

INTERVIEW WITH ENVER DUGOLLI

Pristina | Date: March 4, 2022

Duration: 91 minutes

Present:

1. Enver Dugolli (Speaker)
2. Anita Susuri (Interviewer)
3. Renea Begolli (Camera)

Transcription notation symbols of non-verbal communication:

() – emotional communication

{ } – the speaker explains something using gestures.

Other transcription conventions:

[] – addition to the text to facilitate comprehension

Footnotes are editorial additions to provide information on localities, names or expressions..

Part One

Anita Susuri: Mr. Enver, if you could introduce yourself and tell us your birth date? Birthplace? Anything about your family and origin?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, I am Enver Dugollu, born on 27.01.1963. I am the fourth child, I have two older sisters and a brother, and the other brothers after me. In total, we are five brothers and four sisters.

Anita Susuri: Where did you live as a child?

Enver Dugolli: Yes. Nekoc village, it's a village in the municipality of Drenica, formerly known as Glllogoc. It's a relatively big village, it has an elementary school. The Bajram Curri Elementary School, in Nekoc. That's where I finished elementary school. My parents, my father was... at first he was a teacher, and he worked as a teacher for 14 years. After that, he switched to an agricultural cooperative [and worked] in administration. He was also a well-known troubadour, and he experienced the Second World War too. He was... after the war, he finished a pedagogical course since he finished a four-year school in former Yugoslavia, at the time, he was one of the very few to finish it. And then, he took that opportunity, the people who had an elementary education could finish the pedagogical courses, and he worked as a teacher. He worked as a teacher in our hometown Nekoc, and then also in Komoran, and in Shalë, they call it Sodllarë.

Anita Susuri: What about your father, sorry to interrupt you, but you mentioned the Second World War, was he in the army, or did he merely experience the war?

Enver Dugolli: At first, based on what he told us, he was a soldier for a short time with that... during the German occupation here. At the time, it was known as Great Albania, as they called it. He was part of the German SS brigade for about two or three months. And then he left that brigade and went home. After the war ended he was a Youth Secretary for some time in that place, as a person with an

education. After some actions that UDB¹ did at the time against the people who resisted, and at some point my father didn't agree to shoot, or there was a surrounding and he allowed some people to escape. And as a result, they interrogated him and expelled him from the Party, since it was concluded that he consciously allowed them to escape from the surrounding. He didn't act according to the instructions he received and they expelled him from the Party.

And he was a target and after 14 years they fired him as a teacher and he went to an agricultural cooperative in Komoran. He worked there until retirement and it was an early retirement because of the circumstances at hand, after my imprisonment in 1981, and as a punishment, they retired him because of me. They forced him to retire earlier than he should have, and in a way he was fired. My mother is a homemaker and the special part of my childhood is that I grew up in a big family, but with a lot of love and respect for each other.

I have never in my life heard my parents arguing or having some sort of problem. Like some of my peers could have, since the time in which I grew up and the village, so it was a rural place, and the social relations that prevailed at the time were quite primitive. But, in the village, I never noticed this in my family. Also from the fact that my father and mother broke some taboos at the time, they married out of love without those rituals or family traditions where you had to send someone to ask for their hand because they loved each other. And in some way, my mother did a revolution, she broke a taboo and married my father, who was a teacher at the time, without her father's, without her parents' permission.

So, for quite some time, we didn't feel close to our [maternal] uncles because they didn't have good relations because of the grudge they held for a long time. Although we were children and we didn't know, because children wouldn't know how their parents got married. But, later on, we found out that the reason why we never visited our uncles was that they still held a grudge towards my mother because she... she got married to my father, Adil, without her parents' permission.

I finished elementary school in the village, in Nekoc, the Bajram Curri Elementary School. And in the village there I remember the path, which I continued in high school and started to take a path that was very different from the ones my peers and people my age took. It started in elementary school since it has always attracted me and I was curious to learn more about history, and the past of Albanians, the injustices towards Albanians and I heard it from my father at home. While at school I heard it from my teacher at the time, Gani Sylja, a former prisoner who was later imprisoned in 1979.

But, he was the source of my inspiration, and how do I put it, the teacher who has forever remained a teacher of my activity. Because I got the foundations of my patriotism from, besides my family, from

¹ The State Security Service - *Služba državne sigurnosti*, also known by its original name as the State Security Administration, was the secret police organization of Communist Yugoslavia. It was at all times best known by the acronym UDBA.

my teacher Gani Sylja, who has passed away now, he died. But, I always remember him because he was the one who initiated my path which I continue after. I continued high school in Glllogoc after I finished elementary school and in 1981, we organized the 1981 demonstrations² in Glllogoc, and I got in front of them, reading an appeal for demonstrations.

I had an early childhood but also an early maturity because of my interest and somehow my engagement in the illegal group of that time, the Marxist-Leninist group of Kosovo. Which is an organized, patriotic group, but which functioned in [groups of] three. So, a person organized with two people, and each one of them organized with two other people in groups of three, so three cells. I was organized at the time in 1981 and...

Anita Susuri: How did you make it to that group? From your friends or...

