

Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW WITH REMZIJE LIMANI JANUZI

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Duration: 179 minutes

Present:

1. Remzije Limani Januzi (Speaker)
2. Anita Susuri (Interviewer)
3. Renea Begolli (Camera)

Symbols used in the transcript for non-verbal communication:

() - emotional communication

{ } - the interviewee explains with gestures

Other symbols in the transcript:

[] - addition to the text to facilitate understanding

Footnotes are editorial additions that provide information about places, names, or expressions.

Part One

Anita Susuri: If you could please introduce yourself, your birth year, place, and say something about your family background?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, my name is Remzije Limani. I was born on March 3, 1959. I was born in the village of Pogragjë, in the municipality of Gjilan, to my mother Fatushe and father Ruzhdi. We were six children, three sisters and three brothers. My brothers were older than me; we sisters were the younger ones (smiles).

Anita Susuri: What was life like in your family when you were a child?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Life in our family was like that of every other Albanian family. My parents were uneducated, but they were very hardworking and valued their children's education. The conditions were not good, they were difficult. We grew up in poor conditions, with many hardships, but they managed to raise the six of us. They also sent the boys to school and me as well. I went to school, and my older brother Nazim, he was the first one, it was extremely difficult to get an education at that time. There were no roads, but he had to go to school... he traveled. He didn't travel every day, he would come home once a week. He would leave for Gjilan on Sunday evening and return Friday night or Saturday morning. And on Sundays... he would walk from Pogragjë to Gjilan.

Even harder, he would carry bread with him for the whole week, and sometimes the bread would mold... during the week. He said what happened, maybe they'd go into fields where someone had planted some cabbage or some leeks and they would take them, clean them, and eat them {mimics gathering vegetables}. The conditions were difficult, just like for everyone else in our community. But they valued education and my father used to say to my older and second brothers, and to all of us, "I'll sell... I'll sell the land but you will get an education, because without education there is nothing."

Anita Susuri: You mentioned a story about your father, that he was a partisan and also a survivor of the Tivari massacre.¹

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, our father, I only remember him saying, "I was in Albania," and he'd say, "a very beautiful place," and also, "If I never go there again, the earth will not rot my body." You know

¹ The massacre of Tivari, currently Bar, Montenegro, was a mass killing of Albanian recruits from Kosovo by Yugoslav partisan forces in March 1945.

that saying, what they used to say? (smiles). My mother and some of his fellow fighters told me that he had been a fighter in the Second World War. As a young man, he joined with the goal of fighting for freedom. But as we know, they were betrayed by the occupiers.

In the Second World War, in 1945, he and many young men were gathered and disarmed, he was armed but was disarmed in Prizren, and they started to walk: Prizren- Kukës, Kukës, Puka, Shkodra. They crossed the border between Albania and Montenegro. When they began [their march] the group wasn't big, maybe 300–400 people. "It depended on how many we were," he said, "then there we heard gunshots," he said "they said that they were executing them, and he said, "we were afraid we'd be next in the execution, which was planned by the Yugoslav communist forces." So they decided among themselves to leave, to escape.

He said, "We didn't even have bread. If we tried to get away from the group, from the column, we would be shot immediately. You were hungry," he said, "bullet." So, they decided to leave and scattered. My father was with someone from our area, from Bilinica, but I don't remember his name. He told my brother, "We left, we escaped into the mountains and didn't know where we were going, where were we going, we walked for a long time, a long time, an entire week, until we arrived, and we crossed the border," he said, "we reached Kosovo. We ate even grass and whatever we found along the way," he said, "we had no food," he said, "and with all those difficulties...no water, no bread, no washing, nothing." That was... the path our parents, my father, had during the Second World War.

Anita Susuri: So, your father didn't talk much about it, but only when he came back...

Remzije Limani Januzi: My father, yes, he only told us that he had been to Albania. But my mother told me he had also been in Tivari. She mentioned that, and so did some of my father's friends who were from Bilinica, though I don't remember their names, my brother told me, but I have forgotten. My brother Avdiu also told me, "Yes, when they gathered them, when they gathered them in Prizren, they disarmed them completely, all the young men, ages 20 to 30, were rounded up," {she gestures with her hands showing a large group}. And they were sent for the worst purpose, to be executed, to be eliminated and to a journey through Albania, because he mentioned Albania often (smiles). They were patriots, they were patriots, they loved their homeland, their freedom, and their people.

Anita Susuri: Did your father tell you anything else about World War II?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, just that they were, they were fighters and participated in the war with the best of intentions, to liberate the land, our territories. He mentioned this and always said, "Never trust a Serb, do not engage with them, there is no *besa*² with them. They seem to behave well, but there is no *besa* with them." They always repeated that to us, because if you don't have a solid base, even from your family, you can't walk the path you want to walk {nods}.

Anita Susuri: What other memories do you have from childhood, your family, the environment where you grew up?

² In Albanian customary law, *besa* is the word of honor, faith, trust, protection, truce, etc. It is a key instrument for regulating individual and collective behavior at times of conflict, and is connected to the sacredness of hospitality, or the unconditioned extension of protection to guests.

Remzije Limani Januzi: About...memories of childhood, I have a lot of childhood memories because... I was raised by very loving parents, my mother loved us a lot, dad loved especially us daughters (smiles)... They, you know, always supported, they supported us. He always said, "I will make you..." you know, with those folk expressions of the time, "Your father will make you a doctor" (laughs). But he didn't get to see that because he died very young, it is...it was, I was only 13 when he passed away. And when I think of myself and how far I've come... how to dream that a woman finishes university, drives, gets a license! That was a big deal at the time {shrugs}. Maybe if he saw me progress so much, he would have been overjoyed seeing a woman to go so far (smiles).

Anita Susuri: What was your mother like? What kind of family did she come from?

Remzije Limani Januzi: My mother was very hardworking and she loved life a lot, she loved it. She used to say, "When I sent," she'd say, "Nazim to school for the first time," she'd say, "I couldn't sleep the whole night from the joy of sending my child to school (smiles). "I worked so much," she said,"at night...it felt like the night was too long for me because it was getting dark and I wasn't working," and she said, "and the night seemed long, that's how much I wanted to send my son to school."

He succeeded in finishing school and when he went to school... We listened to Radio Prishtina. My brother would only allow us to listen to the news, no greetings, no music, I don't even know what those radio greetings were like. My mother also used to listen to the news from Tirana, we regularly listened to Radio Tirana's program for the diaspora, it was special. We also listened to Radio Kukës, it came through very clearly in Pogradjë, because Pogradjë is in a kind of valley, in the middle it's a flat area surrounded by two hills {she gestures with her hands}, so the radio signal came through really well.

When my brother came back from school, [my mother] would say, "Oh Nazim, I heard the news, and here's what they said." "Mother, you should have been a lawyer." You know, he said that ... (laugh). She was very happy when he said that. And she would tell us, "Nazim told me, 'You look like a lawyer.'" I'd say, "Of course, mom!" (laughs) She wanted to know everything. She was a smart woman, but unfortunately, time takes its toll, and those were difficult days back then...

Anita Susuri: And the place where you grew up, what was it like?

Remzije Limani Januzi: It was a village, not a small one either, a large village. Even today you'd call it a big village. There was a municipality there... the municipality existed until...I don't remember exactly, but the villages always handled birth registrations, certificates, everything through our local municipality in Pogradjë. It was a village with many educated people. We had four or five PhDs from early on. We had Rabbit Rexhepi, Nuhi Sadiku, Xhafer, all of them Doctors of Science. We also had doctors, engineers, many younger generations came out of there highly educated. It was one of the most educated villages in the municipality of Gjiilan. Even among women, there are women today in their eighties who were some of the first teachers in the village, four of them are from our village.

Anita Susuri: You mentioned that your family had a mill, was that your father's?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, my father and my uncle, there were three brothers, the eldest uncle passed away, but they had set up the grindstones earlier, and the remaining two worked the mill.

Anita Susuri: And one of your uncles was involved in the NDSH³ movement?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, yes. My uncle Sinan was involved with the NDSH, the National Democratic Albanian movement, with Gjon Serreçi, who was the leader of NDSH... Metush Krasniqi⁴ was assigned to the Kamenica region, and Fehmi Saraçi was also a member. My uncle worked with Fehmi Saraçi, Metush Krasniqi, Gjon Serreçi, and others, I can't remember all their names. They were an underground group, because at that time, NDSH was an illegal organization. They worked, not openly.

Anita Susuri: There's also a story of something you did as a child in elementary school, about destroying photographs (laughs)...

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes (laughs), let me tell you about something that happened before that story, because I was in high school then. I had a strong inclination toward art, I loved art a lot. In elementary school, my art teacher Zejnullah Zejnullahu would collect my work and display it in the school hallway, he covered the walls with my drawings and parents would come and look at them, like a school exhibition. He said to my brother...The teacher told my older brother Xhim, "Remzije has a great talent for art, send her to the Art School in Peja." My brother replied, "No, how can I send her to Peja? She's too young, just out of elementary school, and I'm afraid she won't come back." He said, "No! She can continue high school in Gjilan and go to the Faculty of Arts in Prishtina." It was no, a categorical no!

So, I finished elementary school in my home village and enrolled in high school in Gjilan, it was the first year. Now, I connected with the art teacher, who was Jetullah Haliti. He gave us a free drawing assignment, "Draw whatever you want." I drew the Albanian flag, our national flag, the eagle, and I completely colored it and when he came to check the drawings, he saw mine and asked, "What is this?" I said, "The national flag." He replied, "No." He took my drawing, and tore it up. There were 44 students in the class, and he only tore up mine. That destroyed my morale, you know, I was very disappointed, and I completely lost interest in art and I've never forgotten that moment, never. I was very disappointed. I went home and I told my brother. He asked, "Who was he?" Later, we heard that the teacher, the art professor, was a collaborator of UDBa⁵ (smiles). We later found out he was even sent to Geneva by the UDB, regarding Albanian movements in Switzerland, and that he always carried a weapon. My sister's husband told me the whole story. It is connected, it is all connected. How could someone tear up a national flag and still be a good person? Absolutely not. That's what happened.

³ NDSH or LNDSh, acronym for Albanian National Democratic Movement, an anti-communist resistance in Kosovo between 1945 and 1947.

⁴ Metush Krasniqi (1928-1986) was a Kosovo Albanian educator and activist. Krasniqi was known for running illegal nationalist organizations such as The Revolutionary Party for Uniting Albanian Territories with the Motherland and National-Liberation Movement of Kosovo and other Albanian Regions in Yugoslavia. Krasniqi was imprisoned several times by the Yugoslav regime between the years 1958-1986. The last time he was taken to prison, the tortures he was submitted to led to his death.

⁵ The State Security Service - *Služba državne sigurnosti*, also known by its original name as the State Security Administration, was the secret police organization of Communist Yugoslavia. It was at all times best known as UDBa (pronounced as a single word and not an acronym), and was the most common colloquial name for the organization throughout its history.

And that incident in high school, it happened in my village...It was in the fourth year... My sister⁶... that night we had guests, friends of my brother, and I told my sister, "Will you listen to something?" I said, "But you must promise not to tell anyone, not the family, no one. Today you're a young girl, tomorrow you might be engaged to someone, maybe even a patriot, but you mustn't tell anyone, because who knows what might happen. He could be interrogated or tortured and end up telling. And now, we go out, they arrest us and what do we gain?"

She said, "I am giving you my *besa*⁷ that I'll never tell, not ever." "Okay." "What?" I said, "Let's sneak in and write something." The name of our school was Liria [Freedom], and at the entrance was a picture of Tito. Just imagine, having a picture of Tito, someone who did absolutely nothing good for us, but so much harm to our people, it was something...it felt shameful to have that image there. In the hallway there were all pictures of Serbian writers. I told my sister, "There's not a single Albanian picture here." I said, "We can't allow this here." "Ok, let's go," she said.

Before going in, I checked the entrance, because I was convinced that one window was broken and had been replaced with a board, and I wanted to make sure I could remove it and enter without problems. I went and looked, it was dinner time, and there weren't many people around. The principal was from the village of Bodri, not Pogradë, he lived in the school. There was the old schoolhouse, which was built before World War II, there were some rooms, and he lived there. Once I saw no one was around, I removed the board easily, I told my sister, "Socks, we have no gloves. We must cover our hands with socks, put your socks on your hands." {touches her hands} And with nothing, only socks, we would leave no trace. We went in, the two of us.

