

# Oral History Kosovo

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## INTERVIEW WITH IBUSH JONUZI

Vushtrri | Date: July 28, 2021  
Duration: 139 minutes

Present:

1. Ibush Jonuzi (Speaker)
2. Anita Susuri (Interviewer)
3. Korab Krasniqi (Interviewer)
4. Besarta Breznica (Camera)

*Transcription notation symbols of non-verbal communication:*

*() – emotional communication*

*{ } – the speaker explains something using gestures.*

*Other transcription conventions:*

*[ ] – addition to the text to facilitate comprehension*

*Footnotes are editorial additions to provide information on localities, names or expressions..*

## Part One

**Anita Susuri:** Mister Ibush, if you could introduce yourself, your birth date, birthplace, [and] tell us something about your family, your origin.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Hello, welcome, I am honored that you are in my home today. I will start with a saying from president Rugova,<sup>1</sup> “We should not close ourselves off, we have to show who and what we are.” So, I am Ibush Jonuzi, I was born on January 28, 1950 in the village of Suma [as it was called] back then, now it’s called Pasomë, but the village should be called Suma. Actually the former American representative in Vushtrria, Charles Denison Lanen had asked at one point, “Why” he asked, “are you changing the village names?” I said, “No, Deni, we are not changing them, but Serbia has changed them because otherwise, the original name of the village is Suma.”

I come from an average family, my father worked within agriculture and farming, and my mother was a homemaker. But they were very ambitious in work and the activities they participated in. And I say this with honesty, when my father went out to work the field, he was a role model for the village, “Sefadin went out [to work], there is nothing to wait for, we have to go out and work.” My mother was a very valuable homemaker. Even though my father died 52 years ago, and my mother 19 years ago, they are continuously mentioned among family because they were two great parents.

From him, from my two parents, from Sefadin and Sylema, I have analyzed our family tree. We are 179 family members today, out of them, 102 are women and 77 are men. I completed four years of elementary school in the village, so [it was] in Suma. It had three classrooms, its construction was very, very poor. But that’s what it was like at the time. Whereas, from fifth to eighth grade, I attended school in the village of Smrekonica. So I had to travel in two directions, six, twelve kilometers, it was quite difficult. Why? Back then, even winter and fall were different from what they are today.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibrahim Rugova (1944-2006) a writer and journalist, founder and leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo, and President of Kosovo during the war and after until his death.

And then it was a special characteristic because back then there were no roads, we had to travel under difficult conditions, so twelve kilometers. But even though I traveled twelve kilometers, I feel bad saying it, but I was the best student in class. And then I went to the Technical High School in Mitrovica, it was called Boris Kidrič. In former Yugoslavia the school of Mitrovica was the best school. I finished the technical high school, I finished the vocational technical school and on February 16 of 1973, I was hired in the flotation mine Trepça in Stari Trg, where I also had a Trepça scholarship.

**Anita Susuri:** I wanted to ask you about the school, was it on the northern side of Mitrovica or...?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, the technical high school was on the northern side of Mitrovica and at the time I traveled 32 kilometers in both directions. From Pasomë to Mitrovica it was about 16 kilometers but I'm saying 32 kilometers which was very difficult, very hard.

*[The interview was interrupted here]*

**Anita Susuri:** What was the journey to the school like, you mentioned that transportation lines weren't that frequent?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** There was only one bus, actually it was a minibus at the time which traveled from Vushtrria to Mitrovica. We had to go out to Smrekonica [to take the bus], but 50 or 60 percent of the students weren't able to get on it at all because the minibus was small and the travelers were students. I will tell you about one case, the bus arrived, we couldn't get on and my classmates said, "Well there is no space, Ibush." I ran from Smrekonica to the technical school. When I went there, the math professor asked, "What happened, Ibush?" I said, "Like this, professor, I couldn't [get on the bus]." "Why would you do this you fool?" He said, "Why are you in this state?" I was as if someone had thrown water on me, I was all sweaty because of the running, only so I wouldn't be late to class. I'm saying, there was an order, there was discipline back then.

**Anita Susuri:** What were the relations like, I think there were Serbs in school back then, there were also Serbs...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, there were, yes.

**Anita Susuri:** What were the relations back then?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The relations were...

**Anita Susuri:** Were there Serbian professors?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** There were Albanians, but there were also Serbs. Some of the subjects were in Serbian and the criteria was really high. I also said in the beginning that the criteria was really high, but then Albanian staff started to be hired and the situation improved day by day. Otherwise, it was a technical high school with very high criteria. That was the matter of education.

I finished high school and I am telling you the truth, I was thinking of becoming a technician because there were employment opportunities everywhere. And a fellow villager of mine asked, "What are you doing Ibush?" I said, "I want to get a job," "Where?" I answered, "In Obilić." He said, "It's a pity for you to get a job and not finish university." But there was another issue because my father died and I still hadn't finished high school. I experienced my father's death very, very painfully.

**Anita Susuri:** Were you the big brother in your family?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** No, I was the youngest.

**Anita Susuri:** Oh, the youngest.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The youngest. Three brothers, I was the youngest. But they weren't in school, I was the first child in our broader family to go to high school at the time. And it was difficult because today there are opportunities to consult with other family members who have finished school. There is a PhD graduate in my family, two master graduates, they finished bachelor's for five years and masters for two. I have two masters graduates in my family, three with their bachelor degrees, I have four nephews and nieces who are in university, so you have the opportunity to consult with whoever you want.

But the internet does its thing too, back then there was no opportunity, for the smallest issue, you had to think long and hard, how to solve it, an assignment or anything. And what that fellow villager of mine said resonated with me, so I dropped it [applying for a job] after I had prepared the documents, I went to the technical vocational school, and I enrolled there. I finished on time, so I started in '70, [and] I was hired in Stari Trg in '73, as I mentioned I also had a Trepça scholarship. But I didn't leave it at that because I noticed it would be a pity. And I immediately enrolled in university, I finished it.

**Anita Susuri:** Did you enroll in university through the scholarship, or was it high school?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Nope, I finished the vocational school through the scholarship. The technical [school], whereas I enrolled in university through...

**Anita Susuri:** What was it like back then, if an enterprise gave you a scholarship you were required to work there, or what?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, it was, that was the contract with the enterprise that gave you the scholarship, to start working there after finishing school. So for me it was a great privilege to be hired at Trepça at the time. On February 15 of '73, I started to work in Trepça. Otherwise, I was the first engineer in the base unit where I was hired, there weren't even Albanian technicians. When I went into the office there, there was a Montenegrin director, or Serbian, he used to say, "I am Montenegrin" but he was Serbian. And I showed him the letter of acceptance {he imitates giving of the letter}, he said, "Sit there boy" he said it in Serbian, of course.

I was looking around for something to sit on, but there was no chair. And I remained on my feet, unfortunately I traveled from Pasomë and it was raining that morning, we were dripping wet, there weren't even umbrellas at the time, we had to accept reality. And he took the letter of acceptance and said, "Sit there," I remained on my feet. I was tired from the day, so from 7:00 to 2:15, there was a clothes hanger and it had a *polica* [srb.: shelf] and I went and sat there. The next day he brought me a chair, and I took a seat. There was only one qualified Albanian there, so it means he got comfortable there, otherwise everyone else was Serbian. Many Albanians from the flotation mine Trepça were surprised that I went there. I said, "I don't know, they sent me here" and I really had no business being there.

I will tell you about a case, I used to advance from time to time, I used to advance with work, advance with results, I will be honest I got medals in Trepça two times, employee medals, I got gold medals twice. I became a director to that first director of mine. And he told me once, "*More*<sup>2</sup> Ibush who would've thought" he said, "that you'd become my director." I said, "Yes, because you left me standing up on the first day of work, you didn't bring a chair at all." And he turned red, he said, "No." I said, "No, it's true" in front of the people, I said, "it's true. On the first day" I said, "I will not forget that until I die. Instead of being happy" I said, "I remained on my feet without having the possibility to sit." I said, "But it's not a problem." So this was what the beginning was like there. Trepça was everything.

I will tell you another detail about Trepça now. In 2007 we went to a Balkan conference in Turkey. We were four MPs of Kosovo's parliament. That man they assassinated, [Oliver] Ivanović,<sup>3</sup> Teuta Sahatçija, myself and [Hydajet Hyseni](#). After the conference finished, we were taken to dinner. And Hydajet Hyseni said to the lecturer, a respected professor, he said, "Professor" he said, "Ibush is an engineer in Trepça." "Ah, engineer!" {raises posture} he moved from the chair like this trust me, he said, "How is Trepça doing?" I said, "Professor, so-so" I answered, "when you come to Trepça I will give you a Trepça crystal to keep as a memory." He said, "You will give it to our ambassador when they come."

He also said, "Look, only you have Trepça, nobody else has [a company such as] Trepça." He said, "I am the fourteenth generation of lords, we continuously" he said, "followed it. I have been lecturing for 50 years" he said. I will repeat it, he said, "Only you have Trepça, nobody else has a Trepça." So I mean, I am saying that Trepça was everything. But unfortunately everything has changed today, instead of changing for the better, many things have stagnated, I just wish to God there will be better days for everyone.

*[The interview was interrupted here]*

**Ibush Jonuzi:** I will tell you a detail about when we enrolled in the technical vocational school, 72 students enrolled in the department of mining. When we fulfilled the criteria to continue to the second

<sup>2</sup> Colloquial: used to emphasize the sentence, it expresses strong emotion. *More* adds emphasis, like *bre*, similar to the English *bro*, brother.

<sup>3</sup> Oliver Ivanović (1953 – 2018) was a Kosovo Serb politician. Ivanović served as the State Secretary of the Ministry for Kosovo from 2008 to 2012 and was also a member of the Coordination Center for Kosovo from 2001 to 2008. He was assassinated by unknown perpetrators on January 16, 2018 in North Mitrovica.

year [of studies], we were only six. And that is a special case, out of those six, five of us were married. And one day, as young people, we were at the cabinet talking and a professor came, a very honorable and respectable professor. "What is this? What is this?" A colleague of mine said, "Well professor we were talking" "What were you talking about?" He said, "We" he said, "are in university" he said, "and have wives." "What is that about?" "Well that five of us are married, we all fulfilled the criteria, only this..." {shows with his hand in front of him} and he was from Pristina, from the Macedonian faculty in Pristina.

And the director addressed me, "Is it true Ibush?" I said, "Well, professor." "All five of you are married?" I said, "Yes, the five of us are married" (smiles). But relations change, I mentioned earlier that technical school was very difficult. Why? We had a lot of subjects in Serbian, there were no textbooks, there were only textbooks in Serbian, you couldn't find anything in Albanian at the time. Even in university, because the Faculty of Mining and Metallurgy was first opened in Mitrovica in '70, it was opened in '70, and then it started. But at the time finishing university meant you had opportunities to find a job anywhere. Today, unfortunately, you finish it and it's still difficult [to find jobs]. Because all the staff that graduated back then were hired in Trepça.

The first generation of geologists came out of the faculty in Mitrovica and we made a request to hire them in Trepça, at the time I was the technical director in Trepça and I am honestly saying, we didn't need seven geologists. We needed one, two {counts on fingers} because we had geologists. But for the sake of them being the first Albanian generation, since I had asked a very respected professor, I said, "What are these students like?" He said, "Ibush, they are very good," he said, "even the professors from Belgrade that lecture here said that they are better than the students in Belgrade." And we hired all of them. They really were good and there was an opportunity to hire them and help them and everything.

**Anita Susuri:** I wanted to ask you about Trepça being very famous, especially around Mitrovica, for the villages, for Vushtrria and... but I'm not sure how aware you were of Trepça's history about the English who initially started to explore...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes.

**Anita Susuri:** Do you know anything about that, could you tell us?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, the English explored in 1927 until 1930, in 1930 Trepça started its first productions. But even the esteemed professor whom I mentioned earlier, it was Lord Robert, who said, "We followed [Trepça] for generations," he was English himself, "the issue of Trepça." They took advantage of it in a very professional manner even though it was the '30s, the matter of security because the mine is very dangerous. But, I am saying, the mine of Trepça is very stable in comparison to the other mines, since the sedimentary rocks are mostly limestone and they're solid.

But, however, technology wasn't on the level it is today, the possibility to take advantage and go through with the production plan, but it was all manual labor, difficult, heavy work. However, the

results are fairly good. After the English, the Germans used it during the war and then it was our generation. The first engineer in Trepça was Albanian, Dr. [Minir Dushi](#) who is an academic, who still is today, who is a very esteemed man. He did all he could for Albanian students at the university and all the Albanian staff who came out of there. We are professor Minir Dushi's students and through this interview I warmly send my regards to him because he has contributed a great deal.

