

# Nazmi Rrahmani

Writer, journalist, and editor

My name is Nazmi Rrahmani, I was born in the village of Ballovc in the municipality of Podujeva, on May 7, 1941. I completed the four-year elementary school in the village, which was opened there for the first time around 1947. I started around the second half of the year, and after three and a half years, I continued to the seven-year school in Podujeva. My generation was the first to attend the eight-year elementary school. After elementary school, I continued to the gymnasium in Prishtina, where I graduated. After the gymnasium, the Department of Language and Literature at the Faculty of Language and Literature opened in Prishtina in the 1959-'60 school year, and I was part of the first generation at this faculty. However, right after finishing the gymnasium, I started working as a journalist at Radio Prishtina, where I continued for about 15 years, after which I moved to *Rilindja*. Initially, I worked at the magazine *Fjala*, then at *Jeta e Re*, and from *Jeta e Re*, I transitioned to the Publishing Editorial Office of *Rilindja*, where I concluded my career. I finished my career with the closure of *Rilindja*, but we continued our work as an editorial team during the difficult years of the occupation, after *Rilindja* was closed, until 1999, when I founded the publishing house *Faik Konica*, with which I am still involved today. This is approximately a part of my work, but most of it was within *Rilindja*, not only as professional engagement but also as a broader activity. In 1960-'61, I began writing, and in 1965, I published my first novel, *Malësorja*, followed by several other novels.

As for myself, I consider it perhaps a starting point, the support or encouragement given by the teacher or language and literature instructor, or at school, in writing assignments... the support given during an essay or a piece of writing. It may not necessarily be decisive, but still, I remember, for instance, the language teacher, Shefqet Kelmendi from Peja, who was then working in Podujeva, praising my essay in front of the class, which we had done as a routine task... and maybe that was the beginning. But then, even in the Prishtina gymnasium, for example, the language professor would give me books to read, books that were hard to find. I read Ernest Koliqi, for example, as a gymnasium student, because the professor himself had given it to me. So, these are the encouragements that perhaps initiate something, and then it continues. This doesn't mean it applies to everyone, each person has a starting point, something that drives them forward. It could be a reading they like, or maybe a kind word from someone, as a child, it could be what inspires them, and...



*In the photo: Nazmi Rrahmani  
From the personal archive of Nazmi Rrahmani*

At *Rilindja*, the work for me was the most suitable, the best possible work. That's why I did it with enthusiasm and a lot of desire, because I had the opportunity to engage with literary creation, manuscripts, and the effort to publish and offer readers what I believed to be the best and most necessary for culture in general. That's why I carried out this work with great passion and perhaps with significant dedication, due to the volume of manuscripts and works that needed to be read, approved for printing, or further work. It was such a large amount that I often had to work at home or complete tasks outside the editorial office. Because as the head of that editorial office at the time, I naturally had other obligations, both to the team... and the larger *Rilindja* collective, which, as is known, was a very large and heterogeneous organization with broad activities, sometimes diverse. Starting from the printing press, the concrete aspects of the work such as machines, paper, printing, distribution, etc., to book sales or book distribution, storage, and the necessary organization. The sector heads of *Rilindja*, known as "United Work Organization" at the time, also operated under a collective leadership, that's why my obligations extended to dealing with issues across different sectors. This was due to the leadership role and the problems that needed to be resolved collectively for the entire *Rilindja* team, which was a large group with well-educated, experienced staff working under very good conditions. Therefore, this was work that required a large number of people to be completed. For example, *Rilindja* as a Publishing Editorial Office, I'm only speaking about this part, as the organization structure of *Rilindja* changed over time and was not the same as at the end. Initially, the

newspaper was launched on February 12, 1945, and some of the then-existing institutions published books, mainly propagandistic and political ones. Later, when *Rilindja* was established as a publishing house, it was named “Mustafa Bakija,” not *Rilindja*. Under this name, “Mustafa Bakija,” some initial works were published, starting with publications and translations. In the beginning, around ‘47, ‘48, ‘46, translations were mainly from Russian, Serbian, and the languages of the Yugoslav peoples. Later, the scope expanded to include other publications as well. In 1953, for example, two books by Martin Camaj were published, which were the first books of poetry by Albanian authors. Around the same time, Rexhep Hoxha’s first book, *Gjethetë Reja* was published... marking the first book by an author from Kosovo. Authors like Anton Çeta, Mark Krasniqi, and Sejtki Imani were among the first to be published by *Rilindja*, which continued to expand its activity with both original creations and various translations.