First, we took down Tito's photo, we tore it up, smashed the glass, then we went down the row and destroyed all the other photos. And slowly we are...I saw there was nobody around, I peeked out again to be sure no one was around and said, "Come on, we go now." We went out, the cornfield behind the school was tall, it must have been June, because the corn was tall. We ran through the corn, crossed by the river, which was very near, took the socks on our hands and threw them away {makes the motion} the socks, and returned home shivering. And we began our normal life.

There were times when we laughed and my brother caught us laughing and asked, "What's so funny?" "Oh, nothing" (smiles). The next day we were never discovered, because my brother did not know, we did not tell him even later. No, because we did not trust him, because our older brother... I trust all my three brothers a lot. But it happened that we did not tell anyone and we did not know what would happen the next day. And the school supervisors discovered what had happened and reported it to the principal. They said, "All the photographs were broken, we need to call the police."

They notified the police, and the police came with lots of vehicles...probably the UDB agents in civilian clothes. They saw, approached, but didn't enter the first floor, they went to the second floor through the stairs, afraid the building might be booby-trapped. No classes were held that day, or for the next three days. It was never discovered who did it. We only told the family after Yugoslavia collapsed (laughs). They said, "We suspected a little, but not a hundred percent" (smiles). And so it happened

⁶ Her name is Saimë.

⁷ In Albanian customary law, *besa* is the word of honor, faith, trust, protection, truce, etc. It is a key instrument for regulating individual and collective behavior at times of conflict, and is connected to the sacredness of hospitality, or the unconditioned extension of protection to guests.

that we were never found out. I'm glad to this day they never found out (laughs).

Anita Susuri: Was anyone punished?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Some young people were questioned, they took them, they usually took some kids, they detained and beat them a bit, but released them. The local [Communist] Party Committee held a meeting, probably suspecting some individuals, but nothing came of it but I am telling the truth, they never caught us, they never reached us.

Anita Susuri: You weren't part of any organization at that time?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, I wasn't organized. That began in my first year of university. I registered at the university, and the first year, because in our family...my sister was married to Rexhep Mala,⁸ the national hero. I often went to their home, and even during my studies I'd visit my sister in Gjilan and then return to Pristina, I did not go to the village. The Mala family inspired me a lot, especially Rexhep's resistance because he... When my sister married him, I was in my first year of high school. He was arrested in 1974.

About the movement, the organization of the illegal group, I joined an illegal group in 1978, in my first university year. At that time, groups from Albania visited — concerts, football teams, volleyball teams, theatre groups. They caught the attention of young people. I remember one concert with Avni Mulaj, Gaqo Qako, Ema Qazimi, it was a very big group at the time.⁹ It was held in the 1 Tetori Hall, there was no, I don't know... no seats left, many people standing. It was something extraordinary, they sang patriotic songs of freedom fighters. Boys and girls cheered, waved their jackets in the air {mimics gestures}, it really stirred people (smiles).

I met [Teuta Hadri](#) and [Teuta Bekteshi](#) through this group, when we went to the concert. We met there. "Where are you from?" "Gjilan." And she heard about Rexhep, she said...I told her that he was my sister's husband, "Ah!" Teuta Bekteshi was the first to visit Rexhep's family, there was also my sister's brother-in-law Hasan and usually the cells were formed with three people, we were four, three girls. Hasan was the leader of the group, and when Teuta arrived he asked me, "She looks like a very good girl, doesn't she?" I said, "Yes." "Where did you meet her?" He asked me, you know, in general, "Where did you meet her? How did you come to meet her? How does she look to you? Why did she want to come to see our family?" And I told him and I said, "We have another friend." "Who is she?" "Teuta Hadri from Gjakova." Because usually Gjakovars were on the side of the regime at the time. But she was a very good girl, very, and a very good woman (smiles). And now she...the two of us went to Gjilan.

We went and talked there, at their family's house, with Hasan, and we decided to form a cell. They accepted - "Yes, with great pleasure!" They were very ready for this, for everything. And we held the oath at my brother's apartment in Pristina, because my brother had worked only one year after finishing the Law Faculty, he worked in the Municipality in Gjilan, and then the UDB ruined his plan to

⁸ Rexhep Mala (1951-1984) was a prominent Albanian activist in the underground movement. He died in 1984 with Nuhi Berisha in a shoot out with the police when their hideout was discovered.

⁹ That was the State Ensemble of Radio Television Albania, with Gaqo Qako, Avni Mulaj, Luan Zhegu, dhe Liljana Kondakqi (speaker's addition).

continue, had him removed. There was a certain case in the village of Pisjan, I'm jumping topics here. In the village of Pisjan, there was a Serbian-run municipality where they were registering children from nearby villages like Llashtica, Velekinca, and others. And now, the parents complained that when they went to register their child, that Serb would tell them to undress the child: "What is it, a boy or a girl?" And they didn't accept that.

And now, they complained, and when my brother started working there, the complaints reached him. The word got to my brother, and he removed him. However, I found out about this much later from someone else, the husband of my husband's paternal aunt said, "Avdi even removed that Serb from the municipal office in Pisjan." Because they had complained about this, he said, "Avdi intervened and brought us an Albanian, and we were very happy." I heard about it very late and I asked my brother, "Did this happen?" He said, "Yes, that's how it happened." Maybe his work and his actions in Gjilan weren't pleasing to the occupier, to the regime of that time. And my brother saw that *phhhh* {onomatopoeia} it wasn't going so well, so he left and came to Pristina. My brother worked in gas distribution in Obiliq, until he was imprisoned.

And my brother had his apartment in front of Armata,¹⁰ and he still has it there today. He usually went to the village every Saturday and Sunday, every weekend. And since the apartment was empty, I told aga Can [Hasan], "The apartment is free," I said, "we could also use it here." He said, "Alright, I'll notify you, I'll come from Gjilan. You three are in Pristina, it's better I come." And we took the oath in my brother's apartment, we swore that we would work with honor, with a lot of love, never betrayal. There we took the oath in front of the flag and started. Our work began there.

Anita Susuri: This was in 1978?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, in 1978. I don't remember exactly what time of year.

Anita Susuri: Why was the oath necessary?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, an oath is a word you give (laughs)... a declaration before someone that you say, "I swear before you that I will tell only the truth." That's what an oath is, before the flag, before you, before the nation, declaring that I will work with great dedication for my country.

Part Two

Anita Susuri: And in the movements you were part of, about the activities, what kind of rules did you have? Who determined them?

Remzije Limani Januzi: The rules, yes, the rules were made... the movement made them, the center made decisions. Because before us, there were such groups of three, and from us it was taken... well, Teuta with her own group that I didn't know, I developed with others that Teuta didn't know, that's how it went. And now, someone else made the rules and we implemented those rules.

¹⁰ Former Yugoslav People's Army cultural center and a current public space for alternative culture and social dialogue. Located at the very center of Pristina, behind the Grand Hotel.

Anita Susuri: What kind of rules were there, for example?

Remzije Limani Januzi: There were rules not to... to go out on time, to be disciplined about time. Even today, at my age, I really hate it when someone doesn't come on time. I always come a little early, just so that the other person doesn't wait. There was a lot of discipline, with time, everything on time. And if you didn't show up on time, then something wasn't right, or you were late. Something could've happened, you'd think, "Maybe they were taken, maybe they were searched." Because it was impossible not to be on time. That's it, because time, to be on time, had a lot of meaning {nods in agreement}.

Anita Susuri: Did you have any rule, for example, if you were caught during an action or something, how to act?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, we had it. For example, we, the two Teutas and I, were organized by Hasan Mala. He brought us a weapon, we trained with the weapon in Gërmia. Not in that field, but we went to the forest. And how to handle... how the weapon is used, how it's loaded, how it's closed, how it's opened, how, everything that's needed, how the weapon should be used, we learned all that from *Aga*¹¹ Hasan. He taught us... we also practiced aiming and shooting, how to use weapons in a situation of danger. For example, you take an action or something happens on the street that you can't complete, or they want to stop you to search you, if you have materials or something, then you use the weapon as your own form of protection. That was the point, that the defense... the weapons were for protecting the materials of your work, when you're doing an activity, when you're making a pamphlet that you're distributing, a...

In Kamenica we also had, I don't know if my friends mentioned it, I had an action with Teuta Hadri. In Kamenica, as you enter, there was a hill, and that slogan stood out: "Tito, the Party, Yugoslavia," where each letter was nine meters long and all made with white stones, painted white and it was very noticeable, their slogan. And now Hasan Mala organized how to go to that place and destroy that slogan with me and Teuta Hadri. Because we had code names, I was "Ganimete," Teuta Hadri "Shote," and Teuta Bekteshi "Bule" (laughs). And we always called each other by pseudonyms when needed, so the enemy or someone else wouldn't know our real names exactly. Bule, for example: if you got caught, they'd say, "Bule, who is that Bule?"

The action was taken and he tells me, because in the village of Koretin, on the way to Kamenica, before Kamenica there's a village Koretin, my brother's young wife is from that village and I also had two daughters of my paternal uncle in that village. And because they were a big family, we came and went, and they often came to us, it was impossible not to be seen by someone. And he says, "Remzije, wear a coat and a scarf," and I... that was a disguise, a scarf and a coat, and I took the coat from Hasan Mala's wife, and the shawl, the mantel. And we got on to INA¹² in Gjilan, because Teuta came from Pristina to Hasan's family home. Teuta didn't dress up, wasn't disguised at all, but I had to be disguised.

We got on the bus at INA, it was in the afternoon like that, it was a bit autumn, a bit cool... It was chilly. And Hasan tells us, "When you reach the road between Topanice and Koretin, get off," and I, there was

¹¹ *Aga* is a term usually used to refer to an elderly man, often as a sign of respect.

¹² Fuel company from Croatia.

a bus stop there, and ... I don't remember very well, only that at that time we had to get off at that stop, and on the right side of the road... it goes toward the river. We went on a path, a walking trail, not like a proper road. And when we went to the river, Hasan was waiting for us on the other side, and Teuta ... I carried her because she was very weak, and even now she's still weak, she used to be better (laughs), and I put her on my back. Teuta takes both her shoes and mine in her hands. And we crossed that river, it was a bit chilly, and Hasan, Aga Hasan, said to us, "Where are you, Shote Galica? What are you missing to be like Shote Galica? You are just like Shote Galica" (laughs), just to praise us a bit, to lift us up a little...

Anita Susuri: To raise your morale.

Remzije Limani Januzi: To give us strength and morale (laughs). And we crossed the river, then we put on our shoes, sneakers or whatever we had, and heard two gunshots. And we immediately froze, stopped; we were caught. He said, "No," he said, "these are our friends," he said, "they've gone ahead, they've secured the road, it's completely clear. You have no problems, go where you're headed." And among those friends was the husband of Teuta Hadri, Ilmi Ramadani, and we go, we continue. They had taken shovels and everything there. Hasan Mala was dressed like an old man, with woolen trousers, with a scarf, with a cap, a *plis*, he had tied the scarf around his head like the elders do {gestures with hand on head}, and with a cane in hand {acts like holding something in hand}. He looked just like an old man, so that no one would suspect, because he was young at that time. He was 40 years old, now he is 80.

We went there, to that slogan, everything was ready, we messed it all up — we destroyed the whole thing, made it all like this {gestures with hand to show completion}, not a single letter was left unbroken, everything. But it was very difficult because they were nine meters long. We destroyed it, completed the action, and returned just as we had come, I dressed in my coat. Then, when we came out, we got down by the military in Gilan, we exited from Gjilan where the army barracks were, former Yugoslavia's barracks, now they belong to the FSK.¹³ We got down there and walked to the house of Hasan Mala's family. It was completed successfully. Later we heard that they had taken, in those areas where families were already under suspicion, they had taken some boys, beat them, tortured them. But it wasn't... this case was never discovered ever {shakes head}. Also the case I mentioned in Pogradje, and this case.

Anita Susuri: At this time, you also mentioned the groups that came from Albania, artistic groups, do you remember anything special, any event, a concert perhaps?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, the artistic concert that was from Avni Mula's group.¹⁴ That one left the biggest impression on me because the singers were at a very high level (laughs). It wasn't folk songs, you know, the ones usually sung, no, it was like, not quite opera but I don't know how to describe it. And yes, it was a very big group. They stood out a lot; they all traveled in two or three buses because they had instrumentalists, singers, and people who surely were also part of the government of that time. But we were also very curious to ask them questions, to find out something about Albania, to

¹³ Kosovo Security Forces, Kosovo army.

