

# Oral History Kosovo

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## INTERVIEW WITH TEUTA HADRI

Pristina | Date: May 5 and June 10, 2021

Duration: 267 minutes

Present:

1. Teuta Hadri (Speaker)
2. Anita Susuri (Interviewer)
3. Besarta Breznica (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:** So, to make an introduction for yourself, to tell us about your background and something about your family.

**Teuta Hadri:** I am originally from Gjakova. I am the daughter of Izet Hadraj. My father was a history professor. Besides my father, I come from a family, which I can call intellectual and education-loving, starting from my grandfather. My grandfather, Avdullah Hadaj, was the first teacher who opened the first Albanian language school in Vushtrri in 1915, and in addition to that, he also opened an Albanian school in Petrelë, Elbasan, in Albania. And my entire family, starting from my grandfather to the generations of my brother and sister, have been educators who spread knowledge, culture, and education in Kosovo.

I feel joy when I mention my family, because I truly had a very happy childhood, a childhood where I was well-educated. Everyone is educated, but I think I had a slightly different upbringing compared to others because I was part of a very democratic family, a family where women had an important role and were given priority and fairness in every aspect to be free. And I owe this to my father, who was also a fighter in the National Liberation War, a founder of anti-fascist cells at that time. He had a cell with Emin Duraku and a cell with Abedin Tërbeshi, and it's known that from the Tërbeshi family, Ganimete Tërbeshi<sup>1</sup> became a heroine. My aunt was also a friend of Ganimete, as girls they shared and stayed together.

So, I say that I grew up and was educated in a family that thought about the freedom of the country, a family that aimed to make history, and we, as a people... In the Balkans, just as we once were an imperial power in the time of the Illyrians and Teuta.<sup>2</sup> So, my whole life has been a life that stemmed from my family, and the family inspiration has also influenced my personality. As a child, I say, I was a problematic child (laughs), my mother says so too. However, I remember those events of mine when I was four years old, and other activities as a child that made me different from my sisters and brothers.

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<sup>1</sup> Ganimete Tërbeshi (1927-1944) was a notable Albanian partisan and national heroine who at fourteen years old, during the Second World War, joined the Anti-Fascist Movement. She was hanged in 1944 by the Germans in Gjakova.

<sup>2</sup> Teuta was a queen of the Illyrian Ardiaei tribe who ruled in the 3rd century BC and is known for her resistance against Roman expansion.

As my mother used to say, “When you were a child, you were more troublesome than the other four children,” she said, “while I managed the four, you were the hardest because I couldn’t catch you.” She also said that when I woke up in the morning as a child, at three years old, I would get up and run away from the bed. I would leave them and go out into the yard to stay alone, “you would go out,” she said, “into the street, onto the stones,” we lived on the main road, “and you would watch people going to work.” She said, “I would wake up and wonder where my daughter went. My daughter,” she said, “was staying by the apple tree, you would get up early to welcome the day with the morning.” I was, as I said, a problematic child.

I remember that when I was seven years old, I was in the first grade. From Gjakova, I went to a village, which was called Sadik Aga’s Wall back then and still is, and I went as a child alone on the road. Gjakova was inhabited up to the “Mustafa Bakia” school. I took a path and walked about a kilometer to the village to visit my two classmates, Pashka and Drana. I went to see how their families raised cows and pigs, and that life. Once, with a friend of mine, this part of my childhood is very interesting, and I may be mentioning it for the first time, we went to pick nettles in the village. From Gjakova, it was a little over a kilometer to Sadik Aga’s Wall, and we passed by Shefetai’s Tomb to take a shorter route to the village.

When we saw some nettles, we stopped there to pick them, to make *pite*,<sup>3</sup> to make my mother happy. So, I took a long stick and raised that branch high. When I raised the branch, a large eagle appeared above our heads and hovered above us. I had red, curly hair, and I had this fear, as a child I was so vigilant that I was afraid it would grab my curly hair and not let go. So I told my friend, Beba Hoxha was her name, she lives in Prizren now, I haven’t seen her for years. I said, “Beba, hold my hand because the eagle can’t carry both of us. So either it grabs you or me.” And I held that stick, hitting the eagle with it.

It came down at us, trying to grab us... we used the stick while running about 200 meters and then we reached the asphalt and lied down. We were catching our breath, our hearts pounding *bam bum* {onomatopoeia} from the shock we experienced out of fear. So, I came to Gjakova, told them about it, and this eagle story remained a tale, you know. “Even an eagle came down on you that early,” they would say at home whenever they wanted to criticize me for something in the family, “An eagle came for you, there’s nothing we can do” (smiles). So, I was a very problematic child. You know, I didn’t cause destructive problems, but I had adventurous childhood escapades.

In my family, history was spoken of and discussed. My father was a historian, there was Ali Hadri... the author of the book on Albanian history. My father’s patriotic friends would visit, such as Sami Peja, Sami Pruthi, Isuf Zherku, and Sadik Tafarshiku who was imprisoned for several years. So, any political

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<sup>3</sup> *Pite* is a traditional pastry made of thin, flaky dough such as phyllo, often filled with various ingredients like cheese, spinach, or meat.

issues that occurred in Yugoslavia were part of the Albanian patriotic party, because after the Second [World] War, in 1948, when the flag came, they fought, Kosovo was betrayed under the assistance of Tito<sup>4</sup> and Albanian-speaking collaborators. My father did not join, even though he fought alongside Emin Duraku, forming those anti-fascist cells.

Albanians were betrayed, my father still held a patriotic line and proposed that the Albanian flag be displayed in Kosovo and in schools. From that time, he was expelled from the Party, from politics, and remained as a teacher. However, even as a teacher, he was always persecuted by the authorities. But they couldn't do much because he was a fighter in the National Liberation War, making it harder to punish him. Yet he was constantly monitored, with plans and preparations to trap him. This is how I was educated in that family spirit, so that I, as a child, was prepared for the background, for betrayal, for all that a state, an authority prepares.

**Anita Susuri:** Do you remember as a child, did the police ever come to your door?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, yes.

**Anita Susuri:** Did they come to take your father?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, yes, to take my father. They came to take my father because they had prepared things against him, even at school where they had their own people and agents to strike at Tito's photograph, to take them into responsibility. They had drawn a red and black flag on our door, and the flag was not allowed, the eagle was not there, I think it was around '66 or '67 when I was a child. I don't know if I was seven years old, something like that. And they had drawn a flag. Near us lived a Serbian woman. She saw someone doing it, and although she was Serbian, she was an honest and upright woman.

And they came to arrest my father, to take him in for questioning, and they sent him a kind of notice with three red lines. And those three red lines... I overheard it, I was a child, three red lines are not... my mother didn't tell us as children. But I was a bit of a nosy child. Three red lines for my father. And she [the Serbian neighbor] went out and told him, she told him who did it, who framed him. And I saw that she went out, that Serbian woman, and told my father. My father didn't say anything. When they took him in for questioning, during the conversation he said, "I know who did it," when my father mentioned the person, which isn't right to reveal now as 40 years have passed. He mentioned that person's name and they released my father. I remember this as a child. They didn't arrest him because

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<sup>4</sup> Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) was the leader of Yugoslavia from 1943 until his death. He was a key figure in the Yugoslav Partisans during the Second World War and later became the president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

he was a notable figure, my father was a notable figure, a friend of Fadil Hoxha<sup>5</sup> and others. Only if he did something very significant. But he was always persecuted.

**Anita Susuri:** I know as a child, I heard somewhere in one of your interviews, that you tore down the Yugoslav flags.

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, the Yugoslav flags. It was the year... '68 when the flag was allowed, the flag was allowed during the celebration of November 28.<sup>6</sup> I was a child, I say, and I heard my father tell my mother, "Oh, they allowed the flag, the whole city of Gjakova is filled with flags." And my house is right in the center, which was filled, let's say, with about 24-25 flags, as many as there were shops, because now there are more. And they had placed the Albanian flag in the middle. They had put the flag of the working class, of Russia or whatever it was, and the Yugoslav flag, they had placed ours in the middle. As a child, I couldn't see them well, I had to go out to see them. And I went, got up early in the morning, the flags were waving, it was a celebration, tearing down the flags, including those of Yugoslavia. And I can say I probably tore down 20-30 flags, one by one.

When people went out, the wind was blowing, and the torn pieces of the flag waved, the eagle would appear, and my heart would swell with pride. I was a child, when I did what I did, but I didn't dare tell even my family. And they took...they arrested some boys from the neighborhood. We heard that they arrested them, they were innocent, they released them. Nobody knew, neither my father nor... I later told my father that I did that. And it was an act that truly opened there, "They tore down the flags of Yugoslavia." And the authorities said, "Look, the flag is not even up properly... and already the nationalists [have acted]," you know. It was talked about, but I was a child then. It was my motivation. This was the source that made the family, my father, happy. It seems that I made my father happy with that act I did.

**Anita Susuri:** How do you remember Gjakova and the place where you lived at that time? How was the organization of society and your family, for example?

**Teuta Hadri:** Gjakova was a city that brought culture to Kosovo. Everyone acknowledges this. In other cities, there wasn't a Higher Pedagogical School or an Albanian school. To get an education at that time, one had to go to Serbia, complete university studies in Serbian. Even literature was studied [in Serbian], as there was no university [in Albanian]. And Gjakova, with all its heroism, the soldiers of the National Liberation War, all the political class that fought in the Second World War, were intellectuals,

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<sup>5</sup> Fadil Hoxha (1916-2001), Albanian Communist partisan leader from Gjakova, who held a number of high posts in Kosovo and Yugoslavia, including the rotating post of Vice President of the Federal Presidency, the highest leadership post in Yugoslavia under Tito, in 1978-79. He retired in 1986, but was expelled from the League of Communist on charges of nationalism.

<sup>6</sup> November 28 is celebrated as Flag Day (Dita e Flamurit) in Albania and among Albanians worldwide. It commemorates the day in 1912 when Ismail Qemali raised the Albanian flag in Vlora, symbolizing the declaration of Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire.

people who brought culture, people who had a tradition of culture, culture stemming from Sylejman Vokshi.<sup>7</sup> All these national figures we knew, Bajram Curri,<sup>8</sup> then Emin Duraku,<sup>9</sup> Hajdar Dushi.<sup>10</sup> These were heroes. We had heroes not only of the Second World War, but also international heroes like Asim Vokshi.<sup>11</sup> And Gjakova prided itself in comparison to other cities for its political, historical, and patriotic legacy.

So, Gjakova is a city, I say, a hero, a hero of both past times and now, the current<sup>12</sup> war of Kosovo, as over 1300 boys... from Gjakova, sons of those mothers and grandmothers, were inspired not just to defend their homes, but to go out and fight in the Kosovo War of 1999. So, I grew up in that family, as I said, in that city where women had a significant role, we had intellectual women of the time, we had the first woman... in Gjakova to parachute, Gone Vula, the sister of Asim Vula. That was a family where the whole family was persecuted and imprisoned by the authorities, the progressive family of Asim Vula.

We had Hyrije Hana, who was a heroine of the time for us. As they say, Aunt Hyrije, the sister of Xheladin Hana. Xheladin Hana was a man who signed the act of Kosovo at the Bujan Conference<sup>13</sup> for Kosovo's separation, and union with the motherland. However, that act was also betrayed by the politicians of the time. And we were the family of Bije Vokshi,<sup>14</sup> that heroism, of historians, we had singers. We had Atifete Kryeziu, the first actress. I can almost say she was an actress before Melihate Ajeti.<sup>15</sup> Atifete Kryeziu, the sister of Ekrem Kryeziu... so, in Gjakova, there was also art, culture, and music. Compared to other cities, where Albanian women were secluded or uneducated or under the influence of family constraints and traditions, in Gjakova, the Albanian woman was not like that.

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<sup>7</sup> Sylejman Vokshi (1815-1890) was a prominent Albanian leader and activist, known for his role in the League of Prizren, an organization that sought to defend Albanian territories and rights within the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>8</sup> Bajram Curri (1862-1925) was an Albanian chieftain, politician and activist who struggled for the independence of Albania, later fighting for Kosovo's unification with Albania, following the 1913 Treaty of London.

<sup>9</sup> Emin Duraku (1918-1942) was a notable Albanian partisan and national hero who was killed by fascist forces during the Second World War.

<sup>10</sup> Hajdar Dushi (1916-1944) was an Albanian communist and anti-fascist fighter, known for his resistance efforts during the Second World War.

<sup>11</sup> Asim Vokshi (1909-1937) was an Albanian communist revolutionary and soldier who fought in the Spanish Civil War.

<sup>12</sup> The speaker intended to say "recent war of Kosovo" referring to the Kosovo War of 1999, as there is no current war in Kosovo.

<sup>13</sup> The Bujan Conference was held from December 31, 1943, to January 2, 1944, in the village of Bujan, in the Tropoja District. It was a meeting of Albanian and Yugoslav Partisan leaders where they discussed the future of Kosovo. The conference resulted in a resolution that supported the right of the people of Kosovo and other Albanian regions to self-determination and union with Albania. However, this resolution was later disregarded by the Yugoslav authorities.

<sup>14</sup> Bije [Sabrije] Vokshi (1912-1943) was an Albanian nationalist and partisan, known for her resistance efforts during the Second World War. She was the daughter of Syleiman Vokshi and the aunt of Arsim Vokshi.

<sup>15</sup> Melihate Ajeti (1935-2005) was a renowned Albanian actress, celebrated for her work in theater and film. She is considered one of the prominent figures in Albanian performing arts.

So, I grew up in that environment with high moral values, as the more culture you have, the more moral values women possess. Where there is a lack of culture, there is also a lack of morality. We grew up in a city where I completed primary school, where my Albanian language teacher, Mandushe Vula, mentioned Shote Galica<sup>16</sup> to me for the first time in the first grade. In class there, Shote Galica resonated with me, the sister of so many brothers who fought for the freedom of Kosovo. At that time, it was very difficult to mention Shote Galica to students. She mentioned her, and then we found the literature and read about her.

I grew up in a city where I had academics who taught. We had... even now, Jahja Kokaj, who is a member of *Vetëvendosje*<sup>17</sup> and an MP. Professor Jahja Kokaj was a scientist, a type of scientist. There was Besnik Hoxha, a biochemist. There was Mebije Dushi. They were close, professional figures, people who left their mark in science. We grew up with that generation that made a great contribution both to their city of Gjakova and to Kosovo. So, I was prepared by them, I came from their influence.

**Anita Susuri:** I wanted to ask about the connection with Albania at that time, since the borders were closed, but you previously mentioned that your grandfather had a connection with Albania as he opened a school there...

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, he worked for two years. For two years, he received a salary from Albania, from the government of Ahmet Zogu,<sup>18</sup> and we had... My father completed high school in Shkodër with Vasil Shanto. When they were in high school, he would tell stories about Vasil Shanto,<sup>19</sup> Vujo Kushto, with whom they had contacts. Emin Duraku also completed his studies in Shkodër. And those who were part of the communist movement of that time, during the Second World War, had significant communication with Albania. Additionally, apart from that, in our family, the Oruçi family from Albania also stayed with us. A teacher from Albania came during my father and grandfather's time to open Albanian schools in Kosovo. Muhamet Oruçi stayed with my family. So... we had a very strong connection.

My grandmother and Asim Vokshi's mother were cousins. So, our [paternal] aunt Qazime... every month, every two or three months... my mother would gather the elderly women and bring them to our house. Qazime, Esat Hoxha's mother. She gathered all the members of the National Liberation War.

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<sup>16</sup> Shote Galica, born as Qerime Halil Radisheva, was an Albanian insurgent fighter and the wife of Azem Bejta, a leader of the *Kaçak* (outlaws) movement. Galica participated in dozens of attacks against Royal Yugoslav forces in the beginning of the 20th century and the *kaçak* movement succeeded in putting under their control temporary free zones.

<sup>17</sup> Alb. *Lëvizja Vetëvendosje* - Self-determination Movement is a political party in Kosovo which goes by the acronym LVV. It is orientated towards principles of social democracy, progressivism, and Albanian nationalism.

<sup>18</sup> Ahmet Zogu (1895-1961) was the King of Albania from 1928 to 1939. Before becoming king, he served as Prime Minister and President of Albania. His reign is marked by efforts to modernize Albania and consolidate state power.

<sup>19</sup> Vasil Shanto (1913-1944) was an Albanian communist and partisan leader. He was a significant figure in the anti-fascist resistance during the Second World War and a founding member of the Albanian Communist Party.

Their mothers who were widows, she would gather them together. Ilmije Hoxha, all of them, my aunt. They would all discuss the heroism of the Second World War. They would talk about what Ganimete did, what Abedin did, what Emin did, each one would tell their stories. So, as a child, I liked listening to these stories and grew up with that spirit. And...

**Anita Susuri:** Do you remember any interesting events from the Second World War that they told?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes. My aunt would tell how she was embroidering the flag with Ganimete, this, embroidering a flag, doing embroidery. They would gather like girls going to visit each other. And then, two or three days later, when my aunt came, she couldn't meet her because they had arrested Ganimete Tërbeshi. And my aunt and mother would tell how, at the moment when she was hanged, my mother said, "I saw it from the house, from the doors of the house," because the place where they hanged Tefik Çanga and Ganimete was in the market. She said, "When the Germans lifted those ropes," she said, "I saw it when she screamed," she said, "they were shouting, 'Down with fascism, down with fascism!'"

And I have that moment that my mother would describe, how she saw it as a child, how she opened the door, how her father shouted at her, "Don't, because they'll shoot you from there," because it was very close. We saw them hanging by their feet. They would tell these stories. Then one of my aunts was a member of the Communist Party, how she distributed tracts,<sup>20</sup> how she worked in cells, how she cooperated with Emin, my father. They would tell their own stories.

**Anita Susuri:** From Albania, there were also many books that came, which were banned in Kosovo. Did you read those books? How did they get into your hands?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes. For example, Bije Vokshi, Aunt Bije, brought us a work of Enver [Hoxha]<sup>21</sup> or the Albanian Party of Labour. I also had a maternal uncle who was imprisoned in Goli Otok,<sup>22</sup> Faredin Hoxha, who was imprisoned three times for political reasons in the prisons of Goli Otok, former Yugoslavia. He was imprisoned just for singing an Albanian song from Albania, "*Posta, Shoqe Posta*"<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> In Yugoslavia, particularly in Kosovo, tracts were underground pamphlets distributed by Albanian activists to protest against political repression and cultural suppression. These documents contained critiques of the Yugoslav government and called for greater rights and autonomy, playing a crucial role in mobilizing resistance and fostering Albanian national identity.

<sup>21</sup> Enver Hoxha (1908-1985) was the leader of the Albanian Communist Party who ruled Albania as a dictator until his death.

<sup>22</sup> Island in the north of the Adriatic sea, from 1949 through 1956 a maximum security penal colony for Yugoslav political prisoners, where individuals accused of sympathizing with the Soviet Union, or other dissenters, among them many Albanians, were detained. It is known as a veritable gulag.

<sup>23</sup> A folk or revolutionary song from Albania, popular during the communist era. Songs of this nature often celebrated the socialist ideals and the unity of the working class, and they were used as tools for propaganda and morale-boosting. Singing such songs in Kosovo, especially those with direct connections to Albania's communist regime, could have been seen as a political statement against Yugoslav authorities, leading to potential persecution or imprisonment, as in the case of Faredin Hoxha.



[Alb.: Post, Comrade Post]. He was imprisoned once for that, a second time, and a third time because he was steadfast. He was, in fact, the nephew of Qazime Vokshi. And because he was from that family... in that family of Qazime Vokshi, Bijë Vokshi was a member of that family. She had a passport, dual citizenship both from Tito's Yugoslavia and Enver Hoxha's time, and she could travel whenever she wanted.

In Bijë Vokshi's house in Albania, the House of Anti-Fascist Youth was founded, and Bijë had that right because she greatly contributed to anti-fascism, and she was granted dual citizenship. Whenever Bijë came from there, she brought magazines, and albums from Albania. For the first time, I read about the history of the Albanian Party of Labour... and there were two booklets, *Yjet e Pashuar* [Alb.: The Unextinguished Stars], the first and second parts. I got them from Bijë Vokshi's family. She read them and gave them to my uncle, who brought them to us, to my father, to us.

Later, my brother started... even my older brother started studying literature and he got into literature with Isuf Gërvalla<sup>24</sup> and his friends at university. It was anti-state literature, which the state [treated as such] even though it wasn't. Those were Albanian works, but Yugoslavia wanted to erase us as a people and didn't allow us to know our own history. I remember this now that you mentioned it, we were in history class when the smallpox vaccine came to Gjakova. They wanted to eradicate us as a people in Gjakova, as citizens of Gjakova. Why did smallpox spread? To save Yugoslavia, Gjakova had to be bombarded with bombs to wipe out an entire population in Gjakova.

It was the year '72, '72-'73, the Yugoslav government made this forecast to do this, and when Albania heard, during the time of Enver Hoxha, Enver heard, the Party, they decided that hygiene experts and sanitary doctors should send their own teams because they saw that it was a measure... because Gjakova was the most intellectual city and it suited Serbia to eradicate this city that brought knowledge and culture to other cities like Pristina, Gjiilan, and Peja. There was the Higher Pedagogical School filled with students from all over Kosovo and Montenegro, who studied at the Higher Pedagogical School, *Bajram Curri*, I think it was called, and they wanted to destroy it.

At that time, the whole class got sick from the vaccines, they were giving them to us, just like now when people are afraid to take the vaccine. "No, they want to kill us." "No, they don't want to kill us." "No, the vaccine will kill us." And they gave us the vaccines, the whole class got sick. As students, some would pretend to be sick to avoid studying and get sent home. And the history teacher came, and this was interesting, I followed it a bit. The history teacher gave a topic, it was, "The Formation of the Albanian Party of Labour," in detailed points, written in detail. "Albanian Party of Labour was formed by Enver Hoxha..." with some points.

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<sup>24</sup> Jusuf Gervalla (1945- 1982) was a poet and also nationalist activist killed in Germany together with his brother and a third person. All these killings have been widely attributed to Yugoslav agents, though no investigation has come to a conclusive identification of the killers.

However, I went because I also had *Yjet e Pashuara* and *Formimi i Partisë* [Alb.: The Formation of the Party], a book that had come to our house, and I had learned it like that. And, “Who will stand up to explain? To answer?” No one. “We are sick.” “Does anyone know the last lesson we explained?” Then I got up and explained (laughed). There was a history teacher, and I explained it in detail. I mentioned not only Enver Hoxha, but also Nako Spirra, Mehmet Shehu, all the members of the political bureau, I mentioned them all. In the history book of Kosovo, that wasn’t written. The teacher was taken aback, he was a bit in favor of the authorities, he supported the system.

“Where did you learn this? Who explained this to you?” I said, “From a book,” that youthful courage, “From a book, professor.” “What book?” “From a book.” My father was his friend, but with different views. He leaned towards Yugoslavia, my father towards Albania. He knew that my father, Izet, had inspired his daughter as well. And, “Where did you learn this? Can you bring me that book?” I told him, “Ask my father.” “You, you bring me the book.” And I... the whole class stood up and made fun of the teacher. And this was what he kept asking, “Where did you get that book?” It was a book that neither the class nor... I remember this was [one of the books we had] back in ‘74-’75. We had sources, they came to us.

Bije Vokshi was allowed to have two or three of her own works to read herself. She would give them to someone else along with other written materials. And later...

**Anita Susuri:** How did those who came from Albania travel?

**Teuta Hadri:** They came by airplane, by cars, by train. She had permission from Yugoslavia to have a passport. How did she come? By buses, by... there were no buses, but perhaps with the buses of the delegations from Belgrade. She also came by plane from Belgrade to Gjakova because she was a daughter of Gjakova, and she had permission. However, she was allowed to carry two or three books in her bag and she distributed the materials, giving them to people. The patriots had it, and Fadil Hoxha also had contact with Bije Vokshi. He went there. There were moments of criticism and debate, but there were also relations. They received information from her.

**Anita Susuri:** You told me that you also have some memories from the time of Ranković<sup>25</sup> when many Albanians left from here. Do you remember anything?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, I remember from the time of Ranković, how they used to take people from their homes because I left Gjakova a long time ago. There was a local criminal there, a notorious figure, known for his bloody boots, he entered with his bloody boots and took people away. Her name was Hermo [the woman whose son was taken], Alil... Hermo’s son, she had two sons. They took her young

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<sup>25</sup> Aleksandar Ranković (1909-1983) was a Serb partisan hero who became Yugoslavia’s Minister of the Interior and head of Military Intelligence after the war. He was a hardliner who established a regime of terror in Kosovo, which he considered a security threat to Yugoslavia, from 1945 until 1966, when he was ousted from the Communist Party and exiled to his private estate in Dubrovnik until his death in 1983.

son, took him at night and he disappeared, no one knew who it was. And that mother wouldn't tell, as she was in our neighborhood, and we would go there as children, "Aunt Hermo, how did they take your son?" "Oh, mother, so-and-so came with bloody boots. I saw his boots with blood, I knew he was going to take my son away." As children, that was traumatic for us. They took the mother's son.

On one hand, I [thought] I had freedom, I thought Yugoslavia was free, that we were free, we were equal. But in reality, our people were being arrested, imprisoned, and at night those criminals would come. Of course, they also had Albanian collaborators who committed these crimes. These facts are well known. Many families left Gjakova, left Prizren. The friends of my uncle's wife now live in Çekmeköy in Turkey. The three brothers couldn't be saved, without hearing their stories. They mention the names of the agents who... came to massacre in Prizren, carrying out the mass displacement of Albanians. It was a very bad period.

As a child, I would hear when the women would say, "Be quiet, don't talk because the walls have ears," we would talk about how they killed Hermo's son, how they took him. As children, when we played hide-and-seek. "Be quiet because the walls have ears, they can hear you." They would come and arrest my father, "Where did the child hear this talk?" It was a difficult time then, a time of crime.

**Anita Susuri:** Did they select the families that were...

**Teuta Hadri:** The opponents of the regime. But the people in power, no one touches them. Just like now, those who serve the party are not bothered by anyone. It was always the opponents of the regime, the patriotic families that were wiped out. Families with deep roots and long-standing heritage were wiped out. Those families were eradicated down to the foundation. They didn't leave anyone. Whether they drove them insane through torture or wiped them out, those families disappeared.

**Anita Susuri:** You completed primary school in Gjakova...

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** Then you continued with high school. How did you decide on the path you took?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes. I attended the *Hajdar Dushi* gymnasium<sup>26</sup> for high school. The best students went to *Hajdar Dushi*. I was an excellent student throughout, and I had an aspiration to study medicine. Attending a gymnasium gave you more points, more preparation, and a greater advantage for being accepted into the medical faculty. So, I enrolled in the *Hajdar Dushi* gymnasium and was accepted. That's where I completed high school.

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<sup>26</sup> A European type of secondary school with emphasis on academic learning, different from vocational schools because it prepares students for university.

In gymnasium, it is worth mentioning that we had, as I said, the Albanian language teacher Nysrete Vula, whom I respect, because she actually made us, or rather forced us, to learn. When we studied *Bagëti e Bujqësi*<sup>27</sup> [Alb.: Cattle and Agriculture] with her as the Albanian language teacher, we called her “teacher,” since we girls called the professor “teacher,” she made us learn *Bagëti e Bujqësi* by heart from *O malet e Shqipërisë e ju lisat e gjatë...* [Alb.: O mountains of Albania and you tall oaks...] to the end. At that time, I read a lot because my brother was a literature student, an Albanian language graduate, and he drew inspiration from literature. He had contact with Isuf Gërvalla, the Pireva brothers, those who were imprisoned, and he would bring literature, and my older brother would bring literature.

