

## INTERVIEW WITH VJOLLCA MEHA

Mitrovica | Date: March 21, 2022

Duration: 87 minutes

### Present:

1. Vjollca Meha (Speaker)
2. Anita Susuri (Interviewer)
3. Korab Krasniqi (Interviewer)
4. 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:** Mrs. Vjollca, could you introduce yourself? Tell us about your birth date? Where you were born? Anything about your family?

**Vjollca Meha:** I am Vjollca Meha, born on November 11, 1963. My family, my father and mother, my father was Rizah Meha and my mother was Azize Kajtazi Meha. During '62 in Mitrovica, first my father came from Prekaz, Lower Prekaz, due to the [financial] conditions and in order to provide education, better education, for his children. We are six siblings: three girls and three boys. My father was one of the first teachers in Kosovo. He worked, he worked in education his entire career. He provided us with education as best as he could.

We lived in Mitrovica. The city of Mitrovica was a lot more different than the situation it's in now. We had a very happy childhood. As children, we had friends, we hung out, we played children's games. I finished elementary school at Abdullah Shaban, which was very close to our house. Even when the school bell rang, we heard it at home and ran to go to school.

I started high school at the gymnasium,<sup>1</sup> it was oriented learning. The first and second year, I moved to the mathematics gymnasium and in the third year, natural sciences. I finished school, the gymnasium. To enroll back then... half of the class aimed to go study in Pristina. It was also my wish to go to Pristina, but because of the conditions... because I was the fourth student in my family and I didn't have the means. With my father's advice, "We have faculties here," because there was the Faculty of Mining and Metallurgy, which had four departments. And there was the Higher Technical School which had two departments, it was the most prestigious school of electronics and machinery.

So, when I went to enroll there... I went to enroll in technology as a scholarship holder, I had a scholarship in the chemical industry in elementary school. I mean, high school, and in order to continue with the scholarship you had to enroll in technology. And when I went to enroll in technology, there was an administration worker there, Preveza Prekazi and Kujtesa Prekazi. And she

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<sup>1</sup> A European type of secondary school with emphasis on academic learning, different from vocational schools because it prepares students for university.

asked, “Do you want to start working quicker?” Back then the goal was to finish it as soon as possible and get employed, to get employed and help yourself and your family.

At that moment I said, “Yes.” She said, “Why aren’t you enrolling in geology?” Because geology was a new department that opened back then in the ‘80s, because I am the third generation of geologists. And I enrolled in geology. Although I had some friends in high school who were studying geology in high school too... I was interested in earth’s science, but I wasn’t that directed towards geology, but with the help of the administration worker, I was directed [in that path] in order to achieve employment quicker.

So, during my five years of studies, we had a good time, we had colleagues from other regions as well. We were involved with activities that happened within the Geology Department. I finished my studies in ‘88 and as soon as I finished, I was the first Albanian geologist graduate. I went... from the third school year of studies, I was a Trepça scholarship holder, Stari Trg, the flotation mine.

I went to talk to the mine director, [Burhan Kavaja](#), and he directed me. He told me, “Until we open applications, aim to work as a professor at a school. And then we will open the applications and take you.” As a scholarship holder, getting employed was easier because the agreement was that the students who had scholarships had advantage in employment. The application opened at the end of ‘88, while I worked at the technical school for one semester in ‘88.

During the miner’s march, I was a teacher an the Technical High School, in separate mining and metallurgy classes, in Stari Trg. The students went out, they joined the march and we supported them. And then I moved to work at the mine. Me and a colleague of mine, Mevlude Emini, were accepted. We started working in the mine at the same time, but the application was canceled.

After we were accepted, the application was canceled because the union filed a complaint that it wasn’t acceptable to only hire Albanians and not people of other ethnicities. So, the application was repeated and two Serbs were hired along with us. So, both of us were accepted, and two other Serbs, it became four of us. And there were four other geologists in the Technical Service Department prior, because back then units were divided. Our job was in the mine, but we also had work to do in the office too. So, we were linked to the production.

**Anita Susuri:** Mrs. Vjollca, I would like to go back a bit and then we will continue chronologically with the information, I mean, your story. You mentioned that your father was a teacher, how did he get an education? Where did he study?

**Vjollca Meha:** He received an education under very difficult conditions, because my grandfather had a very big family, and the first child to go to school was my father. My uncle went as well, they were almost the same age, a year apart, but he couldn’t, he didn’t want to continue school but he [my father] did. For some time he even went discreetly from his father so he wouldn’t know that he’s going to school.

He wore his *qeleshe*, *plis*<sup>2</sup> until he arrived at school and then he took it off to attend the classes and then he went back home. When he went back again... and then his father got it, my grandfather, that

<sup>2</sup> Traditional white felt conic cap, differs from region to region, distinctively Albanian.

he's going to school, he told him, "All right, keep going!" And he kept going, he attended five... he attended a five-year school, and then he went to the eight-year school. And after he finished the eight year school, the system changed again and he continued with two more years of schooling that he finished in Prizren. And then after Prizren, he went to The Pedagogical Academy [Higher School] in Pristina and later he finished two more years of Pedagogy and then he was a teacher in lower education.

**Anita Susuri:** As a child, do you remember Mitrovica? I am sure you remember what kind of place it was, but if you could describe what the neighborhood you lived in was like? What kind of people lived there?

**Vjollca Meha:** The street we lived on, we were closer to downtown. Not all the people who lived there had an education. On our street, my father was a teacher. A [maternal] uncle of mine was working, but he was a worker in the chemical industry and another neighbor there was also a worker. But he was a painter, [another one] in the chemical industry and the others were more related to Trepça. Two other neighbors were working in lead metallurgy in Zvečan. And there was our generation, as children, each of us [the families] had one, a child who was in the generation that we went to school together.

**Anita Susuri:** Were there Serbs too?

**Vjollca Meha:** There were...

**Anita Susuri:** I mean, Turkish people too?

**Vjollca Meha:** Not on our street, not on our street. On our street everyone was Albanian, but on the other street across from Abdullah Shaban school, there were four-five Serbian families.

**Anita Susuri:** What was life like then? Were there good relations between neighbors or what was it like?

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes, there were good relationships, they were calm, until the movements began. Because there were already some developments in '68, and in '74 when the Kosovo Constitution was approved, there was more freedom, more... we spoke our language more freely, and listened to music, we listened... we had our TV at home, I mean we were one of the first families to have one. There was the Iskra of Niš, in black and white. And the whole night, I mean, we would wait for a show in Albanian every time, it was *Bujku* [Alb.: Farmer], on Sundays. All the activities in Kosovo were included there and we would always wait to see that or in the evening we gathered to watch an animated film, it was five minutes before *Ditari* [Alb.: Journal] began, the news.

