in what we now know were clearly populist self-serving activities to undermine the Hungarian community there and, and something was going on here... in, in a different form, but the end result was more or less the same.

On every subsequent visit there more police, there more armored personnel carriers parked in the park behind the Grand Hotel, where the *Heroina* statue... sculpture is today, it was an Interior Ministry car park in those days, well it became one, it had just been a city park when I first came here and by

1998, when I was here once or twice, one's freedom of movement was limited to the extent that one had to have a permit from the Secretariat of Information of the Autonomous Socialist Province of Kosovo and Metohija to travel around the province with the municipalities specified where one could and could not go written by hand. And I remember... not just municipalities, but even towns, and I had a permit that said, "Not allowed to go to Junik." And I went to Junik and was stopped by the police. I got the distinct impression that the police officer was not particularly...gifted in reading Serbian and said, "Oh, oh, oh Junik, yeah, okay, fine, sure." (Laughs) This is the one place I wasn't supposed to be. Not that I stumbled on any *kaçaks*<sup>1</sup> or, or their descendants, but what I found there, and which was gone by '99, was a... very traditional way of life. No asphalt, half the time no electricity... women in traditional clothes, families living in *kullas*<sup>2</sup> and there were more *kullas* in Junik than anywhere else in Kosovo. It was a... it was like a trip into the past that hadn't been spoiled by what we now call globalism, what then was called modernization or Americanization and...

**Anna Di Lellio:** Have you done any reading...

**Jolyon Naegele:** On what?

**Anna Di Lellio:** I mean you were traveling, did you read anything that prepared you to understand Kosovo, I mean I know you are quite literate so I'd imagine...

**Jolyon Naegele:** Yeah, there was *Black Lamb Great Falcon*, or whatever *Gray Falcon* or whatever it's called by Rebecca West. Yeah, I had read the pertinent chapters by my second visit or during my second visit, but she had a very special, myopic view of the place, based on who she was traveling around with, and who she spoke to.

Ehm.. I had read more about Albania and frankly I was a lot more interested in going to Albania than Kosovo, but that was, back in the 1980s, for an American citizen simply not, not in the cards. So I was curious about Albanian culture as such, and I looked for it in Kosovo and in Macedonia, the only places where I really felt that I might be living in, in a traditional Albanian area or here in, in Dibra, Dibra in Macedonia, in fact almost more there, the influence was palpable in the town, it wasn't like the rest of Macedonia then, now it's completely different. Mostly Albanians had immigrated to Staten Island and sent, sent back a lot of money, so the city has changed. But so yeah, I had done a little reading, but there wasn't a whole lot available, it was more a question of discussing Kosovo with other journalists who had been here, who knew who was who, who knew what a... what a dilemma it was for, for Belgrade and what Zagreb's and Ljubljana's views were. Particularly Viktor Mayer of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, who had been covering the region since 1956, who died a couple of years ago, and the Reuters correspondent in, in Belgrade at the time and a few others. So, there were people who were telling me what was important, what was interesting, but no, compared to any other part of the region, there was really no literature that focused on Kosovo.

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<sup>1</sup> Outlaws, bandits, also known in other regions of the Balkans as *hajduk* or *uskok*, considered simple criminals by the state, but often proponents of a political agenda of national liberation.

<sup>2</sup> Traditional, fortified Albanian house, tower.

Nevertheless what I did was, since I could more or less read Serbian with a dictionary, I subscribed to *Jedinstvo*, which was a daily in those days, and look, there were three dailies and they were *Jedinstvo*, *Rilindja* and *Tan* and given that I didn't speak or read Albanian or Turkish I could sort of plow through *Jedinstvo* and they, these copies would pile up on my desk from about 1987, '86 or '87 onwards at work, and was at the time of the, the inflation, so we pay a subscription for a year and then after six months they come back from Belgrade, the distributors, and say that they need the same amount again because they had exhausted (laughs) the money, because they didn't keep it in hard currency they immediately transferred it at the beginning of the subscription to Dinars, but it didn't hold out for the year. So, eventually I, I canceled after several years, but in the meantime I was able to follow developments in *Jedinstvo*, in *NIN* and *Danas* and elsewhere and get a flavor, in *Vreme*, when it started publishing, get a flavor of how the Serbian media was covering Kosovo and the growing hysteria here in the late '80s already.

I then came here in 1989, twice in the spring, once around Easter... and I think when, yeah, that was when I visited Junik for the first time and then again for Vidovdan, where I witnessed the celebrations in Gračanica on the eve before Milošević came, which would be summed up as a lot of very drunk Serbs on the street and gridlock. The media were taken there by bus, but the only way back was on foot. I mean I saw what I needed to see within about 20 minutes and then I walked back to Prishtina over the hills. And the next day we were taken to Gazimestan and Milošević was flown in by helicopter. We were kept under {makes hand gesture} a tent. I recorded him, I still have the tape recording of his notorious speech, but what I found interesting, having covered dictators throughout the region, notably Ceausescu, was the fear of the crowd that the state, that the state party apparatus had...

Just as with Ceausescu, Milošević was kept well away from the crowd and across the highway, and it wasn't much of a highway on those days, it was a two-lane road, there was a temporary encampment of Yugoslav military vehicles that included tanks, with cannon and armored personnel carriers and various other vehicles, which I photographed and still have the pictures, which give one an image of an attempt, I suspect... the state didn't really know where things were headed and they wanted to intimidate. I don't think the soldiers who were manning this encampment really had a clue what... no one stopped me from taking pictures, remember this is '89 not '99, it was a very different situation. It wasn't tense but it wasn't entirely relaxed. But the guns, the incoming... everything was pointed in the other direction, towards Obiliq, towards, not towards where the gathering was, but it was across the street and no one tried to disrupt it.

I... later that day when, with my interpreter who was Laura Silber, who later went on to become a well-known journalist and who was stringing for *The New York Times*, no sorry, who was stringing for North America and subsequently also for the *Financial Times*. We went to visit Ibrahim Rugova, whom I'd already interviewed once or twice and one of these interviews was, had already been published in *Drita* in Albania with my name, but identifying as "*gazetar amerikan*" [American journalist], no mention of Voice Of America. And Rugova was very happy, surprised in fact, that this interview had gotten such play not only in Albania but here, he didn't know until that point how many people were really listening and people came up to him on the street constantly telling him, "I heard your interview on Voice of America." So we went to having visited him on his flat, we then, I guess in the spring, we

then visited him on his office behind the stadium for, where I interviewed him and I sent that interview along with the audio from Gazimestan to Voice of America in Washington.

And what happened subsequently was a quarrel that turned physical in, in the newsroom at VOA between the head of the Yugoslav service, Veljko, I can't remember his last name, and the head of the Albanian service where...and where they almost came to, got into a fist fight where Veljko was refusing, not only refusing that, that ... to broadcast the elements of the Rugova interview, but insisting that that interview not be broadcast by the Albanian service either, nor by the English language service and it was settled by the news desk that, this was Serbia's day and that they weren't gonna broadcast it that day but they could do it the next day, whether Elez Biberaj, the head of the Albanian service then broadcast it in Albanian that day or had to wait, I don't recall. But tensions were high, even there.

**Anna Di Lellio:** Do you remember the personalities whom you met at the time, besides Rugova?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Rexhep Qosja was always away, he was always on the coast on the Adriatic, never available, so the people that I spoke to, you know, I spoke to a judge in the Martinović case which I had been following on the pages of *Jedinstvo*. This was a famous case of the guy with the beer bottle who claimed that he had been attacked by Albanians and then it turned out it was self-inflicted in the middle of a field. And so I interviewed the judge on that case, but of course all he would say was, "As long as the case is in progress, I can't comment on it." I sat in on various... I conducted interviews with officials from the... from the Secretariat, I guess from the infamous Secretariat for Information... in that sense, not impressive.