Now it was easier for us to get literature because my brother, through his connections, would bring *Gjarpërinjtë e Gjakut* [Alb.: The Snakes of Blood], all those works that were banned at the time would come through my brother. And when the Albanian language teacher had the program in high school, I didn’t rely on the program but read those, *The Renaissance*, the 14th, 15th centuries. Those literature books, Franjo Bardhi,<sup>28</sup> Filip Shiroka,<sup>29</sup> outside of the regular literature, Gjon Buzuku,<sup>30</sup> all these writers, and all the historians who left their mark and works, I would expand my own literature, and... I was an excellent student there, I had a five<sup>31</sup> in the subject [of literature].

With the teacher, we would go back and forth as rivals, “I’ve read these,” “I’ve read those.” And the teacher was well-prepared. She was at a high level of preparation, as it was difficult even for her with a student who had read more. And she would ask, “Where did you get these?” “Well, Blerim,” you know, my brother who was in Albanian language [studies]. In high school, we caused problems, we caused problems. And then the Albanian film started coming to Kosovo, *Debatik*, the united boys, the members of... it’s that film with the little children.

We saw those films there, *Toka Jonë* [Alb.: Our Land]. Then we read a lot of literature. *Nora*, the first Albanian dramas appeared, *Halili e Hajria* [Halil and Hajrie], *Tradhëtia e Mikut* [Alb.: The Betrayal of a Friend], those families, they all left a mark on our ideal inspiration. Also, the arrival of Albanian film from Albania, the arrival of literature, reading the first Albanian dramas was an inspiration, an emotion, with all the youth who loved to read and wanted to read. And I say, that’s where we were inspired. We were very fortunate, we also had two professors who had been political prisoners,

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<sup>27</sup> *Bagëti e Bujqësi* is a poem written by the Albanian writer Naim Frashëri, who was a pioneering figure in Albanian literature and one of the most influential Albanian cultural icons of the 19th century. This work was first published in Bucharest in 1886 and is considered his magnum opus. In *Bagëti e Bujqësi*, Naim Frashëri depicts the idyllic landscape of the village and nature of Albania.

<sup>28</sup> Frang Bardhi (1606-1643) was an Albanian Catholic bishop and scholar. He is known for his works in linguistics and literature, particularly for compiling the first known Albanian dictionary.

<sup>29</sup> Filip Shiroka (1859-1935) was an Albanian poet and writer from Shkodër. He is considered one of the most important figures of the Albanian Renaissance for his contributions to Albanian literature and culture.

<sup>30</sup> Gjon Buzuku (c. 1499 – c. 1577) was an Albanian Catholic priest and writer. He is best known for writing the first known book in the Albanian language, *Meshari* [The Missal], published in 1555.

<sup>31</sup> Grade five corresponds to an A.

Sefedin, the father of the one who acts in *Familja Moderne*<sup>32</sup> [Alb.: Modern Family], Sefedin Fetiu, of Nëntor, Nëntor Fetiu. His father was a patriot, a political convict. And he taught us Latin.

Instead of Latin, he gave us *Bagëti e Bujqësi, Gjeneral Mojsiu* [Alb.: General Moisiu] and he enjoyed it, “Go Teuta, read ‘General Moisiu.’” “Behind your shadow...” [quotes words from the work], the betrayal done to Skanderbeg.<sup>33</sup> And we presented it as a recital, “Behind your shadow...”, he was pleased. There was also Fadil Rugova, he taught us psychology and he was a person persecuted by the government. And we were inspired by Albanian films. The inspiration was from the professors too, it was a fact they influenced in creating our youthful rebellion and we began to write slogans like them. Even, “Death to fascism, freedom to the people.”

Then, this history professor that asked me, my classmates would salute him with, “Hail Hitler.” It became all of us. And we were a smaller group, about four or five of us who began to write slogans. Then we dirtied the sponge {pretends she’s shooting} at Tito’s photo. It became a problem. But the people of Gjakova had a high awareness, they didn’t take us to arrest us, but they handled it silently with politics, involving our parents, doing this and that... they expelled the two professors. For us, it was a death and we stopped.

For about two years, we acted this way with the walls... and when they removed the professors, they took Nëntor’s father, Sefedin Fetiu, we felt a weight, thinking perhaps we were the cause of their being forced to remove him. And they remained unemployed, maybe because of us, our encouragement, our actions. Later, in high school (laughs), I caused a bit of a stir. It was political, but I wasn’t punished because I was the daughter of Izet Hadri, a National Liberation fighter, so they couldn’t punish me. The Albanian language teacher, we would compete with each other with poetry to see who knew more about Albanian literature, and she noted that I read beyond the syllabus.

When she said it... in writing, I always got a five. Orally, always five, but in writing, to encourage me, I’m very happy she encouraged me, gave me moral support, she said, “I won’t give you a five,” she said, “because you always write with a patriotic motive.” We would write, for example, she’d give a topic, I’d write about patriotism, Skanderbeg... She said, “I want a motif and a bit of erotica,” you know, emotional feelings. And when she gave us the topic, she said it could be like this, like this. I said, “What’s the topic? The subject of the topic?” She said, “Well, it’s about great people,” and that title, “small people create great works.” I said, “What are you indicating? You’re saying it’s social, but you’re

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<sup>32</sup> *Familja Moderne* was a popular television sitcom in Kosovo, known for its humorous depiction of everyday life and social issues. The show gained significant popularity for its relatable characters and storylines, reflecting the nuances of Kosovar society.

<sup>33</sup> Gjergj Kastriot – Skanderbeg (1405-1468) was an Albanian nobleman and leader. Taken hostage as a boy by the Ottomans, he served the Empire until 1443 when he became the Chief of the League of Albanian People in the League of Lezhë. He led a resistance to the Ottoman Empire for the next 25 years until his death, and is considered a model of Christian resistance against Ottoman Islam throughout Europe. He is the greatest Albanian national hero.

saying I write about patriotism, what should I do?" She said, "You could take..." "Who should I take?" "Vaqe Zela."<sup>34</sup> "But is that a social motif?" There wasn't. When she goes on and says, "Mao Zedong." I said, "I to you..." and internally I wasn't expressing myself with the vulgar language of the topic. "If I have to explain it to you myself, I might as well do it, if I have to tell you myself..."

I wrote about Enver Hoxha (laughs). *Kuku*,<sup>35</sup> back then, writing about Enver Hoxha in an essay, Qemal Stafa,<sup>36</sup> I mentioned all those heroes and at the end, "Party, Enver, we are always ready," at the end of the essay. I nailed it, I would write beautifully, I would write for a five. There were those who wrote even better than me. When the Albanian language teacher got the essay, she saw "Party, Enver." *Kuku*, what to do? Then she came up and would gesture boxing in class, "I'll box, *bam bam* {onomatopoeia}, I'll do this to you, I'll do that to you," she even pulled my ear. The class didn't know, except for the girl sitting next to me. She asked me, "What's the teacher doing to you?" I said, "No, I wrote." Because I saw the teacher got heated for about three days just pulling my ears. I even got her into trouble. I knew it.

And then she pulled me slowly, "Come on, out!" When I went out of the classroom on the third day, I was dragged out by my ears. Then she kicked me *bam bam* {onomatopoeia}, it wasn't violent. Yes, because she kicked the boys too, she was a sporty teacher. And she said, "You monkey," she said, "do you know what you've done?" "What did I do?" She said, "You wrote Enver Hoxha's work, to get me imprisoned, your father, your brother, the whole family. Are you in your right mind? I had to," she said, "destroy the essays of the whole class." Then I urged, as a child, I urged the students of the class, "Ask for the essays." The whole class got up, they didn't know what I wrote, they were asking for the essays, "Teacher, we want the essays," "I need the essay to pass with a two<sup>37</sup>." She knew then, "Did you talk somewhere? Did you talk to someone?" I would say, "No." And that's how it... I'm sure the principal knew, she destroyed them.

I noticed that I had a kind of monitoring, it became noticeable. To expel me from school, whether to expel me, or to send me to Pristina. She remained silent and those professors were dismissed, they were removed from their jobs. And somehow, I felt a kind of break, thinking that we might be the cause of it, high school.

**Anita Susuri:** You mentioned that you wrote slogans, what kind of slogans did you write?

**Teuta Hadri:** The slogans we wrote were "Glory," "Death to fascism, freedom to the people," and "Long live the PPSH<sup>38</sup>." Those were the ones we had, because the films at that time said, "Long live the PPSH," "Long live the Albanian Party of Labour." We filled those. And the principal knew, they erased them, painted over them, some they...

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<sup>34</sup> Vaçe Zela (1939-2014), influential Albanian singer.

<sup>35</sup> Colloquial, expresses disbelief, distress, or wonder, depending on the context.

<sup>36</sup> Qemal Stafa (1920-1942), one of the founders of the Albanian Communist Party

<sup>37</sup> Grade two corresponds to a D.

<sup>38</sup> PPSH stands for *Partia e Punës së Shqipërisë*, the Albanian Party of Labour.

## Part Two

**Anita Susuri:** Then you continued your further education in Pristina I believe...

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** How was the move from Gjakova to Pristina? I mean, settling here in this city that was a bit different from Gjakova, a somewhat broader environment.

**Teuta Hadri:** It was fortunate because I had my brother and sister here as students. My sister in sociology, they had already come here and I was familiar with Pristina, how they worked, how they studied. And I was the child in the family with all doors open, my family never hindered me in anything, whether with friends or other matters. My father had great trust and, you know, [confidence] in me. And that support from my father was the strength that he gave me.

When I came to Pristina, it was... Gjakova was a city with different cultures, Pristina had different cultures... I came into contact with girls who were closed off, with girls who had come to study but didn't leave the dormitory. They only had the faculty and the dormitory. I had a freer life. Then I had a broadening of horizons, I was interested in those families, because the dormitory gathered children of patriots from all regions of Kosovo... and I expanded my knowledge. I got to know Xhevë Lladrovci,<sup>39</sup> we met as students and we had read Shota Galica at that time.

Xhevë Lladrovci's father also took her to that cave, the bones of Azem... who was in Dragobi there, where was it? The cave and graves where Azem Bejta<sup>40</sup> was killed. They moved him to avoid falling into Serbian hands, Shote Galica's group and her fighters decided to place him in the cave, based on the order to hide him in the cave so that the enemy would not find him. Even after Azem's death, the soldiers of Shota's group shouted, "Wait for Azem Galica," but Azem was actually dead and thrown... and the authorities did everything they could to capture his bones to claim that they had killed Azem.

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<sup>39</sup> Xhevë Lladrovci (1955-1999) was a prominent Albanian activist and fighter in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Born in Drenas, she actively participated in the struggle for Kosovo's independence. Together with her husband, Fehmi Lladrovci, she played a crucial role in organizing and leading KLA units. They both were killed in 1998 during the Kosovo War and are celebrated as national heroes in Kosovo for their sacrifice and contribution to the country's liberation.

<sup>40</sup> Azem Galica (1889-1924) was born Azem Bejta but took the name Galica from the village in Drenica where he was born. He was the leader of the *Kaçak* (outlaws) movement against the Kingdom of Serbia first, and then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Bejta's units put under their temporary control a free zone in the western part of Kosovo. He died from wounds received during a confrontation with royal forces. Together with his companion Shote Galica, Bejta acquired legendary status as a national hero.



They kept it, the fighters hid it, because it kept the morale among the people. And now I had an ideal. Xhevë Lladrovci's father took it upon himself, he was a sportsman, a person whom no one could dive with for years to retrieve the bones, he went in. I became connected with Xhevë. I had contact with Xhevë's father, I talked, I had read the book about how he retrieved them... and contacts started to open. Xhevë with a patriotic family from Drenica, Shtime, Lipjan, the Berisha families, all of these we had in our hands. We started because we were interested, there was an interest to know the Albanian families. Who are they? Who is fighting? Who has children in prison? All of this.

My friends used to go out and have fun, go on *korzo*,<sup>41</sup> attend matinees [gatherings]. For me, this was my orientation. And we would come into contact there, form groups. During our studies, we had professors from Albania who taught us pharmacology, histology, we had pathology, Gojart Cerga, whose arrival in Kosovo and lectures were at a very high level. They were international professors who also taught in Spain, not just here, as per the agreements.

Sejdi Marjaka was the Minister of Education and Culture in Kosovo, he made an agreement with Selami Pulaha,<sup>42</sup> and also with Tefta Cami,<sup>43</sup> the Ministers of Culture of Albania, to bring literature. Then literature, films, and state ensembles began to come to Kosovo. Ema Qazimi,<sup>44</sup> Luan, athletes, basketball players, volleyball players, Ela Tasa, they all came to Kosovo, in groups. And our goal, I wasn't very active, but it was the goal of mine and my friends, [Teuta Bekteshi](#), Remzije Limani, to gather as many students as possible to welcome them. To show them that we have the motherland, we have Kosovo, we are people of one *besa*,<sup>45</sup> one blood, one origin, and we connected with them.

However, the authorities were pursuing us, arresting us, and they had also arrested our friends, "Why do you accompany the professors from Albania in the city? Why do you accompany them? Attend the lessons, don't accompany them." They had taken some of our friends. They took Mejrem and others for questioning, and we accompanied them on purpose, to challenge the authorities. "They're ours." Like in the movie from 1988, when they accompanied Tefta Tashko<sup>46</sup> and arrested them, the same with us,

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<sup>41</sup> Main street, reserved for pedestrians.

<sup>42</sup> Selami Pulaha (1928-2005) was an Albanian historian and academic, known for his contributions to the study of Albanian history and culture. He served as the Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sports in Albania and played a significant role in fostering cultural ties between Albania and Kosovo.

<sup>43</sup> Tefta Cami (1940) is an Albanian politician and academic who served as the Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sports in Albania. She is known for her efforts in promoting cultural exchanges and cooperation between Albania and Kosovo during her tenure.

<sup>44</sup> Ema Qazimi (1954) is a renowned Albanian singer known for her contributions to Albanian music and her performances that have gained popularity both in Albania and Kosovo. She has been an influential figure in the cultural exchange between the two regions.

<sup>45</sup> In Albanian customary law, *besa* is the word of honor, faith, trust, protection, truce, etc. It is a key instrument for regulating individual and collective behavior at times of conflict, and is connected to the sacredness of hospitality, or the unconditioned extension of protection to guests.

<sup>46</sup> Tefta Tashko-Koço (1910-1947), the most famous Albanian opera singer of the time



some were arrested and released, what for? For accompanying a singer like Gaço Çako,<sup>47</sup> Ema Qazimi, and others. We organized these activities with friends from the faculty, we accompanied professors. All the ensembles that came, we went out, we accompanied them.

However, it was interesting in '75, with over five hundred people, it was like a protest, Sabri Fejzullahu<sup>48</sup> was also there, and we were all gathered to accompany the Albanian Television Dance Ensemble. And all those who were there, violinists, *bubnjara* [Srb.: drummers], everyone in Kosovo, we would accompany them and welcome them with flowers. I remember that the flowers were taken from there and sent to Enver Hoxha at the congress. He received the flowers from Kosovo, the carnations. Five hundred people came out from that gathering, which was also a kind of protest. The media called it governmental.

It was a kind of small, silent protest there because we were accompanying our brothers from Albania, the singers. When Zdravko Čolić<sup>49</sup> came, what propaganda, posters everywhere... "Zdravko is coming, Kićo Slabinac<sup>50</sup> is coming, this one is coming, that one..." They made a big deal... Why not for our own? So, we organized to make their reception grand and as well-known as possible. The sports halls were filled. The morale was very high, the whole hall standing to sing Albanian songs. That's it. Later during our studies, organizing these events, connecting with friends, Arsim Braha, we saw Ramë Sadikaj, we were doctors, as a group of doctors, Ramadan Sopi, Hidajet Paçarizi, Zyp Baja, Binazi. We were a large group connected with each other.

We organized it, I can say it went quietly, Sali Krasniqi, the surgeon, also to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the 1968 demonstrations.<sup>51</sup> How to celebrate that? There was a problem. We made a kind of disguise because few people knew about it, three or four people. Teuta Bekteshi, Hasan Beketshi was imprisoned for this demonstration. We organized that we don't want professors from Serbia to come to us, but we want them from Albania as they were bringing them to us. To have biochemistry come to us, why should we... the faculty, the university is in Albanian and they taught us the subject in Serbian? Professors from Belgrade came to teach us biochemistry. There was Rakić, I can't remember his first name. And to remove Rakić.

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<sup>47</sup> Gaço Çako (1935-2018) was a renowned Albanian tenor, celebrated for his contributions to classical music and opera. He was a prominent figure in the cultural scene of Albania and often performed in various cultural exchanges, including those between Albania and Kosovo.

<sup>48</sup> Sabri Fejzullahu (1944) is a well-known Albanian singer and actor from Kosovo. He has had a significant impact on Albanian music and culture through his extensive career in both music and film, and he is recognized for his contributions to the cultural heritage of Kosovo and Albania.

<sup>49</sup> Zdravko Čolić (1951) is a prominent Yugoslav and Serbian pop singer, often considered one of the most popular musicians in the former Yugoslavia.

<sup>50</sup> Kićo Slabinac (1944-2020) was a Croatian pop singer and musician renowned for his contributions to the music scene in the former Yugoslavia.

<sup>51</sup> During October and November 1968, many demonstrations were organized by the Albanian population across Kosovo. The main demand was to recognize Kosovo's right to self-determination. The first and most massive demonstration was organized in Prizren on October 6, 1968. This demonstration ended in front of the League of Prizren, where for the first time the demand for the Kosovo Republic was publicly articulated.

We did it, 500 medical students came out of the Faculty of Medicine organized in a line up to the rectorate. At the rectorate, three or four people were assigned to speak. Teuta Bekteshi spoke, she was also a member and later became a member of the cell that we organized later. From these organizations, we moved on to deeper underground political organizations. Teuta gave the speech, Hasan Bekteshi and another student also spoke. Hasan was sentenced. From there, he was followed, and after a few days, they took him. He was from Kičevo, and he was sentenced.

However, this participation of 500 students, the group, the second-year, third-year, and even the graduating students joined us because they were giving direction since it was the tenth anniversary of the '68 demonstrations. It was a kind of celebration, they were giving it direction. There, the Albanian politicians, Mahmut Bakalli<sup>52</sup> and others... because they wanted to channel it, to arrest more people who were in this group. He gave it direction and said, "The medical students came out in the media, no one can touch them. They are the best students, the cream of our intellectual society." And they removed Professor Rakić and brought in Avdyl, who was an assistant in biochemistry.

So, it was the first silent protest. The authorities knew that behind this there was a prepared organization, they didn't... they perhaps followed some other figures, someone, Arsim Braha from Prizren was later sentenced. So it was the tenth anniversary.

**Anita Susuri:** And that day, was there any police? Was there any organization?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, there were, but there were more plainclothes [police]. Here and there, three or four policemen at the [Hotel] Grand. They didn't surround us, didn't provoke us, because members of the Kosovo Assembly, like Fadil and Mahmut and all those Gjakova leaders, were present. There was greater participation, and there were others who didn't give direction, wanting to neutralize it, and they succeeded in neutralizing it. Otherwise, it would have taken on a greater dimension, leading to more arrests. That group of ten to fifteen [people] who organized these things would have been arrested and...

They didn't make much [fuss]... later, I don't know, back there, just until the rectorate, two, three policemen, four policemen were there... they sent their representatives to the rectorate. They spoke, there was one Sali Maqedonsi, there were some others like that. They didn't let the big political figures come, "What do you want?" The demands, "Remove the professor." In fact, we celebrated there. But who is a patriot, who wants to... there, those figures already started to emerge. We knew the families, but who wants to sacrifice? Our friends who were more dedicated, more for a future sacrifice, started to step forward.

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<sup>52</sup> Mahmut Bakalli (1936-2006) was an Albanian political leader from Kosovo who served as the head of the League of Communists of Kosovo from 1971 to 1981. He was known for advocating for Albanian rights within Yugoslavia and played a significant role during the 1981 student protests.

**Anita Susuri:** '70...

**Teuta Hadri:** Before '81, in '78. This was in November. November '78, November 28, 1978.

**Anita Susuri:** Then did you also become part of the *llegalja*<sup>53</sup>?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, we also became part of the *llegalja*. In 1978, we joined underground groups. We started... We saw that there was a force emerging in Kosovo, a force that had been building for years, decades, a patriotic force that was ready to be the first to raise that flag or call to action. And we just joined with Teuta Bekteshi, a medical student. With this whole group, we had our friends, friends with whom we distributed literature, we had trust, we gave them literature. Because it was being prepared for a larger popular revolt, for a demonstration later, as it happened in '81.<sup>54</sup>

Maybe a bit ahead of time, it was thought to be a bit later, but the student youth, the momentum, the preparation of underground groups, the spreading, the opening, our agitation. We also had our agitation. Just as the authorities did, we did it against them. But we did it in disguise, because if they discovered you, they'd catch you *trrak* {onomatopoeia} and throw you in jail for years on end. And this was in '78, a moral [stance] before '81 that with these people, you have to work, you have to act, but you also have to sacrifice.

The greatest pain for me hasn't been my own life, the interruption of my studies. That might have broken me spiritually if I had been arrested as a student, there was a... and... but I overcame it because we were prepared politically, ideologically, physically. We had training, the members of the underground groups had all this preparation. Then, we had, what is called training now, back then we called it education. For example, I couldn't wear jeans at that time. Why? It was our inspiration to be, in every aspect, a member of our cell, of the organization, embodying all human traits. Our women comrades, for instance, didn't have the right to keep long nails, or to do colorful hairstyles. They were people with characteristics, following the protocols of the organization.

We... we fought against negative traits, like smoking, we had friends who secretly smoked cigarettes. We tried to combat, to eliminate these habits, so that when you joined us... we were preparing the generation. You visit a villager, hold a meeting, and if someone said, "This girl... she smokes." We even had such cases, "You trust her? She doesn't stop smoking, don't trust her." We were creating the new person, the person for future organization, the person for a revolution, we called it shortly.

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<sup>53</sup> Constellation of underground militant groups fighting for Kosovo separation from Yugoslavia and unification with Albania during Tito's Yugoslavia.

<sup>54</sup> 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.

**Anita Susuri:** Where did you hold the meetings, for example, where did you gather?

**Teuta Hadri:** In 1978, we made an oath and formed the group. Not me, it was Hasan Mala, a member, who was the head of the group, Hasan Mala led us. Remzije Limani, Teuta, and I formed a four-member cell. From this four-member cell, we formed trios. And each member formed their own trio cells. It spread like the branches of a tree. Our goal was to spread our spirit, our ideals, our struggle throughout all of Kosovo. We reached many cities. We covered Gjakova well. Gjakova was, but none were punished. Because when I was punished, I didn't expose any of them. We also had a couple of groups in Peja, more in Gjilan, two groups in Drenica, Xhevë and some girls from Malisheva had their own cells. But we members were prepared with literature, ideological development, and physical [training].

However, to join the cell, you couldn't join without taking the oath and completing an action. You had to write a slogan, distribute a tract, or spread literature. And when you did these things, you gained my trust because you could have exposed me. And there we trained them, overcame their fear, and we were successful. Because if they had arrested us, they would have... later, they did arrest us. We created a strong person [of ourselves] who, even if I went to prison, would continue, and we did continue. For example, when Arsim Braha was imprisoned at that time, Teuta Bekteshi continued, and so did we. When Teuta was imprisoned, I continued. When Naim was imprisoned, others continued, you see, they left trustworthy people.

We created our fund through the student cell. We contributed money every month. We supplied the group with ink and paint. We managed to buy a machine and, in '81, we wrote tracts for March 8 that the authorities never discovered who wrote them. When they arrested our friends, we wrote tracts stating that the movement continues. You could see in the writing that it was at a level... but it was clear that the new groups were continuing. We were all committed to a purpose. Before making [our commitment] there, we swore in the name of the flag, Skanderbeg, and the figures that gave us political morale, whether the Party of Albania or here, we swore an oath. We took an oath to commit to the freedom of Kosovo until the end, regardless... and betrayal was punishable. Only then was the member accepted.

We operated from '78, I was active. For six years, I was not discovered. My friends were discovered before me, but I wasn't discovered with the other groups. In '84, I was discovered because we were expanding, the more we recruited members, the more you opened branches, you were the person who did this and that. Someone from Gjakova told me, "No, stop, that's not how you're describing the people of Gjakova." They fought, but there was also an element. "She's a patriot, she's like this... she [participated] in the demonstration..." You know, you would get exposed.

We distributed with our group, with our cell, the tracts, we distributed tracts in Gjakova, we distributed the magazine *Liria*. That was, the magazine *Liria* was the magazine of our organization OMLKSH,<sup>55</sup> and that magazine was distributed up to 25 [copies] at a time, even 30 copies at a time. It circulated in Kosovo, and people got caught distributing it. The Titist work was also seized, it was “Titoism” published in Albania that came through underground routes. We had connections, with trucks (laughs), if you want to know. Trucks would come bringing iron, cement. We formed those connections bit by bit. And they would come and bring us literature, leave with the trucks and drop it off in places, whether in Gjakova or elsewhere...

**Anita Susuri:** So, it spread like branches...

**Teuta Hadri:** Like branches, yes, yes, yes.

**Anita Susuri:** From...

**Teuta Hadri:** And from Albania, they knew the place here where they would stop the truck and pretend to fix the tire, and they would give us the books. They would bring two or three books, literature. That was how it was done.

**Anita Susuri:** Was it...

**Teuta Hadri:** And later on, when we joined the organization, our main source was the organization in Geneva. Hasan Mala was the main inspirer of the group, our member, because he had a direct connection with the center, and all the literature that was released, the latest book was *The Anglo-Americans*, which hadn't been distributed in Albania yet, was brought to us here. So, there was a distribution from the organization, from the activist Nuhi Berisha, Hasan, they were the people who supplied us with suitcases. Other friends who were members, whom we didn't know, were involved as well.

Not a week went by without speaking to Hasan Mala, where we didn't gather to know even those who worked on the side, who had their own members. I didn't know them, he didn't know my members, only by pseudonyms. Because if you fall [into prison], you could expose Teuta, I was tortured and didn't expose anyone because we were using pseudonyms. Even if you were caught talking on the street, to make a slogan, to write it there... we were using pseudonyms. Ganimete, Lule, and I was caught with the pseudonym Lule.

If the occupier heard my name “Lule, Lule” when we escaped... we wrote a slogan here with Teuta Bekteshi at the Dormitories between III and II, starting from there, Bregu i Diellit, slogans until where it ended, we would come out with paint, about a meter of paint, and the police came and stepped on it.

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<sup>55</sup> The Marxist-Leninist Organization of Kosovo and Albania.

While we were finishing the slogan “Kosovo Republic,” they came and stepped on it and saw. After they stepped on it, they remembered they stepped on a slogan. Then, “Lule, run because they caught us.” And someone said, “I heard the name Lule,” not Teuta, you understand? We had all those forms of our organizational activity until the end for freedom. As I said, without taking the oath, you were not accepted into the cell. Then, we members of the cell rarely included the children of people in power. Although, they later joined us, even their children.