¹⁴ State Ensemble of Radio Television Albania.

hear them talk to us about Albania, to talk about uncle [Enver Hoxha]¹⁵ (laughs). So yes, we stood out a little, but we continued.

Anita Susuri: Did you have a chance to talk with them?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, we did. We usually asked them about Albania. They told us many good things, and even through the radio, I personally never suspected {shrugs shoulders} that it was bad or that it was a poor country. I always thought Albania was a garden full of flowers (laughs), that they worked a lot, loved their homeland dearly, and so I never had doubts. We did talk with Avni Mula, with Liljana Kondakqi, we... We followed them step by step (laughs), even to the Grand Hotel, which back then, that kind of thing...as girls, we never went to hotels or cafés, it wasn't very... well-regarded among the people. But because this was a concert with guests from Albania, we wanted to get close to them, to...

Anita Susuri: Was this during the time...

Remzije Limani Januzi: Excuse me a moment... and also those from the Albanian Embassy who were in Belgrade. Now, a group of us students, there was a guy named Hasan, I don't remember his last name, he made a request for a group of students to go to Albania. Both Teutas, myself, and many other friends, Mera who was from Istog, many friends were part of it. At that time, we had just formed the illegal group, and Hasan persuaded us. He said, "You don't need to go because you'll stand out more. Do you want to work more, or do you want to get noticed and end up in prison immediately?"

Anita Susuri: To be prosecuted?

Remzije Limani Januzi: "To be prosecuted?" We said, "No, we want to work." So, then he said, "You are convinced that Albania is a flower garden as they describe it," and said, "it's better for you not to go." I then went home to Gjilan, and my brother called me from Pristina. Avdi tells me, "Remzije, your friends are calling you to go to a wedding," but he didn't say it was Albania. It was understood that the wedding meant Albania. I said, "No, I don't want to go." "Why not? They are waiting for you," you know, "they've been coming here asking about you." I said, "No, I don't want to go, Avdi. It's over. I've decided not to go." So, we didn't go. That group went, and they were interrogated and such, but we didn't go. No, we didn't.

Then, I was on my way to the faculty, the Embassy was near *Tre sheshirat*.¹⁶ Do you know where *Tre sheshirat* is? {She addresses the interviewer} That's what it was called then. Near *Tre sheshirat*, on the other side of the street, there was a sort of café or maybe a place selling burek or something, I don't remember exactly. The windows were very dark, they could see you, but you couldn't see them. Then, a guy who knew us, we knew him through...everything we knew was through the groups that came from Albania. He saw me and said, "Oh Remzije, I looked for you in the sky and found you on earth." "What happened?" He said, "I have something to discuss with you." "Okay." While we were talking, he asked, "Can you walk a little slower?" I said, "No, no, we can walk and talk." Suddenly, three people from the Embassy appeared ahead of us. They were Embassy staff. I said, "Oh, those are the Embassy

¹⁵ Enver Hoxha (1908-1985) was the leader of the Albanian Communist Party who ruled Albania as a dictator until his death.

¹⁶ The three-way intersection at the entrance of Pristina, where the Catholic Cathedral currently stands.

people,” because we knew them and would talk to them (laughs). He didn’t stop, but I did.

At that time, pamphlets had been distributed throughout the entire territory of Kosovo, in all cities. We talked, and he asked me, “Do you want to come to Albania?” I said, “No, we don’t want to go, because... no, we contribute more by not going. We already know what Albania is like.” We laughed. “What’s new? Anything new?” “Yes,” I said, “there is something new.” “What is it?” I said, “Pamphlets have been distributed all across Kosovo, in all cities.” “What do they say?” I said, “‘Kosova Republic,’ ‘Free Political Prisoners,’ ‘Adem Demaçi.’”¹⁷ - mostly they mentioned Adem Demaçi - “‘Trepça works, Belgrade builds,’” these slogans were used, “Freedom for the Albanian People,” “Long live Albania,” and of course, Uncle Enver [Hoxha] was mentioned, this is a fact, we can’t deny it. These were the messages.

While we talked, I was able to laugh with them normally. As we were parting, my friend was waiting for me four–five meters away, maybe ten meters. As I was leaving, two people came in front of me. One was tall, dark-skinned, with a long coat and a hat, he reminded me of someone from crime movies. The other was shorter, red-haired, with freckles {points to her face}. They stopped me, even before I could reach my friend, and pulled out a document {mimes pulling something from a coat}, a State Security ID. “We’re from State Security.” “Okay,” they said, “You must come with us. Either walk ahead or beside us, as you wish.” I said, “No, I’ll walk with you, straight to Security.”

My brother lived nearby, just around the corner. I knew where State Security was. They took me to Ibush Kllokoq, a young, handsome man, and he interrogated me. They put me in a room with Ibush. He questioned me. I gave him all the wrong info. “Where are you from?” “Remzije, yes.” I didn’t change my name, but “Which village?” I said, “Kokaj,” because I had some material at my brother’s place. I thought, while that guy informs the Teutas, and they go to my brother’s wife, they’ll have time. I gave the wrong info on purpose, so they could be warned. They couldn’t get anything right and called Gjilan. When they called Gjilan, maybe after an hour and a half they figured it out. “You’re not from Kokaj, you’re from Pogradë.” “Well, Kokaj is right next to it,” I insisted again (laughs).

They collected all the data, about my brother, my sister, who was married to Rexhep — “Where is Rexhep?” “He is in prison.” Her husband’s name, everything. Then he asked from the beginning, “Where is your brother?” “He works in Obiliq,” I said. My second brother, during his first year at the Law Faculty, was arrested during the 1968 demonstrations and held for 6 months. So, he was noticed because he helped people, never tolerated injustice, and stood out to the regime. They followed all my relatives — my oldest brother, my sister. “Where is your sister? Does she work here?” “No.” “Is she married?” “Yes.” “Where is she married? To whom? Does he work?” “No, he doesn’t.” “Who is he?” I said, “She’s married in Gjilan to Rexhep Mala.” “Where is he?” I said, “He’s in prison.”

That one, he got up and with the dirtiest words, cursed me, insulted me, you know, it was terrible, terrible. And I knew them, I didn’t expect anything good from them. Meanwhile, Faik Nura came, he too was a State Security officer, and he [Ibush] says to Faik, “What were they using?” Because they had gone somewhere to write slogans at that time. He said, “What were they using? Paint, or was it easy to remove or difficult?” “No,” he said, “It was difficult.” He said, “Who is she? Who is this woman?” He

¹⁷ Adem Demaçi (1936-2018) was an Albanian writer and politician and longtime political prisoner who spent a total of 27 years in prison for his nationalist beliefs and political activities. In 1998 he became the head of the political wing of the Kosovo Liberation Army, from which he resigned in 1999.

said, "Her? Let me tell you who she is." He said, "She's the sister of Rexhep Mala's wife." Then he started... cursing, yelling, walking back and forth {gestures with index finger describing movement}. "This couple, this couple of theirs wants to destroy Yugoslavia," they cursed my mom and dad, my sister, everything, everything.

They didn't beat me, but they kept me until evening. They asked me everything, brought me bread and some drinks. Ibush [Klllokoq] said to me, "Eat!" He had also ordered food for himself and for me, it was deliberate, so that I'd eat. Because they took me very early, at 9:00 in the morning and kept me there until 7:00 in the evening. I remember, the drink was like Coca-Cola and bread with some meat inside. He said, "This is for you." I said, "Thank you, no, I can't." He said, "Why won't you eat it? Look, I'm eating it." I said, "Well, go ahead, I'm not here to eat." "Then drink this." "No." I absolutely refused. I thought maybe they put something in it, you never know what can happen. "No," categorically, "No."

"Where do you live?" I didn't tell them I lived at my brother's. I said, "I commute from Gjilan." "Do you have your ticket?" I said, "No, I don't keep it in my pocket," I said, "I threw it away." "Where will you go now if I release you?" I said, "I'll go to my uncle's." I had uncles in Pristina. "I'll go to my uncle's." But I didn't mention my brother at all. Meanwhile, while Ibush was questioning me, the one who picked me up on the street, the blond guy with freckles {gestures toward face}, went to my brother's wife and knocked on the door. She opened it, and he said, "Is Remzije here?" She said, "No. Who are you?" He said, "I'm a friend of Remzije's." She said, "That's when I doubted, he couldn't be Remzije's friend, he was too old." And, "He left," she said, "before him, Teuta came." Teuta said, "I went secretly. So, no one would follow me to Avdi's. I went behind the building and grabbed a sweater, disguised myself a bit. I went to Nexhmije, knocked on her door. When she saw it was me, she opened the door."

Then she said, "Nexhmije, whatever is in Remzije's room, check it. If there are any materials, any book, get rid of it because the UDB has taken Remzije." "I stayed there," said Teuta, "she took a look, and I helped her." She took the books, wrapped them in a plastic bag, and put them in the toilet tank, the flush tank {uses hands to describe the tank}. She emptied the water, removed the float, or did something, and hid them inside the tank, thinking the police would never think about looking there. That's what happened.

Anita Susuri: So, they didn't go to the apartment?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, they didn't go to the apartment, because they said to me, "We'll take you to your uncle's." I said, "No need," I said, "I'll go on foot by myself."

Anita Susuri: And they released you afterward?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, they released me, I went to my brother's, I didn't go to my uncle's. I went directly, but a bit indirectly {makes a circular motion with her index finger}, and I stayed at my brother's place.

Anita Susuri: Was this the time when you met your husband?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, it wasn't. I was already with my husband, yes, we were involved in the movement. About eight or nine months before I was imprisoned, I met Reshat, and it wasn't just Teuta,

there was Shemsi Sylja too, who worked with literature, now he's in the Security Force. He was a [KLA] fighter, was in the TMK.¹⁸ Now he is Deputy Minister of Defense under [Armend] Mehaj. I also had other comrades we exchanged materials with, Skender Berisha in Prizren, Sali Bashota, a professor in the Faculty of Philosophy. I had taken Skender because I told him about a concert that had come from Albania, since they used to come from time to time, and I said, "Skender, did you see the concert?" He said, "No." I said, "Are you coming to see it in Gjilan?" He hesitated a little, "How can I come, where would I stay?" I said, "Come on, I'm telling you, I know my family," I said, "and I'm telling you." "Really?" "Yes, come."

He knew my older brother because he had stayed a bit in the hospital in Pristina, and this friend from the group used to visit him every day. And he's a guy, I don't know how to say it, a very good person, a good man. He was very, very decent, never a single word out of line came from him, not a word. He comes to Gjilan, and he asks to go to Rexhep's father. We went to Rexhep's father, he came out to greet us, he was an old man wearing traditional clothes, *tirqi*¹⁹ with *gajtan*,²⁰ traditional clothes that he never took off, always brown in color. He always had them tailored, he said, "I used to have my tailor in Ferizaj." And the two of them stayed together.

At that time, we had a guest from Albania. My mother's cousin lived in Albania, he had fled from Kosovo and lived there. And he came as a guest, you know, to our village in Kosovo.

Anita Susuri: Did he have the right to come?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, he had the right to come later, because he had fled early as a child, when he wasn't yet grown up. He came as a guest to us in the village.

Anita Susuri: What did he tell you that night?

Remzije Limani Januzi: About life there, but he never said bad things, never. This family, my mother's cousin's family, had great privilege. He was employed, not discriminated against by the locals, so he had some privileges.

Part Three

Anita Susuri: You told me about the codes you used to communicate. Could you tell me more about that? How did you understand each other using codes?

Remzije Limani Januzi: We didn't have written codes, only nicknames.

Anita Susuri: You said, for example, "we're going to a wedding," which meant going to Albania...

¹⁸ *Trupat Mbrojtëse të Kosovës* (TMK) were part of the Provisional Government of Kosovo under the protectorate of the UN Mission in Kosovo, TMK was a civil organization for emergent intervention and service. It was active from 1999 to 2009. In 2009 it was officially scattered, to become *Forca e Sigurisë së Kosovës*, Kosovo Security Force (KSF).

¹⁹ Tight-fitting embroidered white flannel breeches with decorative braids at the bottom of the legs and on the pockets, traditional Albanian wear.

²⁰ A long black cord, decorated push buttons in the vest.

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, yes, yes, like, “It’s raining,” we’d say. I took part in the demonstrations on April 1, 1981. Teuta called me to her sister’s, because on April 11 Rexhep’s mother had died and I went to help, it was before April 11. I heard on the news, this was a moment of unrest, a real explosion that day, because it was truly a difficult time, and I’ll tell you about other cases we experienced. On March 26 I didn’t go to Pristina, I stayed in Gjiilan. On April 1, Teuta called and said, “Remzi, there’s ...” she said, “there is a wedding in Pristina. We have a wedding at the end of March, you must absolutely come.” “Ok,” I said, “Teuta.” I was forewarned.