I spoke to a garage mechanic here in Prishtina, who wanted to show me around, he wanted to take me to Prizren.... and gave me one of the, two of the best quotes of the trip and the most memorable, memorable quotes I got from, from that era in Kosovo. One was... this was a guy who had eight children, and his wife was pregnant with the ninth and he said that, "There is nothing more beautiful than an Albanian woman pregnant with the ninth child or tenth child," or something like that. And that was a very different situation those days. That was, that was one of the quotes, the other quote was, "When the revolution comes, we will unite with Albania, we will fight and unite with Albania." And I said, "Hold on a second, Enver Hoxha has only been dead a few months," or a year by then, he died in '84, '85, now I can't remember. Anyway, he'd only been dead a few months, '85, '85, April '85. "Do you have any idea what uniting with Albania would mean given the system that they have there, compared to the relative freedom you have here?" And his response was, "We are Albanians, we can overcome all of that, we watch Albanian television, we see what a wonderful land it is." Yeah, well, they had bought into it, like he had, among others and this was also an interesting aspect and then ten years, more than ten years later, 14 years later, in '99, interviewing Albanian refugees from Kosovo, Kosovars in Albania, and they are shocked at what they actually found, I mean many, a number of people had already come to visit in the course of the 90's, and were confronted with the reality that was very different from Albanian TV and radio.

Yeah, so those were my, my early visits, sorry (coughs). And then other things began developing: the, the suppression of the Turkish community in Bulgaria turned into, the end of June, shortly after Vidovdan, roughly at the same time, turned into... that was... The suppression of the Turkish minority had been ongoing for years, however on the 6th, 5th or 6th of June, Topa Živko made an announcement in Sofia opening the borders and I'd been very involved in covering that issue, so I went straight from Gazimestan to Belgrade... to Prishtina then Belgrade then flew to Istanbul and covered the outflow of that, of, of that. And then there was the development in autumn in Budapest and Prague and Leipzig, and so on and so I covered the, the collapse of communism in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany and Poland, where I'd been for the, for the elections where Solidarity won 99 out of 100 seats on the Polish Senate in autumn... in August, no that was also June, it was the same weekend as Topa Živko's speech.

And finally the focus shifted again to Yugoslavia in '91 as I recall, beginning of '91, no, autumn '90, where there were incidents in, near the Plitvice Lakes in Croatia, where Serb, Serb vigilantes had cut down trees, were blocking roads and taking hostages of tourists and tourists buses and so on. And this, there was growing apprehension that something was going to happen, in Croatia and Slovenia and in the end, a day apart, they declared independence from Belgrade, and VOA had a plan. At that point I was the Prague correspondent, it was the Vienna correspondent who went to Zagreb, I was in Belgrade. And I remember, going in and out of Belgrade, a number of occasions. In the, in the autumn, something in the autumn of '91 being in Manastir and Serb occupied Croatia, East of Slovenia, which was under, under shellfire and no electricity, not a pleasant sight, visiting villages like Ilok, that had been abandoned by... almost everyone, except the clergy and the loonies.

And then in '92, when on a May day weekend, Sarajevo was being bombed by the Yugoslav Air force I was, I took a walk on Kalemegdan because I couldn't get the radio signal in the hotel Moskva on AM, because of the structure {shows with his hands} the jamming or whatever, not jamming, but interference. So I went to Kalemegdan because word had it among the reporters that you could get reception on your AM radio there, to listen to radio Sarajevo, and BBC, VOA to find out what was actually going on. And I listened in real time to the pleas for help from radio Sarajevo, and watched people dancing, spontaneously, relatively, at Kalemegdan. Whether they were celebrating, whether they had any clue what was going on in Sarajevo I, I don't know today, or whether they had an inkling and were simply in a great mood but you usually don't see usually see dancing in the street in broad daylight, and it wasn't a parade.

A bunch of journalists, colleagues went down to Sarajevo and some never came back. They all went down on a convoy that weekend, and I chose not to go, because if there's one thing that I've learned as a correspondent over the previous years, your value is only as good as your ability to send a story out, and if you end up either behind bars or in hospital you're not, you're cannon fodder at that point. And it's not as if I hadn't been to Sarajevo before, and it's not as if I hadn't already been reporting for, for months, for a year, that if the fighting in Croatia were to spread to Bosnia would be a completely different ballgame and then it would be a real bloodbath. I knew and I didn't go, and several people in

that convoy met their end within, within a matter of days or ended up being medevac with serious injuries .

I subsequently did go to Bosnia on my own terms during one conflict on one occasion. And reported on it and immediately was confronted with that irritation that many reporters not only at VOA experience, where you're somewhere where the pack is not, and you have a report but everyone else is reporting on something else, and your editors want you to report about that something else, rather than on what you're experiencing. I'm sitting in a town that's encircled by the Serbs and is being shelled, and it was a multi-ethnic town even during the war, it was Serb, Croats and, this was Bihać, Serb, Croat and, and Bosniak, Bosniak majority. And they said, "Yeah, yeah but Sarajevo is being shot." I said, "Yeah, but you got a guy here." "Yeah, but start with Sarajevo." But that's aside... so I covered not on a day-to-day basis, but on occasional basis over the next few years, I covered the Yugoslav conflict, the Bosnian conflict from Belgrade, the Croatian and Bosnian conflict also from, from, on occasions from Zagreb.

After Dayton, shortly after Dayton I drove across Bosnia alone with my own car. When I got back from Prague and my wife took it to the repair shop to be serviced, they said, "Where in the name of hell have you been with this car?" (smiles) I'd driven through a few po... shell holes, potholes, obviously was not in great shape. But what I saw there, and I interviewed people along the way, driving from Bihać to Bijeljina across northern Serbia in the course of a week, picking up hitchhikers. So I was anonymous, relatively. These people were veterans from either side, some of them on crutches, they were refugees, Serbs from Sarajevo who had no intention of living in Sarajevo henceforth. I was in Brčko, which was among the most shelled, heavily shelled places I have ever visited. I mean, I would rank it with, with Vukovar, Bijeljina, where I interviewed the mayor and other town fathers who, you know, "butter wouldn't melt in their mouth," and they gave the most innocent explanation of how, what happened to the Bosniak population there a couple, a couple of years earlier, that obviously didn't correspond, correspond at all with reality.

During the conflict when I wanted to go to Belgrade if, during that conflict in '92, '95, if I put Kosovo down on my Yugoslav visa application I didn't get a visa, so I knew that simply was off limits for me and I wasn't gonna push it because the regime by '95 was a very different regime that had been in the 1980's. And then the Yugoslavs stopped giving me a visa entirely. In '99 I was in Turkey when the, when the NATO bombing began, I was covering stories in the East, Southeastern Turkey near the Syrian border, and I eventually... Later in April managed to get a flight from Italy to Tirana and I spent another ten days, two weeks covering the refugees all across Albania from the tobacco factory in Shkodra to, to the stadium in Korça, to the military base in Maliq, to pasture on the west bank of lake Ohrid, to the beach in Durrës and the Drenica cafe on the beach in Durrës where they were recruiting fighters for the North Atlantic brigade, or the Atlantic brigade or whatever, who has just arrived from the US and Canada off the boat from Italy and so on. So, I had a lot of interesting stories to report on, and yeah, there was a considerable uncertainty as to where this was all going to head because Milošević had not caved in, the bombing was going on day after day, week after week. The American military attack helicopters were parked on the tarmac at Tirana airport and were not going to actually be utilized at any time in the near future. And the weather was generally overcast, rainy, pilots weren't

going under 15,000 feet so most of the attacks were by, by missile rather than by low-flying aircraft here.

