

Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW WITH SAZAN SHITA

Pristina | Date: January 10 and February 23, 2015
Duration: 152 minutes

1. Sazan Shita (Speaker)
2. Kaltrina Krasniqi (Interviewer)
3. Erëmirë Krasniqi (Interviewer)
4. Besarta Breznica (Camera)
5. Donjetë Berisha (Camera)

Symbols in transcription, nonverbal communication:

() - emotional communication

{ } - the interlocutor explains some gestures.

Other rules of transcription:

[] - addition to the text to help understand

Footnotes are add-ons that provide information about places, names or expressions.

Part One

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Mrs. Sazan, can you tell us what kind of childhood you had, what kind of a child were you?

Sazan Shita: I had a very good childhood, I was a quiet kid, I wasn't... I attended school in ex-Yugoslavia in Serbian. We only spoke Albanian in our house...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Where did you live?

Sazan Shita: In Mitrovica. We're originally from Gjakova, but I was born in Mitrovica. It was hard, but I learned the language. In the third grade, elementary school, we had a teach... Not a teacher, she was an imam, Imam Mejrem, she taught us religion. She spoke only in Turkish, now Turkish, Serbian, it was hard. But when she started to make us memorize poems in Arabic, I couldn't memorize them, I don't know why. Maybe because I didn't understand them.

There was this case... She asked me to recite a poem and I didn't know, she said, "Come here," I did, she said, "Curl your fingers". I did {curls her fingers}, she always came with a stick, and with a hijab, she would only show her face. She hit my hands with it, I was around ten years old, or maybe even younger, in the third grade. It was horrible...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: How many siblings did you have?

Sazan Shita: We were seven sisters, seven sisters, and...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What did you parents do?

Sazan Shita: Commerce. We were a big family. My father was keen on education. When it was time for him to go to university, my grandfather allowed him to do so. They got ready, there was Xhafer Deva, my father, and Xhafer Deva's brother and two other men. His suitcase was ready, he was supposed to travel the next day. When he went to the shop, people there told him, "Do you want to lose your son since you're sending him to Vienna?" He says, "No, he will go to school." "He will never come back."

When he comes home he says to my father, “Hetem, you’re not going.” “What do you mean?” “I don’t wanna lose my son.” They go, he doesn’t. But, he was so disappointed he started to drink and smoke. Now my grandfather noticed that he is about to lose his son even though he was home, *duq*, they had *duq* back then, so he fills it with money...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What is *duq*?

Sazan Shita: It's like a bag, a weaved bag, front and back, they were called *duq*. This way and that way. He filled it with money and told him to go buy goods, he wanted to make him excited about working. But, he took that money and traveled and finally settled in Hungary. He stayed there for more than a year, my grandfather could’t find him. Finally, they found him through the Red Cross and brought him back. The moment he came back to Mitrovica, Belgrade called him and took his passport. Then he was married immediately. He started married life. We have, we are... then we, seven, seven sisters...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Who did he marry, who was your mother?

Sazan Shita: Mother? My mother was Miradije Ibrani, she was also from Mitrovica. She had two brothers and a mother. Everything you saw she could sew, she embroidered, she sewed and... she was very capable. And she taught me and my sisters handicrafting, we went to school as much as we could... I am old, and I still craft.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What did you parents do? What kind of craft did your father do?

Sazan Shita: Religion?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Craft, what job...

Sazan Shita: *Bakall*, how... He had a *bakall* like a grocery shop. But not a big one, a small one.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: They sold goods?

Sazan Shita: Yes.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Were there many people from Gjakova living in Mitrovica back then, or?

Sazan Shita: There were. There were many. I think people from Gjakova developed Mitrovica. Because locals there were, at least that’s how I see it, I didn’t know then, but now I do.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Tell me about your elementary education a little more?

Sazan Shita: And when she hit me with a stick I don’t know why I didn’t cry or scream, I was just stuck my grandmother lived near the school, because our house was far from the school. We had a servant, Vehbi, and his mother, who would guard us in the yard, we were a lot of people there. While Vehbi would do shopping for us, whatever we needed at home. I would go over at my [maternal] uncle’s house and he would come get me. When I went that day my grandmother asked, “What is wrong?” I

told her. She said, “Stay the night, don’t go home.” I said, “What about my mother?” She said, “When Vehbi comes I’ll tell him.”

Now when we wanted to sleep, we used to sleep on mattresses on the floor back then. She said, “Lay down next to me and listen to what I say.” She turned off the light, I layed next to her, she started, she said, “Which one did she tell you to memorize?” I said, “*Kulhuvallah*”. She said, “Listen...” She repeated it to me a couple times, I memorized it. Then she said, “What else?” I said, “*Alhamdulillah* also.” We had religious classes only once a week, but it was enough. I learned that, too. When I went to class Imam Mejrem said, “Come here!” I did. I recited both of them, “*Heee, arnauta çytek*¹...” She waved with her hand like this {waves her hand}. I didn’t know...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What does that mean?

Sazan Shita: Beating, Albanians only understand by beating. Meaning, she beat me and that’s why I learned... So when I went home I asked my mother, “What is *çytek*?” Because I didn’t speak Turkish, I understood it but... She said. “Why?” I told her. She said, “Don’t tell your father, because he will go there and make a mess.” I didn’t tell him. But it was very hard.

Then when the first German airplanes... I had just finished elementary school, my mother and father went out in the yard, me and my sister also. The moment he saw the planes he took my mother’s handkerchief and waved at them, “*Ohoo*” {onomatopoeia} I said, “Dad, they won’t see you from up there.” He said, “They will, they will.” I was little, I didn’t know...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: When is your birthday, what year?

Sazan Shita: 1928, I will turn 91 in January. There was a moment, when my father left, he came back with an *Abetare*² and two small flags, he put them on me and my sister’s shoulder, he explained what *Abetare* was in Albanian, “The Albanian alphabet from now on...” “Why didn’t you tell me earlier?” “The time wasn’t right, now it is...”

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What flags?

Sazan Shita: The Albanian flag with the eagle. The one *Vetëvendosje*³ uses now, it was the same. And the time for Albanian school to be opened came, because Germans... we were free, I thought... We didn’t know what it was, but it was important that we were learning Albanian in schools. At the time Ernest Koliqi had sent three-hundred teachers to Kosovo. Everywhere, in the villages and everywhere schools in the Albanian language started. In Mitrovica, Bedri Gjinaj, he was born and raised in Mitrovica, but educated in Albania. You know, how they used to go secretly... but very capable, he was a very capable man. When I enrolled, not only I, but the entire class, the first thing we learned was the flag. I was familiar with it, but his teachings were effective, whatever he would say stuck with you.

¹ Çytek from Turkish *kötek*, which means beating. While, *arnauta çytek*, beating for Albanians.

² Abetare is a children's textbook written in the Albanian language. It was created to help teach the basic language to children and young adults throughout Albania and the surrounding region where Albanians live.

³ Vetëvendosje is a progressive, social-democratic, Albanian nationalist political party in Kosovo.

When we began the class, he said to us, 'Let's learn the flag song.' {She recites} "*Oh red and black flag, all the joy and love that you wave, makes my heart spring with you, in the fields and meadows, mountains and brooks forward with you, I will fight fearlessly, though I am young, I am your soldier and I'll say, today that freedom has come, may the Albanian flag live long.*"

When I went home, I recited it to my father, what a hug he gave to me, his tears poured out of joy. Of course... that school year, it was like ten years in one. Everything that they taught us, the lectures were such that you understood and internalized them immediately. He taught us the song, the poem, {recites}, "*You can hear the trumpet, you can hear the drum, comrades, let's help Kosovo, because our homeland needs protection, let's make the feelings of our enemies disappear. Every good brave man, shouldn't be lazy, in bloody wars, either wins or dies. All the boys, here to Kosovo, take spirit, take heart, trains, works out, ready for war, war isn't sacred, Albanians are not scared.*"

Then, "I am Albanian, {recites} "Do you know the flag? This sacred red and black flag, these beautiful colors, because my ancestors, died in the name of freedom. I will never forget about them! I want to stand as they did, even if the sky touches the ground, I am Albanian, and I want to be Albanian. I recited these two, I had never heard them before, it's been so many years, teachers don't recite them anymore. We should have taught these to our children... But they didn't... That's why I recited them, so they're written somewhere.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Were there other girls?

Sazan Shita: Many. Girls, boys, there were many of them. Then, they opened a ballet school, you can see the pictures, we did ballet. Then at the theatre, we played *Besa* by Sami Frashëri. Imagine, at such a young age I played Vahide. Muharrem Bekteshi played Zymber, Qemajl Deva played Begu. Mirusha and Rexhep were played by Lina and Vilson Shkreli, they were siblings. They were beautiful, they were good at singing, they were tall, pretty. {Recites} "We're like grass, snow or rain doesn't scare us, we want freedom, so we live in mountains..." We would sing this song...

But, when we did the play *Besa*, I couldn't even walk because the spectators took me in their hands, hand by hand because they were scared I would fall, they were... thirsty for culture. We played *Mother and Daughter* by Vinçens Prennushi {recites}, "Why are you crying and whining daughter, crying and whining and arching your brows. I cried so much, Mother, that while I sew, my needle fell, it fell on the balcony, now I'm sitting and looking for it. Mother, love has made me sad, that's why I'm crying while sewing... What are you saying my daughter, did you go crazy? If I saw you getting out of the door, you won't get away with it, no, over my dead body." I remember all of these from when I was a kid, Bedri taught me. And many, many more.