Professor Minir at the time... because the miner's language was more Serbo-Croatian. They didn't know how to say, "My name is Ibush Jonuzi [in Albanian]" but he said it in Serbian. Or the payment number, you had to, it was a rule to write your numbers. For example, my number was 116, so they would know when you entered the mine, when you left, all that stuff. And they didn't know how to say the salary number but they said *platni broj*. Sorry for saying it in Serbian, but that's how they originally said it. So professor Minir continuously reminded them, "That is not alright, you have to learn it in Albanian."

**Anita Susuri:** They didn't know the terms?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** They didn't know the terms [in Albanian], they didn't know. They didn't finish school, unless they attended a Serbian course and everything. So professor Minir, besides contributing professionally, he also contributed in the national aspect as the first engineer in Trepça.

**Anita Susuri:** When did you decide to follow this path professionally, were you aware of the difficulties? About it being difficult, unsafe, that it is unsafe for the miners, there could be accidents, I'm sure you knew all of this. What influenced you to ignore that and choose this profession?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Well this was also a family tradition. My father worked in the mine for some time, my [paternal] uncle worked in the mine, two of my cousins worked in the mine. One of them also died in the mine, the mine soil swept him over in 1948, he was young, he died in the mine at 26. When I started working in Stari Trg, in '73 as I mentioned, after some time I immediately researched the records about how he died, how did he die? Both of my cousins were together, one of them died right then and there, the other one was wounded, but he survived. So, it was a family tradition to work in Trepça and I liked that profession. I wanted it for some time because my father used to tell me about how they traveled from Pasomë to Stari Trg by foot and they had to take food with them. They also took their work boots with them because they had no place to leave them, so they traveled during that time. I had many relatives who worked at Trepça.

**Anita Susuri:** What else did he talk about, in regards to working back then? The work was done through primitive tools, it was harder to work. Can you describe your father's story about Trepça?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** As I said, starting from traveling, food, clothing, working tools, safety measures, everything was lacking at the time, first. Second, it was all manual labor. They had some drilling hammers and they had to physically do their work with everything else, they transported things with trolleys, they carried the ore on their arms. They loaded it using shovels and broke it using hammers,

this was all difficult work. Now the situation is totally different, even at the time when I started the situation was better than when my father and cousins and my uncle worked.

**Anita Susuri:** According to what we were told about the Second World War, there were also hostages they captured and made to work.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, there were. Based on the writings, there were war hostages and prisoners who worked in the mine. They worked an entire work shift and then they were sent to those casemates they had. There were war hostages.

**Anita Susuri:** What are these casemates? Were they like shelters?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, [places] where they sheltered them, yes.

**Korab Krasniqi:** Could you tell us about the Germans because you already told us about the English. From 1927 to 1930 there was exploration, the first production...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The production, the production...

**Korab Krasniqi:** When the Germans came, what was worked on while they were here? Was there any transformation, for example technological, industrial, production wise while they were here? I mean from what you have heard and read.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes there were changes, successively in Trepça, there were steps, but small steps, there were continuous positive changes to improve the miner's life, conditions, safety and all that. There were improvements.

**Anita Susuri:** You mentioned the hostages and everyone who worked there by force. How difficult could the work be when they brought hostages to work there? There were people who were paid for working for example, was that the only difference, so the salary, or was it also the conditions under which they worked? The ones who were paid, were they in better work positions from the hostages, do you know about that?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** I don't... I'm sure the regular workers were in better positions, the ones who had monthly salaries, compared to the ones who were punished to work there, so they brought them there as a punishment. There was a difference, of course there was, and the ones who were leaders were all [officially] employed. Front workers, supervisors, workers, managers, they were all staff who had monthly salaries. While they [hostages] were exploited in the harshest way at the time.

Otherwise, in Trepça I came across old works where the ore was transported with a wooden cart, we know what a cart is. There was a job which at the time we worked from point 610 to point 915, so the sea level would match with the mine. When we penetrated to a [certain] part, I went in because I was very curious to see every detail and see what was there. I came across a wooden cart there, it was all



wood, not like carts today which are made from metal and have rubber wheels and all, but it was all wood.

And it was worked in the most difficult way, with chisels, and small hammers, that's how the ore was worked, not like today with 500-600, 5,000-7,000 square meters surface which is used. I visited some German mines in Velenje in '87, and I saw that the mine was fantastic, but when I saw the ore body which was in Germany, you can't compare them to the ones in our mine. The ore bodies here were and are different, there were only veiny ones in Germany.

**Anita Susuri:** And what is the difference for example, for someone who is not familiar with this?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The difference is that as I mentioned, there is a 5,000 - 6,000 square meter surface where the ore is worked here, the [earth] veins were maybe 20 centimeters there, that vein, that veiny ore was worked by the Germans. But, the conditions in Germany couldn't be compared to the ones here. They even offered me to remain there and work in Germany in '87, even though I went there as an official from Trepça. And while talking there, a director who was Hungarian, a Hungarian from Vojvodina.

And he said, "Ibush" he said, "will you work in Germany, here in the mine?" I asked, "What do you offer?" He said, "We will offer you seven thousand *marka*<sup>4</sup> entry wage, we will give you a brand new company car. We will give as much credit as you want. Depending on the production based on your implementation plan you will have your [bonus] percentage." He said, "These are the conditions we offer so you will remain in Germany." I said, "No, thanks a lot!" "Why?" I said, "No, I can't. I have a duty to Trepça, I will never stop."

So, it was something that at the time even they knew about. Why, because we had tight collaboration with the Germans, they regularly came to the mine, they brought tools, they brought various machinery. So we were familiar with each other. And I feel bad for saying it, based on the work I did, based on my results they knew me well as a professional in Trepça.

**Anita Susuri:** Do you know what the salaries were like in the '40s for example? At the time your father and uncles worked?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** No, to be honest, I can't know, because it's a long time...

**Anita Susuri:** How were they paid?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** I don't know, I can't know, since I don't know I can't talk about it. I can't just talk without sense.

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<sup>4</sup> Albanian: *Marka*; German: *Deutsche Mark* was the basic monetary unit of West Germany from 1948 to 1990 and of reunited Germany from 1990 to 2001. It was used as a stable, non-official currency in various Yugoslav republics as a result of hyper-inflation of the *dinar*.

**Anita Susuri:** Yes. At the time when you started working in Trepça in '73...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** It was a better time period for the position of Albanians because the constitution was written in '74...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, right.

**Anita Susuri:** How did you see Trepça back then? What condition was it in?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Trepça, I will say that line again: Trepça is Trepça. Working there was a source of pride. Why? In former Yugoslavia, an engineer who worked in Trepça had the doors open to work somewhere without applying, just a request, "I want to work in this mine" and you got it. A lot of staff, a lot, not Albanians of course but of Muslim, Serbian, Montenegrin nationalities chose their [work] places wherever they wanted in former Yugoslavia if they worked in Trepça. Because Trepça was a school, not just a mine, but it was a school.

The cooperation between the miners was exceptionally good, the level of respect was great. I am sorry to say because it's a shame to me, but when I went back to Trepça in 2014, I saw [the difference of] how they work today and how we worked back then. The respect between the leader and the miner was great. The miners didn't welcome you sitting, they stood up when they saw you, another special attribute was that people were disciplined there. You could never hear about the miners having a problem with each other, or the leadership, or...

So, that was proved right in the November march, at the miners' strike, everything that was said was proved right. Because you know, you heard about it although you are young, the main pillar, the main hit in the breakup of former Yugoslavia was the miners' march and strike. Whether one might want to accept it or not, this is the reality. Protesting today, opposing the government and the president and everyone, everybody is doing it, but showing your teeth to the occupier back then, I'm referring to them as occupiers with the full meaning of the word, it wasn't exactly, exactly easy. It required a readiness, a very great sacrifice to do that, and the miners did, we all of us did it together.

I want to tell you about something, when we were on our way to Pristina for the miners' march, a Swedish delegation had come to the mine to do contracts about bringing equipment to the mine. They stopped their car on the street and I talked to them, "What is..." they said, "director," I said, "This and that." "Are these engineers here?" I said, "Yes," "Go on" they said. And they went back there, so the relationship was very tight {joins his hands together} and the trust was strong between the miners and the leaders in Trepça.

**Anita Susuri:** Before we go on to the march I have some other questions, if you could describe your work or an ordinary work day in the mine for you, what was that like, I mean in Trepça?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes. I could barely wait for it, I woke up at 5:00, and I ate breakfast. My mother prepared it for me at the time and then my wife and sisters-in-law, my brothers' wives, when my mother wasn't there. I ate breakfast at home, I left, I traveled to Smrekonica, six kilometers, we got on the bus, I went to Trepça at 7:00. And I continuously had the commitment to work, I never looked at the time, [to check] when the shift ends. I am telling you the truth, I said I never took my annual leave for seven years.

Everyone knows that... or I worked there for four days without coming back home, until my brother came and said, "*More*<sup>5</sup> come [home] because mother is going mad. You," he said, "are out of your mind." I laid down in my bed to rest at night [and then] I went to Trepça. Usually when I worked on Saturdays and Sundays, I worked together with them, I never went there by car, not the company car nor my private car. I always went there by bus together with the miners, they were joyful when they saw me on the bus with them, they wanted me to. And you could see it was some sort of respect and it really was like that, I went out of respect for them.

I mentioned earlier, about that director who didn't find me a chair, since at the time I had to work as an engineer for twelve months, and then take an exam, it was an intern exam. A special professional commission which assessed if you were prepared to get the position of an engineer in Trepça or not. And twelve months passed by, thirteen passed by, 14 months had passed. I used to say, "Director, in order to take the exam I have to learn the craft." "Well you have time" he used to say, "you will work here till retirement."

Përndrysh, hulumtojsa gjithçka, gjithçka hulumtojsa në mënyrë që me qenë i përgaditun. Nashta po përpigna mos me tepu, po muni me marrë dëshmi prej kujt doni në vitin 1075 [1975] u kërkoi një galeri me e bo për shpejt edhe ka qenë karakteristikë krejt ka qenë harkore galeria. Une i thom ni minatori që i ndjerë osht' tash Nezir Osmani, payment number ka qenë 45/46 (buzëqeshë), osht' me randësi me ditë që 32 vite as ato s'i kom harrue.

Otherwise, I used to research everything, I used to research everything in order to be prepared. I'm trying to not overdo it, but you can ask anyone when there was a request for a gallery to be quickly made in 1075 [1975] and it was special because the shape of the gallery would be arched. I told a miner who has died now, Nezir Osmani, his payment number was 45/46 (smiles), it's important to know that I haven't forgotten them for 32 years.

And I called him and said, "Nezir, they are asking for this and that" I said, "you will receive a good payment. You do a good job." He said, "Chief," he said, "it's not a problem." A month after, he exceeded the objective, I paid him two hundred percent higher than his wage, at the time it was 172 percent more, it was a large amount. Miners got paid more than the director at the time. And he said, "Well whatever that engineer from Pasomë says will happen, will happen."

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<sup>5</sup> Colloquial: used to emphasize the sentence, it expresses strong emotion. *More* adds emphasis.

So, I didn't promise anything to the miners, but I constantly kept in touch with them to learn the craft. You can't learn a craft at university, you can forget about saying, "I finished university so now I know the craft." I am talking about my craft {puts his hand on his chest}, about my profession, about mining. That craft is learned in the mine and you learn it if you want by copying the older miners.

If you want [to learn] the craft you will only learn it in the mine and I was willing to go to the mine. Because there are engineers [who have been working] for ten years, they won't even go there for two weeks. But if I wasn't able to go on the first shift, I went on the second one. And they knew and said, maybe I'm overdoing it but they used to say, "If Ibush doesn't go to the mine he will get a headache." Because I loved it, I loved the mine with all my soul, I had results. I wasn't the best engineer in Trepça, but I was the engineer who worked in Trepça with the most commitment.

Even the results from when I was leading the mine, were the best in Trepça from 1930. There wasn't a bigger amount of production than when I was leading the mine. Or when I went to a shift as a technical director and entered the mine. The miners knew as soon as I went, "What, what is it?" And I told them, "This and that," "No problem, director." 302 skips<sup>6</sup> came out within one shift, so almost 1500, 1600 tons within one shift.

It was the miracle of the entire Trepça production. When there were 300 skips, because [one skip] was 5.5 tons of ore, the worker of the transporting lift said, "It reached 300," I said, "Two more," I said, "to take out." And they wrote it in, since the supervisors were there all the time and supervised [it], no one was able to bring out 302 skips again and really, nobody will ever again.