Enver Dugolli: From my friends. After Gani Sylja went to prison, my teacher Gani Sylja went to prison as organized [in illegal groups] in 1979. His imprisonment affected me a lot somehow. When I knew why he was imprisoned [I thought of] compensating with my engagement somewhere. So a friend of mine who was organized [in these groups], I found out about it from somebody else. But, the group I was talking about made me a member with three people as I said, so in '81 I was part of the Marxist-Leninist group of that time. We were engaged by Milaim Zeka.³ Milaim Zeka was the person who made me a member.

But, in the 1981 demonstration, although we were already part of illegal groups, we discussed that it would be good if we organized [it in Glllogoc] because the demonstrations broke out throughout Kosovo. We were expecting some sort of information or push from our group. And while waiting, on April 2, 1981, the separate classes that were in the high school in Glllogoc, the separate classes in Çikatovë, a village near Glllogoc. During the long break at school, there was a, a... a letter was going around, a letter which was multiplied, it was multiplied, and it was going around among students. And that letter fell into my hands. It was a call for demonstrations. The call was for 12:00, it was a market day, it was Thursday, it was a market day in Glllogoc.

Since it was the long break, I took that letter and immediately said to myself, "Not at 12:00, we have to start now." I told two or three of my friends who were near me since we read the letter together and... the reason being that I thought if we leave it at 12:00, it would fail. Because of the militia, the police of that time began, they were alarmed and began to come around the school. But the other risk was that the professors wouldn't allow [the students], if they entered the classrooms, they wouldn't allow the

² On March 11, 1981, a plate was broken at the student canteen expressing dissatisfaction with poor student conditions, after which many students joined flipping tables. The event sparked a widespread student-led demonstration. The demand for better food and dormitory conditions was emblematic of the Albanian demand for equal treatment in Yugoslavia.

³ Milaim Zeka (1962) is political analyst and former MP of Kosovo.

students to go out. And I said, “We’ll begin now.” It was my initiative not to begin at 12:00 because I doubted that we could pull it off, but to begin as soon as we got the letter instead.

I took that initiative and a big group of friends got out there and went to the center of Glllogoc, which was near the high school. Because the first shift [students] were already there and it was expected that from 12 to 1 pm, the afternoon shifts would join. We arrived there while it was still the long break, in between classes. And we went there, they saw us coming, I guess, and those letters, these pamphlets, these calls for demonstrations were circulating, but not a lot of them. And it became kind of chaotic there. I took the initiative to explain to everyone what was going on without anyone appointing me to do so. No one told me to get on top of a vehicle that was parked nearby, to draw the attention of the students and the professors, so I began to read the call for a demonstration.

I ended the call for demonstration with the slogans that read, “Kosovo Republic!” “Republic, Constitution. Either through peace or war!” “Trepça works, Belgrade prospers!” it was also, “We are Albanians, we are not Yugoslavians!” because that was really important too. At the time, there was a lot of propaganda so they would prevent Albanian ethnicity, to prevent it, and create a false idea that we are Yugoslavians and they aimed to erase people’s [Albanian] ethnic identity, and they insisted on the Yugoslav structure to penetrate as deeply as possible in people’s minds. That’s why there was the slogan, “We are Albanians, we are not Yugoslavians.” Because, at the time, many people had begun registering as Yugoslavians in those [population] registrations that happened, they would register as Yugoslavian.

So there were [slogans] like, “Long live Albania!” So, it was the slogans that were being read and chanted, I would read them, and the students would chant them. There were other slogans too, “Free our friends from prison.” Gani Sylja was imprisoned, as were other people from organized groups, and from there, I made the call to take flags, the national flag, and to go out on the streets of our town, the streets of Drenas, of Glllogoc. There was resistance on the principal's side, not the principal, but the deputy principal, since he was... he was apparently there at that moment, and he was a little more strict. He didn’t want to open the school doors for us to take the flags.

I warned him, I said, “We only want to take the flags and leave. Open the door, or we will break it down,” we broke it down. He didn’t open it, so we broke it down. A group of us violently entered and took the flags. We tore up the Yugoslavia flag, and some friends tore it up and threw it on the ground. Also, the name of the school, which was Marshall Tito, that name was taken off, the plaque where the name Marshall Tito was written was broken, and the demonstrators of the Skënderbeu high school began chanting as well, so everything happened there. And then we were on our way to town, to Drenas. It was called Glllogoc at the time.

The principal who was... and then principal Ymer Elshani came, the late poet. And he took things in his own hands and in a way ordered the professors to join us for the sake of supervision, at that point

almost all the students had gone out, so [the point was for them] to be beside us for the sake of supervision. That was encouraging for us too, since the professor joined us. They were supposedly there to supervise us and not allow the situation to escalate further.

At... It began when we went to the city, and we had the first clash with the police, with the militia of that time. They ordered us to disperse, and of course we didn't accept that ultimatum and the first fight sort of took place. We threw rocks at them, and they attempted to disperse us with tear gas. And they began to separate us into smaller groups from that point. But, we continuously went around, but we never dispersed entirely. And that went on, their goal and action, until the afternoon shift students joined too. When the afternoon shift students joined too, the crowd became very big.

When the crowd became very big, the police gave up because they couldn't follow everyone in the big crowd. Add to this the fact that when we went into the city on our way to Feronikel [company], it was a market day, and a lot of villagers and workers joined us, they had gone out to the market, and they joined us. I remember, in order to get as many people to join as possible, we would chant, "Whoever doesn't join is a traitor," and that sort of encouraged people not to remain indifferent. It became a very big demonstration and then we continued to Feronikel, and our aim was to get the workers there to join along.