When the school year ended, they gave scholarships for twelve girls from Kosovo, they sent us to Albania. Eight people... at the *Nana Mbretneshë* School in Tirana. Four people, I was part of that... Four people were sent to *Daka* school in Kamëz, Kamëz is like Gërmia here, the same. We learned a lot there. I don't know how our children learn now, but it was a great foundation for us. When the school year ended we came back to Mitro... Here, in Pristina, always moving around...

But (coughs) sorry, when I went to Tirana, by all that our teacher Bedri explained to us, when I got there I kissed the ground. Everybody cried when they saw me... He was very good, very good, smart, and he could interpret very well, and he made you love knowledge.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What was Tirana like at that time?

Sazan Shita: At that time Tirana... I didn't go around Tirana much, only the main roads, because I was in boarding school...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Boarding school, yes...

Sazan Shita: Boarding school. My mother's uncles were tailors, they sewed officer's clothes. My uncle would come and get me every week, not just me, but the four of us. We would sleep over and he would take us back the next day. We travelled that time... when I went there the second time, in '70, there was a big change.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Did you, did you wear a hijab or...

Sazan Shita: No, never, never. Our dad never allowed us to do it. None of us! Only my mother wore, like all the other women who didn't have a choice. But my father was progressive. He... there's a book Fahri Buçinca wrote, he talked about Hasan Pishtina... I was surprised to see that among the four... I know about my father, but among those four people they had put someone else's picture there, the person in the picture is not my father. A picture of the people who studied for a year in Hungary. The book is there.

But he didn't go to school then... My father was very sad. When my sister grew up he immediately enrolled her in high school. He did the same thing with me. My oldest sister came to Pristina for a pedagogical course for three months. There were borders to Pristina, we were with Germans, Pristina was with Italians. She came here for three months, finished the pedagogical course and she was a teacher. But it was really hard for her generation. When we talk about Gjakova I will tell you what happened.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Okay, then you spend a part of your childhood in Mitrovica, right?

Sazan Shita: Excuse me?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: You spend a part of your childhood in Mitrovica?

Sazan Shita: In Mitrovica, all of it. When the war started, then Chetniks won... We fled from the bombardment, we stayed for a while in Boletin, in Isa Boletini's tower. We had a cow, we took it with us. Then when Chetniks started talking, my father got five horse-drawn vehicles, five brave men, they had guns on their shoulders... My uncle's pregnant wife and her mother were with us, it was her first pregnancy. My uncle, my grandmother, me, Melihat, my sister, we were all together.

That's when they make us wear linens to come to Gjakova, to make us leave Mitrovica. My father said, "When they come back I will take the children, my mother, and we will come." Our cousins had an

empty house, and they let us in. When we went there they said, “Oh you’re wearing linens and *cokule*.” *Cokule* were shoes, but a little longer, few people had them. We said, “We are fleeing from partisans and Chetniks...”

A school was opened there, they asked me to go to school immediately. I didn’t want to, because I thought I would be stuck there, I wanted to go back home where... My mother and sisters were in Mitrovica. But, I started going to school. After a while the commandants of that place asked to meet her. They told her, “You’re going to go to a village to teach tomorrow.” My sister... a village near Mitrovica. That wasn’t true, but... she came, she brought a coat, sewed a pair of pants, and took a blanket with her. She was a good tailor.

When she went... there were a lot of people from Mitrovica who went to live in Gjakova. People gave her letters and stuff, she put them in her pockets and went there. When she got there they told her, “You’re imprisoned.” And they took her to the prison. On the way to the prison she asked them, “Please, just take me home so I can notify them I’m going to prison.” She came and said, “Grandma, I’m going to prison...” She said to me, “Bring me other clothes, I don’t want to go to prison with these.” She was worried about the letters she had in her pockets. And she was imprisoned.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Why did they imprison her?

Sazan Shita: Excuse me?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Why did they imprison her?

Sazan Shita: They said that she was Bedri Gjini’s secretary. Some others said that she was Bedri Gini’s fiancée, some... because Bedri Pejani worked with Xhafer Deva. When my [maternal] uncle came, we told him what was happening, he said, “Get a blanket and a pillow for me.” He took them, he went to the prison, they let him in. She met the wife of... I don’t remember the name now, a woman who gave her cigarettes... Beqir Maloku’s wife, now I remember, Qale, she gave... she said, “Light it up.” My sister didn’t smoke, “Light it up, light it up.” And she started smoking. Then we would take cigarettes for her in the prison.

When they took people from the prison of Gjakova to Pristina, they would never come back, they were all executed. Someone told my grandmother, “We saw her...” You know where they put the luggage? “And a man and...” The man was the brother of my uncle’s wife. “They had put a red blanket over them, they were going to Pristina.” My uncle’s wife says to her mother, “They want to kill them both.” She gets dressed, gets ready and goes to Mitrovica.

When she went to Mitrovica, Ali Shukriu’s mother, she was engaged to uncle’s wife uncle, Bardhi. They were eight people, they were eight people when they traveled, they never came back. The wife waited and waited and then got married to Ali Shukriu’s father. She says, her name was Alije, she says, “Please, this is what’s happening, just Melihat, because her parents don’t have a son, she’s like a son to them.” Then they saved them, the prison was on the corner where the court is, that’s where the prison used to be.

My father comes from Mitrovica in Pristina and begs the guard, “Can I just see her when she comes out to the yard, just open the door a little, I won’t talk or anything.” He says, “Yes.” He felt sorry for my father, he was old. When he opened the door a little, my sister said, “Dad, don’t worry, I’m okay.” My father worried that he got the guard in trouble. He left immediately. She was very brave, she didn’t care. There was an officer in Gjakova called Luba, when he asked, when he asked, he asked... he bashed her to the door, she got a nosebleed, and she said to the guard there, “You’re allowing a Serb to maltreat Albanian women.” She was young, alone and brave. One of them takes a gun out and wants to kill Luba, the other one says, “Don’t, you won’t gain anything by doing that.” I told you while she was here.

While she was in Pristina, Ali Shukriu made sure she got out on parole, he told her to not go to Mitrovica, but to stay in Pristina. Our uncle lived in Pristina at the time. She slept there, ate, took showers and everything but she didn’t have money for cigarettes, she said, “Smoking... it was very hard.” A Serb, my father had drank *raki*⁴ in his basement, he was in Pristina and met my sister, he said, “‘*Kako si?*’ [How are you?] His name was Gavra, she said, “We’re all good...” And he gives her some money. My father didn’t give him that money but he said, “Your father gave it to me and told me to give it to you if I see you.” She would say, “I will always remember that.” Even though he was Serbian, he was a good friend to my father. Now there were good and.... We came to Mitrovica.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What happened to your sister then?

Sazan Shita: Excuse me?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What happened after this...

Sazan Shita: She became a teacher.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: She worked as a teacher her whole life?

Sazan Shita: Teacher. She was transferred to Gilan, they didn’t allow her to teach here. Her fiance, he was from Gjakova, Nevruz Nura, he was a teacher in Gjakova. They sent them both to Gjilan, as a punishment. The teachers were very good in Gjakova. There was Sylejman Lleshi, he was from Albania. Skender Curri, Zef Nekaj, they were all very good.

[Vehap \[Shita\]](#) worked with Zef Nekaj in Pristina, they worked in the same office. When I had my son after my daughter, he wrote a postcard to us, “The graceful mom asked me, come at the door my fairy. I went to the yard and saw my dragon brother flying, I went to him, I hugged him and put it in my mother’s lap. Hope he becomes the honor of his country.” I will never forget that. He was Catholic, but he was very, very good. A proud Albanian. Then, he left, he didn’t stay here because they wouldn’t stop bothering him. Just like they bothered my husband and my sister, they were both in prison.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Was your sister accused of collaborating with the Germans, or why did she go...

⁴ *Raki* is a very common alcoholic drink made from distillation of fermented fruit.

Sazan Shita: No, no, she didn't collaborate. Just... in Mitrovica... Imagine, I wasn't even 18 yet, I was 17 or so, I was the first to be registered as a person who didn't have the right to vote. Imagine. I was engaged to Vehap, when he found out, he came to Mitrovica. He went to Ilija Vakić, he was the mayor, he said, "She still isn't eligible to vote, how..." We had some neighbors from Gica, they have five daughters and a son, they were partisans, communists. We were, they called us reactionary, all of us. Oh, the electricity went out [addresses the interviewer].

Kaltrina Krasniqi: No, it didn't. Can you not turn them off?

Sazan Shita: No, no, oh... Sorry.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: It's okay.

Sazan Shita: Now, when we went out, because when I went to elementary school, I was with Bedri. When we went walking through the city with the class, "Sazan, leaf, one, two, one, two start as the leaf of God's angel." And we used to walk by their house. My mother's aunt was their neighbor, she said, "When our day comes we will show her." The aunt says to me, "Look, they don't have a good impression of you." I said, "What will they do to me? What am I doing? I'm walking, I'm singing." I also had a *plis*⁵ and around it I had the red and black flag. They... So I think they were the ones who caused the problem with voting.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: When did you get your right to vote?

Sazan Shita: When I got married, there were no... who asked... When I went to Gjakova, Vehap was very important in Gjakova, he was the secretary in the council. There was this Đoko Pajković, he killed people, he was from Montenegro. He heard that Vehap, people that came from Montenegro, they were being put in houses, and... he didn't allow them. But a... Fiak Hima's father was experienced, he said, "Look, Vehap, whatever you do, take documents, don't trust people." And he asks for a document, and they give it to him, stating that he came to Gjakova and he said, "Who is that secretary?" With disdain, "That... is making Montenegrins leave?" And from there they didn't have a good impression of Vehap.

