

INTERVIEW WITH MILICA ANDRIĆ

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Duration: 16 minutes

Present:

1. Milica Andrić: (Speaker)
2. Lyra Limani (Interviewer)
3. Ermal Gashi (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.

Milica Andrić: I'm Milica Andrić, I was born in Pristina but raised in Zubin Potok, so I basically lived my whole life there until I started my undergraduate studies in English language and literature here in North Mitrovica, and after graduation I found a job in a NGO and basically since that time I live in North Mitrovica.

Lura Limani: And, where were you living in 2007, leading up to... in the summer of 2007, were you in Mitrovica then?

Milica Andrić: No, no, no, I was in Zubin Potok, that was my second year of high school. So basically at that point I didn't really travel much, except around Serbia with my folklore dancing group, so basically all that I knew was Zubin Potok, especially in Kosovo, the farthest that I've gone to in Kosovo, except the part where I was born in Pristina, but I don't really remember it, was North Mitrovica, so I didn't know much of Kosovo at that point except for our four [Serbian] municipalities.

Lura Limani: And, do you remember anything leading up to independence? Do you remember whether it was reported in the media or whether anyone in your circle talked about the fact that Kosovo would declare independence soon?

Milica Andrić: So, again, given that I was in the second year of high school, I really wasn't that much interested in politics, and we in Zubin Potok were especially isolated. I kind of knew that Albanians as a community existed, but I never knew one. So, to me it was like... it was happening elsewhere, so I didn't really know what the independence or declaration, the act itself of the declaration of independence meant at the time that it happened.

And I actually don't remember absolutely anything about the day when the declaration happened because it just wasn't something that interested me. However, the day after the declaration, I do remember this part where one of the teachers in school told us that this was not the first time Kosovo declared independence. So that was the only, the first contact that I had with... of getting a piece of information of what this act might mean.

After that I did ask my mother what does this entail, what is this, and she also kind of dismissed it, she said, "OK, it's nothing to be concerned about," and actually at that time she was right because it didn't really affect our lives, because after the declaration we saw UNMIK institutions lose their competences, and instead it was Serbian institutions that grew stronger, so really in the northern part

of Kosovo, it didn't have much of legal consequences, I would say, at the moment when the declaration was... of independence was... actually when independence was declared.

[We felt] The first, let's say, consequence, legal true consequences of this act in April 2013 and then November 2013, when we had the first local elections, and since then I would kind of say that we had this very postponed reaction to what the declaration of independence was back in 2007.

Lura Limani: You said something very interesting, you said that you didn't... there was no legal consequence until you voted. Was that the first time you also voted, were you here in Mitrovica or... what do you remember?

Milica Andrić: Actually I haven't voted in Kosovo elections yet, because I never felt that I have a good choice in the elections, so I still haven't [yet] used that right in the Kosovo system. I did vote for the Serbian presidential elections, I think twice, yes, and maybe one parliamentary election in Serbia, but not Kosovo elections yet.

Lura Limani: Do you remember anything specific, why do you think it was so monumental, the stories that other people might have said, was it then when it kind of hit home that this part of the country had declared independence?

Milica Andrić: Actually it was not in 2013, it was way before that, of course. When I started getting interested in politics in general or starting to get to volunteer in civil society, so it was maybe 2010, 2011 when I finally understood that there is this status dispute and I actually started concerning myself with it, because in 2011 actually, we first had... we had the first post- declaration of independence talks between Belgrade and Pristina, and this is when it started getting serious.

We had the agreement on IBM [Integrated Border Management], which given that it was not implemented immediately we had the issue with ROSU special forces in Zubin Potok actually, the subsequent death of Enver Zymberi, the barricades for two and a half years followed this incident, so that is when it really started becoming a reality in our municipalities here.

Lura Limani: And do you think also for you personally, was it just part of a political awareness that you kind of came to deal with it and can you explain a bit more maybe through a personal story or anecdote?

Milica Andrić: Yeah, I would say on a personal level because the things that happened in 2011, it was kind of collective so we... but on the personal level the first time that I met an Albanian was in 2014, summer of 2014, and they were my colleagues, I worked very shortly for USAID program at that point as an interpreter, and they helped me get my documents, I had to go to Pristina to get my birth certificate, to Ulpiana I think, so that was the first time that I met an Albanian, that was the first time that I actually went to Pristina, so it was... on a personal level 2014 was the year of understanding Kosovo reality for me.

Lura Limani: And how did it feel?

Milica Andrić: It was very weird...

Lura Limani: ...when you went to Pristina?

Milica Andrić: It was very weird and I was so focused on not having administrative problems that I didn't really concentrate on where I was, and also I felt extremely comfortable with my colleagues, so it's... it wasn't... I didn't feel apprehension or fear, so it's... but it was very weird. I remember him saying, because I was speaking to him in English, and he said, "*Pričaj srpski da te ceo svet razume*" [Speak Serbian so the whole world understands you] I, and I was like, "OK. No problem." But it was weird.