So, there was a pleasure, because when there was something [a show] for New Year's Eve, we gathered. There was Albanian music and we would happily look forward to it when there was a song in Albanian, because back then there were festivals in Serbian and Albanian, the bilinguality, Turkish as well... But our biggest joy, we had the most enthusiasm when there would be a song in Albanian. Qamili i Vogël,<sup>3</sup> he would sing. We had a tape recorder with tapes. My [paternal] aunt's husband

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<sup>3</sup> Qamili i Vogël - Muhaxhiri (1923 - 1992) was a folk singer from Gjakova. Inspired by Tirana traditional songs, he returned to Kosovo together with Ymer Rizën to establish the Cultural and Artistic Association.

worked in Germany, my aunt's grandson worked in Germany and my father requested him [to bring us one]. Because my father liked music, you know, he had a mandolin, he played the mandolin. And he always encouraged us that music heals the soul, it's good to listen to music, to become a little happier, more joyful.

We always... we listened to folkloric music more, but sometime later in the '80s, also pop music. And we always looked forward to festivals, there was *Zambaku i Prizrenit* [Alb.: The Lily of Prizren]. While us being the first ones in the family to have a TV, we always gathered with family members during holidays.

**Anita Susuri:** Did neighbors come by, for example?

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes, my friends and neighbors who I attended school with, together.

**Korab Krasniqi:** What were the songs you listened to back then that you still enjoy when you listen to them today?

**Vjollca Meha:** A song by Fatime Sokoli, we would listen to that secretly before. Because my father, we would take the radio, our house had two-three floors and he would check every room for where the radio caught the signal better in order to listen to [Radio] Tirana. And that song. Usually when they sing older songs now, they have a different meaning to me because I feel nostalgic when I listen to these songs again.

**Anita Susuri:** Maybe they also remind you of your father.

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes. My father and mother and all the close family members. And now it's a little different, there is an emptiness, there is... my father died, my mother died, you know, and you're reminded of them. You get visions of what it used to be like, where your father used to sit, because my father would sit, he had sort of a special place and the rest of our family sat around.

**Anita Susuri:** What was the neighborhood's infrastructure like? Were the houses old? The streets? What were they like?

**Vjollca Meha:** When we came, those houses, their roofs were with tiles, they called them *qerpiç*.<sup>4</sup> And my father demolished that old house and then built another one, we built it under those conditions, it was good considering... And then again in '88, we demolished that house and built another one. While the neighborhood was, the roads weren't asphalted. We didn't have a sewage system, we had a septic tank... for water, we had a pump. We had a pipe, because there is a lot of water here in Mitrovica and we had a pipe placed and we had the pump and we got water by pressing the pump. So, it brought the water out from the well.

**Anita Susuri:** In the yard, right?

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<sup>4</sup> Tur.: *Kerpiç*, *qerpiç*, is a traditional type of clay tile that has not undergone any firing process, but is left to dry in the sun.

**Vjollca Meha:** In the yard. And later during the '80s, they placed a sewage system in the street, there was infrastructure to support it and we installed both the water and sewage system.

**Anita Susuri:** I wanted to ask you about what the city was like as well. How do you remember your childhood?

**Vjollca Meha:** I remember as a child, [Hotel] Adriatik, there was Adriatik on the other side of Lushta. Lushta was in the middle of the city...

**Anita Susuri:** Lushta as in?

**Vjollca Meha:** Lushta as in the river. Now it passes by, Lushta is covered, but there is an exposed part there at the Mosque, at the Big Mosque as they call it now. A small part of Lushta's canal is exposed there. I remember the way Lushta was up until Mokra Gora and it wasn't covered. The main road, Mbretëresha Teuta wasn't there, it was a cobblestone street.

**Anita Susuri:** With *kalldrëm*.<sup>5</sup>

**Vjollca Meha:** With *kalldrëm*. And later on Lushta was covered because every time there was heavy rain, it flooded the city and all the stores that were across from [Hotel] Adriatik, there would always be a flood. And there was a clothing store called Napredaku, I think it was from Gjakova, because the rain would flood them and then they would vacate the stores. The clothes would go on sale and you sometimes had the opportunity to just get them, because the water [had damaged them a bit] and they cleared them out.

**Anita Susuri:** Was Adriatik a restaurant or what?

**Vjollca Meha:** Adriatik was a hotel.

**Anita Susuri:** Hotel Adriatik.

**Vjollca Meha:** It had that, back then it had... there was Lushta and it was close to Lusha... Lushta passed by. And it's... there was the bridge where people cross from one side to the other. There were three bridges and there was a bridge here at the cobblestone street which connects to the old part of the city and it goes where the gymnasium is now, it was the old market or I'm not sure what they called it.

**Anita Susuri:** Yes.

**Vjollca Meha:** There was another further down, near the hotel, Hotel Adriatik.

**Anita Susuri:** What was life in Mitrovica like back then and was it lively, it was an industrial city. What was it like, for example, the people, was there a cultural life? What did people do in their free time? What about you? Your family?

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<sup>5</sup> Layer of stones placed next to each other.

**Vjollca Meha:** How do I put it, we partook in sports activities in elementary school. There was the school choir, there was the group of school dancers, there were the basketball teams and... but they played handball more. I was with my class when we would play with other schools, I was in handball. But then the number of activities increased in high school, we had to study and I avoided the other activities a bit, I didn't do many.

My brother did sports, he played with Trepça, he also played in Zvezda of Gjilan back then before the war. But, during the '90s they closed down the football clubs and they didn't even give him a transfer from Trepça because the director was a *shka*,<sup>6</sup> Stolić, or I don't know what his name was. They didn't make it possible for him to transfer and go because my brother, both of my older brothers fled, during '86 they went to the Netherlands. And then my older brother, since my other brother was playing football, he wanted to take him to play with other teams there, but he couldn't because he didn't have the possibility to transfer and he couldn't go. And then he moved to Switzerland, my younger brother.

**Anita Susuri:** Did you go, for example, with your friends or family to see any matches?

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes. My brother who played football, every time... I went about two times, but I didn't go anymore because I had a bad experience. Not that it was me, but my brother had injuries every time. He broke his hand, or his leg, or he injured his leg, during training and I didn't... I always had... even today, I never tell people to play football, it seems like a very combat sport, dangerous (laughs).