## Part Two

**Korab Krasniqi:** When you received the new position, you led the miners and teams, what were your responsibilities? I mean, naturally you gave them instructions on how to work, what to work on? What were the goals of your work, if you could explain your responsibilities with that position a bit more in detail?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** I mentioned that after 14 months they made it possible for me to finish my intern exam and I got the position of a foreman. The foreman was responsible for all three shifts, so to instruct, to advise, to check the work. But as I said all the supervisors were Serbian, all the front workers were Serbian. And I started to write {pretends he's writing} the order book in Albanian. And the director at the time, Radojica Vučorović, called me.

He said, "Ibush," he said, "they don't know Serbian [Albanian],"<sup>7</sup> he said, "you can give them an order to work but they won't understand," he said, "they won't get the job done," he said, "they don't know

<sup>6</sup> Mine skips act as shaft conveyors for transporting gathered ore from underground to the surface. This equipment is also used for transferring waste rock and debris for disposal.

<sup>7</sup> The speaker mistakenly says Serbian, but he means Albanian.

Albanian, how can you give the order out [in Albanian].” And I took it and wrote it in both Serbian and Albanian. So, I wrote the order book for work in both Serbian and Albanian because they really did know, I know that they knew, but they could say, “I don’t understand, what?” That was my initial duty, and then I was in a higher position as a technical leader.

The technical leader was a higher position which managed a little more than a foreman who supervised the shifts. From a technical leader I was director of a working unit for exploring and deep drilling. And then the following year I was a leader. I wasn’t a director, but the position was leader of the mine, of the whole mine, you managed the entire production at the time. I was young as I said, relatively young because I was 30 years old and had the job of leading the whole mine of Stari Trg, it wasn’t easy.

You had to get in front of the miners, there were engineers, I’m telling you honestly, they used to say “I will work on anything just don’t put me to speak in front of the miners.” Because they would look at you, how do they say, like with a magnifying glass. But I also finished that duty with a lot of responsibility. There were work interruptions at the time, they demanded better [working] conditions, better wages and all that. And the work stopped, I was home.

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

**Ibush Jonuzi:** It was, it was ‘83, ‘83. And they notified me, I went to work, to workers’ gatherings. There was the Work Management Council of Trepça, there was a Head of that council and he had his deputies. The deputy for economic matters was Enis Presheva, who was a popular economist at the time. He was the only one with a [university] degree, and he studied in Ljubljana.

And the Management Council had given him the duty to follow the miners’ gathering because they demanded wage raises and that belonged to the economic unit. Enis came to all the gatherings, he listened to the miners’ demands and he promised them, “We will systematize all job positions.” So, I was the leader of the mine. He came to my office [after] the gatherings finished, “Ibush,” he said, “It has to be done.” I said, I said, “Yes it has to be done,” [He asked,] “Who will get it done?” I said, “I will get it done.” “Can you?” I said, “Yes, I will get it done. No problem.”

Because we had to finish the systematization and go in front of the workers’ gathering, whether they would approve of it or not. And that was done. So, there was a new reorganization, the job positions of the miners who needed to be stimulated were favored, we showed them [the new plan] at the gathering and everyone approved, no remarks. I was, I’m saying I was connected with them even on a spiritual level and Enis saw that at the time.

From that position, from the position of the leader of the entire mine they recommended me to become technical director, it was a really high position. And I was in the office, they sent a car from Zvečan because at the time the central directorate for Trepça was in Zvečan. I went, the Head of the Management Council at the time was Shefqet Jashari and I went into the office, “How are you? How is work going?” I said, “I’m good, I’m really good.”

He said, "You should become a technical director and Rexha Dervišević will be a leader," an older engineer, he was Muslim, a Bosnian, who worked in Trepça earleir but they wanted to bring him back. He said, "Rexha will be a leader," he said, and, "you will be the technical director." I said, "Boss," I said, "thanks a lot," I said, "I am good," I said, "work is going well, I am the mines' leader," I said, "you have older staff. With experience," I told him everything I was thinking.

He said, "We know everything. Someone," he said, "has analyzed it, you have to go there." Believe me the request was written, it only had to be signed. I said, "I can't go," he said, "Go out for a bit and think." And I went out at the front of the office, the secretary who was there told me, "This and that," she said, "this thing is done because it was talked about," she said, "they discussed that you will get the highest [job] position."

*[The interview was interrupted here]*

**Ibush Jonuzi:** I thought about it, another engineer came there, "Why are you out here Ibush?" I told him, "This and that." He said, "No, you don't have a reason to refuse [the offer]," he said, he said, "someone has assessed it," he said, "you are valuable, you are honest, you are a well prepared professional," he said, "and it's really good they did this." And a person can convince you with a few words.

And I signed it, I sent it to the Head, his assistant came out and said, "Thank you, Ibush!" She told the driver, "Take him back to Trepça." At the time, the Council, the Workers' Council, was the highest body. And the next day the Workers' Council was called. The head of the Workers' Council was a really good man, very esteemed, Osman Rama, he has passed away now.

The Workers' Council session was over, they congratulated me for being chosen the technical director and they said, "Congratulations director!" I said, "Thank you!" They said, "Are you feeling bittersweet?" I said, "I am feeling very bittersweet," they said, "You will leave from here with honor," he said, "you're valuable, you're a hard worker," he said, "the miners love you. The miners respect you. You are young and you will leave from here with honor." And believe me it was a weight off my shoulders because he was a very respected man and he knew me well.

And then I started [working] as a technical director, which is a job that I took with even more commitment. Why? There were 3,470 workers there, it was a job with responsibility, the workers' safety but also ensuring the production plan. The late Rexha Dervišević, he was... good at his profession but he had a very big flaw, he constantly consumed alcohol, all the time.

He kept it at his office in the drawer {pretends he's opening a drawer}. And he decisively used to say, "I have it easy," he said, "I drink *raki*,<sup>8</sup> Ibush works," and it was actually like that. But, when I made a decision he never said no, ever. He didn't interfere in the production matter or anything, he would

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<sup>8</sup> *Raki* is a very common alcoholic drink made from distillation of fermented fruit.

barely ever come to the workers' gatherings because he had to be at the gatherings at all costs. But he used to say, "Since Ibush is there, I have no reason to go." And we're almost in '89.

**Anita Susuri:** There is also something else I wanted [to talk about], you mentioned a visit you had in Velenje, did you go on visits often or did people come to visit? What were these organizing like?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Many delegations came to Trepça, many delegations I mean from mines in Europe and the world. Why? I will say it once again that Trepça was popular, but we didn't travel much, we didn't. I was in Germany back then, I was in Romania, the Romanians had requested a visit because they started producing some mining equipment, but only Trepça could give the green light.

If Trepça said that the equipment is right for the mine, it would go through. If it said no, it could only become stagnant. But there were many visits to Trepça. There was a strict criteria. Why? You had to know who someone is, what they are, where they are from. The register, it was a special book where they had to register and they needed special permission in order to enter the mine because you couldn't [otherwise]. Or [for example], it was impossible to take pictures of the mine, it wasn't allowed, it was a rule. No one could go to the mine without supervision. The person from Stari Trg who was invited to guide the delegation had to be there.

**Anita Susuri:** Most of the miners told us that the period when Aziz Abrashi,<sup>9</sup> [Burhan Kavaja](#) and you were there, it was the golden period of Trepça, [the period] which produced the most. But on the other side, there were also the slogans "Trepça works, Belgrade builds." What was that all like and was that some sort of reason for the dissatisfaction to begin?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Aziz Abrashi was a personality who had many merits. He became Head of Trepça's Management Council, and as I said at the time I was technical director, and when Aziz came to the Management Council, so I reported about the first gathering about production. When we finished, we were in a mine flotation room. The meeting was over, we went to the office of the flotation director, he said, "Ibush, I want to ask you something," I said, "Go on."

He said, "Did you learn them by heart?" And trust me I didn't understand him, I said, "No, why?" He said, "I followed it closely, you said it by heart," I said, "Nope, I can say it whenever you want." And I'm saying this again honestly because the miners knew, I knew the payment number of every miner, their name, last name, and where they were from. And a miner never had to introduce themselves on the phone, "I am this person," because I recognized them by their voice.

And they told Aziz, [who was] Head at the time, "No," they said "Ibush is always like this. He says all of this..." because I'm saying, if you love something, you will learn it. And you had to closely follow these figures continuously, every day {touches his head} you had to work by logic. And then Burhan came as a director and Rexha became deputy of the Management Council again.

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<sup>9</sup> Aziz Abrashi (1938-2014) was an economist, who led many important socially-owned enterprises. He was the general director of the Trepça Enterprise and led the enterprise during the most difficult period of the Miners' Strike 1989, where he was fired and sent to prison for 14 months together with other miners.



It was a good time. Why? There was a big turn, and the workers' restaurant became great. When the miners from the Bor mine came, you know Bor, they were surprised. They said, "We have not seen food and conditions like this anywhere." Miners had trays for warm food, dry food and milk. There was no miner who could finish all that by themselves. It was impossible. They could get whatever dish they wanted there.

If they wanted dry food, there was *suxhuk*,<sup>10</sup> there was prosciutto, there was canned food, fish, boiled eggs. I'm saying, there was everything there. And all of them got one liter of milk as well. Trepça's infrastructure started to improve and we built a new restaurant. I'll mention a saying of Rexh Dervišević.

Kabllari [company] started working on buildings in Tuneli i Parë. Kosova from Vushtrria at the time was a construction company which was very well prepared. And I said, "Director it's bad *bre*,"<sup>11</sup> he asked, "Why Ibush?" I said, "Well Kabllari is working there and Kosova [company] from Vushtrria..." "Well what do you propose?" I said, "Let's give them [Kosova] the permission to build the restaurant, the toilet for the workers and all of that," he said, "Well you are right, no problem. You propose it," he said, "I will support them politically." {puts hand on his chest} He said, "You go on."

And that's what we did even though it was difficult to compete against Kabllari back then, but I will say it once again that he respected me a lot, he respected me because I worked [hard], no other reason. Not because I was good looking or somebody, only because I worked. And we put Kosova from Vushtrria there, we had Përparimi to bring water there. So, we slowly began to make some steps towards the interest of our region.

**Anita Susuri:** I mentioned earlier the slogans that began later, I think it was after '85.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes.

**Anita Susuri:** What was the situation like back then, for example after '81, after the demonstrations<sup>12</sup> the political situation started to worsen and that political situation led to the march and strike.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** Yes, I'm interested to know how that was reflected at you as a worker of Trepça and the other miners, how did you see it?

<sup>10</sup> Turkish: *sucuk* is a dry, spicy sausage which is eaten from the Balkans to the Middle East and Central Asia. The Turkish name *sucuk* has been adopted largely unmodified by other languages in the region, including Serbian: *sudžuk*; Albanian: *suxhuk*; Romanian: *sugiuc*; Russian: *sudzhuk*; Kyrgyz: *chuchuk*.

<sup>11</sup> Colloquial: used to emphasize the sentence, it expresses strong emotion.

<sup>12</sup> On March 11, 1981, a plate was broken at the student canteen expressing dissatisfaction with poor student conditions, after which many students joined flipping tables. The event sparked a widespread student-led demonstration. The demand for better food and dormitory conditions was emblematic of the Albanian demand for equal treatment in Yugoslavia.



**Ibush Jonuzi:** I said it many times, in Trepça, in Trepça's storage you could find anything but airplanes. We even had an arsenal in the framework of the mine, we had it for self defense. It was a special unit, but after the '81 demonstrations the relations grew cold day by day. I had a cousin who was a good soldier in UÇK's<sup>13</sup> time, Ali Jonuzi who was wounded here {shows behind} about 50 meters away from our houses during the time of the demonstrations and at the time he was working for Elektro, here at Elektro Kosovo.

They sent him to the hospital and from the hospital they sent him to prison, at Smrekonica's prison. I went to visit him in jail, it became such a big deal. And then the Serbs used to say, "You're giving a high position to Ibush who has nationalism in his house." It became a big deal, but anyway I'm saying I beat all of it with work because I worked more and they had nothing [to say]. But as we know, the situation worsened every day also in the political aspect. Why?

They were bothered by the work, they were bothered by the results of Albanians, they were bothered by everything. There was a director, Sreten Nikolić. And once during a workers' rally he said, "Ibush has it easy," he said, "he," he said, "is coming to work." Because the miners said, "He comes on Saturdays, on Sundays, at night, during the day, he doesn't stop." And I feel bad mentioning it, but I am saying it now that I am grateful to that man who said it, Halit Haxha, he was a technician, he said, "Blessed is the cradle which raised him," he said, "we want a leader who works and who doesn't steal from us."

