

# Oral History Kosovo

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## INTERVIEW WITH LIDIA MIRDITA TUPECI

Pristina | Date: November 22, 2018

Duration: 86 minutes

Present:

1. Lidia Mirdita Tupeci (Speaker)
2. Kaltrina Krasniqi (Interviewer)
3. Donjetë Berisha (Camera)
4. Besarta Breznica (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

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** I am Lidia Tupeci, my maiden name is Mirdita. I was born on 19.06.1956. I was born in Niš, now Republic of Serbia.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Can you tell us something more about your childhood?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Yes.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What kind of childhood did you have? What kind of a child were you to your parents?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** I had a wonderful life, I had a life... how do they say... a life that people want to have. I was a kid born in Niš, because Mom and Dad worked at the lungs sanatorium in Sokobanja, Ozren is the name of the facility. It was the second sanatorium in Yugoslavia. One was in Slovenia and this one here, in Sokobanja. My mom worked there, she was a nurse while my dad was a supplier for the hospital. His job was supplying, supplying the hospital, for example, supplying for various needs... because there were a lot of patients with TBC and the food needed to be strong and fresh.

My dad went to school in Zrenjanin of Vojvodina because there was no high school of agriculture in Kosovo. He did sports there and caught a cold, and he had a doctor in Zrenjanin that liked my father so he told him, "I know where you come from..." and that people were poor at that time, there were few people that had it good. And he told my father, "I'm sending you to a doctor I know, and also the food is good there," meaning that he's taking him there to heal him, even though he did not have TBC but a cold. And then he came.

My father came as a patient while my mom was already working there. Now, when the visiting time came, the other patients were getting visitors but nobody came to visit my father. His family was in Peja. When my mom went into my father's room, he cried. My father cried. And my mom asked him, "Why are you crying?" He told her, "Nobody came to see me." He had nobody, nobody. His home was far away and his family couldn't come, the facility was not close. There were no buses then, there were no roads, nothing.

And my mother went... because the sanatorium is three kilometers away on the mountain side of Sokobanja. My mom walked downtown, bought some apples and some other stuff she needed and brought them to my father. And that's when the love started. Then they stayed there... but before giving birth to me in '53, Mom came to Peja. When they came to Peja, she quit the job at the sanatorium. My dad was very close with his family and thought that as the oldest child, it was his responsibility to watch over the other children. And they came back.

But when they came back, my mom and dad had no jobs. My mom worked in... how do I say... it's like a carpentry... but she carried planks as well. There were no other jobs but she had to survive. In the evening she did handicraft. My father sold the handicraft my mom made. But they were lucky because the director of the hospital in Sokobanje came to Peja... he had business with the lungs hospital that once was in Peja, still is actually, and he asked them, "Does a Croatian woman work here?" Because my mom is Croatian. And they were surprised, they said, "In our personnel there isn't a Croatian woman".

A patient that was there told him, "A neighbor of mine brought a woman home, I think she is Croatian but I am not sure". The director told him, "Can you take me there?" Their home was near the hospital. He told him, "Yes." When the director entered their yard while my mom was there, my mom told me, "When I saw him I nearly passed out." When he saw my mom he said, "You..." my mom's name was Dragica, he said, "Dragice, where are you? Why aren't you in the hospital? I cannot find you." She replied, "I don't work in the hospital," he told her, "Where are you working?" She replied, "I am carrying planks.. He told her, "No, no. Please get ready and come with me."

He took my mom to the hospital and told the director of the hospital, "I vouch for this woman, and I want her to start work tomorrow." And that is how my mom started working there. My father was lucky too. There was an engineer, I think he was an agronomist and he saw my father and asked him, "Are you working?" He told him, "No." He then said, "Okay, come tomorrow. I will see..." he said, "If I can find you a job." There was the so-called Agro-Mileracia back then, that's how it was called, it was not the Plant Protection Station, because he registered there afterwards. And that's how my dad started working. They worked like this.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What did he do there?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** My dad was... my dad was the commercial director. They had agricultural pharmacies and his job was to supply them. My father spent more time on the road than at home. For example, he went on the road on Monday and came back on Friday.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Where did he travel?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** He traveled all around ex-Yugoslavia, for example, because he worked for example with... there were some companies back then and I don't know them all, it was Hrom Zagreb, because they had pesticides too, they had the veterinary in the agricultural pharmacies, they had flowers, there was *Agrokopi*, there was *Agrikap* which was from Zagreb, *Agrokopi* was from Novi Sad, and then... everything that was needed... sacks for peppers for the farmers, and stuff like this. Basically everything that an agricultural pharmacy has. Now when I look at agricultural pharmacies, they are very poor, they are not how they used to be. Because I... my father, for example, we had at our pharmacy any kind of flower that you'd want to buy. We also had beautiful flowerpots made of ceramic, not like the plastic ones that are now, now there is more plastic. Stuff like this.

They started working and the director said to my mother, "If you can't adapt here, the job is waiting for you." And my mother went, she went back there. I was born in '56 in Niš. I lived there for about three years, there was no one... it was very hard to find someone to take care of the children. Their financial conditions were great there. There were, there were two buildings where doctors and nurses lived, so the hospital's staff, the hospital was near there and... how do I say it, the patients who weren't very sick had the right to go out for walks, but it was limited. For example, up to where they could walk.

So my mother struggled with me, there was no one to take care of me. Then she had the night shift, their life was good. My mother's apartment was one hundred square meters with heating, they had... all the rules, they didn't lack anything. Then they had the kitchen which... the kitchen was only for the doctors, for the staff, and there was another one for the patients. My mother told me, for example, the patients had... there were patients who were in very bad conditions, there were patients who removed five-six ribs, then patients who had incision wounds. My mother says, "We had to take care of the wound so it wouldn't open when they coughed," because at that time it was quite...

