Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW WITH ADEM VOKSHI

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Duration: 113 minutes

Present:

1. Adem Vokshi (Speaker)
2. Anita Susuri (Interviewer)
3. Korab Krasniqi (Interviewer)
4. Renea Begolli (Camera)

Transcription notation symbols of non-verbal communication:
() – emotional communication
{} – the speaker explains something using gestures.

Other transcription conventions:
[ ] - addition to the text to facilitate comprehension
Footnotes are editorial additions to provide information on localities, names or expressions.

Part One

Anita Susuri: Mr. Adem, if you could introduce yourself: give a short biography about yourself, and then something about your family, your origin?

Adem Vokshi: Yes dear, I am Adem Vokshi. I was born on January 18 1952 in the city of Peja, in the Kapeshnica neighborhood (smiles), that's how it's recognized. And my family originated from the Pobërgj village in the municipality of Junik, but many years ago, before my father was born, both my grandfather and grandfather moved to Peja. Back then, Peja was a small town when I was a child. My father's name is Osman, Osman Vokshi. He was born in 1924 and yes… My mother was born in 1931, she's from Peja as well. Her father was an imam at that time and they [my mother and father] were married in '50 I think, and before me, they had a girl whose name was Emetullah, but she died before I was born in '52.

So I am the first boy in our family and after me they had my brother who was born in '55. And then my sister was born in '58. In '68, they had my brother who now works as a pathologist in the Peja hospital and a sister who is a pharmacist, she works in Peja as well. This is my close family. Meanwhile, I…

Anita Susuri: Can you describe your (first) childhood home and how you remember it? The neighborhood?

Adem Vokshi: My first house where I was born and where my parents lived was in Kapeshnica, Mustafa Bakija Street, no. 52, I remember it well. It was a two-story house. The first floor was, I don't remember it, but I'm sure they kept straw there, because they used to call it a part of an acre, where the animals were kept… and the upper floor had three rooms. My father and my two uncles lived there. One older uncle, and one younger uncle and each of them lived in one of the rooms and we had *çardak*.[1] That's how we called it, *çardak*, the part where we hung out during the day, where we ate breakfast, lunch and dinner together.

[1] Old term for veranda type balcony.

And each of the rooms had, in everyday language we called it, *hamamxhik*,[2] or the shower where people washed themselves and it was like a built-in closet as we have them today, and it was clad in wood and the clothes were on top of it (smiles). When it was used as a shower the clothes were removed {describes with hands} and warm water was taken there, because at the time there were no bathrooms. So yes we lived there until 1960. Then my father and my older uncle bought a house about two hundred meters from it, in Kapeshnica as well, and that house had about eight or ten rooms, but each room had a tenant. The tenants had rented from the [original] owners with *qesim*[3] and even though they were renting, they didn't vacate the house.

The owner [of the house my dad and uncle purchased] lived in Kraleva if I'm not mistaken. Back then, I was very young, eight years old, he [the owner] decided to sell the house, but no one was buying that house with tenants and my dad decided to buy it together with my uncle. They bought that house and after about one year, one tenant vacated one of the rooms because they had lived in one room, and then my family moved there. My father together with my mother and us, the children, moved there and after about three or four months another tenant vacated one of the rooms, and then another one. After two or three years that house had no tenants left and my older uncle came to live there and we split the house in two. My uncle used one half, we used the other one.

It [the property] had about five acres. That house is still there and the renovations are visible. In 1979 when there were floods in Peja, since the house was built of *qerpiç,*[4] you know what *qerpiç* are? [addresses the interviewer] The floods covered in water about one meter and a half of that house, and the Municipal Assembly declared it as an unlivable house. And then they granted us permission, and in '81 we started to build the new house. And the new house was renovated after '99 because it was burned by the Serbian forces during '99. It was renovated and that house is still in Peja.

Anita Susuri: How do you remember when you started school? Was the school far away? Was it close by?

Adem Vokshi: My school was far, maybe about 15 minutes, but as a child it was a big joy when I enrolled in school. My first teacher was, I remember it as it was today, she was Shadije Kotori. She has passed away now, and like every other child I also didn't want to attend anywhere else besides with that teacher. I thought she was the best person in the world (smiles) and she really was a wonderful woman. I remember it very well, when I would return from school and they had given us homework, I would come back crying. My mom used to ask me, "What's wrong?" "I have to do homework." And I didn't even eat or anything so I could sit and finish my homework {describes with hands} and my mom used to help me.

[2] Tur.: *hamamicik*, or the small baths, which were inside the homes for the higiene of the family members.
[3] Old term: buying and selling without measuring, at one price for all of it.
[4] Tur.: *Kerpiç, qerpiç*, is a traditional type of clay tile that has not undergone any firing process, but is left to dry in the sun.

My mother only finished four years of elementary school. So did my father. But she knew how to teach me back then because she studied together with me (laughs), but she understood them better and I finished the homework. At school, I had a teacher until the fifth grade I remember, or *arsimtar,*[5] because after the fifth grade they were called *arsimtar.* He taught me the Albanian language and at the time my uncle was a soldier and I used to write letters to him. So yes, I wrote them for my family. My uncle was a soldier in Zagreb…

And he [the teacher] assigned us to write a letter to a friend and I finished that assignment. There's a degradation in the handwriting I have today {describes with hands}, it's almost unreadable you know (smiles). But we learned how to work with computers, but at the time, Mustaf Puqesta showed the notebook with my homework to the whole school where he taught, to show them what kind of writing and content it had. He was wonderful. I'm boasting a bit, but that's how it was (laughs). Even though it's not a trait of mine to boast, but that's how it was and I felt really, really good about myself.

At that time I remember when it was Youth Day, our friend Tito's birthday, on May 25th, they took us to the [Communist Party] Committee's building and they chose me from our school. Me and two other pupils from the other schools and they took us to that building. It was sort of impossible to go into the Committee's building for me as a pupil (smiles) and they gave us candy in nylon bags, some candy, some stuff like that, you know as gifts and I returned home filled with joy feeling like I did something important.

Anita Susuri: Did you also have those red handkerchiefs?

Adem Vokshi: No, no, but yeah they used to give us those red handkerchiefs (laughs). It was, that time was very wonderful. Peja was a very small, as I said earlier, town. Now where the police and the court buildings are in Peja, back then there was what we called Dulja and on the side to Gjakova there, not the stadium, farther from where the stadium is in Peja and there was Dulja, they used to call it, the customs. The tax collectors went there. To take the villagers' taxes when they came to town to sell their stuff. That is how taxes were collected. So, that's how small Peja was. Now Peja has grown a lot.

Anita Susuri: I'm interested to know about your parents, your mother, your father, what were they doing?

Adem Vokshi: My mother was a stay-at-home mom, although they asked her to teach two or four elementary school classes. But no, she wanted to take care of us, the children, just like my wife who takes care of our children even though she has finished [university in] the Faculty of History. My father

[5] *Arsimtar*, another term for teacher, usually used for teachers of grades above the fifth one.

was a *zhgunaxhi.*[6] Do you understand what *zhgunaxhi* means? [addresses the interviewer] [Maker of] traditional clothing, that's what he did when I was little. And then when *zhguna*[7] started not to be worn as much, yes, that's when he started to work as a tailor.

I know when May 25th was close, [the time] of the holidays, all the schools organized to go to *slet,*[8] back then they called it *slet*, in stadiums. And the overpants for men had to be sewn, and my dad, along with my uncle, used to work together back then and sewed those. That's what they worked with until '90.

Anita Susuri: Did he perhaps have a store?

Adem Vokshi: In the *çarshia e gatë*[9] yes, yes they had their own store.

Anita Susuri: Do you remember what the store was like? Or that *çarshia* at the time?

Adem Vokshi: It was very interesting, not only that store, but all the other stores had a very gloomy look. There wasn't much there; compared to stores nowadays they were really undeveloped. They didn't have a toilet, they didn't, even though the store had two floors. But it was, it was a very great poverty, it was a very great poverty and that was the reason… The store, Peja's *Çarshia e gatë* which was popular, was paved in gravel, it wasn't paved in asphalt, it didn't have cobblestones or how they call it *kalldërm* either, it was, it was like that.

Anita Susuri: Did you ever help your father in the store?

Adem Vokshi: I started to go [to work] at my father's store at a very young age and at some point thereafter, in '65 or '66 my uncle, one of my uncles opened a store for watchmaking and then I started to go [to work] at my uncle's store because I was really interested in the profession of watchmaking. Something where you can show your creativity. And I worked there until I finished my studies.

Anita Susuri: Now I want to ask you about something that impressed me about your mother, who you said finished four grades, and at that time it was something very extraordinary for a woman to finish four grades. What kind of family did she belong to?

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[6] The craft of making *zhguna*, which in translation means coats and capes. The craftsmen who made *zhguna* were referred to as the *zhgunaxhi*.
[7] An old Albanian term for coats and capes.
[8] *Slet* was an annual sporting event, involving distinguished athletes, pupils, students, workers and soldiers. Every year, on May 25th, *slet* was held in various cities of Yugoslavia to mark Youth Day and the birthday of then-leader Josip Broz Tito.
[9] Literally a small market. The speaker refers to the long-shaped market that had stores stacked one after the other.

Adem Vokshi: Her father was an imam.

Anita Susuri: Yes.

Adem Vokshi: Her mother was a stay-at-home mom too, but her father was an imam and he taught in the *medrese,*[10] he taught there, he held lectures and he really appreciated education. He loved education so much that he sent one of his sons, the oldest son, to the Military Academy at the time and yeah whatever happened, happened. They [my mother's family] didn't like his [my mother's oldest brother's] wife from Peja that he chose, but not his father or mother [they liked her], but his grandmother [didn't] or what do I know and he [my uncle] was like, "You don't want this bride? Really? Have a nice day!" And he went to live in Zagreb, that's where his family is. Anyway, his spouse has died, he has his children, in Zagreb. My oldest uncle.

My second uncle, he was a watchmaker. The youngest uncle worked with watches as well. So, he was a watchmaker but he then worked in the auto parts factory of *Zastava.*[11] In Peja, he was a rare professional at the time [because] they hired them even though he was in high school, but at the time there was a very high demand for that.

Anita Susuri: Talk to me about your life in the '60s and the early '70s, it was a transition period for Kosovo cities. It started from towns and cities, some sort of construction started, but even in '74 with the constitution I mean.

Adem Vokshi: As soon as the constitutional changes took place.

Anita Susuri: Some sort of change took place, political as well as social. What were these years like for you?