This was the fight that extended our branches even within the authorities. There were children of people whose fathers worked in State Security, who wrote slogans, and their children distributed them. And we were later punished with that group of theirs, but they were treated more leniently later because they weren’t with the organization like us, with an oath. We selected patriotic families. We chose the Vokshi family, the Malaj families, the nephews of the Malajs, and sons-in-law. All these families who had connections. And there could have been agents among them. However, we selected those who wanted to contribute. In our group, in our cell, we had our own rules, our own protocols. And it was like a fight, [adhering to] that collected protocol.

In our cell, we organized ourselves in a way that included preparing with weapons, because we were writing slogans. Authorities might catch us, the police might catch us. You had to shoot, so if they shot at you, you could shoot back. Not to kill, but ultimately it was a fight. You didn’t know, either they would kill you, or... and we organized our members. We had a fund that we used to supply materials for writing slogans. We had meetings, gatherings. We held meetings every three weeks. There was discipline there too, at specific times, “If I don’t show up at 7:00, know that I’ve been arrested.” There was no excuse like mother, sick father, uncle died, aunt, or cousin. We were strict about the schedules because it could cost the life of a friend.

As our leaders now, Hasan and the others, used to say, “You must respect the time because it costs lives, friend. The enemy is spying on you.” We had a reserve of ten minutes, or we would go out and check the terrain beforehand to ensure we weren’t surrounded, [in case] someone betrayed a member or if you didn’t show up within the designated time, they would take another route and come back to survey the area again. Sometimes, due to suspicion that someone was following us, it took us longer because we changed routes. And there were rules there, every member followed these rules, every... including myself. Some friends were imprisoned, because they were caught during activities, maybe they were less organized, or it was just fate. I can’t say it was because they were new members that they got caught.

They caught us, they imprisoned our friends. Teuta Bekteshi was imprisoned during an activity. She was once imprisoned with Arsim Braha, they spent 40 days in prison, and they were tortured. They were caught with the magazine *Liria* which we had distributed to someone, and they asked, “Where did you get it from?” This led to Teuta. They were arrested and spent 40 days in prison. They found the magazine in the dormitory. We were prepared to endure torture. We relied on a spot in the dormitory,

and they released them because the magazine was found there. I said, “Who found it in the dormitory? Who distributed it?” And they were arrested. It was very painful to see a friend get arrested. We expected to be arrested too, but she endured, got out of prison, and waited for the 40 days. We continued our activities in distributing the magazine. “It’s not Teuta, but other members who are distributing the magazine, it’s not her.”

And so we acted until the conditions for the demonstrations of ‘81 were ripe. Teuta’s imprisonment was both a loss and a pain for us, as our activities were somewhat hindered, stopping for about two to three weeks, a month of careful movement to avoid surveillance... but when she was released from prison, we continued again. Despite the torture, she didn’t break and continued her activities once more. We continuously worked on ideological upliftment, as we called it, raising the awareness of the masses for resistance against Yugoslavia. We fought with literature and similar means, leading up to a major protest, as the events of 1981 unfolded.

**Anita Susuri:** How did the organization come about and how did the breakout occur on that day, I mean...

**Teuta Hadri:** You are the young generation, it’s difficult, only the authorities know, just a word spread that there was tension and something was about to break out, it was planned for March 7 that a group would initiate it, but it didn’t happen because we didn’t gather. Not that there was betrayal, but the organization on March 7, the Teacher’s Day,<sup>56</sup> didn’t materialize as we were waiting for the party leaders to come and lead us. We would start, then they would come. But that didn’t happen. One of them backed out, saying there were doubts, no doubts, someone was going to be arrested... so March 7 passed with tension.

We, the activist girls, Xhevë Lladrovci, Lumnije Musa from Gjakova, Lumnije was a friend of Xhevë, had a cell, but not with an oath. Xhevë did not take the oath in front of the members. And Xhevë didn’t know that I was involved, she knew I had connections with Lumnije, but not that I was actively involved. And Lumnije received directives from the base, from our group, and I did from elsewhere, and we started writing slogans. We organized in the dormitory with lipstick... to incite the students. We didn’t know what they were, what they could contribute to an organization, to a later explosion of demonstrations. Lumnije organized with me in Dormitory II, Remzije Limani with her fellow members who accepted to break and take the oath in Dormitory I, and Xhevë went to Dormitory II and wrote slogans.

And we wrote slogans there inspired by the past, such as “Long live the Party of Albania,” those were the ones. They didn’t arrest us. The focus was on the boys, the aim was towards the boys, not them.

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<sup>56</sup> Teacher’s Day, celebrated on March 7 in Kosovo, marks the anniversary of the first Albanian-language school in the region, which opened in 1887. This day honors the significant role of teachers in preserving and promoting the Albanian language and culture, especially during times of political oppression and cultural assimilation efforts in the former Yugoslavia.



Then the tensions arose, “They’re arresting, they’re not arresting.” These were the circumstances. Later, you couldn’t say, “I’m organizing,” not even your brother could know, nor your family, nor your father, because you could get arrested, and we had prepared for that. Because of the pain, my father would say, “Teuta Bekteshi took do-and-so down,” or, in Teuta’s family case, “Teuta Hadri caused her downfall” do you understand? We protected our families too, even though we had prepared our members. However, in critical moments, the pain would come, and you would deconspire [unintentionally revealed thing]. We called it “deconspiration.”

We maintained deconspiration. So much work was done among the people during the demonstrations that even we didn’t know the groups with our own dissemination of information... and it was prepared, and the authorities knew two or three days in advance that something was going to break out, there was tension. They tried to break it out with their own agents, but they didn’t succeed. At the moment, there was a spark ready to ignite, to incite and trigger a massive [demonstration]. However, the organizer could never reveal themselves, as it was an organization with significant political weight, with great political responsibility to take on. When March 11 broke out, at 7:15, it broke out in the dormitory, in the student canteen.

The student canteen was filled with members of the cells. We knew them, but we wouldn’t say that we knew they were a member, do you understand? We knew that there was a connection, a piece of literature. For example, Remzije Limani would tell me, “Shemsi Sylja is reading, he’s a member but with another group,” or, “Avdullah Tahiri is one of our members,” since Remzije was from Gjilan. We knew them, but we also didn’t want to reveal ourselves, so that he could continue his activities without risking exposing me if he got arrested. Each had their own branches. And the canteen was full.

There she was, when it broke out, Bahrie, a friend, and roommate of Xhevë Lladrovci. It happened there, in Xhevë’s room, the one who would start it and... she threw this first plate, then we all just stayed there cheering, helping her. Avdullah Tahiri was there then. Avdullah jumped in, and that’s how it happened, the event of ‘81 in the student canteen. We, in the student canteen, used it, the *Ilegalja* movement with our members, we used this event like any other such events that had more dimensions, such as sport.

The football game *Partizan-Zvezda* {Partizan v. Crvena Zvezda, *Partisan v. Red Star*) of Belgrade was playing, and the boys were eager to watch the sport. The girls and boys started pushing each other, one provoking at the entrance, the other at the beginning of the row, and we incited, we fell while pushing, we got up. The tray was thrown over there, we fell on this side in a column, pushing. The pushing was intentional incitement. There was a boy who pinched a girl there, you know, he pinched her, and that created the atmosphere. And that atmosphere was created by that guy and it broke out. When it broke out, we were surrounded, the police forces came, even though the canteen had its own



secret security agents secretly working in the dormitory. We were surrounded, encircled by UDB<sup>57</sup> agents.

I knew them, I was the head of Dormitory II. I knew the figures who would come and make propaganda for the state. But it was April 1, they didn't want to go out and take part in the April 1 action, the action of cleaning the dormitories, the yards, but they refused because it was organized under the flag of Serbia, Yugoslavia. The idea was to organize, we wanted to break that, April 1. In March, the demonstrations broke out. And they would come, we knew those who came to stimulate the youth to go out, to act. There are also some figures here who pose as analysts, some who supported the regime.

It broke out there, we were surrounded. I managed to escape from that crowd and go to the room to gather the girls from the room, the girls from the dormitories to tell them, "Run to join the students, run, the students are protesting." There were some girls from Gjakova, Vjollca Hoxha with her friends who joined me. A beautiful girl who inspired that demonstration. When she entered with those jeans, with that body, with her friends, she joined. Groups of students began to gather when they heard our shout, the breaking of glass, they joined the line, that crowd. And we went out.

When I came, I gathered the girls from the dormitory to join the girls, the boys, everyone we knew, they came and joined. They went out to the canteen, the group that stayed there, Avdullah and Bahrie went out in front of the canteen. We joined them there. Our joining gave them morale as well. But meanwhile, as we were gathering, we were surrounded by the police forces, with... the police started to come, they started sending cars, as the number of students grew, citizens were joining us from the canteen and the road was blocked.

They didn't want the number to grow, they wanted to disperse us, they circulated the road with cars, with *Fiqe '91*, that's how we called the Yugoslav Zastava cars, to break that line. Then they started sending buses, their own people, people they had as agents. They had their own people in the *Kosova Trans* buses, sending them, not to run us over but to pressure us with the buses, one after another, first one bus, then two, three. We didn't let them through. When we started overturning the cars, all the students rose up to knock them down and the road started to get blocked.

Then, floods of people gathered, they gathered from the apartments. They joined us, we stayed there, I can say for about 45 minutes to an hour, singing. At first, the conditions were social, and there they were purposeful, "We want food, we want food, food, better conditions." Even if they arrested us, arrested me, we were at the center there, "I wanted conditions, I wanted food, I wanted..." When we came from the dormitory, a large crowd formed, we were convinced, they were convinced that the

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<sup>57</sup> 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.

masses joined a lot. A crowd of 500 people formed. Someone gave a word, gave an order, "Quickly, let's go to the Assembly," from the friends there. The crowd broke out and went towards the Assembly.

The agents had surrounded us. They had also called our professors, educators, around the line. They barely got the students to give information on who, how it happened? Who was organizing it? We had all these words. And when a professor, there was a Muhamet Bica, and someone else who accompanied the line and, "Be careful, be careful!" They gave us the word because our friend had family ties. "Be careful, you are being followed. They forced us professors to come out and accompany you. Don't take us..." because we told them, "Whoever doesn't join is a traitor," to the professors (laughs). They felt bad about themselves.

And they called Rama, a friend of ours, Rama, and told him, "This and that, we were forced by the authorities to accompany the students. We are not part of the government nor part of those officials." And we reached the Assembly of Kosovo where it is today. There we... up to that point we were with slogans "We want conditions, we want food, we want conditions." We hoped that this was the interest of all of Kosovo, not just the students, that someone from the higher-ups we had connections with in the government would come out. They suspected that the organization had connections even in the government. There was this belief that someone would come out, Mahmut Bakalli, or someone to lead us, the students, and say, "Here you go, continue."

It was hard to get started, you continue. They didn't join us. "Join us, join us," then we started, "Whoever doesn't join is a traitor," "Down with treason," "Kosovo remains ours." They didn't join us. We came and continued to the municipality and there we shouted slogans. Surrounded on all sides, we were with police forces, with... dressed, prepared security.

**Anita Susuri:** Were there, I think it was the politicians who demanded the protest be quashed...

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, they didn't join us. We were calling for Fadil Hoxha, "Come out, Fadil," by name, "come out." They were standing there at the windows. You know, they didn't stick their heads out, but we knew. Because Fadil Hoxha was in Belgrade that day and quickly returned by plane. He came, and it was heard in the crowd because we were getting information from people in power who had connections with uncles, aunts. And they would come into the crowd, "What are you doing?" And Fadil Hoxha came, we got the special news that Fadil had come from Belgrade to stop them. And we hoped he would come out, but he didn't come out, he didn't come out. Then, we were disappointed. After two hours, we returned again, disappointed, still hoping that someone would come out and lead this. We thought of government officials, those whom we were thinking of.

And we came back to the dormitory, to the student canteen. To speak, who would speak? We got up, there were many medical students there, and Deliha Gjocaj was the first to rise. But, he was seeking the people in power. Come on now, they didn't join, he was seeking [Pajazit Nushi](#), "I demand..." We

told him, “Stay, you’re not the one to speak,” we removed him, and we had Ali Lajçi nearby. Ali Lajçi came from a patriotic family with that emblem like Abdyl Frashëri,<sup>58</sup> and I was convinced that he was also one of... because there was an underground organization, a friend who said so, but I didn’t know he was leading it, but he knew how to speak and he spoke there.

When we saw in the crowd that he expressed himself well, we grabbed him, “Get up, you!” “No, I’m not prepared,” “You know how to speak very well.” And we took him to an electrical substation, lifted him up as if on a stage. Ali spoke, gave a speech. He added a bit of fire to the demonstrations... We were looking for leaders, but Pajazit didn’t come, not even then. Only after the police forces broke out, started dispersing us, but we didn’t disperse. Then they threw tear gas at us, we bled, a friend from medical school was injured. Now he is, Ukshin Ismaili, works, he is the director at the Regional Hospital of Gjilan. Ukshin was injured, many of our friends were injured, but he was the most seriously injured and had to go to the hospital.

We treated some of the wounds since we were medical students and managed to break through towards Bregu i Diellit [neighborhood] and arrived, they gathered. The students gathered, then we dispersed. All the agents came to observe, they burned the Torch of Freedom<sup>59</sup> until 5:00, those who wanted to sing stayed... we, the movement members who were part of the underground, just dispersed, it was not our turn now... the process was over, we watched from the dormitories to see how it was going, who was being arrested. They didn’t bother anyone all night.

The next morning, they started suspecting people in the dormitories, I heard them because I was in the crowd there, planning to arrest and act... but they did it in the most secretive way, they didn’t manage to find out the names of those they wanted to arrest. I knew I could be part of that group too, but it was fortunate that I didn’t stay at the Torch of Freedom, because if I had stayed there, I might have been one of them. But we had dispersed, it was by chance. This dispersed. There, Gani Koci and others gathered and sang. And the group around the torch that was surrounded, they sat like at a feast there, the fire, and they were being followed on all sides. Because I knew the agents, I recognized who was following, who.

The next day, they started with suspicions, gathering information about who the person was, who. They prepared to arrest Ali Lajçi for three or four days, but Ali was cautious, his friends protected him. They didn’t let him fall into their hands. Even people from [State] Security came secretly, but the students set up barricades with beds, closed the doors, and didn’t let them [in] without resistance. They tried to enter by force, but not without resistance. They thought they would get him, get him and

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<sup>58</sup> Abdyl Frashëri (1839-1892), an Albanian politician, diplomat, and one of the leading figures of the Albanian National Awakening, known for his efforts to promote Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>59</sup> The Torch of Freedom was a symbolic flame or event representing the struggle and aspirations for freedom and independence in Kosovo. It was often associated with protests and gatherings advocating for national and political rights.

take him away. But they didn't surrender him. Bajram Kosumi,<sup>60</sup> Ali Lajçi, they later formed a group in Dormitory V. They were a group of some key protesters. They established points, points of what to say in front of the authorities and their demands.

They didn't meet the demands and organized, "If they don't meet our demands and just want to arrest us, there will be no arrests without the fulfillment of conditions." The students gathered together in the dormitory, not letting anyone in. Then we broke out on March 26. March 26 was more organized, on a larger scale, but we got used to the 11th [of March], we got used to fireworks, tear gas, and whatever else they threw at us. We got used to violence, to *palica* [Srb.: batons], they had hit us with *palica* on the 11th but we didn't feel anything. The crowd caught us while running and falling... and Bajram Kosumi gave a speech on the 26th, some students also spoke, reading out some points. That's when Sanije Hyseni, Nuhi Bashota, and [Azem Vllasi](#) came, they were the most political Albanian figures, gathered to calm and disperse the students.

Their biggest concern was that it was Tito's relay race.<sup>61</sup> Our goal was to stop the relay, to prevent it from entering Kosovo. This was the biggest crisis that both they and we knew about. And they didn't meet our demands, because if they had, perhaps it would have been suppressed. Maybe, I believe, although the masses were electrified. And they didn't meet the demands, a huge revolt broke out there, and that revolt aimed to go towards Ulpiana [neighborhood] to intercept the relay. But they had us... we didn't know we were surrounded. All around the dormitories, along this road to Ulpiana, the market, around the circle, the fountain, we were surrounded by cars, police cars, military vehicles, with police, special forces from all the republics, gathered from Macedonia, we could hear them speaking.

When we broke through that cordon, there were some barriers like round iron bars that divided the road. We jumped over them, and someone fell, trying to break through to the relay. That's when the massive shooting from the police began, with guns, with... it broke out. We took the fireworks they threw at the crowd, they could kill you. And we took the fireworks, throwing them back at them. But we had injuries, fingers were cut off. Whoever didn't manage to throw it back before exploding, their fingers were cut off. It was a face-to-face revolt with the police forces for the first time.

A student was carrying the red and black flag at the front, and when the student fell, Trëndelina Labërishti, who was also a political prisoner and had been imprisoned for three years in Macedonia, ran to help. She grabbed the flag from the student, because in that moment, you know, some people might think to grab the flag. Trëndelina grabbed the flag and said, "Brothers, don't let the flag fall into

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<sup>60</sup> Bajram Kosumi (1960), a Kosovar Albanian politician, former Prime Minister of Kosovo, and a prominent activist involved in the student movements and political protests during the 1980s and 1990s.

<sup>61</sup> Tito's Relay Race, officially known as the Youth Relay or Relay of Youth (Serbo-Croatian: Štafeta mladosti), was an annual event in the former Yugoslavia, held in honor of Josip Broz Tito's birthday on May 25. The relay involved young people carrying a baton across the country, symbolizing unity and loyalty to Tito. It was a significant cultural and political event that aimed to promote Yugoslav identity and socialist values.

the hands of the police,” and stood up. However, the police attacked Trëndelina, and she wrapped herself in the flag to avoid surrendering it. We grabbed and unfolded it, I didn’t know her at the time but later we became comrades. We removed the flag, and I took it, at that moment, I took the flag, but I couldn’t carry it because it was quite heavy, about five, six, or ten meters. It also had that wooden pole, which required strength to wave.

A guy came and said, “Give it to me, I’ll take it higher,” and a student took the flag. The police were chasing us, we didn’t want the flag to fall into [the police’s] hands, but to keep waving. We came from the dormitory to the sports hall. While climbing towards the sports hall, it was very emotional, adding fire to the moment when the police were shooting at us, the workers of Ramiz Sadiku were building dormitory V at that time and were finishing up. They had stopped, seeing all those workers, dozens of them. I told them, “What are you looking at, brothers, why aren’t you joining us? We’re fighting for you, for your rights. Do you see how the authorities are massacring our sisters?” They threw down their hammers, got emotional, left their work, and joined us. It was a feeling that never... truly the most magnificent, when the working class left and joined the students.

We went to the sports hall, gathering with the flag. They didn’t target us anymore, but were at the dormitories. They were ready to shoot when given orders, we stayed there until evening. In the evening, we got tired, and the process ended. We returned to our rooms. At the moment we returned to the rooms, the special forces started, the police dragged us out of the dormitories with the most brutal force. They were hitting the girls in the stomach, saying “*Nećes da rodiš Albanca*” [Srb.: You won’t give birth to an Albanian]. They were hitting them in the stomach. A beautiful couple, even today I don’t know... they grabbed the girl by the hair, I don’t know about the guy, they were hitting her and took them through the corridors, sending them to the police.

We don’t even know if they were alive, whether they were or not, we don’t know who they were... it was a huge disaster of violence against the students, both boys and girls. They dragged us out of the rooms and threw us out... I didn’t go down, I was in my room. They searched all the rooms. I had about seven male students hidden in my room and two girls from the neighboring room in my room. They came to my room, and when they got there, someone named Sahit, who knew I was active, said, “This is our head’s room, the head’s room, don’t break in, it’s the head’s room.”

We were dried up, seven guys in my room, if they caught you with them, they would take you as an organizer along with the whole group. The system would frame it. And they didn’t enter our room. They would hear even the slightest movement and break down the door. They broke down all the doors, but fortunately, they didn’t break ours and left. We went out, we didn’t stay, to see what was happening, the whole dormitory was silent. Violence, violence, then silence fell. All the rooms were broken into. I went out, we went out to see what was happening, a room with a balcony, we looked down slowly through the curtains. They were taking pictures, beating them, identifying people, and

kept them for about two hours. After two hours, they released some, arrested some, and thus March 26 ended. We spent the whole night discussing who did what. We gathered together.

I left the dormitory because I expected they might arrest me and went to stay at my sister-in-law's house. I stayed there, expecting every minute to hear my friends say, "They came looking for you." I had friends who brought me information. I stayed there for three or four days, supposedly preparing for exams, and in fact, I did prepare for an easy exam and passed it, the best girl. March 26 ended, then came April 1, April 2.

### Part Three

**Anita Susuri:** You were now talking about April 1 and 2.

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, April 1 and 2 broke out as a result of March 26. They started arresting, then after the 26th, they took Ali, they took the active people who were part of that student group. They arrested Gani Koci, Merxhan Avdyli, and a group of them. Musli was there, Kadri Kryeziu was there, the whole group of them who were present on the 26th [March]. They went in and arrested them by force. There was no more questioning whether you were... they went in by force and broke the doors. They had information on who they were, and we could see from above that people were being arrested. We sent the girls from the dormitory to gather information, those who had brothers [in those dormitories] to gather information from the dormitory. We received news that they had been arrested, they kept six or seven people, and more arrests were expected.

I was hearing over here that arrests were expected to identify them. But the state organized teams of professors from all universities to come to each dormitory, both for girls and boys, to hold some lectures. To sit down those who were caught up in the demonstrations and educate us that these things don't work like this. They said they needed to get rid of, they needed to [remove] those divisive people. He himself was of the regime, he would say, "The foreign hand," implying they were coming from Serbia. And they instilled that fear as if someone else was organizing the demonstrations. We were [the organizers], the students. It was staged, it was vile propaganda, because based on that you would suspect that even among those who organized it, who was that person of the regime in the demonstrations, who is that.

So, they used a very vile policy. They tarnished Ali Lajçi's name. They tried to discover anyone, they knew how to discover them, to give them labels, "Spy of this one, spy of Ranković, spy." If they had caught me, "Teuta, spy of Fadil Hoxha," those were the dirty propagandas that were being made, but whoever was caught, was caught. And then, how to get our friends out of prison, who they arrested, how to stop these arrests, how to stop this violence? The underground movement took these matters into its hands, the activities. We connected with our members in high schools, elementary schools. We

organized. [Naime Maçestena](#) was a member of our cell. We organized the “Meto Bajraktari” elementary school students. At the moment when a [favorable situation] arises, we will organize the demonstrations again. The demonstrations will continue, they won’t stop.

They saw that the people were with us. When we held the demonstrations and they dispersed us violently, all the mothers of Bregu i Diellit, all those families who were there, supported us with onions, because it was impossible to resist the tear gas. The mothers of those families in Bregu i Diellit brought us onions, food, and bread. Trucks filled with bread and milk came from Fushë Kosovë, and they distributed them to the protesters. The people united, and we wanted to use this unity of the people, of the citizens, for the movement to continue, for the members of the movement to keep this momentum going. The longer it didn’t continue, the more restricted and identified you became. Then other brave people would emerge, and you would fade away. Greater brave people would come who would organize, climb on tractors, and carry out other activities.

So, the spirit of resistance entered the people, “The people are giving us water, giving us milk, giving us bread, and helping to release our friends from prison.” And the demonstration of April 1 was organized. We had informed the elementary schools that when we gave the alarm from the dormitory, all our friends from the dormitory, [Zyrafete Kryeziu](#) and Remzie Limoni, who were staying in the dormitory at that time. Zyrafete had her house near Hotel Grand, her own house, but she came to the dormitory during the demonstrations. Remzie stayed there, Teuta Bekteshi stayed there, and they stayed in the room with Zyrafete and Binaz. All the members of the movement stayed there during those days to create a widespread, popular organization.

Sami Pireva was also a medical student, involved in the underground movement. He organized his own groups, and we told the students, “Wait.” On March 27, before April 1, [Hydajet Hyseni](#) came from Switzerland. It is said that he came from Switzerland, and I didn’t know Hydajet Hyseni. He requested a meeting with me, I was a member. They had given him the information, “She is one of our members,” and perhaps he already knew because he was based there at the center of the organization and wanted to contact me. He wanted to explain because he had heard from other members of the movement, Avdullah Tahiri and Shema, and he had received the latest information from the men’s dormitories, with male organizers, and now he wanted to hear from the women’s side, because the women’s voice was powerful.

The women stood up and did not stop even the men. We played music, we boosted the morale of the male students with the radio, with cheers. The inspectors came to check who was playing the music, Dervish Shaqa’s songs and revolutionary, patriotic songs. From the dormitories, we broadcast that music with radios and transistors. Some people cursed us, others called us heroines. This great wave of resistance emerged in the dormitories. Usually, it was the people in power who cursed, because the power was slipping away from them. On March 11, we gave Tito’s Yugoslavia a blow, it fell to the



ground. There was a disintegration even within the republics. There was support from Croatia, Slovenia, but they were more silent until it happened, until the first republics separated.

Then with Hydajet, we came, he was an underground member. The entire Yugoslav UDB was tracking him in Switzerland, Australia, wherever he walked. He had come to Kosovo. And he received the information about how he went to the dormitory and protected our side [the women in the dormitory] in the meeting. We went to Gjilan for the meeting because we were underground, an underground group that had members. But when he came, I knew that he was a member of the base there. And with Hydajet in Gavran [neighborhood in Gjilan], he said, "Now..." after I finished speaking, I described the event, he said, "now," he said, "this action will be taken by the organization, all... young, old, men, women, students, we will make a nationwide organization, stronger, bigger. We will punch this Titoist Yugoslavia that imprisoned our friends." Like Rexhep Mala,<sup>62</sup> those who were in prisons, our friends in the enemy's torture. "Let's organize a day but be in contact with my husband Elmi, Tomorr," Tomorr was his pseudonym, "Tomorr will tell when they break out."

We kept in contact with the students. We maintained contact with the schools, with the students, everyone. Each school had its own member who just gave the news, "When the students gather, the students break out, join us." And April 1, this started with the workers at the shock absorber factory, and they joined. And we students got the information, "The shock absorbers are coming." They were ready, waiting for April 1, it was awaited. Whether it would be the first or second [of April], it would break out soon, from March 26 soon. When the working class with sickles and hammers broke out, they came. It was an indescribable atmosphere, "Kosovo Republic." They climbed from the dormitories, we have it, I went out to KEK<sup>63</sup> there.

I had left my sister-in-law with her husband to inform me when they were approaching so that I could bring the news to the dormitory. She called me on the phone and said, "It's snowing." That was the code word, "It's snowing." Nazmije, the demonstrations broke out. We were convinced that now it had a bigger organization. We just needed to gather the students, and we had the school students. We came, Zyrafete Kryeziu, the Mala Sisters, all of them were members of the underground movement, as well as the women from Ferizaj. Suhareka alone had up to 15 members of the movement, Zyrafete with her friends. And we took the scarf, with the scarf we signaled, "Join us!" It was the symbol, "When I raise the scarf," Lumniye Musa, and others, Xhevë, "know to join us." They spread the news in the dormitory that the students were coming.