And we went to the dormitory, talking with Teuta about what would erupt on April 1st 1981. And I said, “We’re going out,” among our comrades, “Today we’re going out in protest, in the demonstration. This is going to be the strongest, the biggest one that will be held,” and everywhere you looked there were three to four people, five to six people talking in front of the dormitories. And we began the march straight toward the city center there. The center... I don’t know, all the roads were blocked, the road that goes toward Mitrovica, the road by the hospital, all those main streets were completely black with people, with workers on foot, with citizens, with children... classes weren’t held at all anymore. And we gathered in the square there.

We were in the front rows, I don’t like to mention the front rows much, but in the front rows were [Meriman Braha](#), my brother was there, Teuta was there, and of course many others. And everyone gathered there in front of the Committee building. [Hydajet \[Hyseni\]](#) spoke in front of the Committee, and a guy spoke, I don’t remember now, later they said it was Gani, a Gani was there, a Gani Kra... it couldn’t have been Gani Krasniqi, but it seems it was Kryeziu. And the chants, the demands, by then were already known. At first, those on April 11 were social, for better conditions. On April 26... March those were...they turned political. The April [protests] were more public, but the demands were primarily political.

“Self-determination!” “Free the political prisoners, Adem Demaçi, Rexhep Mala!” They mentioned all those imprisoned by name, “Trepça works, Belgrade builds!” “Kosova Republic!” “Either by will or by war!” “Constitution, either by will or by war.” These were mainly political. And in that pro[test]... demonstration, Hydajet spoke, he spoke [dressed] as a worker, with a cap, with simple clothes, we didn’t know him at all. And that day, Teuta... the momentum wouldn’t let you rest, that situation didn’t let you rest. And then, “You go up Teuta, you too as a woman. Why should only men go up? Let women go up too” (laughs). And, “No, you go up Remzi,” I don’t know how it happened and they told me, “Go, go you,” before starting, and I climbed [the tree], my brother wrote the demands {mimics writing with hand} what to say, what to... on someone’s back, I think it was Teuta’s brother’s back.

And he gives me those, I go up there with a skirt, it wasn’t really easy for me, and now Hydajet Hyseni asks me, “Do you know me?” he says. “I don’t even want to know you,” because we never asked to know anyone, no. Why ask, “Do you know me?” I said, “No, I don’t know you and I don’t even want to know who you are.” And I shouted those slogans, and the cheering was even louder, because as a woman it was a bit different, and I came down and we continued until late into the evening, it got very dark, it was late. They dispersed us with tear gas, we dispersed and didn’t see each other again. My shoes came off, and I see a boy running down the street, I don’t remember those streets today, where they were. And he gives me one of his shoes, I was wearing one shoe, one was left in the street, and he gave me his shoe, I kept it for a long time. I don’t know, someone later removed it, I wanted to keep it

as a memory (laughs). A memory to be in a museum, that shoe, to show what happened, what we did in that time. And it got lost, I don't know how. It's not that my family was scared, but maybe my sisters-in-law or someone removed it.

That night we went with my friend Giyzide Osmani, we met somewhere on the road and went to Mehmet Halimi's, we stayed there. He's a professor I think, yes, a professor, but I don't know of what. We stayed, spent the night there. There were other students too, we had dinner. His wife served us dinner, we were tired, of course. He said, he gave us strength, he supported us, saying, "We've never been closer to freedom. Because the whole people are on their feet, old and young. University professors, high school teachers, teachers, students, peasants, uneducated mothers came out and gave bread, gave onions for that tear gas." You had all the people, you just needed organization and to be at the head of the demonstrations. It was something unbelievable, incredible. It was an extraordinary joy when you saw the whole people standing up. And the next day we went out again. We went out again the next day, the square was full again.

Anita Susuri: On April 2 then?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, 2 April. They dispersed us and we went toward the students canteen, that street by the students' dining hall, because there were tanks, helicopters, it was very hard. April 2 was the toughest. You had tanks everywhere. And now, despite the tanks, we were pushing them back. Meriman was there, he had come with his wife and said to me, "Where the hell were you, man!? In Dragodan we heard you'd been killed." And I said, "Well, if I had been killed, so what?" (laughs). We knew, struggle means sacrifice and killing.

We stayed all evening, very late, also on April 2. From time to time we'd gather, then scatter again because of the tear gas. And so it went on until April 3, when we started going to our homes. Because they shut down the dorms, they no longer allowed anyone even to come near the student dorms. The tanks were there, the police, mainly Serbian and Bosniak police, were very, very brutal, very aggressive. Ours, our own [Albanian police], behaved better. Some were very good, saying, "We are with you, we are with you, we are part of you." Those who came from other republics were much harder, much harder, much more aggressive.

Anita Susuri: What other police violence did you witness? Did you see anyone wounded or killed, or beaten?

Remzije Limani Januzi: I didn't see killings or wounds. I did see beatings, grabbing boys by the hair, with batons... throwing them into jeeps, into vans, those I saw myself. But I didn't see the killing. On April 1 they didn't... They dispersed us with tear gas. On April 2 they spread out everywhere, and when the tanks came it was very hard to regroup, though we still did, but not like on April 1. I remember at the Faculty yard, many airplanes, fighter jets, flew very low. {gestures with hands a diving plane}. Actually, a couple of guys even fell to the ground like this, and we laughed a little like that, "How you fall, such brave men!" (laughs). So it was a very difficult time

Anita Susuri: And the moment you climbed the linden tree to speak...

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes.

Anita Susuri: ...to read the demands, was there police around you or did you suspect anyone?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, no, only the crowd, there were no police, usually just UDB men, maybe the little guys that we didn't recognize. The high-ranking ones we all knew, like Ibush and Sinan... but these others were from other cities. For example, in the Peja office there was one female UDB agent who was very rude, very foul-mouthed. I think they were very immoral, among themselves too, the way they touched each other, the way they talked, very immoral. And you always feared being taken and going through the hands of the UDB.

Anita Susuri: Did you use any disguise when you climbed up?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, I didn't use a disguise, no (laughs). This time I didn't.

Anita Susuri: You said Hidajet Hyseni was dressed like...

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, Hidajet Hyseni disguised himself. He was very thin and wore a worker's cap and overalls. We thought he was a worker (laughs), actually he was a journalist at Prishtina Television at that time.

Anita Susuri: Hidajet was...

Remzije Limani Januzi: Together with Kadri Zeka²¹ and Isuf, he was a journalist at Prishtina TV then.

Anita Susuri: I'm interested a bit more in the circumstances, after you finished the speech what happened next? Did you have to hide?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, no, no. We were in the middle of everyone, there was no fear at all (smiles), fear simply didn't exist anymore. And nobody could grab you out of that crowd, everyone was on their feet. We were packed tight {she clasps hands}, no police could get inside. On April 2 it was different, with combat helicopters and tanks... On April 1 they hadn't used tanks, no.

Anita Susuri: Did you prepare banners on bedsheets at that time?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Bed sheets... I, who was there, no, no, we didn't prepare them, I'm talking about April 1st, no. As for our duties, like, like... you know, as a movement, we approximately knew beforehand how to behave, through our work, and not to stand out too much in order to influence and encourage other women to come out, for example, for April 1st. But the people were ready, the entire population was ready for April 1st, you know, you didn't even need to say anything to anyone. They were all fully aware that they had to come out, because it was now or never. It was, Anita, {addressing the interviewer}, because in the dorms, when we were in the dorm it was May 1st and Teuta Hadri and I, I'm telling you this, maybe Teuta has forgotten... We didn't go home, and Teuta and I talked, because I was staying part of the time in the dorm, because at my brother's it became crowded, with my

²¹ Jusuf Gërvalla (1945- 1982) and Kadri Zeka (1953-1982) were nationalist activists killed in Germany together with Gërvalla's brother Bardhosh. These killings have been widely attributed to Yugoslav agents, though no investigation has come to a conclusive identification of the killers.

brother's children, the apartment was very small, and I moved to the dorm.

We were talking, because we had these Philips transistor radios that Hasan Mala had brought us from Switzerland — they were very good transistors because they picked up signals very well, the patriotic program from Radio Tirana without any interference for example, they were very good. And I say, "Teuta, are you going down or should I go down?" Because the boys were playing football in front of the dorms. And, "Either you go out or I will, turn on Radio Tirana." We opened the window, it was good weather, warm like this. And she said, "No, I'll go down. You play Radio Tirana." And I played a singer, Vaçe Zela or someone else. Then I turned it off, and when I turned it off, the boys reacted, "Hey! play it, play it, play it!" And we did this to take the pulse of the youth, to see where the youth were.

And then a guy addressed me from below, I know him now and I know his name too, Qazim Leka and he goes like this with his finger {points upward} up there, he says to me, "As soon as you come down, you'll see who I am!" And I *pfff* {onomatopoeia}, like I don't care what he says. He had a problem with us playing Radio Tirana and didn't forget. Not that day, the next day, he must have waited for me and saw me in person, and he comes in front of the dorm and grabs me by the arm {mimics grabbing someone by the arm}. "Do you know who I am? Why did you play that?" I said, "Get lost, get away from here!" I pushed him with my hand and continued on my way. "You'll find out who I am." "I don't care at all who you are."

Look...our movements were very propagandistic for the good of the people, for the good of the country, because at that time, in the dorms, they listened to Serbian songs. It was necessary to take a definitive stand, young boys were mingling with Serbs, Serbian music was heard, it would echo, sometimes it echoed through the dorms. And you couldn't accept that, not at all. So, it was necessary. The illegal movements did an extraordinary job. And this was also when I met my husband. It was the dormitory, I don't know, near the dormitory, right in the corner, when you came out of the canteen, straight ahead was the last dormitory, the men's dormitory. And at that time you could catch Albanian television, you could catch Albanian television, and I was the first girl there in that hall, like this, to listen. And the man who is now my husband said, "Are you coming? It's Radio Television of Albania." There would be programs, news, concerts, or music or something. I said, "Yes of course, I'm coming."

The same person who had said to me, "Just wait and see who I am" was in that same hall. They were playing the Albanian television, and he would get up and turn it to Belgrade TV {mimics turning the TV knob}, that Qazim Leka. Then they started fighting with each other {clasping hands}, my husband and the other friends got into a fight, you know, pushing, boxing a bit. Their goal was to stop the spread of Albanian spirit, you know? Not to hear anything in Albanian, that was the goal. And we achieved our goal, reached our goal, because we would go and the hall would get completely full, it would get completely full (smiles). And then other women came too, and this is where we tried, so that women would be everywhere, everywhere, wherever they needed to be, even with a lot of sacrifice, but to be there where they needed to be.

Anita Susuri: You mentioned meeting your husband, how did that go, how did you meet?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Well, we... (laughs). A guy, a cousin from my relatives' village, his sister was married to my uncle, told me about him. He said, "Remzi," he said, "I've found you a guy." I said, "No way," I said, "what guy? I have university ahead of me." He said, "Come on, just meet him, see for

yourself.” They planned it all, how to have us meet, calling me to the cafeteria while he and his friends came out, supposedly we met by chance. And he had already told me his name, and I said to him, this one who called me, “Come on!” either they were going to the canteen, or coming back from the canteen. We stopped, me not knowing anything at all, he said, “Reshat,” and I, “Remzije,” and immediately it crossed my mind that it was Reshat the one who had talked to me.

I said, “Is this the one who told me that? Go on now, but you look like a kid,” because he looked so young (laughs). We talked a bit too. “How are you? Where are you going?” “To the cafeteria.” “Ah, okay.” They mostly talked with Nexhat, his name was Nexhat, and they were asking him questions. Then we started heading to the cafeteria, and I turned my head and said, “But this one really looks like a kid!” (laughs). And he said, even my husband said, “When you looked,” in the meantime, he had looked too (laughs). I started talking with him and told him all about my work, not that I told him I was part of the movement, no, I just told him that my work was very dangerous.

[Interview interruption]

Anita Susuri: You were telling us about how you met your husband.

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, we met in Pristina, some time passed, we talked, and usually, as they say, “The tongue goes where the tooth aches,” and we decided to go public, if he agreed with my path. I told him, “Reshat, my path is full of sacrifice and risk. Maybe even my head is always in the bag,²² that’s how our work is. If you accept this, fine. If not, we’ll part ways. You go your way, I’ll go mine.” He responded, “I’m on the same path.” And he never stopped me, never, on the contrary he has been a strong support for me.

