

Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW EXTRACT

[The in-depth oral history interview with the narrator was conducted on May 22, 2021 in Pristina. Due to the narrator's request for anonymity, we have concealed the identity.]

Interviewer: Do you ever think about the war? How did it...

Narrator: Me?

Interviewer: Yes.

Narrator: I think about it because I experienced it. During the war, I gave birth to my oldest daughter, when I gave birth, I gave birth to my oldest daughter in the state hospital. Not many people dared to go to the hospital. I don't know where I got the courage to go, but I went. But when things happen fast you don't have time to think about where you're going. I always wanted to go to, in Vranjevc, there was Nënë Tereza [hospital], they provided baby deliveries there. But I don't know, it happened out of the blue and [I went] straight to [the state hospital], it was my first pregnancy and I didn't dare [to go to Nënë Tereza], because more severe cases were taken from there to the hospital, and in the hospital, they would not deal with you when they saw where you were coming from.

I went straight to the state hospital. I went at around 8 AM, and until 11 AM, no one cared that someone was giving birth. No one, at all, you couldn't hear anyone at all speak Albanian. I stayed in the hall, it was a quite cold September, quite cold. I was a little scared, a little nervous, you know, you could feel the cold. At some point they came, when they remembered that they saw me there. They came and took me, "Why are you here?" I said, "Well, to give birth, I didn't come here to hang out." They took me and examined me, they said, "There's no time." When they saw that it was time to give birth to my daughter, they took me to the room.

There was a nurse or a doctor, I don't know, what was she? I don't know. I heard her talking in Albanian. I said, "Please," I said, "Can you stick around because I don't speak Serbian." I understood it a little, but not much. She said, "Yes, don't worry," she said, "at all." And I never saw her again, she didn't come, my daughter was born, even if I had gone to Nënë Tereza, there wouldn't have been any complications. They didn't ask you there, I even heard them saying, "Cut her," they said, "who cares." You know, like that. They made a small incision, but there was no need, they didn't cut me any more, and my daughter was born and they took her. Because back then they didn't let them near you like they do now, they took my daughter, I just heard her crying a little and I didn't see her anymore.

They left me uncovered, I was freezing. It was so cold and at that, at that time, you're cold, even if it's summer. Oh God, I saw one of those, I said, "Please just bring that closer to me," I couldn't reach the blanket. I didn't dare move, "Come on," I said, "bring that blanket closer to me." They brought me the blanket, how do I say it, they gave us some bad, black blankets as aid and it was soaking wet. It didn't help, it actually made things worse, [I stayed] four hours like that. I don't know how I remained healthy and didn't catch a severe cold from that, but maybe God protects you when you have no other options. They took me from there and took me to a room, or where did they take us? I didn't get to see my daughter until the next day, I couldn't wait for that moment. Not only did I not see my daughter, but they had also told my family that, "She needs a lot of medications, infusions, because she is very sick." They didn't let anyone come in to see us.

They, I feel bad because they had spent a lot on medications, but they [the doctors] didn't give me anything, not even a paracetamol pill, let alone anything else, because I didn't, I didn't need it. Until the next day I didn't have any water to drink, they didn't want to [give me water] because they were all Serbs, they didn't want to... Only when the inspection came in the morning, they'd get scared, and then they would come and fix our beds, check up on us. That was when they saw how wet I was, how... and friends among each other, those who had come earlier that had something to drink. One of them, I forgot her name, gave me a box of Plazma [cookie brand] and some juice, I think it was blueberry juice, you know, I am in... She gave it to me and I drank it, from evening until morning [I only drank] that.

The next day when they brought my daughter, God, it seemed like I knew which one was mine, she had black hair, very beautiful. When they brought them... because they put them in a big, like that table, they put all the children there. They all had their own numbers. Her face was ice cold, because she was fully uncovered, ice cold. I took her and held her near me, but she didn't drink, she didn't drink at all, but she slept immediately. Then I felt bad for her that she didn't drink. I thought, are they feeding her? They fed them. I felt sorry for her when they took her from me.

You know, they left them with us for a half an hour, until it was their time. I stayed there for two days, I didn't want to vaccinate her there. People would say, "They're giving them something bad, harmful, they're harming them for sure." And I refused, I said, "I don't want to give her the vaccine, I'll do it

later.” Then I took her to the ambulance to get her the first vaccine. Those two days seemed so long, no one was taking care of her. We were still in their hands, we had to do whatever they asked us to.

Interviewer: What year was your daughter born in?

Narrator: My daughter was born in 1970... ‘97, 1997. A day before I turned 25 years old.