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<sup>62</sup> Rexhep Mala (1951-1984) was a prominent Albanian intellectual and politician, known for his advocacy for Albanian rights in Kosovo. He played a significant role in Albanian nationalist movements and was a key figure in Kosovo's political landscape during the late 20th century. Rexhep Mala died under suspicious circumstances, reportedly due to poisoning. His death has been widely regarded as an assassination orchestrated by the Yugoslav secret police.

<sup>63</sup> *Korporata Energjetike e Kosovës (KEK)* - Kosovo Energy Corporation.



The high school students came, threw their bags in the dormitory, and joined us. “Meto Bajraktari,” the girls would say, the “Meto Bajraktari” school, “Gjergj Fishta,” all those schools with their own members... it was just waiting to break out, then the youth would take over, they wouldn’t ask, they would rise. And they would organize to join us. And that’s how we went out to join the working class at the Technical Faculty. There, at the Technical Faculty, we were in the front lines.

A professor came out, Ruzhdi Sefa, an assistant technician from Gjakova who had been sentenced to two years in prison. He was against Yugoslavia and had been sentenced to two years. He came out and said, “Run,” he said, “because they have set aside your photographs,” he said, “they are focusing on you” because of my distinctive red hair, he said, “your head is sticking out, hide somehow. Tie up that hair,” and he, as an assistant from the technician, came out and told me, “or move aside.” When it started to break out... the tanks, I really tied up my hair, and I also tied a scarf to not be noticed. The revolt broke out, police violence [ensued] and the students marched again towards the Assembly. From the Assembly, we gathered at all the paths. People came out, scattered, gathered in groups. Women, men, the elderly, there were even pregnant women.

On April 1, we gathered at the tree where the Democratic Party is now located and assembled our base. Hydajet Hyseni came and climbed that tree. Together with Hydajet Hyseni, Remzie Limani, a friend of our cell group, also climbed the tree, it surprises me that she is never mentioned as a woman. Why isn’t she mentioned as a woman? Whatever the others did, she did too, she spoke a few words as well. Because we gave... when she climbed the tree in a skirt, it was a morale boost that ignited the crowd, with all the citizens raising their fists and shouting, “Kosovo Republic.” This was the main slogan, “Kosovo Republic.” There were also slogans like “National Unity,” but “Kosovo Republic” dominated because we had learned it like a chant, “Kosovo Republic.”

Remzie climbed up, igniting a fire within us, I estimate there were over five thousand people gathered from the Assembly of Kosovo to the Hotel Grand, packed body to body. I remember, though I’ve never mentioned it before, there was a singer, Gashi, no, Bytyçi, Bytyçi. He sang at that time and provided us with songs. We would follow him like a chant. Songs broke out, they broke out until... when they saw we weren’t dispersing, only becoming more electrified, growing in number, the police started attacking mercilessly, breaking windows... It’s very interesting, the windows, the glass, the store windows shattered, shoes, no one stole shoes.

They took shoes to wear because we had left our own shoes. Two truckloads of shoes... I personally walked barefoot through the rubble because I needed to, they fell off... when the chaos broke out, we fell on top of each other. Three or four men fell on top of me, squashing me because I was weak, but somehow I found strength, they grabbed me and lifted me, and my shoes were left behind. To avoid being caught, to avoid being caught because we were right at the tree where Hydajet Hyseni climbed, our most problematic group that provided morale and songs, and voice. We dispersed to our homes. I hid again with a family and stayed there overnight. I went to Ibrahim Behluli, an anatomy assistant

who is a professor today. His wife was from Bosnia, Mirsada, not many know the doctor. I stayed two nights at Dr. Mirsada's house, seeking refuge and hiding, something few people know. She was a strong woman and welcomed me into her family.

I had a small wound here {touches forehead} and she washed it for me later. Ibrahim took me to Ceka's husband, Hajredin Ukelli, who treated me, as my whole face was swollen from the infection, I wasn't recognizable. Even Ibrahim teased me, this Ibrahim, the professor, "You've become more beautiful, the swelling suits you," my whole face was swollen. And she treated it with iodine and cleaned it. I stayed at her place for two nights, hiding because I knew they would arrest me, word gets around. This student, they catch a student and they would say that this girl told us. They break, broke, they were young, the tortures were cruel. It was impossible to endure without revealing a lot, very, very impossible.

The grand April 1 happened, and we were very proud. Our strength was in the people, it flowed from the heart of the people, it was evident. They dispersed us with violence, with force. The next day, they imposed a curfew. We tried again on April 1, and there were injuries. We took Besa Ahmeti from the crowd, she was injured, and we put her in a car, perhaps we even hurt her spinal cord because we didn't know. There were a large number of injured demonstrators. We tried to continue on April 2 at the dormitories. The boys would climb onto tractors, and they would release the trailers down the road, releasing them... the police and the special forces were on the road down there, where *Kosova Dërvo* is now, they blocked this faculty, I mean, where Ali Hadri is. They blocked that road, released the tanks, and threw stones, slingshots, at the police, big stones. The students organized with ropes and threw stones.

They started shooting at us, injuring us, a person named Xhemajl was wounded. I don't know. We had injured people. We took them to the house of Professor Hysen Ukmata. The professor couldn't provide immediate help. He called on the telephone, "Take them to the hospital." We transported the injured, organized to take them by car, whatever cars we could find from citizens, we put them in. Then they started coming. Hysen Ukmata gave the order, because there were injured students. The ambulances, these vans, the emergency vehicles came and took the students. There they dispersed us with force, with violence, with weapons, they started shooting.

They also shot, the family of *shkije*<sup>64</sup>, the Delebašić family. Directly at the students, seven meters away, we had two students who were injured. A girl in the arm and a boy in the neck, and we took them to the hospital. Sadete Mekuli made a significant contribution. When she heard that the medical students were organizing, getting the cars ready, and providing first aid to the injured, she stood by us, the students. The professor stood with the students, and our morale was boosted. At that point, it was like a war, waiting to see who from the authorities would organize us. Fadil could have taken that crowd, led them, and it would have ended, I believe, it would have ended with that. Although, we didn't know

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<sup>64</sup> *Shka* (m.); *shkinë* (f.), plural *shkije*, is a derogatory term in Albanian used for Serbs.

that Yugoslavia, that Serbia was so criminal. We didn't think... we could win our rights in a democratic way, not through violence, but actually, through violence, we won. And April 2 ended.

**Anita Susuri:** Then a tense situation began...

**Teuta Hadri:** Then a tense situation began. That's when the ideological differentiation<sup>65</sup> started in the universities. Ali Hadri was punished then, they removed him from his position as rector or director of the Faculty of History, dean, whatever it was at the time. The differentiation of these intellectual circles who supported us began, who believed that students had the right to demand their rights and, in the end, why not have the seventh republic. We had all the resources, wealth, Trepça,<sup>66</sup> natural resources, chromium, all of these. They were production sources that Yugoslavia traded with our labor force, our sweat. And while they built up Belgrade, Kosovo was left in hellish conditions, misery, utter misery. Extreme poverty. Those who praised Tito's system were the ones who served Tito, who had some salaries, some job positions. Over 80 percent of the population lived in destitution.

You cannot now say that the Albanian people had good rights during Tito's time just because you had a position as a boss, a sycophant, or a collaborator of the system. I had a good job, but it did not satisfy me. My father was in education and had a salary, but that did not satisfy me when my people were suffering. When my people did not know directions, they came to clinics where the ENT was, unknown, unknowledgeable. That troubled me, it tortured me spiritually, and I rose against the violence used, the racial discrimination against Albanians.

That's when the differentiation began. She was stopped, Sevdie, the wife of Ukshin Hoti,<sup>67</sup> was the second one punished, and hundreds were differentiated. Hanëmshah Ilazi, the Albanian language professor who wrote the book *Fëmijët e Luftës* [Alb.: Children of War], about the massacres that occurred. A large number of intellectuals were punished. Where there were intellectuals, the aim was to punish them, thinking they would uncover the leaders of the demonstrations.

Thus began a period of violence, imprisonment, and widespread torture of the population, people were arrested, beaten, and tortured without cause, suffering on the streets. During that time, we continued our activities with our groups in the *llegale* movement. We continued to hold the support of the masses in our hands, and the arrests started. A large group of 17 members of the OMLKSH was

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<sup>65</sup> In the context of Yugoslavia, "differentiation" referred to a form of political and social ostracism. It involved isolating and marginalizing individuals who were deemed politically unreliable or dissenting against the ruling regime. This could include demotions at work, social exclusion, surveillance, and other forms of repression to discourage opposition and maintain control.

<sup>66</sup> Trepça is a large industrial complex in Kosovo, famous for its extensive mining operations. It was one of the largest mining and metallurgical complexes in Europe, producing lead, zinc, silver, and other minerals. Trepça played a significant role in the economy of Yugoslavia and is historically significant due to its economic and political importance in the region.

<sup>67</sup> Ukshin Hoti (1943-?), philosopher and politician, who was sentenced to five years in prison in 1994. He disappeared at the time of his release and his whereabouts are still unknown.

sentenced, including Hydajet Hyseni, Bejtullah Tahiri, Mehmet Hajrizi, Ilmi Ramadani, and Gani Sylja. That entire large group was sentenced. We managed to stay unnoticed. We operated in deep conspiracy, it was a point of the conspiracy project to avoid... because your capture would endanger your friends too.

You see, my close friend and I once stayed together. People wondered, why these two Teutas had fallen out, separated, and drifted apart? We had separated and no longer stayed together. We organized things in secret, but we kept to ourselves as if we no longer enjoyed each other's company. In fact, those of us in the *llegale* never stayed together, even during demonstrations, because if one got caught, they would take the other as well. We had our points spread out, one here, one there. We continued from April 2 [1981]. Then came the stopping of the students because the activity continued. Those students from the dormitories in May, who were supposed to leave at the end of June, were scattered, thrown out with white sheets into tents, saying, "We won't leave the dormitories," because that was the center, the base where we gathered. Even though we stayed outside, we kept the fire burning, spreading it until they were forced out. Then they were dispersed by buses, and the arrests began.

I wasn't discovered and continued my activities until 1984. I created new branches, new groups, distributed literature, spread tracts, wrote slogans, it all continued. Not all the enemies of the people were caught. That group was caught, but some groups with hundreds of members would rise again. We would revive, because we knew, "This group fell in Gjiilan, go activate their children, their nieces," the movement of our organization would be renewed and revived. It continued until I was discovered with my activities. Teuta Bekteshi and I distributed tracts. There, with Sami Pireva, I also had my part, the road of Muhaxher, to distribute, fill the city with tracts.

The tracts were caught, it didn't become a big deal, it was silenced. People couldn't be found. Perhaps innocent people were arrested because innocent people were indeed arrested. We covered all of Kosovo with slogans, "Kosovo Republic." And we continued until I was arrested. Teuta Bekteshi was arrested before me after the demonstrations. She was sentenced to two years in prison, but she didn't give me or my group away. I continued with Sami Pireva, with Sokol and Naim, with the members of the cells. Where she had the cells, I took the members and we continued, plus my own members. And until '84.

In '84, they were caught, the materials were caught, the magazines being distributed were caught, and the Titist works were caught. Slowly, as they limited the number, they came to me and arrested four of us. Two kids and me with... Teuta was already in prison. But it was a continuation of that, as her members were caught and it came to the point that she had, it was suspected that she was Teuta's [referring to herself] friend, and they came for me. They went to the faculty, and my photographs were massively duplicated. The photographs were massively duplicated because they didn't recognize me since I had red hair. In those black and white photographs, I never appeared in color (laughs).

When we took the graduation photos, the photos from the graduation party, everyone was in them, I feel sorry for that part of my life because I wasn't in those photos. I didn't appear in them, my friend Teuta did. I didn't because I thought they might come and identify me based on the photograph. And they questioned me during torture, "Why didn't you appear at the graduation party?" I hadn't appeared, but they didn't know my intention because they couldn't get into my head like that.

**Anita Susuri:** I'm interested in that moment, it was November 9...

**Teuta Hadri:** November 9, the Liberation Day of Gjakova...

**Anita Susuri:** Where were you and how...?

**Teuta Hadri:** I was at work, I was working and I was supposed to come to Pristina to distribute literature, to continue. I was supposed to distribute it to Naime Maçastena and Sokol, Sokol, I forgot the name now, Sokol, Bujar, Bujar Zeneli, a member of our cell. And, over the years, the surnames are forgotten, because Sokol was his pseudonym. We knew Bujar very little, when he was arrested, I realized it was Bujar. Because that's how we knew the cells, the members not by names, not by surnames. They arrested them.

Then during the torture, they took, they didn't know my name, they called me Lule, and I said the same for someone else when I mentioned them with a pseudonym. With a pseudonym that they didn't know, for example, Nuhi Berisha, I said Jupi. Even though Nuhi was dead, I said Jupi until they discovered that I had connections with Nuhi. Then I started [referring to him as Nuhi, but still Jupi. And they caught them, they came to my photograph, it was revealed by a doctor, "We saw her in medicine, we don't know if she is a doctor. At the Faculty of Medicine..." The meetings we held, we held them in fields as you asked before [addressing the interviewer]. We had them in fields, not in houses to avoid being overheard by walls with parents listening in.

We did everything in the open, in the field, in Gërmia, at the Faculty of Medicine, we climbed up the Malush Kosova road. All these were meetings at a distance. You could see the police car if it was following you. You saw it, and it would signal you, "Run!" It would just signal you, "Run, because you're being followed." We scattered that day and gathered again. We had that backup meeting 15 minutes later or the next day at the same time. That day we had those signs of illegality. And they were arrested, "Lule with red hair, we don't know anything else." They were tortured in a macabre way, and cigarettes were burned into Sokol's hand. "Who is Lule? Who is she?" The poor guy didn't even know the name, just Lule. Miserable torture. And I would have said Lule too.

Then they came to identify me, photographs from some events, they wanted to arrest me earlier because they mentioned it during my tortures... and that they didn't imprison me then, I don't know

at what time they wanted to, either during demonstrations or when they arrested Teuta. I didn't even know myself when that moment was when they suspected me. But they said, "She's from Gjakova, why associate with her? Just associated." Who knows how they assessed that moment that they didn't arrest me. And they came to a conclusion, they gathered past points, signs, some words were heard in the dormitory. Someone was caught with literature, "I think she's from Gjakova."

They came to me. I was in Gjakova working at my job. I had scheduled a meeting with Bujar and Naim Naime in Pristina. They had been arrested, and I didn't know. They had been arrested earlier. And I went to the meeting place, it was very... they had surrounded the Assembly where we had set the meeting, yes. And they were waiting for me to bring the literature. There was the railway then, the bus station over there, do you know it?

**Anita Susuri:** Yes.

**Teuta Hadri:** Did you reach that? It was at Arbëria [neighborhood], the railway, the station. I would leave them there to see from afar if they were being followed or not. And I saw Sokol wasn't coming to the meeting. I climbed up, no. Then I saw some figures dressed in tracksuits following me, following me. And I thought to myself, these sportsmen are just waiting to catch me. I also had the literature with me. And when I left the meetings there (laughs), because this is the first time I'm mentioning it. There was a certain place at the railway, a kind of small slope, there were the tracks, a kind of water ditch to cross, and I went there because we held meetings and observed. I put the books there. When I put the books, I climbed up the Arbëria slope. I climbed the hill to see if Bujar was being followed.

I was thinking that they would catch Bujar. When I climbed up, there was nothing, just those people watching. Cars were coming, talking to that sportsman, I remember that figure, a short man. And they were talking to him like in movies, and he would say, "She went this way..." and they went towards Arbëria. Do you know where the stairs are in Arbëria? I went to the stairs, again in the direction the sportsman went, and they scattered. I climbed up there, I saw the cars scattering to catch me, and I was convinced, that's how I think of it, that when they came, there was a Lada and a 101,<sup>68</sup> like in orange. They came and stopped there, I just ran down the stairs. They couldn't go down the stairs with their car to catch me. I was also fast and light (laughs), no one could catch me. I was just afraid that the sportsman might show up below with another team.

I went towards the Secretariat, just fell through sports, through the sports fields, and went towards the Secretariat, and I rushed to a house there, to a friend. I stayed there outside in the corridor for about half an hour just in case... she had been politically convicted, this member of ours, "To Remzie, I'm going to my friend Remzie." And I waited there for half an hour. Where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is

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<sup>68</sup> Lada and 101 were popular car models in the former Yugoslavia, with the Lada being a Soviet-made vehicle and the Zastava 101 being a domestically produced car.

now, there used to be JNA,<sup>69</sup> back then it was military, it was that military garrison. And I watched from the windows if they were passing by, if they were coming. I watched for half an hour, it calmed down, I returned to go home to Gjakova. But I noticed that I was being followed.

I came to Gjakova, this happened before the 9th. On the 9th, on the 9th, they had organized to arrest me. They gathered the evidence, but that day I wasn't caught. They caught Bujar, they caught Naime. And then the UDB forces, not the police, came to the house. It was Daniell Grezda who escorted them to Gjakova. Zyberi was a senior inspector and they came to arrest me. They went to Gjakova to get the UDB members from Gjakova, but no one came, they fled. They didn't want to arrest me because I was a doctor and had authority among the people and even among the Serbs. My treatments and such had a kind of reputation, and all of Gjakova erupted when they took me.

On the other side, I was being arrested. Fadil Hoxha came and held the meeting for the liberation of Gjakova. November 9 was the Liberation Day of Gjakova. They took me by car, Arben Jollgrezda, "I am the leader for Gjakova," he was the chief, he had no choice but to come because they took him. And the others had all fled. They took me and brought me to the Secretariat of Gjakova. They didn't stop me there, Bedrush Meqa, a senior inspector, was also there. He said, "Teuta, you don't have any business with me, you have business with the region, with the regional inspectors," he said, "you have nothing with me," and he didn't speak further, there was silence. He made a statement there because they were also dismantled. The inspectors, "Teuta." They didn't expect someone from the Hadri family, irredentists or major organizers of political issues.

From there they took me by car, Zyber Zyberi brought me to Pristina. When they brought me to the SUP,<sup>70</sup> the torture began. They left me alone for about two hours to confess on my own, in my own handwriting, to convince me, "You are a doctor, you shouldn't, how can you accept to undergo torture, tell us all your friends." This lasted about two or three hours. The persuasion lasted from 3:00 PM until 7:00 PM, persuasion. This was a psychological attempt to convince me...

**Anita Susuri:** Pressure.

**Teuta Hadri:** They applied pressure and found ways to truly break you morally. And when it got to 7:00, they changed my room. Lutfi Ajazi, who was an inspector, came in. He was a beast, and they had called him a beast. He said, "I am the beast." He took out the baton and started hitting me with it, which I'm not describing... "Write a statement." I wrote the statement about how I started and all that. And it was all a fabrication that I did because I wanted to know who they had taken from my friends. I didn't know who they had arrested, I didn't even know that Teuta Bekteshi was in prison, my friend, nor Naime, nor Bujar. They were arrested, and I was worried I might uncover someone. I was in torture.

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<sup>69</sup> JNA - Yugoslav army.

<sup>70</sup> SUP - Acronym for *Sekretarijat unutrašnjih poslova*, which translates to the Secretariat of Internal Affairs, of the Yugoslav Socialist Federal Republic.



And I... the police... it was the first time someone hit me, “Irredentist.” I wrote those words, maybe they helped me, I often say that they helped because we had in our education, when you give a statement not to write your name at the end but to close it so they can’t embroider it, and they fabricate it. They sentenced innocent people unjustly. Innocent people were sentenced to 15 years with Adem Demaçi’s group. My fiancé Ilmi Ramadani and Rexhep Mala were members who made those slogans in ‘75. That was it. And we would later say to write the name. I personally didn’t write it, but I told others, “You must write [the name] when you’re in prison. Write it because they add words, they fabricate, they lie that Teuta said it and I didn’t say it.”

In torture, I endured. I myself left [the name unwritten]. And Lutfi Ajazi said to me, “Why don’t you write like your philosophers,” he said, “who write to us. Do you know that I write words?” I said, “Write whatever you want, I haven’t done anything,” “You haven’t done anything,” he got angry there. He got up to hit me with a baton, *bam bum bam bum* {onomatopoeia}. First on the hands, then on the body. It was just me and him in the torture room and this Zymber was standing at the door watching, Nexhat. And they took me from that room and moved me to another room. I think it was on the second floor, at the end. Now it’s next to the police station. And I think it was there in Zyber’s room.

There were about seven or eight people gathered there, inspectors waiting for me like, “Come on, Smurfette,” calling me Smurfette. “Smurfette.” I didn’t know what this Smurfette was. And they were gathered. They took a flower, the pseudonym Lule [Alb.: flower] that I had. *Bam* {onomatopoeia} on the chair, “Speak, who are you?” I didn’t speak because I didn’t know who gave my name, whom I would be implicating. I had three groups under the pseudonym Lule. I had Lule with Naime, with Sokol, Lule with Kimete, Lule with Teuta Hamiti in another cell. Four cell groups that I had under Lule.

And an apartment where I stayed in hiding because I had five exams left to take. I went to an apartment of *magjup*<sup>71</sup> people, but a poor Albanian lived there, next to the *magjup* neighborhood, I stayed in an apartment where not even cows would stay, they themselves didn’t stay there. I rented it, the ceiling leaked, and there I studied for my exams and hid. The family knew I was hiding something, and they took care of me, made me food. I completed the five exams. When I graduated, I wasn’t afraid anymore. And that’s how that situation was...

When they brought me the flowers, I thought, “Oh, my family has given my name to Vesel. How can I betray Vesel?” “Lule” again, “Lule, Lule!” Just one word, because when you work in an organization, you are prepared in every aspect. They gave me a bag, and I gave it to a member there. A bag from Invest Bank, and I had put 50 Marks<sup>72</sup> in it to serve the movement. I was working, had money, and

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<sup>71</sup> Derogatory term for the Romani community.

<sup>72</sup> Albanian: *Marka*; German: *Deutsche Mark* was the basic monetary unit of West Germany from 1948 to 1990 and of reunited Germany from 1990 to 2001. It was used as a stable, non-official currency in various Yugoslav republics as a result of hyper-inflation of the *dinar*.



supplied them. Besides the fund we had, I would contribute 50, sometimes ten, sometimes five. I also talked a bit to these students, contributing 50 Marks at that time.

And I gave the Marks to that guy. "You gave them, Lule. He doesn't know you, but you gave them to him." There, I was tortured in a way... I couldn't give them away. Then he said, "You gave the bag with..." I said, "To Sokol, yes." I said, "I gave it to Sokol," "The magazines were caught," it turned out that they had been caught. And I was tortured barbarically. But they weren't interested in kids. They were interested in my connection with the base, with the center, to give away the big comrades. Lutfi Ajazi said, "No, we don't want the kids, we want..." because in the kid's group there were also children of inspectors, members. They almost made me say it, and I told them, "Don't rush, they are inspectors' children," we called them spies, "The children are spies..." and there were infiltrators. And without arresting them, they investigated, they saw me entering the bus station for Gjakova.

They were our members, but in the end, they joined their father, out of fear of being arrested. There was a girl, I don't know if Sokol, with red hair, and he didn't know either, and then they were spared. I don't... I know the tortures stopped against them.

And that's how the tortures started. When I entered among them, they formed a column around me, waiting for me, Lutfi Ajazi, who was the chief, and I think Kllokoqi was the chief later on. Lutfi, Zyber, Blerim Olloni, perhaps you have relatives now... but Blerim Olloni, Rifat Berisha, and Arifi were there...

**Anita Susuri:** Were they all Albanian?

**Teuta Hadri:** They were all Albanians, they tortured me badly. When Bashkim Kursoni came in, Bashkim did not torture me. These others, like Xhavit Kuqi who tortured me badly, Blerim Olloni, Rifat Berisha. For three weeks they tortured me and beat me so badly that I couldn't even wear shoes. My feet swelled up, my feet and hands burst. Then when I couldn't lift my hands [to protect myself], I didn't lift them because there was nothing left to lift, lymph would burst out, turning green, rotting. Then, they would hit us on our bodies. Three weeks of torture to expose my friends, to reveal them.

None of the comrades from the base were caught, neither Hydajet, nor Mehmet Hajrizi, nor Bejtullah Tahiri, nor Ilmi Ramadani. All those I had... Nuhi Berisha was mentioned. Even Remzie Limani wasn't caught. It was Teuta who gave me the connections with them. Why? The biggest fight, "Why did Teuta give you her members?" I said, "Because I felt sorry when she was imprisoned," and I held on to that, "my best friend was imprisoned. She was my best friend, and then I felt sorry for her imprisonment." Because we had been separated, they couldn't follow us anymore. "And I wanted to continue her path..." "You?" That's when the beating started. And three weeks of torture, torture, torture, until they found no other elements.

They spread their agents. They went to Gjakova, “Gjakova is crying out for you.” They went to Gjilan, they had no information. Information would come in, I could hear it. “No one speaks badly about you.” All of a sudden, while I was sitting, the torture would end, and another slap would crack. They were very vile. Now when they finished this torture, I was now their rival. Sometimes they beat me while laughing because they caught me laughing since they didn’t know things, they were lying to me. I knew they didn’t know the connection with Nuhi Berisha, or with Rexhep Mala, or with Ilmi Ramadani. They suspected that he was my fiancé, but they didn’t know the connection with Hasan Mala, what kind of connection I had. They didn’t know anything about the connection.

I hadn’t exposed anyone from the group, not Sami Pireva, nor the friends I had left, Teuta, Hikmete, Luma in Gjakova. I had left the groups in Gjakova there, all those groups. Nexhat Rexha, we were members, then we had Haxhi Beqiri, Besa. All of these were groups of the underground movement operating there, no one came out. And I would laugh, I was very happy. Three weeks of heavy torture, but then I gained strength. I said, “They are weaker than me, I am stronger than them.” They couldn’t break me and I started to laugh. When they hit me, I would say to myself, “You know nothing, you’re just hitting?” And they beat me just because I laughed. “Why did you laugh? Why did you laugh?” I said, “I’m laughing because you’re like beasts [beating] a woman, you’re not sending the women guards but you men are beating me.”

“Eh,” he said, “if we bring Zyre, Zyre has two guns. One here {points to the left leg}, one here {points to the right leg}. She’ll break you like she did to your comrades, and they all talked.” I said, “No, bring Zyre. Let a woman beat me.” Zyre didn’t agree to come because we knew each other from Deçan. My sister studied psychology with her and she said, “Don’t put me in this.” I heard from them, “She won’t agree,” she’s saying, “Just don’t put me in this.” And these men beat me until they had no more evidence. And they closed [the case]. They were also under political pressure from political figures. People went to the houses of Xhavit Nimani, Fadil Hoxha, every day, asking for my release, “Release the doctor.” But they wouldn’t release me because, “The doctor is involved in illegal activities, the group with 150 people will come out.”

They did actually take 150 people, but only took their statements and then released them. In the end, they kept the four of us who were truly organized and had sworn an oath. That’s when I was sentenced to one year in prison. What was there to expose? At first, they took the large organization, 136 [people], but they had no evidence. How could they sentence with testimony? 16 year old children, the law didn’t allow it. They were indeed indoctrinated by me, that’s a fact. But they had to be released because they were children, take me instead. They didn’t release them. They didn’t release my friend Teuta either, because I said, “She is not guilty, she was in prison and didn’t act, I was the one who acted.” They didn’t release her either, they extended her sentence by three more years. I was sentenced to one year. I served one year in prison, three weeks of torture. After that, no, then they only tried to find reasons to beat me. I also stayed in the Prison of Mitrovica for five months, four months, and two weeks.