Well then it was mostly TB but they're still lungs. You can't get to the lungs without removing some lungs to see what's wrong and so on. When I was little my mother told me, "All doctors were scared to let the children..." To walk around the hospital because TB it's not exactly... my mother said, "I didn't stop you, you went up and down in the hospital." He said, "No patient would go near you 'cause they knew what they had," you know, especially not to a child. So like this, I lived for a while... I was little back then.

When my [maternal] aunts came from Croatia, when they saw my mother struggling with me, they said, "We'll take Lida and take her to grandfather." So, to my grandfather because I had two aunts who weren't married so I grew up there. And when time came to go to school, to enroll in school, because I started school when I was six years old. Back then it was difficult to start school at six years old, so I enrolled in '62, the director didn't want to accept me, he said, "Plus.", he said, "she is young..." I was also tiny. Then my father begged him, "We don't live here, she lives with her grandmother." And so I enrolled.

As a child, my mother says, when I was a baby, I was very quiet, but when I started school... or maybe when I went there, a new environment in Croatia, or maybe because my parents weren't there I was spoiled. Of course, they all took care of me, so you feel like you can do anything. I was very lively, very lively. For example, my teacher called me, as they told me, *vrti repić*<sup>1</sup> so tail because... I was little, when I started first grade... for example, I would forget the pencil or the jacket she would come after me. I had a teacher who really took care of me, she had a niece who lived in Belgrade, while my teacher's daughter went missing during World War Two, they didn't know where she was.

So, she took care of her. But, then she went to university and probably since she missed her niece she looked after me, she looked after me a lot. I would forget my jacket, she would come after me, or for example if we did something in class... Back then we had *slet*,<sup>2</sup> we would make *slet*, we would make some crowns with flowers with *krep papir*,<sup>3</sup> we made flowers like this {shows with her hands}. She didn't dare to do anything if I wasn't there and took... some activities and so on.

But, then when I finished third grade, my parents said, "No, we will take her because..." when they came, I was little, when they came during their vacation, I asked my grandmother, "Who are they?" Seeing my parents only once a year, I grew up with my grandparents, my aunt, I also had an uncle, and the whole family. Then my father said, "Having a child and not knowing..." for example, "We will take her." So they took me. They brought me to Peja, but I went to Serbian, I couldn't go... I came from Croatia to Peja in third grade and I went to school in Serbian. It was good, my teacher was good. I was in Ivo Llollla Ribar, I don't know what it's called now, maybe Bedri Pejani, no Bedri Pejani is a gymnasium,<sup>4</sup> I don't know, like this.

Good, my life was good. I was a type of person, and my parents never limited me on anything. For example, if I wanted to go somewhere they would let me. But I was the type of person who did not take advantage of that. You know how a child... my father always told me, "Lida, you're a child, you can be selfish," he said, "When you eat something and you see someone looking at you, buy them food, those who are poorer." And so on. Good, life was good, life was very good.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** When did you learn Albanian?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** I spoke a little Albanian, but we also spoke Serbian at home, that's how it was. When we came to Peja with my mother, because my father spoke Albanian. It was hard for my mother, she... when she started working there were a lot of Montenegrins, nurses and so on so she was used to

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<sup>1</sup> Serbian, literally it means a spinning tail.

<sup>2</sup> *Slet* was an annual sporting event, involving distinguished athletes, pupils, students, workers and soldiers. Every year, on May 25, *slet* was held in various cities of Yugoslavia to mark Youth Day and the birthday of then-leader Josip Broz Tito.

<sup>3</sup> Serbian, it was a type of ruffled paper. Literally, crêpe paper.

<sup>4</sup> A European type of secondary school with emphasis on academic learning, different from vocational schools because it prepares students for university.

that. When I got married, when I got married, I started speaking in Albanian. Why? Because I had friends, no one wanted to talk to me in Serbian, they spoke Albanian and that's how I learned. But I learned some things wrong.

When I started working, for example, I didn't know... I knew the basics, but I didn't know much, I couldn't converse with someone who... I couldn't. I had some funny colleagues at work there, they spoke stuff like... so I learned to speak like that. Then I would talk the same way with my director, I didn't know. But, then I apologized to my director, I knew what I did wrong. But he would say, "No problem, Lida, this is how you learn a language." Because it wasn't my bad, it was other people. So this is how I learned.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell me about life in Peja when you came back, and how was it? Did the environment between Peja and Croatia differ...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** A lot, when I came...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Explain that...

**Lidia Mirdita-Tupeci:** When I came to school, for example, I didn't learn anything for a year because they were way ahead. What I learned in Croatia, when I came here, they still didn't get there and so on. Life was good, my life was good...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What was the city like?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** It was a very beautiful city, there was no other city like Peja. It was beautiful and the thing was that the city... Peja wasn't big then. We all knew each other, we went out for walks every evening. We went out in the *korzo*.<sup>5</sup> For example, our generations didn't have bars, bars opened later. Where did we go? The young people went to Hotel Metohi, there was live music, we went there, we had no other place to go, and walked around in the *korzo*.

We went out in the *korzo* with our parents, we went out almost every night, and my father had a friend, he had a tailoring store in the center, we would walk around and go there and then we would go... life was... I don't know, now when I go to Peja, the center remains the same, you know the buildings that were old and so on, but the other parts are degraded, Peja degraded. It isn't as it used to be.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Explain what the neighborhood you lived in was like?

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<sup>5</sup> Main street, reserved for pedestrians.

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** We lived... my grandfather lived in front of the hospital, so up there. Our house was... we first lived in a private apartment, how do I say, the part behind MUP.<sup>6</sup> We lived there for about two or three years, then we got a house a little further, in Vitomerica, but it was good. My father liked it because the garden was big and we planted a lot of roses, pines and so on there. I had to travel, I went out to walk and so on. I traveled with my father...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Were you near the church or...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** No, my grandfather was. I went to symposiums with my father, those symposiums were in Bled, Borel, Opatija, we were in Kupari, Dubrovnik, Oher and so on, so we traveled. But my father had an opportunity to go work in Slovenia because a friend of his was the representative of Italy for, for agricultural machines and so on.