**Anna Di Lellio:** Where you working for Voice of America?

**Jolyon Naegele:** By then I was working for Radio Free Europe. I had moved, I had started working for Radio Free Europe in '96, and I was based in the newsroom. So, VOA had a much more hands-on attitude in, in putting reporters on the scene, wherever. If you could get in there, you know, the only rule was, beyond being objective etcetera, etcetera, was, you don't go after the head of state and try to interview someone senior without permission, and you don't use excerpts of a national anthem, it either is the whole thing or... those were really simple rules to remember subject, verb, predicate, 13 lines to a minute etcetera. Those were easy rules. Radio Free Europe was a little more complicated and a lot less fun, there was a lot less freedom and more restrictions, sitting in the newsroom the whole time, just getting money for a single trip was a complicated process, they expected you to do all your reporting over the telephone, and it was, it was frustrating.

But yeah, once, once after, after the Kumanovo Military Technical agreement was signed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June '99, then VOA starting coming in and always had someone here from the central newsroom and very quickly established a Prishtina Bureau for, for the South Slavic Service, of which the Kosovo unit was a part. And I came in, then, it was my turn toward the end of August, and I made a beeline for Junik and saw that most of the *kullas* have been destroyed. I had asked a colleague who had already been in Junik a couple of months before whether the *kullas* were still there and his response was, "What's a *kulla*?" (smiles) Because Junik was known obviously for something other than just *kullas*, the fact was that it was a center of resistance as it had been during the *kaçaks* rebellion in the 19... early 1920's. I went there and met with villagers who were generous despite the situation or their losses in, in lives and properties, property, in sharing their, their food and tales. I went to... other villages where, in the Dukagjin region, where all the men had been hauled off and slaughtered. I went to Dragash, where the Turkish KFOR unit was frenz... frenzily... in a frenzy to circumcise all the boys who hadn't had that opportunity, under Milošević circumcision had been discouraged at best. And so there were busloads of kids being brought down to Prizren by the in Turkish army buses, you know, all dressed for the big celebration. They weren't all five years either but they started with the young ones and marked their ways up anyway .

**Anna Di Lellio:** How much of what you saw in Bosnia influenced your attitude toward Kosovo, when you came here during the war?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Well, I didn't come here during the war, I came here afterward.

**Anna Di Lellio:** After the war.

**Jolyon Naegele:** It's very different and it didn't influence me that much. Those who were in the military, in KFOR, IFOR, SFOR, who then subsequently came to UNMIK who would say, "Oh you know, the difference between Bosnia and Kosovo was four years." Sorry, that is so far from reality it's not funny. Yes, the aggressor may have been the same to a certain extent, however the historic, that's

where the historic parallels for me and, uh historically, and you look at a map and it's very clear what Bosnia represented for Ottoman Turkey. You look at the, the ethnic divisions of, in, in, in Bosnia. You look at how IFOR and SFOR then implemented a form of normalization in Republika Srpska in the Federation. And a lot of that was missing here, within one year of Dayton everyone in Bosnia had standardized license plates, no one was driving around with a Republika Srpska license plates. You still see K, KM plates for Mitrovica here issued by Belgrade and obviously not south of the Ibar, not being driven around south of the Ibar and, and you'll see you know PZ plates and for Prizren and UR for, for Uroševac, Ferizaj, and etcetera, etcetera.

There was no discussion, I mean, IFOR and SFOR implemented it, the job was the implementation. Serbia learnt its lesson there, and although there were plenty of people who had worked in the High Commissioner's Office and elsewhere who came down here, including at least one SRSG, getting Belgrade on board on license plates proved to be something, it took more than a decade.

**Anna Di Lellio:** So you're saying that Serbia learnt from Bosnia...

**Jolyon Naegele:** Serbia learnt...

**Anna Di Lellio:** ...dragged its feet much more in Kosovo?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Yeah, well yes, but also because that would be an oversimplification because for Serbia to this day Kosovo is Serbia, hence it's a different issue. With Bosnia, halfway through the conflict it was clear that Belgrade was going to leave the Kosovo... the Bosnian Serbs in a lurch and they knew it. The Krajina Serbs in, in Bosnia were, and even more so in Serbia, were pretty much finished halfway through the war, certainly in the west, they weren't, they were too far away and when push came to shove. And it was clear and then it, it happened during Operation Oluja [Storm], Belgrade abandoned them. Here, it took eleven weeks of NATO bombing, and it didn't have to last that long, but it did precisely because of a certain French officer in NATO who was passing on to Belgrade the targeting a day in advance or a few hours in advance. And so, Milošević knew he could hold on for so long, until the skies cleared and NATO bombed the Serbian emplacements on the south slope of Mount Pashtrik, along the main road coming in from Kukës, where the Serbs had been expecting later in the year a US-lead NATO invasion, if it came to that. And so they had put a lot of material there, and men, and in one night, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, 500 serving soldiers and a lot of artillery were destroyed, and Milošević threw Chernomyrdin Russian Premier's suit for peace very quickly after that. That's a very different end to what we saw with Oluja which was US-backed, US-trained Croatian forces who finally after four and a half years, of four years of having their noses rubbed in the mud, were able to reclaim their territory, and they could have reached the gates of Belgrade, if they hadn't been told to back off.

## Part Two

**Anna Di Lellio:** I just was curious about your own impressions, your parents were refugees...

**Jolyon Naegele:** Yeah...

**Anna Di Lellio :** And then you cover basically refugees throughout all these years. What did you, I mean, did you have a personal impression on ...

**Jolyon Naegele :** Of course, I did. It depends on the situation, of course. In...refugees, in the tobacco factory in Shkodra were living in squalid conditions, but were in a relatively good mood, but they hadn't an uncertain future. The refugees I met on the shores of, of Lake Ohrid on the Albanian side were... from Prishtina, were proud, dignified, irritated that the Serbs had basically come to their homes, rung the doorbell and said, "Give us the car keys and get out of here in ten minutes." And it was the car that bothered some of them more than anything else and they had a second pair but it wasn't...the... And they had already turned down a military camp they've been sent to originally, I think to Maliq, and they said, "If you think we're sleeping on concrete, we are from Prishtina, don't even think about it, you give us something decent." So in the end they ended up rather in Albanian military camp, in a Greek military or Greek Red Cross and kept in the middle of a field, a beautiful view, clean air, but they were in tents.

And then there were those in from Gjakova that I met on the beach in, in Durrës, in a camp an Italian camp from Miterkolja or whatever is called, and they were being served. I was there during dinner time and they were lining up to get pasta and penne and, and salad, and they were complaining. I said, "What's the matter?" I was starving and they were complaining. I said, "What's, what's the matter?" "This food..." "So what's the matter with it?" "It's not's, not real food." And remember these are Highland people they're not not from the coast and this boy spoke at me, "We want spoon food." And then he said, the kid said, "Goulash!" You know, for them this was rabbit food, salad, pasta, this wasn't their daily staple and the Italians were doing the best they could, and I would have eaten it all, (smiles) but anyway.

So that was a bit of an insight but and one can have sympathy or one can say, "Come on," given the reality of what's going on, "You should be ashamed of yourself!" But I didn't say, what the, what really got me more than anything, all of these were interesting experiences. But what grabbed me by far and what, what haunts me to this day, was having been at Vërmica crossing, Morina on the Albanian side, but meters from, from the border, and seeing these masses of people come across.