The trial was held and I was sentenced under Article 133, 131 for activities and hostile propaganda against the SFRY.<sup>73</sup> Article 36 could go up to ten years. This one went up to ten years too, depending on whether it was political propaganda. For civilians, the punishment was smaller, [Article] 131. Then, [Article] 136 could sentence up to ten years as it started, but it went lower. The director, Izet Hima, Faik Hima's brother, requested every day to return me to my job. He was later massacred by Serbian forces because he was being followed, even at that time, for his requests. Until they told him, "Do you want to be taken too? Go back, because you've asked enough, we won't release Teuta Hadri," and I got one year in prison. I served the other half in Lipjan, and that's how it was.

## Part Four

**Anita Susuri:** What were the conditions like? How long did you stay?

**Teuta Hadri:** The Prison of Mitrovica was an investigative prison. It was built in earlier times, and the architect of the prison, when we entered... it was oval-shaped, I even have a poem about the prison. It was oval-shaped, so when you entered, you didn't know where you were going in or out. You couldn't tell. It was said that the architect himself committed suicide because he built that prison. They transferred me there from the torture, so the population wouldn't see me, because I had urinated on myself from the severe torture. I also asked for help because I was swelling up. When you have edema in your hands and feet, the adrenal glands and aldosterone cause their effects, leading to urination. Because the edema [makes you] want to urinate.

I asked for help during the torture, but they didn't allow it, and they hit me with batons. While trying to protect my hand, which had become gangrenous, I was struck in the abdomen with the baton and my hand, causing me to urinate on myself, soaking me completely. To prevent the public from seeing us and the crimes they were committing, the good men of the state and Tito's servants put us away, they put me in a basement that I didn't know. Maybe they also put me there to instill fear. They put me in a basement because citizens had gathered for visits to see their relatives. In the Prison of Mitrovica Mitrovica, there were people incarcerated for both criminal acts and patriotic acts.

I didn't know where I was or how, I learned later. The basement was all twists and turns, just up and down stairs, I got so dizzy I couldn't even walk. I didn't even have shoes, I couldn't wear shoes. I put on shoes, kept them on my feet, and they sent me to a room. When they took me there, they threw me into a cell. The cell was number five. They put me in a cell with someone [who was imprisoned] for a criminal offense, who had committed a criminal act, and there was also a political prisoner, someone named Sherë Kelmendi. She was there for 40 days as a form of punishment for something related to her teaching, 40 days in prison for her. I was soaked, I had... and they threw me in.

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<sup>73</sup> SFRY: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

There were these cushion-like things all covered in blood from where they had beaten and tortured our boys, and no one had cleaned them. They threw me in, and I fell, seeing the bloodstains, but it didn't even affect me compared to the relief and escape from the torture. It was a sort of relaxation there. They left me to rest for about an hour. They brought me food, and I was so desperate for food and water. But at the moment when I tried to ask for the food, it wouldn't go, as soon as I lifted it to my mouth, they wouldn't even let me eat. I tried to bring it to my mouth faster, but I couldn't even eat a spoonful of bean soup. I just drank the water quickly, and then they said, "Come on, they're calling you." And I went back to continue the torture.

The rooms were terrible, there were double bunk beds, accommodating up to six people. Two, four, six were in the beds, plus more on the floor. When there was a protest, they would bring in and lay down girls on the floor. And the conditions were very difficult, the food was very bad. The worst part was that we were women, we had our [menstrual] cycles, a physiological process for us requiring hygiene and cleanliness. And they wouldn't allow us that. Actually the director was Sherafedin Ajeti, the director of Prison of Mitrovica. Our friend Hava talked about the tortures he inflicted on her. He even prohibited me from having honey and other things... because as a doctor, I asked for vitamins, honey, lemons, and other things to boost immunity, food that I would also share with the girls. When I entered the prison, they threw me in there and he prohibited the honey, stopped me from having those things.

The torture continued for another week while I was in Mitrovica. When I got there, they gave me a lot of moral support. The prisons were filled with political women prisoners. I was thrown in, and they didn't let me have food. There was a plastic can for relieving ourselves. It would be used, and the smell from six people would suffocate you in there. They would cover it with a mop, and they didn't even let us have cardboard to cover the toilet. We would urinate and defecate there, all six of us. There was a set hour for it. At 5:00, a horn would sound, like in the 17th century, not a bell but a horn to get up and get ready quickly.

I was tortured, I couldn't get up, I couldn't move my body, my legs, or my hands. The guards would come, screaming, those beasts of the Service. And I got up with difficulty. I couldn't put on my shoes, so I took a pair of someone else's slippers, they forced me to wear them, but I couldn't because my feet wouldn't fit. I took some slippers that had been broken by the torture, and those shoes were broken too. And you would go there again, back to the Secretariat. We went there, the torture continued, and they sent me back to the cell. They kept us from 7:00 in the morning, and at 8:00 the alarm would go off, the keys would jingle, I will never forget those keys, I would say that when I get out of prison I will never carry keys. As the keys jingled, unlocking the first door, the second, the third, our fourth door, I knew they had come to take me, and indeed they took me to the investigation room to continue with those UDB torturers, who at the end of the day had no reason to do so.

I said, "Sentence me, sentence me, but don't torture me," "We would sentence you a lot, 20 years," "20 years. Why torture me?" And these words earned me slaps, "You think you can teach us." And they would send me back there. And this Sherafedin was the director, he was, he was really like the Gestapo. He was the Gestapo. I don't... You only see such prison directors in movies, he was just like them. And it snowed two meters, I climbed up to the window, I climbed to talk to my friend, he caught me. He had come because he was inspecting. "What are you doing there at the window?" [The prison director speaks] And he entered, "I will do this to you, I will do that to you... a certain Përfe Badivuku saved you," a certain teacher of mine, "He said, 'Please don't touch this girl,' otherwise, I would have beaten you to a pulp," and "Come to the room, you. Why do you do this, that? Don't you know torture is used, it continues, even if it's stopped for now." They stopped torturing me for 21 weeks. "If I catch you one more time, I will torture you."

We held our meetings. When I entered the room, it started, I began to say, our friends started making noises on the walls *ding dong, rraka tak, rraka tak* {onomatopoeia} "Kosovo Republic," it was a sign. And now in all the rooms they would shout "Kosovo Republic," the whole prison echoed. It would start in one room, then stop, "No, not us." Because they would just beat the girls every day. And these came out. There were good guards among them who allowed us to communicate. But they also allowed it to catch us. To catch us because I climbed up there and my friend who was there would say, "As soon as she heard where is she from," *rraka tak* {onomatopoeia}, "How many of you are there?" "There are three of us," and they would show with their hands, one, two, three.

She couldn't bear it, Teuta Bekteshi, and she climbed up and asked, "Where is she from?" "From Gjakova." She was stunned. "What is her name?" "I don't know, she had freckles," some kind of freckles, you know. She said, "Freckles?" She said, "Yes, she is a doctor," she told her. When she said doctor, she knew. "It's happening to Teuta." And she just called me, "Sokolesha<sup>74</sup>," and we had nicknames, both Shota [referencing Shote Galica] and Sokolesha. Because they listened. They were going to let us reveal our activities using these names. There she told me, because we also had a reserve back-up pseudonym, Coli and Loli, given to us by a professor from Albania, Gojart Cerga. I, the taller one, was Coli, and she was Loli, and the whole faculty called us two Teutas, Coli and Loli.

She said to me, "Loli, is that you?" I said, "Yes, Col, you are here?" She said, "Yes," she said, "they took me four or five days ago. Nothing," she said, "nothing new." She gave me that... and they came in to beat us. She said, "Look," she said, "because they came in," she said, "there's no new evidence, they just took me," she said, "falsely. They took me. Nothing, just because I was active back then." When she told me that, it gave me strength. Then I kept everything to myself because I didn't know what had come out. And with Teuta Bekteshi, we were in those cells with Hasan Mala. Later on, with my activity and my work, I was separated, and I was promoted to a higher branch in the organization. There I was a member with Ilmi Ramadani, again with Hasan Mala.

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<sup>74</sup> A nickname derived from *sokol*, meaning "falcon" in Albanian, often used to symbolize bravery and strength. In this context, it denotes a strong and courageous woman.

My member, the chief, the one who directed us, was in a cell with Ilmi Ramadani and me. We formed a cell branch. They were connected there, I didn't know. I thought that the literature that came was connected to the base. There, we met in the cell with Ilmi Ramadani. Before meeting in the cell, Ilmi and I started getting to know each other from the demonstrations and began to form a bond. It wasn't love, but it was a bond of love for the homeland, for freedom, to strengthen our cell. To unite the members... and our friends, I used to tell them, "Marry the group members." So when a member fell, the husband wouldn't reveal the fiancée. It was a conspiracy. There were also those who revealed their partners. There were such cases.

For us, the bond was stronger, but still, someone remains. We pressured our friends, even those who started a romance, we told them to leave that and start with our comrades. Comrades with whom you've started a fight. And in my fight, I chose someone who would continue, to continue the fight until the freedom of Kosovo. He was a man who had been released from prison, had served four years. And this friend of mine, a member of the cell, knew him both family-wise and personally, and she said, "Look, Ilmi," she said, "has been released from prison. Look, he's continuing the activity again," and she said, "he's continuing, what a brave man." She really praised him as brave. "How is he continuing?" She said, "Well," I said, "Now he must be careful," "No," she said, "he isn't being careful, he's continuing," she said, "he's a friend of Rexhep." Rexhep Mala.

They were two friends who were sentenced in the group of '75, who had distributed tracts in the dormitories. She said, "Even though he has been released, he continues on Rexhep's path." Then gradually, after two or three conversations with him, she said, "Our comrades are saying, would Teuta consider linking up with Ilmi. He has been released from prison, let them connect if they fall in love," and this friend said, "The movement's comrades are saying it's good for these two to link up." And I thought, this is going to be my life. I had tried to give a book to someone, a friend, a medical student, a doctor for whom I had some sympathy, hoping to continue a relationship. They withdrew, they didn't want this path of resistance. Because when I thought about continuing, I would give them the book, "I want it, I don't want it." They saw where they were getting involved and remained silent, not continuing.

I got together with Ilmi in the war until the end. So, I spent about five months, passing, but only had four or five dates because it was exam time and I knew I would get arrested. I tried to take as many exams as possible and didn't know him as a person. I used to push it aside... you knew him as a hero, liked him and everything, but you didn't know him as a person, his good and bad qualities. We had about four dates like that, he was arrested for the second time in '81 when the demonstrations broke out. He was arrested, not for participating in the demonstrations, but as a political convict with suspicions of continuing his activities. They arrested some of his friends, there was some information but not accurate. He was arrested once, imprisoned, isolated for five months, then sentenced after five months. He was sentenced to nine years in prison with the larger group. This group of Hydajet was

caught. He was involved in the connection that continued, since '75 when he got out of prison, things were discovered and he was arrested. I remained outside.

I remained outside and continued our path. Our path was war, either death or freedom. We wrote slogans, "Death to Fascism," because we considered Yugoslavia fascist, "Freedom to the People." We used the slogans of the National Liberation War. And we wrote some slogans out of hatred. And I continued the path. And now the biggest problem was how to announce that I was going to see him in prison since he was both my boyfriend and a fellow movement member there. We exchanged letters, information, sending information to him in prison about how the movement was progressing, how many members. We informed them all with hidden letters. The authorities, the prison, would check, but they never found any letters from us, otherwise, they would have arrested me too.

We hid them in different ways, which are now considered conspiratorial, how we managed to get them through even though they checked the clothes and... we even wrote on handkerchiefs. I still have the handkerchiefs. There is a handkerchief where I wrote on it, then put it in the clothes, and sewed it into a jacket. In it, I informed them that the movement was continuing. I met Nuhi Berisha, Rexhep got out of prison, and I met Rexhep Mala. I was the one who connected him with Nuhi Berisha and passed on that information. Now the problem was how to tell the family. When they were sentenced in groups... we Gjakovars, you know, we don't marry outside [Gjakova], let alone with villagers. And then my brother said, "This one looks like a village hero. Look how he puffs out his chest, how he stands above the others, he's not afraid of prison."

He had just gotten out of prison, my brother didn't even know he had been released. Ilmi really stood out compared to the others... he was dressed in a suit and tie and appeared there looking different. "Yes," I said, "this 'Tarzan,' as you call him, is my boyfriend." "What?" My brother, who was sitting, stood up, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Yes, it's true." "You're joking." I said, "No." My father, who was cursing the government, "These criminals, these people, they're sentencing the group, sentencing the students, the youth," he sat down, legs trembling. My mother started crying. I said, "This is the one," "How?" My brother, "Are you serious?" I said, "Yes, today it's him, tomorrow it's me." I was already in the movement, I was a member, I had taken the oath with Ilmi Ramadani, with Hasan Mala. We had formed another branch. A branch that connected the small groups with the base. These were intermediary groups between the base, the organization, Ilmi, my fiancé, Hasan Mala, and me. We had other pseudonyms there. He was Tomor, he was Veli, and I was Shota. Shota was my pseudonym.

And so we continued with it until he was imprisoned, not as a participant in the demonstrations, but as a political convict. I continued the activity. I formed new branches again until I was caught that time in '84 that we talked about. At that time, he was in prison. I facilitated the connection between Rexhep Mala and Nuhi Berisha, to open branches, to operate. Nuhi had many organizational tasks and kept the organization going, and Rexhep was released from prison after nine years. After nine years, three



months later, Rexhep, being the lively revolutionary he was, resumed his activities without any rest. Even though he was out of prison, he still sought to meet with Nuhi Berisha.

The only one who could bring these two together, and the one they trusted the most, was me. We went out and met Rexhep, they embraced like two eagles that day, as if they had known each other for centuries. It was a heartfelt embrace that ended exactly with their killing, like two branches, two wings of an eagle, both connected to each other. When I saw them in that embrace, in that emotion, they gave me so much strength. I was watching from a distance, and an ideal united them, a struggle of arms and with arms in hand. I was also at that meeting, armed, and Rexhep had a weapon, and Nuhi also had a weapon. Just in case, if following Rexhep could capture Nuhi, following Nuhi, who was seeking to stay underground, could endanger Rexhep. I was prepared with them, and I met them on Vellusha Street over there in Gërmia.

They continued their path embraced. That bond remained, I say, divine, patriotic between this pillar, the pillar of the underground movement. A resistance, as we called it, was this figure, which later faced the struggle against, arm for arm, Rexhep and Nuhi on the Kodra e Trimave [neighborhood], which today is named Kodra e Trimave [Alb.: Hill of the Braves] thanks to these two heroes who died for the freedom of Kosovo. And with my husband, when he went to prison, that branch continued to function with Hasan Mala, who went abroad, another member. He operated in Switzerland, couldn't return. And I operated in Kosovo until I was arrested.

**Anita Susuri:** After the imprisonment, I mean, after being released, how did the release come about...

**Teuta Hadri:** I served one year in prison, even though they wanted to sentence me for longer, but they didn't have the evidence. A piece of literature, a newspaper. People have been sentenced to three years for a newspaper, but I was a doctor. It was somewhat [different], they wouldn't take a student, a pupil, a minor, but they would take a doctor. There was also the pressure from the citizens who would go every day, "When are you releasing the doctor?" And it was interesting to mention, there was a mentally ill person from Batusha, and she suffered from schizophrenia. While I was a doctor, I gave her therapy. When I gave her therapy, I gave her vitamin supplements, and she thought... they had given her Akineton, Moditen every three weeks, but my therapy helped her over the months, and she was recovering.

And she went to look for me, her sisters crying, they told her while crying, "They arrested the doctor." She had gone to one of the inspectors, Zyber Zyberi from Batusha, and made the connection to him. "Release the doctor." They told me during the torture that the patient was looking for me, I think her name was Sanija, "She's looking for you." It was very interesting because there was a lot of pressure from the citizens, from the patients, from the director Izet Hima [who] went continuously. Mahmut Lila asked for my release, many others did too. I served one year in prison and was released after that. Even

though they wanted to sentence me again while in prison, we went on a hunger strike, one month without being released.

Once again, not torture, but the inspectors and directors confronted me, saying, “We will sentence you like Ruzhdi Sefa,” that professor who was sentenced to one year, then they added two more, “the same will happen to you.” That pressure, “You organized the girls in the hunger strike.” There was a doctor, Avdullah Hoti, who didn’t deserve the title of doctor because he didn’t need to intervene. These were political matters, inspectors, why are you getting involved? You are a doctor, serve the patients. And he interfered, saying that I was organizing the girls and, “With my permission, I guarantee that she organized them.” The director tried to get me out, she was from Gjakova, a family connection. But she tried to say that I wasn’t at fault, yet he insisted on punishing me. He said, “You will be sentenced because Avdullah said it’s your fault, as a doctor you’re not explaining the problems the hunger strike causes to the stomach lining. All the blame is on you.”

The director herself gave me that signal that there was nothing more she could do, “Take care of yourself!” And they... Then they sentenced me, and for the last two months, I was kept in solitary confinement. The girls who went on the hunger strike were released, they kept them for about two weeks. Some for two weeks, some for three. They extended my time by another month, and the biggest struggle was not physical torture but psychological. Every day they would come to measure my blood pressure, like Ceaușescu<sup>75</sup> at that time, and this doctor would come. And that [psychological] pressure, he would say, “To die like Ceaușescu,” you know how it was. He would measure my blood pressure, instilling a bit of fear in me (laughs), to tell the truth. I thought they might poison me like they killed Ceaușescu... but he instilled that fear in me. And every day, they subjected me to that psychological torture by measuring my blood pressure. “I don’t want my blood pressure measured, I am fine,” I insisted, and they would respond, “We will use force if you don’t let us measure your blood pressure.”

So they measured it, it was a kind of pressure. One day, I was released from solitary confinement. I was waiting for the provincial inspectorate to extend my sentence, and those like Lutfi and Blerim would come there... When I had my solitary, the windows had 40-centimeter bars, you couldn’t even fit your body to escape, with nets, with bars, with... and I had contact with a young guy, named Salih, who was there for other reasons. And he overheard them saying, “The doctor.” “Doctor, they’ve come for you, the inspectors are having coffee.” And I was in solitary confinement, thinking they wanted to give me another year. He brought me the information, but they beat him for speaking to me, “What did you tell the doctor?” He brought me this information.

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<sup>75</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu (1918-1989) was the communist leader of Romania and the General Secretary of the State from 1967 to 1989. Along with his wife Elena, he was executed by the new government due to genocide during the Timișoara Revolution.

Then I prepared myself for another year, maybe two or three... “No, they’re sending you to Požarevac.” Because when we went on strike, they dispersed the girls. I had one more month left, finished the strike, and then another month in solitary confinement, then they were dispersing us. They sent the girls to Požarevac after a month. It was a great tragedy to go to the prisons of Yugoslavia, and I felt great sorrow for the girls. I felt deep pain, not even thinking about myself. I thought, these girls in prisons, what are the *shkije*<sup>76</sup> doing, what kind of torture. They dispersed about four or five of them. Trëndelina was there, and I remained in solitary confinement for another month. Two months in solitary, which they didn’t have the right to do, one month like the others. They extended mine, why? Because they were punishing me.

From solitary, they suddenly slammed the doors *rram bam* {onomatopoeia}. They didn’t even let my family come to see me, they turned them away. They just said, “Get dressed! Get dressed to go free, to go to Gjakova!” They had organized my family, saying, “Come, take her.” Salih again said, “Doctor, you will be released.” This boy came and said, “When will they be released?” I said, “tell my family to bring me clothes.” His mother, Servere, who worked at the hospital in Gjakova, brought the information to my father. They brought me some suits you can see in the photographs there. With those suits, I walked out of prison dressed [well], to show that besides being fighters for freedom, we are also ladies who fight. That was the attire... and we made all the girls, you know, dress nicely to show... they were very good girls, heroines and beauties who were there for three months in prison.

It was truly heartbreaking when you saw them at such a young age, 17, 18, 19 years old. The oldest were myself and Ajshe Gjonbalaj, who was sentenced to eleven years in prison, [initially] 13, then it was reduced. We were the oldest, you know, the teachers, as they say, to teach the girls other lessons, because those girls were braver than us. And so, I was released. When I was released, as family members arrived, the entire city of Gjakova came to see me, giving me moral support. They showed that my fight was just, that it wasn’t a fight where someone would abandon me. They came to see me, with gifts, to see that I was out of prison. The nurses from the hospital came to see me, the director, they... many political figures like Zekerija Cana,<sup>77</sup> they came to see that the doctor was out of prison, giving me moral support.

We still didn’t stop, we continued in a very cunning way, because we were under UDB surveillance. Zyber Zyberi came to Gjakova every month to get information, “What is she doing in the hospital?” He had his own people, whom I also discovered, with whom he was contacting. And he had people from his place because it was harder for him with the people of Gjakova. Here and there, he had some, and the people of Gjakova didn’t give anything away until the end. He would get information on who I was contacting, how to approach me, and he knew all of this. With my own eyes, I saw that he came to

<sup>76</sup> *Shka* (m.); *shkinë* (f.), plural *shkije*, is a derogatory term in Albanian used for Serbs.

<sup>77</sup> Zekerija Cana (1934-2009) was a prominent Kosovar Albanian historian, publicist, and human rights activist. He was a member of the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms and played a leading role in the Reconciliation of Blood Feuds Campaign. Cana was known for his extensive research on Albanian history and his contributions to the academic and cultural understanding of the region.

show me that I was being watched. When I was going to the hospital with a woman to give birth, he appeared there. And he tortured me as much as he could in the dormitory, and again. Again, we continued and started with democratic forms.

The Democratic League was formed in '89, I didn't join the LDK<sup>78</sup> because it wasn't in line with my views or those of Hydajet Hyseni, our group. Not because we opposed the LDK, but there were figures I doubted, [we had] our perception that they were collaborators with the enemy, and they were there. I didn't understand that kind of democracy. I spoke up, I was just the first to get involved. One mistake [happened], you got [imprisoned], not the other one who never went to prison and was never surveilled. And we started, Adem Demaçi came and formed the Branch of the Association of Prisoners, the Council for the Protection of Rights, the Council for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Gjakova. And I became a member there, I started with the Council for the Protection of Human Rights. Then we prepared for the reconciliation of blood feuds.

I was granted the right to specialize, which in these cases was not given. You were considered a political person. Me and a *shkinë* woman named Mira Antoković, Serb of Russian origin. She gave her hand so that I and she could continue our specialization in gynecology. And her approval in their group, everyone was in favor, but the authorities. She said, "Give it to her, she deserves it." I continued my specialization. I went to Zagreb and completed it there, but I didn't stay put in Zagreb either. There I started with the Kuzhnin brothers, who were two Catholic jeweler brothers. With the Kaçinari family, the contacts with them. We organized Adem Demaçi's release from prison, about 500 Albanians.

Usually, the Albanians closed these fruit markets. We gathered, went through the markets to collect for Adem Demaçi. We organized it with a film, it was that movie *Vlladin*, or I don't know what it was called in Zagreb. And so we continued in Zagreb, we spread awareness. When the miners' protests happened, I was there. The [blood feuds reconciliations](#) started here, I came from Zagreb. I contacted [Hava Shala](#), for the reconciliations, for about two or three days I went to Deçan, to Mulliq, to Baballoq to give support, and so on.

**Anita Susuri:** Where would you gather... How did that go?

**Teuta Hadri:** That was... the organizers were students who had been released from prison. Hava Shala, credit to Hava, [Myrvete Dreshaj](#), [Adem Grabovci](#), Musa from Gjilan. They were mostly prisoners, Hydajete Kelmendi, Zyrafete Mulliqi. They were mainly her base, Etem Çeku, the organizers of the blood feuds reconciliations in the city, village, reconciliation. They went and gathered them... then the first person who joined them was, because they told Anton Çetta<sup>79</sup> their goal... when I came from

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<sup>78</sup> 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.

<sup>79</sup> Anton Çetta (1920–1995) was an Albanian folklorist, university professor, and prominent figure in the reconciliation movement in Kosovo during the 1990s. He led efforts to resolve blood feuds among Albanians,

Zagreb, they told me, “Come with us to meet Rexhep Qosja,<sup>80</sup> because you are Ali Hadri’s cousin.” They were joking, they had prepared the ground. And to help us because Gjakova was also needed here... I was even holding bags in my hands, “Without Gjakova’s involvement,” they were joking, because they had already done quite a bit of activity.

We went to Rexhep Qosja to join the intellectuals because Anton Çetta said he accepted and was leading us. Then Rexhep Qosja, Cana, many figures, and Mujë Rugova joined. There were many intellectual figures, professors who joined the student youth, but the foundation of the reconciliations started with the girls who had been released from prison to organize against the authorities. Not in illegal forms, because democracy had also begun. Ibrahim Rugova’s<sup>81</sup> party, LDK at the time, raised their voice democratically. Again, for freedom, a future for Kosovo.

Here the purpose of the blood feuds reconciliation was to reconcile families so that in war we would not be divided. A war was foreseen at that time. So that we would not be divided if war broke out in Kosovo, to have families without enmity. And maybe they were patriots, there were patriotic families... I went to the Kuqi family there to reconcile the blood feuds with Hava Shala. They had organized it, I just went as a guest because I was in Zagreb, but I was their helper. She, since the director had influence there, Luljeta Pula, all of them would go to the reconciliations. It also became fashionable to go.

And these friends took me, “Come, let’s visit some of the more important families.” There had been two murders in a Kuqi family there, and the blood was forgiven there. There were tears, pain, it was... truly a great job they had done. Anton Çetta would speak, they would give you a word too, and that’s how it started, for unity, and almost 90 percent of the blood feuds in Kosovo were reconciled. It was a struggle, truly a heroic silent struggle for the future of Kosovo, for... because a war was foreseen.

## Part Five

**Teuta Hadri:** Then we formed the branches of the council throughout Kosovo, and the killings, beatings, and tortures began. Every week, in the Council for the Defense of Human Rights, we had

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promoting peace and unity through traditional methods of conflict resolution. His work significantly contributed to reducing violence and fostering social cohesion in Kosovo during a tumultuous period.

<sup>80</sup> Rexhep Qosja (1936) is a prominent Albanian writer and literary critic from a part of Malësia in modern Montenegro (locally known as *Malesija*). He is known for his contributions to Albanian literature and his role in the political and cultural life of Albanians. Qosja has been an advocate for the rights of Albanians in the former Yugoslavia and has written extensively on issues of national identity, history, and culture.

<sup>81</sup> Ibrahim Rugova (1944–2006) was a prominent Kosovar Albanian politician, writer, and journalist. He was the founder and leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and served as the President of Kosovo during the war and after until his death. Rugova was a key figure in the non-violent resistance movement against Serbian rule and played a crucial role in Kosovo's struggle for independence.

about two or three members, sometimes up to five members, who were killed across Kosovo. Maybe even more, I can't remember now because so much work was done...

