

INTERVIEW WITH HATMONE HARADINAJ DEMIRI

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Duration: 94 minutes

Present:

1. Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri (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: Mrs. Hatmone, if you could introduce yourself, tell us your date of birth, place of birth.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: I am Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri, born in the village of Glllogjan, Municipality of Deçan, born in 1960.

Anita Susuri: Can you tell us anything about your family, your origins?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, of course, I come from a known family, especially nationally. Our ancestors, I am going back to much earlier from today, I mean, our first ones, of the family, Xhemajl Haradini was killed in the tower of Abdullah Pasha Maxharri in Gjakova, I mean, protecting Gjakova. Today he is a hero, so he fell [a martyr] back then at the tower of Abdullah Pasha Maxharri. After... My great-great-grandfather, I mean, our great-grandfather, kemi te vrame edhe Ramush Haradinaj, who was the Second World War and whose bones today are in Belgrade. They remained there to this day.

So, when he came back from war, he caught a cold during the war and, I mean, at the time the circumstances weren't easy regarding health care, especially the circumstances in Kosovo, they sent him to the hospital, at a hospital, hospital, [he had] pneumonia, I think that was it, I don't know what it's called and he died there. The circumstances weren't very easy and when they went there, they buried him, and to this day his bones are in Belgrade. And then the other war, the last one, I mean, the Glllogjan village is known as a fortification and a center of resistance in the last war, that you already know, all my cousins are mentioned, they all participated in the war.

But, I mean, I will go back to the '80s, when I was a high school student, but even before going to high school we were brought up with patriotic ideas, with patriotic feelings from my family, being aware of the circumstances our predecessors went through, the ancestors of our family, we always had some kind of hatred, not towards the people, but a hatred towards a system which always discriminated against Albanians.

Anita Susuri: I would like to go back a bit to...

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, I will go back to elementary school, so I finished elementary school in Irzniq, a village called Irzniq. Under those circumstances... the elementary school, maybe I was a bit younger, I was very much into school. But, when I finished eighth grade, back then eighth grade was [the last year of compulsory education], the circumstances weren't easy for a girl to get an education. Right when, I mean, I finished eighth grade, although I had the support of my parents, getting an education was a challenge with the *rreth*.¹ That's why, there was the challenge with the *rreth*, the mentality the times weren't easy and I stayed home for a year.

However, my persistence was strong, both with my parents and the *rreth*, I challenged them and I was so persistent, that I told my parents, "If you don't allow me to go to school, I will either cross the border to go to Albania or I will run away from the family." So, I started after one year, I started the gymnasium,² at that point there was freedom, not only for me, but also for other girls, because all the girls, after I broke the ice in my village, then all the other girls had an open path.

So, I had to study a lot, I had to be very well-mannered with the *rreth*, very well-mannered with people, maybe it happened that I greeted somebody two hundred times and they didn't greet me back. And in the end they told me, "Why are you greeting me when I don't want to greet you?" I told them, "Even if you never greet me, I will always say hi to you." And in the end, exactly one of my fellow villagers told me, "You beat me to it, from now on say good morning to me." So, it was my persistence to show them that girls who go to school aren't girls who are troublemakers or however people perceive them, but they are girls who want to get an education, who want to contribute to the *rreth*, to society, especially to Albanian women.

Anita Susuri: I wanted to ask you, your parents, what kind of family was yours?

¹ *Rreth* (circle) is the social circle, it includes not only the family but also the people with whom an individual is in contact. The opinion of the *rreth* is crucial in defining one's reputation.

² A European type of secondary school with emphasis on academic learning, different from vocational schools because it prepares students for university.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Eh, my father was, there was a *Shkolla Normale*,³ later a technical and commercial school. And my father's challenge was, because, I mean, he really wanted to get an education, he was raised in a big family, a family with forty-fifty members, and he wanted an education, but even he as a man had his own challenges. That's why he said, "I ran away from the mountains and went to *Shkolla Normale* in Peja," back then it was a commercial school, "and when I went there," he said, "they didn't accept me in the school because they said, 'You are from a rich family, we won't give you a free education.'"

School was free of charge at the time and it was his luck that when Ernest Koliqi⁴ sent the teachers to Kosovo, he asked my father, he asked him, "Why are they sending you back?" He said, "I want to go to school," he said, "I ran away from the cows, I left everything in the mountains, I came back," he said, "I want to get an education" I mean, it was his good luck, [Koliqi] took him and sent him to the Commercial School there. He finished two years, and then he went to military service. And when he went to military service... After a little while, some people from the *rreth* who saw that he was getting an education and had a different point of view, reported him and said, "He has to be sent to military service, to be removed from school because he will be ruined." The other thing, when he went there, it was his good luck because when he went to military service, he was deployed in Croatia for three years, in Vis and in Hvar as he told me, and he still got an education there.

So, during military service he got an education and he got a, a decent education, regardless that he was serving in the military at the same time. And when he came back, the challenge to get an education, when he came back here, was entirely different from mine. And I always put him in a tight spot, I told him, "Why? You got an education and you saw that..." when he told me, because... he said, "The women in Croatia were old and went to read the newspapers on bicycles." I said, "I want to go read the newspaper on a bicycle too," I said, "because I am much younger than the old women in Croatia" (smiles). So, that was it. My mother was a girl, she had four years of elementary school, but it was enough for her, because she taught us the letters and offered [help], she was a hard worker.

Anita Susuri: You mentioned that it was difficult to break the barrier to continue education, how did it happen later, did you commute, or?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, we then commuted. It was the time, the circumstances weren't very easy. We traveled for 15 kilometers to go to the gymnasium and 15 to return, we traveled 30 kilometers a day. In most cases, maybe there was a means of transportation back then, but it was so rare that

³ The *Shkolla Normale* opened in Gjakova in 1948 to train the teachers needed for the newly-opened schools. With the exception of a brief interlude during the Italian Fascist occupation of Kosovo during the Second World War, these were the first schools in the Albanian language that Kosovo ever had. In 1953, the *Shkolla Normale* moved to Pristina.

⁴ Ernest Koliqi (1903-1975) was a Shkodra-born writer and a poet educated in Italy and a citizen of Italy after the advent of Communism in Albania. During the Second World War he was Minister of Education of the Albanian Kingdom, which included a large part of Kosovo.

when it broke down, maybe it wasn't fixed for months. So, we overcame those challenges walking 30 kilometer when we went to the gymnasium. But we were never late, we had to wake up at 5:00 AM, to get ready, to go and get there on time, and if... because for example [if] you went to school and you were late, they didn't let you go inside at all.

So, the rules were strict although it was a gymnasium, I am saying it now because the gymnasium Vëllezërit Frashëri [Alb.: The Frashëri Brothers] in Deçan at the time when I attended, was really one of the wells of knowledge, one of the best known schools in Kosovo at the time, so there was really quality learning. The teachers were all well educated, I mean, all the teachers who were there, maybe because it was a small center and there were enough educated people, they were chosen very selectively and very esteemed, and we really received a decent education.

So later, during the gymnasium, those challenges already started, the years '76, '77, '78, that's when those different movements started, the movements from '68, they were revived once more in these years. We started being infused with patriotic ideas since we were high school students, reading underground magazines, reading pamphlets, we would read Adem Istrefi,⁵ we would read about Shota and Azem Galica,⁶ some works which back then were... or Dritëro Agolli,⁷ *Nënë Shqipëri* [Alb.: Mother Albania]. However, the professors' support was great too, especially the teacher of Albanian language, who was also the head teacher of my class. And he would always, I mean, when we went to the library, now I am exactly in this library, as a student I would always go and look at a book's title, or a book that looks beautiful on the cover.

And he would always take one from the drawer and say, "This is for you, this is for you," so he always remembered my family origin, and he would give us books based on which family we belonged to, to give us directions. So, I mean, we became a group of friends back then in our generation and started exchanging those books, those books which were maybe a little more illegal or for example, *Lahuta e Malësisë* [The Highland Lute]⁸ which was very in demand and it was very risky to be found in your home. But, however, we found ways to read them and to be maybe...we started becoming dissidents very early on.

Anita Susuri: And how, I am interested, how did it begin, you mentioned, but who was the person for example, was it known who brought those books or how did they get to you?

⁵ Adem Istrefi (1942-2020) was an Albanian poet from the area of Deçan who lived and worked in Albania.

⁶ Azem Galica (1889–1924) was an Albanian nationalist guerrilla leader who, together with his wife Shote Galica, led armed resistance against Serbian and later Yugoslav rule in Kosovo after the First World War.