Now, that morning and this was, must have been around the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May or the 1<sup>st</sup>, the 30<sup>th</sup> of April somewhere in that area, '99. I had gone out first thing in the morning and the place was empty, there was one Albanian officer leaning on the border rail sort of looking into Kosovo and it was no traffic in either direction of course, and I was there with a driver and an interpreter and I said, "So, where is everyone?" He said, "You see that smoke up there" {shows with his hand} I said, "Yeah." He said, "That was a Serbian military emplacement until two hours ago, but a couple of American fighters took it out." I said, "So, your people are now, I assume, out of sight?" He said "Yeah, they're all downstairs in the bunker." And I said, "We shouldn't be here either under those circumstances. "No really shouldn't be here," because it could be retaliatory fire at any point. And so we went back to Kukës after he told us, "Look, they don't, the Serbs don't let anyone out until after 10:00 in the morning, come back around 11:00 or so, you'll see the scenes." And sure enough it was right out of the BBC, Sky or, or CNN. A line of cars back towards Prizren, sneaking to, up to the border and... the people in the cars, and the

cars were packed with people, the maximum number that could squeeze in, plus belongings and these people were completely traumatized, it was obvious at first sight. There was an older woman from the Swiss Red Cross in uniform, who reached into each car and stroked the arms of each person in the car and assured them in Albanian that they were safe, that they were no longer in Serbia, Yugoslavia, they were in Albania, they were safe.

There were some people, they came over on foot, who had no car, who had been allowed to take a bus as far as Prizren or maybe a little farther and then they came off on foot, mostly women. They were also traumatized, they had seen piles of bodies, dead people, outside, on the side of the road, where the Serb police had taken people, soldiers, paramilitary had taken people out of cars, off buses, young men and simply shot them. I, and they, these people then came across and some somehow started, somehow expected that their relatives who had already left would be there waiting there for them. They were disoriented, I remember them, just, some women just putting their bags down the middle of the field and looking around and really not knowing where to go, what was next, there was no reception center, anything up there. Others came across on tractors, one told me that he had thought he could sit it out with the family in Gjakova but that morning, 3:00 in the morning, Serb forces showed up in the house next door, took the neighbor out into the garden, shot him and he said, "That's it, I couldn't take it any longer," packed bags, packed their bags, got in the car and left within minutes .

**Anna Di Lellio:** Why, this is more, you know, remains more in your memory than... you said you talked to a lot of refugees...

**Jolyon Naegele:** Okay, no, no because these people were still in a state of complete trauma. By the time you interview someone weeks after they have left, they have calmed down, they have put things into perspective, they're more relaxed. When you speak to someone who just hours earlier saw someone being killed on the basis of their ethnicity, age or gender, and they just recount this to you as the first person they're telling this story to, obviously that grabs you very differently. uhm. So yeah, it's... it's... it was haunting let's say ...it's not something one I'll ever forget. It was, it was an insight into, into the trauma that they were going through. And when I have told this story to Kosovars, it touches a nerve with them as well, that I understand, that I know, I have an insight into what many of them did experience with the, what they went through.

**Anna Di Lellio :** When did you go to Kosovo, after the war?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Into the summer, August, and things were relatively settled. A lot of businesses that had been burnt out during the conflict were already opened for business, they were, others were on the verge of reopening, painting, new glass, new plate, new windows, etcetera. You couldn't go up to Gërmea, that was off-limits. British tanks and and British personnel were parked near where the American University is, and you couldn't drive any further. The road between Peja and Prizren was, in terrible shape, clearly rotten by, by a combination of airstrikes and heavy tank traffic in really, really bad shape. Serbs from, from Rahovac, Rahovec, were blockading the road from Malishevë to Gjakova, which I guess was the shortest, we thought, the shortest way to get there in those days. Uhm,

Malishevë was completely devastated, Viti it was yuo know completely burnt out, Klina was completely burnt out.

**Anna Di Lellio:** Where did you stay?

**Jolyon Naegele:** I stayed where everyone else stayed, at the Hotel Grand, where I had stayed in the late 1980s, and which had just rehired all of his former staff in the '80s, who've been let go in '89, '90 and so there were familiar faces there, I did not stay at the hotel Dukagjin, previously the hotel Metohija, because, at that point it was the headquarters of Italian KFOR contingent. But I did go there for a visit, spoke to a number of officers.

I interviewed, the most interesting interviews then were in Peja, I interviewed a family. The, the father had been or was the director of a school for the blind, and then when the NATO bombing began, if I'm not mistaken, it was during, either during Ramadan, around Bajram or something, I don't remember the exact story, but basically a lot of families weren't able to come and fetch their kids. They had gone away and he was stuck with a lot of kids with several dozen children that he had to feed for the duration of the bombing, which meant going out every day and essentially foraging in Peja to get food for the kids. And then in the evening this Serb police, paramilitary, would park their vehicles on the grounds of the school, knowing that it was a safe haven, assuming that it was a safe haven, that it wouldn't be bombed. He gave me an incredible interview. He was a fascinating person, I don't know if he's still alive, but worth tracking down. His daughter and her husband and child I think, had walked on the first march to Montenegro and then spent the conflict in, the duration of the bombing, in, in Ulcinj. But, and she told me, we sat in their flat, modern high-rise building on the outskirts of Peja and she said, "For me this is a miracle, that we can sit here today. In August '99, when I left here I had no idea whether I would ever see Kosovo again, whether we'd ever in my lifetime be able to come back." And she was younger than me by a good bit.

**Anna Di Lellio:** That was a difficult summer and already Serbs were being either expelled or you know, most the time they actually left because the situation was so tense. Did you also do stories about...

**Jolyon Naegele:** Yes...

**Anna Di Lellio:** Serbs leaving?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Most of the Serbs had left. What I did do I went around and saw villages that were on fire, that were being systematically house by house burnt down. And I interviewed Serbs, where they sent their women and children out and they were there basically to protect their properties. And this was near Istog. I first went to the KFOR, Spanish KFOR camp, interviewed officials there and then I went to some of these villages. And the fire engines were kept, would come out and they put out the fire, but, and there were slow, small, slow smoldering fires, but it was it was a systematic operation by remnants of the UÇK<sup>3</sup> or others to simply get rid get rid of them. And so I yes, I covered, I covered that

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<sup>3</sup> *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës* - Kosovo Liberation Army, was the Albanian guerrilla that sought the separation of Kosovo from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

aspect there in particular. And this was still going on when I when I moved to Kosovo in 2003. I remember sitting in the café in, in Prizren and seeing that the *nën Kalaja, posht Kalaja* [under the castle] was, yet another house was in flames, and people would just sort of look up at it, two or three houses maybe, people would just sort of look up at it and then go back to having their drink...(sighs) that, it was also disturbing. Uhm yeah, and I interviewed father Sava... on one or two occasions, and and, and so yeah, it wasn't totally Albanocentric, what I was, what I was reporting .

**Anna Di Lellio:** You said you come you came in 2003, there's a big shift...

**Jolyon Naegele:** I moved here yeah...

**Anna Di Lellio:** There was a shift, I mean, you were interested in international affairs, interested in Europe, you worked as a journalist, it seems to be a nice fit to be a journalist with what you were doing, and then in 2003 there's a change in your...

**Jolyon Naegele:** Right, yeah...

**Anna Di Lellio:** How did you, how did you decide to, and who, how were you hired by...

**Jolyon Naegele:** Okay, I had been curious about, interested in working in the UN ever since I was in grade school. When we were in the third grade we were taken to the UN to see the flags outside, shown around, for me it was something rather natural. Except when I then started looking at it after graduate school, I didn't have any, any experience, all I had was, was an education and the languages that I had were clearly the languages that they needed and so it was put on hold. In the 1990s the UN did less than a stellar job in Bosnia and Croatia and I saw as a reporter how much they were despised and how, how weak they were in carrying out their mandate, one could say how weak their mandate was. And here, initially no, I mean I didn't even have any sort of strong feeling that yeah, this is something I should do, work for UNMIK. I was rather shocked by the number of the UN vehicles in the streets particularly at rush hour, basically the UN was financing people's commuting within Prishtina...