When we arrived at Feronikel, the special forces which came from Pristina were already there and also the special forces which came from Niš. First, they started to throw tear gas and then with guns. Some people were wounded, but they still couldn't disperse us. It was the biggest demonstration ever to take place in Drenica. A very important detail that is worth mentioning is that it was one of the largest demonstrations, but something extraordinary also happened.

In some way, we took over the police station. How did we manage that? Since there were too many of us and we suspected that they had arrested some of our friends, we surrounded the police station and demanded that they be released. They would tell us, "We don't have them," and we didn't believe it. So, a group of two or three people was formed. Elmie Plakaj was among them, in that delegation, and we went into all the offices of the police station, we forced them to open it so we could check if they had hidden anything. It was some sort of invasion of the police station, which never happened before in demonstrations.

Let me not forget to mention that the appeal I read, that call I read, I didn't know who wrote it. When I got imprisoned after two days, they arrested me, and that's when the torture and the interrogation began, but I never knew who wrote it. In some way, I initially took responsibility. I said, "I wrote it." But, they knew very well that I didn't write it because that letter was all around...

Anita Susuri: Is it the same letter you got at school?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, yes, at school. And I didn't know who wrote it. And I found out that only after I got sentenced, and I found out by chance. I was in prison in Pristina with Bajram Kosumi,⁴ he was under investigation, it was the phase of investigation prior to the court process. And one time, they took him in the evening, and it became very late, they didn't bring him back until the morning. Each time they took him while he was under investigation, he came back tortured. That time they kept him for so long. When he came back he told me everything, they had taken him near the border with Albania.

At the time we heard rumors that they would take some political prisoners near Albania to make it seem like they wanted to run away, and they would execute them. This was their way of putting pressure. And that's what they did with Bajram, but fortunately, they didn't execute him, but only to scare him. On their way back, people from UDBA, the State Security had asked him, "Who are you sharing your cell with?" He told them and among others, he mentioned my name, and there was a Serbian and an Albanian with him. The Albanian was Lutfi Ajazi, a worker of UDBA, he knew me, and the Serbian asked, "Who is this Enver Dugolli?" And he translated it for him, he told him in Serbian that I was the one to read the appeal of Halil Kuliqi. And when he came back, he asked me, "Who is Halil Kuliqi?" Bajram asked me, I replied, "I don't know who that is," he said, "Well, some letter you read," I said, "I don't know who wrote it," he said, "Halil Kuliqi wrote it." Halil was imprisoned too, but I didn't know him. He was a teacher, and that's when I found out, so that's where I found out the truth about the letter.

Part Two

Anita Susuri: I am interested to know how your arrest happened. Did they come to get you at your house, or how did they find you?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, they came to my house. To my house because I was already exposed at the demonstrations, I was exposed, I had gone out, I had climbed on top of the vehicle, I read [the letter], I read the appeal for demonstrations, the call for demonstrations. In some way, the demonstration identified with me as a leader, and I was certainly expecting they would come to arrest me. But, I didn't see it as reasonable to leave, to run away, to leave the country. Another reason for that is that I was thinking, since my big brother was present in the demonstrations, I was thinking if I left, then they would've taken him. So, I consciously accepted that they would arrest me, but I never contemplated if I should stay or leave.

So, after two years, on the 4th, April 4, 1981, they came to my house and arrested me. And we were planning to, we tried to organize another demonstration on March 3, but it was impossible because there was a state siege. In some way, Drenas, Glllogoc was totally blocked, there was no way to enter or leave the city.

⁴ Bajram Kosumi (1960) is a politician who served as the third prime minister of Kosovo for nearly one year.

Anita Susuri: And then you mentioned that they brought you to Pristina's prison, right?

Enver Dugolli: Yes.

Anita Susuri: What was it like there?

Enver Dugolli: When they sent me to Pristina's prison since they held me in Drenas for two days, they treated me very horribly, although I was very young, I was 18. I can't think of more arrogant, harsh, and brutal behavior from the police, although all of them were Albanian. Some of them solidarized with us, and they were affected somehow by their colleagues' behavior, but they were totally powerless to change anything about the situation. So, I am not saying it was all of them, more than half of them were good people who loved the country, although they had militia uniforms at the time. But, some of them were really harsh, really aggressive, brutal, and they... it's a very bad stain for them, but for Drenas as well.

Because after I was in prison, I met other people who had experienced and organized demonstrations. When I told them what happened in Drenas, which was ethnically unmixed, there were no Serbs in Glllogoc, they were shocked. They wondered how it was possible. For example, in Lipjan where half [of the population] were Serbs and half Albanians, there were no mistreatments like that. And in some other places where... I guess in other places where there were more ethnicities, they were more focused on preserving their essence as Albanians and not behaving in an unnecessary manner. Because of their brutal release against the students, against the youth, for no reason, only a release of rancor since we had demonstrated, it was totally unacceptable.

We went to court, and they made us a group, a group of eleven people. They made us a group in order to seemingly sentence us more. I barely knew anyone in the group, they were all people who took part in the demonstrations, but I had no connection to them. Although every action I did was public and I couldn't hide, I had to accept it, "I simply went out to demonstrate for Kosovo to be a Republic and I don't regret it." I even remember a moment in prison before we were sentenced, the investigative judge came, and to be honest with you, I was young, 18 years old, and I had no idea what an investigative judge was or what a judge or prosecutor was, I didn't care about it at all.