⁷ Dritëro Agolli (1931-2017) was an Albanian poet and writer from Tirana, and a member of the Albanian communist nomenklatura

⁸ *Lahuta e Malësisë* (The Highland Lute) is an Albanian national epic poem written by Gjergj Fishta (1871–1940), first published in 1937. It is composed of 30 cantos and celebrates Albanian resistance against foreign powers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Eh, actually, at first we didn't know. Someone brought them, maybe the teachers, maybe somebody else. But, at first during high school, until, until late, we didn't know, later on, yes. Later on, because my cousin, I am not saying now...because [his father] wasn't exactly my father's brother, but we were very close, Ismail Haradinaj, who was a physical education teacher he was my family's guide, because he was a teacher too and he always bought those books and he had a direct connection to Jusuf Gërvalla,⁹ to Bardhosh Gërvalla, to Kadri Zeka, these men. And, I mean, they found ways to send them to us, at first through some people, later on when there was trust they sent them to us, some books which were published abroad. That especially happened in '79, '80, '81, it was then, that period when we already started to mature a little and people started trusting us, that we would take those books and exchange them with our friends.

Anita Susuri: And where did they keep these books for example, were they kept in drawers?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: No, of course they weren't, no, they were a little more illegal. We actually kept them, we, we found ways to wrap them, to keep them or put them inside [the covers] of a Serbian book, somewhere, always, I mean, it wasn't easy and, I mean, we knew, in the moment we gave them to somebody, we knew who to give it to, that that person wouldn't expose that book.

Anita Susuri: For example, you, did it ever happen to you that you personally gave it to someone, and did you feel risk or fear?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Of course, yes, we felt at risk, of course. We knew that, for example, the moment we took that book, we said, "You took it, but are you capable of taking it?" So, "Are you a person who can take it and protect it and keep it from falling in someone else's hands?" However, maybe being young has its thing and you're not afraid.

Anita Susuri: Where did you read these books, was it at home?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, we read them at home too, maybe we read them, actually it happened that we read them even during our classes, when we could tell that a teacher [was safe], we knew what, we knew their orientation, especially the history teacher, the teacher of Albanian language. We actually read them, you know, a little like, with a... to tell you the truth, with some kind of snobbism, to show the teacher what we were reading. And they just looked at us and didn't say anything, they saw, I mean, it's like we presented it to them indirectly. But it even happens today, I mean while going through the lines of students we would show it, we knew their [political] orientation, and...

⁹ Jusuf Gërvalla (1945- 1982) was a poet and also nationalist activist killed in Germany together with his brother Bardhosh, and Kadri Zeka. All these killings have been widely attributed to Yugoslav agents, though no investigation has come to a conclusive identification of the killers.

But, it was interesting in the fourth year, the teacher gave us an essay topic, I remember that, I was a senior, and he gave us a phrase from [Ismail] Kadare,¹⁰ “The long mountain caravan was waiting for years, it had been waiting for centuries, Albania was waiting for a leader” (smiles). And that was Kadare’s phrase, all of it was the essay topic. And then, who had what kind of political orientation, knowing who Enver Hoxha,¹¹ and Enver Hoxha’s system were, was not an issue, the goal was that Albania was our country, divided, and that’s precisely what I said and I wrote the title. In the essay I wrote an “E,” I was telling who the leader Albania was waiting for was, we were alluding precisely to Enver Hoxha back then, because we were high school students and he was our idol. So, Enver Hoxha did something really big for us {raises her hands}. However, it was the orientation, a much better orientation going towards Albania than in the other direction. So, that was it, we can’t deny it.

Anita Susuri: What about you, for example, as a student back then, do you remember how you imagined Albania, or the system?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: *Uff!* I imagined Albania, because I watched [the Albanian] TV and, I mean, in Dukagjin it was all over the Tv.. And the TV was so perfect, that we thought everything was in order over there, because we watched quizzes, we watched shows, all of that. The television of Belgrade, back then there was only two hours of Radio Pristina, we only watched TVSH [TV Shqipëria] All the movies now, which are in the archive, we already watched when they showed them back then, so the film studio *Shqipëria e Re* [Alb.: The New Albania]. We watched all those movies. And I really thought that it’s paradise over there, I even thought they had atomic bombs too at the time, as a child, but maybe we saw many others.

And I couldn’t imagine that maybe behind that TV, behind everything we saw, there isn’t something that we would want. But I thought that it really is [paradise] there, they had good language, we learned their [standard] language, but their [way of speaking the] language back then was much, much better, the language, cleaner, and at the time... the Albanian television, so we, we watched everything, we saw them. We thought it was beautiful, I wondered if it was a dream, if I would ever go see Albania, although when I went to visit in 2000, nothing seemed wrong to me, because I had that dream of going to see it. Regardless of whether other people were disappointed, I wasn’t disappointed, I thought to myself, because I never dreamt that my feet could touch the Albanian ground.

Anita Susuri: In 2000, was it the first time?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: In 2000 it was the first time when I managed to go.

¹⁰ Ismail Kadare (1936-2024) is an Albanian novelist, poet, essayist, screenwriter, and playwright. He is a leading international literary figure and intellectual. He focused on poetry until the publication of his first novel, *The General of the Dead Army*, which made him famous internationally.

¹¹ Enver Hoxha (1908-1985) was the leader of the Albanian Communist Party who ruled Albania as a dictator until his death.

Anita Susuri: I wanted to also ask you about how this patriotic awareness started, you're saying from your family, but you as a person for example, how did you start noticing things?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, yes, of course, we noticed, aside from our families, aside from those texts, from the books, from the activities, I mean, we could tell that, people started, I mean, to be imprisoned, we would read about Adem Demaçi,¹² we would read, I mean, at that time we already started to thread into those waters. Not only did our family tell us about the events that happened, but I mean even our elders. I was a girl who wanted to hang out with men more than with women. My interest was much greater, because the men would tell different stories and I always went to serve them drinks and food, not that I wanted to, but just so I could listen to them.

There were those *oda*¹³ turned into school rooms, despite the mentality of those men with mustaches, but there was everything. I mean, the *kanun*¹⁴ was interpreted, the blood feud reconciliations were interpreted, they were interpreted, they talked about different wars, they talked about different entanglements, and, I mean, I always listened to them with pleasure. That's why even these, these were those, I don't know, maybe a person takes a little from their family, a little from school, a little from the *rreth*, and then the circumstances are of that nature. I mentioned the television earlier, the television of Tirana which was a guide for us maybe, all of that.

Anita Susuri: Besides these, I mean, the development, I want to ask you about the culture, about the cultural development. I am sure you visited the cinemas as well back then or where they showed films?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, it was there too, I will go back to exactly high school. In Deçan there was a cinema, there was a cinema that functioned very well and [showed] films too. But also, it was, the cultural life was very developed, a big part of the actors, who to this day work in the Theater of... the National [Theater] in Pristina, there were actors in Deçan too. So, they played various shows, there were various activities, there were various plays. So even as students, there were activities organized in school, especially dramas, especially *Halili e Hajria* and others.

So that's when we already started the activities, but it was very organized, no, I mean, at the time, the cultural life was much more organized than today. There were different rhapsodists, but even students could take part. But, mainly, we went regularly to the cinema which was there at the time, today it's

¹² Adem Demaçi (1936-2018) was an Albanian writer and politician and longtime political prisoner who spent a total of 27 years in prison for his nationalist beliefs and political activities. In 1998 he became the head of the political wing of the Kosovo Liberation Army, from which he resigned in 1999.

¹³ Men's chamber in traditional Albanian society.

¹⁴ *Kanun*, customary law, the unwritten law that regulates all aspects of life in the mountain areas of Northern Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro. A written version, the *Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini*, was compiled by the Franciscan monk Shtjefën Gjeçovi in 1910-1925.

not there anymore. So, back then even under those circumstances it was there, we watched those partisan-German films which they showed, or it was very interesting, that *Bidaai*¹⁵ film (laughs), Indian films were very attractive at the time, we would go, we watched those films a little, a little partisan-German ones, these were the topics that...

Anita Susuri: It was like a kind of hangout with friends.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, hangout with friends but we found the way to go there too.

Anita Susuri: I am interested to know, after you completed the gymnasium, was it a challenge for you to continue the gymnasium, but what was it like for university?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Eh, back then my path towards the university was already clear, the university, I didn't have even the smallest issue. I enrolled in the Faculty of Philology, the Albanian Language and Literature Department, that's where I studied, I got my master's there too. Eh, back then it was '81, I was a first year student, so five, six months, seven, eight months passed until it was March 11. Today it's exactly March 11, the 41st anniversary of when I was a first year student. And it's very interesting, I went out to buy a red coat, I knew what was going to happen, I mean the demonstrations, more or less.