**Anita Susuri:** Within a day?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, within a week.

**Anita Susuri:** Within a week.

**Teuta Hadri:** They would beat them, torture them. To this day, I found a photograph of someone named Zija Hasimja. I had kept it, and when I was arrested, they didn't find it on me, he had been beaten and tortured, his entire body covered with hematomas, and he died. That man died from the tortures. And we would gather the photographs and bring them to the Council for the Defense of Human Rights, as members, providing the information and the source. I was involved until the KLA<sup>82</sup> war, and then... [Selatin Novosella](#) took me as a member of the inter-party council, the branches of political parties, where all the branches and parties functioned as a temporary government. The LDK, the Parliamentary Party of Adem Demaçi, and other parties, they all participated. We also formed a unified movement, LBD, the United Democratic Movement, and an inter-party council acting like a government. I led the medical sector, including school clinics.

And we organized all our school teams, all the protests held in Kosovo during '97, '98 before the war were under the control of medical teams for treating injuries and organizing them, from demonstrations to the highest centers for operative intervention, clinics like "Jeta" and "Galaxy". We had all designated places where to take the patients. That means, the school clinics did a very significant job during this time of the protests. The [Bread Protest](#), or what was it, on April 1 and 2, the Red Cross, the American Embassy, all these. They were all covered by medical teams, in case of injuries to make the classifications... October 1, when Albin Kurti<sup>83</sup> organized October 1, we cooperated by agreement in writing with Albin's organization.

The Council, I was the chairperson of the Council, the Council for Protection and Freedom, the Health Council. The chairperson of the Health Council was like a kind of municipal minister. So, the temporary government of Kosovo, at that time Ibrahim Rugova's, not temporary, sorry, Ibrahim Rugova's parallel

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<sup>82</sup> Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) (*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, UÇK) was an ethnic Albanian paramilitary organization that sought the independence of Kosovo from Yugoslavia and Serbia during the 1990s. It was active during the Kosovo War (1998–1999) and played a key role in the armed resistance against Serbian forces. The KLA aimed to secure independence and protect ethnic Albanians from oppression and violence.

<sup>83</sup> Albin Kurti (1975) is a Kosovar Albanian politician and activist, currently serving as the Prime Minister of Kosovo. He is the leader of the political movement *Vetëvendosje!* (Self-Determination) and has been a prominent figure in advocating for Kosovo's sovereignty, social justice, and anti-corruption measures. Kurti gained significant attention during the 1990s for his involvement in student movements and protests against Serbian rule.

system<sup>84</sup> had the Minister of Finance, Education, and Health. The minister was, the one who passed away, Limani, and later Alush Gashi. They didn't want to deal with these issues, they wanted to remain in Ibrahim Rugova's calm, silent, peaceful administration. About ten to fifteen people were being killed per week, and there was silence, "Quiet, quiet, quiet."

We were more of the resistance, and the inter-party council, with Selatin Novosella as the chairman, gave a different spirit to that non-peaceful issue. And that's where we started our organizations and preparations. It started in '97, the war, the killing of the Ahmeti family, a massacre. We went in an institutional manner. The Serbian authorities knew that we were a parallel institution working with Ibrahim Rugova as president. And we did these things with our own teams, we had our own teams. I was the chairperson of the Health Council, and we did the work, we weren't arrested. You know, that surprised us, they allowed it as democracy but had us in their hands, when they wanted, they would knock on the door and arrest you. The Jashari family war<sup>85</sup> broke out. We also went to Ahmeti and Jashari [families] as medical teams, we reached there. There...

**Anita Susuri:** To the Jashari family, you went to the funeral...

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes. Identification of the corpses, we went as members of the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, when it was on the 5th, 9th, and 10th of March because on the 5th they were massacred. Not even a fly could enter there, it was fortified with tanks in Drenica. I decided to go in, and when I decided, I went in. I entered by car that day. The police allowed us with strict checks, with insults, with curses, and I managed to get there. It's a long story now, about how they checked us and how they mistreated us on the road. The other team included Isuf Dedushi, from the medical field, Batalli, pathology, Fadil, Balaj the lawyer, Fazli Balaj the lawyer. They organized, there was the pathologist Syzana Manxhuka, Ramadan Sopi. All these pathologists were there, the team of pathologists came.

We organized, the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, with Adem Demaçi as the leader, Behxhet as the secretary, Halime Isufi was also a member, Ibrahim and others were the

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<sup>84</sup> Parallel System refers to the unofficial governmental and administrative structure established by the ethnic Albanian population in Kosovo during the 1990s. In response to the Serbian government's removal of Kosovo's autonomy and the exclusion of Albanians from public institutions, the parallel system provided education, healthcare, and other public services independently of the Serbian authorities. This system was supported by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) under the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova and played a crucial role in maintaining social services and political organization among Kosovo Albanians during a period of intense repression.

<sup>85</sup> The Jashari Family War refers to the attack on the Jashari family compound in Prekaz, Kosovo, by Serbian forces in March 1998. This event, also known as the Prekaz massacre, resulted in the death of Adem Jashari, a founding member of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), along with over 50 members of his extended family, including women and children. The massacre became a significant symbol of resistance and martyrdom for the Kosovo Albanian population and played a crucial role in galvanizing support for the KLA and the wider struggle for Kosovo's independence.



council's leadership. We organized to go, but they wouldn't allow it, no one took the initiative until we organized it through the council. Our group, [Binak Ulaj](#), Ilmi Ramadani, myself, Halime Isufi, and we entered Drenica through the enemy tanks. With their permission and identification, we went in and did the identification. CNN, the most well-known international television, came there and saw me examining, measuring, I don't know, using my forensic medicine skills.

I was neither a pathologist nor a forensic doctor. I had just learned and passed an exam in forensic medicine, knowing the depth of the wound, the entry wound, and the exit wound. The entry, the tearing, the exit like a bullet. Those were the signs that I would say, "This is where the bullet entered in Adem Jashari<sup>86</sup>." It was a large bullet in the neck and the exit wound. And when we went in, some forces came out that didn't let us enter Drenica at first, they cursed us during identification, calling us "terrorists," shouted at us, "Where are you going?" Where could we say we were going, as we entered there, they saw us from Morina, it was like a sort of depot of Limani. A kind of depot where they had left gravel and sacks and had put the corpses, there were 53 corpses. Three were outsiders who weren't from the Jashari family and they had covered them with white sheets. A great tragedy, never in my life had I seen such a massacre.

We started to uncover them with my husband, and Binak Ulaj, and Halime. Halime was taking photographs. The first films were from the Council for the Defense of Human Rights, Halime's films, those who did it, and we protected them, hiding them on our bodies so that we would have them. Even Arkan's forces,<sup>87</sup> when I see Arkan, it seemed he came out that day, "Where are you going?" And, "Where are you going?" "*Kod Jašari*" [Srb.: To the Jasharis] "*Kako kod Jašara*?" [Srb.: How to the Jasharis?] I said, "*Kod Jašari*," what else could I say, where could you dare say the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms. And I said, "She has relatives there," it was distressing. But in these situations, you would get a kind of courage, I don't know, like an out-of-body strength. And "*Kod Jašaraj*." One of the friends said, "Ah, how could you think to say the Jasharis," you know. And Binak said, "*Da, kod Jašari*," and, "Really?" They checked us, "Terrorists, criminals," they called us. "You are criminals, you are terrorists." They checked the trunk, found nothing. She had the film, they didn't check her bag with the film. If they checked the members of the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, they either killed you or you had to show everything.

And they let us in, we entered and did the identification. There, measuring those wounds. There was a massacre, a pregnant woman cut open, there were children, Bekim, Zaide, those children, Zarije, all... when I remember them today, it was distressing, horrifyingly massacred. Adem was not, for me, because they use that Azem Galica tactic without knowing, they left him alive like that, without

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<sup>86</sup> Adem Jashari (1955–1998) was a founding member of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and a key figure in the Kosovo Albanian resistance against Serbian rule. He is regarded as a national hero in Kosovo for his role in fighting for independence.

<sup>87</sup> Arkan and his forces refers to Željko Ražnatović, also known as Arkan, and his paramilitary group, the Serbian Volunteer Guard, also known as "Arkan's Tigers." They were notorious for their brutal actions and war crimes during the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s. Arkan was assassinated in January 2000 in Belgrade.

destroying the body, massacred, to spread the word that they captured Adem Jashari, killed him, and it's over. They had left him, here {explains with hands at the neck} he had a bullet about three to four centimeters large, and one here by the ribs and one lower. He had three bullets. Here on the back, there were only the exit wounds in those areas.

While Hamëz and Shaban had been massacred, their hands flayed, hands completely flayed with flesh, bones exposed. They had placed some kind of hot cannon barrel or weapon on Hamza, burning and carbonizing his lungs, and you couldn't see the parts of his lungs, only lateral parts were left. I was trying to hold onto those. When the CNN journalist, Domenik, arrived, he said, "Madam, there has been," he said, "a massacre here. It is said, the Yugoslavs are saying," in English, he said, "do you know how to speak English?" I said, "I do, but not so excellent," and he said, "Okay." We talked a bit, he said, "Where did a massacre happen?" and we talked, and he asked, "Do you agree to speak?"

To speak and appear on CNN, I had come illegally, thinking of returning to Pristina (laughs). And I decided, I said, the Jasharis died, I will die too. They will catch me, they will hold me. And I said, "Yes," I said, "on one condition." He asked, "What is your condition?" I said, "When I die, to go to my mother and tell her," because I thought they would assault me, massacre me, and throw me like a dog on the street, saying with many epithets why I went to Drenica. And I said, "On one condition, to go and tell her that your daughter died honorably. She died with the Jashari family." He said, "Yes." He got the special cameras ready. My husband was trying to do something, he said, "No, no, move away." He removed everyone because he said, "The device is so sensitive, it goes directly to the satellite."

He interviewed me. I gave an interview explaining that Serbia was hiding its crime. In Kosovo, they killed children, women. It's on CNN if you want to see [addressing the interviewer]. And they cut off the water, and I spoke for almost 20 minutes, but they only took the core message that women, children, elderly men, elderly women were massacred, pregnant women, and we appeared on the internet. When returning... they were buried, those troubles, they wouldn't let us bury them, and our effort with the Council to bury them. Fatmir Sejdiu came, politicians came. We didn't agree to bury them, we wanted an international team to come and uncover the massacre because Serbia was covering up this massacre just as it did in Reçak<sup>88</sup> later. They tried to cover it up, they brought a fake pathologist to cover the Reçak crime. We knew it because we had fought, we knew what Serbia was.

Citizens, imams wanted to bury them, we wouldn't let them. There was a big resistance between us, Shaban Shala was there, Hoxha, and even Osmani, the imam listening, because they wanted to force us to bury them. Then, let's return to Pristina. Then the police forces came out, those Arkan forces, "Criminals," machine guns on their bodies. I was in the car, they took my husband out with a machine gun, kicks, Binak with a machine gun. They lined them up against the wall, kicked them, hit them with

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<sup>88</sup> Reçak massacre was a mass killing of 45 Kosovo Albanians in the village of Reçak by Serbian security forces on January 15, 1999. The massacre was a turning point in the Kosovo conflict and drew widespread international condemnation.

weapons. Halime Isufi and I were left in the car with the films. Halime... I had a bag, and I always kept a scarf around my neck for wounds, a hand hemostasis, for that half an hour, fighting for life, maybe I could save it.

I had the scarf, Halime had the films. But when we wanted to return, we went to the toilet there and hid them, she hid the films on her body. "Halime, did you remove them?" "All of them." One film had remained in my bag. And when I saw the film, I thought, [they are going to] massacre us. Because we were about five meters away from the Jashari's yard, and... when the CNN guy took me, I said, "They are going to massacre me. I'm giving the interview, they are going to massacre me. Just go and tell her that I didn't die like a dog, but like a human being, your daughter by your side," and he said, "Okay," Domenik. He stayed and watched over us to see if they would massacre us. Later we connected the dots... because at that time we didn't understand. And he stayed behind a bush, the CNN car was hidden there. They came out.

They knew that the car was there, the police, but we didn't know. And they let us go, what happened? Before they let us go, I had the film in my bag. I opened the bag to show them and I saw the film, I somehow quickly glanced at it, and maybe my life... I took off the scarf, thinking if they caught me and broke my arm. I had the scarf like this, like holding it like this, I dropped the scarf in the bag and grabbed the film {mimics grabbing the film with her hand up}. He was looking at the bag, and I was opening it with my hand. I said, "Did you see, he broke my arm?" He had a knife, a local knife like this. I said, "He broke my arm, I'm stuck here." And I held the film with my hand because I was afraid it would slip from my hand and nothing would be left.

My friend had all the films {gestures towards the waist}, the killings, the crime, the massacre. Every photograph, from Adem Jashari, Hamëz, all those films of ours circulated all over the world.

Then Mitrovica was also shown, Halit [Bajrami], the one with the mustache, but our films were the first. Halime's film that our group from the Council for the Defense of Human Rights had made. They let us go. Before letting us go, they took the car keys from me. They didn't know what to do with the women, they released the men. That's when I realized that they were releasing the men to massacre them and then somewhere else us. And I was telling him, "*Daj mi ključeve*" [Srb.: Give me the keys] {extends palm}, somehow... and I had my hand like this {extends palm}. He was holding the keys and doing this {mimics turning keys} and somehow he gave me the keys. I thought he was joking with me, "*Hajde, vozi*" [Srb.: Come on, drive], and he started the car, "*Voz*" [Srb.: Drive], he said. I said, "*Neću da vozim*" [Srb.: I don't want to drive] "No," I said, "I came with them."

I had my husband and Binak, both of them. But I thought they might separate us, the two of them. I said, "No, we came out together..." and there I said, "We are members of the Council, we came together." Because there were crowds, hundreds of people came to the burial. Members of the Mitrovica Council were coming and the police already had information. And I said, "No," I said, "we are

members of the Council,” I said, “we know each other and came together.” And they turned them back, “Get in.” And when they got in, I said, “Slow down,” I said, “because they will kill us from behind,” I didn’t know that Domenik was hiding there. I said, “Let’s start slowly,” because they said, “Go, go, let’s escape. Teuta, step on it,” you know. I said, “No,” I said, “better slow down, if they shoot at us, let them know they killed us on the spot, not while escaping.”

We expected them to shoot us, but they didn’t. We hadn’t gone about 20 meters when someone called out, “Hi!” [speaks in English] It was getting dark. I knew that somewhere at night they would massacre us... There was a certain Hanumshahe from Drenica, she worked in the Council for Drenica, I forgot her last name. She invited us to her house, “Come, come over,” I said, “No, they have identified us, they have cameras,” we’d cause trouble by going to her house to sleep, “they’ll kill your family members too. Whatever happens to us...” We returned to Pristina, and then Dominik appeared, “Hi Teuta.” I didn’t see him at first. But my husband said, “It’s him, the one you talked to.” I opened the door and said, “Domenik, is that you?” “*You are?*” “*Yes!* Do you see that you survived,” he said, “you survived,” he said, “do you see that you weren’t killed,” because I had told him they were going to massacre me. And during the interview, he opened the window and said, “Drive,” he said.

Now I thought, I think, maybe I didn’t see him, maybe they didn’t dare to do it in front of him, maybe he got a guarantee to pass. I am surprised that they didn’t massacre us! They let me through as a lady with the team, we passed the checkpoints, no one stopped us, we arrived at the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms. We developed the films at night near the theater, we developed the films, distributed them worldwide, and the Drenica massacre was known as a massacre by the Slavic government. Not how they wanted to hide it, groups killing each other. We internationalized the massacre. It wasn’t to remain within the borders of Yugoslavia to manipulate, but it was a massacre that appeared in the media. CNN, the world’s largest television network, reported that, “A crime has been committed here against children, against women,” reported Teuta Hadri, my name there.

**Anita Susuri:** How did the war continue? You were also a doctor for the KLA in Gollak.

**Teuta Hadri:** After the massacre of the previous year, when the bombings started in Drenica, the destruction of Drenica, burning of houses to the ground, theft of properties. Every atrocity was used, violence, massacre in those villages, Poklek and Arbëria, and all the villages of Drenica. It began to spread, the massacre wasn’t confined to Drenica, it started in Dukagjin, in Kosovo, in Klina, and here began the displacement of the population. Some managed to escape to Macedonia, some to Albania. We stayed there, organizing, as I was also a member of the Health Council, organizing family settlements. First, they killed the doctor Lekë, Lekë Uka, and Hafir Shala. Oh, as the years go by, one forgets. Do you see what it means to not write down history? [addressing the interviewer]

They killed these doctors, massacred them, they disappeared. Then we started, we took their families to Isa Kastrati to shelter them. We were distributing families, each one in Dukagjin, in Deçan. Wherever they had come from, the center of refuge was in Pristina, because the whole Dukagjin area was in flames. From Gjakova, from Prizren they would come to Pristina and we would organize the settlement of those families, ensuring their food supply. The Emergency Council was formed, led by Selatin and the group of emergency members who fed them and took care of the families. In those families where they were staying, they would give some accommodation, a little money. And so we managed the settlement until there were more and more massacres, tens of massacres, each time the situation became more and more difficult.

The Kosovo Liberation Army in defense of the population, fighting. And my circle became narrower. I was staying in Pristina while my husband had already gone to war, he had left a month and a half or two months earlier. I stayed in the city until it became too risky... organizing healthcare, doctors weren't too eager to go into the thick of it. They contributed, but they didn't want to come to the war zones. I worked in the *Mother Teresa*<sup>89</sup> association, we helped with births. Once, with Selmon Demolli, we had 55 births, Dr. Selmon. He was a resident at that time, I was a specialist. The director in Prizren, when there were serious cases, we called Sejduallah Hoxha. He would come often, every day or every other day.

However, as a specialist, I was the oldest one who maintained the shifts there. Fehmi Ahmeti was there, he was also a resident. A young specialist, I can't remember his name. Selmon and also Merita, Shpresa Agani, Jakup Ismaili, the director of the clinic, and we maintained the shifts and carried them out. All of Kosovo, except for Gjakova which had its own hospital and Gjilan, everyone came to give birth at the *Mother Teresa* center. We took the women, they gave birth, and we attached them to the KLA wing, returning them to the war zones with the help of cars, jeeps from here, the Red Cross. There were Doctors Without Borders, we organized the births... this Ahmeti family, who were massacred. I visited that daughter-in-law when I was in Drenica then, when they were massacred, she was three and a half months pregnant.

Now I had promised him, her husband, Xhevdet, that I would deliver his wife at the *Mother Teresa* center, and I went specifically for her because they informed me. Hanumshah Ilazi said, "Xhevdet's wife, whom you visited, and Xheva have arrived." We were together then in that healthcare group, helping the Ahmeti family. He said, "Xhevdet's wife has come to give birth." And I took and delivered Xhevdet's wife, from the Ahmeti family. The only male heir. And this is how we worked at *Mother Teresa*. During that time, we helped them with food, everything, the displacement until the NATO bombing started.

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<sup>89</sup> *Mother Teresa* was a humanitarian organization that, during the 1990s at the height of Milošević's repression, supported the parallel society of Albanians who were expelled from all state institutions and services. The organization played a crucial role in supporting the population by offering healthcare, distributing aid, and assisting with births amidst the conflict.

The crimes were committed, they happened... and when NATO started bombing on [March] 24 [1999], I was on duty that night. And the forces... the lights went out, that horror in *Mother Teresa*, pregnant women, children, horror! The Serbs were coming in, they were doing things, women, us... I was prepared, the nurses know I even had a revolver that night, ready to go into the fight. There was a certain Violeta, I trusted her a lot because she was from our side, from Dukagjin, and I also had other trustworthy nurses and colleagues, but I don't know. Then she was coming, because her family had been massacred, tortured, and had fled to Albania. I said, "Viki," I said, "I have a revolver," I said, "the moment you hear gunshots and I jump," "How, doctor? You'll break your leg..." I said, "Just keep it a secret that I'm armed, it's my business how I jump."

We tied the sheets and [attached them] to the window so that when the Serbs came... we locked the doors, then Shaban Svirca, the owner, and his sons helped me a lot. That man, along with his sons, helped the women immensely. He turned his house into a hospital, a maternity ward, and also provided financial support and other assistance. Shaban and his sons, whose names I've forgotten, were major contributors. They didn't know I had planned to escape. I said, "I'll jump from roof to roof," and I made a spot where I could jump and join the KLA. Dawn came, and they didn't come in, they didn't break in. Morning found us there, taking the women to their homes. We filled the whole neighborhood with women from the *Mother Teresa* hospital. Because fewer Serbs came. There were no lights, no water, and a water pipe burst there, unfortunately. The basement filled with water. We went down to the basement once. Then we had to go back up so the children wouldn't get sick, it was a terrifying atmosphere.

NATO was bombing Hajvalia, and the flames could be seen from here. We dispersed the women, and I finished my shift in the morning, I went out, and we came out alive, they didn't come in. I came home. When I got home on the 24th-25th [of March], the whole city was blocked, the roads. There was Dr. Jasmina, who was also supposed to be on duty, but they had entered her family's home, and she had gone abroad, they said to her aunt in England. So, I went to find out who was on duty, but her mother didn't know how to tell me, "Oh my, run!" she said, "because the situation is very bad." I came, I wanted to go to *Mother Teresa*. When I arrived here at KEK, what *Mother Teresa*. The population was fleeing, escaping from the Dragodan area then, [now called] Arbëria, Bregu i Diellit, with bags, their bags tearing apart, clothes spilling out, people screaming.

The police forces told me from a distance not to approach because... the road was blocked at KEK. Somehow, we turned back, I don't know how we made it back home alive, it was such a horror, and I returned to the apartment. My sister-in-law's husband was escorting me to *Mother Teresa* because I knew that I might disappear, be killed, and he should know. We were walking about ten meters apart, and I thought, "When they take me. Just know that they will take me." When we saw each other, he shouted, "Walk, Teuta," he said, "turn back because there's no chance of getting to *Mother Teresa*," and we turned back. We stayed in the apartment like that, with candlelight while they were bombing us,

[with the fear] of when the Serbs would enter the apartment. We stayed like that for about two or three days. They came and kicked us out of the apartments, and it was a horror (laughs).

Let me tell you now, I had the revolver with 25 bullets. They broke the door down, the brave woman (laughs) with the Serbs, and I loaded the revolver, knowing that I couldn't really fight but at least I could shoot and they would kill me. Better than being massacred and abused in violent ways. And I kept the revolver and hid the bullets. They checked our bags. When they entered the apartment, they saw us coming down. I thought I would escape. I had connections to join the KLA, my husband was already with the KLA. I also had connections with Llap, and with Besina... and then they stopped me in the corridor. I had some beads, like a rosary, "The Turk," they called me. When he said, "Turk?" I replied, "*Jeste, turkinja sam*" [Srb.: Yes, I am Turkish]. They entered our home and broke it. As I left the apartment with the revolver, with... they caught us in the apartment, and when they saw me with the bag, they didn't even check it, "*Beži za Albaniju, majku, majku...*" [Srb.: Run to Albania, your mother, your mother...], and, "Terrorist, such and such..." And I went downstairs.

As I was going downstairs, there was a Montenegrin woman, a certain Lidia, married to an Albanian, and I had helped her with childbirth as well. And when Lidia saw me, I thought, she would immediately tell on me, you know. "Oh my, my doctor, did bad luck catch you here? How did you end up here? Come here," and she gestured with her hand and brought me into her family. The girls grabbed my hand, "Aunt Teuta, don't be afraid. Aunt Teuta, don't be afraid, you're with us." I couldn't tell them whether I was scared or not. I thought to myself if they only knew what I had on me when they will check me. The Montenegrin woman said, "*Kuda ću ja, ja sam Crnogorka, gde ću ja...*" [Srb.: Where should I go, I am Montenegrin, where should I go] "You, Montenegrin, Turk, go back to your homes."

But I wanted to get out more, rather than stay at home. She didn't let me leave, she said, "Turn back, turn back." "Come on, Aunt Teuta, come on," Lidia, "come to our house." And when we entered, we entered with some children from Malazogu, refugees from Gjakova, she was also sheltering them and those children, and us and some students, she brought us into the house. When the police forces came, one of them with one eye, a cyclops, with a mask, just to instill terror and trauma, drugged up. They were just there to instill fear and panic. And there where they stopped us, "The Turk," with a sword, with a kind of twisted blade, a type of knife that I can't describe. You know, it wasn't the kind of knife that stabs, but a knife like a crescent.

We went to Lidia's place and sat on the couch, when they came in, I saw them coming to check us, "*Ajde ja sam Crnogorka,*" [Srb.: I am Montenegrin], I thought, oh no, now they will check the children, identify us by name. When they came the second time, "Write down your names, *da si Turkinja,*" [Srb.: that you are Turkish]. I didn't want to say I was Turkish. And I said, "Lidia, I'm getting up and leaving," "No, Teuta, they will kill you," I said, "Lidia, I'm leaving." And I took the revolver, then they came to check everyone in the house. I slowly, before they came in, saw them at the door, somehow I managed to take the revolver out of my body and hide it under the couch. But then it troubled me, I thought I



would cause trouble for them. But since she was Montenegrin, it was a relief. And Lidia's husband, poor man, he's passed away now, Logjaj, saw me. He saw me and said, "*Kuku*<sup>90</sup> Teuta, *kuku* a revolver!" And we stayed like that.

I was burning up and freezing at the same time. The little girls sat close to me, happy that I was staying at their house. The couch somehow got covered with those cushions. And slowly, I said to Lidia, "Lidia, I can't stay." I slowly took the revolver, so the little girls wouldn't see it and get traumatized. Lidia's husband hid it, and I slowly put it back on my body and got up to leave. People were screaming. I went to my sister-in-law to hide there until they evicted us from her apartment a second time. Again, we went out armed, and we went to Sami Peja's place, my husband's aunt, on the street of the Roma community. They emptied the entire Dodona street. We went out there too, and they displaced us.

I stayed hidden in houses, in... and Sami Peja came and got me when he heard I was hiding. Food was scarce, there was no food to eat. We were left without food, the supplies ran out. It was me, my sister-in-law, her husband, their son, my [paternal] uncle's wife, and we all gathered there with the food. We heard about the killing of the Kelmendi family while we were there. Then, I had to go out slowly, when the police forces decreased, I put on some tracksuits to go check on Ramiz Kelmendi's<sup>91</sup> house, Ramiz, Bajram Kelmendi<sup>92</sup> because there was no information. Nobody knew what had happened to the family, they had killed them, but about the women.

When I went in there to check, the curtains were blowing, the door was creaking *viuuu* {onomatopoeia} as it moved and it scared me. I thought there might be bombs, mines. I opened it, that house, I don't know if they had destroyed it, stolen, looted. The curtains were flying from the air, it was terrifying. Mrs. Nekibe wasn't there, and I was glad that Nekibe and her daughter weren't there. And they didn't know where they had been sheltered. I brought the information to the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms because I was in the Vellusha neighborhood, where the Roma neighborhood was where I lived, and I took the information to Naime. Naime was a member there, Naime Maçastena. And Naime took the information to the council that, you know, Nekibe had survived and someone had taken her. And they evacuated that neighborhood too.

Now we were left without food. How to eat, where to eat, going out into the city to buy food while we were hidden, no one knew there were people in that neighborhood. They thought there were only two or three Roma families. When the owner of the house, the old man, was given a sack, half a sack of

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<sup>90</sup> Colloquial, expresses disbelief, distress, or wonder, depending on the context.

<sup>91</sup> Ramiz Kelmendi (1930-2017) was a prominent Kosovo Albanian writer, journalist, and publicist, known for his contributions to Albanian literature and culture. He was also a leader of the Reconciliation of Blood Feuds Campaign.