Anita Susuri: You didn’t know about each other’s activities...?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, no. But after we got married we did, because we got material from Switzerland, from my sister’s husband. My sister had married Kadri Abdullahu, who was a friend of Rexhep Mala, Hydajet, Kadri Zeka, and others. Before the group fell, he had gone abroad, very young, because he was imprisoned young and was killed at the age of 33. And when she [my sister] lived abroad, she involved the friends who had the right to travel from Kosovo to Switzerland. Sometimes they would bring us some children’s clothes, but in the meantime also the material: *Zëri i Kosovës* [The Voice of Kosovo], *Këngët e Lirisë* [Songs of Freedom] by Hydajet Hyseni, which he had published abroad. And they were small booklets {shows the size with hands}, mostly smaller so they could circulate more easily among people, and could be carried more easily. And sometimes they would bring them in *bonbonnières*. they were thick candy boxes, only the last layer was left with chocolate, because the rest of the compartments inside were separated, and in between you had all the materials. And so, whenever some money arrived, I would open it, and see the materials inside.

My husband distributed them, he took that material and delivered it where it needed to go. That’s how it continued. Once my sister’s husband came by car from Switzerland, and I had to send something from Kosovo to Switzerland and I gave it to him there. It also happened that [Agim Sylejmani](#), who was in prison with my sister’s husband, with Rexhep, and Selajdin, who was the brother of Kadri, my other

²² Idiomatic, “head in the bag,” ready to be executed, life at risk.

sister's husband, came to pick up material that was sent from Switzerland. At that time, we were planting, working in the garden with peppers, because I had nothing else to do, I was labeled a nationalist, an irredentist, expelled from university... so we had nothing else to do, and we worked in the garden. I love working. So, we filled a sack with peppers, and in the middle of the peppers we put the materials {gestures with hands}. And if we got caught or someone stopped us, "It's just peppers." We hid them in one or two sacks, not very big sacks, and covered them, and they took those materials and delivered them where they needed to go (smiles).

Anita Susuri: Prior to the April 2nd demonstration, what happened to you? You said you went...

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, after the demonstration I stayed overnight at my husband's family's house that night, on April 3rd, yes. I went there late at night, very late. My husband wasn't there, he had gone out to the demonstrations in Ferizaj, I was in Pristina. And his friends were injured, he said, "Our friend was injured right in front of our eyes." I even know him, you know, but I don't remember now because a lot of time has passed and when you don't keep up with names anymore ... and they got into a car and took him to Skopje. There in Skopje, they didn't say they were in the demonstrations. They asked, but they said, "He was injured with his own weapon." And they left him at the hospital and returned. They took all the bloody clothes because we had the goal to take the bloody clothes with us, because those were the clothes of freedom and... {starts crying} a bit emotional.

He said, "Let's get to Ferizaj by train, and we boarded the train," because traveling was safer by train. "And we saw," he said, "many tanks in Ferizaj on April 3rd. Tanks, there was no movement, only some police," he said, "we saw tanks in Ferizaj, we saw them and we arrived at the station. Before the station," he said, "further down, there was a field, we threw the clothes there. We threw them, opened the windows and threw them out." He said, "And then we had the chance..." Later, they went back and picked up the clothes and handed them to Izet, now I remember, Izet, he was a worker at some factory. "We threw those, we got off at the train station," he said, "and some police searched us, nothing in hand." "Do you have someone?" "Guests, that's all." They arrived home late at night, around 1:00 AM.

And they told us everything, because we thought he had been killed or taken to prison, no, either killed or jailed, there was no other outcome at that time. If you went out at that time, either you were taken to jail or you were killed. Because to be late like that was not possible, you couldn't just do that. He came and told us everything, told us exactly how it happened. The next day, on April 4, I came to Gjilan with my husband, and...

Anita Susuri: Were you married at that time?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, no, but we didn't have an engagement at all, we went straight to marriage. And he left me, my brother... Reshat left me in town, in the center, I went on foot because that day we had come by bus. And my brother, "Who did you come with?" I said, "Brother, with Reshat." And he felt bad and said, "Where did Reshat end up?" I said, "He stayed in the city center, he met with a cousin." My younger brother was working on something, he used to work with those repair devices, and his hands were all covered in that stuff from work, he ran and caught up with Reshat, and brought him back, "Come stay overnight. Where are you going at this hour? Come back." And he came back, he stayed that night, and the next day he left.

Now, they monitored me. My nephew had gone to Pogradjë, asked around, and then came and said, "Uncle, where is aunt Remzi?" He answered, "She's not here," because I had gone to a neighbor nearby. He said, "UDBa came to take aunt Remzi," he said, "I came to warn you. *Aga* sent me to let you know." At that moment, I didn't fall into the UDB's hands immediately. My arrest happened later. I had gone out with my sister, the one living abroad, Saimë. We went out like this to the market. And I told my sister, "Let's go to the market. Maybe they won't recognize me," wearing some disguise, with sunglasses, my hair tied back, it was a bit long.

And we went to the market, and on our way back near the Selami Hallaqi school, there was a field there, it's all built up now, a small Fiça²³ pulled up, and three people jumped out quickly and blocked our way. "Are you Remzije?" I said, "No." And my sister pushed them, saying, "No." She didn't admit I was me. There was pushing going on, and they tried to arrest me. They said, "We're sure you're the one we're looking for." So there was a scuffle with the police. One of them was a Serb and two were Albanians. The Serb ran off.

With them there was a security officer, he was Feti Shota. And Feti... and I don't know how, my sister picked up a rock and hit him here {touches her forehead} and blood started running down. We were fighting, pushing each other, you know? They couldn't tie my hands easily {demonstrates with hands}. Eventually one of them grabbed my sister's arm badly and began tying my hands. They put me in the car and straight to the police station in Gjilan. They kept me there for about two hours, asking for all my details, "Where do you live?" all of that. And then they got ready to send me to Mitrovica. They said, "Get in the car," they didn't tell me it was Mitrovica, but that's where they took me, handcuffed.

It was really interesting to me when I sat in the back of their police jeep, the police car, I was sitting in the back handcuffed, with two police on either side with automatic rifles, and I told myself, "Oh God, how weird! I'm the one with her hands tied, they have automatic weapons, and they're afraid of me." You know, it gave me a kind of strength. Not at all, not even a little, I didn't have any worry whatsoever.

Anita Susuri: They were afraid of you.

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, they were afraid of me. I thought, "They're scared of me" (smiles).

Anita Susuri: (laughs)

Remzije Limani Januzi: And then when we went through the city center, there was this hotel called Bozhur²⁴ I think, now it's private, Shemsi Sylva was there, in the center. I thought he'd see me, so I raised my hands like this {raises hands as if tied}, you know, so he could see they were tied. But he didn't see me. One officer said, "Why are you raising your hands?" I said, "My hands are numb." And that's how we continued to Mitrovica.

In Mitrovica, they took me straight to prison. First they took me to this woman, at first I was interrogated, I don't know who those people were, and then they sent me to this woman. When I got to her office, her name was Naile, that female police officer said to me, "What did you do, girl?" I said, "I killed people." "Seriously?" she said, like that, textually. I said, "No, I didn't kill anyone, I haven't done

²³ Zastava 750 type of car, a version of the Fiat 600.

²⁴ Now it is the Hotel Swiss Diamond.

anything.” “Then why did they bring you?” “Why? Because I asked for Kosovo to be a Republic.” Oooooo {onomatopoeia}, you know, I thought, “Well, it’s not that bad here,” you know, prison. “It’s not what I imagined,” but that was just her room.

They took me to the cell, and when they brought me there, there was a murder case from Peja. She had killed her own father. Her name was Raziye from Peja, accused of murder, she had killed her father. Also there was Drita Kuçi, a political prisoner, not yet sentenced, still under investigation. I stayed with Drita, we stayed together in that room for three full months.

Usually, they would take us...Daut Morina from Gjilan interrogated me. The questions they asked... Whenever they took me in for questioning, it was usually when I was falling asleep, around 11:00 or 12:00 at night, until nearly morning. And nothing was safe, nothing was safe in Kosovo’s prisons, because of the beatings the men got, we could hear their cries in our room. The first time Daut interrogated me, he wanted to uncover the organizers of April’s events in Gjilan, he mentioned my brother and Hasan Mala’s son, Aliu, the eldest.

I was confident that my brother had been in Pristina and not involved in anything. He [Daut] beat me in the most barbaric way, my hair was left in his hands. He was so angry that I didn’t cry. I don’t know, I felt some extraordinary strength, maybe I had mentally prepared beforehand, but I never showed anything in front of them. He beat me with sticks, on the eyes, on the body, on the head, on the legs. He would throw my legs up on the table and hit me. I had wounds all here {touches the skin beneath her eyes}, all my hands were wounded {touches hands}. My hair, my hair hurt, I mean, his fists would be full of my hair, pulling it. And when I got up, at that time I was the only woman who had been beaten.

When I returned to the cell, and Drita saw the state I was in, she was completely horrified. We used to communicate in prison using little tactics like *tap-tap-tap* {onomatopoeia}. Someone would hear you, you know? We had iron bars in the cell, and we could climb up on those bars and let our voices carry to the next cell {demonstrates with hands} when we thought the guards weren’t around... There was one heavier-set female guard, I don’t remember her name, she gave us more freedom, and we communicated a lot that way.

We mostly used nicknames, for example, one woman was from Ferizaj, she worked in the lumber factory there. She had been very active during the demonstrations, so they arrested her. Her voice was very distinct, and when she said, “I’m from Ferizaj,” the other said, “I must be your sister-in-law,” you know? (smiles). And so that nickname stuck, “sister-in-law, sister-in-law.” Drita was “Apple,” someone else was “Pear.”

Dinore Curri was there at the time I was in Mitrovica. Also Shqipe Haradinaj and Nasim Haradinaj,²⁵ who is now in The Hague, his sister was about 14–15 years old, no more. But she was in another cell. I stayed in that cell with Drita. The cells were in a row. And then Drita brought me handkerchiefs, because I had such a high fever and my whole body, all over, especially my shoulders, was aching. She

²⁵ Nasim Haradinaj (1963), former KLA commander and Deputy Chairman of the KLA Veterans’ Association, in 2022 was found guilty by the Kosovo Specialist Court at The Hague on two counts of obstructing official persons in the performance of duties, one count of intimidation during proceedings, and two counts of violating court secrecy by revealing information and witness identities.

placed the handkerchiefs on my face, but they would dry out instantly, in just one moment. And her tears would fall onto my face, like a little rain, *tak-tak* {onomatopoeia}.

Then our friends were informed. Drita informed them, saying, “They beat my sister-in-law badly.” They decided what to do, how to protest, a hunger strike. They held the hunger strike for three days. During that time, Daut continued interrogating me for about a week, every single day. Every day, he’d bring you back at the same time, usually very late. And when you’re tired, without sleep, anything can happen. Now they questioned me again, because they didn’t care that the other women were in for murder or other crimes and weren’t eating. The issue was with the political ones, we had a different status. We heard it ourselves when they said, “The strike must be reported,” because when the officer would bring food and say, “Take it or don’t, it’s your problem,” to one of the others, that was it. But with us, it was handled differently. They wouldn’t force it, but they also tracked it. They wrote down how many people were in each cell, listed the names, and we were told they had to report to the Committee, the higher-up Committee, that a hunger strike was being held, like this and that, and for three days we didn’t eat.

Then the UDB agents from Mitrovica took me to the Security Office in Mitrovica. “Why aren’t you eating?” they asked. I said, “How can I eat, when you say you are the safest place in the world? We aren’t safe at all,” I said, “not even a little.” He asks me, “Why don’t you feel safe?” I said, “I’m not safe. Daut Morina comes and takes me at 11 or 12 at night, keeps me until 4 in the morning.” And I said, “Look at the *marka*²⁶ Daut left.” He said, “No, that’s nothing, you don’t have anything.” I said, “Don’t you have eyes to see? Or you just don’t want to see?” “No, that’s nothing, you’re fine,” he said. But I could see it myself in the mirror, when you’ve been hurt, you notice it, right? {she touches her eyes} My whole face was bruised. The hunger strike lasted three days. After three days, it ended, and that’s how things started...