I am convinced that, given the relatively large print runs at the time, when there were few educated people apart from a small number of teachers, those publications played their role. The publications of that time contributed not only to the education of new authors but also to their development in creative writing, enabling them to begin writing themselves. That’s why, the next generation of authors emerged, such as Latif Berisha, Besim Bokshi, Enver Gjerqeku, Din Mehmeti, and others, who started publishing their first works; followed by an even more prolific generation, including Azem Shkreli, Rrahman Deda, Ali Podrimja, and others, with a continually growing number of authors and published works.

This naturally shows that, alongside education, whether secondary or higher, there was an increase in the number of authors, the number of works, and of course, the number of translated works, as well as works in other fields. Now we have works in linguistics, history, mythology...

And *Rilindja* was like any other collective, even though the work process at *Rilindja* was a bit complicated, in the case of publications, for example, it was somewhat more complex because it involved many people, not just one, for instance, there was the author who brought the manuscript or wrote the work. There were reviewers, and there was the first editor who had to read it and provide feedback, either pointing out errors or, if there were no issues, confirming that the work was good and could be published. At that time, there was a system of reviewers who were representatives of society, outside of *Rilindja*, who took responsibility for the publication of a work. They had to read it and provide a written opinion on whether the book, work, novel, poetry collection, etc., was good or whether it had flaws or even that it could not be published in its current state. This was the first stage of work for any manuscript. The next stage involved sending it to the printing press, but first, it had to be technically prepared. There was a technical editor who prepared the pages... specifying which font to use, where to use italics, line length, etc... so, this technical side of the book was managed by the technician, and then it was sent to the printing press, where typesetting was done. The work at the printing press was very laborious, it involved typesetting letter by letter in lead, with the lead being melted to form the letters and lines. All these texts then had to be read by the proofreader. The proofreader identified errors. The proofreader relied on the manuscript, so if there was an error in the manuscript, they had to replicate it, hence the process. Corrections were made, and the text had to be read again until it was approved for printing, sometimes requiring two or three readings of the manuscript, so these were difficult tasks that took time. Back then, without

computers, book production faced many more challenges. In the end, even after all this, there was the possibility that someone, perhaps a reader or someone in politics, could say, “Why was this book published when it says this or that?” so all of this was part of a very labor-intensive process, a job that, especially in those times, carried a great deal of responsibility.



*Meeting in the office of Rexhep Zogaj (director of Rilindja), 1980  
From the personal archive of Nazmi Rrahmani*

I first started working in the old *Rilindja* building. That building was a two-story structure where there is now a parking lot. The newspaper offices were located near the museum, while the magazines were housed in a barrack by the stadium. So the conditions were not very good. The entire publishing editorial office had about three or four rooms, with the main one belonging to the editor-in-chief, and in the other rooms, three or four of us would work together. And when the construction of the palace began, everything was well planned. A comprehensive project was created not only for *Rilindja* but also for other media outlets in Kosovo. It included the school textbook publisher, *Jedinstvo* in Serbo-Croatian, *Tan* in Turkish, and *Komunisti*, a newspaper published by the party. So the palace was designed to house all of them in one place under excellent conditions, and the construction of the palace also allowed for expansion. Naturally, in the beginning, the number of magazines was much smaller, but it grew over time. Besides *Jeta e Re*, which was one of the first, and *Pionieri*, which were the first magazines in Albanian. *Përparimi* came later, along with *Zëri i Rinisë*, other magazines started as well... other