He introduced himself and came to the prison to get my statement. When I finished my statement, he asked, "Do you regret what you did?" I said, "What?" He thought I didn't understand the question. He asked, "Do you regret it?" I said, "No, no, I understand what you're asking. But, what is there to regret?" I said, "Why should I regret it?" He said, "Well, what you did." I said, "Well, I did good," I said, "I asked for Kosovo to be a Republic," I said, "Kosovo as a Republic is good for you too. Do you not support that?" He started laughing and said, "I am here to question you, not the other way around." He was an

investigative judge, Ymer Rosaj was his name. I don't know where he is or what he does now, but I remember we had that conversation.

And then during the trial, after the interrogating, after that procedure, let's call it formal, they apparently had already decided the sentences. They brought many witnesses so they could tell I was leading the demonstration and read the appeal. And I told them, "Why are you bothering these witnesses, I am admitting it myself. There's no need for you to prove it, I am admitting that I read the letter, the appeal for demonstrations. I went to the demonstrations, I don't regret it." And by the end, there was an unpleasant situation for me, since they apparently had instilled fear in a big part of that group of eleven people, and they began claiming that they didn't know what was happening, "They forced us," and stuff like that.

I started to feel bad, and before the procedure of statements and the verdict ended, I raised my hand and said, "I want to say one last thing." He said, "Well, it's over," the judge, it was Isak Nishevci. I said, "No, it's not over because I have the right to say one last thing," "Okay," he said, "what do you have to say?" I said, "I only want it," I said, "to be documented that every action I took, I did it consciously. Nobody forced me, nobody made me. And I feel pretty good and satisfied that my work will at least influence Kosovo becoming a Republic a little bit, the demand for Kosovo to become a Republic." They were somehow stunned because I was young, and they didn't expect that statement. "Sit down," and I remember the situation that arose even now. The prosecutor, it was Nijazi Burgideva, she had some thick glasses, and looked like this {pretends he's lowering his glasses}. She was shocked by my answer and my age I guess and [she said,] "Sit down!" I sat down.

They came back ten minutes after they left the court and they announced the verdict. I was sentenced to eleven years, four of us in that group were sentenced to eleven years. And then, but it didn't bother me at all to be honest, I was young and I was prepared that they would sentence me. But, when you saw all those people in prisons, professors, students, youth, there was somehow no place for sadness there. I was simply feeling proud that I was able to face the consequences at that age. And then the second instance of the Supreme Court, apparently, the prosecutor asked for my sentence to be reduced, since I was 18 years old and was sentenced to eleven years. And they reduced my sentence to six years. Six years. And then I served six years until the end.

Anita Susuri: Was all of it in Pristina's prison?

Enver Dugolli: No, no, they transferred me to Peja's prison. From Peja to Niš's prison, and then I served the rest of it there.

Anita Susuri: Can you tell us about the experience you had in these prisons? I know that each prison has a set of their own rules, they have some... if you could tell us more about your experience.

Enver Dugolli: Well, prisons are almost the same by principle. Restriction of movement and deprivation of the right to be free, but then prisons differ. There are prisons with better conditions, some have it worse, some have it a lot worse. But the staff, the guards and leaders differ as well. Some were more gentle, for example in Peja's prison, when it came to the guards and leaders of the prison, you merely were aware that you were in prison, since they were really friendly with us. Ekrem Kryeziu's brother was the prison director, Fuad Kryeziu, a very good man, he was the prison director. And he didn't allow anyone to mistreat us, he respected us a lot.

But, I can't say this about Pristina's prison. For example, most of the guards in Pristina's prison were very harsh, they had bad attitudes. The ones who were nice were only a few in number, since there were Serbian guards as well. There were more and apparently even the ones who were nice didn't dare to expose themselves, since we were declared as state enemies. It was like that. And then in Niš's prison, I was very isolated. I was isolated for four years and a half. Isolation referred to the pavilion where you had only 20 minutes a day to go out for a walk, and the rest was inside the cell.

But, at that time, I used that time mostly to read. I read a lot. We had a library there and they gave us books every two weeks, so four of us were in a cell and we would take four books. A book for each and I can say that that is the time when I read the most...

Anita Susuri: Were you allowed to read books in Albanian in Niš's prison?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, I am talking about the one in Niš, since they didn't allow us in the prison we were in during investigations.

Anita Susuri: I think the cells were really small in Pristina's prison...

Enver Dugolli: Yes.

Anita Susuri: What were the cells like?

Enver Dugolli: The cells were small. When they brought me from Glogoc, the cell was a little bigger at the beginning and I remember they took me there during the night. When I entered it, it was, how to put it, terrible. There were so many people, they were all somehow lying down to sleep, but they covered the whole floor. There was almost no space to even sleep on your side, since it was full of people. And I stayed there for about seven or eight days. Because they would bring them, they had no space to accommodate the prisoners they would arrest every day. That room was full, we were above 30 people, which is bizarre to think, how could a room accommodate 30 people.

The conditions were really difficult, bad, there was no toilet inside. There was a bucket where we even had to... the smell, the humidity, everything was terrible. And then they sent me to Gjilan's prison, and it was like that...

Anita Susuri: How long did you have to stay in Pristina? In Pristina's prison?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, I stayed in Pristina for around three or four months. But, after, in the second prison, it's a different one, I came back to Pristina again.