**Anna Di Lellio:** So let me stop you just a second...

**Jolyon Naegele:** Yeah, the '99...

**Anna Di Lellio:** So you had an idealistic view of the UN, I mean, you wanted, but the reality....

**Jolyon Naegele:** I was not naive, I had studied it as a graduate student at SAIS international relations and had discussed the UN with professors in various seminars, and I had concluded already in 1978 or so, that the solution at the UN was to burn down the Secretariat and start from scratch. I actually said that in the class. This wasn't something new to me I was fairly well read on the topic as an outsider.

**Anna Di Lellio:** What was the positive attraction? Okay, we understand that you understood the reality and the shortcomings of the UN, but what was the attraction...

**Jolyon Naegele:** The positive attraction was as follows. In Kosovo, this was the first time the United Nations was actually administering a territory on a temporary basis, it was the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo. The name has never been officially changed and the idea was, the understanding was, if you read 1244 very carefully, that this was a holding operation until such time as the international community could agree on the way forward, that it would be unseemly to give Kosovo independence on a silver platter in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. This was not a war of independence, despite what some may describe it. It was a miscalculation, one could argue it was a miscalculation by, by Clinton and by others, Blair notably. What were they really thinking? And where was this going to go? Were they compensating for not having been tough enough on Milošević at Dayton and force Kosovo onto the, onto the negotiating table at Dayton in, in '95? Well, had they done that successfully. Who knows, we might be sitting in Serbia now rather than in Kosovo.

Yeah, so I knew something about Kosovo. I was fascinated by it, the fact was, the UN was running the place. Now I don't know, I didn't know the first thing about civil administration, but while I was here on a reporting visit in 2002, at a time when the SRS was Michael Steiner, whom I had known previously and whom I had intended to interview and I was looking up, looking for a contact number and then on the UNMIK site I notice they had a jobs page, and there was a an opening for a political analyst in Peja. I said, this is tailor-made for me, to move to Peja, I have already taken two courses in Albanian, I can more or less make myself understood in Serbian, and I had done Albanian summer school in Tirana and Prishtina the previous two years. So, this looks tailor-made, why don't I do it?

So, I got an interview with Steiner (smiles), and I told him about that. He said, "Show me the, the job offering." I showed it to him, he said, "Why would you want to be in Peja?" I said, "Well, Prishtina is an English language bubble now, I mean, why would I want to be here? I'm curious about the culture, about... I want, I want see how this place develops, but if I'm going to be in an English-speaking environment I'm going to be rather isolated from reality." He said, "Well, you're no good to me in Peja. If you want to work as my adviser at the Office of Political Affairs, not my adviser, but you, you want to work with, in the Office of Political Affairs, then it's going to be Prishtina, so make up your mind." So I said, "Okay, okay, I'll take Prishtina." So it was a compromise. Had I insisted on going to, to Peja I might have gotten the job but I would have been out of the job after a year and I would have probably gone back to Radio Free Europe, whatever. What I found fascinating and why I stayed was, not only because I like Kosovo, I like hiking in the mountains, I like the location, I like everything except what Obiliq produces in the way of bad air. I was finally on the inside, looking out in terms of decision making, I was no longer the speculating journalist being kept behind, outside, on the other side of the closed doors, wondering what the decisions were being made and why wasn't being told the whole story.

Now I was on the inside where decisions were being made, and I was seeing for the first time in my life how they were being made and I was participating in that process. And that was something that, that,

that attracted me, hooked me and there was no walking away from it after a year or two. Because I was valued for my knowledge of the area, of the society, for the lack of any startup time I came here, I could meet and start reporting, working, writing from day one, I had contacts and I could build on those contacts immediately. Politically like, like Bosnia.... and to a less extent Serbia and Croatia, it was dynamic, there were changes. If you were away for two weeks you almost had to start from scratch to catch up, and there was an assumption, in retrospective, a naïve assumption, by the Americans, among Americans, Germans and French, Italians, that yeah, by 2006, 7 at the latest, Kosovo would be independent and UNMIK would be shut down. And then, who knows, there'd be some other mission to go to.

And when already in 2005 I got my first request to go to another mission, to Sudan, while I was on holiday in Norway, my boss said, "Just tell them we need you here and say, 'thanks but no, thanks.'" They came back from Sudan at least once, Darfur, and I was always told just, "We need you here." And then, subsequently I thought I was going to Afghanistan, and this went all the way up to the Under-Secretary General of Peacekeeping, "No, no, stay where you are, when the time comes we'll look after you." And then, and I retired after 14 years, there were many other missions I would have been interested in working in, and I applied, repeatedly. However, the system within the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Affairs and Department of Field Service Personnel is dysfunctional when it comes to mobility. They're introducing a new system now it's... I question where it's going to be any more functional than it was, than anything that existed in the past, but essentially you don't get any job unless you know someone. I never got a job anywhere without knowing someone and that includes UNMIK, and that's unfortunately the way things work in the UN and not only in the UN.

### Part Three

*[This question was cut from the video-interview]*

**Anna Di Lellio:** What was the most difficult time for you in these 14 years? You, you started in 2003?

**Jolyon Naegele:** So, in March 2004 that was the most unpleasant time, that was two and a half days, because there was shooting in the streets, there was ransacking of the, the flats of the UNMIK staff, people were getting killed. The March riots in 2004 were disturbing, deeply disturbing hmm.... from UNMIK's perspective, everything they had been working for, for years, standards before status, getting people to understand what had to be done in order for Kosovo to impress the international community sufficiently to say, "Yes, okay, let's move on... and resolve Kosovo's status," all that was just flushed down the drain with a series of incidents... the manipulation of public opinion through, through RTK, but also the print media. And, and, and the, the failure of KFOR, due to the different national... what do they call them? Not paradigms. Anyway the, the, the contingents said their own set of rules for engagement and some contingents performed extremely well and some contingents proved wholly inadequate, a lot of people got hurt and some people died.

We tend to forget just how many people were killed and under what circumstances. We also tend to forget what led up to it, didn't just happened out of nowhere, and I don't mean the incidents in the immediate 48 hours beforehand, but the general public mood, for which UNMIK was also, also partially to blame, but even more so... the Contact Group for not being open on already having the issue of Kosovo's future status on the table since September 2003. But it never leaked out, because the SRSG at that time, when these talks were held in New York, and who attended the first half of the talks which was on dialogue stood up, when the second item on the agenda, Kosovo's future status, came up, said, "That's not part of my mandate." Incorrectly, in my view, he should have reread 1244 but he, I assume he was told by people at DPKO, "You don't attend that part of the meeting." That was unwise. So that was left up to the Contacts Group, they didn't leak and people had the impression that nothing was happening, nothing was moving forward. Not too much was spontaneous, I suspect, in March. There are still many unanswered questions. Who was behind the killing of the fifteen year old Serbian boy in Çagllavica in a drive-by shooting? That was, that then touched off the roadblocks by the Serbs on the main road between Prishtina and Ferizaj and also in the main road through Graçanica on to, to Gjilan.

That evening of the next day, the next day I think was, when the river drownings near Çabra in the Ibar of... the children. What really happened there? Who lead the crowd across the bridge to North Mitrovica into a hail of gunfire? There was a lot of madness, and there was a lot of calculation. If you look at where... the, the largest number of... clashes, serious clashes, and, and burnings of homes occurred... the specific parts of neighborhoods in Çagllavica and Fushë Kosovë, Kosovo Polje, Serb neighborhoods, there were Serb neighborhoods then, and then within a year or two were bought up by Albanian speculators, including politicians, for development. Transforming these neighborhoods either into as in Fushë Kosove, Kosovo Polje high-rise apartment buildings and commercial properties or suburban developments and commercial stores in Çagllavica. That, that paints a rather nasty picture. That this, this was not spontaneous, that this was about, in the end, speculation, kicking out the Serbs to create a situation more amenable to buying a property and making, making a fast buck as it were. Some of, some of these properties were then built over for highways but in the meantime there were politicians and others who had bought up land and then were able to sell at a significant profit, a big bought-out by the state when the highway was built to Skopje. So, so, that, that aspect, I mean, the fear aspect, of course, you're walking out the street and there's shooting and you can't get home because it's too dangerous and you have to find a substit... substitute place on the way to spend the night, that's no fun, that's no joke. But that's minor comparing to people losing their lives and their homes for the speculative interests of certain people, certain individuals.