Sreten Nikolić got really mad, because he was very nationalistic. He said, "He gets daily allowances." When he finished his speech, I got up to speak {raises his hand}, I said, "A special commission should be formed," I said, "to verify it, a month has 30 days, if I have allowances for 30 days or 22-33." And the commission was formed. I said, "If there is one hour of my work which I spent outside the workplace I will hold myself accountable in front of you." But there was no chance, there was no chance and everything was proved... But *shkijet*<sup>14</sup> had nationalism in their hearts. And at the workers' rallies when there were discussions in Albanian, it bothered them. When there were orders in Albanian, it bothered them. And as we have seen it, the situation worsened by the day.

**Anita Susuri:** How did it come down to the march, to that day? Was it known that the miners would organize?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** In the reviewing sessions of the constitutional amendments, delegations from Serbia used to come, [delegations] from former Yugoslavia and all kinds of others [delegations] and as I said there were some miners there who could talk in Serbian better than Albanian. There was Dragan Šapunić, I never forgot his name. We were sitting in the front row, [with] Osman Rashica who was a miner, he is in his 80s now. Otherwise, he worked in Split for some time and he knew the language fluently and read the newspapers.

<sup>13</sup> Alb. *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës* - Kosovo Liberation Army, was an Albanian guerrilla paramilitary organization that sought the separation of Kosovo from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia during the 1990s.

<sup>14</sup> *Shka* (m.); *shkinë* (f.), plural *shkijet*, is a derogatory term in Albanian used for Serbs.

He got up and spoke about the amendment changes, this, this, and that, he mentioned a lot of things. And someone told me, they asked, “Director, what is his profession?” I said, “Miner,” they said, “It’s impossible.” I said, “A miner with [no] qualification at that, he doesn’t even have a higher qualification.” People thought miners only knew how to exploit the ore, but it wasn’t like that. They were very far-sighted. And you could see that day by day the political situation in Kosovo was collapsing.

And there were work interruptions, but not because of financial matters, back then nobody discussed financial matters at the time. Because I talked earlier about the financial matters, about the improvement of salaries, but this was only about political matters. After those changes the movements began, the worker rallies, “This is not worthy, that is not worthy,” and it came down to the organizing of the miners march from Stari Trg to Pristina.

Like you all know, that was a very powerful march, very well organized, with no obstacles, by foot from Stari Trg, the buses were there for them but they didn’t get on. “We only want to walk there.” And when we arrived in Gazimestan [monument], I have mentioned this other times too, there was a police cordon and I was in the first row. You could hear someone saying on the two-way radio, {puts his hand close to his ear} in Serbian of course, they said, “There’s no power that will stop them.” And we dispersed the police cordon and continued ahead, and the other shifts [who marched] did the same, the miners’ marches, they went to both Mitrovica and Pristina and it came down to the promises, “This will get done, that will get done.”

**Korab Krasniqi:** Can you describe that to us? Were you part of the group that marched?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, of course.

**Korab Krasniqi:** What was that day like? I mean, when you woke up, when you started [the march], what did you talk about to each other, what did you talk about on your way?

**Anita Susuri:** How did you find out that you were going at first?

**Korab Krasniqi:** Where did you go and stuff like that?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The day was very difficult. When the third shift arrived, they didn’t get out of their work outfits but they waited in the room. And when the first shift came to join them, the decision was made then and there in the room, “We don’t want to negotiate anymore, we will go straight to Pristina.” But apparently that didn’t happen only that day, there were preparations earlier and that’s what it was, and then we started together, as I said earlier the engineers and everyone was with the miners too. There was also that Serbian who at the time was Head of...

**Anita Susuri:** Juljana Gašić.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Juljana Gašić, she was on the miners’ side, like that.

**Anita Susuri:** We were told but we also saw in photos that there was Tito's picture and the Yugoslavian flag.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes, it was, it was. Because we needed something for cover. Look, we needed to have something for cover. When president Rugova used to say, "You have to protect your front door step," did he say it like this? He couldn't say you have to fight, but even when there were discussions with him about war issues, UÇK issues, he used to say, "You have professor [Fehmi] Agani,<sup>15</sup> talk to him." That's what Rugova used to say, "Talk to him." And I'm saying there needed to be something for cover, a photo, a flag, in order to make everything else happen. That's how it was.

**Korab Krasniqi:** You said that there were no obstacles except the cordon in Gazimestan.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** There were no obstacles on the road, neither while going, nor while returning. There was a police cordon in Gazimestan but that was dispersed and everything was...

**Korab Krasniqi:** You kept on walking, where did you go?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** To the sports hall, Boro Ramiz, former Boro Ramiz at the time. We all went there, and then the movements began, not only from the miners but also the citizens and the students and [workers] from the mines, from Kishnica, from Golesh everyone had... The activity of people at the time was like a river, on all sides. I will mention a detail, my [maternal] uncles are in Stanovc, Cakaj [last name], they saw the lines of people from their home. And their mother said to one of her sons, "What are you doing here? Go join them with your friends!" (smiles) She has passed away, her son is alive and retired like me. He said, "She said to me, "What are you doing here? Go join them!" So, it was a big commitment from everyone.

**Anita Susuri:** Do you remember when you walked in the city, when you went in, what was the people's reaction or did you observe any of that?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** It was remarkably good, remarkably good. You could see the people's faces in a good mood and smiling when they saw us like that even though we were wearing work clothes, helmets, and heavy boots. I'm saying, it was miserable to go from Stari Trg to Pristina by foot, that was a difficult thing to do. For some time, their feet were all wounded and they couldn't recover because of that torment. But above all, [because of] the strong will to do something, they overcame it all.

**Anita Susuri:** Do you remember when you went to the hall in Boro Ramiz, who was waiting there for you and what was talked about?

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<sup>15</sup> Fehmi Agani (1932 - 1999) was a sociologist and politician in Kosovo who was considered to be the leading thinker and political strategist of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) in the 1990s. He represented the LDK in international negotiations prior to the 1998–1999 Kosovo War, but was murdered during the war.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Well you all know the demands, and [Kaqusha](#) came there, Remzi Kolgeci too, and some others, but as they say, lower ranks. And it was discussed that no one should be allowed to change the constitution of the Autonomous Socialist Province at the time. Neither would anyone bother the miners, and the constitutional amendments wouldn't change, and they promised nobody would resign and this was mainly what was talked about and what they promised.

**Anita Susuri:** What did you think about, did you expect consequences because of that march?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes.

**Anita Susuri:** What did you think about for example, what did you think was expecting you?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** I expected there to be consequences and a man came to my office and told me, an Albanian man who was deputy head of the Work Management Council of Trepça. He said, "You are a good engineer, you are a leader, you have finished university and have to watch out, this and that, these [marches] lead to nowhere," you could tell he had a different background. I will also tell you his name, it was like that, it was Barush Sejdiu. I said, "Deputy," I said, "thank you for your advice. I am," I said, "aware of what I do."

I said, "I have finished university, I am a father of seven," I said, "I've been working for many years," I said, "I have the legal responsibility to stay close to the miners," I said, "and I will never," I said, "give up on them." "Yes, but," he said, "I like you because you are a hard worker so I am only suggesting for you to watch out." So we knew. I told my wife before I went to prison that we would go to prison. "No problem," I told her, "I only don't want my mother to know," that's how it was.

Or my classmate Fadil Bajgora who at the time worked at the secret service of JNA.<sup>16</sup> He switched off his car lights and he came here {shows to his right}. He said, "My friend, I feel responsible to let you know that the military is following you," he said, "I don't know anything," and he went back. I said, "Thank you a lot Fadil," so these things were known, I was very aware of the consequences that would follow but it had to stop somewhere, there's no other way. I said back then, I am saying now I too had to share the fate with the miners.

When I went to prison my brother's brother-in-law asked my mother, "Aunt Syleme, do you miss him?" [She replied,] "Well, a lot *bre* Asllan," he said, "Don't worry at all, it's better that he's in prison with friends than if he was here." And it was actually like that, my mother on the other side would say, "Most of my pain went away." So I'm saying we knew a few things, they were known because it wasn't things that were organized then and there, nope. It was worked on, it was worked on well.

**Anita Susuri:** I am interested...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** After...

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<sup>16</sup> Yugoslav People's Army

**Anita Susuri:** Yes?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** After the rally, after the rallies in November we held a meeting of the committee, it was the committee for self defense and a miner came in the afternoon, the director's secretary was there too. Sinan Kurteshi was both the director's [secretary] and my secretary, he said, "Director," he said, "a miner is calling you." We went out of the office and I went to my office and that miner came, it was Tahir Salihu, who was also in prison with us. He said, "Director, I came to ask you something, will you trick us?" It was about the preparation for the strike.

I said, "Never, we will never trick you," "Well that's all I needed," he said, "only," he said, "I wanted to hear it from you." So, the work back then was done in a better, more honest, more serious way, because it was not easy. That was a leadership position, it was very difficult. I got thirteen verdicts for execution in prison. A young man came to my cell, in a room with me and they brought me the decision and he read it. He said, "*Bac*<sup>17</sup> *bre* maybe they won't execute you," his name was Fatos. Fatos Fazliu, I said, "Well *bre* Fatos maybe yes, I don't know what they want to do to us."

And his tears started to fall down {touches cheek}, I will never forget his tears. So, it was a very difficult situation, it was very dangerous at the time as I said, it wasn't exactly easy to face *shkijet*. And to say this is you, this is us, because we were a small handful, [I mean] Kosovo. But fortunately it worked.

**Anita Susuri:** Those three months between the march and the strike...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes?

**Anita Susuri:** I know that the police took people for questioning, what was that like, I'm sure they interrogated you as well?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes, there was a lot of pressure from the bodies of the state security at the time. I am saying, they took me in for questioning a few times at night and, "It's not okay [to strike] you have to work, that's your duty, you are leaders, you have responsibility, you have to convince the miners. You shouldn't go out in marches, no more rallies, you have to work." So, there was a lot of pressure in this way. "You could be sentenced, you could lose your job, you could have bigger consequences." That's what they said to me.

So, there was a lot of pressure for me from time to time, because they also knew I was very connected to the miners spiritually. At the time if someone wrote KR<sup>18</sup> at the mine, Kosovo Republic in the dust, the miners used to draw it in the dust, a lot of security used to come down there, terrible, it would cause a lot of trouble, or if a pipe burst they would immediately show up as if the miners did it intentionally. I am saying, it was very difficult.

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<sup>17</sup> *Bac*, literally uncle, is an endearing and respectful Albanian term for an older person.

<sup>18</sup> The KR acronym stood for Kosovo Republic.

**Anita Susuri:** Do you remember, we are going a bit back, in '86 they arrested two miners because they wrote the slogan Kosovo Republic, do you remember?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, from time to time they arrested them and took them in a lot. So, only because they wrote 'Kosovo Republic', they rushed to take them in. And they would come to check, I am saying again it would be written on a rock {pretends he's writing something with his finger}, or with a finger in dust. They would erase it and it would come back again. It was impossible to control them.

**Anita Susuri:** You mentioned that the miners, one of the miners came and asked you if you would trick them, so you somehow knew that a strike would be organized.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** You knew?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes that was known, of course. I said he asked, "Will you trick us?" I said, "No, never. We will never trick you!"

**Anita Susuri:** Was there a group or who organized it?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Everyone, that's the saying, it was everyone.

### Part Three

**Anita Susuri:** What was the period before the strike like and how did the strike begin, how did that day go? Did you know the exact date or did it happen...?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The strike, the strike... the first shift didn't leave the mine. I was in my office as a supervisor, since at the time every shift had a supervisor. So the four unit system worked in the mine. First, second, third, one of the shifts took a break. And then like that, {moves hands in rotation} that's how the cycle closes. And the supervisor called me, he said, "Director," he said, "the first shift is not leaving." "What happened, Rexhë?" He said, "Well, they are not leaving."

And Aziz wasn't there, neither was Burhan, it was only me and I immediately went down, I called the engineers. We actually called it the furthest office (smiles) that was the title, I called them all at the furthest office. I told the supervisor, I said, "Call all the engineers, tell them Ibush is calling." They came there and I said, "We should all go to different [mine] levels and talk to the miners about what's happening."

And the largest number of miners were at the ninth level, I went there myself and we all went across the mine. They said, "We have decided, we decided to go on strike and we won't quit." This is what the

beginning was like and then everyone was informed about it. All the institutions were informed at the time. But this was the start, the news came at 1:00 [PM] that they won't get out of the mine.

**Anita Susuri:** Can you now describe the whole experience of the strike, what you saw, what happened, how did the others take it?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** In the history of underground mines this was the longest strike. They stayed there in those conditions for eight days and eight nights but the miners' commitment for Kosovo matters was very strong. Why? Every time there were discussions, they never put their personal interests or their salaries before the overall national interest. We went on strike, the first shift didn't leave, the second shift came and immediately joined the strike, the third shift came and joined the strike. The fourth shift was on a break, they also came. And the large movements of other people began, for example the retirees wanted to go on strike, but there were attempts to prevent them.