Part Two

Kaltrina Krasniqi: When did you meet Vehap?

Sazan Shita: When I was in Gjakova.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Can you tell us a little about...

⁵ Traditional white felt conic cap, differs from region to region, distinctively Albanian.

Sazan Shita: Yes. Once he came to the classroom to lecture. After that, I danced ballet in Gjakova, you saw the pictures... so in Gjakova, there was a cafe shop or something, I don't know, but it was a big hall. I danced ballet there. Now when the show was over, the cafe shop owner told me to sit down with Vehap, he was already sitting at the table, and I sat next to him. I didn't even... just luck. From there we started getting to know each other and we got engaged. But while we were engaged Vehap was transferred to Tirana as a translator, Albanian to Serbian and vice versa. In the meantime...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Which year was this?

Sazan Shita: What?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Which year?

Sazan Shita: Which year? '45.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: So after the war?

Sazan Shita: Yes, yes, after the war in Gjakova. After the war. In the meantime, his father, his uncle... his older brother and his mother sell the house in Gjakova, I think they sold it for gold. They wanted to move and buy a house in Tirana. Vehap let me know, he said, "This is what's happening, let's get married and you come here with my family." I said, "No way." He said, "Why? You love Albania." I said, "I love Albania, but I can't leave my parents." It seemed so hard to leave my family, I don't know. But... there was luck in misfortune. Then he goes to Enver, he goes to him and tells him...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Which Enver?

Sazan Shita: Excuse me?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Which Enver?

Sazan Shita: Enver Hoxha. Mehmet Shehu was also there. He says, "I'm enrolled..." Because he was enrolled at the University in Belgrade, "If it's possible I would like to continue it." For education and culture he... he gave him the salary of three months, without actually working. Then he came to Gjakova, and after a while we got married.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Then what happened?

Sazan Shita: Then, after we got married in Gjakova, he got transferred to Pristina. His older brother, he told his brother that he wanted to live separately from him. He had two sisters, two brothers, and his mother, his dad had died. "Good." He says. They called the people, they separated. Now he had all that money, everyone was saying, "Oh he is marrying Ethem Idriz Deva's daughter, he will spend all his money." Meaning that I was used to a good life in Gjakova, while here it was a simpler life. And I heard what people were saying, I said, "Look Vehap, please buy the house because I can't stand when people talk about me." I was from a family... I wasn't used to living... We were simple. My father wasn't luxurious.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What was your father's name?

Sazan Shita: Ethem Deva, Ethem Idriz Deva. It's in the book..

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Was he related to Xhafer Deva?

Sazan Shita: Distant cousin.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: So the Deva family were, many of them lived in Mitrovica, right?

Sazan Shita: Yes, the book Xhafer Deva wrote, 370 years ago they moved from the Deva village, not Gjakova. But that village is near there.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What did your husband decide to do?

Sazan Shita: Eh, when we came to Pristina, first we rented a house, then in this house. We have a neighbor here, Straja, Vehap knew him, he said, "Uncle Sula, do you know any houses that are on sale, I need to buy one." He says, "I have a neighbor, Doctor Pantelic, it's a very good house." He came here, he gave him some money in advance, they were done in half an hour. He goes to the meeting. When he comes home he says, "I bought the house. Tomorrow we're moving." And we moved. Then this house was... there was no better house at that time.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: How old is this house?

Sazan Shita: God knows, in Turkey's time, *yhyyy* {onomatopoeia} the land patent is old... but we renovated it. The doctor had also renovated it, then my son is an architect, he... but it didn't lose that old exterior.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Was it built a hundred years ago, or more?

Sazan Shita: I've been in this house for 70 years, more than a hundred years, or two hundred, or three hundred... very, very old. Now they didn't like him, "He bought Pantelić's house..." And so they imprisoned him.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: For what?

Sazan Shita: Where did he get the money from? You know? They made a big deal out of nothing. Even though he didn't sell or... it doesn't matter. I was pregnant with my daughter, Zana. It was very hard for us. Now, his two sisters, his brother, his mother... they were all going to school. I was enrolled in the gymnasium, it was near here.

Then his oldest sister got a job... we didn't have any income. Vehap's sister got a job as a sister. First she got a job in a store, then as a teacher. She went to school and worked at the same time. They were all very smart. His mother was also very smart, she was... she didn't go to school, but she was very smart. The children inherited it from her, apparently their father was also very smart, I don't know, I didn't meet him.

Now my daughter was born, she was only three days old, I took her to the prison, there was a small window {sighs}. That's the only time he saw our daughter until he came back home, only... eleven months, from one place to another. In three places: Pristina, Gjakova, Peja. They were interrogating him. Eleven months, then... When I went to meet him he said, "Sazan, do you know what is going to happen? I'm going to plead guilty and say, 'I sold the house.' So I can get free from all this maltreatment." They went to court, because he sold the house, he sold the house in exchange for gold, five years... Ali Shukriu was the prosecutor...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Why did it matter that they sold it in exchange for gold, wasn't it...

Sazan Shita: You know what? Back then the partisans, "We don't want houses to be built, we want them all to be the same..." They were all just words. That's how it was, I don't know, but it was horrible. And now, Ali Shukri was the prosecutor, he says, "*Najstrožnija kazna od ped godine*" [The most severe sentence of five years]. He had already done almost two years. There was Nikola Vujačić... they took him from here in Kukavica, Serbia... he worked with Vehap, he was a very good person and he loved Vehap, he valued him.

He came to see me, he said, "*Znaš šta?* You know what? I would suggest you get all those documents and go to Belgrade, my, my... my cousin works there." He said, "Marko Vujačić, "Just go and ask for him, give him the documents and don't worry." I took all of them, I went to Mitrovica to tell my father that I am leaving... "No," he said, "I'm not going to let you go there alone."

We went together. There were a lot of people on the train, it was cold, there was no space... horrible, don't even ask me. Anyway, we got there. When we go there...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: In Belgrade.

Sazan Shita: In Belgrade. When we asked a policeman for the address to the presidency, he told us and we found it. I told the guard downstairs, "This is what's happening." He said, "Give me your ID and go upstairs." "What office number?" He told me. I went upstairs, I knocked on the door three times, no one answered. I knocked again and again and the third time I opened the door a little, there was no one there. I went to the office next door and said, "I need to talk to Marko Vujačić." They said, "He is not here, it's his day off, whatever you have to give him, you can give it to me." So I left them there.

But, I wasn't content. I felt... I said, "I want to meet him, because his brother told me to meet him. I don't know his address..." They gave it to me. It's interesting, they were very nice to me, they weren't like here. We found the apartment. I knocked, they opened the door. When they opened it, there was a huge hall with doors on the side. The moment you opened the door you saw a table in the middle, four people were there playing cards. I asked for him, he got up and said, "It's me." I told him, he said, "*Bez brige*" [No worries].

Me and my father came back. I don't, a month or two after that he came back. He had almost done two years. He came back after two years. He looked for a job, couldn't find one, his friends... it's interesting, they didn't want to be friends with people who were smarter than them. They were very selfish, that was my impression, I was very young but that was my impression, they didn't like him just

because he was very smart. Vehap was very smart. Not because he was my husband, but he was very versatile. He also had a very good memory.

He wrote a book, if I remember correctly, *Tihi Don* by [Mikhail] Sholokhov. He translated it while Zana was sitting in his lap, she was a quiet kid. Then, at some point, he went to Xhavit Nimani, he said, "Either give me a job or I will start working in construction. I can't stay like this anymore. We sold out clothes and some stuff from the house, but it wasn't enough. Then they gave him a job..."

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Let me ask you a question. After the Second World War, the job that your father did, did he continue doing it, was his property confiscated... or what was it like?

Sazan Shita: No, no, no. He worked with a salary. There was no commerce after that. My grandfather died young. His sons, one of them was a tailor, the other ones worked like this, different jobs, they had very small income. Then my father retired. My other sewed, my sisters worked, they lived like this.

We were a big family. My grandfather was... I was little but I can still see an old lady with red hair and red nail polish. I didn't know what those were back then, I asked my mother, "Who is this old lady?" She said, "You want to know everything. An old lady." "Why is this old lady in our house? Her hair is red." It's interesting, I was around three or four years old. She said, "Your grandfather let her in, she has no place to stay."

A cousin of his, he wasn't married, he was sick, his brother's wife didn't want to take care of him, his brother was dead, my grandfather took him in. He had tuberculosis. Imagine, there were so many kids, so many people in the house, back then we didn't know what tuberculosis is. But my father told my mother, "Listen, don't let the children go downstairs. Let them go outside or upstairs, but don't let them go in that room. And don't let them eat anything." Because they used to bring lemons, grapes, everything, not like now, back then it was...

My uncle had a very beautiful daughter, I don't know... I envied her. She always stayed downstairs, and she ate leftovers, like grapes and so that he touched, and she got sick, she got tuberculosis. Eight of my uncle's children died, one after one. Then one of them survived, a son, Kadri Deva, and then four daughters. His daughters are alive, he died two years ago.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Tell me, you lived in Mitrovica, but also had family in Gjakova, tell me...