Lura Limani: And, so we are nearing... towards the tenth anniversary and do you have any... I'm not really sure what to call them, but are you worried or what do you think is going to mark this anniversary, especially after the events in the last couple of weeks?

Milica Andrić: Yeah, I think it's going to be a very troublesome anniversary, especially if the Special Court starts coming up with indictments. The assassination of Oliver Ivanović that we had not two weeks ago, it was a shocking thing, it was a huge thing, but it really, honestly did not, in spite of what politicians are saying, it did not really affect interethnic relations, especially not in Mitrovica, not at the community level. So in that [sense] term, even though this was a huge event, I don't think that it would make any significant change in how communities... interact. However, the Special Court might bring resentment, I mean it really depends on how both communities react to the results of this court and how the court itself handles these cases. So I think that it's going to be a very troublesome anniversary, but I'm guessing we'll find a way through it. I don't expect anything too traumatic to happen. I hope, actually. So I'm not afraid but I am on guard.

Lura Limani: I really wanted to talk a bit more about [independence day]... because this is very interesting to me, the fact that there's no actual recollection of the event. How about the people around, do they... have you asked them, especially if you've... you had to encounter it as an event later on. How does that conversation go?

Milica Andrić: Yeah, when you contacted me about this interview, because then I realized that I don't have any, absolutely any memory of the day itself, so I did ask people around me, they were a bit older, but they all had recollection of the day, and vivid recollection of the day. So they kind of knew but also, the majority of my friends were students of political science at that point, so for them it was a major thing, and it happened and two of them were in Belgrade and one of them was here in Kosovo, so the first thing that they do remember is the massive protest in Belgrade, which is to this day called, "Kosovo for Sneakers," because some of the protesters were destroying the sports equipment stores and stealing sneakers. I think that there was even the burning of some embassies if I remember correctly, so basically everybody remembers at least something of that day, and they do remember the protests that came afterwards. I also do remember protests here in Mitrovica, we organized them at 12:44, and I did go to one or two of them, because there was this option if you were in these older [last] years of high school, they would inform a day in advance to ask your parents, to get permission so you can go to a protest or you can go back... home. And then you would have to go to classes on weekends to make up for the lost classes. So yeah, I went to, I think maybe two protests, and that's basically all that I remember from that time.

Lura Limani: What did you do at the protest? Did you have uniforms, your school?

Milica Andrić: No, no, no, we don't use them, we don't have them. No, I mean, politicians said things, we were in the audience, that was basically it. Maybe with... I think that it happened once or twice that we would go have coffee, but then they started closing down the coffeeshops so people wouldn't freely disperse, especially students, so even that was not an option. So if you went to the protest you would have to be in the crowd and listen to politicians say things.

Lura Limani: You couldn't skip school and not go to the protests...

Milica Andrić: Yeah, but you have to go there on the weekends so it was not really a bargain, so that's why we didn't freely go to many of those.

Lura Limani: And how about your family, do they remember it? Your parents...

Milica Andrić: I haven't asked them, unfortunately. But I'm guessing that they do. I'm actually sure that they do. I think that my mother told me it's nothing to worry about because she didn't really feel that this was something great that was happening, but she wanted to make sure that at least I don't worry about it. So I do think that they remember but really didn't ask them.

Lura Limani: Do you think it's a difficult topic to talk to them...

Milica Andrić: No, no, it's just I didn't think to ask them... It's, it wasn't... especially for me, that it wasn't represented as something huge, especially not at that time, so we really kind of like dismissed it. It was not something that you would make a fuss about at that point. 2013 was way different. The Brussels agreement was, like, everywhere, everybody spoke about it, everybody had a copy of it, reading it, it was... I think that that was something that Kosovo Serbs (incomp.) experienced as the day of the declaration of independence, what we experienced when the Brussels agreement was signed... so for us that was kind of the true declaration of independence.

Lura Limani: Was that because the media kind of reported it as an agreement... a very important agreement or...

Milica Andrić: No, because it was clear, from reading it, it was very clear what it actually meant so even though the media represented it as something completely different, and it was very short, like 14 points, anybody can focus on fourteen points, it was basically one page and two rows on the other side. So I think that everybody realized... the majority of people realized at that point what it meant, so that's why it was a huge deal, because it really did mean a substantial life change for everybody living in the four northern municipalities.

Lura Limani: I don't have any questions, but if you have anything else to share... I'm thinking that would be interesting...

Milica Andrić: I really did think a lot trying to remember, but also... and I had a diary, but I didn't want to go through it in order not to put some false memory... memories, but it was also a diary that was... I took it with my friend from the school... the school desk, so she and I only wrote only about things that happened in school, so I do remember there was a faint reference like, "Kosovo declared independence yesterday, but Stefana did this today." It was not really about that, it was really

something that, again, we really dismissed it, like... eh. Like, it happened somewhere else because we were very, very detached from the rest of the reality in Kosovo.