I was close with my friend Shukrie Koci, who is now a professor there in Glogovac [Serbian name for Drenas, in Drenica]. Precisely her paternal uncle's son was one of the organizers, [Hydajet Hyseni](#). Ali Lajçi, we were a group of friends, we organized together. I don't even know what connected us, how we got connected, but we were all in that. Maybe not directly in organizing, but we spontaneously connected with them. And the moment when we all went out, I mean, it was that friend group, so we began March 11, the first demonstrations. Some of the girls were Shemsije Elshani, now I will not mention all of them, Bahrije Kastrati and the friends from that generation, and, I mean, that day, it was the first day that we directly went out to protest.

Anita Susuri: But, did you become members of the *llegale*¹⁶ beforehand? Were you a member?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: I wasn't directly in the underground movement, with a precise group, I mean, maybe I belonged to many groups. But maybe my family protected me a little, because those breakouts were almost happening, but they happened after, I mean in '81, at the time when my cousin Ismajl was imprisoned together with the group of Deçan and exactly with my teachers of language and math, both of them taught me.

¹⁵ *Bidaai* (lit.: Farewell) is a 1974 Indian drama film produced by Prasad Productions Pvt Ltd.

¹⁶ Constellation of underground militant groups fighting for Kosovo separation from Yugoslavia and unification with Albania during Tito's Yugoslavia.

He [Ismajl] was imprisoned, he was sentenced, but I was the one who was hiding all their materials. So, as a first year student, at that time we got all the material they had from that first underground organization of Dečan, I took it and hid it in our backyard, I covered it, thinking that it should be preserved. So, there were several materials there, there were some typewriters, there were some magazines, some, we took them together with my uncle's wife. We took them and hid them, because we had to preserve them. So, they sadly found them, those materials were found, UDB¹⁷ came and took them, they removed them from the ground.

Anita Susuri: When did they find them?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: They found them in 1981, in... Sometime around June, May, something like that, I think.

Anita Susuri: Do you remember that, what was it like?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: I was in Pristina, so when I was a student, a cousin came and told me. He said, "There are 40 policemen in your backyard, they found something, I don't know what." Nobody from my family knew either, so not my dad, or my mom, or anyone. Just me and my uncle's wife knew about it.

[The interview was interrupted here]

Anita Susuri: We were talking about...

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, we were talking about... so, I was in Pristina, they came to let me know that there were around 40 policemen in my house. Then it was, the challenge [was], what to do? I couldn't come home, and get noticed by the authorities, nor stay. However, my uncle's wife told me, "Come," she said, "I am at the police [station], they interrogated me," she said, "but, I took it upon myself, I said, 'I hid them, let her go.'" So, that was the fate, they tortured my uncle and they brought him to dig them out himself, I didn't see him after those great tortures, my sister was there. She said, "Only bones were left in his body." And that passed, that challenge.

Anita Susuri: What about your uncle's wife, did they imprison her?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: They took my uncle's wife, but later on, I mean they interrogated her. Later, they took her son, two sons, two daughters, the ones we saw in the photograph we have together. I mean, they imprisoned all of them, one son got five years, the other three years, and the

¹⁷ 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 as UDBA (pronounced as a single word and not an acronym), and was the most common colloquial name for the organization throughout its history.

oldest had to escape, to go abroad to Germany; he was part of a group with Jusuf Gërvalla and the others, as a first-year student. Because of the circumstances, he had to leave, and he only returned to Kosovo after 20 years, once everything was over. He never came back before that, only during the war, he returned to join the fighting here. And so, only the mother and my uncle's wife remained in the house, with the two daughters, everyone else, I mean the men, one was in Sweden, two sons and the father were in prison, the daughters as well, and me, the cousins, in short, the whole family, the whole village, was affected.

There were other girls too. In our village, even if you went to a wedding somewhere, and there was a girl from the village of Glllogjan, even if you raised your hand or did a gesture {puts a fist up} for Albania, they took them in. They even took girls, so there were two or three girls from our village who weren't at school at all, just because they went to a wedding and they talked about something, they took them in, they took them in and imprisoned them. So, the cause was, because of these groups, I mean, our cousins, they were in that underground group, and then there were others, then there were another group of youngsters, they formed a group of youngsters, and one group was with older members.

So, our village really became, they were out to get us, the enemy. Actually to tell a detail, they said, "We had put some asphalt on," -they hardly did, but when they saw that in '81 most people from our village came out as opponents, they said, "If we could," they said, "to make this asphalt, to make it like a carpet, we would roll it and take it away," that's how angry they were. But, anyway, these were the circumstances which really weren't easy, for the time when we were active as students, and as family members, and as villagers and as girls, there were different challenges.

Anita Susuri: How did it continue afterwards, your activity?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Well, later on, I mean after '81, March 11... well...

Anita Susuri: Yes, beforehand, let's not pass by '81¹⁸ because it's very important. But, I want to say, what happened beforehand, did you also make banners or...

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, yes, of course. We made banners, "Kosovo Republic," we took them on the bus, we sometimes used chalk to write, sometimes behind the bus. So, the next day there would be a notice that the terrorists wrote something, "They wrote something!" We were students, we didn't, I mean, we didn't... sometimes they would not think that some students, but anyway, I mean, yes, they wrote "Kosovo Republic." These were the things that [we did], or sang some song or something. For example, we would play a song for motivation, patriotic songs that we would pick.

¹⁸ 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.

One of the songs that meant a lot to me, that I loved very much, was that one: *“Lis mi lis, në ato shkrepë, ni bylbyl po knon mbi plepë, kom pa njerzë që hanë barotin, kom pa njerzë që ndalin lirin, po s’kom pa si Pal Mëlyshin”*¹⁹ [“Oak by oak, in those cliffs, a nightingale sings on the poplars, I have seen people eat gunpowder, I have seen people stop the oak, but I have not seen anyone like Pal Mëlyshi”]. That was the song that carried a certain motive, you know, because Pal Mylyshi was that man who could stop the earth itself. So, I mean, these were the slogans, the ones that, if we could, we used to inspire each other — to see which was the patriotic song, which was the song that would move the other, who, what, the slogans...

Anita Susuri: Were there some kind of events for writing these banners for example, at what time?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, yes, of course, during the night, when for example, when we came back by bus late in the evening, when people got off and on the bus, we pretended we were making way for someone and we went behind the bus and wrote them, and then got back on the bus. The next day, they saw the writing there, it became a big deal.

Part Two

Anita Susuri: You mentioned that you were in the dorm with some friends and that they were also involved.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, the friends I was in the dorm with back then, almost all of us were involved. So, most of my friends, we already got to know each other, we knew who was what, which ones they were, in what direction we were going. Then we started to organize, to talk, to discuss, so we would talk late in the evenings about what we were thinking, “It’s not going well.” We would watch the TV, we would listen to what was happening in Yugoslavia at the time. There was hatred against some people in power, they would especially mention Xhavit Nimani,²⁰ Rahman Morina²¹, at the time, it was the people who represented Kosovo, who we would listen to. We started listening to them and the parliament and we know who said what.

¹⁹ Pal Mëlyshi (1926-1950) was an Albanian communist partisan killed in 1950 during his service as a member of the communist state security.

²⁰ Xhavit Nimani (1919-2000) was a political figure of the communist period. Born in Prizren, he joined the Yugoslav communist movement in 1941 and became a member of the party’s politburo for Kosova in 1948. In 1961-1963, he was the party’s organizational secretary in Kosovo and, from 1963-1966 was a member of the executive committee of the party in Serbia. In 1967, became vice-president of the Yugoslav federal parliament. From 1974-1981, he was president of the presidium, i.e. state president of Kosovo.

²¹ Rahman Morina (1943-1990) had a career as an agent of the Ministry of Interior of SFR Yugoslavia, and later on as a party official in the League of Communists of Kosovo. He rose through the ranks and was in 1981 appointed as Kosovo’s interior minister, and thereby held the top law enforcement office in the province.

“No, Remzi Kolgeci is good, he is good,” somebody would mention Mahmut Bakalli,²² someone [would mention somebody else], so we started to see the representation of Albanians in the Yugoslav system of that time and we started [being active]. somebody would deal with politics, we would go and see, “What do you say, what do you think?” So, it was our free discussions after class, especially when we lived in the dorms. So, we started this way, so then we already found another way, I mean, they would come from Gjilan.

Actually it was interesting because they would come to fill us a little with nationalism, it was Tetovo and Gostivar, those girls, the students, because back then there were all the circles from Montenegro and Gostivar, and from Tetovo, and Presheva and from everywhere. And they would usually come here, they would say, “We are speaking Albanian here, we don’t dare to speak Albanian there.” Actually one of the friends said, “Just because I asked for a drug,” she said, “at the pharmacy, I asked, ‘Can I have this?’ she told me, ‘Why aren’t you speaking in Macedonian?’ and just because I said,” she said, “‘I speak my mother tongue more easily,; I was tortured and beaten and interrogated.” So, they didn’t even dare to ask for drugs in Macedonia and Gostivar.