**Anita Susuri:** What about [cultural] life...

**Vjollca Meha:** We went to concerts, we had our school day, we went there because there were activities organized, there was mathematicians, the mathematicians competition, historians, in elementary school. And then there were activities in high school too. But, when we finished high school, we didn't have a prom at all, because the '81 turmoil happened and they didn't allow us to get together.

**Anita Susuri:** Since you mentioned the turmoil, do you remember it? I'm sure you were in Mitrovica, '81, March and April. What was that like?

**Vjollca Meha:** In '81 I was in the second year...

**Anita Susuri:** Of high school.

**Vjollca Meha:** Of high school. No actually in March of '81 we were in the third year of high school, the gymnasium in Zveçan. Because we were in Zveçan for one year, and another one here in Mitrovica at the technical [school]. When the demonstration happened, they came to Zveçan too and we went out on the street. When we went out on the street, Zveçan was a small town, most of the people were Serbian and in order to avoid that crowd, we wanted to join the Trepça workers and come to the city [in Mitrovica]. They didn't allow us and we went to Zveçan. Zveçan is small. We walked on... it's a hilly terrain, a field, and we crossed to Suhodoll. And from Suhodoll, we went to the other side of the three skyscrapers, because back then the northern part was populated by Albanians. That's also why we came back home, because they didn't let us join the workers.

<sup>6</sup> *Shka* (m.); *shkinë* (f.), plural *shkijet*, is a derogatory term in Albanian used for Serbs.

**Anita Susuri:** What was the situation like in the city for example? Was there police violence, or people running away?

**Vjollca Meha:** I was here at the bridge, the Sitnica bridge, when a crowd of people came and the police got in front of us at the tunnel and they opened fire. I saw two people jump from the bridge and they fell in Lushta [river], in Stinica, in order to run away. And I saw another person wounded. When they opened fire, I saw blood in the crowd of people. And now I always have that image when I pass by there on the bridge, I remember that.

And we, they didn't let us go to school until they took measures. And there was supervision. We couldn't speak, because back then it was the "Republic of Kosovo", "Kosovo works, Belgrade prospers." We couldn't mention the term republic, because they would immediately take punishing measures, disciplinary measures, they would expel you from school and stuff like that. We kept it on the low with our classmates and... not with everyone because we feared some of them. For example, about some of them, we knew that their fathers were working for SUP,<sup>7</sup> and we would be wary of them.

**Anita Susuri:** Back then there were also books that were prohibited, for example related to Albania, anything that encourages [identifying with] nationality. Did you read? Did you have access to books, for example ones that weren't allowed?

**Vjollca Meha:** My father worked with Fazli Graçevci<sup>8</sup> at school and when he made a drama, when they imprisoned Fazli Graçevci, he made *Gjarprinjtë e Gjakut* [Alb.: The Blood Snakes] by Adem Demaçi and he brought it back home, because the book was kept in secret. We read books, because my big sister finished law, to become a lawyer. She read a lot of novels, and then I read those novels too, that's how we did it in order. Usually the ones who were more [nationalistic], we hid them, we would discreetly pass them around. In places we knew it was safe to read, because we didn't pass it on to just anybody.

**Anita Susuri:** Were you aware at the time about the existence of those groups, for example *illegalja*,<sup>9</sup> the organization...

**Vjollca Meha:** There was more information on TV...

**Anita Susuri:** When they were arrested.

**Vjollca Meha:** When they were arrested, and on newspapers, because back then we would also get the newspapers, there was *Rilindja*<sup>10</sup> back then...

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<sup>7</sup> SUP - Acronym for *Sekretarijat unutrašnjih poslova*, which translates to the Secretariat of Internal Affairs, of the Yugoslav Socialist Federal Republic.

<sup>8</sup> Fazli Graçevci (1935-1964), member of *Illegalja*, the underground Albanian nationalist movement, killed in detention.

<sup>9</sup> Constellation of underground militant groups fighting for Kosovo separation from Yugoslavia and unification with Albania during Tito's Yugoslavia.

<sup>10</sup> *Rilindja*, the first newspaper in the Albanian language in Yugoslavia, initially printed in 1945 as a weekly newspaper.



**Anita Susuri:** How did the media report on these individuals back then, for example by the system?

**Vjollca Meha:** By the system, as terrorists, as [people who were] against the state, against... They were always regarded as criminal groups. Although sometimes we would know their families and know they weren't [criminals], because they were indeed revolutionaries.

## Part Two

**Anita Susuri:** I would like to go back to the career you chose, geologist, you mentioned that you continue studying this. Were there many girls who enrolled in that department?

**Vjollca Meha:** When I enrolled in the first year we were ten or 15 students. But, slowly, the number decreased in the second year. So, from the third to the fifth year, the ones who finished the studies were me and Mevlude Emini. And then the other generations, after us, the fourth and the fifth generation had more students complete studies. Now there are, there is a considerable number of women who are geologists. But most of them, unfortunately because the industry chain closed, they remained... they just finished the specialization and now stay at home.

**Anita Susuri:** You mentioned you were nine or eight girls...

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** Compared to the boys, how many boys were there?

**Vjollca Meha:** Well compared to the boys, there were more boys. From the third year to the fifth year, from the ones that finished, we were two women, and there were 20 men. So...

**Anita Susuri:** Yes, that's what I wanted to know.

**Vjollca Meha:** Because I had a professor who is still alive today, Valdet Pruthi. He would say, "It's a bit hard for women in geology, because it's a profession that only men should pursue." He was a doctor of science, geology sciences and when he finished his masters degree, he did in Zagreb, and there were other women in Zagreb. So, he didn't mean to overlook us but he wanted to encourage us, you know, because sometimes during our studies we would be unnerved because we saw what the situation was like.

We also had professors from Belgrade and we had to answer their questions in Serbian as well. They came from Belgrade and they would teach the subject in two days and we had to prepare for it and take an oral exam in Serbian, not Albanian. Most of the students passed and for example, we also had the right to go and take the exam in Belgrade, but I personally didn't go...

**Anita Susuri:** Were there people who went?

**Vjollca Meha:** Other colleagues did, but I didn't because I wanted to wait until the professors would come here and then I went to take the exam.

**Anita Susuri:** So, they came here for two days and they taught the whole subjects, they went back, and then there was only the exam?

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** Was that difficult?