Sazan Shita: Family in Gjakova? Why? The family I married into?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: No, no, this is the question. I mean, while you were young you traveled to different cities, you went to Mitrovica, Gjakova, Tirana. Then you got married and came to Pristina. Say what was Pristina like when you came? What kind of city was it?

Sazan Shita: Imagine, now, I can't even imagine... Mitrovica had a better infrastructure, Pristina didn't. It was... the houses up here, they were all beys' houses. They were two-story houses. Important people lived there. There were no other houses, all the roads, all... Where the hospital is

now, *hyyy* {onomatopoeia} we used to say, “To go to the hospital...” The hospital wasn’t there, but the road, it was horrible, it was so far away. There weren’t any nice buildings.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: So the city was built while you were living here?

Sazan Shita: Yes.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Tell me a little about the atmosphere at that time?

Sazan Shita: An object would be built, it would be praised, “This got built, this got built.” They would also take money from people who had salaries, everyone was giving money. Not a lot, there was a set amount, as far as I remember.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: They contributed for...

Sazan Shita: Yes, yes, they built it. We... I forgot to tell you, we... when Vehpa went to jail, they evicted us from this house. Đoko Pajković moved here. They sent us to a house, it was called the Pioneer Center, not it doesn’t exist anymore but... there was a house in the center of Pristina. There was a room with cardboard in the windows, don’t even ask. There was a better one upstairs. The owner said, “Sazan Deva, Sazan Deva, come upstairs for a moment.” I did. “Yes?” He said, “I want to ask you something.” “Yes?” He said, “It would be good if you could stay in the rooms downstairs, and we would stay upstairs because I have two daughters...” He has two sons, one of them was in jail, Avni Hasani. He said, “You have a son and a daughter also, it’s messy.” I said, “Hasan Efendi, I can’t give you an answer now, I’ll ask my mother-in-law and I’ll tell you.” I went downstairs, she said, “What did he want?” I told her. She said, “Good, we’ll stay downstairs.” “Okay, I am ready.” We didn’t have money to hire people to fix some stuff.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: So you were living in that house and didn’t have money to renovate it?

Sazan Shita: Yes. Vehap’s mother says, “Sazan, I feel bad for you because you have to work on it now.” I said, “I’m doing it for us.” Sol started, first I mixed some liem paint with sand and covered the holes... then I whitewashed it, I cleaned it, I washed it. I was very, I sometimes hate that I was very hardworking. Sometimes I am thankful that I was so hardworking because that’s how I got here, because when a person doesn’t do anything they get weak. We fixed it, we stayed there. We stayed there for five years. After five years, Đoko Pajković’s wife was here, also Olga Glogovac and her husband. They had two rooms, the others... but she was Đoko Pajković’s lover, and she caught them...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Who?

Sazan Shita: The wife, Đoko’s wife catches them. And she says, “I don’t want to stay in that house anymore.” They lived where RTK is now, from here, they went there. So they said to us, “You can come to the house now.” We went back to our house. Then my son was born here, Fatos, then Arbni, the one you saw. So, I have three kids, a daughter and two sons.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Did you live only with Vehap and your children, or were there other people?

Sazan Shita: Yes, there were other people. We had two people who were renting the place, one that worked at the Radio Station, he played the violin, I don't remember. And the Subotiqi family, but they left. They left, the one who played the violin said, because Vehap was also working at the Radio Station, he said, if you will give me a single-room apartment, I will continue to stay here. Or else, I will look for another job, because I can't live with so many people." It was hard, especially for me, it was very hard.

So they gave him the apartment, he also left. Then Đoko Pajković pulled a few strings so that his wife's sister and husband came to live here, he worked at UDB.⁶ We were stuck with them. They stayed for a very long time. But he was a good man, Danilo Zelenović, he was from Frizaj, I will never forget his kindness, he could have sent everyone to prison... because here we would gather, there were no TVs back then, so there would be thirty people, men and women in the bedroom. The room was as big as this one, maybe a little wider. But again, we would talk about anything...

He was downstairs in another room. But no one has ever called to say that Danilo has said anything. He was a good man, he was a very good man. His wife wasn't as good. She wasn't nice. I mean she wasn't nice to us. Because I don't know how she was other than that, but her husband was nicer to us.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Why were these people allowed to come and live in your house?

Sazan Shita: That's how it used to be, they would take people to every house, it was... in '47. '46, '47 *yhyyy* {onomatopoeia}...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: How did you resolve the problem of the proprietary of your house?

Sazan Shita: At the end, Vehap was trying, Danilo... he had built an apartment, they gave it to him. While the others, the two others, he asked... they asked for a settlement wherever they worked, and they would.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: When were you finally free? (laughs)

Sazan Shita: (Laughs) I think it was around '50... we were alone for six or seven years, just us and Vehap's family. Enough... we always had people at the house for about 17 years. They would come in with their shoes, we had to clean it (laughs).

Kaltrina Krasniqi: How did it start, what was life like after World War Two?

Sazan Shita: What?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What was life like after World War Two, how did life change for you?

⁶ UDB - *Uprava Državne Bezbednosti*, State Security Administration.

Sazan Shita: It was different because Vehap had a good job, I didn't want to leave Vehap and the children... he was very hardworking, he worked at the office and at home. I always wanted to make him dinner, breakfast and everything. I wanted to take care of my children, educate them, sing them patriotic songs and poems. All my children and grandchildren, Arbni didn't study literature but he writes beautifully. He inherited that from his father. When Zana was studying in Belgrade she wrote an article for *Politics*, everybody was saying, "Oh, Vehap wrote it for her, Vehap wrote it." Then they saw that... they wrote even after Vehap passed away.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What do your children do now?

Sazan Shita: My daughter was excellent from the beginning. She went to the gymnasium here. There was a rule in Belgrade, whoever had excellent grades from the beginning of high school, they would enroll at the University of Medicine without taking an exam. Zana always said, "I love medicine." I said, "No, you can study Albanology, it's here, you can get a PhD..." When time came for her to go Vehap said, "Yes." I said, "No." I felt she was going very far away, that's how my brain worked (laughs).

She said, "Mother, I will stay for you, but just know that, even if I turn forty I will go to study medicine." "Go, if you really want to, you can go." And there... She worked very hard, there was a particular subject that the professor was really hard on her, you can't even imagine, pharmacology. I think it was in the third year or... I don't know, I don't remember, she says, "Mother, I have a friend, Nada, she wanted to come to our house so I can tutor her because I'm good at it." "Okay," I said, "Don't worry, you can come."

There were guests of my sister and brother-in-law at our house, they were studying here. When she came, when they came, they stayed for around a month, and they went, they were going to enter exams. The girl had passed it, when Zana came in, "Zana Shita..." with disdain... I don't know, her origin. She was very fierce, she said, "What, I am like this..." And he doesn't even give the exam. She called us on the phone, "Father, this is what happened to me. Please, the book..." She told him what to bring to her.

Vehap went to the library, he took the book, and took it to her in Belgrade. She took it to the professor and said, "This is our origin." He saw it, and finally she passed the exam, but it was very hard for her. Now professors from Belgrade would come here to teach at the University. Zana's friends, Zana graduated then...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What period of time are you talking about, which years?

Sazan Shita: '72, yes '72. They were friends, Beleg and everyone, those who studied in Belgrade. Now he said, "Do you know Zana Shita?" They said, "We do, why?" "I want to go see her." They said, "Anytime." They called Vehap and said, "This professor wants to come to your house." He said, "Welcome." They sat a date and time. We had a room up there, behind the house, it was Zana's room. The library was also there... now it's in the hall.

Our oldest son had a guitar, he didn't play the guitar, but we bought it for him, and we used it as a decoration in the corner of the room. Esat Mekuli and Sadet Mekuli came over. When they wanted to

leave he said, “Esat, this is what’s happening, can you stay a little while longer?” He said, “Of course, we’ll stay.” Then we all went upstairs. They came and... I, anyways, I served. He saw that they were intellectuals, both of them, Sadet and Esat, everyone. So when he saw he was wrong, he says, “Can you give me that guitar?” “Yes.” He said, “I want to sing a song.” So he sang a song, but he didn’t apologize. But we were happy he came and saw how Albanians are, now we... there were a lot of intellectual Albanians, but Sadet and Esat were here at that time.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Due to the political affiliation of Mr. Vehap, did your children have any problems with their education...

Sazan Shita: Zana, not much because of Vehap. Zana had problems in high school. Drita Kursani, she is alive, her classmate, Zana liked reading magazines and everything. There was a magazine *Rinia* [Youth] I think, I don't remember, she said, “Oh, you’re reading...” And she notified the Committee. Like this... she was distinguished because she was smart.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: The other kids...

Sazan Shita: Now I’ll tell you. Now we get the order that Zana shouldn’t go to school... anymore... she shouldn’t be allowed to get an education. Why? I don’t remember the name of the director... anyways, the head teacher and director fight and they barely find a way for her to finish school, because she was in the last year. My oldest son graduated from the University of Technology, very... actually once he said, “Father, I got a nine.”⁷ “How come you didn’t get a ten?” He said, “Father, nine...” I mean that he wanted our children to get an education. The other one studied architecture. They didn’t have problems like that, but none of them studied arts. Because Vehap suffered a lot being in a party, and so on.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: So, what we’re doing is that we’re trying to gather stories about Pristina, how life was in Pristina. I want to know if you went to the theatre during the ‘70s, ‘80s, did you...

Sazan Shita: Yes.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Can you tell what cultural life was like then? Which places did you go to, did you go to any sweets shop, were there any restaurants, what was it like?