Anita Susuri: Did you have the right to receive visits? I'm sure you did, but what was that like and how long could the visits last?

Enver Dugolli: The visits were done by the family's request to the investigative judge. And the investigative or the procedure judge, what are they called, would give the permission for visits. The visits were very short, about ten minutes and sometimes maybe even less. Through the bars, the bars were very frequent and you couldn't see the person, the family member who came to visit you that well. No physical contact, only through [the bars], you could hear their voice and see them. But, not that well since the bars were very frequent.

Anita Susuri: I am interested to know about the physical violence, was there violence only in the beginning or was it continuous?

Enver Dugolli: In prison, there are two periods. There's two periods known for physical violence. The first one is during investigations, that violence is unimaginable and in some way the most terrible one. Since at the time you're in the hands of the secret service, like UDBA was, which facilitated the whole investigation. Even though, officially, it's the prosecution who facilitates the investigations. But at the time, but also later, it was UDBA who facilitated that whole process. And in order to get as much information as possible, which they could later use for accusations, they used violence. Wherever they suspected they could get something out of, to deconstruct even more, [for people] to admit to even more acts, whatever they suspected. And then they would somehow tie you to those acts.

That period is terrible, it's a story of its own, which... interrogations usually happened in the evening. In the evening when everything was calm and they didn't want to bother the UDBA offices which were in Pristina's prison. But, the next phase lasts till the end of the sentence, depending on the guards and their moods. Simply put, there were guards and prison leaders who just wanted to punish you. But, that happened and they all qualified as breach of order.

Anita Susuri: I am interested to know about the time period after prison, what did you do after? Did you continue your political activity, or did you continue school? What happened after?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, after the second prison, after I got released from Niš's prison, for some time there was really a great need to help my family and contribute with my work. To bring income to my family because my family had suffered economically. I mentioned earlier that my father was close to retirement, he had four more years to go. He was forced to... they forced him to quit his job. So his work friends got together and... they made him leave his job. So his work friends got together and gathered the money to buy him four more years of work experience so he could get a pension, since they aimed to leave him without a pension too. So, the only income the family had was my father's pension. Add to it that we were a big family and there was a lot of spending. We didn't have farming lands, we didn't have farming land. Our only income was that pension.

The spending made to host the people who visited were very big for the family budget. So, seeing my family's situation and being aware that they suffered a lot economically, I somehow felt obliged, morally, to give back to my family and to work something. And I did manual labor, because... it was impossible to find a [different] job somewhere. I was an enemy of the state, I was isolated, I was followed everywhere. So, the only work I could do was manual labor. And I had to go far away, to Zagreb, [and] to Slovenia, in Ljubljana. So these were the places where I had to go to work. Since it was far away and they were big cities so I wouldn't be followed as much.

So for some time, I did manual labor and made an income for my family. And then I returned to Kosovo. I started to learn the craft of construction, I became a workman without ever being one [before] and I worked with construction. In the meantime I enrolled to continue high school, remotely. I finished high school too because after the '90s, that pressure we had from the system loosened up somehow. With the parallel system⁵ of the education that was organized, I was able to, since before that you couldn't even think about it because I was punished. I was an enemy of the state and that happened after the citizens, the people of Kosovo somehow said no to Serbia's measures about the revocation of our autonomy and there was some kind of unification among citizens, of Albanians, the general population. And the education began to function again in some way, it was a parallel system but it happened everywhere in Kosovo.

Anita Susuri: Did you also enroll in university at that time?

Enver Dugolli: No. I didn't at the time because as I said I somehow decided to financially contribute to my family. We were a big family and I didn't manage to handle a worsened economical situation, I somehow felt it was my obligation. At that time I also met my wife, Sherife, we started dating and we got engaged.

⁵ By 1991, after Slobodan Milošević's legislation making Serbian the official language of Kosovo and the removal of all Albanians from public service, Albanians were excluded from schools as well. The reaction of Albanians was to create a parallel system of education hosted mostly by private homes.

Anita Susuri: Was it a problem for her or her family that you were in prison or that you were engaged in political activities?

Enver Dugolli: It was a very big problem. At the time when I met her, it was a big problem, since it was that most difficult period of time when there were people who were still seen as state enemies. And I met my wife right at that time and they were a persecuted family. Her [paternal] uncle was Fazli Grajçevci, and as a family, they had suffered from the regime, and they were familiar with the punishments and the isolation of the state, but also from society. Even though there was opposition, it seems like in the end, that feeling of love dominated. So we weren't even thinking about turning back or not deciding to be together and date.

So, that was also the moment we began to create a family, we got married but were always in a difficult financial situation, and also politically speaking. When I met my wife, among other things, I also wanted to make sure to let her know that my path was very challenging and it would continue to be because I wouldn't give up on political activities. So, my patriotic and political engagements. So I told her that, at the very least, I could be imprisoned again, but I could also be killed. But she accepted those conditions too.

In 1997, what I had warned her about being imprisoned again happened. So, as a result of my engagements and my involvement with the LKÇK organization, The Movement for the National Liberation of Kosovo, as a member. I was caught, uncovered, and I still don't know how. But, very early in the morning, on January 27, 1997, they came and surrounded my whole family. All our houses and apparently the neighborhood too...

Anita Susuri: You were still in the village?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, in the village. I was in the village. And they arrested me.