**Vjollca Meha:** It was difficult because we had classes from morning to evening, from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM and then the next day it was from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM again, for example, and two more days. For example, there were cases when they couldn't finish [teaching] the whole subject and they had to come for two more days. But usually, they would let us know a week in advance that we will only have classes with that professor, and we neglected the other subjects a bit because we couldn't do both. So, we would attend the classes and then the most difficult part was that you could learn the subject but it was difficult to express it. So that was a bit of an obstacle every time, but we passed well.

**Anita Susuri:** It was in Serbian...

**Vjollca Meha:** In Serbian.

**Anita Susuri:** And I am sure it was more difficult.

**Vjollca Meha:** We had to take the exam in Serbian and for example he [the professor] would ask us sub questions, and you had to answer in Serbian.

**Anita Susuri:** From the students who were girls, were there also Serbs?

**Vjollca Meha:** There were Serbs, but there was one girl, she started before us, she was a generation older. There weren't any others, the others came after us. We would attend classes together, I mean we had most of the subjects in common.

**Anita Susuri:** You also mentioned that you were...

**Vjollca Meha:** It's the professors who came from Belgrade, because they studied in Serbian so their subject was in Serbian too.

**Anita Susuri:** You mentioned that you were a scholarship holder of Trepça, how did that work? I mean we know that in Mitrovica most people had a scholarship from Trepça, you were then obliged to work for Trepça after finishing your studies, right? Is that right?

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** How did that work out for you?

**Vjollca Meha:** When I applied for the first year of studies, I also applied for the scholarship but they didn't grant me one, neither the first nor the second year, it happened in the third year. Because back

then they favored the miners' children, the Trepça workers, and my father wasn't a Trepça worker. The scholarship, back then there was the Tito's Fund as well, that was the biggest scholarship, but they didn't grant that to us either. They didn't grant it to me, because I applied for it but I didn't receive one. Because my father wasn't a member of the Communist League, he wasn't in any party. And since he wasn't, because you had to send evidence that your father is in the party and it would make it easier for you. But, since the commission saw that I applied for it for three years as a student of geology, they granted me one in the third year. Because otherwise, you only had an advantage if your father was a Trepça worker as they would grant scholarships with no hesitation. That's why it was a bit easier for me in the third year.

**Anita Susuri:** I wanted to ask you about your university years, what was social life like in Mitrovica? Were there places to hang out at? What was the people's mindset regarding girls going out? Since it was a bit more developed, I mean, an industrial city.

**Vjollca Meha:** The faculty organized a freshman celebration every year and the senior year celebration, and there were the celebrations of the Mining [department], and technology [department], and they were organized on a Yugoslavia-state level. And they would go, for example, they appointed 20 people, ten people but also the ones for the activities. For example, whoever played soccer, the soccer team would be chosen, those were more like sports races and people would go. There were only a few Albanian women who went to the Mining and Technology celebrations.

**Anita Susuri:** Did you attend them?

**Vjollca Meha:** I didn't. In freshman and senior year celebrations, when there were senior year celebrations organized... when I was a senior, it wasn't organized. I didn't want to go to the freshman celebration. But we went out in the city, there were bars, there were bars for young people, we went there for coffee with friends, with... When we had breaks between classes, we went there for coffee, we hung out at these bars and then went back [to school]. We made visits, to the faculties as well, and then to mines, because we had our field practice with professor Valdet Pruthi at the Mine of Bulljaka in Klina, Klina of Begu, we were there for one week.

We had the field program and we stayed at Motel Nora for one week, back then it was located at the crossroads there in Klina e Begut, on the way to Peja and Gjakova. We were together, both Serbs and Albanians, the whole group because we attended the course together. The Serbs gave up, they went back the first or second day. We continued as a group.

**Anita Susuri:** Why? Was it difficult or what?

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes, it was difficult because the terrain was near Mirusha rivers. We walked all around that part, we did the mapping, our job as geologists. They couldn't bear it and they went back (laughs).

**Anita Susuri:** What about Trepça, did you go to the mine?

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes, as a geologist, you have to go into the mine. But, we had work in the mine and in the office.

**Anita Susuri:** What was the first time you went into the mine like?

**Vjollca Meha:** When I went to the mine for the first time, some people said they were afraid, but I found it very interesting, I don't know, I didn't feel fear or... but I had a good time.

**Korab Krasniqi:** As a geologist, what are the responsibilities or what were your responsibilities in Trepça, whether in the office or the mine?

**Vjollca Meha:** The responsibilities as a geologist were supervision, cartography and a workshop about where the ore went, for example, we made the plans, we took evidence and we described the core and then supervised how much ore is being spent for example, how much it's being used. Because it's a work that is somehow a continuation of what miners did. Because we discovered and found the ore and where it led to, the miners followed that and extracted the ore.

**Anita Susuri:** The miners did the physical work, while you measured and discovered?

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes. Our work is more about...even miners have their own work in the ore where they engage in the process of chemical separation... while we also developed designs about which way corridors should be opened, as they needed to be cut in a specific manner.

**Korab Krasniqi:** What was work in the office like?

**Vjollca Meha:** And then we continued work in the office. We measured the terrain, and then we put it on a plan at the office. The plans are, geological plans are taken from geodetic plans, because they do the measuring and then we incorporate the geodetic plan in geological plans.

**Anita Susuri:** I would like to know a little more about your work, you mentioned that you started to work in January of '89, how did it go and what were the relations between you and your coworkers, the cooperation?

**Vjollca Meha:** When we started working, the cooperation was good. But in the technical service unit, I could say that 80 percent [of the workers] were Serbian. There were four in the technical service, geologists, geodesists and the designers. Because designers did the projects, geodesists did the measuring, while we the geologists did the maps and the geological plans. And then there was production, and the other parts. But the units were separated. So, because of the Trepça workers, the mine had over 2000 workers and the units were separate.

There was harmony at the beginning, but that cooperation went cold. The leader was, I could say *shka*, because he was both a *magjup*<sup>11</sup> and a *shka*, he tried to forcibly make us get along. Because the geologists and the technicians had offices together, we had, when the Serbian workers would get into service, we were six geologists, they were two and they never hung out with us. They went, they had an office and there was a woman who did the drawing, and they stayed there. They removed the middle part, we had a phone in-between because there was an office phone, we were on this side and the technicians were separate on the other side.

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<sup>11</sup> *Magjup* is a racial slur. The term usually denotes racial inferiority, uneducation and “backwardness” and is used by many cultures in the Balkans against members of the Romani community.