And we immediately created an order in the mine, the supervisors at the mine, the supervisors to go in the mine stack. The supervisors at the gate, [to see] who's coming in, who's going out. Because it was really dangerous if someone was infiltrated and it could cause great consequences. There were large amounts of explosives there. The mining depots were on all mine levels. Starting from the first level to the eleventh one. We had to be very prepared, to keep our eyes open so we didn't face any trouble. And I am saying, eight days and eight nights even though they were tired, they inhaled dust, no food, everything, but however, they handled it, they handled it firmly.

They would move to get checked by a physician, even though our physicians, and I can say now that I am very thankful, they were committed to the miners. They didn't want to go to the hospital, so we turned that hall where we held the gatherings into an improvised hospital with some beds, so we could place them there because they didn't even want medical services. But the whole Europe was alarmed, so I don't say only former Yugoslavia, but the entire Europe. When it was said that former Yugoslavia is being protected in Trepça, that was an important matter.

And delegation after delegation, delegation after delegation with no interruption. There was a rule which was talked about, it's included in the indictment in prison, which is something that even Albanians talked about, but [only] those Albanians who are cowards, they said, "Without the permission of Ibush no one could get in the mine." And it was actually like that. The technical director is the most requested, the most responsible person for the mine. We sent them food from time to time. We sent the delegations in an order, not only going there, excuse my language, like going to the market, whoever wanted to. Everything was supervised, but we were followed every step of the way.

**Anita Susuri:** For example, who did you allow to enter and who did you refuse?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Well all of them were allowed to be honest, when it was about the Head of the former Yugoslavia's Committee, who was Stipe Šuvar, to visit, they said, "Stipe Šuvar wants to visit." We didn't gather in the hall, but we gathered in the restaurant and the Head of the Management Council, Aziz

Abrashi said, “We’ll go to the miners and tell them that Stipe Šuvar should be accepted.” He said, “And only Ibush and I will go.”

It was a decision by the Head and we entered the mine, we went to the eighth level. Aziz started talking to them and believe me [I remember] that moment like it was today I was thinking even the rocks are crying, they were crying a lot, the miners. Aziz pleaded to them and they didn’t accept, they said, “We don’t want him to come here at all, not at all.” We went back about 20 meters and I told him, I said, “Boss, can I tell them?” “Quickly,” he said, “*bre* Ibush, quickly tell them!” We went back, I told them, they quickly said, “Let him come.” And they accepted him.

**Anita Susuri:** How did you convince them?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** I don’t know how (laughs). I said they were convinced quickly. There was, there was a small strike in 2015, because I returned to Trepça in 2014, I was deputy manager of the entire Trepça mine. And the manager told me, “Well Ibush, the miners aren’t going to the mine.” I went and met them at the toilets, “Okay,” I said, “go,” because you had to know their language. They went to the mine, and started the strike, we went there, some departments of Trepça would come, Mitrovica’s mayor Agim Bahtiri<sup>19</sup> came as well. I could see how the situation was developing and I slowly got closer among them.

“Can I speak?” “Yes.” And I started to speak. And everything took a different turn and they were convinced about how to act. So I don’t talk about it more, Agim Bahtiri said, “*Kuku*,”<sup>20</sup> excuse my expression, he said, “Bless your soul”. The older miners knew me well, and not only did they know me but they loved me and I loved them, and they respected me. And so they listened to me. Delegation after delegation in order to convince them, to convince them to quit [the strike]. A delegation from the Yugoslavian army came, it was... if I could remember his name now... I have it written somewhere {checks his phone}. I had his name written somewhere.

**Anita Susuri:** Yes, anyway, we know his job position.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** And the ones from the Kosovo committee, we went, me, Aziz, Burhan, and Bahredin Osmani who was Head of the Municipal Committee of Mitrovica, to talk with that higher level of the former Yugoslav army. I was in my work clothing, with a helmet, boots, stuff you wear to enter the mine, I went like that and they immediately started to talk. I said, I took the word, I said, “Who will take the responsibility if those 1,300 workers would die?” I said, “There’s explosives, there’s this, there’s that. They could fall from the well, something could fall.”

Bahredin Osmani, who was Head of the Municipal Committee, said, “Slow down Ibush, do you know who that is?” I said, “I don’t care who he is at all.” You know, because I was concerned about the miners, not about him, and we finished the discussion and I went straight to Stari Trg again. Delegation

<sup>19</sup> Agim Bahtiri (1960 - ) is a Kosovo-Albanian politician. He served as mayor of Mitrovica for two terms, from 2013 to 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Colloquial, expresses disbelief, distress, or wonder, depending on the context.



after delegation, to convince [the miners to quit the strike] and at the same time to threaten us about what the consequences could be. But, however after eight days and eight nights they came out, they were deceived, all of us were. They deceived us all because the demands weren't met, the resignations weren't real as you all know.

They were for show. But the effect, because many people asked me, "Was there an effect?" There was an effect. The effect of the strike was achieved, whether they resigned or not, the effect was achieved because the goal had been reached. And we saw, we're witnesses of that time even though you are young, from that moment, everything constantly changed in Kosovo. Because the miners' strike gave the biggest blow to former Yugoslavia. And the miners began leaving after the resignation letters were read, it was terrible to witness. And they risked losing their eyesight... however, there were consequences, it caused health issues for everyone, but above all else I will say it one more time, the effect was achieved...

**Anita Susuri:** I wanted to ask you, how was the news received, because at the time you thought it was real, that's why they also left [the mine]...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** How was the news that they resigned received?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** It was received well, it was received well because I will say it once more it wasn't easy to stay there. Under normal circumstances, if the electricity went out for even five minutes, or the elevator stopped working, it was very alarming, "There is no electricity, how do we go out now?" The mine has its own specifics, it was in the eleventh level which is 15 meters above sea level, so more than 800 meters isn't exactly, "It's not a big deal." But however we thought they actually resigned, they didn't but I will repeat it once more the effect of the strike was achieved, it was totally achieved.

After the miners got out, they began taking us to prison one by one. You know that time period, and even [Azem Vllasi](#) who was just a visitor in the mine faced the consequences. And starting from Aziz, Burhan, me, Mensur, Riza, those miners, [Avdi \[Uka\]](#) and the other miners, we were in prison for 14 months. We got thirteen charges each, some got in [prison] later. Actually one of them, bless his soul {puts hands on his chest} asked me, even though he was older than me, he said, "Bac, I will ask you something." I said, "Go on?" He said, "Why did they take me six months later?" I said, "Can I be frank?" I said, "You left them hanging," I said, "if you told them shortly like that, they would have taken you on the first day." He started to laugh (laughs) it was actually like that.

**Anita Susuri:** And how did that happen, your arrest? Where did they take you? Were you informed about the decision beforehand?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** My arrest happened like this, at the time I had the phone {shows his phone}, because there were no mobile phones. In other words, Trepça paid 170 thousand *marka* to bring a phone to my house, nobody had a phone around here. Why? According to law, you couldn't be a leader there, a

technical director, without having a phone, the mining law said that you always had to be in contact with the mine. And Trepça paid 170 thousand *marka*, actually the former director of the post back then, he said, “I was thinking, who is that man to pay all this money for?” He said, “*More* Ibush I didn’t know it was you.”

Someone called me on the phone, he said, “I am this person, this and that,” I don’t want to mention his name because he might not feel good, because you hear about this stuff, because I mentioned everyone else as you saw. He said, “I am this person,” he said, “I have an order to come and take you, do I come to your house, or what?” I said, “Nope, don’t come to my house.” “Here {shows to the left with his hand} was a gas station near the roundabout, I said, “I will go to the gas station.” He was in a white *fiqa* [Zastava 750], I got in, he took me to the investigative judge, they interrogated me in order. And they immediately sent me to the cell. That’s how they took me in.

**Anita Susuri:** How many days after the strike were you arrested?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** After the strike, they took me on the 1st, and then they left me on a break for about twelve days. But I had to check in at the State Security every day. That’s how they took me.

**Anita Susuri:** What was the indictment for you?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The charge was very grave. I said, I said earlier during the conversation, we got thirteen verdicts for execution, I read them and I still have the verdicts somewhere. They said, “There’s no chance of easing the sentence.” There was an Albanian director then, Shera, Sherafedin Ajeti. And they took us to a different cell with an Albanian from Bečić, who was married to someone from my village. It was never... after the war we don’t know where he is.

When they took us to that cell there were some blue blankets on the beds and he said, “*Bac* when will we get out of here?” He said, “If we do, I will take these blankets.” I said, “Drop it *bre* Hajriz, no reason to take it.” He said, “*Bac*, I will take them,” “Drop it *bre*, don’t cause us trouble. Leave it!” “*Bac*,” he said, “I will take these for sure.” So I don’t talk about this longer, after a few days they said, “Come to another cell,” because they would torture you like that, downstairs, upstairs, once at that one, and then the other. He had the blankets under his arm {pretends he is taking something under his arm}. When we went to the cell, he took the blankets and put them on my bed.

I asked, “Why Hajriz?” He said, “I took these for you, not for myself.” The prison director came and opened the door. He said, “Whose bed is that?” I said, “It’s mine.” “Those blankets?” He [Hajriz] said, “I took them.” “Who are you, fool?” He said, “I took them,” he said, “he should be distinct from others. He,” he said, “is not like us.” And he was left speechless, the prison director. I am saying, there was everything in prison. So, just like the case I mentioned about him tearing up {touches cheek}, when he read the decision about the execution. There were cases when people were specifically sent to tell me about what’s being talked about. A guy came once and he said, “Tell me something about Trepça.” I said, “But you don’t know anything about Trepça, we could talk about goats or something, because what do you know about Trepça?” And that’s how it ended.

**Anita Susuri:** Did you know, were you informed about who else was arrested?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, of course. Because all the names were in the indictment, we knew about everyone.

**Korab Krasniqi:** Was there any communication between you?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** There wasn't, I was near Azem for a long time, we only had a wall between us. And Azem Vllasi never fell asleep without knocking on the wall {pretends he's knocking}. Because we had some codes through which we could communicate. Azem Vllasi never fell asleep without notifying me. Actually when we used to go to trials he used to say, "[They could sentence] Everyone, but they can't do anything to you Ibush," he used to say, "You are a hard worker, you are this, you are..." he used to say, "they could never do anything to you." You know, he would give me some sort of moral support.

**Anita Susuri:** We were told, actually I remember Avdi Uka told us that when it was your [trial], everyone defended each other, they didn't defend themselves but...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** Somebody else, so each other.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** Do you remember these days?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** There were 14 of us, I don't know how many lawyers there were, whether it was 50 or 60, honestly I don't know. In other words, a lawyer from Slovenia came for me, I didn't even know him or know about it. Only based on the reading, he had visited my brother and said, "I am this person, a lawyer, I came," he said, "to defend him," he said, "if you agree," he said, "to defend Ibush Jonuzi," he said, "for no other reason than what I heard about him being a hard worker."

And my brother said, "Yes, I give consent." He came to prison to visit me, the lawyer. "How are you? How are you doing?" "I'm well," "Is there something?" I said, "Well, I haven't seen my mother." [He asked,] "What?" I said, "I didn't see my mother, I saw," I said, "my brothers and wife," and I was telling him. I said, "My mother is old," and he immediately went to the court to get a permit, so he was Slovenian, he wasn't a *shka*. They gave him the permit for my mother to come visit me and he came to tell me. He said, "Your mother will come visit you," he said, "don't worry."

I started to tell him, "You don't need," he said, "to tell me anything," he said, "I know who Ibush Jonuzi is." He said, "I didn't come for [financial] means either." He didn't want even one coffee from my family, not even a coffee. He said, "Not even a coffee, based on principle, I only came here to defend him voluntarily only because I heard about him," I am saying there were many lawyers. And these lawyers said, "That was a special trial, 14 people never accused each other only so they could defend each

other, it only occurred in this trial, I don't remember it happening in jurisprudence." And it was actually like that.

We never talked about it, "He did this or he did that," but we were very unique. Without knowing, without agreeing to it [beforehand]. But a guy had said to my mother, "Don't worry, aunt Syleme, that he is in prison," he said, "because he is honest," he said, "and a honest man," he said, "whatever he says, he could speak a hundred times," he said, "and he would say the truth a hundred times." He said, "Don't worry at all, he will tell the truth there is nothing they can do to him." Telling the truth is easy, you always say the same things, but if you start lying, you could lose track and never get it right.