And, I mean, they were from Dibra, they were two or three sisters who were brought up very, very [strongly] with patriotic ideas there. And who saw [the discrimination] much more, because as long as you don’t have the right to attend university, and get an education in your language, then of course it wasn’t easy for them to come here from Tetovo, and from Gostivar, and from Macedonia, from Montenegro and all of these places. Especially girls and boys, but we had much more contact with girls, and, I mean, that’s when the hatred became even stronger.

Anita Susuri: What was it like before the organizing of the ‘81 protests, the demonstrations. Beforehand, for example, what was talked about, did you know about any event or...?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: It was more or less the same, some kind of indirect organizing, not direct. That night, I mean, some of the groups here, I mentioned these friends of mine who were in these [groups], I mean, that friend from Drenica who had her cousin, the one who was one of the organizers. Yes, not directly an organizer who would say , “I am taking it [upon myself].” But I don’t even know how that happened, how they were directly connected, so there was Gani Koci, there was Ali Lajçi who lived with his girlfriend then, now she’s his wife, but they lived together. And we were friends and, “Something will happen tonight.” So, each of us was aware.

And my paternal uncle made me a cassette, he told me, “Take this.” He made it all with patriotic music, “Take this and play it in the dorms.” So, that was it, not giving you a task directly, I took it, and so on March 10 in the evening, almost nobody fell asleep, we stayed outside all night. The weather was

²² Mahmut Bakalli (1936-2006) was a Kosovar Albanian politician. Bakalli began his political career in the youth organization of the League of Communists of Kosovo, eventually becoming its leader in 1961. As he rose through the ranks, he was elected to the Central Committee of the party's Serbian chapter, and to the Presidium of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia's Central Committee.

really nice, it was warm and I turned on the cassette player on the window, dorm number 1, all those patriotic songs. Then later on some of my cousins showed up, they took it, “We now want to play it at dorm number 3, the boy’s dorm.” And it was that music.

Some were outside, some knew, some didn’t. But there was a feeling that night that nobody slept until late, so everyone, there was some kind of, some kind of freedom before the storm arrived, which arrived the next day. So all of us were, we knew that something was happening, not to directly come and say... and, I mean, at the time when it already started, Gani Koci came, Ali Lajqi and the girls from the group. And come on, what to do, he got up, he went to the students’ canteen, that’s when a big part of us joined, the ones of us who knew everything.

We directly joined the[students’ canteen and brought some onions with us, we also took some nails and put them in a bottle, I don’t even know why we were taking them, what we could do. But, anyway, those were the things we took with us, the onions in case they would throw teargas at us. We didn’t even know who gave that idea, because it was the first time we directly participated in a demonstration with teargas. And so that was the night when people joined at certain moments.

Bahrie, I told you, her last name was Kastrati, she was a little more informed than us about that. At the time, I became friends with her later, I wasn’t friends with her when that thing with the tray started, so I don’t want to be misunderstood. But, later on we connected with their group too, we connected with the group of Tetovo, I mean after March 11, that’s when we started understanding who we were, based on our presence at the demonstration. And then the demonstration of March 26 started, that one was even, even more organized.

Although even in ‘81 they hit us, there were a lot of police forces, but on April 26, on March 26 actually, there were police forces from Niš and the consequences were bad. They shot, there were students killed, and then later on there was the thing you mentioned, April 1, 2, 3, the demonstrations, not only by students but the whole nation joined, especially Pristina at the time. They organized and then the other cities started too later on, I mean, after these ones. Then the other retaliations began too, interrogations, information, imprisonments, so...

Anita Susuri: Can you explain to us, for example, in more detail about what you remember from that period of demonstrations? Because after that the police forces entered the dorms too and kicked out the students.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: The police entered the dorms, yes they did, they dragged them out. Actually, there is the specific case of Zekë Sinani, a journalist from Deçan, together with his fiancé, they beat them up. I ran away, so I wasn’t in my dorm at that time, but some of the students were in the dorms. Maybe we were a little more skilled, because we knew that we wouldn’t go back to the dormitory that night, because we knew what was happening. Some ran away to their houses, we went

wherever we could, to friends' places, wherever we could find a place. Maybe totally without a plan, but we went somewhere, we didn't go back to our dorms.

We stayed in the neighborhood of... the one here, Bregu i Diellit [Sunny Hill], we went to a neighborhood, an unknown house, but they let us inside, I mean, because... they told us, "Don't go!" It wasn't easy, they closed the door to some people, I mean, it was the fear of, of some people who were demonstrators and some were scared, but they opened the doors to us. Eh, friends... like that, each of us wherever we could, some were captured during the protest, I mean, wherever they could catch someone they took them immediately, whoever would run away, we ran away. And later on it began, their investigations, who was there, who is this, who is that, and...

Anita Susuri: What about during the demonstrations, for example, there was violence, but what kind of violence was there? Were there chants, what were the demands?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, there were chants, "Kosovo Republic!" "Trepça produces, Belgrade prospers." "Republic, either the easy way..." at first it wasn't these ones, at first we said that, "We want better conditions," "We want food, we want...", you know, they were softer, especially at the beginning of the protest at the canteen. And then later gradually, as is usual, I mean, at first it's the small ones and then everyone started bringing out their banners, each one their own, and then the others until it reached the extreme. At that time Mahmut Bakalli came, they asked for him, and he came to kind of stop the protest, to say, you know, "Go back!" But, anyway, I mean, the protest kept going, the students didn't accept [stopping]. On April 26 I think, Gazmend Zajmi came, [Pajazit Nushi](#) came, and there was somebody else, I don't remember now, we held that protest in between the dorms telling them to improve the canteen conditions, to have better conditions for the students.

And then they, they couldn't find one, it wasn't all the representatives of Yugoslavia, but it was the ones who were better who came to talk, to soften us up a bit and tell us, "We're reviewing the conditions," and we, I mean, the organizers, they came out a bit on the 26th and created the conditions to talk to us directly already. And the moment they couldn't promise us that we could show them the conditions, maybe it was a little their strategy too, because Pajazit Nushi and these people were not like close to the people, no, at the time they were sellouts, how to put it, sellouts, because Albanians...

Now I never want to say that he is a sellout, because some people were scared and some maybe had that, because we're used to labeling, but I don't like labeling people because, maybe in spirit he wanted to help but he feared for his family or whatever. The circumstances were what they were. So, I mean, we had that impetus, I don't even know where those flags came from, we didn't have anything, each person their flag, and we got on our way, I mean, to the dormitory. In between dorm number 1 and 3, back then, we walked down until the police forces came from Niš and...

Anita Susuri: What did they do, did they shoot?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: They did shoot, yes. First they sprayed us with water cannons. Later on they started throwing teargas, but not only teargas, they shot with guns too. Because right above the students' canteen where you go upwards, as soon as you reach the Ismail Qemali school, that area, it was those houses, because there were some Serbs too, they had their houses there. And they shot, I mean, from the houses of those Serbs, they shot from there, so they shot with guns too and there were people wounded.

Anita Susuri: You were telling us about the Serbs, who had houses there, where they shot from.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, so they helped them too, we didn't know if we should watch out for the forces, or watch out for the Serbs who lived there. That's why, I mean, these were the two risks. It was our good luck that we survived, so we got inside the students' canteen, in the area where it is now, there was that ambulance and there was a corridor there and we went inside and, I mean, we stayed there. After a while the forces started coming again, we ran away, we had to run away, to go on the street, in Aktash 1, 2, 3, wherever we could.

Anita Susuri: What happened ultimately?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Ultimately, I mean, the dorms closed down, they closed down. All the students left, "Nobody will go there anymore. Go take your stuff, go wherever you want. Go! No more dorms!" So, from April 26 and after, I mean, that year the dorms were all closed down. And the students, some went wherever they could in their hometowns, some others, after some time, I mean, after the demonstrations of April 1, 2, we had to come back later to wherever we could find a place, some private home, wherever we could finish the exams.

And later on everything changed, it wasn't very, I mean, we didn't have that freedom in the dorms anymore, because up until that point they didn't think that all the students would turn their backs on them and that all the students would become protesters and... the majority of them. At that point, it became much harder even settling in the dorms, I mean, only if you made one little mistake, they didn't let you settle in. And then it was the faculties too, they started, I mean, whoever had been in prison, sentenced, they didn't accept you at university.

In '82 too, exactly on March 11, '82, one evening they came and took us in, they took me from home, they took some of my friends at the dorms, some at their homes, to isolate us because they feared we would organize again on the anniversary of the demonstrations. And they came and took us into isolation, not to sentence us, but in isolation, "They are dangerous for the *rreth*, for society." And then, I mean, we were imprisoned, me, my friend Mehmetaj, Tima from Isniq, Lali Ferra, whom I met there, and many others. And then, after we went there we found activists from Ferizaj, from all around, all the

students who were there, the best students, the regular students, that maybe they knew. Approximately, they already knew who and what we were.