Anita Susuri: I am interested to know, what were the activities you did in that organization?

Enver Dugolli: The activities in that organization were raising awareness of the citizens, for the people regarding combat organization, to organize the liberation war, which means it was to agitate them. To talk to people, to prepare them that the only way left to liberate was the armed one of war for liberation. Because I had convinced myself early on that you can't liberate the place through pacifistic methods. At first, it seemed to me that there was some sort of euphoria, and the people agreed on one solution for Kosovo, for the Republic of Kosovo. But, as time passed by, you could tell that it didn't bring results, I mean, the pacifist methods didn't bring results. There was a need for active resistance. And above all, I thought that the only way left was the way of the liberation war.

My entire engagement, my focus, and the organization's [focus] was to mobilize people, to contact people, and to raise awareness among people because we had to prepare and fight for our country because there was no other way. As part of the activities, we also distributed slogans, we distributed posters, we also distributed newspapers of the time and we were interested to find supply lines for weapons, to gather tools that we would need during war. But, I was caught, I was caught before making that specific step to organize ourselves into combat formations, and I was imprisoned on... on January 27, 1997.

Anita Susuri: Where did they imprison you? Were you at home?

Enver Dugolli: At home, at home.

Anita Susuri: And they sent you to...?

Enver Dugolli: At first in Drenas and then in Pristina's prison. They did the investigations at Pristina's prison, and then they sent me to Lipjan's prison, there were investigations there too. Until they sent me back to Pristina's prison and that's where the verdict was made, and they sent me to Dubrava's prison from there, where I stayed for two to three months, in '98. After the KLA's⁶ glorious war, after Adem Jashari was killed, after his fall, and his family's fall, and the events that happened in Drenica, they transferred us to Sremska Mitrovica's prison around April. They kept us there with a group of friends, we were there for about a year. And when the bombings began, they sent us from Sremska Mitrovica's prison to Niš's prison. We were in Niš for three days, then they sent us to Dubrava from Niš's prison. So, that's where the Dubrava massacre happened, at Dubrava's prison.

Part Three

Anita Susuri: Let's go back to some specific stages. When you returned to Pristina's prison, what was the difference from the first time you were there?

Enver Dugolli: The difference was that during the second imprisonment, there were too few Albanians, [I mean] prison guards, they were mostly Serbian guards. And maybe the only new thing was that in the cells, there was a separate place for the toilet, which was different from the first prison, which had none. There was only a bucket there. Otherwise, it was the same cold prison, crescent-shaped, with humidity, with bars, and many sad memories. There was no difference, that was the only one.

Anita Susuri: What about the pressure and the violence?

⁶ Kosovo Liberation Army - Alb. *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, was an Albanian guerrilla paramilitary organization that sought the separation of Kosovo from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia during the 1990s.

Enver Dugolli: Of course that the second time around, the violence was of a totally different nature and it was to a different extent. Now it was the time, it was the time when you weren't judged simply for something you did, but you were judged because you were Albanian and you were punished because you were Albanian. During the whole time for my second time in prison, that was noticeable. The guards' behavior always reflected with punishment and the reason for the punishment was that you're Albanian.

Anita Susuri: Why did that happen? The transfer from one prison to another? Why did they do that?

Enver Dugolli: They did this for two reasons. The first reason is that investigative prisons only last until you get the sentence. So, detention in investigative prisons is supposed to last only until the investigations are finished, and you get the sentence, and then there's the transfer to larger prisons where you are supposed to serve your sentence. While the second reason was that based on prison capacity and planning, in order to free up space or to fill up prisons with fewer people, there's a sort of planning they do regarding prisoners and their systematization in places they consider more secure or which have tougher conditions.

Anita Susuri: Was there any warning, were you aware you would change prisons?

Enver Dugolli: No, in no way, no way. The prison changes and transfers always happened suddenly. They would tell you ten minutes before they sent you away, "Pack your things," and that was it. When they told us to pack our things, we knew that a transfer would happen, they would send us somewhere.

Anita Susuri: Did you ever guess or fear that they would execute you somewhere or that they were sending you somewhere to disappear?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, of course. This especially happened during my second time in prison, during the period when the war in Kosovo broke out, I was expecting it every day. I would wake up in the morning, I never knew if I would live to see the evening or not. The evening came, and I didn't know if I would wake up the next morning. The situation was always very, very tense and we were stressed and uncertain all the time. Ever since the war broke out in Kosovo, their aggression toward us would become more and more apparent every day, sometimes to uncontrollable extents. Sometimes, not always. So, that uncertainty was somehow present every day, every day. But, there comes a day when you get used to it, and somehow, you get used to that routine of life. The routine of an unpredictable life.

Anita Susuri: Did you have contact with the outside world during this time, with your family for example? Or did you hear anything about them? Did you get newspapers or anything?

Enver Dugolli: No, [actually] they did until the war in Kosovo broke out, they did [come to visit], my late father did, my mother, my brother. Sometimes once or twice a month. But, when the war began and especially NATO's bombings, everything was interrupted. We didn't have any contact with our families, we didn't even know where they were, and they didn't know where we were or what was happening to us either. There were visits from the Red Cross, Red Cross delegates, but those also happened until the bombings began. After the bombings [began], that stopped too. We didn't get any type of press, except when they would come to visit us, we told them to wrap the things they brought us with newspapers, I even remember when the prisoners referred to it as Flia Press. They would bring us *flia*⁷ or *pite*⁸ wrapped in newspapers, they didn't guess we were more interested in the newspapers than the *flia* or the food they brought us. And they called it Flia Press.