Anita Susuri: So the strike was ended by them or...?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, not by them. The women themselves ended it. It was meant as a protest for three days, and then it stopped. We continued, but during the interrogations, they never mentioned the two Teuta once, not once. And I never mentioned them either, that’s how it was. They mostly kept bringing up my brother, who was in prison at the time. In ‘81, they took him, I think it was April 5th. They had him on record. Now, to sentence him more harshly, they needed more evidence. They thought I would give them something about him. They would show me my brother’s photograph and make a big deal of mine too, one with a stone in my hand. I’d say, “It’s a potato.” He said, “Miss, that’s a stone.” I said, “A potato, we were eating potatoes when they said the earth was shaking” (smiles), You had to say things like that.

And my brother, holding a stick. I said, “That’s just a stick. How can you overthrow a regime with a stick?” “No,” he said, “don’t you see? He tried to overthrow the regime, to kill us.” I said, “With one stick? To kill you? You have tanks.” That’s how the conversation went. They had no solid evidence, but they sentenced him to eight years anyway, because of his previous activities and his big mouth. He always spoke out, he spoke everywhere against Tito’s regime. They gave him eight years. He spent about a year in Kosovo, stayed in Ferizaj, and then they sent him to Stara Gradiška in Croatia. It wasn’t

²⁶ *Marka* refers to the Deutsche Mark, the former German currency, which was widely used as a parallel or informal currency in Yugoslavia during the 1990s due to the instability of the dinar.

easy {shakes head}, for the family, for my sister-in-law, for my older brother. He was a teacher. He missed only two days of school, but then he made up the lessons on Saturdays and Sundays, he never missed a single class, even though he traveled every month.

Anita Susuri: So they brought you in as a witness for your brother, not because of your own activities?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, no, they brought me in because of my own work too, but they questioned me about my brother and about Hasan's son. They wanted to gather material to sentence my brother as harshly as possible.

Anita Susuri: And do you know how they got to you? How did they know all about your activities?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Well, our family was already on their radar. We had my brother in the '68 demonstrations and another brother who was politically active. He was special, not just because he's my brother, but because he truly was. When people were arrested, our family helped, we sent materials and financial support. Metush Krasniqi was a close friend of my uncle, he came to our uncle's house. That's how we got the regime's attention.

Even when I was a student at the time, I stood out to them, especially among those groups that had come from Albania. And they found photographs, they distributed the photos of demonstrators in other cities asking, "Who knows this person?" My photo was very clear there [in Mitrovica]. It was huge, about 60–70 centimeters. You couldn't deny it, couldn't say, "That's not me." You could see clearly, it was me, holding a stone, and other protesters, too. You couldn't avoid it, you had to say, "Yes, it was me."

Part Four

Anita Susuri: You were there for six months?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, six months, I stayed there six months.

Anita Susuri: How was it?

Remzije Limani Januzi: I was involved in that case with my sister. She was given a suspended sentence, while I was sentenced to actually serve those months in prison. I was convicted only as a participant in the demonstrations, nothing else, there were no other charges or elements against me, nothing at all. I never admitted anything. I kept saying to myself, "My friends are free," meaning outside, not sentenced. Later on, they all got arrested, but much later. Hasan, for example, was still outside. They never even mentioned Hasan's name to me. Mostly they mentioned Rexhep, because at that time Rexhep was already in prison.

Anita Susuri: Did you serve the full six months in Mitrovica?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, in Mitrovica. I served most of my sentence there. I was released from there.

Anita Susuri: Did the mistreatment continue later too, or only during the investigation days?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, after I was released, no, it didn't happen anymore. But usually, families who had drawn attention were constantly followed. They were monitored everywhere, always, all the time.

Anita Susuri: No, I mean while you were inside the prison.

Remzije Limani Januzi: What did you say?

Anita Susuri: While you were inside the prison for those six months, was there physical mistreatment only in the beginning?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, no. There was pressure, for example. We were allowed to wash only once every three weeks. We got lice. I even cut my friend's hair short to deal with it. At one point, they moved me from a cell with Drita to a cell with Kadri Osmani's daughter, [Hidajete Osmani](#). Just as we were managing to clean ourselves a bit, a man named Lutfi, not the prison director, but someone lower in rank, came and told us to shake out the blankets. We refused flatly. I said, "No, not at any cost. No." We hadn't washed for three weeks, and those blankets were filthy, full of dust, like horse blankets. I told him, "No." He said, "You must..." I repeated, "No." Then he threatened us, "If you don't shake them, I'll bring Simić." I'll never forget that name. He said, "Simić, a two-meter-tall man, he'll beat you." I said, "Let whoever comes, I don't care who you bring. I won't shake them." He asked, "Why won't you shake them?" I said, "Because we haven't washed in three weeks, we've got lice, you gave us powder to kill them, we cut our hair short, and now you want us to shake these dirty blankets again and get covered in dust until it's time to wash again? No. Absolutely not." We were resisting, but when that Simić came in, Hidajete said, "Let's just do it," because she didn't want him to touch us. I saw her fear, and I said, "Alright, let's shake them. Fine, we'll do it." And that's how it was.

Anita Susuri: Do you perhaps have another memory from prison...

Remzije Limani Januzi: From prison, yes. For example, when we wanted to clean the room, one of the rooms or the bathroom, there was this one woman, her name doesn't come to mind right now, but she gave us some freedom. We would talk with her. And I remember something about Remzije [another prisoner]. A voice came, very interesting, and I asked, "Which one is the sister-in-law?" I would hang on to them, and we felt like we were monkeys, swinging around on those wires (laughs). She said, "It's me." She was a woman with some disabilities, a bit hunched in the back. And when she said, "It's me," I felt such sadness. It hit me very hard, because to me she seemed such a *burrneshë*,²⁷ fearless, with such sharp speech. And then to see her in that condition, I felt so sorry, really upset, and so...so then...

But every move that happened inside, we always knew. We would ask, "Who came? Where did she come from?" We gathered all the information within the day. Not a single person, not even a single woman would arrive without us knowing who she was. Most of the prisoners were young, arrested in protests, in demonstrations. They would sentence them for two months, a month...

²⁷ The Albanian term *burrneshë* or *burrneshë* literally means men-like, but can refer to women's show of courage, wittiness, or general disregard for social roles that often limit women's participation in the public space.

And let me tell you one case. When my brother was in prison, he was sentenced in Pristina. During that time Dinore Curri also had her trial sessions in Pristina. So, during a short break, because the trials lasted five or six hours, they put her in a room. Nearby, in another room, was my brother. He heard that a woman had arrived. He heard her voice and asked, "Who are you?" She said, "I am Dinore Curri." "Where are you from?" "From Mitrovica," she said. He told her, "I have a sister in prison in Mitrovica." She asked, "Who is she?" He said, "Remzije Limani," he said, "would you," my brother asked, "would you take her a letter from me?" He took the wrapper from a pack of cigarettes, the thin foil inside, and wrote on it: "Dear sister, I hope you are well. Stay strong. You know why you were imprisoned, you know your purpose," you know? And said, "I love you very much" (starts crying).

She takes the letter, my brother takes the letter, he takes it to the restroom, he asks, "Can I go to the toilet?" He tells the policeman, "I must go to the toilet," and [the policeman] takes my brother to the toilet. And he left it by a trash basket, there underneath, below, and then she said this and that, it was very hard to communicate, but when he saw that there wasn't... there were no people, he says, "I left it here," he doesn't tell her about the letter, but he tells her, "There is something for you here, take it." And she goes to the toilet, she also asks to go to the toilet, and she goes and finds his letter. She brings it to Mitrovica, and she leaves it in the same [place], as she found it, she also leaves it here in the bathroom where we would go once a day. She leaves it and I find that letter. We met, because we could communicate.

Afterwards they made the measures stricter, again, they made them stricter in Mitrovica. And so, even in those conditions as they were during isolation, we still found the possibility to communicate, for a letter to come to you, to give you strength, whether from your brother, or a friend, or someone else, we found a way to communicate. Eh, about prison... She was sentenced to 15 years, Dinore Curri, she was engaged, afterwards it seems to me that the fiancé left, left her, you know. Very hard, the men could not endure, those who did were rare... because usually the women, the females, waited for the men a long time.

Anita Susuri: Did you have contact with your fiancé? Your husband?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, because they interrogated me, that Daut questioned me, and... also Lutfi Ajazi was there, he questioned me too, he didn't beat me. He was more of a politician, you know, like that, worse in a way, this one would beat you, but he was more, how to say, more *pfff* {onomatopoeia} kind of man... but he was an Inspector of the Republican Security, and he would take you, ask you about family, everything went in that direction, and then he would come to the point, wherever he wanted to go. And he questioned me, he didn't mistreat me, but he mentioned Rexhep [Mala] to me, yes, they mentioned Rexhep to me. Rexhep was the number one there, you know, the one they didn't have there. Rexhep was... every time they interrogated me, they brought up Rexhep, since they knew I was family-connected with them.

Anita Susuri: You also told me about Drita Kuci, the one who had her fiancé outside.

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, she had her fiancé outside. Yes, Drita, she was engaged. Honestly, I don't know if she got engaged before she went to prison or while she was in prison. She was a very smart girl, you know, she was beautiful, she was, she was teaching in Hajvali at that time. She told how she ended up in prison, because she too was active in the movement with Jashar Salihu, with Hasan Ukëhaxha, with many others, and she said, "The first meeting I held legally," she said, "they caught us

immediately,” and there she was sentenced to five years. Her fiancé used to come... we had visits every two weeks, but he came every week. He loved her very much, they loved each other, because usually... I mean, even though he couldn't see her, he still came to the door and passed in something, a sign that it was him, Aqif. Aqif Kastrati, he was the brother of Isa Kastrati, he's a national hero too, he fell in the war, he was a professor of mathematics. A family... coming from a patriotic family, our uncles had also been political prisoners and participants in the war, and he himself had been imprisoned too.

And from all this, she drew even more strength, seeing that Aqif was interested, and she was sentenced to five years without any evidence, you know, clearly there was nothing, but when you look at it, five years is a lot for the activity she had done. And when they opened the door for us, usually even though they were arrogant there, they still looked at us differently. We carried ourselves with a completely different stance than the others. And I spent time in prison in the same cell with her [Drita], we spent it very well. She was an excellent girl, for me she was very good, very smart, with all the qualities a woman should have.

Anita Susuri: When you were released from prison, how...

Remzije Limani Januzi: Well, my husband, he came that one time... because when they were interrogating me here, that Lutfi Ajazi asked me, “Do you have a boyfriend? Do you have a lover?” I said, “No.” I didn't want to involve my husband, because if I said, “Yes” they would go take him in for questioning too. The family was a bit... His father was a *hoxha*,²⁸ and I didn't want to involve them. “No,” I said, I told him, “No.” “How come,” he said, “you don't? Third year of university and you don't?” I said, “No, I have life ahead of me, university, afterwards I'll think about finding someone.” “No, you have other business,” he'd say, you know? He would bring up these things (laughs).

And well, my husband came once on a visit, he came together with my brother's wife. Usually it was my younger brother who came to visit me, because my older brother never came during those six months, it was too heavy a burden on him since he also had to visit our other brother. So the younger one said, “I'll take responsibility, I'll go to Mitrovica.” And when he came, we were so happy about the visits, because they would grill us meat, whole pieces, big chunks, and maybe some pie too, they'd bring it in, you know, they were allowed, because the prison food was extremely poor. And we were happy when the visits came.

But I don't know {shrugs}, for me personally I don't know... there was also that kind of joy even though I was behind the prison bars, because you had a purpose, you knew why, why you were there, why they had taken you. And later my husband worked privately, earlier when he was in high school he had learned the trade of electrician. But his math teacher, who was from Ulqin, told him, asked him, “Reshat, bring your father here to me.” I think his name was Rexhep Duraku, I know the last name was Duraku, he was from Ulqin. He said, “Listen, *hoxha*, it's a shame to leave Reshat with only high school. He has the ability to go to university. He must go.” He said, “No,” but not in the sense of stopping him, he never prevented their schooling. He said, “Sometimes he'd come into our room when he found us chatting with my brother, ‘Come on boys, do some work.’ But if he saw us studying, he'd just open the door and close it again and never say a word.” That's how he wanted to educate those two.

²⁸ Local Muslim clergy, mullah, muezzin.

My brother worked privately and sent me money in prison. I see Remzije [Nexhmie] Limani sent me some amount, I don't remember how many dinars it was back then, and I told Drita, "How did my sister-in-law send me money? She has her own kids, my brother is in prison. Why would she send me money?" Then I saw the stamp of Ferizaj. He had sent it in Nexhmie's name, but it was his money, with the Ferizaj stamp (laughs). That's when I realized it was him who sent me money, he sent it two or three times, yes, he did.