magazines like *Fjala*, *Shkëndija* for education, *Thumbi* for humor, *Bati* for technical education for students, and *Pionieri*, an informative newspaper for students. As a result, the number of magazines expanded, and the newspaper's circulation increased significantly, for example, it typically printed around 100,000 copies daily, and during holidays, it reached two or three hundred thousand copies. The circulation of books also increased as the number of libraries grew. There were a total of 212 libraries in Kosovo. Each of these 212 libraries received every book that was published. Meaning 212 copies were sent as documentation to these libraries to include in their collections, and if interested, the libraries would then purchase a certain quantity, as libraries usually needed to have more copies. And *Rilindja* sent each book to these 212 libraries as soon as it was published, including school libraries and workers' libraries, which also received copies. The smallest print run for a book was 1,000 copies, while the largest reached up to 20,000. For example, the volume of the Albanian language dictionary was printed in 20,000 copies, requiring around 27 tons of paper, which was transported from Austria over several days by trucks.

<<<*The work scene in the printing press*>>>

When the printing press was built, it<sup>1</sup> was among the most modern in the country, as it was the newest one, all the machines were newly purchased, replacing the old ones, making it the newest and most modern. This allowed for very successful work. I knew the printing press in detail, I knew almost all the people working there. The workers were remarkable, and they had good conditions, however, the evaluation of the printing press workers was similar to that of miners, as they worked with lead and under more physically demanding conditions. That's why they were also considered good workers.

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to the Press Palace of 1972.



*Ismail Kadare's visit to Rilindja*

*In the photo, from left to right: Nazmi Rrahmani, Ismail Kadare, Rexhep Zogaj, Azem Shkreli, Fadil Bujari, and Ismail Berisha*

*From the personal archive of Nazmi Rrahmani*

But *Rilindja* was once everything for our people. At a time when we had no institutions, no academies existed. The Albanological Institute was closed. The Institute of History was also shut down. There were no other cultural institutions with various activities. The ENT was a branch of the Serbian ENT for publishing school textbooks. Therefore, *Rilindja*, as a newspaper, magazine, and book publisher, kept the language alive in Kosovo, maintained cultural development, and served as an opportunity for prosperity and progress for those who had completed their education. Because the number of students in Kosovo's schools was small, and apart from the *normale*<sup>2</sup> schools and gymnasiums, most schools were in Serbian. *Rilindja*, along with magazines like *Jeta e Re*, which had a circulation of 10,000 copies at that time because it was used as school reading material. *Rilindja* was perhaps the only window through which people could see their national language, their national interests, and cultural and scientific development, as well as other fields. There was nothing else besides *Rilindja* that could have such a noticeable impact. Therefore, after 1981, amidst the efforts of... both Serbia and Yugoslavia to find the causes of what they called damage, indoctrination, or political harm,

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<sup>2</sup> *Shkolla Normale* was a teacher training school in Kosovo that played a crucial role in educating Albanian-speaking teachers, contributing significantly to the development of the education system in the region.

*Rilindja*, alongside the university, was identified as one of the main points of influence. As a result, there were calls for certain works to be labeled as sources of influence and held responsible for the situation that had arisen.



*Visit to Gjirokaštër, 1970*

*In the photo, from top to bottom: Rrahman Dedaj, Ali Podrimja, Nazmi Rrahmani, Ali Aliu*

*From the personal archive of Nazmi Rrahmani*

Everything about *Rilindja*... I remember everything about *Rilindja* with nostalgia and with deep emotion, because I never thought that *Rilindja* could come to an end. It never crossed my mind that, for example, the newspaper might stop being published, or that *Rilindja*, with all [it stood for]... would cease its work. But it did... it stopped in '99, [it's thought] that in 2000, it continued again for a short time, but then there were issues among people, "It will be funded, it won't be funded," and *Rilindja*... closed down.

I, along with a group of about five people, submitted a letter to the Ministry of Justice, which is in the same building, requesting that a plaque be placed reading, "*Rilindja* was here," but it was not done. Even today, I still think it is a very big mistake on the part of our politics, the state, the government, and the ministry that *Rilindja* was shut down.