They removed that part and closed the door in order to enter through the same door even though it was closer to us. But again, because there was that coldness, we didn't [engage], we kept relations formal, nothing more because then some disagreement arose with the technicians because they would accuse us, "What are you demanding?" Because people were demanding democracy and children would go out on the streets too, "Democracy, democracy!" And then they would confront us, they would actually attack us, "Why do even children want democracy? I would do this to you, I would do that to you..." They started to uncover all the nationalism they had against us. So we didn't have [relations], only formally, not otherwise.

**Anita Susuri:** You mentioned that your work was connected to the practical work inside the mine, but if you could describe the tools that you worked with a bit or the work you did in more detail, or something interesting you discovered during the work?

**Vjollca Meha:** When we went to the mine, we usually didn't go alone, it was two of us. But there was also a technician, two engineers and a technician. He had the task of preparing the plan, and we just took the plan and went, and actually the technical side was done by the technician. When we went in, we had the compass, the plan, and the pen with us, and we went to the workshop and did the mapping of the workshop. We gave the plan to the technician, and the technicians had the task to continue the procedures.

But, when we went to the mine, there was a liveliness even in the mine elevator when a shift ended. Usually, as engineers of geology, we didn't go down in the mine at the same time as when a shift ended, we went down in the mine after the shift ended and we left before the next shift started because if we went at the same time, we would be stuck there until the end. And when we left the mine, we never... because back then there were the worker toilets and the engineer toilets. We didn't, because the engineer toilets were separate, we only washed our hands, we changed our work clothes and continued to the office.

**Anita Susuri:** Is there a special part in the mine where you could change the clothes? And wear the [work] clothes?

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes there is, on the surface.

**Anita Susuri:** Oh, on the surface.

**Vjollca Meha:** No, it's on the surface, it's on the surface.

**Anita Susuri:** You mentioned the mapping, how was that done? What does that mean? [Was it about] Where the ore was?

**Vjollca Meha:** No, you put it on paper, you go see the terrain and it orientates you. For example, there is a plan after the entrance plan, you go into the workshops and see it, you follow where the ore is and write it down, for example, this part has ore, this part has rocks, this part has, you know, there is a description, a kind of description. For example, in a visual way. But, it's all based on the plan, you can't go there without a plan.

**Anita Susuri:** What kind of minerals, I mean, there is information on what kind of minerals Trepça has and such, but what did you come across more?

**Vjollca Meha:** It's usually sulfide, lead and zinc and pyrite. But the pyrite contains more sulfur and iron, so they didn't use it. But, the natural cavities, they also came across natural cavities where they came across crystals, crystals were extracted out of those natural cavities, they extracted all kinds of crystals. It's specific to minerals because of the shapes the crystals are found in, it could be the same composition, but the shapes are different. It's different every time, because the geological composition of the mine has various kinds of minerals.

**Anita Susuri:** Was there also gold and silver?

**Vjollca Meha:** On the first level, we could say there was also gold, but that was used in the '30s, now with the usage of the mine, the mine was also deepened. Now the twelfth level, which is working, is 15 meters [deep], they're thinking of going 35 meters below sea level.

**Anita Susuri:** You mentioned the twelfth level.

**Vjollca Meha:** Twelfth, lower.

**Anita Susuri:** Is the twelfth [level] under the minerals?

**Vjollca Meha:** The whole mine has minerals.

**Anita Susuri:** I mean, it's submerged, not processed.

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes, it's functional only until the twelfth level, the twelfth level only has the well, it's not open.

**Anita Susuri:** It's not open.

**Vjollca Meha:** No. They plan to open the other level with new discoveries.

**Anita Susuri:** Do you remember, was the eleventh level open when you started working? Those years...

**Vjollca Meha:** When I started working, the best [quality] machinery came from Sweden, they were in packages right outside the mine, they were used for the production process which were ordered to be taken down to the mine and used for production. The year I started [working], the spiral method began being used for the spiral ore body, that goes to a bigger space, it could take over two workshops, and at that point the eleventh level was at the beginning of its activity.

**Anita Susuri:** What did the mine seem like to you, did it seem like a world of its own, or what were your impressions?

**Vjollca Meha:** When I went back from my first day at the mine, when I went back home, my grandmother, my mother's mother, was present and I was tired but I didn't notice that tiredness myself. And she said, "How did work go?" I said, "Good." "Where were you?" I said, I told her, I said, "I went down in the mine," "Oh God, you completed all that school and you went down underground" (laughs). And then I would say, "You're saying down to seven meters, they could go even deeper and that is a different world, it's different."

Before there was a warmth when you went to the mine, you had, how to put it, a support which was different. We had respect from the workers, we had, it was on a decent level, they didn't, actually the Serbian technicians would complain and say, "Why are they respecting them more? They came here now and they are respecting them." They would respect us because we were Albanian women. They saw us a little differently compared to the engineer in the technical unit.

**Anita Susuri:** Let's continue, then it was January and it was the end, but the strike began on February 20, how did it come to the news and how did you and your coworkers receive it?

**Vjollca Meha:** When the news arrived, they said, "The miners are locking themselves down." We were close, because the technical service building was close to the mine entrance. We were young, we somehow felt that coldness, a sort of uncertainty because the State Security was going around, we recognized them as figures. They would always follow our moves and we told one of our coworkers, we would notice it, and then we discussed it more and more about the miners' concerns, the political concern. And then they said, we told one of our coworkers, "Can we go join them?" "He said, "Do you want to join?" I said, "Well we are here. Instead of staying here with *shkije*, with Serbs..." Because we had Serbs in our office. They would observe us, they would look who is going so they could say that we were there and not in the office, and we went.

We went with our coworker and he said, there were lookouts, they started appointing individuals as lookouts. They wore the red ribbons {points to her arm}, they put the red ribbons on their arms and they were responsible for who could go in and go out. And we went with him, and he said, "You," he said, "Ibrahim," he said, "can go in." He said, "While they," he said, "can't!" He said, "Who are they?" We stopped because we were new workers. But our coworker told him, he said, "Well they," he said, "are workers who were hired now and they're one of us, they're new." He [supervisor] said, "Is it safe to let them in?" He said, "Yes *more*,<sup>12</sup> of course, I'm assuring you about myself, and I'm assuring you about these two as well because they come from good families." And when he explained the situation, he let us through.