Sazan Shita: Yes, I didn’t like sweets shops, when we went there, I didn’t drink anything or... Vehap did. I only liked ice cream in cones, not with a spoon. He said, “Take it, like little kids with a cone.” (laughs) He used to say that, he laughed. We went to the theatre constantly. Muharrem Qena had come to the theatre and told Vehap, “Jasniqi has said to come...” for me, “In the theatre.” Because he knew that I used to play as a kid in Mitrovica, Vehap says, “Yes, immediately.” I said, “What are you talking about?” He said, “About you.” “I can speak for myself, I don’t wanna go.” “Get up and go, because I feel sorry that you’re staying home. You should see your friends in their office, they have fun.

⁷ Grade B on an A-F scale (Ten-five)

They drink coffee, they talk, they hang out almost all day. You stay here and work all day long.” “So what, I’m working for my kids, don’t worry about it. Don’t worry about me, I like it this way.”

We went to the theatre and he was... he wrote constantly about the theatre, he was a theatre critic, movie critic, and... We travelled a lot, we even went to Pula when there were Albanian movies there. A movie, I don’t remember which one was it... Even Abdurrahman Shala was there and... I mean in the movie, not... and he, Vehap, praised him there, he praised him. When he came back here, all of that was written, and the artists read it. Xhevat Qena said to him, “Uncle Vehap praised us there, while here he was criticizing us...” he said, “How come you criticized us here?” He says, “I criticized you here, so you become better. Because I wanted you for that. There, I gave you the prize you deserved.” We traveled a lot, we went on vacations, we stayed at home, not in cafe shops. We used to gather in houses, I had a lot of fun. Now we don’t even talk with each other because of the TV, that’s how I remember it.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Can you tell me about these last years of your life, what did you do? Your kids aren’t here, right?

Sazan Shita: No, only my youngest son is here, my two grandsons are here. I, while Vehap was... Vehap died four years ago, in November, on November 8, 2014. While he was here, I don’t need to read, because the Academy was near the house. Intellectual people were here every day, not the same... I was fulfilled by the conversations I heard here. I was... my biggest wealth are those conversations I heard here.

After Vehap, I read a lot. I read around a hundred pages a day. Now I am reading *Halimi* by Petro Marko, novel. I read it, I’m reading it again, because I already have once. But I got sad, when I turned 90, my son bought me 60 books for my birthday. We have a lot of books, but I like having even more. And I started to look at them. I opened *Kështjella* [The Castle] by Ismaili Kadare, I read it a lot before. I read it again, it felt like I was reading it for the first time. Because they’re all mixed up, I have read a lot... for the moment, now I can’t distinguish them. I’m also old, but I have read a lot. I read and craft. I watch movies, Albanian movies, theatre, and so on.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Do you have sisters?

Sazan Shita: Four of my sisters have passed away. Two years ago my older sister passed away, she was 92. I have two other sisters, one lives in Brezovica, she has a house there and rents it. The other sister lives here in Pristina, I don’t have anyone else.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: With which of your sisters were you closer to?

Sazan Shita: With the oldest one, I was very... and with the youngest. After six sisters we had a brother. The joy was indescribable. My brother was born in ’40. I went to tell my father that my mother had a son barefoot. He said, “Come on, go home.” And I came back crying, I told my mother, “Why did father do this...” “This is how he is, he doesn’t get sad or happy, don’t worry about it.” Then, in ’42 my youngest sister was born, our seventh sister. I loved her very much. I loved her so much that I took a

picture with her while she was little. I don't have pictures with any of my other sisters, only with her. I have pictures with them, but not when they were babies.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What happened to you brother?

Sazan Shita: He died when he was two months old.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Children died a lot...

Sazan Shita: What?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Children died a lot at that time right?

Sazan Shita: Our luck, we were seven sisters, when he died I said, "Why weren't we the ones who died..." My father said, "Don't be sad, God gave him to us, God took him from us." "Why didn't God take us, but him?" He said, "God plucks flowers from the garden." Trying to calm me down.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Was he religious?

Sazan Shita: My father? He was *Bektashi*,⁸ but he was progressive. He knew everything, they would recite things to one another.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Was it a family tradition...

Sazan Shita: No, no, just my father. But in Vehap's family, yes, they were. His father, aunt and uncle. Because it was very popular in Gjakova.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What do you think is the most important thing that has happened during your life?

Sazan Shita: For me? The most important for me was when Vehap was freed, for me, from everything he went through during those eleven months. When he went there he even chopped wood, imagine that. And for nothing. That was it for me. Not even my children's birth. I didn't have a brother... when my son was born... when my daughter was born, Vehap's mother was so happy. I thought to myself, "She is just trying to make me feel better." But, when my daughter gave birth I realised what it means to become a grandmother. Because you don't have to take care of them, the love is bigger. And you're not worried about chores... you're more free. At least this is how it is for me. Now I have another grand daughter, she is the daughter of my oldest grandson, Ardi Shita. I love her so much.

I am a great grandmother. Zana's oldest daughter has a son and a daughter, so three times. I have had a very happy life, during childhood and as a married woman. I had problems, but I overcame them. What's important is that Vehap didn't just love me, he adored me, I felt that. I also felt that about his family, I loved them a lot, I respected them. Maybe not love... I can't say... but I respected them, I looked after them. We lived together, they all got an education, they all got married, I mean the kids, his brother and sisters. Now that I am old, my son takes care of me. Even those who live abroad,

⁸ Islamic Sufi order founded in the thirteenth century, mainly found in Anatolia and the Balkans. More diffused in Southern Albania, it has a presence in Kosovo as well, in particular in Gjakova.

actually my daughter wanted to come to see me now, but I told her, “Don’t do it.” She said, “Everyone tells their daughter to come home you tell me not to come.”

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Where is your daughter?

Sazan Shita: She is in America. Now, forty years [ago] she said... Imagine, the doctor in Zagreb took her to a more specialized course. When she went there she did some research on children, she said, “This happened...” He got so happy. But Skender Boshnjaku and Trajković told her, “If you can come for three days yes, if you can’t, we can’t do it.” She said, “Only if I had wings I could come there for three days and... I worked on it and everything...” But, she forty, and she had to pass the exams in the university. They only accepted her PhD. It was in Latin and with drawings. But those drawings... you could understand everything in those drawings. So she stayed there.

Part Three

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Can you, now is the last stage, but let’s talk a little bit about the period of the last war.

Sazan Shita: What?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Let’s talk about this period of the last war, ’99. How did you get through...

Sazan Shita: That... my oldest son had a son and daughter, and a wife... they were separated, when the war started, his wife said, “I will take the children and go to Skopje, from Skopje then we go to...” Fatos said, “I can’t leave my children here, you can go.” He stayed here. I went to the market, to tell you the truth I wasn’t happy he stayed here. I wanted him to go with his wife and children. When I got here he was shaving, his face was all yellow. I said, “Arbnasha...” the other’s son wife, “Arbnasha, what is wrong with Fatos?” She said, “Mother, he is sad because his wife told him, ‘You either come, or I will go to America.’” Because her sister was in America (coughs). And now he... he... he said to Vehap, “Let’s all go, Arbni and everybody.” He said, “Son, you can go, it’s enough that we don’t have to worry about you, go.”

Now the youngest, “No way, I won’t go anywhere.” Once... a few people came, I don’t know if they were soldiers or paramilitary, I don’t know. And they ask Vehap, “What do you do?” I wanted to say, because he never kept anything hidden, so he would say that he works for the Human Rights Council, it’s weird, he never kept anything hidden. I would tell him, “You can’t tell everything...” “Sazan, that’s not where my mind is at right now, I will talk.” “Good.” And he said, “I’m a translator.” He said, “What do you translate?” He said, “Albanian to Serbian and Serbian to Albanian. He had all his books here, her said, “These are the ones translated from Albanian to Serbian, and these are the ones translated from Serbian to Albanian.” “Oh, okay.”

There were five people. He said, "Do you have na ID?" "Yes." He gave it to them. We went outside, they said... my youngest son was still here, but he wasn't home. He said, "*Šta ćemo sa ovog starca?*" [What should we ask for from this old man?] I heard them. Now when they were about to go out, I said, "*A legitimacija?*" [What about our identification documents]. They threw them away somewhere. He said, "*Ne treba mu njemu legitimacija*" [He doesn't need them anymore]. I got shivers. They went out. I was waiting for them to come back. The door would open from the inside, and when they rang the doorbell once, I would speak in Serbian. When it... I told the people that we knew that they would ring the doorbell three times. Actually Adem Demaçi would come here often... he went around the city during the war with his sister, he would say, "How come they haven't killed me." He wanted someone to kill him, it was weird.

Once he came and rang the doorbell once, I said, "*Ko je?*" [Who is it?] He says, "*Ko je... It's me...*" I thought to myself (laughs)... I went, opened the door. When they came in I said, "Next time please ring the doorbell three times, when you do it only once I speak Serbian." And it passed. Then after a while three people came again, "*Daj mi ključ?*" [Give me the key?] our son had a car. He said, "Give me the car key." I gave it to him. But, it was broken, it didn't start. He said, "I'll fix it tomorrow."

Ah, no, before this there was a woman Nada, she worked with Vehap. I went there, I said, "Please make it happen for Arbni to leave the house, I am scared." He said, "We'll see." I went there alone, I used to go out. I spoke Serbian, I wasn't dressed... because those who came from villages would wear dresses and pajamas underneath, it was horrible... the street was filled with... they suffered, because they noticed that they... so they used them however they wanted. So they came and asked for the car key, my son was upstairs so he gave it to them. We started the car, he had two cars, one was his and the other one was his wife's. So he gave them his wife's car, they took it.