**Korab Krasniqi:** I wanted to ask you a question. To take you back a bit...

**Anita Susuri:** Excuse me, because mine is related to this...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** They didn't use physical violence against you, right?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** In prison, nope.

**Anita Susuri:** Only mental?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Only mental.

**Anita Susuri:** What were the conversations like, what did they ask you, what did they tell you?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** When it comes to what they asked, what they said, that is... First they took me out of the cell and the investigative judge's office was full of lawyers, not all of them, but the room was full. Believe me, I didn't see them. And the investigative judge was [Avdi Dinaj](#), who was good, he was good then and he is good now, but the time was of that nature. He started to ask me, "Ibush this and that," I said, "I said all I had to say," I said, "I have nothing to add, absolutely nothing to add."

The late Bajram Kelmendi<sup>21</sup> got up and said, "Well done!" Like that, "Well done," he said, "Ibush! Why are you torturing," he said, "the man. He gave," he said, "his statement. You," he said, "are still torturing him." They tortured you there, they... I was the only one from the group of 14 people who was sent to Belgrade. Why? My lawyer came, [Adem Vokshi](#) was my lawyer, I said, "What's the situation like, lawyer?" I asked him. He said, "Well, they said Ibush, two of them without a soul, one without a head." But he didn't dare speak either, in the cell, those halls of the prison, everything was spied on.

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<sup>21</sup> Bajram Kelmendi (1937-1999) was a lawyer and human rights activist. He filed charges against Slobodan Milošević at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 1998. On the first day of the NATO war in 1999, Serb police arrested him with his two children Kastriot and Kushtrim. Their bodies were found the next day.

And he looked like this {looks around} to give signs that... he said, "122 witnesses," he said, "have testified against you," he said, "and the testimonies," he said, "are" he said, "I can bring them and read them," he said, "they're horrible." I said that they testified that no one could go inside the mine if Ibush didn't allow it. So, it was a very grave testimony, so they threw all the responsibility on me. He said, "But, we'll see." One had testified, a Serbian, infamous for not working, who, "Not only the organization of the strike, he even knows the miners' shoe size."

So, in short, he told them all sorts of things and they took me to Belgrade, in prison with a 101, a prison supervisor who was Serbian, a Bosnian driver, they took me to prison. There were two people in the cell there, and I got in. The conditions were much better than in Mitrovica. Excuse my expression, maybe I shouldn't mention it, but we had to use the toilet there in the cell. And to stay there, that was a terrible torture, it was terrible, I am saying once more it was terrible.

The conditions in the cell were better in Belgrade, I got in and greeted those two, they asked me, "Who are you?" I said, "I am this person." They said, "We know everything." They had a colored newspaper back then. They said, "We know everything about you." And they started to ask questions. And without wanting to, I don't want to say these about Belgrade, but I thought if I could go back to Mitrovica in prison, I wouldn't worry even if I'm never released.

They took me back, while on the way... I only stayed for two days, or two weeks, or 18 days, to be honest now... and that supervisor said, "Stop and we'll get *burek*<sup>22</sup>," to the driver. He got out and bought some burek, he brought me one, I said, "No, I won't take it," and I didn't take the *burek* to eat. "Did they beat you up?" I said, "No, no, no," and the Serb asked me, "Did they beat you up?" But I was exhausted, I couldn't even breathe as they say. I said, "No, they didn't beat me up, but I won't take it," "Take it, take it," I said, "No, I won't take it."

I swear I didn't take the *burek*, I have always mentioned this. Maybe they are both alive today but I didn't take the *burek* based on principle, I didn't want to. They took me back to Mitrovica and it felt like I came home. When an Albanian would open the cell door, and greet you, and put your handcuffs on {crosses his hands} they would say, "I am sorry Ibush but it's an order." I used to say, "It's not a problem, it's not a problem at all."

I got food poisoning from eggs in prison, they sent me to the hospital at night, because at the time you couldn't tell what time it was, you didn't have a clock or anything. The guardian had to stay at the door of the hospital room. A doctor came, Sylë Hajdini and asked the guardian, "Can I go to Ibush?" In Mitrovica's prison. He said, "Yes you can." "Can you keep your distance a bit?" He said, "Okay." He came and told me, "What do you want me to get you to eat?" Of course, I said, "I don't want anything doctor," "No you have to get something," because I got really bad food poisoning that for a long time I never ate eggs.

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<sup>22</sup> Burek is a family of baked filled pastries made of a thin flaky dough such as phyllo or yufka, of Anatolian origins and also found in the cuisines of the Balkans.

And I don't even know what he bought, when he brought those bags, he brought all kinds of things but I couldn't eat them. But I am very grateful and thankful also to the guardian who sacrificed [risked] his job, his duty, for me. And also the doctor, which is work not everyone could do. I am saying I was, there were all sorts of people, but, however that is in the past.

**Korab Krasniqi:** I wanted to ask you and go back to the strike once more. The demands, which were approximately ten or eleven.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes.

**Korab Krasniqi:** They were focused on various things, some were political, some were about the rights of Albanians, some were about the rights of workers for example the ones who were retired earlier, the staff of Albanian teachers and so on. How were they compiled, the demands, because I think they were compiled while you were in the mine pit, they were made public after.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes.

**Korab Krasniqi:** Can you tell us how you compiled them and how you made them public, how did you make the demands known?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** They were, they were compiled earlier, not from all the miners, but from a smaller group. Like there was supervision on every level as I mentioned earlier, the supervision at the door, at the gate, all the demands were compiled there. They were read in front of the journalists and those were legitimate demands from the miners. This was short, you know. Those were their demands.

**Anita Susuri:** Did you anticipate those demands to be met, or was it more about raising awareness?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Well... Boris Saviović in Stari Trg in '88. Boris Saviović at the time was Head of former Yugoslavia. And Aziz was head of the Management Council of Trepça, Aziz Abrashi. It was discussed, how to act, how to host him, what to talk about. And when it was the matter of production, he said, "Ibush has to report on producing," he said, "because he's a sly one!" {raises index finger} he said that. "He is a sly one," he said, "he could close down the mine and not mind," I am originally quoting what the late Aziz Abrashi said.

Those were matters which for Trepça, not like today if Trepça stopped you wouldn't worry about anyone. But if the production stopped only for one shift in former Yugoslavia, the news went to the highest level. Hey, imagine Trepça stopping! Trepça worked even during war time, I mean during the Second World War, I had all the results about production rates at the time. And that is how that was.

**Anita Susuri:** There was also a second strike which was held about those who were imprisoned.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes.

**Anita Susuri:** From the people that came to visit you or... because I know they didn't allow you newspapers, but did you find out in any way about that strike or what was happening outside?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The second strike, we were in prison at the time, they took me out of my cell and sent me to Starti Trg, the state security with the police, with civilian police, not police in uniforms, to convince the miners to... They weren't in the mine at the time when I went there, they were at the miners' restaurant. And I told them shortly, but as I said they read the cards in your pocket. And then they told me, "Director, we knew what the situation was like well, but you told it to us shortly."

And then they entered the mine at the other strike and forcibly took them out. The police forcibly took them out. When I went to the restaurant they were like that. And about how they were tortured, they spoke about already because I had no way of knowing that. But when you mentioned the way of getting information, I got *Rilindja*<sup>23</sup> every day in prison, I subscribed to it and they would bring it, but they would bring it censored, the things we were supposed to know were cut out {pretends he's cutting with scissors}, it was a mess. Sometimes there was nothing to see, some sports or something simple because everything was censored.

My sisters and brothers wrote me a lot of letters in prison. My son was in high school and every day he would write, "I took an exam in this subject, I got a five,<sup>24</sup> this and that" {pretends he's writing}. And the prison director called me one day, he said, "What is this about?" I asked, "What?" "All these letters," I said, "What is wrong with the letters?" "Why would he write to you about his exams," "Well he is my son," I said, "he wants to let me know." I am saying there were tortures, but let me not get into details because they are...

*[The interview was interrupted here]*

**Korab Krasniqi:** When they took you from the prison and sent you to Stari Trg, you met the group of miners in the restaurant.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes. At the restaurant, yes.

**Korab Krasniqi:** Of the mine.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes.

**Korab Krasniqi:** What did they ask you to tell the miners?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** They told me, "You have the authority over the miners, you have to speak to them so they give up, to give up, so they can start producing, working, to go into the mine and produce, not striking." This was their request and pressure.

<sup>23</sup> *Rilindja*, the first newspaper in the Albanian language in Yugoslavia, initially printed in 1945 as a weekly newspaper.

<sup>24</sup> Grade A on an A-F scale (Five-0).

**Korab Krasniqi:** What did you tell them when you met the miners, how did they understand that you were forced to?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** I said, I said, “I am sorry,” I said, “I am sorry,” I said, “that you are here.” I said, “It would be best if you were at work,” I said, “The work is for the miners, the mine waits for the miners.” This, these words. I knew the language they... but, I am honestly saying and many of them told me, “We knew what your intention was,” and they didn’t give up or anything. And I went back to the cell where they sent me and it ended like that.

## Part Four

**Anita Susuri:** I am interested to know about the day of the trial, I mean when the decision was made, I know you anticipated, not you personally, but in general, that there will be big consequences and that you will remain in prison and...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes, like that.

**Anita Susuri:** This was also regarding execution. What was that day like for you when you received the news that you were being released?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The defense had to be prepared in written form, and I would remember certain words at night, of course I was preoccupied, I would write them in the dark because there was no light there, they would turn them on and off whenever they wanted. I was putting together my defense. There was Riza Musliu, God bless his soul, he died, he was a jurist and he was in prison with us. And I always had a habit of taking notes. For 20 years in the mine, no miner has ever entered without me taking notes, “This person came, they had this request, this was the time, this was the day,” as I said I had everything on paper.

“Ibush,” he said, “what you did,” he said, “a jurist could get a PhD based on your material.” I wanna tell you about another detail, during the court session, my lawyer, Adem Vokshi’s father was murdered. His father was murdered in front of his house in Peja. And the trial was interrupted, when the next session began I asked the Head of court, Ismet Emra at the time, if I could speak. I don’t know if he is alive or not but...

**Anita Susuri:** No, he isn’t.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** I raised my hand and he said, “Go on, Ibush,” I went straight to the stand. Because I didn’t want [to do it] from my seat, I said, “I came here,” I said, “to express my condolences to the esteemed lawyer Adem Vokshi for the cruel murder of his father at his front doorstep, thank you” I returned to my seat. Aziz Abrashi said, “Ibush,” excuse my language, he said, “you really did it, you added five years to our lives.” I said, “I said my part.”



And I am saying honestly, someone sent me a picture from Germany, and they sent it this year, I don't know how it went around to be honest. But they sent me a picture of me on the stand where I expressed my condolences. And it wasn't exactly easy to go in front of everyone, so *shkijet* murdered his father and I took the stand to express my condolences. And these were moments that I can't forget.

**Anita Susuri:** How was it, was it a joy, I'm sure you were happy?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The moment?

**Anita Susuri:** Yes.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The moment we were released, I couldn't understand it, I am being honest, because it seemed impossible. The decision was read, but I was thinking it's impossible. When we got out, they took us to our prison cells to take our stuff. Even though they told us, "Wear something nice," that day. We needed to have some more special clothes. And when the decision was read that we are being released, innocent, I am saying I could not understand it you know, it was a big joy because we were anticipating execution and now...

**Anita Susuri:** Yes.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The great pressure from outside did that, because Serbia had the intention to, you know as they say, wipe us off the face of the earth, because I am going back to the first thing again, that [miners' strike] was a big hit to Serbia. When we got out there were a large number of people, we didn't know, Mitrovica was covered with people like a river, my brother was somewhere with his car and someone else, I never knew who he was, I still don't know today. "Director, come *bre*, come *bre* in my car, here is my car. Here is my car, come *bre* because I want to give you a ride, come." And I told my brother-in-law, I said, "Wait here for Hetem, my brother, until he comes," I said, "because this man begged me to go with him."

He took me to Zveçan with his car, near Dudin Krš, when we passed by the Serbian cemetery in Mitrovica, the road that continues to Pristina, I told him, "Please stop [the car] man," I said, "because they are my family." I swear to God I never knew who he was. So, he took me in his car only... and people have told me there were even people on roofs of houses, on building roofs, on balconies, police security but also civilians at the same time. I am saying, that was a joyful event not only for us, but I am saying it like this, it was a joyful moment for all Kosovars because it was a direct hit to the judicial system of Serbia, of former Yugoslavia.