**Anna Di Lellio:** Yeah, more Albanian died in 2004 than Serbs?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Yes, yes, but look, the total number was 21 people killed, two of them, two of whom died several days afterwards. That was an elderly Serbian couple who were burned severely in their homes, and then died in the hospital subsequently. That raises another question to which I can come to. Yes, more Albanians died, but, why? Under what circumstances? They were led across the bridge into a hail of gunfire. Who led them in North Mitro, from South Mitrovica to North Mitrovica? Who

wants that? Why wasn't, why weren't those people ever brought to justice? No one raises those questions, that's, that's, that's my problem. Yes, they died but what were they thinking crossing over to the North? Did they assume that the bridge watchers who have been causing so many trouble since 1999 were simply gonna stand by and allow to walk them into it?

Sorry, and the, the guy in Novosella who was shot by an American police woman who saw him at, advancing on Novosella with his pistol out, and she said, "Put that gun down!" presumably in English, presumably he didn't understand, but she was in uniform and he ignored her and she shot him. Well, she was an American police woman. I mean, yes, more Albanians died. Serbs who died, I don't know how many of them died with a gun in their hands, I don't know. The total number of deaths then 21, the total number of church properties thirty or so, 31, it's all very, very serious. The total number of people injured is far more, the total number, we never talk about the Kosovo's police officers, the UNMIK police officers and the the KFOR soldiers who were injured, and those numbers combined are close to 200. And when you raise that with Kosovo's academics or politicians they make it like, "Oh, I've never heard of this before." It's been published, it's on the internet, it's in the UNMIK's report at the Security Council from the, the end of April, I believe 2004 on, on the violence. It's all there, but we only focus on, more Albanians died than Serbs. That's really boiling it down to, that's not the point. The point is 21 people died pointlessly. How many millions have been made as, what sort of profits have come out of, of this, incident? These two and a half day of senseless violence?

**Anna Di Lellio:** Yeah but, you, you are raising the bridge, there's never been any, really law and order forces in, in North Mitrovica. There are about 1600 Albanians who had to flee, this is before your time, in 2000, when there were pogroms against Albanians. There has never been any success, that must have been, it's frustrating I guess for everybody that there is this division there and, and the North is completely ethnically cleansed from, from the war, almost ethnically cleansed, there must have been, and, and it's frustrating for UNMIK. How did you, how did you handle the North?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Well, there is an office in the North and there are offices in all the municipalities, in, in Leposaviç, Zubin Potok, and in Zveçan as well as in North Mitrovica. And they were... UNMIK was vilified by the Serbs in the North until Kosovo declared independence, at which point they made 180 degree turn and wrapped themselves up in the UN flag, hoisted the UN flag next to the Serbian flag. And then we became their great protectors, in their view. But until then, there was no love lost between us. It was as bad as the relationship subsequently was with EULEX.

**Anna Di Lellio:** We are talking about your most difficult moments. Which was your most difficult moment, or...

**Jolyon Naegele:** Oh, many.

**Anna Di Lellio:** ...or the most frustrating activity for you as, as a UN official in these 14 years?

**Jolyon Naegele:** I would say that since 2011-12 at the latest, this, the mission's raison d'être ceases to exist. 1244 has been fulfilled. Serbia is preferably capable of sitting down at the table with, with Kosovo without a UN representative present. All the items laid out in 1244 of what UNMIK tasks are

have been fulfilled. What are we doing here? Why do we hear such a contradictory set of stories at every Security Council sessions, with the Russians and the Serbs, and sometimes other states that they have persuaded to speak up, describing a situation here that bears little relationship with reality? That's frustrating, that the fact that because Resolution 1244 is open-ended UNMIK may be here for decades to come, because there's no exit strategy, there was a false assumption, but they didn't... they were so worried, the Americans were so worried in '99 that if they, that if they allowed the Council to renew on an annual basis, at some point Milošević would persuade the Russian to someone else and it would be all over and so we're here to stay, or they are, I am not.

**Anna Di Lellio:** What is the funniest, the funniest thing, the funniest moment or the funniest thing that you have done, in your experience? There must have been some...

**Jolyon Naegele:** That is one question I didn't expect, fun, funniest?

**Anna Di Lellio:** Surreal...

**Jolyon Naegele:** Yeah, surreal, surreal was Ban Ki-Moon's visit. That was surreal. We saw just yesterday I believe, how the news media covered Donald Trump flying directly from Saudi Arabia to Israel. Well it's not too different when it comes to Ban Ki-Moon flying directly from Belgrade to Prishtina. But for reasons of weather, and there were no storms, his plane was routed via Skopje. He then had a whirlwind trip for a few hours and our protocol person had made sure everything was correct and in line with status neutrality for his meeting with president Jahjaga at, at Prishtina Airport. Immediately before his departure, and they sealed the room so that no one could meddle with it, and so then Ban Ki-Moon was brought into the room and in the meantime someone had meddled with it, and he stood in front of a portrait of Jashari, Adem Jashari on one side, and a reproduction of the Declaration of Independence on the other side, and had its photograph taken, unaware of what was going on behind him and the protocol guy nowhere, nowhere in sight apparently.

And, and all I could say was, "All the king's horses and all the king's men." I mean, this was the case of Humpty Dumpty. No matter how much you prepare and try to make sure that things are gonna be the way, present it as you want to, obviously you are not on your own turf and you are going to be outsmarted. My comment about all the king's men on Facebook provoked a (sighs), an overheated response by one politician who shan't be named, remains nameless, but it was no longer a Facebook friend, who did not see, who saw neither the comedy nor the irony in this. Irony is a concept I am afraid to say that is not well understood by the overwhelming majority of people in this part of the world, regardless if of ethnicity of mother tongue and there was anger rather than amusement (laughs).

**Anna Di Lellio:** Uhm, actually you, I wanna ask you, you worked here for so long and you were making the distinction between being a journalist and being a UN official, what changed in your relationship with the locals, there are these two we categories, "internationals" and "locals" in Kosovo, and I guess in all other missions, did anything change and how was your, how would you characterize your relationship with the locals?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Well the first problem was, my relat...my relationship with the locals didn't change. I am who I am, those who knew me before accepted me for who I am. The bigger problem was with my UN colleagues who, for whom it took years and some never were able to see me as anything but a journalist who couldn't be trusted, who was going to spill the beans one way or another. And I remember being actually taken aside within the first week or two by my supervisor, one of my supervisors, a German diplomat and said, "You're not a journalist anymore, what you heard in that room I hope you're not gonna say..." Why would I do that? However, that said, information is a valuable commodity in a closed society or in, in an unusual society like this one, which is under international administration and if we, we UNMIK, were to, in those days, if we were gonna be fully in the picture of what was going on, yes, in addition to reading the newspapers very carefully in between the lines, in addition to maintaining contact with politicians and their advisers, I also maintained contacts with a few journalists, though I must say extremely few, because the vast majority...they didn't understand the basics of those days of confidentiality, and if you told them anything, your name appeared in print and everything was there, there was no way to ...on background, etcetera.