Anita Susuri: After prison what happened then, did you have the right to continue university?

Remzije Limani Januzi: After prison, no, I didn't continue. We got married, with a two-car cortege (laughs), we didn't have a wedding. I did a little... just for my aunts, a little bit, you know... and they didn't do anything at all, only his aunt was there and his close family, brothers and their wives, no one else. And I got married. But to tell you about the hardships with my husband's family a bit, I don't know if it's worth it, maybe not at all (laughs), it's like everywhere, like all daughters-in-law everywhere. But for me, I never allowed, never allowed my dignity to be trampled on. I had strong support from my husband in everything, I had his support and he helped me a lot, and I managed. I managed, because all the other daughters-in-law who came after, they didn't have problems with either their father-in-law or their husbands. We broke the ice, and the others came and found [the terrain] already prepared. Yes.

And then the other struggles continued. I got pregnant and gave birth to my eldest son. One day we were in Pogradjë, in the village, with my husband, and then my sister's family came, the Shurdhan family, they used to live in Shurdhan and had moved to Gjilan. She came with my mother, and I don't know who else, I think maybe both parents, and that young girl was there, Mirvete, my sister, Rexhep's wife, with Fitore, and me with Reshat and the baby. And we were in the bedroom, then some cousins came to hang out, and we women sat in the other room, the men were in the other. And we started talking, we were alone. "Shall we do it? Shall we write the slogans?" Because it was that time, it was 1982. "Yes, let's write them." But before writing, since they had come earlier in the afternoon, we arranged to send my brother's daughter to buy some wrapping paper in the shop.

The son of my other brother, Arben, we sent him to buy the markers, so as not to burden the others, you know, in case it was noticed more easily. Arben bought the colors, she bought the paper, and I told Shqipe, "It's for the baby's diapers, because I didn't bring many and I need them, I absolutely have to get them." "Okay, auntie," she said, she was twelve years old then, my brother's daughter, Shqipe. She went and bought them, and then upstairs in the room, Mirvete, my sister, and I, we wrote them, I wrote them, and we put them up. Nobody knew at all, not my brother, not anyone, just the three of us. And in the village, at the entrance, we put the first one there, then we walked along not the main road but some side streets, and we reached the middle of the village and there we tied two more, you know, because we had taken two more, in case the first ones weren't enough... and it was right in the middle of the road, not on the side but directly across.

And at the entrance... at the exit of the village, near the school, right where we had our house. And we came back, and we slept that night. My brother's daughter didn't have school the next day, she had a break. And she said, "Aunt, shall I come with you?" Like a child, "Shall I come with you to Ferizaj?" "Come on, dear." We didn't go by car, we went by bus, we didn't have a car at that time. We took Shqipe, my sister went to Gjilan, the other guests went back to their place, and then they announced

that the slogans had been taken down, they had been removed. And then in Ferizaj they arrested me, my husband too... and they took Shqipe, they had taken Mirvete from Shurdhan, but not my sister.

Mirvete was very tortured, you can't imagine how they tortured her. But not a single word, not a single word did she say. No, no, no. They also took my brother's daughter, but only for three days, she was twelve years old, and they kept her for three days. And they also took my brother, the teacher, and there they tortured him in the most inhuman way, to the point that he couldn't even walk. I was in Gjilan, then I came to Pogradje after they had interrogated me in Gjilan, I came to Pogradje only with my son. And Shqipe... my brother told me, "They left the door open when they kept Shqipe in the room, so that I could hear her screams, her cries," and I couldn't do anything but pray to God that she would be okay, that she wouldn't say anything, because I feared for her.

She later told us, it's a fact, what she had said: "My aunt sent me for diapers." That's what she said, exactly what I had told her, and that's what she said. And she said, "They scared me a lot, they opened the window and told me, 'We'll throw you out of here, tell us something else. Who sent you? What did they tell you? Did you see her writing, drawing those letters there?'" "No, I didn't see," she said, because she really hadn't. We usually hid it from the children, because children could talk. And she said, "A snake, whether it was real or plastic, I don't know," she said that many times, "I don't know if they put a snake inside. I panicked, I went to a corner." And her crying, her screaming, my brother heard the whole thing, he didn't see it, but he heard it all.

They beat my brother so badly, and they kept him for three nights. When they brought him back to the room, Nijazi Idrizi was there, and he said, "The wounds, I took [those]," he said, "I put those on him," meaning whatever he had, whatever he could use to soak and place on his hands, because his hands were completely swollen. Only they knew how to torture you. His face, swollen everywhere, hands, legs, his whole body. And they released my brother, brought him by some UDB men, Daut I think, and also Sinan, as I recall. And at that time, a relative of ours who worked in education came and said, "Look what Xhim's own sister did to him!" And he shouted, he came to me shouting, and we couldn't even get my brother inside the house, he couldn't walk on his own feet, he dragged himself like when someone dies and you carry him {gestures behind the back with hands} and his legs drag, just like that... he couldn't walk.

And he shouted, so we placed him inside the house, and then his wife, his mother, everyone tried to do something for him, put something on his face, his hands. And my mother, ooooo... {onomatopoeic sigh}, of course she cried, but she said, "Don't worry my son, this too shall pass, this too shall pass." And my brother, never, I never heard from him that he would say, "You got us in trouble," or "It's your fault," never, never in his life did he say that. He always gave us support, he always liked for women to be present everywhere, he always wanted to see me everywhere. For example, if an action was organized in the village, like when some land had slid and the youth had to organize to fix it, he would tell me, "Come too, go out too. Let the other women see you, so that they too will join, take part." He always wanted me to be equal to men.

And then, our relative came and shouted, saying, "Hey!" he shouted as loud as he could, "What have you done? Are you fighting against Yugoslavia?" He said, "Yugoslavia is the third most powerful in the world with the weapons it has." "Go away," I told him. "Will this wall fall over this house?" I said, "It will fall, it will fall," I said, you know, like this, "it will fall, and one day it will fall. God willing, we'll still be alive, and I will tell you myself that this wall has fallen." He almost fainted, went mad.

My brother didn't speak at all, because of his own pain, he couldn't... and with those wounds he had, for a whole year he couldn't put his own shoes on, he had to tear them apart to wear them. And since that day they tortured him, usually it was Sinan Zhegra who tortured him, when he beat him, he said, he himself told us, "I said to him, 'Beat me, it's better that my brother beats me than a stranger,'" you know, alluding to the Serbs. "He said, 'Your brother, huh? I'm your brother, huh?' And then he beat me even more." And he couldn't even go to the toilet; his wife had to bring him a kind of basin, the kind they used to use for washing hands, and he relieved himself there. That's what they did to him.

And then they released my brother's daughter after three days. Mirvete, however, ended up in the hospital. I, with my child, went before the court in Gjilan, there was a judge there for my case, and they said he was very good, but not... how to say, he wasn't openly supportive, but in his behavior you could see he supported you. He was from Dibra, I can't recall his name. And then he released me, because they wanted to take my child. I tried, "No, I will not separate from my child, I want to be questioned with my child in my arms." I had my eldest son, he was little, not even six or seven months old. And I said, "I don't accept it." Then the judge said, "I swear before you that you will have this child. No one will take him from you, you will have your child, you will be taken only for questioning. Nothing else," because by law, no one is allowed to take a child from its mother. And so it ended: we were tortured, people were imprisoned, and...

Anita Susuri: And you were then sentenced to a year and a half?

Remzije Limani Januzi: A year and a half, yes. This was for six months, but later, for writing the slogans, because we also wrote with Teuta, we divided our tasks. In the women's dormitory, we divided them. There were three women's dorms, I think. "You take this side, you take building 1, you take building 2, you take building 3." And so we divided them. But our tasks were usually in the hallways, and for me it was at 12:00AM, when everyone was asleep or when there was no movement. In the hallway, down the stairs, we wrote "Kosova Republic," those things that were current at the time. And before being imprisoned, we also made pamphlets, and later I was sentenced, yes, I was sentenced afterwards, for that, one year and a half.

Anita Susuri: Yes, for those, how did that happen?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, we did that together with Gjyzide Osmani. I wasn't in a group, but, so to speak, when you stand out, people always approach you, you know, when they sympathize with you. A group gathered around me, friends, and, "Come on, let's write, Gjyzide, shall we write a slogan?" "Yes, let's write it." And she was an activist. I don't know if she was in the movement with someone else, I don't know, because it was forbidden to ask. And it happened, Flora Masolica was the guard, we wrote, we did it without a problem, nobody was interrogated. And then, when she was later imprisoned, I don't know what happened, but then they took me in for questioning and sentenced me to a year and a half for those slogans in the dormitory.

Anita Susuri: These one and a half years...

Remzije Limani Januzi: I didn't serve the full sentence because the judge in Ferizaj, well, not the judge but the clerk, because I thought he was a judge, a Fevzi, Fevzi... he had a sort of bump here {touches forehead near eye} so they called him Fevzi Gunga, that's what people knew him by.

Anita Susuri: Like a nickname.

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes. And he was even the head of the Cultural Artistic Society *Kastriotët*²⁹ e Ferizajt (The Kastriots of Ferizaj). He treated me very well. He called the president of the court, he also worked there even after the war. I was surprised how they still kept him in that position. He was completely in favor of having my sentence carried out, even though I had children. I had my first and second child not because we had planned it, but because we got married and were starting a family. We could have waited longer to build a family, but we had to hurry...

And he told me, “You know what? Have another child and it will be postponed for six months. Up to a year,” he said, “by law they don’t have the right [to imprison you].” That’s what Fevzi told me. “Then one year will pass, and we will file a request, a petition like this to the Yugoslav Federation, and Kosovo will write a request on behalf of the child, to reduce your sentence.” They sent it back with conditions. Those from the Federation reduced it by six months, but they gave me one year conditional. So I was on probation: any other mistake, and you could have been imprisoned again for that year. But still, you couldn’t be at peace... you couldn’t relax. That’s how they released me, but my activism...I never stopped it in my life.

Part Five

Anita Susuri: Earlier you mentioned your brother, who was imprisoned in Stara Gradiška, and the difficulties you had to get there, to visit him, the travel. Could you tell me about that?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, mostly it was my brother’s wife, my sister-in-law, who went, sometimes taking the children, but many times she couldn’t because the journey was too long and too difficult. I also went, I went three times. It was an extremely long trip, mostly by train, like everyone at that time, since trains were the main way. Your legs would swell, you’d get very tired. And when we arrived there, sometimes the visit would be canceled, you were late, so they’d say, “Tomorrow, because you are late.”

Or, after the visit, if you missed the return train, you had to spend the night at the train station just to wait until the next day to come back. My brother also missed school because of it, every month he lost two days, but he made them up on Saturdays and Sundays, he never left a single class unfinished.

It was very difficult to travel to Croatia, extremely difficult. Both exhausting and financially hard. We had to support his wife with four children, take care of the kids, take care of her, and then arrange visits for him. From time to time, the older brother or the younger one also went. Even my mother, though she didn’t go often, because the road was too long. My sister went, I went three times, and his wife, she went every month without fail. And when he saw his oldest child, Arben, who had grown, he said, “Wow, so big! If I had seen you on the street, I wouldn’t have even recognized you.”

Anita Susuri: And how were those meetings, for example, how long did they last, what could you talk about?

²⁹ *Kastriotët* (“The Kastriots”) is used symbolically, referring to the legacy of Albania’s national hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu. The name commonly appears in cultural and patriotic associations across Albanian communities.

Remzije Limani Januzi: In those meetings, the visits didn't last long, ten minutes, at most 15. Mostly: "Are you well? How are you?" Or, "Has it rained?" Simple things like that. If you said, "It has rained a lot," then he understood that someone had been arrested, that there had been mass arrests. We would phrase it through the weather: "Is the weather good? Is it cloudy?" If you mentioned clouds, "Yes, it's very cloudy, with rain and overcast skies," he understood that UDBA had carried out mass arrests. The guards were present, mostly Serbs. My brother told us that the director of Stara Gradiška prison wasn't Croatian. All the high positions, directors, leaders, were Serbs, not Croats. Even the Croats there experienced a kind of discrimination in their own land, because Serbs were dominant in Yugoslavia.

Anita Susuri: How many days did it take you to get there?

Remzije Limani Januzi: We usually left in the evening from here, so that we would arrive the next morning around 10 or 11 o'clock, when the visit was scheduled.