And they said that they would find a job for my mother and they would provide housing for us, but my father didn't want to go, he didn't want to go. My father loved Kosovo. He would always say, "We wanted to buy a house in Opatija." Because back then houses were cheap, when we said, "Let's buy a house near the sea." He said, "No, only in Kosovo. Life is in Kosovo, nowhere else."

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What was his name?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Nue. Maybe he was wrong, but that's how it was back then.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** After primary school you went...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** To the gymnasium.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Which one? Can you tell us about life in the gymnasium?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Yes, I went to the gymnasium in Peja. Life was good, I had a lot of friends, we went out, we socialized. Life in gymnasium, good life as they say... We had really good friends, we weren't very quiet, for example, once when we were in class we didn't want to stay in the seventh class of the day, now we wanted to break the light bulb somehow... I took, I had a pair of *sallonka*<sup>7</sup> I remember it as if it were today, I took it to throw the light bulb, but the professor came and he took me to the director.

When I went to the director, I didn't know he was a friend of my father's and he asked for my parents to come to the school. He didn't know who I was either. And I told my father, "The director asked for you." Of course I thought it was something about vineyards or something like that, he said, "Okay." When he

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<sup>6</sup> *Ministarstvo Unutrašnjih Poslova* - Ministry of Internal Affairs.

<sup>7</sup> Solemn shoes, usually worn in the interior of a salon.

went there, the director told him everything. When he came home he said, “What did you do, Lida? I was the best student in the class,” he said, “Why did you do this? All... so many boys in your class and you hit the light bulb?” I said, “It doesn't matter if they're boys or what, it happened and that's it.” You know how it was back then, they would read what you did. It was good.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Which one of your parents were you closer to?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** I was closer to my dad, but my father died young, he was in a car accident. My father was like my friend. He understood me. My mother was a little more strict, how mothers are, she was constantly worried. For example, when we went to the Hotel and there was live music. we would stay there until midnight. She would wait for me and said, “At this time, it's bad for boys to come back this late, let alone you.” We had neighbors, my neighbor's children, a neighbor of mine said, “But...” she said, “Yours too, they see you on the streets at midnight.” And so on.

Then I said to my father, “Why did you let them come?” “I didn't know you went out.” And so on. My father was more... my father loved life, he was... he had a lot of friends all over ex-Yugoslavia, they would come visit us in Peja. My mother was a very good woman, a very clean woman. But, she needed everything to be in their place, she was like that.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** And how... When did your father die?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** My father died in '85. I got married in '82. He died... they were going to the 40th anniversary of the first cooperative in Bec. They left on Sunday, it was October 20. They left to go there, they probably celebrated the day that they went out... but people have an intuition when they're going to die. When he woke up that morning... he never drank coffee, that morning he drank coffee.

Then when he went out... because our house was deeper in the neighborhood, when he got to the door, he came back and said, because he bought the flowers, the bluebells and he said, “Lida, don't touch them, we will do it together when I come back.” He came back once more and said, “Look, bake me some bread.” I said, “Okay, I will.” That morning he said to my mother, “We have to go and take care of our graves because our daughter may not be able to do it.” I said, “Come on father, there's time for that.” “No,” he said. “It's better to do it while I can.”

He left and after an hour and a half or two my uncle came to the door, “We will not come inside.” I thought that my grandfather died because he was old. I told him, “Why you? Why don't you come inside?” He said, “Lida, you don't know what has happened...” I said, “No.” He said, “Nue died.” So my father. I couldn't process it, I said, “Who died?” He said, “Nue died.” “No...” I said, “He will go on TV now,” I said, “He was going to get a package.” He said, “No, him and the general director who was driving died.”



I went there with the clothes I was wearing at home, I went where the accident happened, but I didn't see my father and I thought that they didn't meet, that he drove by himself. Then there in a field I saw his hat and I knew he had died. And I asked around and someone said, "They took him to the hospital." My father lived until they went to the hospital, but when they... I think when they gave him oxygen then he died because he had internal bleeding. He was 56 years old and I... I had just started working and I couldn't work. I told my director, "I can't work." I was very close to him, how do I say... when I saw people that looked like my father, I thought to myself, "Is it him?" But then with time you make peace with it, you can't do anything about it.

## Part Two

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Now my mother was left alone, she couldn't adapt. You know how it is? Now, my father took care of us financially, my mother didn't know these things. My mother, for example, didn't know if we should buy wood, or when to buy it... not these things were her responsibility. But she came through. She was a very strong woman, very... interesting. I was... I said, when my father died, I didn't. I couldn't come to my senses for three or four months. I couldn't accept it.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Did she live somewhere else then?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** My mother lived in Peja, but after the war... After the war, I stayed here because my husband was sick, so I couldn't go out. After the war, I didn't communicate with my mother for three months. After the war I took my mother here to live with me. My mother lived until 2016. She died on February 15, 92 years old.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** How did you come to Pristina?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Me? (laughs) I never liked Pristina. If someone had told me I would get married in Pristina, I would say, "No way." You know, when you get used... Peja was a beautiful city for me, because I was a child. It was really good for me because I got to know people, you know, when you have friends you see every day and you're close to each other... Because you get lost in Pristina. When I came... but luckily my husband had a lot of friends.

I came to my [paternal] aunt's house, she lived in Çagllavica, and I went there once, before she gave birth. I came and her father-in-law said, "I'll take you to dinner at Grand." Back then Grand was... so we went there. Now my aunt's father-in-law started talking to a person at the bar, they greeted each other. And I heard him say, "Look..." he said, "We're downstairs, come if you want." He came downstairs after an hour. Now I didn't know who he was, he didn't know who I was either. My aunt said, "This is my brother's daughter." And so on.

Then I went back to Peja. After awhile my phone rang, he called me. We started, he came to Peja, and so on. I told my father, "I met a guy." My aunt's father-in-law told my father... He had a son who wasn't married, "You know I have a son..." He said, "Who isn't married, but today I'm not here for my son.." He said, "I came here to tell you about the boy Lida knows. I can guarantee for him..." Because he knew my husband. And so on, my father said, "Okay, he can come and talk to me." I brought him here. We talked. I asked my father, "What do you think?" He said, "He seems like a good man." But how... my father didn't know these things.