Adem Vokshi: I wasn't aware enough to experience these years that much. But, in '66 when Ranković[12] fell from power, at the time he was the leader of the The State Security Service of former Yugoslavia[13] and it caused a lot of trouble. I remember when my father used to talk about it when I was younger, every night they would take not only my father, but other people in Peja too and they would take them

[10] *Medresa, Medrese*, muslim religious school, the only school where teaching could be conducted in Albanian until 1945.
[11] *Zastava*, Yugoslav car brand, FIAT-based. The cars were used by the police at the time.
[12] 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.
[13] The State Security Service - *Služba državne sigurnosti*, also known by its original name as the State Security Administration, was the secret police organization of Communist Yugoslavia. It was at all times best known by the acronym UDBA.

to SUP.[14] They kept them all night and didn't release them till the morning, torturing them, honestly, even to eliminate them they [the State Security Service] took them to Tabje [field] there in Peja and eliminated them. No one knew what was going on.

My dad used to say, "I was lucky to have a lot of cousins from my father's sister and my mother's sister, and as soon as they took me, they knew who did and always started to walk around the police station." there, you know, to let them [the police] know that they're aware of where I am, "and that," he said, "is what saved me. Neither killed me, nor eliminated me." he said. Something that was really dangerous at the time.

And when Ranković fell from power, all politics changed, even the stance of the Serbs who mostly led Peja, surely in other cities too. Even Albanians started not to feel inferior, you know. Instead, to be equal to other ethnicities. Especially when constitutional changes took place in '74, when even I as a student started to feel more satisfied because Kosovo became a constitutive part of the former Yugoslavia back then, yes.

Anita Susuri: When you were in high school, at that time Peja also started to bloom somehow. There was Karagaq, a park that was built and…

Adem Vokshi: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Anita Susuri: Can you talk about that for a bit?

Adem Vokshi: Yes, Karagaqi or the big park is very special, because we had the small park too next to Peja's Municipality building. But the big park was a hangout location. There was the lake, it was in the middle of the big park and the park was always guarded by two guards. I even remember the name of one of the guards back then, but they didn't let us litter, they didn't let us damage the trees. They guarded the lake too, they guarded the lake too. The lake also had fish. It was really, really beautiful.

It was so beautiful that when we woke up in the morning, as soon as the sun rose, as soon as it was bright, most of the students went out there to study because it was a wonderful atmosphere. Young people went out to walk too, elderly people as well. There were also chairs where you could sit and cool down. The air was wonderful, but the atmosphere was much better. Then there was, exactly in Karagaq park, there was a bar where the summerhouse was too, where foreign tourists used to come with campervans and lodged there. Peja had a lot of tourists back then too.

Besides the beauty of Rugova's Gorge, the city had its beauty too. I remember when, now where the department store is, there were stores on that side {explains with hands} and stores on this side. There

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

were stores on every side there. I'm sure there were over 300-400 stores. Now that part is all a meadow except the department store and the library that remained there. It was there exactly where the gas station is, if you know where it is in Peja, across from the gas station there was the police station at the time when I was little. At the Stone Bridge, the exact police station where they used to take Albanians and tortured them and persecuted them and all.

Anita Susuri: How did you decide to go in that direction? I mean, in high school or to continue education?

Adem Vokshi: When I finished elementary school, with my parent's insistence, I didn't know better back then, I was because you know {explains with hands}, but I did continue to high school. And when it was time to choose a direction, social or scientific, I chose the scientific direction because I liked it more. I had a cousin who went to *Shkolla Normale,*[15] but I didn't want to go to *Shkolla Normale* because it lasted five years, whereas the gymnasium[16] lasted four years and I was eager to finish that.

In '68, I was in my third year of gymnasium, in fact in the fourth year I think, but, when I had issues with my eye because my eyes were watering a lot, and then yeah they did. And it was in Peja, doctors from Mitrovica used to come, opthamologists, so eye doctors, and ear doctors, otorhinolaryngologists, for the nose and the ears. And they used to come to Peja once a week for appointments, because Peja didn't have doctors back then. Yes and they preferred that I go to Mitrovica and undergo surgery for one of my eyes.

And then I went there to undergo the surgery [and] to see Mitrovica for the first time. And then I went there once more but I didn't know Mitrovica at all. That was a really nice experience.

Korab Krasniqi: How was it for you, I apologize for engaging in the conversation like this, to be… because on your uncles' side they worked with crafts, your father as well. In this case your mother who was stuck at home was a role model. What prompted you to choose the direction of education?

Adem Vokshi: I will tell you this. I've wanted to read from the beginning, I don't know why, but I wanted to read. When I was at my uncle's store, I had a neighbor there, a friend from my neighborhood who was working at the kiosk where they sold the papers. And I used to get bored working at the store, "Agim, do you have anything for me to read?" You know, "Of course, I have this." There were these Nietzche novels back then, but they were in Serbian, but I knew Serbian as well. I bought *Rilindja*[17]

[15] The *Shkolla Normale* opened in Gjakova in 1948 to train the teachers needed for the newly opened schools. With the exception of a brief interlude during the Italian Fascist occupation of Kosovo during WWII, these were the first schools in the Albanian language that Kosovo ever had. In 1953, the *Shkolla Normale* moved to Pristina.
[16] A European type of secondary school with emphasis on academic learning, different from vocational schools because it prepares students for university.
[17] *Rilindja*, the first newspaper in the Albanian language in Yugoslavia, initially printed in 1945 as a weekly newspaper.

ever since I was in high school, it was *Rilindja* back then, and [later] I started to buy *Politika Ekspres*. Besides this I also had my oldest uncle, whom my father used to work with, and he always bought *Politika*.

Back then, *Politika* was a newspaper and he [uncle] knew politics really well even though he wasn't a politician, but he knew it well. And it was [my] curiosity... they talked about that, they talked about this, so why shouldn't I know about it too. Reading back then helped me to not have issues with the Serbo-Croatian language at all. When I was in elementary school, in third grade, I started to learn Serbian back then. It was mandatory to learn it in *cyrilic*[18] as well as in [the] latin [alphabet], [but] even more so in *cyrilic*. Besides that, it also helped during my university and high school studies because back then we didn't have books in Albanian, so we used to get books in Serbian.

I used to get Serbian books to consult. In the fifth grade of elementary school, they brought us a professor for Russian, some Mirko Rašan, I remember his name as it was today, to learn Russian. We didn't want to learn Russian, we wanted to learn English or French, and they went for Russian. The other generations, some learned English, some French, but we had the fate to learn Russian. So I spoke Russian fluently for some time. I even had an A+ in Russian at university, because my generation also learned a foreign language at the time.

Anita Susuri: You said that in '68 you underwent an eye surgery…

Adem Vokshi: Yes.

Anita Susuri: Exactly in '68 there were demonstrations…

Adem Vokshi: Yes.

Anita Susuri: Did you participate?

Adem Vokshi: No. No, I didn't participate. I was a high school student, I still wasn't…

Anita Susuri: Do you remember that?

Adem Vokshi: I had not yet matured politically (laughs).

Anita Susuri: Yes. Do you remember the city or ...?

[18] *Cyrilic*, denoting the alphabet used by many Slavic peoples, chiefly those with a historical allegiance to the Orthodox Church. Ultimately derived from Greek uncials, it is now used for Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Ukrainian, and some other Slavic languages.

Adem Vokshi: No, I don't remember, I don't remember those.

Anita Susuri: After the surgery, I assume you continued [school]?

Adem Vokshi: Yes, the *gymnasium*, I finished the *gymnasium,* and then I competed to enroll in the [university's] Faculty of Medicine because I was interested in medicine. And the second generation used to get accepted in medicine [studies]. There were 90 candidates. From those 90 candidates, I remained the 13th backup candidate, a jinx number (laughs). I was waiting to see if any of the accepted candidates wouldn't enroll so I could. Anyway, eventually I was told to enroll in biology and after finishing biology I could transfer to medicine in the second year. And I enrolled in biology and, yes… I finished biology as well, only the first year. And then when I went to enroll in medicine, they said, "No. You have to begin from the start because you can't like this." "From the start?" "Yes." "Thank you, I am not interested." And I quit.

And on my way back I met my father somewhere close to the student's canteen, back then up here {explains with hands} there was the student's canteen, at the Faculty of Law there. And I met my father, he had come there to meet a friend, Jonuz Gulinku, exactly where the Faculty of Technical Sciences is. Back there, below there was a *pilarhone* [store], he used to go there. And on his way, "So, what did you do?" "Nothing, this and that…" "Okay?" "I don't want to go to university at all." "What happened?" He said. "This is what they did to me," I was desperate. It was my fate to meet Sami Peja, the professor Sami Peja, and Hajrulla Gorani.[19] They were two really good, close friends of my father.

And, "Osë, how are you?" They were chatting. My father's name was Osman, they called him Osë, his friends called him that. "Here I am, I came to visit Jonuz," to his friend. And Jonuz was his friend who was tortured a lot in jails. And he said, "I came to visit him and I ran into my son," "Okay, how are you doing? What are you studying?" I said, "Well, this and that…" I told them. At the time there were no goddamn open calls for student enrollment, "Go on," he said, "either Law or Economics. Enroll in one of them," he said "don't remain without an education." You should, you shouldn't, you should, you shouldn't, and I enrolled. I enrolled in Law thanks to them.

And then I didn't know that Sami Peja would become my brother-in-law, but anyway (laughs). And I enrolled in the Faculty of Law and yeah I did, but I wasn't that enthusiastic about it. I enrolled in a faculty in which I didn't even know what to do. I didn't have any predictions that I would become a jurist in the near future, that I would become a lawyer, a judge and all that, you know. But I had to finish university, to not remain without an education because that was the will of my family, right? But I lost that willingness because I had wanted to be a doctor. I thought it was better, but I didn't know it wasn't (laughs).

[19] Hajrullah Gorani (1931-2020) was a professor, syndicalist and a former political prisoner. He was the Head of the Independent Syndicalist Union of Kosovo. He led the Kosovo workers' strike held on September 3, 1990, after which Milosević's regime in Kosovo terminated all their contracts, and an oppressive decade for Albanians living in Kosovo began.

Anita Susuri: Did you then move to Pristina?

Adem Vokshi: Yes, I then moved to Pristina. I lived for three or four months in one place, and then two or three months in another. Yes, because it wasn't possible to move into a dorm. There were only a few dorms, but the demand was very high so we used to travel, we used to travel.

Anita Susuri: What was Pristina like at the time?