Now I went to Nada because they said, "We went to see you here tomorrow. The train leaves for Skopje tomorrow." I told him, and he went. Now they came back the second time. There was a Serb who made keys, they were brothers, four or five brothers, at the post office there, behind the post office. You probably don't know, you're young. One of them was a paramilitary. He came once, he came in and out, he didn't say anything. He saw the car. Two others stayed behind him.

One of Arbni's friends, he was an only son, he would come here often. They had sent him the letter to become a paramilitary. He comes here, "Can I stay here?" Vehap says, "Sure, welcome." Now when they came for the second time, he said... One had a machine gun, the other one... he... said, "I'll fix it." He opened the hood of the car, he had the tolls with him, he opened it. He started it... they took it. He was here, Arbni's friend... "Aaa..." he said. He felt bad. I said, "It's okay, they can take it." And they gave me a letter...

A supervisor said, "We can't... we need it for the army. But whoever comes to get it *traži ceduljicu*" [ask for a document]. Now when they came to get it, I said, "*A cediljicu?*" [What about the document?] He was with them, he said, "*Doneću ti*" [I'll bring it]. After a week, Vehap was in the other room resting, I was... he said, "Here, I brought it." When I read it {pretends to read it} I said, "But I didn't sell the car to you." He said, "*Pogrešno*" [mistake]. He wrote something on the other side. It wasn't of use but whatever. He went...

I said, “Look, we keep our worked.” Before he brought it to me... He said, “I keep my word, too. I will bring it to you.” I just wanted, I couldn’t get the car.” When he brought it to us, he said, “We fixed the car.” And when we went out, he said, “Do you want to see it?” “Yes.” It had a poster of Šešelj in the window... he looked at me to see how I react. “Ou,” I said, “This looks really nice.” Imagine! After a while it was obvious that the war was ending. Arbni’s friend said, “Go get the car, now you can get it.” I said, “Eii...” He said, “No, no, you can get it. You know what? Tell them it is your son’s car, his grandmother bought it for him...” He said what to say and... *Kuku*,⁹ when I think about what I’ve done {touches her head}.

I went there. When I went there, where the military was, the car wasn’t in the yard. They told me they were transferred. I go from one place to another. Some young guys... from... going from one building to another, there was a place where people went in two by two, “*Stoj!*” [Stop!] I got there at some point. When I got there they say, “What do you want?” I told them, “Give me your ID and the document (coughs). My father is the supervisor here.” I gave them to him, after I gave them to him I realized I made a mistake. When he came, he said, “It isn’t here. *Ali ja ću da je nadjem. Ona je bila princeza grada...*” [But I will find it. It was the city’s princess]. It was a good car, a big one... .. “*Ja ću da ga uzmem, nemoj više da ga tražiš*” [I’ll take it, don’t look for it anymore]. “*Dobro sinko, daj mi legitimaciju ti.*” [Okay, son, give me the legitimation document]. I was being very nice to him, I was so happy when I got, I wanted to come home.

On my way back I see Skender Nuka, he said, “Where are you going?” I told him. He said, “Are you crazy? People are leaving, you went to take the car.” I said, “Sometimes people make mistakes, what can I do? I made a mistake.” When I came home there were five people waiting at the house, paramilitary. The door was open, Vehap had left the shovel in the yard... I don’t know, they were there. I was scared, I thought, “Oh, now...” They had put everything they robbed in our neighbor’s house. But, in the meantime our neighbor put nails in the door, and they couldn’t do it anymore. Now they wanted to go from our house there, because our house was near that house. But until I realized...

They came once during the night, the military was at the gymnasium. Our neighbors had a light in the wall, it was only the light bulb. When it was windy it would move, I didn’t even notice it. They came, they knocked in the door, I had to open the door. They said, “Are you trying to signal the airplanes with that light?” I said, “What light? Come on in!” They came in, he looked at it, he said, “Here.” I said, “That’s not in my yard, it’s in my neighbor’s yard.” “Go turn it off.” I said, “I’m a woman, you can go. You’re soldiers, you can do it.” I was brave in those moments, it was late at night, around 22:00, I don’t remember... the troubles (laughs).

Kaltrina Krasniqi: When the war ended?

Sazan Shita: When the war ended, my youngest son came home. Zana stayed there, Fatos stayed there. Zana and her daughter came to the border because she was a psychologist, they... children and everyone, and they oriented them on places where they wanted to go, she came to help, shortly. She said “Come here fast, I’ll take you to America.” Vehap said, “I don’t want to go to America. We are free now, I am comfortable in my own home.” My son also came back, because he was in Belgrade. He

⁹ Colloquial, expresses disbelief, distress, or wonder, depending on the context.

wanted to go to Hungary, but his three-year-old son didn't have a certified passport. So they stayed in Belgrade, they had a lot of troubles but he had friends there, some architects... he had friends. Like this. We settled after this.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What was it like when you got the news of liberation?

Sazan Shita: You know? We didn't even get happy. We were so scared, it was horrible. I am talking about myself... ten of our people were in America. Ten, no, actually nine people. But it was very hard, it wasn't easy. We would hear Chetnik songs here, they would play them very loudly *uhhh* {onomatopoeia} those songs, they were horrible. And just when you saw them coming, it was very scary, you didn't know if you're going to survive. We were lucky. Some of our neighbors also survived, they were older... no, we were the oldest, but I mean they weren't young. The young ones... my son was the last to go, the last month.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Who?

Sazan Shita: Arbni, with his wife and two children went to Belgrade, they wanted to go to Hungary. He stayed here, it was hard for us...

Kaltrina Krasniqi: What happened to the Serbian boy that was at your house?

Sazan Shita: What boy? The Serbian? He went to Belgrade.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: When did he go?

Sazan Shita: He went after... He stayed for a while, because he knew a lot of people. He was a good man. He had a mother, he had sent his wife to Belgrade, his mother, "*Teta Sazan, oćeš da dodješ kod mame?*" [Aunt Sazan, will you come see my mother?] "*Zorane, zašto?*" [Zoran, why?] He said, "She doesn't want to come, I told her to come." I said, "I will come, and see if she listens to me." She said, "I don't want to waste all the effort we did all these years and start there from zero. I don't want to go to Belgrade." I said, "You should go with your son, no one will take your house here. You can come here anytime." I thought to myself... I really thought they could come back, I didn't think they were going to leave for good.

Once they came door to door, and one of them bangs on the garage, they say to one another, "*Posle ćemo ovde da dodjemo*" [We'll come back here later]. I was in the yard. I opened the door, I looked around. They evicted people from all the houses around. They didn't open our door. Even if they wanted to, I wouldn't have opened it, because it was obvious that it was the end. I opened the door to go to the *türbe* [tomb], you know here in the corner, I had friend who lived near there, Fatime. I wanted to see her... when I went out there was a line of people. Some people had bags, some... *Kuku* {touches her chest} I felt it here, I came home I said, "Vehap, this is what's happening..." He said, "Don't tell me." I said, "I couldn't go to Fatime." They were all coming downhill.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: These were people that came from Taslixhe, right?

Sazan Shita: What?

Kaltrina Krasniqi: These were people that came from Taslixhe, right?

Sazan Shita: Taslixhe... all of them, all of them.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Where did you see them? You saw them from...

Sazan Shita: I went out to the street to go to my friend's house.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Yes. So you saw them near the gymnasium...

Sazan Shita: Near the gymnasium, and when I turned around the crowd was, you know, it was horrible. It was very, very hard. I made some food and I went out. In front of our house there were some officers, some... One of them would always say hello to me... are your feet cold? [addresses the interviewer]

Kaltrina Krasniqi: No, I'm good.

Sazan Shita: He would say hello to me. He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I went to my friend's house but she wasn't there. The door was closed." I offered him some food, he said, "No, thank you." And it passed. The second time I went there, he came out again, now I was a little suspicious. He said, "*Ja sam iz Hrvatske, nisam srbin*" [I'm from Croatia, I'm not Serbian]. I said, "Hvala što ste..." So he noticed that I was scared. I always tried to hide it, but face expressions betray you.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: These lines of people, where were they going?

Sazan Shita: To the train. To the train to go to Skopje and... leave. Ahmet Mumxhiu, I don't know, he was a mathematician, he was stuck in Bllaca. He died there in the crowd. I saw my neighbors leaving, they were a family of five, I said, "Fahri, where are you going?" He said, "I'm leaving." "Go back to your house, do you want to go and be stuck in Bllaca? Ahmet died there." "No..." I said, "I swear, I heard it on the news, go back." He didn't after a while, they came back. He said, "It was just like you said it would be." I said, "It's not about what I said, but that's how it was." It was the last night, and they killed Nazmi Gojani.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Yes.

Sazan Shita: The last night. Bajram Kelmend and his two sons... *Kuku* when I went to express my condolences, horrible, there were three dead people in one house. That woman was so strong, she talked about what she did in Belgrade, how Bajram... she told her husband's story... it was hard for her. Now she only has a daughter.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: Mrs. Sazan, thank you so much.

Sazan Shita: You're welcome, thank you for listening to me.

Kaltrina Krasniqi: We really wanted to meet, to talk to you. If you think you have more stories to tell...