That was when they got a hit, and we were lucky to be released. They released us, they called us in Pristina again after some time, the second degree and Bajram Kelmendi said, "You're at risk of being imprisoned again." We gathered and we agreed to go to Slovenia. Aziz and Burhan and they all came here {points in front of him} I had my old house, Mensur Fejza and some others from Mitrovica, they said, "We're going," I said, "Honestly, no." I said, "I hope they never take me, but even if they take me

tomorrow,” I said, “I will never leave my home. You asked me,” I said, “[but] no, it’s done,” I said, “there is no force that can convince me to leave my home, let them imprison me.”

And I didn’t go, neither did Mensur, and he said, “If Ibush doesn’t go, I won’t come either.” Mensur was older than me. He was a good engineer, he was good, so it means I was his superior. He said, “If Ibush doesn’t go...” They all went. They went to Slovenia from Kosovo, they stayed there for some time, only Mensur and I didn’t go. But nothing happened after. This was the story.

**Anita Susuri:** And then after some time the miners were suspended from their jobs, after you were released from prison.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes.

**Anita Susuri:** What happened after, there were some activities as a form of help, *Familja ndihmon familjen*.<sup>25</sup>

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, yes.

**Anita Susuri:** The union was formed...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** They released us from prison on April 24 of ‘90, we went to work the next day, Burhan and I went to work, we agreed and went. The police were very mobilized. Why? They had an order. The police told me, there were some of us [Albanians] in the police, they told me that, “We can’t allow them to go to the office.” Beqir Mehmeti was appointed as a director at the time. And we went to his office, he hosted us well, “Welcome, thankfully you were released,” all of that, and from that moment on he said, “I withdraw from this position,” he said, “because you are the right fit, the miners want you, the nation wants you and you have to be here.”

We received the decisions of the Workers’ Council because the procedure of the term was ending. And I would be reelected as a technical director again, the Worker’s Council took the decision for the reelection in the second term. We went a few times, but there was no chance. And then on August 8 [1990] they suspended all the miners. They were suspended and only four or five Albanians remained. There was an engineer, Bejtullah Kurti, he was a quite good engineer, but he was a little sneaky, he mingled with both sides, you know.

When I returned to Trepça in 2014, he came to my office and said, “This and that, I came here to ask you to hire me, you know me,” I said, “Bejtë [nickname]”, he said, “I am unemployed,” I said, “We were unemployed too,” I said, “you worked,” I said, “nobody forced you to remain at the job.” I said, “You worked here in Stari Trg, you worked in Kišnica back and forth,” I said, “but you didn’t want to join the

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<sup>25</sup> 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.

decision, the stance of all the miners and the engineers.” I said, “Nope, you can’t work here, only because of that,” I said, “you can’t and that’s done.”

And three or four workers whom I knew were hired, I knew all of them really well, I was at their service whenever they needed something. [It’s different] If it were a miner, but for an engineer to be tricked in that wasn’t okay, he was mistaken. He is still alive today, but he made a big mistake because that’s not okay. Putting your personal interest in front of the general interest is not okay under any circumstance. My late father, God bless his soul, he died young. I will quote him, he used to say, “My son, don’t ever let anyone step on your self-worth, if they do that, there will be nothing left of you,” and like that. As soon as someone puts their personal interest at the forefront, there is nothing there at all.

**Anita Susuri:** How did the ‘90s go after, what did you do, what did you work? Were you in touch with...

**Ibush Jonuzi:** The miners.

**Anita Susuri:** Yes.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, we were continuously in touch and we held gatherings as well, we held gatherings in mosques and *oda*.<sup>26</sup> And that activity *Familja ndihmon familjen* began. The part of Presheva, Medvegja, Bujanoc did a lot, we went there once only to thank them. They offered material goods, the families were set, which family helped which miners’ family. That’s Malisheva’s part, the part of Peja, Deçan, everyone in Dukagjin was very well organized to help the miners’ families.

And their movement to go abroad immediately began. The largest number of Stari Trg miners are in Sweden. A delegation of MPs from Kosovo’s Parliament went to Sweden and when they came back, Fadil Geci<sup>27</sup> who you may know... he said, “*Bac*, you should have been in Sweden,” he said, “as a guest,” he said, “because of all them,” he said, “knew about you.” Because they were, most of them were in Sweden. And they pulled through, they pulled through thanks to the solidarity of our families, but our diaspora did a lot too, they did. And this is what it was like to go abroad back then.

I personally didn’t leave, neither did I send one of my children away, that was my decision, I worked whatever I could. At that time we had cows and we made a living by selling milk, with these basic things just so we could survive and not ask anyone for help. They took me to the police station many times during the ‘90s too. I was a LDK<sup>28</sup> activist and I was committed to work for Trepça. Why? Our

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<sup>26</sup> Men’s chamber in traditional Albanian society.

<sup>27</sup> Fadil Geci (born 19 March 1961) is a politician in Kosovo. A member of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) during the 1998–99 Kosovo War, Geci served in the Assembly of Kosovo from 2001 to 2007, at first as a member of the Democratic League of Kosovo (*Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës*, LDK) and later with the Democratic League of Dardania (*Lidhja Demokratike e Dardanisë*, LDD).

<sup>28</sup> Alb. *Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës* - Democratic League of Kosovo. The first political party of Kosovo, founded in 1989, when the autonomy of Kosovo was revoked, by a group of journalists and intellectuals. The LDK quickly became a party-state, gathering all Albanians, and remained the only party until 1999.

leader was remarkably good, Ibrahim Rugova<sup>29</sup> was a legend, he was everything. And at some point he said, "Please, we will eventually find out who everyone is." And we are seeing it now, we can tell who Ibrahim Rugova was every day.

On the anniversary of the miners' strike we made some pamphlets, some, and they ended up at the hands of *shkijet*. They came to my house, the police came inside with their shoes un, my mother was there, and she was old and tired. And one of my married sisters was there, who is about two years younger than me, she told them, "Slowly, look at my old mother." She said, "They came at me," to hit her, "Where is he?" She said, "He [Ibush] went out," she said, "he's downtown. He may be at the LDK [office] or I don't know where." And they came straight to the LDK office and found me. "We are searching for you" I said, "Here I am. I am saying, it was 50, or 600, or a hundred cases, I don't even know, that they took me to the police station. From time to time they would take me.

During the protests in the '98-'99, we talked during a LDK rally about who would lead the protest, because as you know, there needed to be a leader everywhere even in the fields and say, "We are sitting down now, we are getting up now." We discussed everything, and I said, "I will go first." "Why Ibush?" I said, "I have the white helmet, I will be at the helm." And that's what it was, I led the miners, I mean the protesters. When it came down to starting [the protest] the police came there with a car. There at the park, they said, "Where are you going?" I said, "You know where," they said, "Where?" I said, "You know where," they said, "there is not a chance," I said, "We will see as soon as the time hits 11:00."

As soon as it was 11:00 I was in the front, and there was a big mass of people you know. And we went on, we went in front of where the Municipal Court building was, there was a basement and there were some metallic covers on top [of the basement]. I don't know how they stepped on top of it and they panicked, there was panic there, and I jumped on top of the police car. I swear to God I don't even know how I got there, but... and they pointed their guns at me, I was thinking that I was done for then. I escaped. The protest was over and we went back, we did the same the next day.

Hashim Parduži was the only miner who was in the strike back then, he was from Vushtrri, a retiree of Trepça and they had taken and beaten him up, they had turned his body like this {touches black pants}. They told him, "You are going to protest with Ibush," the Vushtrri police. He said, "Well he used to be my boss so I will go with him," "Look if you go again we will ask you about everything and don't you dare tell him." As soon as he left the station he came to the LDK office, he said, "Director, this and that." "What did you tell them *bre* Hashim?" He said, "Well I will go again, if he goes I go" (smiles).

So this was the situation back then. You are you and thank God you are young, you are good. But, I am saying it was a very difficult situation, but all of that brought us here because otherwise we wouldn't be able to be here. UÇK, the international factor and God, [and] Rugova who connected us to the Americans because nobody believed we would be able to detach [from Serbia]. All surgical

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<sup>29</sup> Ibrahim Rugova (1944-2006) a writer and journalist, founder and leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo, and President of Kosovo during the war and after until his death.

interventions are difficult but that of the heart is the most difficult. I was the first Albanian to go to Trepça after the war, on October 30 of '99. *Shkijet* were working there, two soldiers from KFOR<sup>30</sup> came with two guns, and a young translator.

“Good afternoon,” “Good afternoon,” “Are you Ibush Jonuzi?” I said, “Yes.” “Did you work in Trepça?” I said, “Yes,” “Were you the director?” I said, “Yes, I was.” They took out an A5 [size] photo of mine and they were looking like this {he looks at the palm of his hand}. They said, “Are you interested in going [into the mine]?” I said, “Very.” They said, “Come” I said, “Let’s grab a coffee until I get ready,” they said, “No, we will wait for you, get ready.” And I got ready, I went to Reno 4, those two soldiers with guns and that translator [waited for me]. We went and looked at everything in detail.

It lasted four hours, not like the interview with you [which was] two hours {checks his phone out} or how long is it, no it’s actually two and a half hours, it lasted long (laughs). I was with them for four hours, “What could happen here?” They were preoccupied with what went on in the mine. I was explaining everything, “This and that.” I told them there was a very modern restaurant, when we went down, the restaurant had a basement, we saw ropes used for livestock tied to the radiator and there was blood there. And I saw that it was damaged, but that was a very difficult experience.

The soldiers noticed it and one of them asked, “Is this difficult for you?” I said, “Very difficult.” He said, “It’s getting done,” “Some [things],” I said, “will never get done,” I said, “there is no chance it will get done, those things can’t come back.” And they took me back home, after thirteen days I had a heart attack, they took me to the hospital, [I was] unconscious for 48 hours. After 48 hours the doctor called me in his office, he asked, “What happened?” Our doctors knew me, he asked “What happened *bre* Ibush? You are calm and stuff.” I said, “This and that,” “Well” he said, “this should be the cause.” So we experienced all sorts of things at that time.

**Anita Susuri:** To our understanding, the mine was close to collapsing after the war too. It was in a very bad condition.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** After the war we slowly began [to work] in the mine and I went to get ready and some... they had used [the mine] in an unprofessional manner, they had used it in a terrible way. Just because they could steal, and they destroyed all the equipment. You can deal with the equipment, but it’s a problem when the mine is used unprofessionally, [it’s difficult] to stabilize it and bring it back. There was an American administrator in Vushtrri, Charles Denison Lanen, and he joined a meeting of the LDK leadership. A professor, the late Hajzer Krasniqi, was head of the branch, I was the deputy head.

He joined the meeting and said, “Mister Krasniqi,” he said, “I came here on duty,” he replied, “Okay, Deni.” He was very strict, he said, “Mister Krasniqi, I came here on duty, I don’t have time to wait for you. You at LDK should...” in that temporary government, “you have to wake up your representatives or I will report that you are not interested in taking power. And,” he said, “only Ibush Jonuzi can come

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<sup>30</sup> The Kosovo Force is a NATO-led international peacekeeping force in Kosovo. KFOR entered Kosovo on June 11, 1999, two days after the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

there from LDK,” he said, “nobody else.” And we were all speechless, believe me, it felt like the room was spinning. And the head told me, “Ibush, don’t rush [to a decision] Ibush. Don’t rush because he’s American and could harm us.”

I said, “I won’t join,” he asked, “Why not?” I said, “My soul is in Trepça, I will never join.” And I got up and left the meeting in a demonstrative way and came home, a professor of English, Shaban Krasniqi, he was his [Charles Denison Lanen] translator and he told him, “Go ask him if he can go to his house.” And they came to my house, but my house had burned down [during the war], I had a broken wood stove after the war. Five hours, I didn’t notice we stayed for five hours, they were pleading to me. But my brother came and asked my mother, “Who is it?” “To be honest I don’t know they have been in there for five hours, I don’t know what is happening.”

And my younger brother came, he worked in Stari Trg as well, excuse me he is older than me and he was listening. That administrator came, the head Hajzeri, a very excellent girl, she worked really hard, and that translator, four people were pleading to me. And then it was more the head [Hajzer], “Ibush you should go by all means. He’s American, he loves us all.” I was categorically [against it], “I will never join.” My brother came and said, “Ibush *bre*, you would have to forgive even a blood feud with all this pleading, can’t you see?” I said, “Hetë, I have an obligation towards Trepça,” he said, “You also have an obligation towards Vushtrri,” he said, “Vushtrri listened to you for ten years.”

And it’s actually like that, I am grateful to all Vushtrri citizens, very thankful. And I told them, “I will join,” he said, “Let’s shake hands because you are [a decent] Albanian.” He said, “I only have to report that Ibush Jonuzi is joining the municipality,” he said, “I will give you UNMIK’s<sup>31</sup> car, and the driver, you can go to Trepça whenever you want. Nobody will ask you, I just want to know that you’re joining the Vushtrri Municipality.” I started [working], but I have a principle, I can’t do both sides. When I start one job I want to commit only to that one.