Adem Vokshi: Pristina was… for some time I lived in Sunny Hill, now the OSCE is up there, and from there we used to wear our boots to go to the bakery. There was a bakery behind Hotel Bozhur, now it's Swiss Diamond, it used to be Božur Hotel. So, there was a bakery there. And I knew the baker, we had good chats, I used to leave the boots there and wear different shoes to go out to korzo[20] and show off to the girls. It was like that. It was really difficult.

And besides that it was even more difficult because until our third year of studies we had to take the train to Peja. The train from Peja used to drop us off in Fushë Kosovo and then we took the bus to Pristina. There was no other way. Either to take a bus that goes through Prizren or through Mitrovica. There was no direct line. And then sometime during the third year of my studies the road was built, with a few stops, but the road was built and we traveled more easily.

Anita Susuri: What year was it that you graduated?

Adem Vokshi: In '71.

Anita Susuri: '71. What happened next? How did you organize? How did you… I mean, did you continue to live here in Pristina? Or…

Adem Vokshi: No, after I finished university, there was Rizah Loci, head of the Peja District Court and my father knew him and met him one day. While talking, he [Rizah] knew that I was studying law, "What did Adem do?" "Well he," he [father] says, "his last exam is on November 11." He [Rizah] said, "Look, as soon as he finishes his last exam, tell him to come to my office." And I really did finish my last exam on November 11, '75 and I went to his office. He [Rizah] said, "From the first [of next month] you are hired here at the District Court. As an intern."

And I stayed at the District Court as an intern from December 1st of '75 until some time in February of '77. In February of '77, I passed my bar exam and when I went to work the next day, the Head [of Peja's District Court] called me, that Riza Loci who I mentioned earlier, and, "How did the bar exam go?" I said, "I passed." He said, "From today on you're an expert affiliate." "Thank you!" But, I worked very

[20] Main street, reserved for pedestrians.

hard, I worked very hard. Trust me, not to praise myself but I was really invested in work. I was used to working even in the private sector, I was used to working and not wasting my time and they appreciated me a lot. And I worked there until December of '77, and then from January of '78 I moved to the District Court of Mitrovica.

Part Two

Anita Susuri: During this period, so '78, '80, especially '81 there was a difficult political situation…

Adem Vokshi: Yes.

Anita Susuri: And it was complicated. I'm interested in your perspective, I mean, as a lawyer, what kind of cases did you have to deal with? Who did you represent or anything like that?

Adem Vokshi: Yes, yes. First it must be explained why I went to Mitrovica. It's very interesting. One day, the late Mikel Marku, who was a lawyer in Peja, [and] was head of the Chamber of Lawyers as well. He wanted to go to Mitorivca, he had a trial the next day in Mitrovica. And at the time I was working at Ferid Gjikolli's office, now he's a lawyer in Peja. He was a judge, I was a professional affiliate. And he [Mikel] said, "Ferid, come keep me company," he [Ferid] replied, "I can't because I have trials to attend. Why don't you take Adem?" And I looked at them, "But I have to work." "Leave," he said, "those tasks," because I didn't have trials at the time but I was working there… he said, "You'll work on those when you're back. Go to Mitrovica."

So, I went to Mitrovica with Mikel Marku and we were holding the trial. I looked at the judge, God spare us, he doesn't know how to hold a trial, he doesn't know, right! I told him [Mikel], "Mikel, are they all like this?" He said, "What can we do?" The judge was Albanian, anyway. And we went out on break, [and] he [Mikel] was looking for Kapllan Baruti, chief prosecutor in Mitrovica, but he couldn't find him because he was a politician working with politics there. And we went to the head of the court to have a coffee until the break was over. And while chatting there, Mikel was telling me how my colleagues in Peja were praising me, what kind of an amazing worker I am and stuff.

I used to double or triple my workload, I didn't mind, as long as there was work to be done. We even finished all of the cases in the Peja District Court at the time, as soon as we got a case, we finished it. We were wonderfully swift. And the Head said to me, "Will you come work with me as an expert affiliate?" I said, "Why, am I crazy? As an affiliate, I'll stay in Peja, not here [Mitrovica]." "Okay then would you come as a judge?" I said, "No, no way." He said, "Well, if you come to work as a judge here, we will provide you with a two-room apartment, we will provide you with a woman to marry," stuff like that, the way men speak to each-other. And I was like no, no, no.

But after like two months, the delegation from Pristina came there [Peja] to convince me to transfer to Mitrovica, and I didn't consent to it in any way. It was the late Xhevdet Hamza, he was the chairman of the Staff Selection Commission and after like two hours of trying to convince me he said, "You know what? You ask your father," he said, "ask him, if he says no, don't…" And when I went home, my father saw me, "What's wrong?" I explained it to him, "You have no other choice but to go." I was expecting his support. "You have no other choice but to go." "Why?" I asked, "*Abej*."[21] I called him *abej*.

"Oh," he said, "you're neither an engineer nor a doctor," he said, "you're a jurist." He said, "Your prospects are over if you don't listen to them." Done. And that's how I went to Mitrovica. And when I started work in Mitrovica it was very interesting. The head of the court gave me only second-degree cases, the ones I worked on in Peja. And I went to him, [and] I said, "If you regret taking me here, I will go back, there's no need for this." I said, "I did not do court proceedings of first instance cases," I said, "I'm not a judge." He said, "Okay, okay, only since I am here."

And at that time in '75, yes the court was established, yes in '75 or '74 it was established in Mitrovica. All the cases of Pristina that were in the territory of Mitrovica, even the procedures initiated before '70 [that] remained [unsolved]. The judges left them, "The court is opening in Mitrovica and they will be transferred there." And when I arrived, there were about 360 fairly big cases to be shared between me and two judges, there was also a Serbian woman and a Serbian man as judges. And we shared 120 cases each, and I took those cases… and those cases didn't scare me at all, you know, when someone wants to work. And I took them, and I immediately assigned those cases.

After six or seven months the Head [of Peja's District Court] asked me, "Did you manage to settle any of the cases?" I said, "I settled over 80 cases." "How did you?" "I finished over 80." Because really, the older the civil cases the easier to settle them, because time has solved those issues. I was aware of that, you understand. And I settled them. And then my authority started to increase with my colleagues, of course. But, if you are knowledgeable among those who have jealousy it's very problematic. And then there was an investigating judge who would complain non-stop that he has a lot of work to do and that his job is difficult and so on and so forth.

And in one of the court collegiums that we used to have, because we had collegiums every week, I said, "You know what? Chief, take half of the cases from him and bring them to my office. Even though I work with civil cases, I can finish these investigative ones with no problem." And I took investigation cases as well. I was simultaneously working on civil and investigative cases. Cases where you had to deal with accounting, where there was financial crime, you know, they used to invite me to take part even in penal collegium. So, I worked on those cases, these as well, those as well, all of them. I didn't only hold criminal trials. I was part of the jury, but I never delivered a verdict in a trial for a criminal case myself.

[21] Tur.: *ağabey*, elder brother, big brother. The speaker uses a vernacular form of the Turkish term to refer to the elderly of the family, namely his father.

Anita Susuri: I'm interested to know what kind of cases you had to deal with more often at the time? You mentioned you dealt with financial cases more, but were there, for example, I'm interested, those cases with blood feuds and stuff?

Adem Vokshi: There were, there were cases with blood feuds, there were and those are criminal cases. There were also cases involving economic crimes. But mostly, for example, people who had stores were being accused. Back then, there were stores of commercial enterprises and they would loan goods, and the clients would take it with *tefter*[22] or with books, yes. And when the registration [of sales] happened, they registered it as a shortage and they used to get accused of misusing socially-owned assets, for stuff like that… Then, there was a case, I remember a case that was more special, a merchant was the head of a warehouse, sometime before I moved to Mitrovica, in June, [and] had been in a traffic accident and had almost died.

His assistant continued to work, to keep the work going and at the end of the year a fairly big shortage was ascertained. Now I don't remember how much, but it was very big. And they jailed that merchant. And now his trial was being held, and the head of the jury called me, "Will you come to the court collegium to give a verdict on this case?" I said, "Yes I will come to the court collegium." The trial was being held and he [the merchant] was accused of the shortage. And the trial ended, the trial ended and we went to vote on the case. When I went to the office I said, "Where is the judge?" They said, "He went to the chief." I said, "What is he doing there?" They said, "I don't know." He went to the Head [of the court] with the case. In the Head's office, the chief of accounting, a translator, a driver and a friend of the Head were talking about the case, and how long of a sentence to give him [the merchant].

And when I went in I said, "What's wrong with you? Were they at the trial? What do they know about it? Come back to the office there." And when we went back to the office, he [the judge] asked "What do you think?" I said, "Let the jury vote first, then me, and then you. Because that's how the procedure goes," he said "No, no, what do you think?" I said, "I think we should free him." "What do you mean, free him?" He said, "He should be sentenced to 15 years in prison." I said, "Just tell me one thing," I said, "prove that he took that money." "Yes," he said, "there was a *manjak.*"[23] I said, "Did his assistant continue to work? Why wasn't there a handover-takeover of duties? If there wasn't a handover-takeover of duties, you can only suppose that he took it [the money]."

His [the merchant's] misfortune was that he had two good daughters and they were studying in England, you understand what I'm saying, right? And for that reason, they sentenced him, they considered all pros and cons and gave him nine years. And he filed a complaint with [his lawyer] Bajram Kelmendi,[24] he was a wonderful lawyer, he defended him. And due to the complaint, the

[22] Tur.: *defter*, tax register and land cadastre in the Ottoman Empire.
[23] Srb.: *manjak*, loss [in profit].
[24] 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

Supreme Court back then annulled the case. And for the second time around when he went to trial, they gave him that much [prison time] again, I think those four years he already spent in prison they sentenced him for those four years. Then they [the courts] waited for the statute of limitations for that case because they had no other way to proceed, no they didn't dare, they didn't dare free him.

The man didn't commit a crime, why are you accusing him? Or when you have doubts, because there's that principle *In dubio pro reo,* in case of doubt, then the verdict of the court against the defendant should be more in favor of the defendant. You have no evidence. The evidence is what sentences someone, that thing I said before, two with no souls one with no head. It's not, it's not, this is it (laughs).

Anita Susuri: I'm interested to know about '81, the demonstrations…

Adem Vokshi: Yes.

Anita Susuri: What was it like? From a professional point of view, but also personal.