Anita Susuri: What about the time when the bombings began, I think you said that they took you to Dubrava's prison?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, yes.

Anita Susuri: I am interested to know about the massacre.

Enver Dugolli: Yes, the way they told us to pack our things while we were in Sremska Mitrovica, we knew they were sending us somewhere. Also, let me mention that Sremska Mitrovica is a story on its own, about the way they behaved and treated us, about the tortures they inflicted, it's a story on its own, for which I also wrote a book. But, when they told us they were taking us somewhere, I remembered some things we had with us. Since when you go to prison, they confiscate the things that aren't allowed, for example, your belt, or if someone had a necklace or something, and then coins, keys, they take everything. And they put them in some kind of cabinet.

I was missing something, I don't remember, it was probably a belt or something, which they had taken. "What do you need it for? You don't need it," they said, "for anything." In some way, they... we didn't know anything. We didn't know anything about what was happening to us, or why they were transferring us from Sremska's prison, but apparently, they did. And their answer that we didn't need our things made us realize that something bad was being planned for us. Because they risked transferring us by bus during the bombings and taking us from Sremska Mitrovica in Vojvodina to Kosovo, so there was a plan which we knew nothing about.

In Dubrava's prison, the Dubrava prison building, after they transferred [from here] a year ago with the reason that it wasn't safe [in Dubrava's prison], "We're sending you away for security reasons." And then they were taking us back when security was... there was no security, not at all, since the war had

⁷ A traditional dish in Albanian cuisine consisting of crepe-like layers cooked with cinders under a lid.

⁸ Albanian *pite* is a pastry made of a thin flaky dough such as phyllo or similar.

escalated, NATO's bombings had begun. We couldn't think of any reason at all why they would gather us there in Dubrava's prison. Afterward, they began bringing in prisoners from other prisons in Kosovo. They began bringing citizens they took from their homes, and their neighborhoods, especially those, they brought a big group of 150 people from Gjakova.

They kept us there like that, they would send food rations in order, and it became monotonous there, nothing happened. We would hear gunshots, and fights that were happening further away. It began later, on May 19, 1999, the planes struck a pavilion. The planes...

Anita Susuri: NATO planes?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, they struck it. Yes, it was most probably NATO planes because NATO dominated the airspace across Kosovo and Serbia, since they were in the offensive, they were punishment strikes against Serbian aggression and the massacres they committed. And it was very surprising for us because the guards quickly went out, the guards left the prison indoors and went outside... outside the walls. Apparently, during the time we weren't there, we learned later that they used Dubrava's prison as a base for the Serbian special police unit and military.

They could have installed some kind of locators there to signal that it's still a military, police base. NATO apparently fell into their trap about the bombings, which happened on the 19th but also on the 21st, for two days, since Dubrava was shown as a military base in NATO's maps. And that's... I guess that is the reason why they struck it. Because there is no reason otherwise, no reason. We were prisoners, we weren't armed, we weren't a unit of...

Anita Susuri: So you're saying that Serbs used that as a way to kill the prisoners and for them to run away quicker?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, yes. That's how it turned out because they knew for sure that NATO would strike since they signaled that it was a military base. They provoked NATO's forces. We were a human shield there, simple. They somehow set us up to be killed by NATO's planes so they could tell the world that NATO was killing Albanian prisoners. But, apparently NATO understood that after the 21st and they didn't strike again. Maybe also thanks to the prisoners' ability who took those window neon plastics, long plastics, they made a sign, some boys made a sign in the middle of the field and the pavilions and the canteen, where the food was served, they made a sign which read "Help!" in English. That reflected a lot from above, and they apparently realized that something wasn't right so they didn't bomb again.

But, NATO stopped the bombings. But, Serbia, the Serbian police and military started to act out their scenario and began executing; they executed us massively, the Albanian prisoners who were there, we were more than 950 people...

Anita Susuri: How did that happen? The execution?

Enver Dugolli: Yes, after March 21, May 21 when the second NATO bombing happened, as I mentioned. The prisoners who survived took the wounded, but also the dead. We placed them in the northern part where the sports field was. There was more space there. Our idea was to stay there, to sleep there at night since we were still scared of NATO's bombings. And that night, we stayed under the open air, so in the sports field. While early in the morning, a Serb in uniform, I don't know who he was since he was further away and almost all of us were asleep, he spoke through a megaphone from the watchtower. He said, "Get ready in 15 minutes. Take your things and stand in line here," they showed us where "because we will transfer you from here because there are no conditions to keep you here."

We began taking what we had and we started to get in line, there were about four or five of us in one line, since we were a lot in number. And like that around the wall and the watchtower. At some point, a prisoner told me, a prison friend who we were together with in Sremska Mitrovica, "*Bac*,"⁹ he referred to me as *bac*, [he was] Visar Ballovci, he said, "let's get together, the ones of us from Sremska, so wherever they send us we will still be together," you know what I mean. Then we were in two groups. One group was here, one farther away. We were positioned in a way we couldn't get together. I said, "Let's go at the start of the line. We'll get together at the start of the line and we'll be together wherever they send us."