My husband was an artist, he loved life. He... now my mother thought I'd find a person who... that I would have a husband who took care of our children, the family and everything. He wasn't like that. He was... he grew up with his mother, when she died, he was all alone. Now, how would he know what he needs to do at home, he wasn't used to that. He had a life, he went out every night with his friends, he worked in the ensemble, he was a dancer at Shota,<sup>8</sup> they traveled all over the world. He also was part of the Collegium<sup>9</sup> and he has a different life.

We were used to a different life, he had a different life. Now when I got married I noticed. I noticed he doesn't do anything and he doesn't ask anything. Now I said to myself, Lida, you have to work yourself... You can't make someone do something they're not good at, you can't teach someone who is old, you can't...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What was his name?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Marsel. Marsel Tupeci, he was born in '45, we had an eleven-year difference, but it wasn't noticeable. I seemed older than him in some ways. It was interesting. He was very vital... he was the best dancer in Shota at his time. He had his merits. Five other members of his family worked in Shota. There was my brother-in-law with his wife and daughter, my sister-in-law and my husband. Five family members... it's a talent you're born with.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Did they establish Shota?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** No, no. My brother-in-law with his wife. They started dancing there in '47, '48. I think it was Shota back then. I think then... until then it wasn't... it wasn't a professional ensemble, then it became so. Ex-Yugoslavia had four ensembles, there was Lado in Zagreb, Kolo in Belgrade,

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<sup>8</sup> Shota is a folkloric dance ensemble, which was established on September 30, 1950, as the National Ensemble, with the decision of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo, as well as three other ensembles in the former Yugoslavia: Llado - Zagreb, Kollo Belgrade and Tanec - Skopje.

<sup>9</sup> The Collegium Cantorum is the first semi-professional choir. As such, it has played an important role in the development of choral singing culture. The choir was established in Pristina in 1969, upon the initiative of the well-known composer and conductor Mark Kaçinari.

Shota in Kosovo, and Tanec in Macedonia. These were the four professional ensembles. So it was good. I had a good life with my husband.

My husband was a quiet person, he always did what I wanted. For example, there was nothing to fight about with him, unless we would fight for no reason, so life with him wouldn't be boring. He was a very good man, a quiet man, how do I say it. We had a really good marriage. Most people asked me about children, they thought, you know, it depends. There are marriages that get ruined, for example, when either the woman or the man can't have children. When we went to Zagreb, when we took the tests, when the doctors told us what conditions we were in, we came to terms with it.

It was a little problematic for my husband, he cried and stuff, he probably thought we would separate, but no. I said... we, when we get married... I am Catholic, we also get married in church. It's very hard to end a marriage for us, especially when you get married in the church. If you end a marriage once, you don't have a right to go there anymore. That's how it used to be, I don't know now. You can't come to church anymore. If your husband or wife dies, yes. You can't get married again in the church if you separate. So like this, we faced this. So, I wasn't loaded. You know, when a person has, how do I say it, when you make a decision... I didn't think about these things anymore.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** When did you come to Pristina?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** In '82.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell us about the atmosphere here because...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** It was good...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:**... A lot of things have changed.

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Now... no Pristina... now Pristina isn't as it used to be, my neighborhood isn't the same either.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell us in more detail what the neighborhood was like? What was the city like?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** The neighborhood was, where we live, for example this neighborhood...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell us where, because they don't know...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Ulpiana, it's called Lamella U3. It was very quiet, our neighborhood. We knew, there were only six or seven cars in the parking lot here. Our life was... all the people in the neighborhood knew each other and we visited each other. Now, now there are coffee shops. There are

five coffee shops in our neighborhood. I don't know what's so interesting in this neighborhood to have... there's no limited working hours. They work during the night, then when we go out there is noise, horrible. Then there were friends. When I got married, my husband had a lot of friends, we would gather in houses, we would go to each other's houses.

I wasn't used to that, for example, night life was horrible for me. They would stay up all night, I couldn't stay. The moment it gets late my eyes close, I need sleep. The kids would make fun of me, they said, "Aunt Lida, we will put toothpicks in your eyelids to keep them open." Because I wasn't used to it, but then I adapted. Then I would go to work from other people's houses, people adapt. Like this. We went out and so on. During the weekends we would go to Brezovica or Batllava. We went there with friends, we had amazing friends.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Did you go to the theater? To the cinema?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** We went to the theater, we went to the cinema, we went to Collegium when there was... we went and hung out there when they practiced. Then I went to the ensemble, for example, I went to *Dubrovačke Ljetne Igre*<sup>10</sup> with Collegium, I went with my husband because the ensemble wasn't allowed to bring family members with them. But with Collegium, yes, I went with them.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Where was the hall of Collegium?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Collegium was here behind, you know the Pisha restaurant...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** It's still there...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Collegium was there. The Shota ensemble is behind the stadium, they were also here but now they have expanded...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell me about the atmosphere.

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** The atmosphere was good. We knew how to have fun, for example, when we start singing we don't stop, songs are never repeated. As I said, a great life. For me it was weird when I came here, because I had a different life. But when I came here... when I talked to my father on the phone, I said, "Father, we went there and stuff." He said, "*Kuku*,<sup>11</sup> you go somewhere all the time." You know, I said, "This is life." Then I told him about life here, "Really?" It was very different, Peja and

<sup>10</sup> Dubrovnik Summer Festival is an annually-held summer festival instituted in 1950 in Dubrovnik, Croatia. It is held every year between July 10 and August 25. The music programme was initially conceptualized as a presentation of the best composers, soloists and orchestras from the country, but by the end of the fifties it had already grown into a real review of top solo artists and ensembles from all around the world.