Adem Vokshi: In '81 I was a judge in the District Court and I remember the demonstrations when the miners came… the court building was in the northern part of Mitrovica, now where the building still is… and they came, all the streets were cleared, only the protesters were coming. And I know in my office, at the time I was the Secretary of the Organization of the Party for Court and Prosecution. When another judge came, and a prosecutor, they had gone mad… they [protesters] were clamoring in the street. "They are gonna kill us," they will do that, "You have to secure us some guns," and stuff like that you know? "Don't joke around, who is gonna kill you? No one will target you, don't joke around. Leave my office." They came to me as the Secretary, so the party could intervene with the police and secure them with guns. Now when I see them I laugh with each and every one of them because of the foolery they exhibited.

They went to Zveçan, the workers. It was a Friday and I was going to Peja but my car had broken down and I didn't have a vehicle to go with. I walked from there to the bus station, no one even bothered to ask for my name, you understand, right? And when I arrived at the station I saw Islam Lushtaku, a traffic cop. And he goes, "Hey judge, why are you out?" I said, "I want to go to Peja." He said, "The bus lines are not running." I said, "You're a cop, so stop a car that is going to Peja and tell them to take me." and he said, "I will stop one." At that exact point a car passed by with Kraleva plates. He stopped it [and asked], "Where are you going?" He [the driver] said, "To Peja." [So,] he [Islam] told him [the driver], "take him with you" (laughs). I went to Peja.

war in 1999, Serb police arrested him with his two children Kastriot and Kushtrim. Their bodies were found the next day.

This was it. They were scared for no reason. What do they want? They're demanding their rights, well is it allowed? Yes, why shouldn't they demand their rights. That was it. Another very interesting situation, Nexhat Daci was in solitary confinement with the group of intellectuals that were taken in '81. They came into my office wearing jeans, they had changed, you know, Nexhat Daci's brother, professor Hamdi Daci and the late professor Shaqir Shaqiri, a [university] Faculty of English professor.

They came, "Yes, come in." They said, "No, let's go out." I asked, "What happened?" They were scared to come into my office. "Just come in, stop joking around." And I went out. "What is this about?" He said, "They confined him, they jailed Nexhat Daci," he said, "and he's in the Mitrovica jail, can you do something about it?" Anyway, we looked there and we saw that… I didn't look but I talked to the jail director, I used to know him. "What is this about?" [I asked; and he replied,] "Don't worry at all, no one will do anything to him." And just like that. That was it.

Anita Susuri: You told me that Mitrovica was more of an industrial city. Was this noticeable? How was it noticeable? For example, Trepça's influence in the city or…?

Adem Vokshi: Trepça had around 27.000 workers in all of Yugoslavia. Ibush can tell you better, he knows it more accurately because he's perfect with numbers (laughs). He knew the number of all Trepça's workers and all that (laughs). Look, the people who worked in Trepça were oriented only in Trepça. They got that wage, I'm sure the wages were good, I don't know. But there were other benefits. They had those coupons to eat in their cafeteria, even the coupons to take the food with them and take it home and everything. [The Trepça Enterprise] They had their cottages near the sea, they had their cottages in Veli Breg which the workers could use, you know. I don't know if they used them, but I had less contact with them.

But, Trepça had it… maybe politics were like that. They [government] built buildings, they built apartments, they gave them away to staff, but not Trepça's, they gave one to this guy, to that guy, to that one in Mitrovica. Everywhere, even to cops, prosecutors, judges. They provided them with apartments instead of their own staff. This was it. They provided their workers with apartments as well but there were workers who had the need for those apartments and they didn't get anything, but they gave them to someone else. That was it.

And then when the production in Trepça started to drop because of the protests, because of the strikes, that was very noticeable because they [the miners] didn't get wages and the economy started to totally collapse. And when the economy started to collapse after '89 when those miners' protests took place, across all of Kosovo, and not only in Kosovo, they started to help. At first they were gathering food supplies to bring to them and then they organized really well. They had organized, now I'm not so sure if it was the party at the level of the republic or another one that organized to set up

meetings between families.[25] So like, one family to help on that side, one family to help on this side. And so it was really beautiful.

I remember it very well when funds were raised even in Slovenia, to send help to the miners after the strike, the miners' strike at the time. And that money, those in power at the time, led by Serbian structures didn't allow for that help to come here. And those funds were used for the Slovenian lawyers who came here to defend the miners in the trial of Azem Vllasi, Burhan Kavaja and Ibush Jonuzi and these guys. They [the Slovenian lawyers] were saying that they came to defend them for free, but then we found out that the money was raised by the Socialist League, they gave it to them [the Slovenian lawyers] to compensate for the work they did here.

Anita Susuri: Then the march happened, after the march they [Serbian law enforcement] began to interrogate most of them, both the leaders and the miners…

Adem Vokshi: Yes.

Anita Susuri: Were you aware of this? How was this organized back then? Was someone kept to be… were they sentenced? I think a few of them were sentenced.

Adem Vokshi: Yes, there were, some were charged with misdemeanors, they were. Besides that, immediately after they tricked the miners into thinking Husamdein Azemi and Ali Shukriu had resigned, also…

Anita Susuri: Rrahman.

Adem Vokshi: Rrahman Morina. The miners went out and they immediately arrested Azem Vllasi, Burhan Kavaja, Aziz Abrashi, Ibush Jonuzi and 14 others and it was a very gloomy atmosphere, very gloomy. Gloomier than when it rains and hails and that's how it all seemed. Even though the weather was nice, the people really were scared to their bones. "Look, when they arrest Azem Vllasi, what will they do to the rest of us." This was it. Really.

It was well known from the beginning that nothing would come of it. I even remember during the trial when we listened to Azem Vllasi talking about how they were held in Trepça and the sports hall here as well as the youth hall; [he's] a politician. They can talk for two hours and you can't find one mistake because nothing, you understand? That's the rhetoric of a politician, they talk for two hours and you can never know what they're saying. You could even ask them what they said, they wouldn't…

[25] In the beginning of the '90s there was a movement that started with Reconciliation of Blood Feuds, a Family Helps a Family. The miners' families were put in touch with another economically better standing family from another area, and they helped them through this hardship by offering a seasonal job or similar. The speaker confuses how this help was given and by whom.

So Azem is a man of politics, he's wonderful right. We also had Mahmut Bakalli as a politician but Azem too is great.

Korab Krasniqi: What was the climate like? I mean, Albanians were part of Yugoslavia as well, the political situation started to escalate. You were very high up in a public institution. How…

Adem Vokshi: They were, they were. No, I…

Korab Krasniqi: The situation was political.

Adem Vokshi: No, in '82 I switched to a lawyer.

Korab Krasniqi: Lawyer.

Adem Vokshi: Yes, I switched in '82. I resigned from the judge position at the time because I couldn't agree with the politics. And I didn't agree with it, but I couldn't do anything to improve the situation either. And if you find yourself in a situation and you come to terms with others doing whatever and [you] not do anything about it, then you are complicit. And so I wanted out. I looked for a job in Pristina in several places. I even remember at the commercial enterprise here; when I applied, an old man at the time interviewed me, "What do you do for work?" I explained it to him.

And I had resigned but I was waiting for the three-month period for them to accept my resignation or to consider my term finished. That was the law. I said, "Well, I was a judge and I want to switch to a lawyer and look for an enterprise to settle at, but not any kind of job." He said, "Well," he said, "for this job position that was announced, we have the person that we will hire. If you want you can file your application." And then that's what pushed me and I switched to a lawyer. I had the support of Bajram Kelmendi at the time, "Why don't you switch to a lawyer? What are you waiting for? You have nothing to expect from them. Don't expect a good job position because there are no good job positions for intellectuals such as yourself." And back then I decided and I registered as a lawyer.

Korab Krasniqi: Did the '81 protests influence you to make the decision to leave the job you were doing?

Adem Vokshi: To be honest it was very interesting why I made a decision like that. I still have the confirmation letter from the head of the court, which he gave me on the day I resigned. January 17th of '82 they killed the Gërvalla brothers and Kadri Zeka, my birthday was the next day. And I was debating going to the office and I told the typewriter, "Make three copies." And I addressed the Executive Council of Kosovo and the Election and Appointment Committee with the request for dismissal.

You can imagine, on my birthday. That was the most I could do as Adem, nothing more. And the typewriter was looking at me and she said, "Are you in your right mind?" I said, "Yes, very much so." And I took it to the secretary of the judge and I told her, "Protocol this request." Because that went through the chairman of the judge. And they kept that request for one month in the drawer of the chairman.

After one month he called me, he said, "Hey come here," he said, "I talked to the President of the Supreme Court and the Ministry of Jurisprudence," he said, "you can't dare to leave here." "Why don't I dare?" He said, "Can't you see the situation we're in?" I said, "I didn't create this." He said, "No." I asked, "Could I even fix it?" He said, "No." "Have a nice day!" I said, "I'm not a child, resigning today, withdrawing my resignation the next one [day]." And that was the reason.

And the second reason was almost as important as the first one. It was [that] I decided to become a lawyer in Mitrovica [and] not go to Peja because I was a Pejan; to tell Mitrovicans that I will have more authority as a lawyer than they do as judges. And that's what I achieved (laughs).

Korab Krasniqi: What about the reasons you wrote in your resignation request, what were they?

Adem Vokshi: The inability to influence the improvement of the situation and help people. Because I was considering… you can imagine as a lawyer when I defended a minor – they found "KR"[26] graffiti, Kosovo Republic, in Skenderaj – and they gave him 60 days in jail. And I filed a complaint, "What is wrong with you guys, first of all how did you know that he wrote it? And then even if he did what is the big deal? He's a child." Stuff like this. Let's not talk about much bigger stuff.

Korab Krasniqi: Let's go back to '88 and '89, when you had already investigated these turmoils, these moments where you decided to resign, you were working as a lawyer and so on. But nearing the '90s the situation escalates…

Adem Vokshi: More and more every day.

Korab Krasniqi: And with the arrival of Milošević to the political scene, what was the climate like for you as a jurist, as a lawyer to work and live during a political climate of that kind? How did you experience that period of time?

Anita Susuri: So it means, when rights were violated on a daily basis.

[26] The KR acronym stood for Kosovo Republic.