<sup>92</sup> Bajram Kelmendi (1937-1999) was a lawyer and human rights activist. He filed charges against Slobodan Milošević at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 1998. On the first day of the NATO war in 1999, Serb police arrested him with his two children Kastriot and Kushtrim. Their bodies were found the next day.

flour by Sejdullah's father, Sejdullah, Naime Maçestena, the neighbors gave it to him, and it was used up. I had a full freezer. They had broken my door, and I thought maybe they had stolen from me, "I'll go." "No, don't go." The whole house got up, "Don't go!" I said, "I want to go. I want to see the city too." When I went out into the city, it was terrifying. They had put [up posters of] Clinton, "*Wanted person. Criminal wanted.*"[in English] The entire wall of the Technical Faculty, Lagjja e Muhaxherëve [neighborhood], the street coming out of the park was filled with news, photos of Clinton, "*Wanted person. Criminal. Clinton dead,*" dead.

I saw them, and they thought I was Serbian. I was wearing a nice pair of tracksuits like an athlete, running, and I went home. I took a girl from the house, Shpresa from Kamenica, who was caught there by the war. "Shpresa, let's go get some goods," and we took bags. With the bags, we came and restocked the house with goods, and after a couple of days, everything was gone again, meat, sausage, everything, there were many members, many people. And then we didn't dare go back because the doors were broken, the apartment was broken into. The Serbs had locked it with special locks, you had to identify yourself to enter. The neighbors opened the door for me, and there was a problem with identification. When people saw me on the street, they said, "*Kuku Teuta*, you're stuck like this."

I wanted to go to the war, but I had no connections, as Llukar and Grashtica were blocked. Bombardments, NATO was targeting Serbian forces, and I had planned to go to the war along that road. And on April 14, 1999, Professor Sami Peja died of a heart attack. It was the day when they divided the map of Kosovo, Serbia, the north belonging to Serbia and the south supposedly to Greece or whoever wanted to take it, Macedonia, they just made the map. Kosovo was to be divided into two parts. Sami, being a patriot and a professor who was also persecuted during the National Liberation War as a pioneer of the struggle and always under the watchful eye of the authorities. He said, "No, you will never take it," hitting the table, "Never, no!" He went out and had a heart attack, a stroke, and died.

When he died, people started coming for condolences, Adem Demaçi, Albin Kurti, Skender Kastrati came to offer their condolences, and citizens came. There were only a few families left here and there in Pristina, you could count on your fingers how many stayed and didn't leave the city, those who were sheltered. One of the Koliqi family members came too, and every day, Blerim Peja and I, along with Sami's son, discussed how to leave, how to find a way to go. Through Koliqi, or through Llukar. And Blerim received information that the milk seller from Keqekollë, the owner who sells milk, had a permit to enter the city from Llap. Ali came, and when he arrived, we told him to take us. He spoke on the phone to arrange for us to be taken and brought to the war.

But after his father died, Blerim had no one to leave the children with, he had refugees, three families with children he was sheltering, Isa Kastrati's wife, Avni Sepllani's family with children, my sister-in-law, and her husband with children. Blerim wondered who he could leave them with. Then they came and checked us, ordered us to leave the houses, and Ali organized it and took me.

## Part Six

*[This part of the interview was conducted on June 10, 2021]*

**Anita Susuri:** Previously, we discussed your involvement in the war, you told me about the death of Sami Peja, and how you and Blerim Peja tried to find a way to join the KLA. Could you please continue?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes. Kosovo, Pristina, and all the cities of Kosovo were in a deplorable state during those days. The problem was not only with the living but also with the dead. With the death of Sami Peja on April 14, 1999, it was a very dreadful day because the Serbian forces did not allow Albanians to bury their dead in public cemeteries, like the one in Arbëria where they are now. They were hindering the citizens, as this was part of their attempt to erase the Albanian identity. The goal was to erase the identity, to show that there were no Albanians here, no graves.

So, to be buried, you had to get permission from the municipality, and there were special permits that the municipality issued for burials. Sami Peja faced this fate as well. They didn't allow his burial in the city cemetery of Pristina, and with his death, his son Blerim Peja was forced to bury Sami Peja in the yard of their house. It was a very dreadful experience. I also felt it very deeply, as I was sheltered in Sami Peja's house, and every day, Blerim and I would discuss how we could both leave to join the KLA ranks.

However, since Blerim continuously had family visits due to the death, my departure was made difficult as all the roads were blocked, the checkpoints towards Llukar and the way to join the Llap zone were completely blocked. However, there was also a stroke of luck because amid all those problems, a path, a window, a door would still open even if others were closed. So, NATO forces bombed the main checkpoint in Llukar towards Grashtica and the way out from Llap. With the bombing, they destroyed that checkpoint, and it allowed people to move freely and pass into those war zones as there were no more Serbian police forces.

We had arranged with Blerim Peja to leave. He had secured a man, a certain Ali from Keqekollë, who was the owner of a dairy company. He had permission from the Serbian forces to come and sell his dairy products, milk, yogurt, and all those dairy items, in the city... from Keqekollë to the city of Pristina. So, Blerim had secured this connection because Ali would come to visit Sami Peja and ostensibly bring products there. We organized our plan to leave for the war, to the Llap zone. Ali kept his word, came to Sami Peja's house, and from there we set off for Llap.

Now, when I remember it, there's a certain trembling, a shiver, it was very... Pristina was completely destroyed, the streets, windows, everywhere there was destruction of shops, debris on the streets, you

walked over rubble. There were clothes left behind by our citizens who couldn't carry them due to the weight or had been attacked by the police forces. You would see shoes, clothes, and the streets of Pristina were filled with this chaotic state. To avoid this situation and the presence of Serbian soldiers and undercover police, we had to avoid the main roads and go through the Lagjja e Muhaxherëve neighborhood. In the Lagjja e Muhaxherëve, there was also the girls' dormitory, and we went through the city park and then to the road leading to Llukar.

Near the mosque, by the girls' dormitory, there was a police checkpoint blocking the road with barbed wire to prevent passage, close to the Technical Faculty, though I can't recall the exact name of the street. We went through... the Lagjja e Muhaxherëve. And the Serbian police forces appeared, some crazy figures with bottles of rakia,<sup>93</sup> drunk, and I was in the car with Ali and his wife. He had also brought his wife to make it easier to transport me from Pristina to the war zone and to have the permit to carry goods with his wife. And the police forces stopped us. I had filled my bag with syringes, surgical instruments, it was terrible. We had received news that the road was clear for those wanting to go to the Llap zone. The one who had come had found the road clear. "Come on, doctor, quickly, let's go."

I had filled my bag with syringes, tools, various medications, two large bags. And when they showed up, we were terrified. He didn't know who he was transporting. He knew I was a doctor, but he didn't know I had medical supplies. When we were stopped, he stopped to get his ID in the car, and while getting the ID, they were about to shoot us. They thought he was going for a weapon to attack since it was such a chaotic situation. When they saw his ID, they paused. One of them was like a Romani, dark-skinned, speaking Serbian, and he said, "Fool, why are you doing this? *Zamalo da ubijem ja dve lepe žene*" [Srb.: Almost killed two beautiful women], he kept yelling. His wife was a blonde, but I was red from [fear], terror, and everything, I was more distressed, not because they might kill me, but because I might be the cause of their deaths. If I opened my bag... since it was red, he kept looking at me.

I took out a coat, covered the bags at my feet with it. I covered the bags hiding the syringes, the hygienic supplies, scalpels, everything, bandages. Whatever I knew that what was needed for the war, for the moment, not a large amount of technical equipment. When he reached for the bag and started to empty it, he didn't see anything because he was looking at us. I had it on my right side, and all the syringes started spilling at my feet. When I saw that, I adjusted {touches her coat} to cover them. He kept saying {looking up and gesturing}, "*Da ubijem ja ženu*" [Srb.: To kill a woman], you know, "*ovakve žene, ej budalo!*" [Srb.: such women, you fool], you know, "Why didn't you show the ID first?" He was distracted looking at us, and I gathered the things.

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<sup>93</sup> Rakia is a popular alcoholic beverage in the Balkans, typically made by distilling fermented fruit. It is often consumed as a traditional drink in many Balkan countries.

When I gathered those things, I thought he saw them. He stopped, but they let us pass and we got through that crisis. That crisis passed. We continued on the road to Llap. It was even more terrifying, a death road, no one was passing through. When we arrived at Llukar, near the part where the Serbian military garrison was, there had been a checkpoint. NATO had bombed it, and for three days, three Serbian police officers had been left without food or water, out of fear that NATO was watching and would bomb them. They were left without food or water. We got very close, and Ali said, "Doctor, it seems there are no guards," for a moment... "because NATO bombed and destroyed this checkpoint."

When they came out, it was as if they had risen from the ground, their faces dirty, disoriented, without food or water. When they saw the cigarettes... Ali pulled out the cigarettes and said, "It's easy with these guys," and offered them the cigarettes. When they saw the pack of cigarettes, they said, "Cigarettes, let me have one, we've gone mad, look what NATO did to us," cursing NATO, "Criminals, they bombed us, they killed us. We've had injured people, we've been left without food." They did a check on us, but not thoroughly, just interested in food and cigarettes. They looked at our bags and car trunk, but they had nothing, so I was able to hide my stuff and we were safe. They told us, "Go, pass." As we passed, Ali shouted, "Doctor, we've entered the war zone." There was no greater joy.

From the terror I experienced every minute and second, when he said, "The war zone, look, our soldiers there." I couldn't see them in the hills, on the ridge where they were guarding the points, but he knew because he was a local, one of their villagers. And we went, we reached our military forces, passed Keqekollë, entered those points. Ali brought me to the *Skifterat* [Alb.: Hawks] Zone. That's what they called it, the *Skifterat* Zone during the war. We entered the *Skifterat* area, and I reported that I was a doctor. He said, "I was supposed to bring you only up to here. Now, my work is done, I don't need to be here," he said, "you continue, here are the KLA soldiers, these security personnel will take you," the ones in security uniforms.

They took me there and notified the Zllash Headquarters by phone that, "A doctor has arrived who wants to help in the war zone, with wartime medical assistance." They contacted the commander of the Zllash point, and they said, "Bring her directly here to our command." From there, they took me to the Zllash zone, and that's where I began serving as a KLA soldier.

**Anita Susuri:** And was there an improvised clinic there? Was there any building?

**Teuta Hadri:** Before I arrived, they had been working in a school, a school clinic. During the time of the parallel system, I was also something like an advisor for the Pristina Municipality, what they called the municipal minister for health. We had contributed in every school, because Albanians did not trust the Serbian forces for medical treatment, due to fear. We opened clinics in the schools. So, those school clinics, like in Llukar and Keqekollë, were turned into wartime clinics. My colleagues who were there before me had been working until the time when the Serbian forces bombed and attacked us. After that, the schools no longer operated.

However, in these wartime situations, it was a dire state because people would seek medical services without caring whether it was a school clinic or elsewhere, they would come to the room where the doctor was. You know the mentality of the people. So, we served them, sometimes even in the headquarters zone, providing services in the field, in the mountains, or just in a room. There was no proper clinic, no military clinic as we didn't have the standards or comfort since comfort depended on the attacks, the bombings, you couldn't see them. They would know and shoot from Guri i Stallovës or the checkpoint in Zllash targeting the clinic or... so they were improvised clinics.

**Anita Susuri:** During the time you were there, what did you see? What did you experience?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, on the first and second days, I thought, there's no war here, what am I contributing to? I was seeing only patients with diarrhea, headaches, problems, ulcers, cephalgia, hypertension, and cardio-hepatic diseases, so I got a bit frustrated thinking why did I come here, my help was needed but as a general doctor, not as a gynecology specialist. And on that first day, I didn't have any childbirth cases, and I also had a notebook, but when we were bombed, it got left behind. I used to note down the patients in the notebook, whoever came to get treated... there were also pediatric cases, they brought the children to me and I couldn't tell them... "Are you a doctor?" I couldn't tell them I'm a gynecologist. So I provided general medical services, treating fever, giving analgesic and antibiotic therapies, and whatever was needed for a child with bronchitis or enterocolitis, providing those services there.

So, on the first and second days, we didn't have much to do until the bombings started. Around the 17th [of April], as dates tend to be forgotten, the bombings started on the 17th and the Serbian forces were coming from Vitia. Over three to four thousand Serbian forces were attacking the Zllash zone. At that point, the population had to leave their homes. It was an alarming and dreadful situation. Those who could grab a bag and flee did so, just to escape the bombings. We didn't have much, but when the offensive began, we had injured people. From... I went out to the front line, not the very front but the second and third lines as assigned by the commanders. "Come to the front to receive the injured," because there were four thousand Serbian forces, and with the limited military force we had with just a rifle, with automatic or combat rifles, we didn't have heavy weaponry like the Serbs did.

We expected there would be casualties from our side and were preparing to receive them. So, it was a very dreadful moment waiting for the injured and the dead, in such terrible conditions. There were no proper clinic conditions, it was a field situation. You provided medical aid, whether as an expert or as a general doctor, right in the field. We were on the second line, ready to receive the injured from the first line. I remember being behind a tree because of the fear, with my medical bag and my weapon. The grenades were falling, it was terrifying, there was a broken tree, and I stayed behind it. The grenades sounded like a big bee. The soldiers would just say, "Duck your head!" because of the fear, and there were soldiers who...

So, during this dreadful offensive with the unequal forces between the Serbs and us, we had four wounded people. We took them and moved them away from the combat zone, and we tried to take them to the school, to the school clinic, because there were more supplies, more tools there. But when we got there, it was impossible to provide aid, as the grenades were hitting the roof of the building, the school was being bombed, and the roof started to get damaged, windows began to break. So, we had to take the patients outside to the field to tend to their wounds. Evening fell upon us with the wounded. Later, there were more injured, and they brought them to me, the doctor.

We went to suture wounds near the *Skifterat* Zone where I had first reported, which had gathered about four or five wounded people. Among them was Osman Gashi, a 17-18-year-old boy, the only son among five sisters, a *hasret*.<sup>94</sup> He had his shoulder completely cut by a grenade, and his breath was escaping through the wound. It was the first time I had seen something like that. I was a gynecologist, but I wasn't a surgeon. It was a situation beyond my comprehension on how to suture such a wound when the shoulder was cut, and his breath was escaping through my hand. At that moment, I thought about my surgical training, how I passed the exam, and how I sutured female genital tissues. I decided to at least bring the tissues together and then transport him to a more specialized area, which was the Llap Zone. In Llap, there was a hospital in Potok with surgeons and an operating room.

I took him, and night fell while we were suturing by candlelight. The candle was dripping on my hand, we had no tools, the tools and bags were left in the school, with the grenades, as we hurried to get the wounded out of the school before the roof collapsed on us. We ran across the field with IVs in hand, with Qerim Kida, a medical student. We carried them, providing aid, I don't know how to explain that medical assistance, but sometimes you rely on God, perhaps God, perhaps it was us and the brave boys, we managed to take them. And we sheltered them, they had been gathered. We sutured Osman.

When I saw Osman, I went in that night, "Come, there's someone wounded," and it was him, the injured one, because these are things that happen in war. At the moment when I was suturing, while I was at the school, a grenade fell, and with Osman and Qerim, we ran, and I was left in the field. They took Osman to be sheltered and taken to a specialist. I thought there was another specialist somewhere, and I was relieved they took him to a surgeon, since I was only there for one or two days. I didn't know anything, didn't know the terrain or the houses to return to that place, didn't know how to find them or where I had been. When they said there were wounded and they had been sheltered in a room, I went there and found the wound I had left half-treated. I took over to continue suturing where I had left off.

His condition had worsened, signs of fever and infection had started. And I went in, as I said, with a candle and a single glove because the gloves were used up. We sutured about three or four in the

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<sup>94</sup> *Hasret* is derived from Turkish, meaning longing or yearning. In the Albanian context, it refers to the cherished status of an only son or daughter among many siblings.



corridor, those with smaller, more acute injuries. When we got inside, there was also an Afrim, Afrim Gashi, and Avni Gashi, who had a leg injury with significant blood loss. First, I sutured Qerim, I mean Osman because he was in a worse condition and there I began to focus my mind on surgery, thinking about how to properly suture this deep wound. I was afraid I might damage the lung tissue, as parts of his lung were visible. There were fragments of the grenade, a part of the lung's tissue, some epithelium. We disinfected the wound, washed it with hydrogen peroxide, and then sutured it.

With one glove, I was suturing, the needle was like this {explains with hands in a semi-circle shape}, in a half-circle shape, I held it with the glove, then pulled it through with the other hand or with a bundle of sterile gauze because I didn't have proper tools, as everything had been left behind. I only had a small pair of tweezers to push and pull the needle. I always kept a reserve for myself in case I got wounded, to bandage and suture my own wound. I kept it for personal use in a small kit that could be tied, like a bag. I used everything I had for other wounds, and the tools became non-sterile. How do you sterilize tweezers? With betadine, experience teaches you, I disinfected them with betadine. There were no septic conditions, just to stop the bleeding and save lives.

And I inserted the needle, suturing and pulling, it was a horrible process that cannot be adequately described. I could barely grasp the needle with my non-sterile fingers, but I managed to suture. Then it was over, he was the worst case. The leg was also a problem to suture. Avni, I had to suture him without damaging the nerve, avoiding causing further bleeding. I thought he would be left crippled. Today, he is strong, two meters tall, healthy and walking. I sutured him too. The minor cases were nothing, a wound, a rupture, a... That night ended for us around 1:00-2:00-3:00 AM, we were suturing until then, by candlelight, covered with blankets because if the Serbian forces saw us, they would shell us. Guri i Stallovës overlooked the whole area, and everything could be seen from there.

At 3:00 AM, I was exhausted, and family members from Grashtica came to take me to sleep since they were nearby. We went to a house. When I got there, a woman was in labor (laughs). It was a breech birth. Nowadays, breech births are usually delivered by surgery. The baby weighed four kilos, as I could tell from measuring. We delivered that baby in a breech position. From 3:00 until around 5:30, we completed the delivery. The woman had been in labor all night, but I saw that she was going to give birth, and with our experience in breech deliveries, we managed it. It was a bride from Grashtica, and the birth went very well.

Then, we finished that, and it began... there are many events, but I'll summarize them briefly. An elderly woman had been milking cows and distributing milk. She had a room with injured people and would bring milk to them. I hadn't drunk milk in a day or two. She brought me two glasses of milk, which refreshed me. When the grenades started falling from Guri i Stallovës, as they called it, I still haven't gone to see it myself. The Serbian forces attacked us again. Then we had to leave Grashtica, the soldiers took us and moved us to another point. They were attacking from all sides, from all directions, and so on.

**Anita Susuri:** During this time, you had no contact with your husband or other family members?

**Teuta Hadri:** No, no, no. My husband was at the General Headquarters, he stayed there. As for family, not even phone calls. The most painful thing was that they would communicate with family members in Switzerland, but I had no way to contact mine. And then there was... I had a sister in Macedonia, with whom I could communicate. I couldn't contact anyone in Gjakova because the phones were monitored, and I was afraid they would massacre my family. That was the problem. So, I was completely alone, completely isolated, but within our army. You know, I was a person who didn't know anyone. Not a foreigner, an Albanian, but unknown to everyone. You had to get to know people to understand who you were, who they were. I had no contacts, I was without contact.

**Anita Susuri:** How long did you have to stay? I mean, until the end of the war?

**Teuta Hadri:** Until the end, on the 11th, but there were many challenges, as you have there... many challenges because it was offensive after offensive. From that day, from the 18th, when it started in Zllash, the police forces constantly pursued us. We would flee from Zllash and go to Keqekollë, they would chase us to Keqekollë. From Keqekollë, we moved to the Llap Zone, to Rimanishte, to Sharban, to Potok, to Popovë, and not a day or two would pass before we had to move again, saying we escaped that attack zone, but they would bombard us. Everywhere we went, they followed us, so we were constantly serving the Liberation Army with patients, with...

**Anita Susuri:** Were there any casualties? How did they bury them? Did they bury them at all?

**Teuta Hadri:** When we were in Zllash, during the offensive, Sokol Sopi was injured, and he was an only son, the son of Professor Mustafë Sopi, who worked at the Faculty of Economics. His only son. Sokol was injured, and Afrim and four others had lighter injuries. But Sokol was the most seriously injured, and when he was injured, we provided him with medical aid there. Then, when we took them to transfer them to the Llap Zone, because the police forces had surrounded us from all sides, we wanted to prevent the wounded from falling into the hands of the enemy.

The main effort of our army was to save the wounded, because our soldiers could easily run, escape, defend themselves, and launch attacks. But the biggest problem was how to evacuate the wounded without them falling into enemy hands. They had broken legs, were in casts, in severe condition. Sokol, along with Isa Kastrati and Afrim, fell into an ambush. When we wanted to leave the Keqekollë Zone to go to Llap, to cross into Llap, they took the wounded in a different direction that was easier. There were three vehicles with wounded people. The first two, one of which was driven by Selim Pacolli, and the other vehicle, and the third vehicle had Isa Kastrati with Sokol, as they had a family connection, and he said, "It's my responsibility."

I was also in that car, but they took me out, you know, and I was exhausted, so I told Isa Kastrati, since I knew him, he was from Gjilan, from my husband's side, I said, "Isa, I'm in your car. Wherever you go, I'll go with you in the car," and I had also taken some medical supplies with me. I got into the car, but then Commander Adem Shehu, fortunately for us, saved us. He said, "Get out, what are you driving like ladies for?" He said, "You need to get out and join those soldiers on foot." Even though I was tired and sleepless, I thought, he's right, what kind of lady chooses to ride in a car, so I got out. For a moment, I had the thought, no, I won't get out, I'll continue in the car. But, considering my age then, the exhaustion, even a young person would get tired walking those kilometers over the hills.

I got out and listened to the commander. We left, and the wounded passed through, but Isa lost direction and ended up in the area of the Burllovit, a wrong zone. They were shooting grenades at the SUVs carrying the wounded. The first two vehicles, driven by Selim and the others, got through, but Isa was left behind. Sokol was killed, along with two other comrades. It was very painful. In those moments, when they say the ones you saved from severe wounds fell into an ambush, you could only imagine the massacre, how they were massacred... it was a very painful feeling. Not just then, but even now, sometimes I say, cursed be those who try to tarnish the name of the KLA. They have left, settled comfortably in the West, living peaceful lives. The best soldiers of the Liberation Army faced Serbian crimes directly.

They might not have fallen into the ambush themselves, but they faced the worst ambushes while defending the population. There were people who stayed, serving the KLA with food and aid, and they had their families, cattle, and their lives, and they didn't leave their homes until they were burned down. When their homes were burned down to the ground, no one stayed anymore, only us, the Liberation Army, remained, the only ones who didn't break and run, refusing to abandon these lands. There were moments when I thought of fleeing even to Serbia through Prapashtica, as we were very close to the border. You know, if it wasn't for the fear of the Serbs. There are moments in war when fear and panic arise, because life is at stake, protecting someone's life, your own life. So, it's a very painful feeling when you hear that two comrades died. When we got the news of Sokol's death, his father's only son, it was very difficult. A young boy, 17 years old, maybe even 16. It's a terrible feeling.

### Part Seven

**Anita Susuri:** On the day of liberation, when the war actually ended, where were you and how did you receive the news?

**Teuta Hadri:** When the war ended and the news came that NATO forces were entering and there were those standoffs at the airport between the Russians and the Americans, we already knew. We had these walkie-talkies, satellite phones, you know, the KLA General Headquarters would inform us. And in the war zones, they had those phones, notifying us, "Yes, there is shelling. They're approaching the

Serbian.” These updates were made through phone calls. We were in a war zone. I was on the Gjilan side, in Verbica.

When we were in Zllash, I was seeking to go to Llap. And even today, I feel a responsibility to Commander Adem Shehu, I was the only doctor in the Zllash zone, serving in healthcare. I wanted to go to the Llap zone because there was an operating room, with Rizah Binishi, the urologist, and Miftari, and I thought I could contribute more by suturing wounds and delivering babies. And he made it possible for me to go to the Llap zone. In truth, when the offensive happened, we had to move there. We had to cross the Serbian checkpoints through the mountains at night, twelve hours from Keqekollë. Keqekollë was burning, the smoke was suffocating us. We could see the fire in front of us, feel the heat on our bodies as we, the military forces, and the civilians we were protecting, moved to avoid falling into their hands.

It happened that we even brought the cows, which the people don’t know. Not only did the soldiers have the responsibility of a soldier, but they also protected the villagers’ cows. We carried the cows because they were the main source of food for those households. From Keqekollë to Llap, there were about two thousand citizens that we transported, helping them reach Llap to escape the Serbian forces’ zone. When I arrived in Popovë and then in Potok, there was a hospital. Rizah Binishi was the main operative there, then Musa Miftari, Dr. Musa, the urologist, was there, and he became the anesthesiologist. Nurse Sanije, Dr. Ajete, Dr. Skender, and Shaban were also there, if I remember correctly. So, it was a complete team.

And there, for about two, three, four days, I worked in the hospital. We delivered babies, sutured wounds, participated in a surgery, removal of a kidney from a child injured by a grenade. Patients from all zones were brought there because it was a hospital with experts and professionals. We served there until the hospital was discovered, and they started shelling us and we were forced to flee. Keqekollë was burned, they attacked Potok and Popovë, and we kept moving, carrying the wounded. We, the doctors, had turned into carriers of the wounded, the young men, the doctors, carrying the injured with blankets. They made makeshift stretchers because we didn’t have proper ones. The soldiers made stretchers from wood and blankets. Then we went and sheltered in Sharbant. From Sharbant, after a few days, the Serbian forces attacked us again, and we had to move back again.

I asked to return... Since my husband was in the General Headquarters at the time, I asked to return towards Karadak. They made it possible for me to go and join him. And we got stuck there. All checkpoints were blocked, and we couldn’t connect with the Headquarters at all, even though the commanders like Agim Çeku<sup>95</sup> and others organized my transport there, Fatmir Humolli, Adem Shehu, they organized my transport to Karadak, but I ended up in Verbica. On the 11th [of June]... we heard about the liberation there. We heard it and rejoiced, celebrating our liberation. Since I was tired,

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<sup>95</sup> Agim Çeku (1960) is a former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) commander and politician, known for his role in the Kosovo War and later as Prime Minister of Kosovo from 2006 to 2008.

having not had a break for two and a half months, without sleep, because it was impossible to sleep even two hours due to the shelling starting again. Only in Sharbant did we sleep for three days, in Sharban in Llap, in no other zone, neither Keqekollë, Grashicë, nor Llukar, could you sleep. You would sleep standing or on a mattress given to you by the soldiers, respected as a doctor, maybe for two or three hours before you had to move again due to the shelling.

So, the military forces didn't leave us any place to stay for those two or three weeks, and when we came to Verbica and heard the news, we were overjoyed. The soldiers said, "Get up, doctor, and have the coffee of freedom," I was tired. I said, "No." There was a cook named Liridon, I still don't know his name well. They called him Liridon, and I said, "Liridon, let me sleep for an hour, I want to sleep in freedom" (laughs). And while we were saying this, he was insisting, knocking on the door, "Get up and have the coffee of freedom." I didn't want to. Eventually, I thought, let me listen to the boys, fulfill their wish, get up, and have a coffee, it won't hurt. I got up to have a coffee, and the first sip, we were surrounded by Serbian paramilitaries. Behind us were snipers too, I don't know if they were military or not.