But those who worked for intern... local journalists who worked for international media, yeah they, if they had a question and they weren't gonna get a straight answer from the UNMIK Office of Public Information or whatever it was called, changed its name so many times, yeah, they could call me and I could tell them what I knew if there was something, and I could ask them questions because they had insights which I didn't have. Particularly in, in the, during the March violence where they had people all over and I didn't. We had people, but we weren't getting the kind of reporting we needed because the people who were in the field were working for the Department of Civil, what was it called in those days? Pillar Two, Civil Administration, and they were very closed with their information, it went straight to the SRSG, none of them came to the Office of Political Affairs, so I really didn't get any field reports, I didn't know what was going on for some time in the field. I only got that through journalists contact and I told them what I was seeing within the Mission and they, they didn't betray confidentiality or abuse the information, they worked in a perfectly responsible, mature manner.

**Anna Di Lellio:** Was there any instance in which you could say, "I have succeeded in doing something?" Because ok you said, "In general UNMIK fulfilled its mandate with you know, problems," You have expressed your...

**Jolyon Naegele:** You know, 14 years is a very long time and the last two years there hasn't been much opportunity. Because, what are we doing? What other responsibilities do we really have other than trying to portray ourselves as something that we no longer are? So, in recent years, no, beyond warning the UN in New York and in Prishtina that attempts to reassert ourselves in certain fields such as rule of law it's not gonna work, that it's misguided, it's serving particular, special interests, the careerism of certain individuals, it is going to get very strong blowback by the government. This isn't Mali, this isn't Haiti, and this is a state that doesn't wanna do anything that would in any way undermine its own sense of sovereignty. So, yeah, and I was basically shushed or ignored, but I was proven correct so that was, some sati.. satisfaction in that. I think I had much more day-to-day influence in the era of EU SRSGs than of Afghan SRSGs. Specific instances over the years, I mean it's all, I have to go back over my notes but yes, there were cases, there were a variety of things when I was

involved in dialogue, when I was involved in being on the Central Election Commission, whether I was involved in, in, in how to report issues to New York, what details to add to convey the, the full picture, what advice to give an SRSG in advance of meetings with officials here or in Belgrade or visiting officials from elsewhere, yes, certainly.

**Anna Di Lellio:** Obviously the UN thought that you were valuable here because you knew the place. Do you think that for a peacekeeper or someone involved in this kind of work, it is important to know the place well, or it might actually be beneficial to give a fresh, to give a fresh look?

**Jolyon Naegele:** It works both ways. No one, you can't expect everyone to know, know, you have to understand the context, otherwise you're doomed to make big mistakes. And to understand the context it means reading in, as you say in journalism, you really have to be up to date on everything that transpired in the past. You need to know the context, if you don't know the context, if you don't know why we're here and why we're still here and why we shouldn't be here then, you may be wasting your time and the time of a lot of others. You really have to understand where we've come from, what we're really trying to achieve here now and why we're still here.

**Anna Di Lellio:** So, it's not just a question of who you are, but how much you are prepared to face the situation? You are making comments about what you when you worked for different SRSG, I mean all of them, they've been all?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Seven, I worked for seven, but I didn't work for the first three.

**Anna Di Lellio:** Okay, so you work for seven SRSGs, so can you tell us something about the difference, I mean what worked or what didn't work in terms of how prepared, well prepared they were, where they were coming from to face the, this Mission which is kind of complicated?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Yeah, okay the, those nominated by the United States... all except the last two were, had multiple masters in their capitals, Brussels and New York. They were at times irritated but by what some perceived as micro management by New York, they were on the phone constantly with their capitals, whether was Rome or Berlin or Copenhagen or Helsinki, ehm, and with Brussels. And, that complicated matters, for them and for running the mission and for headquarters in understanding what was going on here, and getting uncomfortable with what, the material they were being fed. Kofi Annan, as Secretary General had appointed people...for, who he felt were suitable for different phases of the mission. He needed a humanitarian initially, then he needed someone with a, some sort of military background, the first it was... the first two were humanitarians, then the third Haekkerup had been Defense Minister in Denmark, then he had a National Security after 9/11 Michael Steiner, who had been German Chancellor's National Security Advisors.

Then, Ban Ki-Moon came on the scene and we had... Oh wait, and there was still Holkeri, because, the former Prime Minister, because Kofi Annan allegedly wanted a statesman on this post after, after Steiner. But then came Ban Ki-Moon, and we saw... Jessen-Petersen, who was someone from within the UN, but UNHCR, a humanitarian who thought with his heart, also when making political decisions, which was his undoing, followed by Joachim Rücker, who was a political technocrat, former mayor,

holding very senior posts in the German Foreign Ministry, who had been head of the EU reconstruction pillar so he had already had a couple of years, he did not come blindly here, just as Steiner as a deputy High Representative in Sarajevo so he also had experience in the region if not in Kosovo. Jessen-Petersen also been the head of UNHCR office in Skopje. Lamberto Zannier was an arm's negotiator, but also had run a... an OSCE office on minorities, I think... and was a diplomat. And that was then the end of the EU interest and insistence on, on, on, on having a finger on UNMIK, or in UNMIK ,because they figured, well, you know there is EULEX and this EUSR office, so we don't really need UNMIK anymore. Everyone made that same mistake, including the Russians when they pulled out their senior person and put him into Ahtisaari's office. They all miscalculated that UNMIK was just going to fizzle away.

So we've had two Afghan SRSs, the first, who had worked, Zarif, had worked for more than twenty years within the UN system when he started in UNMIK, so he knew the system inside and out, which has its benefits, but also potential pitfalls. And the current SRS, also an Afghan, who was his country's former Rep [representative] in New York for seven years and chaired the committee on reform of the Security Council, so he knows the UN structure as well, even if he didn't initially know how to work the system he, he does by now.

**Anna Di Lellio:** I wanna ask you, how well do you know Kosovo now after 14 years?

**Jolyon Naegele:** It's an enigma. This is... how well? How well, based on what? I can make myself understood, my Albanian is bad because I'm in an English speaking bubble here, enough people speak English or German or Serbian or whatever. I can get by. I have had good local staff, advisers, colleagues, who have kept me in the picture as to how things function here. When I was when I first came here I traveled around a lot more, the higher up you move in a system, the more distant others below you become and you're also told, "Look, the last thing you wanna is make friends within the, within the system." And they are, they can keep you at arm's distance. I found, you know I was inviting people to dinner all the time and no, and I like to cook and bake. But I wasn't getting invited anywhere and was it because I was too intimidating for what I could produce or too intimidating intellectually or just too intimidating period (smiles), by my rank, I don't know maybe all three, but so I felt somewhat isolated in that respect.

This is, as I put it in a speech that Holkeri delivered, back in 2003 or 4, early 2004, it is a backwater, it has been certainly in the Yugoslav era, and in the scale of things even in the region. This is a province, it's only independent for nine years and it never had any history of Independence it doesn't have and it's only starting to have an internationally trained political elite. But because the politicians who really hold power have limited international experience in terms of education and do everything to keep those who have that at a certain distance (smiles) or out of the picture entirely. And that is changing but it's, it's changing far too slowly. There is this town versus down or "*katunar*"<sup>4</sup> versus "*qytetar*"<sup>5</sup> aspect that still hasn't been overcome. I mean, one could be very snide and say, this is a republic of "*katunars*" but that's, that's not fair and that, that's, that's an oversimplification, but the

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<sup>4</sup> *Katunar*, literally a villager, a person who lives in a village.

<sup>5</sup> A resident of the city.

same would be true in Serbia and Bulgaria and Montenegro and Albania and Bosnia etcetera. It's the problem of region and it is a legacy of, it's an Ottoman legacy, it's a legacy of the socialist era, etcetera and growing out of that is something that takes generations, that's something that doesn't get resolved by UN missions, peacekeeping missions, putting things in shape in a couple of years.

**Anna Di Lellio:** But I have one question from a story you told me, for what I know about you is that you also know Kosovo so well, you have practically walked everywhere.