Actually, a policeman from my hometown identified me there. He said, “I identified here, she was,” he said, “a regular.” And he went and notified people there in our hometown where we would go back. They said, “She was there at the demonstrations, he wasn’t and... and he was.” The Albanian police who were there, they identified us and, I mean, they knew. They came and took me from my home.

Anita Susuri: I am interested to know if there was any activity that you did after the demonstrations up until when you were imprisoned?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: We did activities after that, I mean, not activities like that to go out on the streets because those were done. Now it was those issues, there were retaliations, there were imprisonments, there were those... It was a time for us to, to regroup, again it was an issue of immediately... because, I mean, it started, the imprisonments, the groups started being sentenced, different groups, it wasn’t just the group of Deçan, there were groups from everywhere. At that point, it was a time when we had to rest a bit in order to reorganize. Even then, I mean, not that we stopped, not that we did something directly, but we had a lot of discussions, the same discussions for what was happening then. We expressed what we reflected on, what happened with that, what happened with this, what happened with that.

They were more, the discussions were more specific, we knew what was happening. Beforehand we didn’t think about it, we’ll do it and, okay I will do it, but maybe I won’t be in that position. At that time some people were already imprisoned and then we started to have our friends... they were imprisoned and... At that point there were already different circumstances, not very easy, not very easy to organize and directly go out there, because at that point the Yugoslav state had already deployed their Security, they deployed it really well, and it wasn’t that easy to directly go out there. Although we had to be careful and present ourselves as obedient, soft, in order to not...

Anita Susuri: I think they also put a curfew in place at the time, and the gatherings were stopped...

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, there was a curfew, yes, gatherings were prohibited for a long time, you couldn’t do anything. If you were stuck in Pristina, there was a curfew and you couldn’t anymore, I mean whoever [was outside of their city... It was sometime around March 26, 27, 28, whoever went home, went, whoever didn’t, they were stuck in Pristina. We couldn’t go back, because there was a curfew. And they thought that we had nowhere to go, but fortunately the majority of us hosted students in our homes, whoever had the possibility.

Anita Susuri: You said that the day they took you to prison they came to your house, do you remember what that day was like, how did your family react?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Well, they didn't react, I woke up in the morning and actually that day, I was going on a break Saturday, Sunday, and I was thinking to go out in Peja and buy some stuff on Monday, I was prepared to go to Peja, I was prepared in heels, because it didn't cross my mind that somebody would come to my house, I thought something would happen if they arrest us at the dorm, or they would arrest us while doing activities you know, when we went to demonstrations. But I'm sure they got the information and as I was ready to go to Peja, to go out in the city and buy some stuff for my family and for myself as well, since it was the weekend.

The police came to my house, they called my parents, this and that. My father said, "This and that, they came, 'Do you know why, or what did you do?'" I said, "Nothing, nothing at all." I mean, I didn't want to concern my parents and it was fortunate that they didn't go inside, they waited at the door. They didn't give me time to even take off my shoes, I went there in heels, and they were really high and I wasn't prepared for that, thinking that I would go to Peja. However, I was able to tell my sister, to tell her, she was younger, she was in high school, I had some material of Jusuf Gërvalla's at the time, some magazines.

I said, "Nothing," I said, "just those," I said, "you can," I said, "if they don't go inside, you can take them and burn them," I said, "you get away with it at least." So my sister took them and removed them. I went, I mean, I went to Deçan, in Deçan they told me, "You have to go to Peja." In Peja, "Pristina asked for you," and I came here and stayed for around 24 hours at the station here in Pristina. The police took me, I was thinking it would just be an interview or questions, I will give it a try. When it started getting late, I mean, it became evening, at that point I knew that...

[The interview was interrupted here]

Anita Susuri: You were telling us about the day when you were imprisoned, they came to your house, they took you, they brought you here to Pristina. Was it in the prison of Pristina?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: At first, no. The Secretariat of Internal Affairs, as it was called, SUP,²³ that's what it was called, the Secretariat of Internal Affairs. I stayed there for about 24 hours, from the afternoon, around 4:00 PM, until the next day at 10:00 or 11:00, I don't know. So they came from time to time, they interrogated us, "Tell us what you did?" What this and that, I mean, always, I mean [we said], "We didn't do anything," "Tell us the truth, it's better for you if you tell us the truth, you're a student, don't jeopardize your career, start your career and leave those things behind, they're not good for you. They tricked you, the state can't be dismantled." You know they were trying to convince us, "You are a good girl, a good student, don't cause problems for your family." So, thinking they could

²³ SUP - Acronym for *Sekretarijat unutrašnjih poslova*, which translates to the Secretariat of Internal Affairs, of the Yugoslav Socialist Federal Republic.

convince us, they tried to be nice to us, to start with their words, as per usual, like always in interrogations.

But, I mean, I was determined in that. I was in and, I mean, our ideals weren't about telling everything. Anyway, it was decided, they attempted [to convince me] a few times. They would come to question me, they would let me rest, "Did you think about it? Think about it some more, you'll tell us everything after an hour." Again after one hour, after two hours, so it lasted for about 24 hours. They would come and question me from time to time, always thinking, "You will be convinced, we will let you go, just talk," "I have nothing to say, I didn't do anything. If I am guilty and you think that I did something, you are wrong. There are other people around, and they do much worse, I didn't do anything," so I was...

In the end, I mean, Ismail, I think he was an inspector, he came last. He said, "You have decided to go to prison," he said, "we have to," he said, "make the decision to go. But," he said, "I want to tell you something, ask," he said, "someone from your village, when you go out, I hope you do go out," he said it like this, "ask him," he said, "and he will tell you who I am." You know as in, to convince me. I said, "I don't have to know anyone," I said, "I don't need to. Who you are, I didn't come here to get to know you, you," I said, "have your job, I have mine, go on," I said, "I don't mind it at all, I came here for nothing, I came here for no reason," you know, what I said. However, he said, "I'll just ask you one thing," he said, "tell the truth," he said, "when you go." "I have no truth to tell."

At that point we waited for about three, four more hours, we received the decision, the letter that I would go to Mitrovica. So, the moment they brought me that document, at the time it was lucky to be stronger. My friend from Kamenica, they took her from Kamenica, we were friends, we knew each other as friends, but we weren't connected like that, not really, we knew each other, we hung out together, but not connected like that. And at that moment, it happened that we went there in the same car, a police car. One of us on this side, one of us on that side, I was here. We knew each other, we were friends from university, a literary group. A woman who was with us, she was Albanian, she asked me, "Where are you from?" I said, "I am from Deçan, I don't know," I said, "this woman." I mean, if I told her I knew her, my friend, they could barely wait for something like that to happen.

What was also interesting, before going to Mitrovica they would go and take our fingerprints, photos, this, this, that, information, our eye color and... and I went and I saw my friend's name there, that one from Deçan, nailed to the wall, her name was there on that list, and I was looking at it, whoever was there to get their picture taken, a terrible place, isolated, dark. They took our fingerprints, I saw her name, I said to myself, she's gone. We found her there, she went one night before, they took her from her dorm. And it happened, we went to Mitrovica, when we went to Mitrovica, as they usually are, those procedures to remove your shoelaces and stuff, and documents and stuff.

We entered, I went inside, my luck, I found another friend that I knew from earlier, who was the daughter of Kadri Osmani, and her dad was also imprisoned. She was in exactly the same prison, and

it was much easier for me when she already had experience in prison, she also knew the experience from her father. Yes, exactly in the same prison and her father was there ten years before her and it was fate that both father and daughter were in the same prison. And I knew their family, I mean, because we knew each other from earlier, and she would guide us a little, until we adapted to life in prison. But it was our luck that we were from different places, there were two medical students from Ferizaj, I was a literature student, one was from Rahovec, law [student]. So, all those friends, and then we spent time together although we were in prison, we got to know each other, we shared that ideal, beyond there we weren't worse I mean...

Anita Susuri: What about when they imprisoned you, did you know why they were taking you in? Because they didn't actually catch you doing something bad.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: No, they didn't, they didn't catch us. But, we were already under surveillance, I mean, I told you earlier too, I mean I told you earlier too, we were already under surveillance. You were at the demonstration, you were here, you were there, they knew who did what, so they already had the information. Before going, I mean, there were a few inspectors at the time, I am talking about Albanians, always Albanians, they came to the dorms. I mean, they usually came to the dorm, they went in and out, they watched who hung out with who. Actually, a woman from my hometown was there, today she is a professor and I don't want to mention her name because I feel bad, but she warned me two-three days when I was in the dorm. She said, "You said," she said, "that I am a spy."