Sazan Shita: No, only little thingd. I said the important things. There's nothing...

Part Four

[This part of the interview was conducted on February 23, 2019. At the request of Mrs. Shita, we sat down with her to talk about other things that were left out of the interview conducted on January 10, 2019]

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Okay, we wanted to talk about your childhood again, so we have that childhood chapter... So let's start from your childhood.

Sazan Shita: Yes, yes, from childhood. I had a very good childhood, but with a few worries. We were a big family, seven sisters. My father loved school, he sent us all to school. I was not a very quiet kid, my mother hit me twice, I remember it very well. There was an old lady, she wasn't very old, but I thought she was old at that time, she took care of us. Her son, Vehabia, he took care of the garden.

Once my mother was in the kitchen, the kitchen was further from the house. The house was very big, with a big yard, we had fruits, vegetables, flowers. My father planted flowers, we had roses, hyacinths, they had such a nice smell when they bloomed. We had two kinds of lilies, my uncle grew vegetables. There was a corner in the yard... there was a hole there covered with mud and soil. But, they painted there every day, they took the lime and did it, the house was big.

My father's cousin brought us *dimia* from Gjakova, they were very beautiful, they were handmade. My mother liked it when we wore them. She would always dress us nicely. That day, I said to her, "Will we wear the *dimia*?" I was five years old back then, I have a picture. We wore them. My older sister, Melihat, she was two years older than me, she said, "Can you jump over that hole with mud?" I said, "If you do it, I will." She did it, so did I, but we got our *dimia* dirty. My mother hit me because of that, she said, "Don't get dirty!"

I remember the second time she hit me, we had a couch in the living room with a pillow from hay. You probably haven't seen one of those. And for a week my mother worked with my grandmother in the kitchen. And for a week my uncle's wife cleaned it. And back then I wasn't even five years old yet. So she cleaned the room, she went out, I took those pillows and put them on the floor and started to step on them. When my uncle's wife came in, she yelled, my mother didn't know what was happening and came running. When she came, "What happened?" She said, "I just cleaned the room, Sazan put the pillows on the floor." "Why?" I said, "She didn't do it the way you do it. You step on them, she didn't." She hit me very hard there, I will never forget it. My grandmother, my father's mother, she had some marbles, they were made out of metal, they were shiny. I wanted to play with them.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What are they?

Sazan Shita: Marbles. You know the marble game...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Ah okay, yes, yes.

Sazan Shita: Eh marbles. She said, “They’re not for playing.” I said, “But I like them.” She said, “You like them but if someone gets sick these help them get better.” “How do they get better with these?” She said, “I give five of these to people whose intestine has gotten mixed up. I tell them to get in a horse-drawn vehicle, four people should hold the sick person by the legs, and he should swallow them one by one and he will get better.” That’s how she healed people. My father’s aunt, once I was really sick, my throat hurt. My father wasn’t home, he was travelling. God knows what I had in my throat. My mother said, “Go to Aunt Gjylzade, she will help you.” She lived near our house. When I went there, she put her finger in some powder, it was ammonium carbonate, I realized later what it was. She strained it and rubbed my tonsils with it. When I went home I could breathe fine. These are some memories I can’t forget.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And was folk medicine more popular than the doctors at that time?

Sazan Shita: Yes, yes, people didn’t go to doctors, and not everybody could go to doctors even if there were any. I mean our family had the conditions to go to doctors..! My father 86 years ago brought a tailor at home to make dresses for my mother and my uncle’s wife. Dresses with waves, only a few people had dresses like that at that time. I mean that it depended on the family. These are some of my childhood memories. Then you already have the information about my education.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can we talk about this for a while? I’m interested to know about this internal structure, the organization in the family, you had that old woman who took care of you, your mother cleaned for a week, then the next week your uncle’s wife cleaned. So there was an internal organization of work.

Sazan Shita: Yes, yes. They had order. One week one would clean inside the house, the other would clean in the yard, the kitchen was at the door of the yard. Far from the house. It wasn’t inside like now. And that’s how they worked.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What kind of a house was it? What...

Sazan Shita: It was a very big house. It was a very good house for that time. We had grapes in the yard and everything... we had all kinds of fruit in our yard. They would put them on hay and take them into the basement. The basement wasn’t like the ones now, with tiles and so, there was a small window there where we left the fruits so they wouldn’t rot.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was the house Ottoman style or... Was that house in Mitrovica in Ottoman style or how?

Sazan Shita: Well it was simple, I don’t know what you’re thinking.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes, you said it had couches inside...

Sazan Shita: Yes, there were drawers where we put mattresses in, because back then we slept on mattresses. Under the mattresses there was a drawer where they put wood. There was another

drawer, it had two separate drawers. We put there the tea kettle, the tray, sugar, things like this. There was a bathroom. It was like a bath, like a bath. Like a small bathroom, we showered there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Who was that old lady? Was she a family woman who took care...

Sazan Shita: Who took care of us? No, she was a Roma woman with her son. She had a pretty dark skin tone, now that I think about it. Vehbia used to take bread to the bakery and brought it here. We would bake five breads, the pans were around forty centimeters, now that I think about it. We always had cornbread. The cornbread... When we had *sarma*,¹⁰ when we had meat with cabbage, there was always... or meat with onions.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You mentioned that there were Jews in the neighborhood ...

Sazan Shita: At... at... at... at my mother's mother. At my grandmother's neighborhood. There were three houses of Jews. They didn't have a yard. They went out in front of their houses, they had a... a few small chairs, they sat there. They always had pans with baked pumpkin seeds in front. They always ate seeds. The men worked... for example, we would play with dolls, we would make *dimia* for our dolls, or we would make dresses for babies or... We did everything. We would go get the fabric from them, they had samples you could see from each fabric. We took those that we liked, we would take them at home pretending to look at them and then buy them. Shortly, we took them without permission and we would work with them. Me and my cousin, we were closer because my sisters didn't play with dolls like me. They played other games, I liked playing with dolls. I made beds out of wires, I would cover it with those sheets that are... the ones that open, I don't know what they're called. I think there are still sheets like that. And ribbons on the side. I would made *sallenxhak*, do you what it is?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Swing...

Sazan Shita: Swing, yes. I would make a square out of it, I would cover it with a pillow, it looked like a real swing, but for dolls.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about the fabric you used to take from the Jews...

Sazan Shita: The Jews, they gave it to us. They were the main people who sold these in Mitrovica. Their stores were always supplied. There might have been Albanian also but those stores were really impressive to me. They would give them to you, they didn't say anything. We would cut them and then we would return them. They didn't check. They didn't think we would need then centimeters of fabric.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were you friendly with...

Sazan Shita: Yes, yes. Especially with this... with Juliana's mother, who, when the Germans came, before they came, they already know they were taking the Jews, she brought her daughter at my [maternal] uncle's house, "Please, take my daughter, take care of Juliana." That was her name, she

¹⁰ Sarma is a dish of vine, cabbage, monk's rhubarb or chard leaves rolled around a filling usually based on a combination of grains, like bulgur or rice, and minced meat.

was a very good girl, she was around 25 years old. She was nice, but also when you get close to someone...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They almost... They gave her to them... or? Did her parents give her away just to save her...

Sazan Shita: He said, "I'll leave her to you." He could have married her because she was very beautiful, very nice. But my uncle, Albanian are a little (laughs), we are selfish, we want to only look at our people. Even when it comes to marriage, we want to marry Albanians. No way he would get married to a Jew. Maybe she thought that way.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So they took her too...

Sazan Shita: Yes, yes. They figured it out. Someone told them. Someone probably told them.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Do you remember how they got rid of Jews in Mitrovica? Did they go house to house? Do you remember the methods they used?

Sazan Shita: They were called *Feldgendarmerie*.¹¹ When they walked around the street, the way they walked was very scary. Especially... it was very scary. They were very harsh. Very. They took them all from their houses. They closed the doors... I don't know what they did to those houses.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Do those houses still exist in Mitrovica?

Sazan Shita: No, no, it's... Mitrovica has changed a lot. There are new buildings, actually the neighborhood my grandmother lived in... I might not be able to find it. I haven't been there in so long, I had no reason to. I don't have family there. I had a sister then but she would come here often.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What language did you speak to... to Jews?

Sazan Shita: They spoke their own language, we never understood it.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: No, what was your common language?

Sazan Shita: With the Jews? Serbian, Serbian. They spoke Serbian, yes. We also spoke Serbian.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Would you go to their celebrations?

Sazan Shita: No.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did they come to yours?

Sazan Shita: Excuse me?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did they come to your celebrations?

Sazan Shita: No. We didn't get mixed up. I don't know why. We did that with Serbians. Serbians would come. We had... My father had *Gospodja Mitra* [Mrs. Mitra], that was her name. She had three daughters and we were friends with them, we didn't distinguish them from Albanians. I mean the

¹¹ German: *Feldgendarmerie*, field army.

children. Older people knew how things were, but we didn't. Later, yes. Later... Later I realized we shouldn't be so friendly.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Do you remember anything else about that Jews that you think you could tell us?

Sazan Shita: No. No, no, I don't remember.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What did those associations between families bring? What kind of friendship was it? Something, some details...

Sazan Shita: Excuse me?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Those associations between your families, what did they bring...

Sazan Shita: Between Serbs?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: No. I mean the Jews.

Sazan Shita: Oh Jews. The women just stayed all day long, they didn't work. They were all fat. They had two brides that were young, and this Juliana, they weren't fat. All the others were. They ate pumpkin seeds all day long. I don't know what they did inside the house. Why did they find the time to work?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You mentioned that they didn't have a yard, did they have shops there or...