<sup>11</sup> Colloquial, expresses disbelief, distress, or wonder, depending on the context.

Pristina. But in '82 Pristina wasn't exactly... it was, how do I say it... people knew each other. For example, we were friends with Leza [Qena], Xhevat [Qena], some... now they're all gone, some died, some went to the Czech Republic... people moved away.

When they got fired from their jobs in the '90s, people left, they couldn't stay anymore. But we had really good friends, friends... healthy friendships. Our friendships were, for example, we had fun, we didn't talk behind each other's back or anything, we didn't have time, we were always somewhere, always on the move, always to dinners, to lunches. We celebrated, for example, we would celebrate Christmas and Eid. We would celebrate for three-four days...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Where did you celebrate?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Back then we used to go to houses, then here in the yard of the church, there was a hall in the old church, it wasn't fixed but there was a big hall which was convenient for us so... so here. We celebrated for three days.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** How would you prepare for the celebrations?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** We all... everyone prepared something at home and brought it there.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Was there music?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Music, music, no, they would play cassettes or something, but it was important that they had fun. Like this, life was good, life was good but short. I was married to my husband for 22 years, but he was sick for eight years. He had dementia, in the end... I bathed him, I fed and shaved him. He was 59 years old when he died. He died 14 years ago. Like this, now I live here. They say to me, "Why don't you go live in Croatia? Why do you stay here?" Now I'm used to it. I didn't like Pristina, but now I'm used to Pristina.

Now there I think... you know why, because people there are selfish. I see, my family is there, when I go there they welcome me, it's all okay, but I don't see myself living there. We are closer, our mentality is... for example, there's no need here to call people, unless you need something. I call my friends, "Let's go get coffee?" "Let's go." You can't do that there. There you have to... for example when one of my [maternal] aunts who lives in Peja went there she said, "Lida, I thought life here was different."

It is different because you get used to the mentality in Kosovo. You went to visit your neighbors, they visited you, you drank coffee. It isn't like this in Croatia, even with your sister. But they don't... they have... I don't know. When we were going to my aunt, little kids on the streets would greet us, whether they knew or not, my aunt said, "Lida, how do you know all of them?" She said, "They're all greeting

you.” I said, “No (laughs), it’s like this here. Kids greet you whether they know you or not.” So on. It’s hard to adapt, she still hasn’t adapted. She went in 2003 but...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell me about the job you found in Pristina? When did you start?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** I found the job... a friend of mine, how do I say, my sister-in-law’s brother was best friends with my director and I... when I came to Pristina he probably talked to him and asked for a job and he came and told me, “Lida, get ready, we’re going to work tomorrow.” And went there... It was *Artizanati Kosovarja* [Kosovar Artisanal]. And I went there, talked to him. The director said, “I can’t hire her and get her working in the office.” But we had a store at Grand, he said, “She can work there for two or three months then when there’s a place...”

Merita had to leave, she took maternity leave, he said, “Then I’ll take her here.” This is how it happened. Then in February started working as a secretary. I worked as a secretary until ‘90, ‘92. Then there was some sort of mixed capitalism. *Kosovarja* and *Art-Impeks*, but we worked with *Art-Impeks* for nine more years. Then after the war we worked as *Kosovarja* again.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell us now... because all of these, first these organizations you’re talking about and the store you’re talking about don’t exist. And what we’re trying to preserve are things that don’t exist, but through stories of people. So, tell us about your first job in the store at Grand.

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** The store was, the store was very well supplied. I think they had... I think they had a contract with a Slovenian label, In-Trade or something. They hired people here, we took women who worked at home... but this was like a compensation. They brought us necklaces with gemstones, there were the tiger’s eye, jade and so on. There were decorations, there were... they also had the gold of Majdanpek, it was... the store was very well supplied.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Can you tell us one more time where it was exactly?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Under, how do I say, under Grand... you where they built the memorial for the women? Behind it. I think there’s a store there, municipality or something, there are no more shoes there, Kornex or something like that. That’s where the store was, it was big, it had a beautiful interior. It was good. I worked there for about... I didn’t work there long, a little more than a month before I came here. I stayed here.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell us what kind of job did you have? Where was the building?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** The building was there, it was near the Employment Agency, you can see the building in the yard. But the building now, I think it was privatized two year ago and sold...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What duties did you have?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** I had, I had all the workers, the director and the vice director. The vice director... First my director was Nazmi Kajtazi then came Lulzim Rama, the vice director was the same, he has passed away. So like this, I also had commercial responsibility... we had goods from Albania, copper back then, we had good profit from copper because the shopping malls would supply goods there and...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What other goods did you have?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** As far as I know there was mostly copper, maybe there was also ceramic, some ceramic works. But, for example, when the truck would come with goods all the workers would get out and unload it so it would be quicker because others would come to get it. It didn't matter what position you worked in, all workers helped. Our director was great and so on.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Where would you distribute the goods?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** They took... they came with their own trucks, people from shopping malls. But also those who had private stores...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** But you didn't have any collaborations, you just sold them? You also had other places, right?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** We had, as I said we had those with Slovenia. We mostly had them with Slovenia. Then we had the workshop, or I don't know, he owned clothing stores and we sewed. He brought everything to us. For example, he would bring the material all ready and we would sew it. There was a supervisor, I think she was from Turkey, she was very strict. The women there weren't used to working like that. She paid attention to millimeters. If the scarf wasn't straight, it had to be straight... you had to redo it. But there were a lot of good models. So we sewed and so on.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** How would you engage women? Where would you find them?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** The women were tailors. Those who went to tailoring school, we had the workshop downstairs, we had industrial machines and so on. Then there was a hall where they would cut these clothes models. Then there was the organizer at *Kosovare* because we worked with *Uniprom* from Novi Pazar. They had a contract with Italy. Italy... Italy got fish from them as compensation. they took wool. *Uniprom* made carpets. Now...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What kind of designs?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** They had their own designer, we didn't deal with carpets. But the wool, they made sweaters, they brought us wool. We opened that place downstairs where women came, whoever knew how to make them, they had the design and they would make the sweaters. Now, for example, the organizer, the organizer was also there. The organizer, for example, she would measure how much wool was used for a sweater and so on. We worked very well. We took all the sweaters...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** So the sweaters were handmade?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Yes, handmade, we took all the sweaters to Italy. As far as I know, the organizer said the price of those sweaters was one hundred marks for one. But, as I said...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** How were the women who worked compensated? With salaries?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** No, they, for example, I think they were paid by the sweater, I think so. They weren't... they didn't have contracts with us, it was also convenient for them because there were women who stayed home. For example, they gained something with it.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Were they women from the city or...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Not for the sweater, they weren't women that took the job, but the workshop, the women were from there. There were around 17 women.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** How old were they?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** They were... they were older. They were tailors with work experience. There were good tailors. There were also younger women, which was good.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Were you religious throughout your life?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Not that much. When I lived with my mother, I wasn't. We didn't go, I don't know, we rarely went to church, but when I got married, my husband was religious. Especially his mother, she died a year before we got married. And so on. Even my friends, so we went there. But... I don't know about religion... you can be religious and believe in God, but you may not go to church, that doesn't mean...