**Jolyon Naegele:** No, there are, there are corners of Kosovo I still haven't hiked or even driven through, there're not a lot, but I mean, there are places, you know. I've never, never taken the back roads from Lukar to, to, to Kamenica. Maybe I have, some of them, but basically back in eastern Kosovo towards the Serbian border, that *terra incognita* for me in part because it's so sparsely populated and the roads until recently were really bad and I never had a reason to be there.

**Anna Di Lellio:** But you've done everything else?

**Jolyon Naegele:** (sighs) There are plenty of corners that I would have liked to have hiked that I haven't gotten into mountains I would have liked, I've been looking at for a long time would have liked to go up that I never gone never gone up, trouble spots that I avoided so it's not to get find myself in trouble all along the Macedonian border, east of Hani I Elezit, you know on this side of Tanushevcı and the same goes for certain parts of Macedonia behind Tetovo up in the hills and those places I know where to go if I want to have a nice day out hiking. I know where the most beautiful spots in Kosovo and there're still a few I haven't been able to get into, because to get up to some of these you really need to plan unless you're going to bring along a tent, because roads will not get you there, you know, you have to get, get yourself there on your own two feet, you probably can't do the whole thing there and back in one day, and I'm not a camper at this age, so...

**Anna Di Lellio:** If you don't mind something more personal, you are mentioning a wife, you have a wife?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Yeah, my wife, all right, well (smiles) I, I got married in 1991 to a Czech architect and we had one daughter, and we separated in 2002, the year before I came here. And when I noted that, mentioned that to my boss after, shortly after arriving he said, "Yeah, a lot of people are in the same situation you are." And what I, years later heard, was that UNMIK really stands for Unmarried in Kosovo. So yeah, I was essentially single here for years, and that also gave me a certain insight and I still get insights into, into the lives of Kosovars, Kosovo women. And, being a foreigner is not necessarily a plus. I mean, I've heard many women say, "Oh, never marry a Kosovo man," Kosovo women saying this, but I also hear, heard from one person, okay she was from, an Albanian from Southern Serbia, who said, "It would make my parents very sad." I said, "What? I haven't proposed anything beyond you spending the night." And she said, "Well, I mean, they would immediately assume that we would leave and who would look after the farm, the, the house, this, that." I said, "Well, I never raised the issue," I mean (laughs) "I simply asked you, you want to spend the night." Yeah, because her sister would find out and tell the parents and I, you know, this is a very closed

society, with very tight family bonds and if anyone had, God forbid, found out that you were having something with an American the assumption is, it's marriage and you move to America.

Well, I have lived out of America 36 years, so that's, that's one little episode but I can say I go to Pilates three to five evenings a week and sometime other than the instructor I'm the only man in the room, and the women range in age from mid 20s to late 60s. They generally, the Albanian, the Kosovo Albanian women, who make up 95% of the women, occasionally there's some international, but the Albanian women, they either look straight through me, as if I don't exist, regardless whether I have a ring on or not. There is... no attempt, unless they have lived for a long time abroad, particularly in the United States, then they'll talk. I don't think it's a language problem, I don't think it's shyness, it's just, they don't wanna go there, I don't know. It is just... they're not wearing veils, they're wearing three T-shirt's so that (laughs) this is, you don't have a clue, it, it's, it's, it's strange experience. And yes, any West, Western, I mean, West European or East European or, or, or North American, Latin American, who goes into that environment, a female has no problem to, starting a conversation or having a conversation with me saying, "Hello," "Goodbye." There's nothing, there's no greeting, they see me coming up the street and they're coming from the opposite direction, we're headed to the same door, there's no recognition acknowledgement anything. And these, these are generally intelligent women, I mean they, they, you know from the, from these chattering classes, from the ruling classes, they don't communicate, there's no eye contact there is nothing. I find it, I don't find it insulting, I mean, it's their problem, not mine. But I find it in this day and age, odd, but okay, you know, we are not in America. I don't think that I'm that old, I've only been doing Pilates for four years but it's strange. I mean, I can count the number of Albanian women with whom I've said anything more than, "Hello" there on the fing.. on maybe two finger... maybe one finger in four years.

**Anna Di Lellio:** But it's okay, because now you're married.

**Jolyon Naegele:** Yes, I've been saved, as we were, by an old friend whom I knew from before I started coming to Kosovo, also Czech, an ethnologist focused on the indigenous people of Siberia, Central Siberia, but who works as a, an editor in chief of a magazine on healthy alternative living, and has been here with me for the last nearly two years editing, thanks to the intermittent services of the, of IPKO, people can function from here. So my life has changed a little, and I don't get out to hike as much as I, I used to. I am in better shape than I used to be thanks to the Pilates but she's here with her two kids from her first marriage and so, kids of a certain age are not very good to hop in the car and spend the day, I was as a child, but they're not anyway. So we don't do quite as much traveling as, as I would like, but they're happy with the international school that the kids are attending here, and I doubt they'll get as good as education back in Prague, when we return.

**Anna Di Lellio:** And they're making friends, right?

**Jolyon Naegele:** They're making friends, yeah.

**Anna Di Lellio:** Just one last question, are you leaving now to go back to the Czech Republic, Prague, do you leave friends here?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Of course, of course. People I've worked with for 14 years who I trust, who I like, who I respect..ehm.. others who I haven't worked with, but who I came to know since I moved here.. ehm, who I'll miss of course, and who I'll stay in touch with thanks to Facebook, you know. So they'll know where I am, I'll know where they are and If I ever am back in these parts, I'm sure we'll see each other again. I'm not leaving Kosovo with hard feelings, I'm not, I didn't leave the UN three weeks ago with hard feelings. I reached the mandatory retirement age for people hired before 2014 of 62, I'm out. I knew that when I got hired, I never thought I'd stay this long. All good things have to come to an end. I don't know how many more Prishtina winters or Obiliq winters I could survive if I were to stay if I was offered to stay on till I was 65, I probably wouldn't take it, because the winter, the air quality here is going from bad to worse, between November and February.

**Anna Di Lellio:** Anything else you want to add that I didn't ask or you think it will be good to say?

**Jolyon Naegele:** Nothing, nothing that hits me, I'm sure as soon as I walk out of the door there will be twenty things that will occur to you and to me but... Look, this is a society that is, has been victimized through the centuries, over the last century, and continues to be, and, free elections, parties etcetera, there's still no... party politics anywhere are problematical and Kosovo is no exception. I'm often asked, whether I'm here or in other country, "Who would you vote for, what party would you vote for?" And I, my answer is always, "I'm so glad I'm not in that position that I have to make that decision." I've been asked here by people in the NGO sector who wanted to enter politics, what I thought about their founding their own party, and I, and this has been going on since I started here, and my advice was, "Find a party that's at least close to what you think that you can work within to change things. Founding your own party is the fastest way to bankruptcy, you don't. Unless you have the kind of money Pacolli has, you can't afford to do that, so, think again." And that was my advice to Enver Hoxhaj and to my surprise he chose PDK.<sup>6</sup> That's been my advice to various other people who ended up jumping on the *Vetëvendosje*<sup>7</sup> bandwagon., If they can change it from within good luck, we haven't even discussed *Vetëvendosje*, so (laughs)

**Anna Di Lellio:** Should we?

**Jolyon Naegele:** No (laughs), they, I think the less I say about them, I'm not going to say anything that a hundred other people haven't really said before, I suspect.

**Anna Di Lellio:** Thank you, thank you very much for your time.

**Jolyon Naegele:** My pleasure.

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<sup>6</sup> *Partia Demokratike e Kosovës* - Democratic Party of Kosovo.

<sup>7</sup> *Vetëvendosje* - self-determination, is a radical nationalist political party that opposes foreign involvement in the country's internal affairs, and campaigns for the sovereignty exercised by the people instead, as part of the right of self-determination.