Sazan Shita: No, no. That's what their houses were like.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Okay.

Sazan Shita: Their houses were like this, but you went straight out onto the street.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did Albanians have a wall outside, or how?

Sazan Shita: Yes, I don't remember any Albanians having houses like that.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Very interesting.

Sazan Shita: One of them Juliana's mother, she had... she had... she had stairs and had a bakery downstairs. A bakery. The other two houses didn't, they went out straight to the street.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Do you remember their cuisine? What did they eat?

Sazan Shita: I didn't go inside.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: No, no, I mean what kind of food did they eat, or was it the same as ours?

Sazan Shita: I don't know. I Don't know, since I didn't go inside... we never went inside their houses. We only saw them in front of their houses. We didn't go inside. Maybe we would have gone in but...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Mrs Sazan, you wanted to... talk about the war again.

Sazan Shita: Yes.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: There were some details that you remembered and you thought they were important to be documented. Can we talk about that?

Sazan Shita: Yes, yes. Yes.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was war like for you?

Sazan Shita: Both of my sons didn't want to leave without us. They either wanted us to go with them or them to stay here. My oldest son and his wife had two kids, Arta and Ari. She took the kids and said to Fatos, "Fatos, I won't let my children stay here, I will take them and go to Skopje, come with us." He said, "No, I will not come without my parents." And a day before the roads were blocked, I was in the market and when I came back I found him... I've already said this... he felt very bad. He said, "I'm sorry I'm turning my back on you." We were happy he was going to his family. Arbni with his wife and children, Ardi and Albi. Albi was three years old. He stayed with us for 26 days. We went through all of those troubles and hard things with him. Arbni would put up stairs and would see the flames when a house would be on fire as if it were near the house. There were a lot of flames during the night. In front of our house there was a huge flame, it seems as if it was coming...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did any house in the neighborhood burn down or...

Sazan Shita: Yes, here in front of us.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: We were talking about when the neighbor's house was burnt down, were they involved in politics, why exactly their house?

Sazan Shita: No. No, no, no. But in our neighborhood there was only one Serbian house. They had three sons. There was Đurđa, she was called Đurđa. Her sons were very troublesome. When they evicted them, luckily they didn't come here, someone just kicked the garage door. They didn't come inside, they didn't knock... we didn't leave, cause they evicted them all. Actually, when the war was over the owner came to meet them, they were outside. They said, "Give us the money." He said, "I don't have money." He took his little daughter and said, "Either give us the money or I will throw her in the well." So he was forced to leave.

I went to the grocery store. I bought bread and milk to give them, because she had five children. I knocked, no one came out. I looked through the hole, I saw some shoes someone wore and would come at our house all the time. They were clogs. And I came home and said, "Vehap, they're not... there was no one in the neighbor's house." Then we found out they evicted them. So they came and lived there for a while.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: The paramilitary?

Sazan Shita: That... that... the Serbians not... They left a bag full of girls' clothes in front of our house because they couldn't take them at their house. I saw it, but I left. I didn't need them... I would sometimes open the door to look outside. Then suddenly one night we saw the house was on fire, it was horrible. In Bajram Kelmendi's neighborhood so many houses were burned down, imagine, we would see the flames here, as if it was in front of our house. Those flames were terrifying at night. Arbni would check every house that would burn down, we thought they would burn down our house,

too. We were, they noticed that we were going in and out, especially me. I didn't let them go out, I did. I spoke Serbian better than the rest. I had nice clothes, like... Maybe they didn't even know I was Albanian, when I went near the theater to talk on the phone with my children, they would listen to horrible songs, Chetniks, horrible songs.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Where did you go to talk on the phone?

Sazan Shita: At a house, my sister lived near... near the hospital, in an apartment building. In that building there were many families, they didn't bother them. They let them have phones. They took our phone away, we didn't have one. I went there two, three times, not more.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did wait to buy bread or...

Sazan Shita: Of course. There was always a line in the grocery store. We had everything at home. I mostly went there for the neighbors here because I felt bad for the children. He said, "Aunt, we only have left a half sack of flour, I don't have more." He didn't even get to use that half a sack, because they evicted them. They evicted him.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did they evict the whole neighborhood, or just a few?

Sazan Shita: There was another neighbor that stayed home, they didn't bother him, but the rest left. All of them. Once when I went to... There's a small mosque at the Clock Tower. I had a friend there, Fatime. Time after time I went there, to give her something or just to see her. When I went there once, I saw the crowd of people walking from uphill, I couldn't take it. I came home and told Vehap what was happening, he said, "Don't tell me."

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They moved people out of the city, Albanian that were evicted from their houses...

Sazan Shita: All of them, all of them. Just like sheep.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Toward where were they pushing them?

Sazan Shita: They were going downhill. I don't know if they took them to the stations, or to Albania, I don't know but... there were so many people.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did you decide to stay at home?

Sazan Shita: Well now... When four-five people came at once, Arbni was here, but they didn't go upstairs, only to a room here downstairs. Talked with Vehap, I said, "Are they translators, they are translators because it was for human rights, gave me the materials to hide them." And he said, "Sazan, hide them, I can't know where, because if they ask I will tell them." I dig a hole, we have a small backyard behind the house. I dug and I hid them, I placed them in the dirt. And they were saved. One night came two people, both armed. One was very tall, the other one shorter, *trrap, trrap, trrap* {onomatopoeia}, and one of them went upstairs. Arbni with his family was there, his children and wife. We were downstairs.

The one that was downstairs had a rifle and he said to Vehap, "Sit on the second stair. Sit." He held the rifle at his mouth. Then he said, "Give me the money." He took his wallet and opened it. Said "Only

that amount? Give me the money.” The guy upstairs heard, and he gave the one upstairs some, he came downstairs and said “*Idemo*” [Let’s go]. Said, “Tomorrow we better not find you here.” Now the boy says, “Mom, we’re all going.” “Please Mom you go, don’t worry about us.” We had decided to stay in the house. We were old, where were we going to go? Whatever happens, we are in our home. But the kids were not at peace. He was saved then and went out. And one day, a soldier, that was the last day... the last day...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: The bombings?

Sazan Shita: Ah, now the bombings. When the bombings were happening, the young guy, Albi, three years old came running from upstairs here to find shelter underneath the table, “I’m staying here at father Hap,” it probably felt like he was being saved here... it was sad. Those eyes sparkled with fear. It was terrifying. The last night, when it was... when Nazmi Gojani was killed. Nazmi Gojani was in his house, went in, killed him, took his money. He was killed and after tomorrow and the day after that there was no more war. I mean the last day. A soldier came and said, “I came to shower.” I said, “I don’t know if we have water or not.” We had water, but... and what I had... I didn’t have it. When I said, “*Izuj se*,” he took off his shoes and noticed we are Albanian. He said, “I’m going somewhere else.” He stayed for twenty-six days...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Went to Skopje or how?

Sazan Shita: No, they went to go... go out of the country, I don’t know which place it was, I forgot. But most importantly they were saved.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did you experience the 12th of June, the day of Pristina’s liberation?

Sazan Shita: And on June 12th when I saw that the soldiers were coming...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: We were talking about June 12th when the soldiers came. Tell us which soldiers came first? And how did they go to the others?

Sazan Shita: Soldiers on the streets, so many. And as soon as I saw them I thought they were hungry. Behind Elena Gjika School. I came home and made a few sandwiches and while going outside Zekeria Cana came, he was a family friend. He said, “Where are you going, the lady of the house?” I said, “There I saw a few soldiers”. He said, “Good luck.” He came over and told us about Bajram Kelmendi. I immediately went because we knew them. Nekibe was there, waiting for the corpses.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: This is... in the first days of the bombings, when they killed, are you talking about...

Sazan Shita: No, they killed...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Then on the 24th...

Sazan Shita: A few days before... before the liberation.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: No, no. They were killed on the first night of the bombings. Bajram Kelmendi and his sons.

Sazan Shita: Well I don't know, but most importantly I know that when I went, they brought the corpses and they couldn't take them upstairs because the coffins were too heavy and the stairs too narrow, they left them downstairs. But Nekibe... I feel really sad because I can't remember her words. Losing three men and being able to stay happy, it's surprising. The soldiers then, the whole neighborhood stood up, it was a great joy.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was it KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army], or were they from NATO?

Sazan Shita: No, no, from NATO. Not from KLA. I didn't see KLA in Pristina, but... in Prishtina, I didn't walk all around Pristina, but here in our neighborhood only from NATO. Because of the kids here and then they were stuck here... when they found out they could go out on the streets with flowers and so much joy, it was indescribable.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did you get the news that NATO was coming? How did you feel safe enough to go out... You saw all kinds of armies going in and out, how did you know you were safe now?

Sazan Shita: Well, safe because we were listening to the news and it was on the TV. Then, Vehap was working for human rights. Everything was there. The news about Bajram Kelmendi and everything was there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How was Vehap communicating during that time, I mean how was he in contact with the other members of the Human Rights Council?

Sazan Shita: There was... there was a... a girl, I have forgotten her name, she went through when it was too dangerous, I don't know in which village. And she recorded. And came here and told Vehap everything. No, Vehap didn't go out, they only came to the house. For example, Adem Demaçi came often. He went out with his sister, side by side, I even talked about him before. And...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Are we finishing it here...

Sazan Shita: I have nothing else... I don't remember.