And then we went in, we visited them, the situation, it seemed like a different world. It's like we became isolated; no news, no... I mean no good news. Delegations would come one after one, with Kolgeci and Stipe Šuvar,<sup>13</sup> Morina and everyone in that order, delegations would come and they weren't, it was a gloomy atmosphere. Thinking that if Trepça stopped [producing] one day, it would be a big crisis, but there wasn't any kind of solution back then. The workers gathered in the eighth level, we were down there a couple of times, we went down, because they wouldn't even let you go on the

<sup>12</sup> Colloquial: used to emphasize the sentence, it expresses strong emotion.

<sup>13</sup> Stipe Šuvar (1936 – 2004), Croatian and Yugoslav politician. From June 30, 1988 to May 17, 1989, he was Chairman of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

elevator to go down to the miners. On the surface they would say, “You are going to stay there,” down there they would say, “Don’t let them through because they’re pressuring us here.”

And we went out and they turned the workers’ hall into a hospital because the air, lack of light, it became crowded, the air became heavy and the miners began to get sick, tired, exhausted, they couldn’t sleep, there was a lack of decent food, so they set up an ambulance station where the workers’ hall is on the second floor. The offices too, the production offices, and the production offices turned into an ambulance station, they had three-four beds at first, and then it expanded because we started to receive help from all over Kosovo.

We continued to support them, we helped them when the workers came out of the mine, we helped them with cleaning, medication and stuff like that. Because then there was... and we had the ambulance in Stari Trg and then the from there physicians joined, the medical staff of the ambulance joined us in the mine. It became a whole team. The number of people leaving the mine exhausted increased, and the technical service where we had our offices, turned into a medical station, there became two stations.

There were delegations, help and support came in from all sides. And from the exhaustion I felt, because I didn’t sleep for a long time, my body gave out on me and I couldn’t get up. And an anesthesiologist, Nuredin Fazliu, told me, he said, “What happened? Did you perhaps get sick too?” I said, “No, no, I am not sick, but I can’t stand up.” Because I was physically inactive, my blood pressure dropped. “Now,” he said, “I will give you a cocktail [of medicine],” he said, “you will stand up,” and he gave me an injection. They wanted to do something, they wanted to go home and shower, and then return in the morning. But there was only one bus and we appointed the driver to come get us again in the morning. We set the time at 6:00 AM to come back, the bus would come collect us at our homes and then take us back there.

When I went home, I was so exhausted that I didn't even know when I lied down to sleep, nor who I talked to or greeted. My parents asked me, “What happened? Why? What is the situation like?” I don’t even know what my answer was. Only the next morning, plus there were guests. The next day we went to the mine again, when we went there, we received the news that they were coming out. We didn’t want to go out because we received fake news twice that we needed to leave the mine because they signed [the decision] that the constitution wouldn’t change...

**Anita Susuri:** That they resigned.

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes, that they resigned. There was that list of demands and then the whole staff of directors and leaders went in, and they got out that evening. The next day they were all taken by the police, whoever they found, they took them to the police station immediately. And then they also took the famous group of the 13 directors to prison. And then the situation grew even colder. We never talked, we only spoke formally, we got our job done and we didn’t talk to them [Serbian coworkers].

And then, there was an hour, there was a second strike too, but they let us go home and they didn’t allow us to join. And then after one week, the violent measures set in, the police were at the entrance



of the gate, the special police unit of former Yugoslavia back then, there were Bosnians, Serbs, Macedonians, all kinds of people. There were cops even in the office. It was a really bad mental torture.

**Anita Susuri:** How long did you strike for, how long did you stay inside the cavern?

**Vjollca Meha:** No, we didn't stay in the cavern.

**Anita Susuri:** Did you go in now and then?

**Vjollca Meha:** We went in now and then, two or three times, we stayed for about two or three hours and then left, the mine workers stayed there longer.

**Anita Susuri:** When you went there, what did the atmosphere seem like? You mentioned it was difficult, but how were they? What was their state?

**Vjollca Meha:** It was very emotional, for example, because even the miners' children came to the gate and asked for their fathers. They wanted to go into the mine to see their fathers, but they couldn't let the children in the mine. And that was very touching. It was out of excessive tiredness and exhaustion, some would say, "We want to die here and we don't want to come out. We won't come out alive, we will remain here." That was very heavy to see, because we were under pressure from both sides.

For example, we were under pressure, not that kind of pressure, but mental pressure. For example, because of the state we saw our workers in, they were in that state and then when we got outside the mine, we were under Serbian pressure. *Shkijet* were there all the time, Serbs were around, every time, "Why are you going? You think you're doing something." They always spoke in a belittling manner. And then during the second strike, the police went in and forcibly took them outside, I wasn't there at all. And then I saw some workers who, because of the tortures they faced from the police, it affected them really badly.

### Part Three

**Anita Susuri:** I am interested to know, when the strike ended, you mentioned, I mean you were at home and then you went back. If you could describe how the strike ended, where were you? Were you somewhere nearby?

**Vjollca Meha:** When the miners began coming out, we had, we were organized and each of us stayed close to a worker until the [medical] station because of the light. And we stayed close to them until the station and some of them asked to go home, some of them remained at the station. At that time, some directors, some mine leaders told us, "Don't stay here, go and get some rest," and we went home. When I arrived, someone told me, when we went they told us, "Go home again." They didn't let us go in, because they were taking, there was help, all the aids that Kosovo citizens sent, they were all taken, they were confiscated. So when we went, a leader there told me, he said, "Go," he said, "get some rest, it's much better that you weren't there," he said, "because the police came, the police came and got them out." So we left and we didn't, we didn't run into the police at all. We left before they came.

**Anita Susuri:** How did the imprisonment happen, how did the workers and you personally receive it?

**Vjollca Meha:** Very badly, because when they imprison the leader's staff, it's very damaging. And we had, we had a director who was very successful, because during his time, the mine achieved the capacity of production, it achieved the maximum capacity of production. And then the news started reporting who was being interrogated, because they also began torturing. And then for one hour, in the spaces, inside the Trepça fence, we held a kind of protest. All the workers would gather there, and protest for one hour. Security would record who was and wasn't there. And it was really bad. It was a great joy when they were released from prison. For two days, we didn't know if we were at work, if we were friends, if we were downtown or... It was, the level of joy was amazing. Not only for the workers, but the whole city was lively, crowded. For the children, the adults, it was a very great joy. But we were still working under violent measures and they fired us.