But actually I absolutely did not know about that, or something related to it, actually I admired her as a person. And when she told me that, I said, "Where did I say it, who did I say it to?" Because I didn't say that. She said, "You did." Dorm number 5 had just opened and they had apparently made some more comfortable conditions, we already settled and we had some sort of kitchen, we had some small hot plates and we would prepare food there. She said, "You said it here," she said, "in the kitchen." "No," I said, "tell me who did I say it to," I said, "because what did we talk about in the kitchen? We didn't talk about anyone being a spy in the kitchen, or who that is, who this is."

And actually that's where I saw it, I mean, the moment, because later, we saw that some people would come hang out with them, some inspectors from the State Security, they would come and hang out with them. And that's where I noticed something, we had them in the dorm watching who hung out with who, and what we were doing. And then there was this, the game with Slovenia, when the girls played basketball in 1 Tetori hall, we went there and then they locked the door so we wouldn't be able to leave, I went out through the window with my slippers on, and people described it really well. They had written, they had said, "She went out through the window." And they went straight to the 1 Tetori hall to protest, because back then, I mean, [these were] the protests after the ones I mentioned earlier, I remembered now.

So, after '81, the games were being organized then, for that game we went to the 1 Tetori hall, and that's where we started, we protested, pretending to defend the players. But that also became a kind of, a kind of protest as if for sports. But to tell you the truth, they talked about the echo... now to be honest with you, I don't remember the slogans they chanted there. But, it was a big rebellion, and they actually locked the doors after and the students got beaten up, but it was our good luck that we were close to the entrance, because many were beaten up until they left, because it became a protest there, after everything...

Anita Susuri: The police intervened too...

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: The police intervened, of course. And I, we, they didn't let us out through the door. I was wearing my slippers, I went out with my slippers and... when I went there, I said, "I wasn't at the game," I said, "because I didn't like the game." They said, "You were," they said, "and you were," they said, "wearing your slippers from the dorm," they said, "you went out through the window." And, I mean, yes, that was decided.

The conditions there, maybe everyone says it, but it really was like a prison, it was terrible. So, the conditions were minimal, I mean, nothing, you didn't have the right to go outside, and we had to complete our physiological needs inside the cell, so that was the most terrible thing somebody can have. It was terrible because you couldn't, so only at night when you lay down and when you woke in the morning when the bell went off. You got up from bed and you had to stay sitting on the ground, I mean, it was a very stiff floor cushion and you had nowhere to lean on, in bed. The food, it's known that it was exceptionally bad. That's when it began, the interrogations.

[The interview was interrupted here]

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: I was usually interrogated outside of prison, a law that was in place back then inside the prison, they didn't torture people a lot if they interrogated them, but I personally and many others, I am talking personally, each time they took me out of prison and sent me to the Secretariat in Mitrovica, and I mean there we experienced the most inhumane torture, I experienced the most inhumane torture. And I experienced them precisely from a former professor, she worked in the gymnasium of Deçan and she moved from the gymnasium to the Secretariat of Internal Affairs. She came together with an inspector from Drenica, Lutfi Ajazi, whose name I want to mention because he really was a criminal, and she too together with him. She encouraged him with words, he used violence.

I don't know how others were abused, but my cellmates told me. They said that they didn't see harsher torture while they were in prison than the ones I experienced, I was, I mean, my whole body was bruised. The next day my cellmates went and protested, so they protested, they went on a hunger strike, until the prison director was notified. The prison directorate came that day because I couldn't

even stand on my feet. They sent me to the doctors of... I was absolutely numb, I mean, for about two, three days. I was numb. But I was lucky to have my friend, she saved me, because she stayed up all night putting wet towels on my body. And she says, "I am surprised how you're still on your feet today." Some things happened later I mean.

Anita Susuri: Did that woman, that professor, mistreat you?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: That professor, even worse. I mean, how does that saying go, "The instigator is worse than the doer." I mean, she said, "You will never finish university, we will expel you. You won't finish school, you want to ruin the system. You want to ruin Yugoslavia. Who are you and tell us who made you do this, who? This and that..." She incited him, he would hit me, so they brought me to, I don't even know, the moment...

Anita Susuri: Why did they abuse you that much?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Now, there was the issue, that we were, I told you, from my village's origin there, and we knew that if your last name was Haradinaj, it was a problem even if you didn't do anything at all. However, that was it, plus, she was from my hometown so she knew exactly what was happening there. And she asked, "Do you know me?" And I was stubborn, I said, "I absolutely don't know you, I don't know who you are." "I am a professor." I said, "I don't know any professor who beats up students, I don't" I said, "never in my life." And I am telling you the truth because I swore there and I told them that, I addressed them, I said, "If I go out alive, I really will become a professor," I said, "if you don't get me killed here," I said, "it will stick," I said, "someone will say that somebody lost their life in prison because of an educator. But," I said, "the moment I will go and work in education, you encouraged me to never think of working something else besides education. But if I get to where you are, no student will be tortured by me, and I won't misuse the [school] registry like you did." And that's where she got even more mad.

Anita Susuri: How was she a professor, and did she work with that intention of...

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: No, she left, she left the job, she left the gymnasium and moved to another role in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as a SUP worker, as they were referred to back then. So, she moved to investigating and she left her profession. She is alive today.

[The interview was interrupted here]

Anita Susuri: You were telling us about your professor who tortured you.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: So, exactly what I talked about, her name is Zyra Kastrati, she is from my hometown. And I am saying {sighs}, I swore, I swore, so in a way I swore to her, and I kept going my

way. It was really difficult to go to university after leaving prison, it wasn't easy. At that point they already started facing expulsion, there was a disciplinary commission which was formed at the university. And yes, our fate, a professor called us, I mean, a group of professors who formed a commission called us and they said, "You were in prison," they said, "there is one thing," they said, "we did for you," they said, "we tried our best, you," they said, "who were released from prison," they said, "we will put you in pre-expulsion, the ones who are in prison and were sentenced to one or two years," they said, "we will expel them, because they are in prison anyway."

The moment they were released, they had already served their sentence, and, I mean, if they were sentenced to two years, they were expelled from university for two years. When they were released that long sentence was already over. So, the faculty professors covered it, they covered it. That's why, I was lucky to be in pre-expulsion from the faculty. It was a warning because we didn't stay put.

Part Three

Anita Susuri: I want to go back to talking about the prison again. You told us that they tortured you and that you were numb for about three days. How did it go on afterwards, did they continue using physical violence?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Back then, at that time the director of the prison came and he was the father of a student, a girl we studied together with. I don't want to mention names, I will tell you later, and, I mean, he swore, he said, "From now on," he said, "they will interrogate you, but not outside the prison, there is a law," he said, "if you were beaten up inside the prison," he said, "we have the right," he said, "to stop it, but if you are interrogated outside the prison," he said, "we have no jurisdiction because it's a policy of the prison that we don't have the right to step in." Then, I mean, the torture was a bit more mental, but however that was, I mean, a prisoner who was interrogated outside of prison, this torture was uncontrolled.

Anita Susuri: Did they take you out outside of prison again?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: No, they didn't anymore, so at that time I was in rehabilitation, until I healed, like that...

Anita Susuri: You also told us earlier about something about cups, how you communicated through names.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Eh, the communication was interesting too. So, even in difficult circumstances people find means of communication. So, we communicated in order to find out what was going on in the cells, who was coming, what was happening, what was happening outside, the

communication was with plastic cups, which we put to our ears, we listened through the wall and the sound came in like it was a phone. So, we all communicated, but the communication was through pseudonyms. Each of us, in the moment that, I mean, the ones who were in the cell earlier, and the ones who were new, so in the moment that we came we all had our own pseudonyms.

And you talked to Nora, you talked to Shpata, you talked to Iba, you talked... depends who their idol was. Each prisoner, now I don't want to differentiate by gender, each prisoner had an idol, someone they looked up to and they made it their pseudonym and we communicated through those plastic cups, "Who, what, what is happening, who came, who is that girl?" So, sometimes we would joke around, sometimes it depended on the circumstances, the circumstances when we were aware that there were no guards at the time because we couldn't always communicate.

But we had learned when the doors move, so [we learned] the door movement because the structure of the prison of Mitrovica was circular and, I mean, when the first door opened, the second, the third, the fourth, we knew it by order, they opened one and entered the other, the other one was opened... so there were stops with each door, and so we knew the moment, because the walls were very acoustic, you could hear. So, I mean, we noticed when someone was coming and we actually stopped. So, we saw it, based on the keys we knew when to go because they were close and we communicated at that time.

Not at night, because it was too calm. So, we slept late and had to wake up at 5:00, when the bell went off, I mean that alarm. It was like a military rule, you couldn't stay [in bed] anymore, let alone during the day, whether you were sick or not, you absolutely couldn't. Showering was terrible, you showered, maybe they turned on the water once a week or once every two weeks. As soon as you started washing with soap, they turned it off and you went back [to the cell] without showering properly.