There are some people who go every day, some go once, twice or five times to church. It doesn't mean... how do I say, I'm not very, a, a, a... but I still believe in something. I think there is something. It has happened to me, some things happened to me that... for example, when my father died, seven or eight years before, I saw some things like this how I saw my dead father, so there's something. It's good



to believe in something. You're afraid, when you believe you stop yourself from doing some things, I think so, I don't know.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Do you go to church?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** I go to church, I go on Sundays when I can. I go where there are holidays. I don't go every day.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** To which one?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Now I go... on Sunday there's a mass in the Cathedral at 11:00 and at 6:00 in the afternoon. And here there's only a mass on Tuesday at 1:00 and I think on Friday at 8:00, I'm not sure about this one. The mean one is on Sunday at 11:00.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Now for people who aren't familiar with the Catholic religion, can you tell us what masses are?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** The mass starts at 11:00, people come and the priest preaches. The priest preaches life, for what happens, how it happens, from what people should protect themselves, what people should do, what is good, what is bad. Then at the end of the mass you get the blessing. You know what blessing is? We get the blessing and the mass ends. Then people go home, some go home, some go out and so on.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What was it like for you when life changed in the '90s in Kosovo?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Very bad. My husband was out of a job at that time too, both of us. He went to Germany to his sister's to try and find a job but he was 40-something years old. At that age, Germany hardly hired people. To tell you the truth, I knew he wasn't one who could work in Germany. Then we went to Lado in Zagreb. That was the job... he could work there, but it was about surviving.

You have to find a place to live, there... it isn't, how do I say, it's another life. Then there are expenses, you don't know if you will get a salary or not. I said, "No, no." Then we went to Pula, at my sister-in-law. We had the opportunity there, I started going to school because I had the citizenship of Croatia. I finished that school for six months, like a course or something. With that you could open anything you wanted in Croatia, you only couldn't open a store with gold because you had to go to Zagreb to take a test, you could open anything else. So I got a stand, a stand, it worked very well...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What did you sell there?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** We sold jewelry, some shells, things people would buy, work was good. I know people who worked at stands bought apartments in Pula, so they settled down with stands. But we didn't stay long because we had a problem with our apartment. Because when they were fired there was the problem with the apartment, "They will get it, they will not get it." And so on. They called me in '92, around November I think. They called me to come back because they wanted to take the apartment, people from the Shota called me...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What did they want to take?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** The apartment. You know that they took apartments...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** No, I don't know. Tell us about this situation because people don't know.

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Well, when we were fired, for example, in the '90s, then whoever wasn't there, for example, whoever left Kosovo they went into their apartments and took them. So they called me, they said, "Lida, come because..." but luckily that year there was the verdict to buy apartments. I came here, I left my husband there, I said, "I'll go see myself." I went to talk with the director of Shota, I said, "I want to make a contract." He said, "Yes." So we made a contract, this was in November '92.

On February 10, '93, I had to pay for the apartment. So, when they had to evaluate the apartment, the director of Shota said, "I... We don't have money." So I went to BVI and they came to evaluate the apartment, how much it costs and everything. So we made a contract and everything, in March '93, I left to go to Croatia. I thought everything was done, I paid for the apartment and everything. Serbia came with a verdict that those who were fired, those who left can't take the apartment to court, for example, you couldn't verify the contract. Why? Because you left your job. Only people who retired could do it, we couldn't.

I wrote to the Ministry of Justice, I told them that he didn't quit his job, he was fired. We also found somewhere else where he worked, but they didn't take it. So... I paid for the apartment in '92, and in February '93, our apartment was left like that. We had the contract, we paid it, but it wasn't in our name. After the war I went to court and they said... I asked how it works, because I bought the apartment, you know, they said, "Only if the person comes." So my husband. I told them, "He can't come." "Why?" I said, "Because he is sick." You can't make someone who isn't fully conscious sign something, right? I wouldn't do that. I could have done it, but I didn't want to.

In 2015 I finally settled everything with the apartment because, back then, the Ministry of Culture didn't exist, now it does. Back then Shota was a special ensemble. Now through the Ministry of Culture I did the expertise, I went to the notary, then the contract, I had to wait for a letter that I didn't have any obstacles. I don't know who released the cadastre for the land, I don't know, then I went to the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Culture, we signed and it was on our name. So, in 2015.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** 22 years later.