**Anita Susuri:** What was the date?

**Vjollca Meha:** It was, in June, no, in August, in August of '90. The police went out at the bridge here, the police patrol, and they didn't let any bus go up. We got on the bus, we came here, they got us off the bus here and told us, "Go home!" Until we got on again... we attempted to go there for three or four days in a row, but they didn't let us through. And then they said, "Okay, get on here, but there..." And when we went they didn't let anyone through anymore. And I didn't go anymore, I didn't attempt to because they wouldn't let us. When the general strike in Kosovo happened, which was on September 3 [1990], after two weeks they sent us our work cards, "You are fired from this job for participating in the September 3rd strike." Although September 3rd was on a weekend, but we were fired if we participated.

**Anita Susuri:** And what was the September 3rd strike about?

**Vjollca Meha:** Against, because the union with Hajrullah Gorani as leader, whoever joined for the rights and freedoms against the revocation of the Constitution of Kosovo, that's when the strike happened. All the unions notified all the institutions to go on strike and most of them were fired because of the strike after. But, even earlier on, we were fired earlier.

**Anita Susuri:** After getting fired from your job, how did your work continue? What did you do?

**Vjollca Meha:** Well after being fired from our jobs, we thought that it wouldn't last long. But, Trepça was working, but there were some people who returned to work there, and it barely worked to keep itself up. We didn't work until '93. In '93 I worked in education at the Elena Gjika school in Tunel i Parë, I taught geography and mathematics. I worked for two years, in '93 and '94, in '95 they fired me.

And then, I went to my little brother in Switzerland for one year, I stayed there for one year and then I came back. I didn't want to be an asylee, because I could seek asylum but I didn't like the life abroad. Although all three of our brothers were abroad, while three sisters were here. We couldn't bear to leave our parents. And like that, some of us were here, some of us abroad, we still had support. Our financial situation wasn't bad because even when there was something lacking, my brothers would fill in.

**Anita Susuri:** Did you create a family in the meantime? Did you get married?

**Vjollca Meha:** No, I am not married now either.

**Anita Susuri:** You continued with your career.

**Vjollca Meha:** I continued with my career. After the war, in 2002, 2001, I started my masters degree, but I moved to environmental protection. I got my masters degree in 2007 because I was employed when I came back, when I came back from... because during the war I was, even during the war, for one year, we went to Switzerland as refugees and that was very difficult.

**Anita Susuri:** What was it like?

**Vjollca Meha:** Because almost the entire duration of the war, we were here in Mitrovica with my sister and my brother-in-law, my two nephews, while my parents and my younger sister went with the first row of people from Mitrovica who went to Albania. They were in Albania, while we went around with the row of people from Mitrovica to Gjakova, and then we came back to Mitrovica again. And then, we hardly crossed the border by bus, we went to Ulcinj. And then from Ulcinj, we illegally went to Italy by ship, and then we went to Switzerland from Italy. Our entire family got together in Switzerland, my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, everyone. We stayed for a year and we came back in 2000.

**Anita Susuri:** During the war, what was the situation like in the city while you were here? And what forced you to leave? Did somebody kick you out of your house?

**Vjollca Meha:** From the end of our street, they started to kick us out of our houses and they kicked us out. My father didn't want to leave, he said, "How do I leave my house, they haven't come to my house to kick me out yet." But during '98, the police searched us for guns as well and they targeted us as a family from Prekaz. When the police came, because we left, my big sister's house was here at... they kicked them out of their house first after the Eqrem Qabej school, at Iber Bridge. They burned her house down and kicked her out, she had nowhere to go so she came to us. And then, we left together, and went to our [paternal] uncle in Tavnik.

When they went, they asked my father, as soon as they got in they asked, "What are you waiting for here?" He said, "I can't leave my house," they told him, "We will look after your house." And then someone, who was wearing a mask, asked him, "Where are your daughters?" My father was thinking why we would leave earlier since we were already targets. But they had already begun kicking them out at the end of the street. Only my father and a neighbor of ours remained. He was on the other side, and our father was on another, only they remained in their houses and both of them were kicked out and they said, "We don't want to see you here for even one more minute."

And then we would wait at the end of the street, at the start of the street, we would wait and see what was happening. And then when my father came, he barely arrived because he had Parkinson's and he couldn't walk fast. He said, "You were right, because they asked for you." He said, "As soon as they came," he said, "they asked for you, I almost trapped you." And then we stayed at [other people's] houses, from our uncle in Tavnik, and then to our uncle's in-laws.

And then later on, we felt that we were a burden because, for example, it was difficult when you knew the language, you understood what they were saying to you when you knew the language. And it could be possible that if you didn't know the language, you wouldn't understand what they were saying and you would be calmer. We would understand everything, and we would move around in tractors the whole time, "We will cut you, we will shred you. Why are you staying here? Go to [Bill] Clinton, go to Albania, this isn't your place." You know, every time... and the songs, the music was being played everywhere, their music [I mean].

We, for as long as there were people here, were always silent, in silence because we had no protection. They could go inside houses and massacre people and do all kinds of torture. So, we decided [to leave], because we also had the two children of my sisters, to save them as well and we went to the bus station. We paid a fairly big amount of *marka*<sup>14</sup> per person in order to go to Ulcinj. And at the bus station they gave us, now they were, because we went out, we ran out of food and we crossed the Iber Bridge with my sister to buy food.

We were a group of people, but the bus, but they initially did that for their own profit, we would get on the bus at the bus station and we would go by bus on the other side of the Iber Bridge, and when we crossed the Iber Bridge, fortunately, we got the news that they are bombing and they ran to shelters and they left us, "Go!" Because they took our food, whoever had more, you could only get a carton of milk, a yogurt, a, only one by each, no... we could buy more, but they didn't give it to you, "No, because you will send it to UÇK."<sup>15</sup>

We got bread as well, because there began a lack of flour, the baker's yeast to make bread. I don't even want to see *buknore*<sup>16</sup> today, because we ate *buknore* while we were in line, but that wasn't [proper] *buknore*, but only water and flour. And where we were, wherever we stopped, my sister went and made bread and we always had a loaf of bread with us. It was more for the children, because as adults we tried to push through.

It was difficult while waiting in line, because while we were on our way, we even saw dead bodies who were killed in Shipol. They intentionally left them there and they brought the line [of buses and cars] to go around it. You know, "Now, go back home because nobody is following you." And they made the buses go around Shipol and see the dead bodies and they took us back in the line again.

**Anita Susuri:** You said that you returned to Kosovo in 2000, what was the return like? You went back home, what state was the house in?