I went to a different group and we started to walk at the start of the line. Without even reaching the start, detonations began, they began throwing bombs and when I turned my head around to see, I couldn't believe my eyes. I was thinking I was still in a bad dream. It was like mines [exploding], if you've ever seen how fields are mined. That's how it seemed to me like something was exploding from the ground. They threw so many grenades from the walls. They climbed on the walls and the watchtowers and threw grenades.

I froze for a moment, I simply could not believe it. When the people began running in different directions, they began shooting with machine guns, shotguns, snipers, everything. And we began, whoever was hit, died then and there. Some of us who could walk, who didn't have an injury or wound ran away in the opposite direction. And I know that about 60-70 people were killed there, then and there. Actually, I remember the place where we were, as soon as I got out with those 13-14 people I was with, it immediately became filled with people who were there, and they were young, mostly from Drenica; almost all of them were killed. It was a very heavy situation, but sometimes a human can withstand more than a rock.

We started getting away. That's when they started to shoot with more sophisticated guns. Whoever was unfortunate, got hit. They shot with snipers, with long guns. And then, after two or three hours, we took the ones who were more wounded, we somehow dragged them and got them close to the

⁹ *Bac*, literally uncle, is an endearing and respectful Albanian term for an older person.

pavilions to give them first aid. Some of them started to take shelter in holes, the ones that were bigger, some were sewer holes, and some were for heating. It was safer.

But they observed where we were hiding with binoculars, and from time to time, they would go in armed, masked, and somehow they did punitive operations. They would go in and execute whoever they found in the way, and they would throw grenades into those sewer holes. So, there were ones who were killed in these holes, there was a big number of those killed and wounded there. This happened until the 24th. On the 24th, they transferred us to Lipjan's prison. On May 24.

Anita Susuri: Were you still here when the war ended? You were in Kosovo or...? What happened?

Enver Dugolli: When Kumanovo's Agreement¹⁰ was signed on June 9, we didn't know it was signed. While we were in Lipjan's prison, they brought us there from Dubrava's prison and we heard a lot of gunshots. We thought that there might be a fight going on close by, but apparently, those gunshots were ones of happiness that the war is ending or what do I know. They tied our hands, they came in the evening and tied our hands behind with those plastic ties that hurt your hands. They're very dangerous and difficult to keep. They left us tied like that until the morning. They took us by bus in the morning.

Nish Ekspres kanë qenë ata autobusa dhe kur pashë Nish Ekspres e dita që po na dërgojnë në burgun e Nishit. Edhe na kanë dërgu. Kur kemi shku te burgu i Nishit, sepse burgun e Nishit tash unë e njifsha, e disha që na futën aty edhe e di që e kam ni ni fjalë prej ni gardianit pyti, "Pse po gjujnë ushtria?" se kaloi ni veturë edhe gjujtën me armë. Edhe ai tha, "Janë gzu", tha, "se përfundoi lufta". Edhe aty e morra vesh që ka përfundu lufta. Edhe na futën mrena në dhomë, po ju thom atyne shokve që ishin në dhomë, "Lufta paska përfundu". "Pse ku p'e din?" "Po e nijta kështu kështu..."

But, the war had ended, but not for us. For us, the Albanian prisoners, the war only got tougher, more terrible. So, there were tortures and brutal violence that went on every day. Every day, against us. It was punitive operations, you know, ordered just because they lost Kosovo. They had a piece of Kosovo in us and they would take it out on us. This lasted for about four or five months with no interruptions. There were, you know, simply uninterrupted tortures.

Add to this the fact that we were close to exhaustion, not spiritually, but physically because there was little food. Everything was missing. We were in a very terrible condition physically, and all of us had lost so much weight that you can't imagine... I had seen photographs and recordings from the war in Bosnia where they held the prisoners in concentration camps, we became like that too. Tortured, no bread, no food, mistreated and everything.

¹⁰ The Military Technical Agreement between NATO (KFOR) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), commonly known as the Kumanovo Agreement, was the accord concluded on 9 June 1999 in Kumanovo that ended the NATO bombing campaign of FRY.

Anita Susuri: The Red Cross intervened for you to be released too, I don't know...

Enver Dugolli: Yes, when they freed us, after they ratified the amnesty law in Serbia. Afterwards, the transfers from Serbia's prisons to Kosovo, the transport was supervised by the Red Cross.

Anita Susuri: After being released, what was the experience of meeting your family like?

Enver Dugolli: It was a moment I anticipated, but somehow we didn't know how to be happy even then because there were still people in prison. Not all of us were released, they separated us. Some of us were released, and some were still in prison. So we couldn't rejoice properly because of that, since some of our friends were still in prison. And my release in 2001, it was a release for which I couldn't properly be happy because we were separated in half. So, even the release was a bad experience emotionally. So much so that, immediately after being released, we began the protests to release the others. The ones of us who were released together with our families, everyone who joined, we began protesting and demonstrating to release the others.

Anita Susuri: Was everyone released then...

Enver Dugolli: Until 2002, everyone was released.

Anita Susuri: Mister Enver, if there is anything you would like to add, something you think should be mentioned.

Enver Dugolli: There is a lot to add, but it's very long, and I thank you for this opportunity. Maybe there's a lot I didn't mention because there are other details and moments for which there was public interest. But, this was it in general.

Anita Susuri: Thanks a lot!

Enver Dugolli: Thank you!