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** There are some people who still have problems, I think PAK deals with it now, the Privatization Agency of Kosovo.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Then, you had to come back from Croatia?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Yes, I came back and then went there again. I stayed until June, '94. Then we stayed here, we didn't go anywhere.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Because he got si...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** No, he got sick... my husband got sick around '98, '97.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What did you do during those years? Did your husband work?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** No, he couldn't work, I worked.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What did you do for work?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** I was, I was an accountant. I was working. Then... they also had a problem, I know... it's okay that they want education, I think education wants to count these nine years that they worked, right? They have to do it for everyone. I know, for example, my husband... they practiced in Dardania in basements. Police would follow them, and he would come running to my workplace. They all suffered, not just the education. In '97 I think, I'm not sure, but I think in '97 Shota was in Switzerland.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** So, the Albanians...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** They worked. Yes, yes. They didn't quit, they worked under those conditions. Then, after the war he was sick. He was, he could stand on his own two feet but he wasn't conscious for some things. I had to take care of him all the time, to see if he turned on the stove or something, I was like a guard to him. But good, he was very quiet, he wasn't aggressive or anything. It didn't come to that, how do I say, it didn't come to the stage... the doctor said to me, "It can go to Alzheimer's." But, it didn't happen.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell us how did you find out he had dementia?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** We noticed his behavior.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Explain it a little.

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** We noticed his behavior, he was quiet, but his behavior... For example, you stay here, you go there, you know, he didn't know some things, or going out, he didn't recognize Pristina anymore. When I talked to him I said, "Could you come to the center?" During the [1999] war I was alone with him, it was very hard.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** How was it?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Wherever I went, I had to take him with me. If I went to buy bread, I had to take him with me. During the war, it was very hard. A guy came at 10:00 at night and wanted to ban us from our apartment. I said, "If you came to kill us, I won't leave." Where would you go at 10:00 at night? There was a commandant here at the school {shows with her hand} one hundred people would shoot. I said, "I won't." Later I found out that it was the neighbor from D2 [a different building in the neighborhood], I didn't recognize him and so on.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Was he Serbian?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Yes, yes during the war.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell me about the atmosphere in Ulpiana during that time, and how was it for you?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Horrible. There was always a certain time we could go out. Once we went behind the post office, they would give away bread, and there would be a line. When your turn would come, there was no bread. You go home. Well, it was like this. Once seven or eight soldiers came to our door, they came to look around inside and said, "Are there some people from Drenas, from Podujeva, from..." Then, the policewoman came... a neighbor of mine, he was a really good man, he said, "Lida, if they have badges, they're legit, if they don't..." But how can you know?

They came to my door and I was looking at them. He said, "What are you looking at?" I said, "I am looking at your badges." You know, it's very weird. When they come to your door, what can you do? So like this, once a man came, maybe he had the wrong name, he just asked me for my name. I opened the door, one was a civilian, the other was policemen, they asked, "What's your name?" I said, "Lidia." They say, "Thank you, have a good day!" (laughs).

Maybe this saved me, I don't know why they came. They came all the time. They went and took my neighbor's money and gold jewelry. It didn't happen to me, they just came like that one time, but it was hard. I got medical supplies for my husband, I bought them before, I couldn't have bought them

during the war. It was very hard because he smoked cigarettes. I went to the market, one pack of cigarettes cost 4 marks, but I had to buy them. He smoked, what could I do?

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** How would you get daily food supplies?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** I had some food in the freezer. Our friends helped. We helped each other when we needed something. I had, after the war started, four or five days after, I had ten or eleven people in my apartment. A friend of mine came, she came with her family, they left from Fushë Kosova, they stayed with me for two weeks. Then the neighbor downstairs, he had... he wanted to leave but couldn't. He wanted to go to Tetovo. I think he stayed at the border for a week... he had a baby, his daughter was two-and-a-half years old. When he came back, he said, "Can we sleep here?" Because they were sacred, they lived on the ground floor. He stayed here for six weeks, and so on.

During the day we stayed together, I went downstairs and so on but they would sleep here. It was very hard, very... I said, my mistake, I can see it now, my mistake was that I didn't leave, I could have passed the border because I had the documents that my husband was sick. But how would I get to the border, maybe I would have gone somewhere and put him in a hospital and maybe... There was no cure for him, we know. His brain was damaged in three parts, because they did the Magnetic Resonance Imaging. But, maybe it would have been easier, a different life, maybe the conditions could be better, but I couldn't leave on my own.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** After the war? When did you find out that war was over?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** How did I find out? First I saw that here it would be like a *korzo*, when they waited for the Russian soldier who came here to Grand, there was... Then the street lights were turned on, and we were like, like, for three months when you are like... When I saw the lights on, I said to my neighbor, "Kuku, something bad will happen." You know, I said, "They turned the lights on..." I look at *korzo* and we are talking to one another, "Should we go out... let's meet close to Grand." God knows what's happening.

Tomorrow morning, when KFOR<sup>12</sup> troops came from Macedonia, I was watching from the balcony. Now KFOR came from this side, the road from the hospital, perhaps they did not know the way or they were just too many of them, you know. It was raining, I remember this. They were swearing, "Who invited you here?" And I heard a Serb saying this, "Why are you swearing at them? Do you know who invited them here? Milosević did." I witnessed this.

Afterwards, it was different. They started running away, you noticed it when your neighbors were not around anymore. They left at night or I don't know, but they disappeared. Like this. Then after the war, it was hard because I didn't have a job or anything. Then I worked in a clothing shop my friend owned

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<sup>12</sup> NATO military forces serving in Kosovo.

in Boro Ramiz. I worked for about a year, then she closed down the store. Then we rented the organization, they were foreigners. Then we lived with them until it was privatized. Now I have to wait until I retire, if that happens, but I don't, if it will happen because they burned down our records, I don't have the work booklet, but I have the verdict when I started working, and there might exist something else. They burned down all our records, we have nothing. Life's like this.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** How's your life now? What do you do now?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** My life is good. I have friends, I meet with the honorary sisters once a week, every Wednesday, we do voluntary work, then whatever we sell, the sisters sell the stuff we make and with that money, they buy things for the poor. Basics, oil, sugar, detergent and so on.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Where and what do you work?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** We handcrafts, we do whatever we can. It's good, I have friends, I have a social circle... now of course, work, being near your family, illness and all of that. But I have a social circle, a small social circle that I have a good time with. We go out to drink coffee every other day, in the city and so on. At our age it is not appropriate to go to coffee shops everyday. Sometimes we go, especially on Sundays, after mass we go out for coffee. We go to shopping malls, we walk. Now I have issues with walking, but what can you do? Maybe everything will be okay... whatever's meant to be.