They surrounded us and started firing automatic rifles. I don't know how I was sitting, or where to go. If I went out the door, they would have hit me. We jumped out of the windows, from the second floor (laughs), from the second floor. That boy, Liridon, broke his leg, twisted it. He was left with one leg, but when they attacked us, it was on the 8th, Enver Myftari, a 17-year-old soldier from that place, Verbica. He was a guard, he fought the Serbian forces, he fought the paramilitaries. There were snipers up on the hill, and their tactic was to shoot in the leg to wound you, then in the head. He stopped to bandage his wound, fighting, and it was his luck that kept us alive. It gave us a chance while he was fighting, we didn't even know they were attacking, whether anyone was defending us or not. We heard gunfire, but we didn't know where it was coming from. Whether from our side or...

We jumped from the house, from the second floor, and I landed on nettles and rocks, I rolled over and started to run. I didn't even know where I was going, since I had just arrived at that house, and hadn't even spent a night there. I ran, and as I was running I started... We were surrounded and they were shooting at us with automatic weapons. My pants were pierced by bullets. I could hear the Serbs saying, "*Ubi ga, majku ti jebem. Što ga ne ubiješ?*" [Srb.: Kill them, motherfucker. Why don't you kill them?], one shouting to the other. We were surrounded. At that moment when I got out, if the bullets had hit us, we would have had no chance of survival, only a supernatural power could save us. Osman from Prilepnica, whom we called Dajko, Commander Dajko, came out. Amidst the bullets, he came out and took the automatic weapons, the secret documentation of the Headquarters, and engaged in the shooting. They were firing at him, and he was firing back. Enver was wounded in the leg, and they didn't know how many of us were injured. I just ran through the hills.

My luck was that the hill was sloping down, and the wheat had just started to grow, about 20 centimeters high. When I heard them shouting, "*Ubi ga, majku ti jebem*" [Srb.: Kill them,

motherfucker], I knew they were very close, I thought, they're going to kill me. But somehow, it felt like a window or a light opened up in the sky. I thought I would escape and they wouldn't catch me. I was afraid that if they caught me, they would cut off my hand, being a doctor, they would massacre me. I knew what a bullet could do. But it was a tactic, since I knew how to shoot, I could calculate. When I saw the bullets, I would count one, two, three, and usually on the third, I thought the fourth or fifth one would hit for sure. I would twist my body in a line because the sniper would hit {explains with hands in a plus shape} and line up. The bullets were hitting below, above, on all sides, like in a movie. There's no way to describe it. Only our soldiers know how we, how I, went through it.

They had taken up positions, brave soldiers, to protect me during the retreat. I didn't even know. They were shooting from all sides, I could hear the gunfire all around. Our soldiers were firing at the Serbian soldiers, and the Serbian soldiers were shooting at me. I counted like this, one, two, three, four, and on the fifth, I would fall down on purpose. It would make them lose track of me. The slope helped a bit, rolling five or six steps at a time. At one point, from all the rolling, I felt like the sky was spinning. I thought I was hit, that I was wounded. I looked at my legs, they were fine, I looked at my hands, and I didn't dare move because any movement could reveal that I was still alive. When the sky started to stabilize a bit, I thought, no, I wasn't hit. I moved my toe, it was fine, I moved my hands, they were fine.

I gathered my strength again and decided to get up and run once more. I got up and they started shooting again, both sides. But after a while, Liridon, who was with his injured leg, said, "Jump here, doctor, jump to us." There was a fence, very difficult to cross. When I jumped, I landed on the fence. They were shooting, but not a single bullet hit me. I lost consciousness, not from blood loss but from the rolling, and our soldiers dragged me out from there. I regained consciousness and said, "I'm fine, I'm fine," "Can you walk?" "Yes." We escaped into a deeper part of the Verbica forest, where the branches fell all around... even if the Serbian forces passed by, it was hard for them to find us because we were covered by the branches. Barefoot, a soldier got up to give me some size 40 shoes, but it was hard to walk in them, to run. So, I ran like that, barefoot. My feet were wounded, and that's how we experienced our freedom in the mountains. While they started celebrating, Commander Trim went to Pristina, but we had the fate of expecting freedom still surrounded by the Serbs.

**Anita Susuri:** How did all that end?

**Teuta Hadri:** It ended with Enver's death, they killed Enver. After we entered the forest and took shelter, our soldiers came, those who were guarding the positions. The gunshots were heard at the headquarters, and they came to help us and join our forces, and they were convinced that we were four people who were either captured, killed, or massacred. When they arrived, they saw seven, and the Serbs chasing us saw that the room was intact and we were still alive. Then the Serbs fled because our soldiers chased them, because maybe they would have found us in the forest, and they disappeared. They found the boy, checked him, and saw that he was dead. They had shot Enver in the head. It was a great pain, I experienced it very badly, and even when he was buried, I said, "I can't

console the family, as his mother and father were burying their young son while I, at my age, survived. The boy died protecting my life and the lives of his comrades.” It was a moment that I really experienced deeply, and even now when I remember, the face of that beautiful boy appears before me.

**Anita Susuri:** When did you come out, I mean, when did you leave the mountains and enter a more urbanized area?

**Teuta Hadri:** We made our way... NATO forces arrived, in a village called Shipole, or Shipashpole, I can't remember exactly. NATO forces came to talk with Commander Ahmet Isufi, and they set up a meeting. After that meeting, it was confirmed that NATO had entered. They told Ahmet, “NATO has come, they are at the airports, they have taken these positions,” and Ahmet brought us the information that we were liberated. Commander Remi had already started moving out, and we wanted to go to the city. But it still wasn't safe because Gjilan had many Serbs, and it was very difficult to leave the area and join the Liberation Army or the citizens. Then the citizens came... Taip Zeka, the brother of Kadri Zeka,<sup>96</sup> and the political forces from Gjilan came and took us from the headquarters because we couldn't leave as it was a heavily surrounded area. The road opened up, and we went to Gjilan and celebrated.

And this is interesting because I have it written in my diary, I had waited so long for the day of liberation in Gjilan because I had started my underground activities in Gjilan, with the members from Gjilan, and it was a great pride to march. Commander Ahmet Isufi prepared us, Rexha, we called him Commander Rexha, along with Shemsi Syla, prepared us to march and enter the city. When we entered the city, I was without shoes because I had jumped and didn't have any. The whole army got up to find me a pair of shoes, but they couldn't find any that fit my feet. They brought me some boots, but they didn't fit at all, they were too big. So I wore sandals and walked through the mountains, I walked with sandals until my feet were sore.

When we arrived in Gjilan, my sandals broke after walking kilometers. Shemsi Syla said, “I won't leave until I find you a pair.” He went to get me boots, but they forgot about me in a house. They sheltered me there in Gjilan. They were celebrating until someone remembered, “Oh no, the doctor!” He came back to get me (laughs). I almost didn't experience that [celebration]. They had bought me a pair of clothes because my pants were torn by the bullets and from walking. Shema [Shemsi] and the others got me some clothes and shoes, and I joined our military forces on the Day of Liberation of Gjilan to celebrate in the city. There was no greater pride. Pride for us, pride for the people. For our citizens, it was the final day of Serbian violence against Albanians. We showed Serbia that victory had come to our midst.

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<sup>96</sup> Kadri Zeka (1953-1982) was a prominent Kosovo Albanian journalist and political activist, known for his involvement in the nationalist movement against Yugoslav authorities. He was assassinated in 1982 in Germany.



**Anita Susuri:** How did you return to normality afterward? Contact with your family, returning to your home?

**Teuta Hadri:** This is interesting too because when I came here after celebrating in Gjilan, on the first day, they told me to come to the command in Gjilan. Shemsi, we called him Shema, Shemsi Sylja. And we called him by the nickname as comrades from the underground movement, Shema. They said, “Stay at the headquarters there, put on the uniform in freedom...” I said, “No, I don’t want to, I am a doctor. I want to return to Pristina.” “No, but you have to,” they insisted, “No, no,” “Don’t leave us!” I said, “No, no.” “We will go to Rexhep Mala’s house and do this.” I said, “I want to return to Pristina and go to my family.” I was convinced that they had been massacred, because my house is in Çarshia e Vogël, right in the center at a checkpoint where there are three exits, the checkpoint was there. I thought they had entered and massacred them. It was very difficult to go.

I took my brother-in-law and said, “Will you accompany me to...” I didn’t even stay at home, in the apartment in Pristina. I just got dressed, took the car. They had taken my car to a house... I took the car, filled it with gas, and drove straight to Gjakova. It was like escaping the war to die in freedom. On our way to Gjakova, through Duhla, Qafa e Duhlës, I don’t know if you know Qafa e Duhlës...

**Anita Susuri:** Yes, yes, I know it..

**Teuta Hadri:** The Serbian forces with tanks, paramilitaries, and civilians. Just as they drove us out with clothes, they were fleeing. They had looted our clothes, their own clothes, filled the cars, with refrigerators... when we saw them, all shouting “*Živela Srbija*” [Srb.: Long live Serbia] with three fingers<sup>97</sup> raised, I just expected them to fire at us with a tank, and the road through Duhla has a sort of slope when you pass it. I thought they were going to shoot us, that it was destined for us to die then. The roads reeked of blood as you drove through Duhla, Prizren, Suhareka. When we entered Suhareka, believe me, if you opened the car window, you could smell the blood from the houses, from the crimes they had committed, it was a dreadful road.

And I went to Gjakova, first to my father’s brother, and I told him some words, “The freedom of Kosovo that you loved so much has come,” that was it. Then I returned to my mother, and I found them alive. When I opened the door, I thought I would find my mother first, the old woman coming out to open the door to the paramilitaries. I opened the door, and no one was dead. I entered the room and found them. Great joy when they saw that I had survived the war. They didn’t know I was alive either.

**Anita Susuri:** How was the city of Gjakova? Pristina after the war?

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<sup>97</sup> The three fingers symbol, while originally a gesture of Serbian nationalism and pride, has also taken on a more sinister connotation due to its association with Serbian paramilitary forces and their genocidal acts during the Yugoslav Wars.

**Teuta Hadri:** Pristina was less damaged because the Serbs themselves stayed here, and they committed fewer crimes to avoid traumatizing their own population. However, when the expulsion of Pristina started, they had already sent away their own children to avoid witnessing the crimes, and that's when we realized that crimes were going to happen. I saw a Muslim woman saying, "I'm leaving." "Where are you going?" I asked. She said, "I have to leave because they are going to commit crimes here." "How?" "They are going to commit crimes in Pristina, they are sending their children to schools in Belgrade so they won't see it," she said, "and I'm leaving," because she was friends with Serbs there. And we knew that crimes were going to happen, and they came and started expelling the population. First, they started in the Lagjja e Spitalit [Hospital Neighborhood], on the hill, and the population began to...

When we came here, everything was destroyed, but somehow cleaned up. The doors were broken... we found a state of horror, but not like Gjakova, no. And this street here by Santea, from Santea to the clock, the shops were broken, looted, stolen. I saw those even when I was here. However, the population had risen, had come back to life, freedom had been won, and people had returned to their homes. But Gjakova was like Vukovar, Gjakova was Vukovar.

I went out into the city of Gjakova to the Hadum neighborhood, which we call Mahalla<sup>98</sup> e Dumit, and I went up to the museum. It was impossible because I knew the people who had been killed, because while I was in the war, I received information from *Radio Kosova e Lirë*. It was our main source of information. I went near the house of a friend, Shpresa Cana, who was killed along with four family members, the Vejsat family, in the neighborhood by the bus station. Those neighborhoods were completely destroyed, burned to the ground, and on top of that, it smelled of blood. Blood from the corpses that were still there, still being found later. It was a terrible day, but I returned afterward. After seeing my family for two hours, I returned to Pristina.

**Anita Susuri:** How did the recovery continue afterward? Your life?

**Teuta Hadri:** When I returned to the apartment, the first day I came back, of course, I hadn't cleaned myself for almost three months, three months. Falling in the mud, there was no possibility to clean myself. Once in Sharban, we cleaned half of our bodies because the wooden doors, like those of a bathroom, were cracked. Soldiers would stay there to guard, to see, you know, it was very difficult to protect oneself there because every house was destroyed. Only one house was intact, where we stayed as a Headquarters, as doctors, as soldiers, and as sheltered people. It was hard to clean up. Then I remained unwashed for a long time, the body smelled. But who cared about that, life goes on. So I hadn't cleaned for a long time. When I got home, I went to the bathroom. The first thing was cleaning in the bathroom, it felt like being in a hotel, paradise. I got myself together, went out to buy food. My

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<sup>98</sup> A term of Turkish origin, commonly used in the Balkans to refer to a neighborhood or a district within a town or city.

husband was still in a war zone, he hadn't come back yet. I stayed there for a couple of days and then returned to work at the hospital.

**Anita Susuri:** About your husband, did you know that...

**Teuta Hadri:** He survived.

**Anita Susuri:** How did you find out...?

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes, yes, yes, because we had contact from Karadak to the General Headquarters, "If you want to join us, come there." And I did a round trip around Kosovo. He was there, I started here, went to the hospital. I didn't run to the commanders who had taken the checkpoints at the D, those points, to start the life, the revival, the army, the revival of the population, helping the population. Because those weeks were just for helping the population, there were no institutions or anything, just the command that was working. I returned to the hospital and in the hospital... I didn't want to return to the posts, to stay in the army, I wanted to serve healthcare. I returned to the hospital and started working there. Sejduallah Hoxha, the director, took the first shift, I took the second one. There were still Serbs, even in the hospital, and when they saw me with the KLA, they all left the next day. They fled, they left.

So, while I was working in the hospital for those two or three days, they called me, not from the Democratic Party, but because I was with Adem Demaçi, the United Democratic Movement. During the war, Ibrahim Rugova and the LDK did not contribute to the unity and togetherness of the Albanians, instead, they caused divisions within the headquarters, just like how the Albanians are acting now, causing trouble. And we had formed a party, the LBD, the United Democratic Movement. In it were Rexhep Hoxha, Qosja, Adem Demaçi, Mehmet Hajrizi, Hydajet Hyseni, Bajram Kosumi, and all of us were part of this movement. And since I was a member of that party, when I came out of the war, the provisional government of Kosovo was formed, personalities were elected, institutions were formed, and ministries. The Ministry of Health and Education was assigned to this opposition, which was the LDK and these small parties.

The LDK did not participate. I will never forgive them as an Albanian, whether you call me a patriot or a fighter, I will not forgive them. Why didn't they join our institutions when we had just won freedom? And four ministries remained empty. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Arts and Culture, which was led by Sabit Gashi, and another ministry for minorities. They didn't come to contribute, to say, "Thank goodness!" To embrace and say we survived this disaster, this great crime." They didn't come to contribute. At that time, the LBD party, not the PDK, sent me for health and I was elected Deputy Minister of Health.

I worked there for six months until the provisional government of Kosovo was dissolved, and then life began to be freer. Then they proposed and called me as an MP for the Parliamentary Party, and I went to contribute there. I was elected president of the Democratic Women's Group of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, and I worked as an MP in the Parliament of Kosovo.

**Anita Susuri:** You were in parliament when independence<sup>99</sup> was declared, so I'm interested in how the whole event was beforehand. How did you find out...?

**Besarta Breznica:** Before getting to that, perhaps you could tell us a bit about how you found the hospital when you returned?

**Teuta Hadri:** Ah, yes. I found the hospital in a looted and plundered state. And it's interesting because the night I was on duty, there were Serbian paramilitary forces, not paramilitaries but state security people in the basement, and I didn't know. I was on duty, and with the pride of having survived the war, I walked down the corridor, and reaching the toilet, that Serb appeared. I didn't know he was there. Why is this man here in gynecology with the women? When I was in control of the whole situation there. And he was armed, face to face. I looked at him, armed, let him kill me. When I asked the guard who he was, where he came from, there were stairs down where my room was. When they entered, they found weapons, lots of weapons, bombs, mines. They found them, took them, and arrested them.

They then informed our army at that time, and they informed the directorate, and all the Serbs fled. When that weaponry left, there were documents found, all documents, binoculars, everything they had left there. While we Albanians were working, we had taken over the institutions... and that was revealed because they needed resources, there were no resources, it was empty. They had stolen most of the instruments, they had stolen and looted there. And with the tools we had, we started working, we had entered the war, and at least... We had something to begin with. The hospitals were looted, and only Albanian staff remained.

**Anita Susuri:** We were talking about the post-war period and the political organization and the day of independence...

**Teuta Hadri:** And the day of independence is a sacred day. It is the most sublime act of the people of Kosovo. For all those years, we had worked for this day. Since '78, when I got involved in the underground movement without interruption, then the semi-parallel system where the LDK was formed with Ibrahim Rugova, and there we gave maximum contribution, forming our parallel institutions, healthcare. We had done all that, and all that sacrifice, all that struggle, all that

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<sup>99</sup> Declared on February 17, 2008, Kosovo's independence marked the culmination of a long struggle for self-determination following the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo War (1998-1999). The declaration was made by the Assembly of Kosovo and has been recognized by over 100 countries, though some nations, including Serbia, do not recognize it.

bloodshed, it was a major act that reached us. Especially me, at that moment I express my own experiences, and when Mr. Thaçi read it out, he said a very good sentence, and also to our fathers, “We fulfilled the *amanet*<sup>100</sup> of our fathers,” and that made all of us shed a few tears.

It was... I saw that Thaçi was trembling too. If you saw it, his lips were trembling from those emotions because all our tears were reflected in his expression. It was a moment that even now makes me shiver with joy because all that sacrifice, all that struggle, a hundred days of war, crimes, crimes, and then came a day, at least five minutes or an hour or a year when it was declared... Although we waited several years for independence, the world showed itself to be a bit unfair to us, a bit unfair, but as we know our situation in Europe, our position in Europe, and Europe’s policy towards Albanians. This is what happens to the poor, to the people who are poor. Not poor in wealth, but poor in spirit.

It was a grand act, truly an act that seemed to bring to life both the living and our ancestors, as if each one of those MPs was a participant in the war, a part of the resistance for freedom, were academics who had experienced the sacrifices of these 20 years. From the suspension of our institutions in the ‘90s, all their hearts had a remembrance, and we celebrated that day, it was a grand day. Wherever there were Albanians, they were standing. The city was so crowded you couldn’t walk. It was cold, very cold, but the great love for freedom didn’t feel the cold or the ice, I say the ice.

**Anita Susuri:** Mrs. Teuta, I would like to go back to an earlier part, meaning, the day before when we talked, we discussed the reconciliation of blood feuds...

**Teuta Hadri:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** I would like to explain a bit more about this part.

**Teuta Hadri:** Look, during the reconciliation of blood feuds, I was in Zagreb for my specialization in ‘83...

**Anita Susuri:** I know that you returned once and continued...

**Teuta Hadri:** No, I didn’t return immediately, but I came back by chance to participate because I saw them going, as I was there. The work in Zagreb wasn’t easy to get permission for, it was a ten-day leave. And this is very interesting too, but when you are connected with the people, with the masses, you are in the masses, you are in history. So I came with bags and just thought about how to meet with Hava Shala, we were imprisoned with Myrvete Dreshaj. The initiators of the blood reconciliations were the student youth, the professors took it up. I thank those who showed patriotism and joined the youth, but this is very little expressed.

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<sup>100</sup> *Amanet* is literally the last will, but in the Albanian oral tradition it has a sacred value.

The student youth and the political prisoners of that time, such as Hava Shala, Myrvete, Hidajete, Adem Grabovci, Musa Limani, all belonged to this category of prisoners who had made a decision to reconcile blood feuds because we always saw war as inevitable. For you or someone else, it may have been inconceivable to say that war would happen, but we were preparing for it. However, we, as the political prisoners who had resisted, fought for a day of freedom, and we foresaw this. Hava and these women thought, we came out of prison, no changes have happened, the Yugoslav system still existed. The Serbian, chauvinistic politics towards the Albanians still existed, what to do next? To prepare for a war, according to Hava's and Myrvete's words when we met them, Adem and others, the information was that we first needed to reconcile.

We had many families involved in blood feuds, and if you start a war, a divided population is the main issue. So, I came from Zagreb, stopped to pick up some bags here. My sister-in-law had them, I just went out to get the connections, to see what was being done with the reconciliations. But at the Faculty of Philosophy, I see, with bags in hand, since I thought I'd go to Gjakova, I didn't meet anyone. I saw Hava Shala, Musa Limani, Adem Grabovci, and Myrvete Dreshaj, they were stopped at the Faculty of Philosophy on their way to meet Rexhep Qosja. "What are you up to, you prisoners?" (laughs) They said, "We want to go to Rexhep Qosja." "Why Rexhep Qosja?" They said, "To connect with the intellectuals and have them join our action." They told me about the decisions they had made while we were on the road, "A very good action!"

Laughing, they said, "Come on, you're Hadri too," and this one, this teasing Myrvete Dreshaj, said to me, "Come on, you're Hadri, Ali Hadri, Rexhep Qosja will accept us more easily." I said, "And the bags?" I had the bags. So, with the bags, we went into Rexhep Qosja's office, and he accepted us. He had told them, but it was left for me to say, "Come on, Hadri," with Myrvete teasing a bit. We went to Rexhep Qosja, and he received us very well and agreed to join our idea. So, the reconciliation of blood feuds, I can say with full confidence, was initiated by this group of former political prisoners, both men and women. The first person to join was Anton Çetta.

The greatest man of this century, and the strongest intellectual with few words, with few words, Anton Çetta joined the group of students. Then Qosja, Cana, and the intellectual layer started, Muja, this professor Muja the chemist. The intellectual layer joined this reconciliation action, including Zymeri. My friends didn't leave me out, because I said, "I came for a few days, I wanted to," and they took me to Deçan, Mulliq, Deçan, and another village to see these reconciliations happening, the men's chambers. However, apart from Mulliq and these meetings, I remember the Kuqi family. There were two blood feuds, two killings in that family.

I myself had gone to give moral support, to ask for forgiveness for the blood feud. Together with Hava and the others, we were in the *oda*<sup>101</sup> with Anton Çetta, and Cana and all of them were speaking. There was Sylë, the artist Sylë Kuqi, from the family of Sylë Kuqi. We called him the artist, you know, Hava

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<sup>101</sup> Men's chamber in traditional Albanian society.

knew the locals, giving moral support to the family. Two deaths. It was very difficult. I thought to myself, “I would never forgive.” In my silence, I thought, “I would never forgive,” it made me feel that way, questioning if I would go. It was a very... but it was a very grand act. Because for the freedom of Kosovo, for the foresight that this brave youth had, people were ready to forgive blood. And hundreds, hundreds of blood feuds were forgiven. There was no more beautiful, more painful experience than when they stood up to embrace each other, saying, “Blood was forgiven. Two blood feuds were forgiven!”

I wasn't that active in these, it was just a period of five or ten days. We went to Bubavec in the areas of Llap and attended these gatherings... At the Verrat e Llukës we gathered close to 500 people, 500 thousand people were gathered, I can say half a million people from all territories. The Verrat e Llukës was the grandest blood feud reconciliation... until the forces, the police with tanks, dispersed us, not with attacks but by entering with tanks and dispersing us. I remember being there with Ramë Buja and Hava and the others, and we had to scatter from the assembly that was held there.

**Anita Susuri:** And how were you received in the *oda*?

**Teuta Hadri:** In the *oda*, they received us very well. Even today, I am very proud. Today, the moral values of our people have changed. I don't know what happened to us, what was put in us, what poisoned our blood. We used to be a noble people, I tell you as young women because I worked in the underground movement and I felt that experience even in the *oda*. They received us as sisters, as heroines, and no one thought ill of you, their eyes didn't even blink in immorality. Today, it's not like that. Today, I don't have that bond with those families, nor with those friends. It's strange, strange what has happened to us as a people. In the *oda*, it was grand when someone like Hava Shala or Myrvete would speak because they were the main activists. Hava was also an excellent orator. There was nothing more magnificent.

“Sister, come on, sister, say a few words.” “Come on, doctor, say a few words.” There was great respect towards women. I don't know. I don't know how we changed like this. Now women are not respected, they are tortured, abused within families, all these murders happen against... This wasn't ours, it was imported, imported.

**Anita Susuri:** How were those conversations? How did they start? What kind of discourse was used with those people, for example, to get them to reconcile, to accept something like that?

**Teuta Hadri:** The discourse was political. Since it was a political group, the group had its own objectives. We were witnessing Serbian violence, because every... As the Human Rights Council reported weekly on killings, massacres, home invasions, and arrests, nearly every week, about five citizens of Kosovo were affected. There were deaths, and we wanted to create a resistance. The provocation was the incitement, it was political. Look at what the Serbs are doing to us, look where we



have come to, we are not in a position to defend our homeland. These were the conversations. We need to stand together, we need to resist the regime, this blood feud is the hand of the regime. And in fact, it was the hand of the regime because many families had been incited by the regime.

Patriotic families, families linked with the UDB, and these provocations and incitements were the regime's hand. Against these families, there were support, punishments, or massacres, or the injustices that the state committed against these Albanian families who had a patriotic lineage. There was also this division. A wedge was driven to divide them. Because when you managed to convince them that there was a war against them, a special war to divide them, to break them, to keep them scattered, so they wouldn't come to a meeting, an organization, a conference, and the people understood because there were continuous killings. So, a brave youth emerged to confront this.

They convinced them with these demands for national unity, that with this unity, we could even break Yugoslavia, but we were maimed, arrested, imprisoned for years. What did we achieve? We came out again, the same people, and Kosovo hadn't changed. These were the political topics discussed in the *oda*, and they changed the concept of citizen thinking. They supported the youth, who were indeed brave. They went to police stations, checkpoints, and carried out blood reconciliation. I respect that initiating group along with the professors who joined them. Unfortunately, our people don't support that group. They quietly fade away, and other figures are highlighted. Therefore, history must be written correctly.

**Anita Susuri:** Mrs. Teuta, if you have anything else to say at the end that we haven't asked, or anything you want to add...

**Teuta Hadri:** Well, in conclusion, I don't know what to tell you because maybe I spoke a bit quickly trying to catch everything, as there have been several hours this time and the previous time we did this for four hours. To describe the events properly, you know the books are 800 pages long just for the war diary, just for the war. So, even my story requires a long time and has many things that perhaps were valuable to mention that this nation deserves to hear. They deserve to hear not because we want respect, but to understand what we experienced, what we went through, what kind of war it was, without weapons, without money. Because when you touch a Kosovar's money... brave, brave, but when it comes to spending money, it's difficult to buy a weapon, to buy an automatic rifle. And I would say let's raise awareness, reflect on their own spirit, think about where they were in that position, what contribution they made, what the young men did.

They faced automatic weapons, tanks. And to go out and fight, that heroic category, history curses us as it does. There are no institutions that calm us. It's been twenty years since the war, and we can't be at peace, why? The injustice of presenting history. If you don't present history, how can you simply fight with few weapons, with little bread? With water-soaked pasta in our army, and you laugh at my army and didn't contribute even that much, to bring me meat, to ensure meat in the war, for the

soldiers. For days, I walked on foot without eating meat or stew, which a soldier needs to have strength, and today you come out and talk? Shame! Never! That family will be cursed if they speak ill.

**Anita Susuri:** Mrs. Teuta, thank you very much for your contribution and for the interview.

**Teuta Hadri:** Thank you!