Adem Vokshi: In… listen, maybe it's easier to talk about it from this position. From that position, I always thought that the situation would pass because Janez Drnovšek,[27] a wonderful man from Slovenia, had come to Yugoslavia's leadership. Under the leadership of Yugoslavia in '90, the police murdered my dad at the front door of my house in Kapëshnica. Rizah Sapunxhiu was there too, a former governor of the World Bank. He was from Peja, Rizah Sapunxhiu, and at some point when my father was a director of a factory there, he was a worker of my father. But he accomplished a lot after that and he became governor of the World Bank and he was a member of the Yugoslavia Leadership. The late Rizah Sapunxhiu, but at the time…

And I thought that it would really, always hoping, the situation would be resolved. And I remember in '89 I was coming from Belgrade, where I defended a Trepça director and deputy director, when Marković[28] came to power. And during that exact time the Yugoslav Central Committee had broken, the Communist League of Yugoslavia was dismantled and they asked him, "What do you think about it being dismantled?" He said, "Nothing, life will go on even without the Communist League." And it really was these people that gave hope that you could anticipate something positive from them.

Besides that, the inflation number was in multiple digits. And with the arrival of Marković the situation improved because the *dinar*[29] stabilized. And then in January of '90, Avramović[30] came and he stabilized the *dinar* even more and that always gave me hope because I always see the glass half full, not half empty and I thought that the situation would really be resolved. Not that I could have an impact, but I could try, you know, to influence it to improve. This was it.

Part Three

Anita Susuri: When you defended the accused related to the Trepça case… How, I mean, as far as I know, it was voluntary work or was it? How did you make the decision to defend them?

Adem Vokshi: I didn't make the decision to defend them, their family members came to us and requisitioned us. Because you were supposed to be presented as a defender even though there were volunteers that defended Azem Vllasi, since they needed it because of his name you know. But I won't get into that. Ibush Jonuzi's brother came, now I've forgotten his name, he requisitioned me for Ibush. Ramiz Kadriu's spouse came, he was one of them, not a miner, but a reference administrator or something, she [also] requisitioned me. Velo Osmani's brother came and he requisitioned me as well. I don't know who else, now I have forgotten, you know, I just know that I had three or four defendants

[27] Janez Drnovšek was a Slovenian liberal politician, President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia (1989-1990), Prime Minister of Slovenia (1992-2002), and President of Slovenia (2002-2007).
[28] Ante Marković was a Croatian and Yugoslav politician, businessman and engineer. Marković is most notable for having served as the last prime minister of SFR Yugoslavia.
[29] *Dinar* was the Yugoslav currency. Now it is the basic monetary unit of Serbia..
[30] Dragoslav Avramović was a Serbian economist and the governor of the National Bank of Yugoslavia.

that I defended back then. And we presented their defense in court and we tried to convince them with arguments that these men were innocent. That was the system back then, always on the offensive. But it wasn't the accuser's duty to prove someone was guilty, but the duty of the defendant to prove their innocence.

I even remember, I visited Ibush Jonuzi in jail several times and he used to cry, he used to cry. "I haven't done anything," he used to say, "How?" He had nine children, or how many? It happened once and again, and again. At some point I told him, "Ibush," I said, "if you get out of jail tomorrow, and you destroy yourself, you'll be of no use to your family. You did nothing, right?" "No," he said, "I haven't done anything." I asked, "Well who did do something? Besides you, Burhan Kavaja is in jail, Aziz Abrashi as well, and also Azem Vllasi who is very cunning, he's also in jail. Tomorrow it will be proven that you haven't done anything and your family needs you. Their goal is," I meant the regime, "to destroy you because you guys are intellectuals and that's why."

In total, they took four or five miners, supposedly the miners were being judged but in reality it was these guys. Why would the Krasniqi brothers be accused together with Azem Vllasi's group? He was the director of KEK[31] in Pristina, etc, etc. This was it. He talked to the miners, what else did he do? Stipe Šuvar from the Leadership of Yugoslavia talked to the miners too and they didn't jail him etc, etc. There was nothing in that case. But, at the time Avdi Dinaj was an investigative judge, now he's a lawyer in Mitrovica, and we were studying at the same time, he entrusted the investigations to Rexhep Kaçinaku.

Rexhep Kaçinaku was an investigative judge in Mitrovica, the one I mentioned earlier. But, meanwhile, he left the court and started working in State Security. And the investigations were entrusted to him and he used to invite us, both the defendants and us the lawyers when he questioned the defendants, when he questioned them… but there weren't even any witnesses. There was nothing because he had nothing to grab onto. They [miners] organized in a spontaneous manner. There was no leader who, at least it wasn't proven in the trial, some leader who organized it [strikes].

Because it was always claimed that when Burhan Kavaja, Aziz Abrashi and Azem Vllasi visited the mines, they organized them [the miners] to do it [strike]. But it was a spontaneous expression of discontent. And, you know how it is, they're staying there in that cavern for eight hours [a day], not seeing the sun, they sleep for eight hours and they get to see the sun for only eight hours a day and they've had enough {explains with hands} and at some point they stop agreeing with all of that. As I said, where is all the money being made there going?

Back then they used to say Belgrade was developing, there was development here too, as I said, someone else was using the apartments and all the privileges. There was a restaurant there, Trepça *Komerci,* by the stadium in Mitrovica. It was all on the backs of the miners. How big or small are they

[31] *Korporata Energjetike e Kosovës* - Kosovo Energy Corporation.

[apartments], even if you save one *dinar* it should belong to these people, you know, who deserve it because all of this is being earned from their sweat.

Anita Susuri: Why was there an indictment and based on the indictment what was your opinion? What were they thinking?

Adem Vokshi: The indictment was counterrevolution, Article 114, if I remember right. You know, they organized to overthrow the government. Because the miners' demands were the resignation of the former leaders whom no one agreed with. Other citizens also, if they had the chance they would go out, you know, to protest too… not to mention the miners. This was it. These were the organizers of overthrowing the power, beauce it was called power back then, Ali Shukrija, who was in the Leadership of Yugoslavia. He wasn't in the Leadership of Yugoslavia but he was, there, in some form of leadership. Azem, no, Hysamedin Azemi, he was that sort of leader. Rrhaman Morina replaced Azem Vllasi, of course they didn't agree with him etc. He had to sort of force his way in. Not sort of, but actually. (Laughs)

Anita Susuri: You mentioned earlier about that saying of yours, Ibush Jonuzi told us when you said two with no souls one with no head. But if you could tell us about it, if you remember that meeting and why did you say that?

Adem Vokshi: The client always asks how it will go and one of my sayings when you talk to the client, I don't guarantee anything. Even when you can be sure a thousand percent you can't guarantee anything because it's the court that decides. And not the court, but one day there was a client who had won a case in basic court, to whom the decision was confirmed in the court of second instance, [and] the Supreme Court changed these two decisions and rejected his request. And now imagine the position I'd find myself in as a lawyer, if I guaranteed to the client something that I considered right. This is it.

And I told Ibush Jonuzi, "Ibush, don't forget the popular saying, two with no souls one with no head." Two witnesses could come and say that Adem Vokshi killed someone, and the body was found. [When] someone else entirely has killed them. But there is no evidence and Adem Vokshi can't prove his innocence and he's sentenced to the death penalty. That's why two with no souls are the witnesses who falsely testify against you, and you're left with no head. This is that saying (laughs).

Korab Krasniqi: Can you tell us about the context of the discussion you were having with Jonuz, why did you choose these words exactly? Did you want to say that he…

Adem Vokshi: Don't, no, listen. This is why I don't give false hope to people. Because the biggest mistake is if you give someone false hope and at the end they're disappointed, this is it. I remember when a client came to me, there were one or two preliminary hearings and he said, "They told me," he

said, “that there’s no need,” he said, “for you to come. I fixed it with money, It’s done.” I said, “Alright.” And it was the penal act of robbery which was sentenced to at least one year, there was no way to go under one year.

When he came in the afternoon and he told me, “I was sentenced with one year in prison,” I said, “For real?” “Yes,” he said, “but how could he sentence me to one year?” He said, “And I did this for this one and that for that one, I even talked to the judge.” This is it (laughs). This is why you can never make promises. I mostly deal with civil cases, I deal with criminal ones as well, but how could I make a promise to someone for something like that.

Anita Susuri: They [the miners] were falsely accused, for example, they used to say that Ibush Jonizu knew every single detail about every worker. How is it possible that he didn’t know they were organizing a strike? So there were people who said stuff like this. How difficult was that for you? To find evidence or how was the evidence known?

Adem Vokshi: Now, I’ll tell you about a situation, not about Ibush Jonuzi but about Ramiz Kadriu, one of the accused. I was visiting him and the visit was in the [jail] director’s office. They prepared the visits in their office, okay. I had good chats with the director because we knew each other professionally when I was a judge as well and everything. And among other things, this is what the director told him, “Ramiz, tell us that they have organized this [strike].” I asked “Who are they?” He said, “Azem, Aziz, Burhan and Ibush.” “What did they organize?” “These.” So, he [Ramiz] said, “I wasn’t aware that they had organized anything. I wasn’t the organizer, I wasn’t even aware that there was one.” Because there was genuinely no organizer there.

“Look,” they said, “at the pictures we have.” [Pictures] of him [Ramiz] with another woman, I don’t know about it. “We will show them to your wife,” they said, “and we will ruin your marriage.” They said, “Will you tell us or not?” And I was giving him eye signals to not give up. He said, “I don’t know.” He said, “because if I did, I would tell you, nothing will come of this.” This is it. So, they tried to find people to argue their accusations through these kinds of intrigues. I remember also one of the directors of OUR[32] or something there, brought him [Ramiz] as a witness. And people from the Internal Affairs had talked to him, and when he came he was genuinely telling us what happened and what didn’t.

And, “Who was the organizer?” He said, “Well, I don’t know.” “No,” they said, “but you told us this and that.” “Oh,” he said, “I didn’t say it,” he said, “you have said it,” he said, “and you told me to admit that it was true, but I’m not aware that it is like that.” Now I have forgotten which one of the witnesses it was, Maliqi was the last name, if I remember it right. But anyway, I know that he said it like that. So, the State Security would call people that worked atTrepça to try to gather evidence that they organized the strikes and that their goal was to overthrow Yugoslavia. Trepça was overthrowing Yugoslavia.

[32] *Organizacija udruženog rada (OUR)* - Organization for work unions.

Anita Susuri: I know that even when they had their defense, they always defended each other, but never themselves. That's what I heard. Was it like that?

Adem Vokshi: Well, look, they had no way to defend each other or themselves, they defended everyone with their statements. Were you organized? No. Did someone organize you? No. If someone had organized it and they are saying no, then it means they're protecting someone but there really was no organization. Maybe someone else asked them, do we strike? We will strike. Someone had talked to them, but nothing that was very organized.

Anita Susuri: And the director of Mitrovica's prison was very notorious, he was very rough I think. Is there any case you remember where you noticed that he was?