Anita Susuri: What about the cells, were they spacious, were there many people inside?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: There were, it depends on the situation. For example, if the circumstances were, for example, specific dates like March 11, the anniversary dates and stuff, a lot more people would come in. So there were times when there were 12 people, so up to 12 people in one cell, if there was no bed available, you slept on the ground. And when you slept, I mean, that mattress, you had it outlined where to place your hand, where to place this. The [outline of a] person was imprinted, because they never replaced those mattresses, it was the same, so you had to place your hand where it was imprinted, your hand, your back, all the same, you couldn't, you could move however you wanted, you'd still fall on the same outline {describes the position with hands}.

Anita Susuri: Were those cells spacious?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: They were, but like this... to tell you the truth, not that spacious, the cells were small. Beds on this side, on that side, those double beds, and an area where you could place floor cushions and there was no more [space]... there was an improvised toilet there.

Anita Susuri: Did you go to court, or how did they decide on your imprisonment, for example?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: They, whoever was sentenced, I mean, after one year, whoever stayed for more than one year, or two years, depending how long their sentences were. I didn't go to court, I was only isolated, so I didn't have a trial, nor did I have the right to receive visits, or to ask for something, so you were always under some kind of isolation, investigation. Until they turned the decision around and said that the circumstances were created for us to be released, so the decision was isolation and the moment when we were released, the decision stated: "Now the circumstances for them to be released were created." Thinking that, I mean, they always, we were under surveillance to let us do something again and they would come [arrest us] the next time, so this was their strategy.

Anita Susuri: You were there for two months, right?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, actually longer, longer than two months. But, however, those were the circumstances...

Anita Susuri: What about when you were released from prison, did somebody come to get you, or what was that like?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: No, no, when we were released from prison that was even more difficult, so nobody came to get us, nobody knew because we didn't have visits at all, we didn't even have visits. Actually they hardly told my father about where I was, so they didn't know at all, they came to the prison of Pristina and I wasn't there. They went to Lipjan, but I wasn't there. Where? Somebody told him, "Go to Mitrovica, maybe she is there." It was fate that he went to Mitrovica, he ran into my late professor who was killed during the war, Latif Berisha, and they happened to be on the same bus by accident, and he accompanied him to the prison, he didn't know where the prison of Mitrovica was. And they didn't allow him to do anything, he only wanted to know where I was. At that point, he went out to buy me some stuff, toothpaste or whatever he could find in the moment and leave them there for me, but we absolutely couldn't see each other. That was it.

And when we were released, we fortunately were released, so something always connected me to that friend from high school. We met at the bus station, we barely found that as well, the station, because it was our first time going to Mitrovica. And at the bus station, we didn't have money or anything, neither of us. We were thinking who to turn to, the circumstances weren't easy, it was the afternoon and the sister of one of our friends happened to be there, they were both from Mitrovica, they were friends of ours at the time, I actually have a photograph with them and I remembered.

When I ran into her, she asked, “What happened?” I said, “They released me, they released you,” we met at the bus station. “What do we do about money?” “Come on,” I said, “because I think Leonora’s sister works there at the station,” her name was Laura, Laura Aliu, I will never forget her name. I approached her and said, “Laura,” I said, “this and that... they released us from the prison Mitrovica, what do we do?” She said, “The tickets are on me.” She paid for our tickets and gave us the money to go from Peja to Deçan. We didn’t have money. She paid for our tickets, and we got on the bus.

We returned to Deçan, back to Isniq, we went to her place because in my village it was much farther, there was no bus late at night, so we had to go to her. No one knew we were going, neither her family nor mine, nor even that friend of mine. When we entered Isniq, we went on foot, it was night, dark, the dogs were loose, just the two of us, we went to the door. She had her mother and father there, old, they were very elderly, the brothers weren’t there, they were away. Those two old parents were eating bread, or whatever they were having, sometime after dinner.

And we were thinking how to let them know, I said, “You know what...” because her name was Time but at home they called her Sanije, and I yelled, “Sanije, Sanije,” and her mother got out and asked, “Who is it, is it someone crazy,” she said, “calling for my daughter at this moment.” When she went outside I stepped in front of her to not surprise her and said, “Will you let us in because we came back.” At that moment she hugged us, and we slept over that night, we stayed, the next day I left. I then went home. These were the circumstances.

Anita Susuri: What about at your house, how did they receive you?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Well, when I went they were happy and stuff. But they were surprised, because they didn’t even think about it anymore or anything. Back then you couldn’t go and say, “I am going to visit her,” at all. I mean, because they were told, “You don’t have the right to at all, we will tell you when.” They didn’t know anything, however that situation passed too. The more time passed I mean, it became worse, then they portray us as nationalists, and the spite was even worse, the spite of... I went back to the dorm thinking that I could go back again to the dorm, I went there, I was told, “Leave, you don’t have the right to...” I said, “I completed prison,” I said, “I was innocent.” You know, as per usual, they said, “No,” they said, “you,” they said, “will never stay again,” they said, “at the dorm.” So I left.

That friend from Drenica that I mentioned with whom we started [participating in] the demonstrations, came, her father came and removed her from the dorm. He said, “You won’t leave her alone, leave the dorm and go settle somewhere with her.” Again that group from ‘81 got together, Ali Lajçi’s wife, Ukshin Hoti’s wife, me, her. We became a group again in an apartment, we lived together, we decided again... But fortunately, I mean, that apartment owner knew who we were and he let us stay and he

never stopped whatever demonstrations, whatever happened next, whatever turmoil. He would always say, “Just don’t let anyone see you, don’t let anyone catch you. Go inside.”

Anita Susuri: How did your activity continue afterward? For how much longer did you participate in these activities?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Eh, I participated in these activities up until the ‘90s, in the ‘90s, that’s when I started, we started participating a little in the Democratic League,²⁴ when the thing with [Ibrahim] Rugova²⁵ started. I started to be active a little at the Women’s Forum, I did it until around ‘92, ‘93, that’s when they started, these political parties, the divisions started, this person with that, that person with this, at that point... From ‘93, ‘94, ‘95, after... I mean, I stayed, I didn’t have the right to employment. So, I graduated on time, working... it turned into 13 years without working, I graduated...

Anita Susuri: How did you continue university, since you mentioned you were expelled?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: We continued in pre-expulsion, not expulsion, so it was pre-expulsion, it was the last warning. If you were released from prison you were in pre-expulsion, but you had the right to attend. The ones who were sentenced, so they were in prison, were expelled. I don’t know if you understood. So that was it, pre-expulsion, so we quickly continued. The professors, they said, “Look, watch out because...” But fortunately there was Hasan Mekuli, a professor, there were some really good professors, they did the work that the system forced them to do. But they protected us in that way with pre-expulsion, “You got to school, continue and finish it.” But the moment you were sentenced again, they expelled you, there was that, period.

Anita Susuri: But was there some kind of activity like before, that you did after prison, or what did you do for example?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, we continued again in case there were protests, and demonstrations, and then we did activities. Then the ones for Drenica and for... the ‘90s, we never stopped anymore. Although I got married and I became a mother, I took my husband with me too, because we were university friends with my husband. Actually it was interesting because my husband told me, he said, “I,” he said, “if we get married, are you able to wait for me in case I get imprisoned,” he said, “will you wait for me?” “Well, we’ll see,” I said, “either you or me,” I said, “one of us.” And I was imprisoned before him, I said, “Wait for me now” (laughs).

²⁴ Alb. *Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës* - Democratic League of Kosovo. The first political party of Kosovo, founded in 1989, when the autonomy of Kosovo was revoked, by a group of journalists and intellectuals. The LDK quickly became a party-state, gathering all Albanians, and remained the only party until 1999.

²⁵ Ibrahim Rugova (1944-2006) a writer and journalist, founder and leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo, and President of Kosovo during the war and after until his death.

I mean, because he was also active, he was with Nuhi Berisha who was killed, in the first groups before Ahmet Isufi, he was in Gjilan in that, in that other area, with activities, with all of them. So, the university connected me to him too. So we were university friends for four years, but we were also friends with the same ideals. Maybe that was a connecting bridge too that we met other circles of people... that was it.

Anita Susuri: I would like to ask you about the '90s, about what you mentioned, for example the [march with bread](#), freedom for Drenica, there was one with white papers, with keys...

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, all of them, with papers, with keys, the protests which were held in Dragodan, "Drenica we are with you," all the protests. Maybe not all of them, because back then I was, my son was already born in '93, but even then I found the time when I thought of someone who I could leave my child to, I went to protest and I didn't stop. Because my husband too, he was also a journalist and he was a protester many times and he was beaten up in protests. He was tortured together with Ali Zatriqi in protests and he went through those situations although he was a journalist, because we had a totally different ideal, and sometimes he escaped the line of journalists and joined the protest... So I never stopped until we got to where we are today. I tried to give my contribution as much as I could both as a woman and as a patriot, to help the cause. I don't know how much we achieved our goal, it's never enough, it's never enough, but...