**Vjollca Meha:** In 2000, my parents didn't want to stay [in Switzerland], even though our family was there. But since they wanted to come back, we then decided who [will join]. Me and my sisters and parents came back. When we came back, our house was burnt, everything was destroyed. I saw that

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<sup>14</sup> Albanian: *Marka*; German: *Deutsche Mark* was the basic monetary unit of West Germany from 1948 to 1990 and of reunited Germany from 1990 to 2001. It was used as a stable, non-official currency in various Yugoslav republics as a result of hyper-inflation of the *dinar*.

<sup>15</sup> Alb. *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës* - Kosovo Liberation Army, was an Albanian guerrilla paramilitary organization that sought the separation of Kosovo from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia during the 1990s.

<sup>16</sup> *Buknore/Pogaçe* is a type of bread baked in the ashes of the fireplace, and later on in the oven, similar to focaccia.

even after crossing the Iber Bridge, the entire downtown was flat to the ground, there were no houses, or anything. And then, they built those small businesses. Everything was destroyed.

Actually during the whole way, where I lived, my house was burned down, and the other neighborhood houses [as well]. We didn't have any kind of help, we renovated everything on our own, of course, with the help of my brothers who invested and then we fixed it. It was a great joy, because we came back home. It was an euphoria that we were free to freely go out anywhere, without anyone stopping you and speaking to you in a different language, "Where are you going? Where do you want to go?" Everyone, whoever you saw, they were joyful. During the first moment, you always wanted to see someone close to you, and meet them.

[However, we were] Always looking if everyone was alive, or if a relative was killed. My grandmother died, my mother's mother died in the war and my mother's [paternal] aunt, my [paternal] uncle's wife were killed in her house in the village, they Serbs caught them and killed them. While she opened the door, they thought she was hiding someone, and they killed her as soon as she opened the door. They killed her at home.

And after that, the family was complete, they started to go to work. And then there was the issue of work, we didn't have jobs. Some organizations that were here, and they were already settled because most of them came from Albania and they continued with these Albanian contingents. Within one day, my sister and I applied for a job at 20 places. While my father was watching the news he said, "More they're saying something about Trepça." I went out, when I arrived at the station there was no bus.

While waiting for a bus or a van to arrive, because there was no line to Stari Trg, I met a university colleague, "Where do you want to go?" He was working in KEK.<sup>17</sup> I said, "Honestly," I said, "I wanted to go to Trepça and look for a job," he said, "Come," he said, "because we are also going that way," and I went. When I went there, the workers had gathered and two colleagues said, "Vjollca," they said, "come," it was a Friday, "Come Monday, the director will be here," because there was a team of foreigners, ITT, because companies came through UNMIK.<sup>18</sup> "Come," they said, "and you will talk to the director and maybe he will give you your job back." So I went the next Monday.

When I went on Monday it was a challenge because our workers didn't have the right to let you inside the Trepça building. But it was also a long time since we saw each other and it was a change, even our physical appearance had changed, because we were older now, ten years older. And they said, "Honestly, I can't let you in unless you know someone in the mine, an engineer or a director," he said, "They could come get you," and I started mentioning names if someone I knew was there. They said, "Well, they're all here, but we don't recognize you." There was an American there and he said, he came closer, "What," he asked, "what do you want?" I said, "This and that, I used to work here and I came," "Eh," he said, "good, come with me." And we went to the director of the foreigners team.

We talked to him, he said, "We were thinking of waiting until the engineer and the geologist come, and see if we need you or not." And then I waited for the coworkers, I talked to them. They went to the mine, I said, "Hopefully you won't be too long and I'd have to stay here," they said, "Even if you leave,"

<sup>17</sup> *Korporata Energjetike e Kosovës (KEK)* - Kosovo Energy Corporation.

<sup>18</sup> UNMIK - United Nations Mission in Kosovo. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo is the official mandated mission of the United Nations in Kosovo from 1999 to 2008.

they said, “there’s no way for you to go,” they said, “because there is no transportation available,” “When we’re done,” they said, “we will leave together.”

When we left, when they left the mine with the foreign geologist, they came and gave me the contract, “Sign this contract,” I started working the next day. And I was the first woman to return [to work] after the war. I mean, there were two or three more [women] who worked in the restaurant, but out of the engineering staff, I was the first woman. And then gradually with the development of work, the workers came back in batches, because they didn’t allow them all at once.

**Anita Susuri:** And you immediately returned to your regular work studying the ground, right?

**Vjollca Meha:** Six months, but then after six months I began [working at] the Museum of Crystals. I was there and I led the Museum of Crystals until 2012, 2013. When the new building was built, they transferred the crystals to the Museum of Development. After I withdrew, I returned to Trepça.

**Anita Susuri:** How did the Museum work? There were artifacts, only crystals, right?

**Vjollca Meha:** No, the Museum was only for the crystals. All kinds of crystals which were in Trepça and there were also [crystals] from other countries which they exchanged. The museum back then was a museum. You couldn’t visit it whenever you wanted, because the visits were high profile. There were delegations from Yugoslavia who came, they came there because they were also business visits but there was also the Trepça hotel, they stayed at the hotel.

**Anita Susuri:** What about the museum and the crystals that were brought there, did somebody identify them?

**Vjollca Meha:** Yes, yes. They were all recorded, photographs, supervised, and then the selection.

**Anita Susuri:** Is there something you would like to add?

**Vjollca Meha:** From 2012, I moved to the Department of Environmental Protection as part of Trepça.

**Anita Susuri:** Are you still there?

**Vjollca Meha:** Now, I will go on until I am healthy enough (laughs), I will continue in this department.

**Anita Susuri:** Very well.

**Vjollca Meha:** Since I moved [to working there] earlier, you didn’t have opportunities like today with the system of education, I think it’s a little different. It’s not that I like the system today, because before if you were an engineer of geology, you got your masters in geology, you got your PhD in geology, whereas now you finish geology, and then move on to economics, and you actually switch to something completely different, that’s nothing to me. With these new methods, there is a mix, a person can’t be an expert in the sense of that field [of study].

[For example] me, I finished five years of geology, but I switched to environmental protection, but environmental protection is very similar to geology. Because just like in geology, you learn about the natural resource, but you have to cultivate it again, you have to take it back to the state it was before. And the environment, you make use of it but then again you need to be considerate towards nature and you have... but in Trepça we have big problems, because it's been almost 60 years since the depositories were built. The time needed to accumulate the material, then you need just as much time to get rid of the material waste.

**Anita Susuri:** Yes. Ms. Vjolla, if you don't have anything else to add, I thank you a lot for the interview.

**Vjollca Meha:** Thank you for finding the time, I have nothing to add.

**Korab Krasniqi:** Thanks a lot.