Adem Vokshi: Not me personally because the treatment they gave me, that they gave my clients was very good, it was very professional. I remember once I went to visit a female client that I was defending because there was a women's prison as well. And a cop, a prison guard, he was dreadful, so I don't call him anything else, dreadful and he really disliked me. And while I was talking to her, he opened the door wide open and he was watching. He had that little window that he could watch through, you know, but not listen because the discussion was not allowed [to be listened to [confidentiality]]. And I closed the door, then he opened it again [and], he said, "The talk is over." That woman's face was like this {explains with hands}. I was defending her for murder.

And anyway I went out of there and I asked to see the prison director and he agreed. "What is this about?" I said, "That fool over there won't let me have a proper discussion with the woman." He said, "He has the right to watch." I said, "He has the window there, he can watch. But, not to open the door and listen to me." "You're right," he said. And he called the woman to his office, gave her a coffee to drink. You know, he had an attitude. I didn't notice that he had some sort of attitude. They say he tortured the prisoners. I've read that Vllasi talked about it, he brought a razor there or what do I know, but when you talk to Vllasi he can tell you all of that, but I didn't notice any of that. Maybe the ones who were jailed know more about his mentality and his actions. This is it.

Anita Susuri: I wanted to ask you since you were the lawyer of Ibush Jonuzi, he was the only one that was sent to Belgrade, why did that happen? Do you remember?

Adem Vokshi: I am not informed or I don't remember. I don't know.

Anita Susuri: Alright. He told us but…

Adem Vokshi: Okay, okay. But I don't have this information (laughs). I don't have this information.

Anita Susuri: What was it like after? How did all of this continue, this trial? What was the mood like? And then how did their family members feel? What expectations did they have? I mean, what expectations did you have?

Adem Vokshi: The mood was very gloomy. I remember once when Avni Gjakova had come and before the trial started he asked the panel chairman to treat the lawyers differently. "If we don't have better treatment," because they used to frisk us a lot, *kijamet*,[33] *kijamet*, you know, "If we don't get better treatment, then when we come next time we'll come naked. No need to frisk us like that," you know. These kinds of frisks were very rough. But, when the guards were Albanian, there were softer ones, you know. But, there were Serbian guards who were very rough with the defendants, they didn't have conflicts of that sort with us lawyers.

Yes, the mood was that when you went to visit them, they the [guards] used to torture you, wait half an hour, one hour, one hour and a half, two hours. To waste your time, you know, to make you go visit your clients and talk with them as rarely as possible. This was it. And the situation for me was very tough because on February 16th of '90, while the trial of Azem Vllasi was still going, the police murdered my father in Peja, at the front door of my house. And the trial had stopped for two or three days and then the trial went on, but I didn't attend, I went back after like ten days. It was, I still don't know how I endured it all, the entire situation, which was honestly very tough.

Anita Susuri: I want to ask you about this now, about how this happened? After that, in one of the trials I don't remember if it was Burhan Kavaja or Ibush Jonuzi who came out to give their official condolences during the court session…

Adem Vokshi: Azem.

Anita Susuri: Azem.

Adem Vokshi: Yes, yes, alright. Okay.

Anita Susuri: And I know that they said to themselves now you've made it worse for us. So, you accused the murderers of…

Adem Vokshi: Ah, ah, yes, they considered…

Anita Susuri: First of all, how did it happen?

[33] Tur.: *kıyamet*, literally the end of the world. In the given context, it's used to describe a very chaotic and difficult situation.

Adem Vokshi: It was a Friday and it was, I think Veli Osmani gave his statement that day if I'm not mistaken. It was a very touching statement. So much so that the trial had stopped and the court panel saw that there's no point in holding the trial because it began, there was this strong will, this shift of attitude began in people, it was a positive shift in that sense, and the trial was dismissed. No more trial, it'll continue on Monday. And I went back home. When the phone rang I answered and it was my mother, she said, "Adem," she said, "*abej*", my father, she said, "they have wounded him in the neck," she said, "we took him to the hospital. Do you mind coming?" "No."

My car had malfunctioned and I didn't have a vehicle. I went to a friend to ask for her car and her brother-in-law came and took me to Peja, but at Mitrovica's exit to Peja the road was blocked because there was a protest, throwing tear gas and all the things they did. So he brought me near Pristina, we took my little brother because he was still studying in Pristina. And we went to Peja. When I got to Peja, I took my wife and the twins to her parents' house.

And I told her, "You stay here with the children." "No," she said, "I'll be with you. Wherever you are I will be there too." We went to the hospital and there they told me that my father had died. Then I went home. Anyway, of course I expressed my condolences to my mother and that night we took my father, by police car, to Pristina's hospital for an autopsy. I tried to get the doctors [in Peja], since I knew them, to do an autopsy immediately, but they didn't, so I came to Pristina the next day. The autopsy was done and then we went back to Peja.

All of Peja was congested the day of the funeral. It was very interesting how the people managed to come to the funeral; it's still not clear to me today. There was a column of people from the cemetery in Peja, now where the cemetery in Peja is, up to Hotel Korza in Peja, today Hotel Dukagjini. The line of people was that big. I feared there would be a massacre with all those people.

My father used to be, as I said, you know, a small store owner, and at the Kapeshnica Bridge, the Sand Bridge as they call it, the children used to go on that side and throw stones at the police on this side of the bridge. That happened every day. And he [my father] of course, "Children, leave, leave! Someone could kill you, they could shoot at you. Leave, leave." But of course the police had documented those [incidents] because peace was not convenient for them, they wanted disorder and to cause turmoil among the people. All with the intention that Milošević at last showed, to deport us from these territories.

And in that, the night before, the night before, it's rumored, I don't have it confirmed even though one man promised to confirm it for me but he went abroad and didn't confirm it. The police were cruising around in Kapeshnica, and they had never done this in Kapeshnica before, they never had. Kapeshnica was a taboo for the police, except maybe some cop that worked there because there were very few Serbs, I could maybe say there were less than five or six Serbian families. And the next day around 2:30, 3:15 the police went out.

At the end of the street there was a house, now that house is demolished. It belonged to a Serbian dentist. The military gathered there, they had turned it into some sort of a brothel and they could see my house from there. They could see the glass door and it was [also] made of glass behind, and when the light fell on it, you could see a silhouette of who was inside. And when the children went in, they always went by our house and they [then] went on the other side by the neighbors' house and [then] they ran away. But our first neighbor was a very unpleasant Serb, her name was Zarka or something. And of course she told them [the police] where the children were running away and the police did their thing. And when they went out there, there were about 200 people in action. The prosecutor, the late Bujar Juniku, who was the prosecutor of the district, told me that one of them with a gun, most probably a sniper, shot my father and killed him. This is it.

After some time, I went to the prosecutor and I took all the documents the prosecutor had prepared there, fortunately he gave them to me because I knew him, we had good chats. And he pleaded to me, "Not today," because it was a Friday, "come tomorrow at 10 and I'll give you the documents." And at the time I thought that he was tricking me to get rid of me, you know. But at 10 I was there to visit and he came to scan all the documents. "Look," he said, "there were 200 cops in action," he said, "I asked for the examination of those guns to see which gun they shot with. They brought them to me," he said, "Only 20 guns, they examined only 20 guns and it was proved that none of them was shot."

He said, "I will ask for it again," he had those requests, "but," he said, "they don't want to prove it." I said, "Bujar even if something is proved, they'll find a cop who's a drunk, they'll find a black sheep and they'll sentence him to four or five years. They'll take him to Serbia to serve his sentence and he'll never spend a day in prison or anything" You know, there's nothing you can do. This was it, you know. It was very tough. For me it was very tough, what can you do, this is life.

Part Four

Anita Susuri: Let's go back to the trial…

Adem Vokshi: To the trial, yes. It was interesting, it felt good, I felt good when, as far as I remember, the defendant Azem Vllasi at the time got up and in the name of all the other defendants expressed condolences for my father's murder. Maybe someone even thought that the position of the defendants became more difficult but I don't believe it did because we were familiar with the mentality of those judges. I was even really familiar with their mentality and those judges felt bad for what had happened to me because they didn't take it as an intentional murder, but as an accidental one. Even though that murder was intentional. With the intention to scare us, the lawyers, and to eliminate a person who had been calming the children protests happening every day in Peja.

And then, on the judges panel was Ismet Emra, he was the presiding judge. Another member of the panel was Jusuf Mejzini, a senior judge. Shaban Binaku, a former miner and a wonderful man, who at the time was very ill, and we would meet often with Uncle Shaban and beg of him – now he is deceased – beg of him, "Please remain in good health until the trial is over." Because there was another judge who would have replaced him. He was muslim, and we were very afraid of him because he used to be on Committees at work and we were all very afraid of him. There was another judge from Montenegro, Milutin Zubov, and he had a level-headed attitude.

So, we really hoped and believed that the final verdict would be fair and that they [the miners] would be cleared of all charges. Especially when at the same time Slovenian leadership had asked for the release of Azem Vllasi and the group. There were big protests in Croatia in support of the miners. There were protests, there were protests… I remember there was a doctor who protested through a strike, specifically to free the miners. Now I've forgotten his name, I can't remember, but I know it very well. On top of it all, the global public had their eyes on this trial.

There were lawyers from Slovenia, Croatia, [and] Macedonia that were part of the trial. They were the lawyers that together with us defended the miners. They were Doctor Miha, no, Doctor Peter Ceferin. He was Miha Kozić with whom they met in Vienna. And then there was the Head of the Chamber… back then he wasn't, yes, he was when I met with him, he was the Head of the Slovenian Chamber. There was Danilo Canović, from Belgrade. There was Želko Olujić, a lawyer from Zagreb. He later became Chief Prosecutor of the State of Zagreb when Croatia became independent, etc, etc. So, all of the global opinion was engaged there [on the trial].

I'm sure this [international attention] contributed to cooling down the [trial's] atmosphere, and when there was no proof, how could you sentence these people with no evidence? Because then what was happening in the trial would come to light. So, there's no evidence, so how could you sentence these people? Also, I do not believe that there was any suggestion made by the government to release these men, but surely there was no suggestion that these men should be punished. Fortunately, in the end, the miners were released, after 14 months of detention.

Anita Susuri: Do you remember that day?

Adem Vokshi: Yes, of course.

Anita Susuri: What was it like?

Adem Vokshi: So many, so many, so many (smiles) throughout Mitrovica. I don't know, now Mitrovica seems small when I think about the amount of people that came out to welcome and applaud him [Azem Vllasi]. And then the Serbs hid behind windows and only watched, fearing what was going to happen, you know. This was it.