*[The interview stops]*

And her father said, "You just cook. I will bring you what you need from Peja, you just go to university." I went for about two months and I couldn't adapt, and when my father came he said, "Lida, what happened?" I said, "I want to go back to Peja." "He said, "Why?" I said, "I can't anymore." He said, "Okay." When I came home my mother said, "Why did you come back? The conditions were very good. The apartment was in the center of Belgrade and everything." My father said, "We only have one child, we can't make her do something she doesn't want to. If she can't stay there she will come back." And it was done. I said, if it was someone else who knows what they would have achieved, I wasn't. I'm never ambitious about anything, it's interesting.

I'm the kind of person, for example, whatever happened, happened. Did it happen? Yes. It's done. I don't panic, that's how I am. When my husband was sick they said, "Lida, how are you this strong?" It's normal, illness is illness, it could happen to me tomorrow. It's normal, you have to help. It was the same when I looked after my mother, they said, "Lida, you're not even going out..." I said, "You know what, while my mother is alive I want to stay with her." After she dies, what can I do? It's done. That stays with me, what I did for my mother, it's a plus, I did something good in life. When they die what do you have? You say goodbye, that's it.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Tell me... tell me about your experiences in the city while you lived in Pristina.

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** I don't know the city very well, I know the center. We went to Collegium often. Then, we went to the Grand Hotel at the Artist's Club, we went to Restaurant Belgrade...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Where was it?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** It was where Maxi [store] is in the center, where Lesnina used to be, they used to make good pizzas back then. We celebrated Artist's New Year at the Grand, it was, it was held a little after New Year's Eve but I'm not... I can't remember maybe a week or two after. Then...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** How did that happen? What kind of celebration was it?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** It was good, you know, they were all singers. There was Luan Hajra, Ismet Bogujevci, they all sang, it was a good atmosphere, for example, my husband and Leze [Qena]<sup>13</sup> would do some acting. I didn't see them act because they would surround them, I just saw them throwing things. I said, people don't live like we used to live anymore. We were... we never organized anything, it was all spontaneous. We would go out to the city, "Let's go there?" "Let's go." We didn't have a programmed life.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** There used to be a different street where the Cathedral is...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** There were some small coffee shops. There was Allo Allo, people who worked at the radio went there in the morning and during lunch. We went to Lezet. Lezet was known for their good grill, so we often went to dinner there. Where else did we go? We went to Collegium when there were concerts and dancing rehearsals. They also had a buffet there, we would hang out there when they had rehearsals... I think the night of the Bekri,<sup>14</sup> I'm not sure, but I think Veli...

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Which Veli?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Veli Vraniqi. I think he was in the Artist's Club.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Where was the Artist's Club?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** The Artist's Club was in the Theater, it was in the basement.

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<sup>13</sup> Leze Qena (1935-2020) was born in Prizren, Kosovo. She was an actress, who for more than 55 years has played in many theatrical performances in Kosovo and beyond.

<sup>14</sup> Turkish, *bekri*; Persian, *bakrawi*, means a great drinker. The Night of Bekri is a night of drinking without a cause. Colloquially, *bekri* is a person fond of drinking and nightly reveling and good living. A bonvivant, hedonist, bacchanal and drunkard.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** What happened the night of the Bekri?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** Well Veli was very funny, a very good man. We knew him and his family. He would do something, for example, he would pick a woman who had the best décolleté and so on, as Veli did. There was music, it was very, very good. We were always excited for New Year's. We didn't go anywhere for New Year's Eve. We were excited for Artist's New Year because back then, for example, they were all artists, there were also other people, it was a nice atmosphere, it was a nice atmosphere.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Did Albanians socialize only with each other or...

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** No, no. There we socialized with Serbians also, there was no differentiation. At least as far as I know. But if you analyze it like this, Albanians were closer to each other. But they [Serbians] came with us, there were people who weren't at all political. To tell you the truth we only wanted to have fun back then. Good, it was very good. I don't think... those years won't be repeated, or that atmosphere. All those people are now older but it was very good. It all happened spontaneously.

A person once came when we were at Grand for Artists' New Year, a person came and said, "Here are your husband's clothes," I looked at him and said, "What happened? Did he really get undressed or not?" I saw he brought me his shirt, his shoes. Leze did shows with them. Xhevat [Qena]<sup>15</sup> was a good man, good friends. What can we do? Now you have to live because we already did. Most of them died, some went to the Czech Republic, people went abroad. Even those who are here all have different responsibilities.

The women have become grandmothers, they look... they look after children, they're not... they don't have much time. We are... wherever we went, us and our friends, the children came with us, it's interesting. Even when we went to houses like this the children came with us.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Would they stay all night? The children?

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** They would stay for a while, then they would sleep, they were twelve, thirteen years old, but they were always with us. Maybe it's good that they got used to the life we lived. For example, there are some, there are some that socialize like that. But it's completely different now. Now life is different, it isn't how it used to be. I think life is too fast, for example, we worked until 3:00 in the afternoon, you came home, you could make dinner, clean, and everything, and then go out at night.

Now they work until 5:00 in the afternoon, when you come home, what? Pick up the children from kindergarten, come home, it isn't the same as back then. I think we live at a slower pace, more... but

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<sup>15</sup> Xhevat Qena (1932-2003) was born in Mitrovica, Kosovo. He was a well-known actor, who played many roles in films and theater plays. He was married to Leze Qena.



now I can see myself how the day goes. I don't have any obligations, but if you look at it that way, it isn't the same as then. Or maybe because back then, we went here and there, you know, you make a change, but when you just stay like this you don't know what to do.

**Kaltrina Krasniqi:** Thank you very much!

**Lidia Mirdita Tupeci:** You're welcome!