A few days [passed] and I quit Trepça, they brought some stuff to share with the miners, not only funds but they also brought equipment. And they set some aside for me in an envelope too. I said, “No I would never take them,” I said, “nope.” The late Aziz, I said [to him], “There are other people, give it to whoever you want I would never take them,” I said, “nope, I will not take them. I have ways,” I said, “to earn a living and I won’t take them,” and I didn’t. And then I worked in the municipality in that temporary government in 2000 until the elections.

I went back to the hospital. I stayed there for a month and our doctors said, “Ibush we are not able to do anything, your only chance is to seek treatment abroad.” The United Arab Emirates KFOR was stationed in Vushtrri. A surgeon had come here and that American told me, “Ibush there is a good surgeon, do you want to go?” I said, “Let’s go, Deni.” And we went together, he told him, “Ibush is this and that...” and he told him, you know? And he asked, “Do you have documents?” I asked, “What do you mean?” He said, “A passport,” I said, “I don’t even have an ID card.” I didn’t have an ID because *shkijet* had taken it.

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<sup>31</sup> United Nations Mission in Kosovo.

“Do you have anything from the hospital?” I said, “Yes, I do,” “Go and bring them to me!” I came home, found them, and took them to him. He said, “Get ready, we will send you away.” And they sent me to Abu Dhabi, with a KFOR airplane. I wasn’t there before the 2000 elections. I went there five days before the elections and asked them, “Can I please vote?” They said, “No, you can’t.” There was an interesting detail, there was an American and a Swiss who were at the municipality. But they really liked me and trusted me. They said, “Ibush you will go, you will get better.” Because I could barely climb the municipality stairs, I had a very serious heart attack.

And they said, “Since you are not at the elections to predict how LDK will win, put it in an envelope and leave it with me.” And I took it and wrote 64 percent, and I gave them the closed envelope, only God and I knew. And I went there, I underwent surgery and they placed two stents, and a balloon [angioplasty]. They even said, there was a doctor, Naser, he had finished university in Sarajevo at the time and he would come and talk to me in my hospital bed. The first local elections were held, LDK won 64 percent in Vushtrri. That American called me on the phone, “You won,” he said, “two times,” he said, “you won with LDK and you won by predicting that 64 percent. How did you know?” “How could I not Deni? I’ve been with them for ten years,” I said, “I know how these people breathe.”

I stayed in the hospital and then there needed to be an assembly consultation, and there was pressure, “Come, come,” I said to my doctor, “They are telling me to go,” he said, “Tell them that you can go after three days.” He said, “We decided to allow you [to go] after three days, we will give you your medicines for one year, and the doctor will accompany you to Kosovo.” I came back, I was chosen deputy mayor of the municipality, that professor became mayor, but he was very sick, he was a very good man. He was very prepared [for the job], very honest, he was a very [decent] Albanian, but he was sick. And he couldn’t come, he rarely came, I was leading the municipality.

For the national elections, that American asked me, “Will your party recommend you as an MP?” I said, “I don’t know, Deni. Why?” He said, “If they do, go!” He said, “You’re not fit to work with thieves in Vushtrri.” I am saying it exactly as he did. He took me to the hall of Kosovo’s Assembly without being a deputy, without being... “You will only go and see.” And then they recommended me as a MP and I won in the 2001 elections, I [also] won in the 2004 elections. I was an MP in ‘92, I was an MP in ‘98. I was a member of the Mines’ Board in ‘97, [and in] 2007-2009. I was a member of the Mines’ Board in 2014, with many requests for me to go back to Trepça.

I went back in 2014, 2015, I told them, “I am retired,” they told me, “you will retire, you will work as much as you want in Trepça. You will not be bothered by anybody because we need you.” I worked for 16 more months after retiring, I mean in Trepça after retiring and I took my bag after 16 months. They begged me to go and apply for [joining] the board, I said, “Never! I have closed that [chapter].” One of them said, “To make history.” I said, “I’m sorry but I already made history with Trepça,” “It’s true but...” “No I am only telling you,” I said, “since you mentioned making history,” I said, “I made history,” and that was my career.



**Anita Susuri:** I also wanted to ask you about your experience with war, were you here or what was your situation like?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** I wasn't active as a soldier, but I was very active [otherwise]. Drenica, Shala, there's no place I haven't stepped foot in. The day when the Jashari family<sup>32</sup> was attacked on [March] 5, 6, me together with the late Shefki Pupova who was a journalist, with Bajram Mulaku who was mayor of the municipality, you may know, for three terms, and the late Hilmi Gërguri, we went to Galica. When we went to Galica, many citizens were there in the village. Bajram said, "Ibush, I cannot go any further," I said, "If you can't, stay. We won't impose it on anyone."

Me, Hilmi Gërguri, Shefki Pupovci, who are both dead now, we went to Prekaz. They noticed us and some Haxhi from Prekaz, his name was Haxhi because I asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Haxhi." We went into a barn and they threw grenades there, but we survived. After they massacred the Jashari family, I went there to look at them. With that girl I mentioned, Bahrije Spanca. They were all exposed in a storage room of construction material, I saw all of them, one by one. Adem [Jasahri]<sup>33</sup> was cut in the throat. I was very active.

When they attacked Likoshan, the Ahmeti family, we, the people from Vushtrri were the first to go there and help them with everything. We took their sister Sadije who survived, we took her from Likoshan and sent her to the airport for Switzerland. We continuously collaborated with them and they took the director of Mitrovica's prison, Sherafedin Ajeti, his family called me at my LDK office, "You were on good terms with UÇK, this happened, if you could intervene to save him." I said, "Nope, I won't get involved in that," "No, you can," "No, no," I said, "I am sorry but I won't get involved in that." And I didn't want to get involved.

**Anita Susuri:** He was infamous.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Excuse me?

**Anita Susuri:** The prison director was bad.

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes. So, they dealt with him somewhere (laughs). Until April 19 of '99, the police came here {shows to the right} with armored vehicles and they gave us five minutes. We got in line and it took us three days and three nights until we arrived in Albania. Otherwise, I have an acknowledgment from UÇK, from the Kosovo Liberation Army, it's in writing, an acknowledgment they gave me for my contribution and commitment. I said it, I didn't use a gun.

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<sup>32</sup> In March 1998 Serbian troops surrounded the compound of the Jashari family, whose men were among the founders of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and killed all of them, including the women and the children. This event energized the Albanian resistance and marked the beginning of the war.

<sup>33</sup> Adem Jashari (1955-1998), also known as "legendary commander," was a founder of the KLA, celebrated as its foremost leader and symbol of Kosovo independence. He died in March 1998, together with his family of twenty-half of them underage girls and boys - in a shootout with Serb troops during a three-day siege of his home in Prekaz.



I went to Polac, the late Ilaz Kodra, he was a good soldier, he was murdered. He said, "There is no government anymore, there isn't," I said, "No, no, please, there is and there will be one." I said, "I didn't decide to use a gun," I said, "I decided to bring you food," I said, "If I can't bring you 50 kilograms, I will bring you 25 kilograms from Vushtrri," I said, "you used the gun, I'll bring the food," he said, "That's how it is *bac!*" Food, as well as medicine, allowances, wood, generator, car tires, phones and everything. I am saying, we did everything for them. And they were told at the headquarters, when they used to go in groups to get allowances, they were told, "You don't need to come here at all, just call us. Just say whatever Ibush says," they said, "we will get it done."

We crossed to Albania, we stopped in Durrës at the roundabout, at the poplar trees, you may know [the place]. It took us three days and three nights, God sent rain those days and the line of cars was long at the time we went there. And he [the driver] said, "We have to go to Fier," I said, "What are you saying," I said, "we are exhausted." I told the driver... because they took us in some trucks, when we arrived at the border, I said, "No way." He said, "We could go to the municipality [building] of Durrës," I said, "Let's go." And I went there, I talked to them and said, "I will treat you." And maybe this is not appropriate to be recorded but it was exactly like that. And I gave them a hundred *marka*, and they organized it and sent us to a camp in Shijak, the Arcobalena camp, it was Italian. They treated us so well there, it was so good.

We even had organized classes there and everything was at the highest standard. The moment the Kumanovo Agreement<sup>34</sup> was completed, there was a woman responsible for the camp, [she was] Italian, and she had chosen me as Head of camp. And I used to tell them... there were 947 refugees there. I used to say, "No *bre...*" "No, no, you have to be [head of camp]." That Italian woman came and told me, we had a tent where we communicated and coordinated with the refugees. She said, "Head," she said, "the Kumanovo Agreement was signed, but you have to ask the people not to rush because it's risky to go back, it's this and that," she said, "you call on the people tomorrow and notify them." And that's what I did.

And we had a big tent and a megaphone, KFOR and the woman responsible were also there. She asked me, "Will you go back?" I said, "I will tell them yes," I told them beforehand. An old man from Rahovec with a white hat got up and said, "I have a question," I said, "Go on," [he asked,] "Will you go back?" I said, "Yes to be honest, immediately." They asked, "How did you know?" I said, "How could I not know what these people want to know?" I said, "I know." And I went back with two of my brother's sons, immediately. I went back to Kosovo, my family remained there for about ten more days, and then everyone came back.

I'll go back to [talking about] the camp once more, we had an amazing model of organizing. Not only did an Albanian minister visit, but also Italy's Minister of Education, they visited us to see how we organized the classes there. And I sent some young girls, just like you, in the morning to clean outside

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<sup>34</sup> The Military Technical Agreement between NATO (KFOR) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), commonly known as the Kumanovo Agreement, was the accord concluded on 9 June 1999 in Kumanovo that ended the NATO bombing campaign of FRY.

the camp with gloves on {touches his hands}. So, there were [people from] all municipalities, the organizing was quite good. And then as you know, everyone went back, and Tony Blair said it well, “Kosovo deserved its independence, and to be supported because everyone returned immediately.” That was a very big testimony.

**Korab Krasniqi:** I just wanted to ask you, when you came back from Albania, in what state did you find your properties?

**Anita Susuri:** Were they burned...?

**Korab Krasniqi:** Were they burned, did you... or didn't they touch them?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Yes, my house was burnt. I had three good cows, they took all three of them, nothing was left here. We had some supplies, but those were taken by our people, bless them, flour and food and everything. I was a pen collector, I liked having pens, and some of them survived, because everything was damaged, they were thrown away. I had some beautiful crystals, they took all the good ones. So like that, everything was damaged.

When they started to give aid, I was at the municipality myself, and my mother told me one day, “Everyone is taking them, is there anything for us?” I said, “It's not right mother.” “Why?” I said, “No, because we have the possibility to make a living,” I said, “Let the ones who can't take them,” “Well then okay” (laughs). My mother was extremely understanding, you could easily talk to her. And that is how it was, we slowly started making steps, working, making a living, all of that.

**Anita Susuri:** If there is anything you would like to add or tell for the end, please go on?

**Ibush Jonuzi:** Lastly, thank you! Through this show, if it ever goes public, everyone I mentioned, especially the miners, I send them greetings, I wish them health, and a happy life. I wish that this amazing mine will get back on its feet. The Government of the Republic of Kosovo should support it. They should support it because it's not only in the interest of the miners, but it's a national interest. It's great luck that the mine has its supplies. I am very up to date with the assets it has, the exploration there. For us to become more active, not to go to work in Switzerland and Germany, but to improve our conditions and circumstances, so our people will work here.

There is an ore that you can find in only five places in the world, alloyite, which can be found at the Artana mine. The Germans were interested in creating a Kosovo-German agency, together. They invited me and the manager of Trepça, professor Ahmet Tmava, to go there in 2014. They gave us three year visas immediately. And to create that joint agency, we would use the ore, the work would be done here, the final production would be here, the products would be used in medicine. But, I have to unfortunately say, it's a reality, the politics immediately...

Xhavit Haliti<sup>35</sup> used to say, “Everyone has two or three million.” Not they don’t, my skin fell off [working] as they say, even today I wear my gloves and do manual labor, I am 71 years old. And he makes two or three millions without sweating {touches his forehead}. And the Germans saw it and withdrew from the idea for the agency, from everything. This is a consequence of the non-efficient managing of our state institutions, because that would’ve worked really well, there was mutual interest for both us and the Germans, but they noticed, they smelled it quicker than us and gave up.

**Anita Susuri:** Thank you too for your contribution and your story!

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<sup>35</sup> Xhavit Haliti (1956 - ) is a Kosovo-Albanian politician, philosopher, linguist and one of the founders of the Kosovo Liberation Army.