Anita Susuri: I would also like to talk about that last war, I mean the Kosovo one. It started around the early '90s, but it was more apparent in '98 and finally '99...

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: In '98, yes, in '98, in '98 it already started there in Dukagjin a little earlier. Five weeks after the Jashari family, my first house in Dukagjin was burned down, so my first house in the Dukagjin Plain was burned after the Jashari family's house, my family house. So there was an attack then, on March 24, in '98 when it happened, so when Ramush [Haradinaj]²⁶ resisted and, I mean, during that resistance the tanks came and they were positioned in front of the house. That's when the house was burned down, but fortunately my mother was already alone there, that night she was the last person in the village, I mean, she was there when they fired, she was already inside the house.

The others, somebody left, I mean, my brother and his children and my sister-in-law and sisters fled, they went, somebody was at school, somebody was at university, I mean, they weren't together. But only my mother was at the house and she said, "I don't even know how I escaped from the flames, how I found the way." She escaped, when she went out, "I set the cows free, and I tried to go to our neighbors and see if there was somebody left to give the cows water." And at a certain moment, she

²⁶ Ramush Haradinaj (1968), leader of the KLA from the region of Dukagjin, founder of the political party AAK (*Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës*) and twice Prime Minister. In 2005 he was indicted at the ICTY for war crimes and crimes against humanity and acquitted of all charges. He was retried and again acquitted in 2010.

said, “There was absolutely nobody left in the village,” so she was the only one, those were the circumstances, not very easy.

So, I, once more I had to go, I ran and went, to leave my son and go through checkpoints because... in the morning I saw it on Zagreb’s TV, which broadcasted it... they broadcasted the news and I said in the morning that my house was leveled down to the ground. I didn’t wait anymore, I left my son and said, “Let whoever catch me, I will go,” and I went {sighs}.

Anita Susuri: What was it like to go through those checkpoints?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: It was, we went by Prizren, we went by Prizren, we went by different places with my husband, because he was a journalist and we went by different places. Through his friends, I mean not through the checkpoints directly, because if we went by Komoran, there was no chance. We went to Prizren, we slept over in Prizren, I don’t even know where they sent us through in Prizren villages, wherever we could, here, there, here, we finally arrived in Gjakova.

Anita Susuri: And then...

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: My brothers were there, two brothers, they were involved in the war too I mean, but they survived. Many people were killed in the village, again I mean that village of ours that started when we started ‘81... in ‘99, 17 boys were killed in one day, young men. So all of those young men were killed in one day and others too. They went on the offensive and 17 boys were killed. Out of them, it was fate, only my brother survived, he was the oldest among them and they gave him a task. He said, “‘You will go get water, because we are all younger, it’s on you because you are the oldest, to go and get water,’ and I did, when I came back...” he was the only one to survive out of them, out of all them, a little more alive. And he [one of the boys] told to my brother, “Don’t leave me in the hands of *shkijet*,”²⁷ he carried him in his arms for kilometers and brought him to the village. “He died,” he said, “in my arms,” he said, “but I couldn’t,” he said, “not carry out the *amanet*...”²⁸ the others remained there.” He came back...

Anita Susuri: What about here in Pristina, what was the day when the bombings started like, do you remember?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Yes, yes, we were here, we were at Bregu i Diellit as usually at home, the bombings started... Back then, to tell you the truth there was one other thing that made me anxious, I had around 26 members at home, my family, my mother, my father, my sister, my sister-in-law with her kids, students, two, three students were there, there was a professor, Sali Bashota together with his five daughters, so all of them... It wasn’t about me as much as it was about the others because we

²⁷ *Shka* (m.); *shkinë* (f.), plural *shkijet*, is a derogatory term in Albanian used for Serbs.

²⁸ *Amanet* is literally the last will, but in the Albanian oral tradition it has a sacred value.

were sheltering many people, children, strangers , and now each one of them, and to be honest we weren't in such a comfortable place there in Bregu i Diellit. Terrible! We endured those days, we endured for several days, sometime around April 1, 2 [1999]... we went to Lagjja e Muhaxherëve, we moved there. I insisted on leaving there, because I saw that we had no possibilities and I took them and we went to Lagjja e Muhaxherëve. And then, we stayed there for two, three days and we fled like everyone else... at the train station and we went... to Bllacë.

Anita Susuri: What was it like there at the station?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: There at the train station it was terrible. It was terrible how we got there, because we went by the National Library, when we went by the university library, there were all the paramilitaries with... armed with AK47s, and stuff. We hardly passed by I mean, our group wasn't that large, but it wasn't small. Fifty members in that house where they sheltered at Lagjja e Muhaxherëve, they sheltered us there that night, we stayed there three, four nights. But the head of the house came and said, "I will take you to the station and then come back because," he said, "you are leaving my place."

In the morning the lady of the house woke up together with her daughter, she is a professor at the Economics High School, Hajrie, she woke up together with her mother and prepared food. And actually the lady of the house, her brother was killed in Fushë Kosova, he was left in the street. Her sister-in-law was there with her two children, crying all the time. She got up in all that chaos, she got up and prepared food, she accompanied us all. They woke up at night and prepared food and fed us all, "Who knows what might happen to you," she gave us all the food to take with us.

Plus four-five students stayed at their place all the time, because their house was used as a class as well. They had a big house, the students stayed there. Two old people... the young men left, the young left, but those two old people and the students stayed there. Later on when they had no other way, they kept them in the attic until they came back, and sent them food secretly. That old man has died, the woman is still alive, but back then, I mean, I took that woman's sister-in-law with her two children, my children and the others. We tried to not go in big groups, some there, some here, and we left.

Anita Susuri: Where did you go, how...

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: Then we went to Bllacë, the moment we went to Bllacë, we were stuck there for five nights, so we improvised some kind of, how to say, cottage, I can't say cottage but it was improvised, like a tent, a tent improvised with plastic bags. My husband left, thinking that... my father was very sick, and my sister, and they took him and left, they left. My son and I, my sister, the others remained there, whoever came there, we didn't know what was happening anymore, almost one million people.

We stayed there a long time, five nights, it was not very easy. I had a thing, I didn't know Serbian, because whoever knew Serbian would give a little money to Macedonians, and they would let them through. Until the border opened, so after there we went to Stankovec... to Stankovec, and we stayed there for four-five days, then we went to Tetovo. We didn't go abroad, my husband didn't want to go abroad and we went to Tetovo and stayed there for three months.

Anita Susuri: When did you come back to Kosovo?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: When we came back to Kosovo, we went...

Anita Susuri: Did you come back immediately, or?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: We immediately came back, so we came back to Kosovo after a week, we came back immediately. Although we didn't have our house, we were renting, we still came back first. Actually the landlord said, "I thought everyone would come back but I never believed it about you." His house had four floors, and everything we needed, his sons had gone to America, we came back (laughs)... that's what life was like...

Anita Susuri: How did you recover after the war, how did your life go on?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: So then, after the war life wasn't that easy, until 2004. In 2004, I mean, my husband died. And I faced life as the head of the family, my son, his education, but I never stopped working. I mean, I still gave myself to education, I still tried to work, to do my work because it never seemed enough to me. I worked as a trainee for nine years on two-three projects with Canadians, teaching with the students in focus, maybe to overcome all those challenges, my work allowed me to not... not become demoralized, to not feel sad and I didn't have the time. So I didn't allow myself time to get sad, but I only left myself time to work for my son and for my students. I never abandoned activities.

Although I am three years away from retirement, I will never stop being active, I told you my oath about education... I don't know how much I gave, but it was always my goal to give what I could, if nothing else, I will give love, education, I will attempt to give culture, what I have, I don't know how much I have it. However, I mean, I was always in the service of students, in the service of those who needed me, especially...

Not only in education, but they might have also needed financial support, moral support, to support them because we started... in 2000 I started working, 13 years after my graduation. I started in 2000 and I never stopped. I was a leader twice, I was a principal and led the school too, I worked in education, but my biggest satisfaction was as a teacher, it never seemed like... but what pushed me to

become a principal, when I saw those injustices being done by school principals, that's when I thought, I said, "I will become a leader but... I will be fair," so I wouldn't put anything in my pocket.

Anita Susuri: Thanks a lot for the interview and your time.

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: I don't know, maybe a little...

Anita Susuri: Do you want to add something?

Hatmone Haradinaj Demiri: No, I don't know. Now if I go home I would say that half of it I would... but sometimes you know, these are spontaneous, maybe there are more and better things to say ... So, I don't know if you liked it.

Anita Susuri: It was very good. Thank you!