Anita Susuri: What was it like during the session, when it [the verdict] was read... because I know that most people didn't expect they would get off?

Adem Vokshi: They didn't expect it, they didn't. Yes, it was, honestly very enthusiastic. Even while going out, I was with my colleague Xhyran Dema, when we went out, the guys from the State Security were asking for those cards {explains with hands} which we used to get into the trial. And yes, they took it from Xhyran and I took it back. I said, "Bring it here," I said, "I kept it for six months," I said, "I will keep it as a souvenir." I said, "Put it in your pocket, Xhyran. Don't give it to them" (laughs). And they hushed because they were also shocked about the verdict and their attitudes softened.

Anita Susuri: I'm interested to know if they had been sentenced, in what manner and how many years would they have gotten?

Adem Vokshi: Listen, I was in a trial in 1982, a couple of months after I switched to a lawyer, I defended Halil Alidema, have you heard about Halil Alidema? [addresses the interviewer] He, his fault was that he was still a target of the regime. They gave him a political leaflet but they threw it from outside, [it was the] State Security [who did it], no one else. And he took it, he read it, and he took it to the basement to place it in a stove down there, to hide it. Instead of burning it, to hide it. They knew that he had it [the leaflet], so they came to take him and they sentenced him to eleven years in prison. In that trial they sentenced Ukshin Hoti to nine years, etc, etc. There, this is it.

Them [the miners] too, if they had been found guilty, a long sentence would have awaited them. Let me not assume, but several years. But, fortunately the [political] climate changed. Back when Halil Alidema got sentenced, at the time it was total darkness. All of '82, even the press did not care, not [about] these guys, not [about] those guys. At the end of the day, the press was destructive at the time.

Anita Susuri: I'm also interested to know, I mean after the trial I think there was a risk for them [the group of the defendants] to be jailed again or for them to get something out of it. Do you remember that? There was this fear too, I think it pushed Avdi Uka and some others to leave the country. I think this was it.

Adem Vokshi: Listen, when the court comes to whatever verdict, each party has the right to appeal. If the verdict was to free them, then the prosecutor, the late Spaso Zanfirovic, had the right to file an appeal, to ask for the verdict to be changed and for them to be found guilty. That was the fear. But it wasn't a fear that was that reasonable because the court of five judges freed you, they didn't just do that for nothing. And he [the prosecutor] could've filed any complaint, but it wouldn't really change anything. He could've only returned the case to trial again for a second time. In that case, there was a risk for them to be sentenced. Without that complaint there wasn't a risk. I didn't expect a risk even if the prosecutor filed a complaint.

Anita Susuri: How did the ‘90s go for you? I can say it was a difficult time period when most people were fired from their jobs.

Adem Vokshi: To be honest, I had a lot of cases [representing] the miners, the Trepça workers, the workers of the Medical Center, and the Municipality, where they were fired. I remember the doctors who were fired on September 3 of ‘90 for no reason at all. Only because on September 3 they didn’t go to work and they were fired. Because the goal was to economically destroy Albanian families, you know, so that they can’t find a [local] solution and they [are forced to] leave [and live] abroad. But this didn’t have an impact on my job, I not only had a lot of work, but even more [work] than usual because I had to write rebuttals, to write suits, I had to represent them.

I remember I used to represent them [people] for employment relationship issues, but also for housing issues because they [the regime] even wanted to take their [people’s] apartments. Because back then there was no housing ownership, only housing rights. Housing ownership came after ‘90 with the law to privatize apartments. At the time, the majority of Albanians had no jobs and it was very difficult [for them] to privatize their apartments. And I remember that I represented them very successfully for housing issues, but the employment relationship issues on the other hand, those cases almost never closed.

They [the authorities] took them [the cases] to Kraleva, Kragujevc, there, they had taken all of the employment relationship cases of Kosovo there because they [the authorities] had no legal support for the termination of employment relationships despite that at the time they [the authorities] brought the law for employment relationships under exceptional circumstances. Because under Article 8 of the Law of Labor for Exceptional Relations, it was stated that an employee’s work contract could be terminated without notice, if the employee missed work for two or more days in a row. It was only one day, September 3. And they couldn’t legally terminate the employment relationship for that one day. This is it.

And for this reason they wouldn’t bother to examine these cases at all. And then they brought a group of judges from Serbia and Vojvodina to help the Kosovo judiciary finish these cases, and they came but none of them [the judges] finished any important cases. Very, very rarely. There were two or three judges who did, they tried to, but it was very difficult to meet those demands.

Anita Susuri: During the ‘90s, there were lawyers who got murdered too, for example, Bajram Kelmendi was murdered…

Adem Vokshi: Bajram Kelmendi was murdered in ‘99. Mikel Marku as I said was murdered after my father… they didn’t murder Mikel Marku, a Serbian neighbor who was a cop beat him up, he beat him

up really badly and then they took him to the police station and held him there for four or five days until he died. That was it.

Anita Susuri: Did you feel at risk or how did you feel during this time period? I mean, when it started initially in '98 with the massacre of the Jashari family,[34] and then until the the beginning of the bombings, when Bajram Kelmendi was killed, what was this time period like? And then the war? I mean, the reaction.

Adem Vokshi: A friend of mine describes it like this, he said, "Last night," he said, "half of the cafe was cops, the other half we were civilians and we were playing with pebbles, we were drinking and everything," he said, "And one guy said to me," he said, "Look," he said, "Ukrashtica there is burning," and "What do you want me to do about it? I can't help" (smiles). This is it. And to tell you another thing, I don't know, not only me, but also my wife and my children, even though they were very little at the time, we weren't scared at all. I adhere to that principle said by that old man, "Children, I'm leaving you an *amanet*,[35] I have died a hundred times until today, you only die once. Now the time to die has come. So, don't die a hundred times." So I didn't die a hundred times, I will only die once. I don't know if you understand or not.

You know why? Now I'll tell you a… I was working on my computer, it was about 1:00. 1:30 in the morning, in January of '99, or February, honestly it may have been February. I don't exactly remember. 1:30 in the morning when the door went *tak, tak, tak* {onomatopoeia} the patio door, at that time I was home.

Anita Susuri: In Pristina?

Adem Vokshi: No, in Mitrovica.

Anita Susuri: Ah.

Adem Vokshi: Yes, I was home and my neighbor was Lah Nimani's brother, Mustafë Nimani, his brother. He had a two-story house and it had windows outside, you understand? And I called him on the phone, "Mustafë, did I wake you?" He said, "Yes." He [Mustafë] was wonderful, I said, "Please look out the window, someone is knocking on my door. I want to open it because they're telling me they're three young guys because I talked to them. But I fear they have the police behind [them] and they might cause me trouble," nothing else. He said, "Don't open the door unless I tell you," and he looked out the windows, no cops, it was only those three.

[34] The massacre of the entire family of the Jashari in Prekaz, Drenica, March 5, 1998 marks the beginning of the Kosovo war.
[35] *Amanet* is literally the last will, but in the Albanian oral tradition it has a sacred value.

And, anyway, we [he and his family] invited them inside, I opened the door and we invited them inside, we welcomed them. The police station, you know up there at the court where it used to be, they had released them from there at around 12:00 at night [midnight]. They got them from Skenderaj and released them there [in Mitrovica], and on their way, they knocked at around ten to fifteen houses, "We knocked at ten to fifteen houses, no one opened the door." This was the people's fear. And then they used to tell me, "We heard the door but we didn't dare to open it." I dared to. Anyway, I also had that neighbor but even if I didn't, I would've opened it. But since I had that solution why not use it.

And the next day one of the guys had some trouble there in Mitrovica. A *gymnasium* teacher, Hasan Veliqi, came to take this guy. He came to take his nephew and take him to his aunt in Vushtrria, but he [the nephew] was afraid. I said, "I'll give you a ride there." I got him in my car and took him to Vushtrria (laughs). Recently one of them met with my son, one of those boys, and he told him how everything happened, "Your father," he said, "took us home back then." The next day we gave them lunch and we escorted them home. This was the people's mood but also my lack of fear.

I only feared one thing during '99, I feared for my children. Why did I fool myself into thinking that that situation would only take three or four days and he [Milošević] would accept defeat and that problem would be resolved. Not only me, but many people thought like that. But I would've never guessed that it would take 77 days. I went around Mitrovica for a month hiding here, hiding there with a family of four, *kijamet*. This is it. It was very difficult.

Anita Susuri: What did you see during that time as you went around Mitrovica? What did you see, what was it like?

Adem Vokshi: On the day of the bombings, that night, the barracks were very close. And then when the grenade fell there the children were at the neighbor's, they climbed the wall and came to our house. And then the next night we went to our neighbor's there and… the neighbor's house started to burn and I called the firefighters, but they didn't answer. I called the police, I said, "This and that, the house is burning." They said, "My house is burning too." "Excuse me." There was nothing you could do. But they didn't bother us at the house. The next day I got into my car and took my family and was on my way to Zubin Potok on that side.

The police stopped us and said, "Where are you going?" I said, "God willing, to Veli Breg." I didn't tell them I was going further, "Go back! I'm telling you to go back!" They didn't even allow me to speak, because if I had spoken in Serbian I would have beat them to it, you know. But, what could I say, I went back (laughs). I took refuge at Mustafë's sister, we only slept one night. All the houses around got burned down, all the houses got burned down, all of them, it was *kijamet*. And Mustafë that day… I went out to get some wood chips [to make a fire], to get some potatoes, because there was no food to eat or to cook.

And then two cops went in and broke down the patio door and went inside, I had my car there, I had a Kadett. And they asked, "Who's in here?" I said, "My family and I." Now, I couldn't tell them about Mustafë because he went there to hide. But if I told them he was there too, why did he hide there? If they'd found him, they would kill him, anyway (laughs). They had guns. "Who's inside?" "My family." anyway they went inside, they looked around and went out. When they went out I asked, "Do you want to check in the basement?" They said, "No, no we trust you."

But there were four of them, two remained outside, two inside. And one of them asked me, "Who are you?" I said, "I am Adem Vokshi," what else to say. They knew me better. And he said, "A well known lawyer," the other one asked, "Was he good or not?" (laughs). "Will you sell me your car?" I said, "No." "Why?" I said, "Look at how the car's floor matts have loosened up." It really was damaged a lot, "It has loosened up and if I sold it to you like this you'd say the lawyer tricked me." "Don't joke around!" I said, "It doesn't suit you," I said, "because you won't even be able to drive it for 200 kilometers."

And then he agreed because when I said no {explains with hands} (laughs). They went out and in the afternoon two other Serbs came and they came wearing masks. The ones in the morning had no masks, the ones in the afternoon had them. "Who's inside?" I said, "The owner of the house and me with my family," and they came inside. They checked with guns like this {explains with hands}. But while leaving one of them told me that I knew him, but I didn't dare to say I did. His Albanian was perfect. He said, "I don't want to see you here anymore," in Serbian. Do you know Serbian? [addresses the interviewer].

Anita Susuri: Yes.

Adem Vokshi: Anyway, I said, "Alright. Where do I go?" He said, "To Albania." I said, "Tonight?" "No, no," he said, "tomorrow." "Alright, thank you!" That night all the houses around were burning. We couldn't even sleep at the house. The next day we took the car and left to the northern part [of Mitrovia] because you couldn't dare to go on this side [southern]. In the northern part, I had the key to my cousin's apartment there, neighbors with *SUP* (laughs). I stayed there for four or five days, then they stole my car, and then I walked. We [he and his family] went to the bus station to try and leave, but that day the bridge on the way to Zubin Potok was bombed and we couldn't go that way. And then after four or five days, [we got] on the bus to Albania.

Anita Susuri: What was that like because it's quite far?

Adem Vokshi: I had luck, I don't know, maybe I believe in God a lot, and doing good, good will come your way. We slept over in Zhabor [neighborhood] there with my family for one night and the next day the military kicked us out at 12:00 in the afternoon, the regular army, "Come on, leave it, go to the bus station." We stopped at the school in Shipol [neighborhood] there, and we stayed there for one night. We found a house, we thankfully did because it started raining, rain *kijamet*. And the next day, a guy

came there, where we had slept, and gave 200 *marka*[36] to the cop and he [the cop] didn't give him [the guy] the nice truck, but the other one. And in that truck, they told me to go hide in the back of it, "Don't let them see you because they will cause you trouble." Children and women in the front. The truck took us to within 3 kilometers of the border [with Albania].

On the way, they stopped him [the truck driver] at Prroni i Keq and fined him 70 *marka*, supposedly because there were too many people in the truck and stuff like that. But we crossed there fine, we crossed. And then we walked to the border. Then at the border, it was closed till 9:00. At 9:00 it started to rain, *kijamet*. [They told us,] you can't take clothes, you can't do this, you can't do that. What a disgrace. All the family documents, the ID documents and all that, I put them under one of my twin's shirts, he doesn't know Serbian, and I told him, "Don't speak at all. If they stop you I'm here, I'll speak with them."

When it started to rain like that, they started to cross the borders, "The documents?" A couple of my neighbors gave them their IDs, they took them and ripped them apart {describes with hands}, you know. "Your documents?" I said, "They took them on our way here." "Come on, pass!" So, nothing, I saved our documents. Anyway, I saved my family, which was really good. I said to myself in my right mind knowing all this stuff, how did I end up staying here. All of my friends, "Are you planning to leave [to go abroad]?" "No way, why leave?" And the next day they're nowhere to be found, they left before me (laughs).

Anita Susuri: Where did you stay in Albania?

Adem Vokshi: I stayed in Tirana. The first night I stayed over at a Mitrovician's there at the arabs' apartments and the next day… Anyway, that night we tried to contact my wife's family because they have a house in Tirana, downtown, at the Faculty of Law there. But we didn't know where it was or how to get there. There was a lot of fear that they wouldn't accept us in Tirana, that they wouldn't accept us in Durrës, that they'd take us to Vlora or what do I know. And the next day, we went out for a walk but, suddenly… we ran into a relative of my wife and they told us, they gave us directions to the house and we went there. We stayed there for about two or three days, then we found a two-room apartment to rent for 600 *marka* in Tirana and we paid for it for two months all at once and it was like that (laughs), what could we do.

Anita Susuri: How did you experience the news about the liberation and how did you return? Where did you return?

[36] 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*.

Adem Vokshi: It's very interesting. My son that works with me [now], Urim, was little back then, six years old, not even six years old. When we crossed to Albania and crossed the border there, "Dad," he said, "the flag." "Yes, son," I said, "we're screwed." Palestinians came to mind, Albanian Muhaxhers[37] came to mind, all of them did. "We will never return here [Kosovo] again." Something unbelievable! And they complain, having freedom is what matters. I went to Novi Pazar in '98 with a friend and the Bosnians used to say to me, "What do you want here? You have all the good stuff, you have cars, you have this, you have that… What else are you looking for?" "We're looking for freedom." Nothing matters without freedom.

Anita Susuri: How did you get back up on your feet after? How did you start your work?

Adem Vokshi: Everything I had in Peja was destroyed. Anyway, it wasn't mine but the house was shared. In Mitrovica, the house that I had was on the ground floor, the brothers of Adem Demaçi[38] sold it to me, and I always tease them about it. And my office was destroyed, out of about 13 thousand cases only 300-350 remained, incomplete but what I could find you know, the other ones they destroyed. I had a plethora of literature and books, they took everything. And then I uploaded them to my computer in case any of the parties needed them and some of them came to get whatever was left.

So I stayed over one night at a friend's in Mitrovica, then when I came back from Peja two days later, there was no room left there so I stayed at another friend's in Mitrovica. He forced me to go, but I didn't stay long, three or four days. And then an elderly man from Gjakova, Arsim Abrashi, gave me an apartment which I had won from him when they expropriated his wealth. Not only that apartment, about three apartments, a house and all that. But he said, "Take this and" {explains with hands}. He could've rented it out, it was across from the municipality. He said, "You'll stay here for one year."

And then another year, I helped my neighbor Mustafë to rebuild his house through AKTED,[39] back then you had to rebuild your house, and his [house] was a category four [mostly destroyed]. I had a category five, you know I had to start from scratch. They rebuilt his house and I lived there for a year. Then I bought an old house, it was *kijamet*. When my wife heard what house I had bought she said, "You're not in your right mind." What could I have done? I said, "I will fix that house and you won't go in there," and one of the twins said, "How could you not buy it? Where can you buy a house with three thousand *marka*?"

I then sold my land because that woman who sold it to me was the wife of one of my friends, he's a catholic. I had good chats with her, and then she got married in Peja but we still talked to each-other

[37] *Muhaxhir* and *Muhaxher*, plural: *Muhaxhirë and Muhaxherë*; meaning Muslim refugees are terms borrowed from Ottoman Turkish: muhacir and derived from Arabic muhajir.
[38] Adem Demaçi (1936-2018) was an Albanian writer and politician and longtime political prisoner who spent a total of 27 years in prison for his nationalist beliefs and political activities. In 1998 he became the head of the political wing of the Kosovo Liberation Army, from which he resigned in 1999.
[39] *Agjencia për Bashkëpunim dhe Zhvillim Teknik* - Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development.

because he died, my friend, and we always kept in touch. One of her sons is in America, her daughter is married in Postruc or, she's married in Croatia, Zagreb.

And she said, "They're offering me a hundred thousand euros," that house, a hundred thousand *marka*, the house was for sale for a long time but no luck. It was saved for me (laughs). And she said, "For a hundred thousand I'll sell it to you because it's a pity for you to remain on the streets," you know, I said, "Oh thank you a lot, but I don't have the money," she said, "Make only one quarter of it, my daughter and son need it," she said, "and when you make the rest, you'll give it to me." I said, "Oh, like that?" "Yes." I said, "Congratulate me." I took out those three thousand *marka* and I gave it to her. I bought a house with three thousand *marka*. And then I slowly got back up on my feet.

They begged me to become a judge immediately after the war. They heard I was a good jurist, that I was a judge and I had helped people. There was this guy Heiner and I asked, "Will you tell me something?" I asked, "The wage is 250 *marka*. Yes?" I said, and I told him everything I lost, what I inherited, what I earned. My wife is an intellectual, I'm an intellectual, everything. I said, "And with 250 *marka,* how long will it take for me to rehabilitate?" I said, "Is there a risk if I'm a lawyer? Is it prohibited?" "No, no," he said, "you can be." I said, "I'm choosing to be a lawyer, I have chosen and I'll remain a lawyer."

And lastly I'm married. My wife is from Peja because everyone thinks she is from Mitrovica, but the women in Mitrovica back in my time didn't want me, but I deceived her, she was a student and I married her. And I have two twins [boys] born in '85, a daughter born in '89 and my youngest son born in '93. My youngest son works with me as a lawyer, one of the twins is also a lawyer, but he works in Mitrovica. The other twin is in economics and works in the Prosecutor's office in Mitrovica, but he also has a private store in which he works.

My daughter is an economist, she has a masters from the Faculty of Law. She's currently a deputy director at *Mehmet Akif* school in Lipjan and she has a daughter, and she's expecting another baby. My oldest has two daughters and a son. My second one, the twin, has two sons. They're very mischievous, but what can you do, they're children. My youngest son will soon have a daughter. And yes, a good and useful family to society.

Anita Susuri: Now you live in Pristina, right?

Adem Vokshi: No, I still live in Mitrovica, my wife won't come to Pristina (laughs).

Anita Susuri: Korab, do you have any questions?

Korab Krasniqi: Yes, as a closer. Since you have experienced, how to say it, several systems, I'll call them systems, and then in the '90s the Milosević regime and now you live in an independent Kosovo,

which is trying to build itself into a proper state with its available capacities and the help of the international community. To ask you, what's your point of view or how could you compare these three justice systems?

Adem Vokshi: I didn't like any of the systems. Being forced to live in these systems is something else. Because the prior systems were despotic, they were systems that wanted to command people, they were systems that… also the socialist system, which made people dependent on income, you have a wage and a ten day vacation and eventually a cottage, yes.

The current system has its weaknesses. But look, compare the Kosovo of '99 and '98, to not say earlier, with Kosovo today, is there no change? The youth are eager to move abroad, what will they find there? I could've gone abroad a long time ago. Back when they murdered my father, they would've welcomed me abroad and [it would've been better] for my children and everything. They [diaspora] are building two and three story houses here for their children. They won't even come back here themselves, let alone their children.

Kosovo is wonderful, it's free. Now we only have to work and choose the right people in positions of power. We've seen that there are people being elected who are not worthy, elect the ones who are better. This is it. We have everything good. Everything.

Anita Susuri: Do you have any more questions? [addresses Korab] Thank you a lot for the interview and your contribution.

Adem Vokshi: Thank you to you as well for all the work you're doing and all the commitment and everything, I hope you will be successful.

Anita Susuri: Thanks a lot.

Korab Krasniqi: Thank you.