Anita Susuri: And only for ten minutes, fifteen?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, just ten minutes, fifteen minutes at most, not more. And my brother told me how they tortured them, because I also had a high school classmate who was with him, some Haliti from Kumanovo, you know. He said, "What torture... just enough to drive a person insane, but you had to give them strength because they were really young," he said. "The young ones, unprepared," he said. "Why did you take part in demonstrations or why did you read a pamphlet without being prepared for something like this?" And then when you ended up in prison, they used the most inhumane kinds of torture, their tactics in the prisons.

I myself experienced in Mitrovica the voices of men, the screams of men that came to our room. And many times we knocked, we made noise when those women, the policewomen who were on night shifts came. They asked us, "What's wrong with you?" We told them, "What do you mean what's wrong? We are hearing the screams of men here in our room. What kind of safety do we have here?" And there was also one Skender, he was sentenced, actually he got 15 years. He had been a prison guard. There were also good people who worked in institutions, but eventually even they ended up in prison because they couldn't hold on anymore, you know, keep that secret.

Anita Susuri: And what happened with you afterwards, did you still have the right to continue your studies, did you finish them?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, I still had one year left, just one year. Actually, I finished that year after the war. I remember telling a friend, because I often dreamed that I was failing my exams, and I told my husband, "I don't know... it still weighs on me that I didn't finish, that I don't have the diploma."

I had never really worked, except once in Switzerland, for about three months with Albanian students. But it wasn't paid, it was volunteer work, just until another teacher could be found, because it was very hard to travel, you had to change two or three trains to get to the school. But my husband, who was the chairman of LAPSH [the League of Albanian Teachers and Parents] for all of Switzerland, told me, "Go, stay until they find someone else. Once they do, you can stop, but don't quit before then, because it wouldn't be right. They had a teacher until today, and now suddenly the parents are left discouraged and might stop sending their children." The goal was to bring Albanian children into these supplementary schools to learn in Albanian.

Anita Susuri: I think you also took part in the demonstrations of 1989?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, in 1989 in Ferizaj, I was there. I already had three children, but they were very well-behaved. I remember telling my sister-in-law, “I’m going out,” because Reshat was on strike at the time. Then Qibrije Demiri’s husband, Bardh Frangu, came and said, “Remzije, would you prepare breakfast for the workers?” I said, “Yes.” He even called on the phone to tell me, “Tell Remzije to prepare something and I’ll bring it.” I said, “Yes, I will.”

And then I heard that the women from the village of Baliq had gone out first. When I heard that, I thought, “How could I stay home?” So I told my sister-in-law, “Watch the children, I’m going out.” She asked, “Where are you going?” I said, “I’m going to the demonstration!” Later, she told my mother-in-law, who came and asked my sister-in-law, “Where is Remzije?” She said, “She went out.” And my mother-in-law comes, you know, a little *pfff* {onomatopoeia}, it was offensive, but for me it didn’t matter (laughs).

It wasn’t easy, I don’t even want to recall those moments, because they weren’t easy. I feel bad even mentioning them, especially because of my husband. He never once stopped me, on the contrary he encouraged me. He knew, “She’ll go out!” And we went out for two days in a row. Luckily, my children were calm and stayed at home; they didn’t follow me, since there was no one else to look after them.

Anita Susuri: And how did these demonstrations go compared to those of ’81?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, ’81 cannot be compared with anything else... It can only be compared when the entire people, even the collaborators of UDBa joined the people...then it can be compared, then it makes sense to compare. But these other demonstrations cannot be compared to April [’81], no {shakes her head}. No, because it was difficult, very, very difficult at that time. Later on things loosened up, you know? More or less people could talk, they spoke more freely.

My mother-in-law would come, I was working in the garden at the time, and I’d have the radio on. She would say, “What is this? Who are you playing it for?” You know, I’d put it on, I’d play the radio, some news, some song. I enjoyed it, I really wanted to, and also it was necessary.

Anita Susuri: You told me that in 1990 your husband was forced to leave for Switzerland, and later you too?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, I’ll tell you when exactly... I’ll tell you also about when they took us to prison because of the slogans we wrote in Pogradjë, they took my husband too. And when they took him in for questioning, he told me, “A man named Refik Thaqi, I think from Gjylíkreshtë, came in a sneaky way. While questioning me, he circled around and then with a folder, he struck me. And a Serb was there too, but he didn’t touch me.” Usually it was Albanians who tortured us. Why pick up a hot coal when you’ve got tongs? That’s how it was.

And he said, “He hit me with the file, and then I don’t know anymore, I fainted. The only thing I remember is seeing myself down on the floor, my legs straight out, my head, apparently the chair had collapsed.” And then, he said, the Serb started shouting at the Albanian: “What? What have you done? What did you do?” He said, “They poured some water on me, I came around a little, and then later they began with their usual questions.” But the ones who did this were Albanians {nods in agreement}.

During the early '90s my husband, in the last two years before we went abroad, worked at the beverage factory as an engineer. At that time the head of the Kosova Unions was Hajrullah Gorani,³⁰ and they decided to go on strike. I think it was a strike, yes, to go on strike. My husband was chosen as the strike leader, he led the Union during the strike. And every day, he said, "The Serbs interrogated me." Mainly Serbs, no more Albanians, only Serbs brought from Belgrade... from other cities.

And, he said, "They asked me, 'Why this? Why that?' They didn't beat me, but I spoke my mind. They asked, 'What do the Albanians want? Why should Kosovo be the seventh republic, equal with the other republics?' When 93-94 percent of the population were Albanians! Every tenth worker was Albanian, while nine were Serbs, that's how extreme the discrimination was." And finally, they asked him, "Have you done your military service?" My husband said, "No, I haven't." They asked, "Why not?" At that time, they were bringing back soldiers in coffins, mostly before they even finished their service.³¹

He told his coworkers what kind of questions they were asking him, and they told him, "Don't you dare! If they call you to the army, don't you dare go. You have brothers in Switzerland, leave. We need engineers, not unskilled workers. They are killing the ordinary soldiers, they're just waiting for you to fall into their hands."

"I had received a military scholarship," he connected it to the reason why he wasn't called for military service. "But I never actually took that scholarship, someone else stole it, and I never followed it up to find out why, and they never called me." Then on Thursday he came home from work and called his brother Avdi in Pristina, "What should I do?" he asked. His brother told him, "If you ask me, I'd say leave for a while, because they'll send you to the army."

The very next day, a letter arrived summoning him to military service, to report on Monday. Luckily, by coincidence, he had already applied for a passport earlier, and said to me, "Go ask for the passport sooner." I don't know how, but they processed my application, even though they required a certificate proving military service. I didn't have that. But in the passport, I had included my oldest son too, along with the two smaller ones. The officer was surprised when looking at the photo of my son and of Reshat and asked, "Why didn't you bring him?" I said, "He works in the factory, he couldn't come." She accepted it.

As I walked out, it even felt like they were about to call me back, "Come here, I can't give this to you without the certificate" but they gave me the passport anyway. That passport saved us. We got it about a week later. So, my husband left, it was a Saturday, the first snow had fallen. He went to Skopje, then flew to Slovenia. In Slovenia he had to wait three or four hours, and he said, "It felt like people were watching me, like they wanted to ask me something, like I was being followed." But then an Albanian man sat next to him and said, "You look uneasy, do you have a problem?" My husband said no, but the man reassured him, "Relax, Slovenia has nothing to do with Yugoslavia anymore. It's practically its own state," even though it hadn't fully separated yet, before the war.

³⁰ Hajrullah Gorani (1931-2020) was a professor, syndicalist and a former political prisoner. He was the Head of the Independent Syndicalist Union of Kosovo. He led the Kosovo workers' strike held on September 3, 1990, after which Milosević's regime in Kosovo terminated all their contracts, and an oppressive decade for Albanians living in Kosovo began.

³¹ Contextual: Reference to a wave of alleged suicides of Albanian conscripts in 1990, which were never investigated and always denied by the families.

From there, he said, he boarded the plane to Switzerland, Zurich. I joined him later, about seven months later, when things in Kosovo got even worse, even more dangerous. He told me, “Remzi, if you agree, bring the children and the prison documents and let’s apply for political asylum.” I traveled without a visa, at that time visas weren’t yet required, they were introduced only two months later. I flew from Skopje with the two younger children, I left our eldest behind because his name was on my husband’s passport. My eldest stayed in Kosovo, and I went with the two younger ones. When I arrived, my husband told me, “Look, Remzi, you’re here now, but we don’t know when we’ll return. Even Hysen Tërpeza³² left with the hope of returning soon, but it took him 42 years, and he never came back. You must think about it.”

My reaction was strong, very emotional. I said, “Never! We are not living in Hysen Tërpeza’s time. Back then only two people could read in all of Gjilan, today it’s completely different. We have universities, we have intellectuals, every house has one or two educated people. It’s not the same, we will return.” And so, nine years passed, nine years. After nine years I finally returned, for the first time after the war. It felt like a dream. Walking through Kosovo, through Gjilan, through Ferizaj, I kept thinking, “God, am I dreaming? Am I really here in Kosovo?” It was painful, but at the same time full of pride, the joy that we had finally been liberated.

Anita Susuri: And your eldest son, what happened to him?

Remzije Limani Januzi: My eldest son was brought to me after seven months, no, after two months, my brother brought him. But even two months felt like such a long time. My younger brother brought him with the passport of his own son.

Anita Susuri: And how old was he, six, right?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, he was seven and something, because even between the second son and him there weren’t even fifteen months difference, those two older ones, and the youngest was four years younger. I took the youngest one, he was three years old and something. And I told my brother, he had arranged it with my sister-in-law, he told her, “Prepare Qëndrim, put him on the bus, we will be waiting for him here. Let him come to his siblings, since he is on break.” That’s what my sister-in-law said. She prepared him, and my father-in-law put him on the bus and told the driver, “Someone will be waiting to take him there, don’t hand him over until someone comes.” That’s how they agreed. And then my brother went out to meet him at the station. And then my brother didn’t go home at all, only his wife knew that my brother was traveling with the boy to Switzerland.

And when they passed that... “Where are we going, Uncle Sylë?” “We’re going to our uncle’s in Pogradjë.” “But when we passed that Army house, he said, ‘Uncle Sylë, where are we going?’ I said, ‘Quiet,’ I said, ‘Qëndrim,’ I told him, ‘do you know what? We’re going to your father in Switzerland.’” Because he had already boarded the bus for Belgrade. He said, “But not a word, your name is Arbëresh, that’s it, if they ask you.” And he said, “When the inspections came, that’s when I was really scared. And I told the boy, ‘Qëndrim, cover yourself as if you’re asleep.’ The control came, I gave them the passport of his own son. They asked, ‘Whose child is this?’ ‘Mine.’ ‘No, he isn’t yours.’ ‘Yes, he is mine.’ At that point my whole body began to shake, I was terrified of being discovered, because if they caught you with another person’s child, that was a criminal offense. So I said, ‘No, he is mine.’ ‘No, he

³² Hysen Tërpeza (1910-2002), Albanian anti-Yugoslav activist who left Kosovo during WWII and spent almost his entire life in exile, followed by Yugoslav security agents.

isn't yours,' they said, 'no, he isn't yours.' But he kept insisting five, six times, "No, he is not yours, he is your wife's son." Then finally I felt a little relief, because I had been so scared. Anyway, somehow we got through.

He traveled by bus from Belgrade all the way to Austria ... usually they went by train from Belgrade to Austria. From Austria he called us and said, "Should I take a taxi? The taxi costs this much, a hundred and something euros," he said. "Take the taxi," we told him, in francs, "Take the taxi and come by taxi. We'll come out and wait." But to my husband the boy looked like he had grown nine months, he had developed so much, because children grow so quickly. And so we were all reunited together again.

Anita Susuri: And how did life continue there, how did you get involved?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Life... our life... for myself, I never adapted there. It's a very beautiful country, everything is in order. So much so that when I come here, nothing seems right to me. And I say, "They're praising the mayor," but wherever I look [she looks down at the ground], I see trash. There, you can't even find a piece of paper, a plastic bag, a cigarette butt, not even in the mountains, let alone in the city, in the capital. Everything is clean and in order. But we were involved, and that's how our time passed, because for me personally, I felt a deep homesickness, in Switzerland I missed home so much. And I loved it when the time came to travel back to Kosovo. I couldn't even sleep, all night I couldn't close my eyes, sleep wouldn't come. When I arrived here, I felt joy, you know, happiness. I love this place, no matter the difficulties, no matter if things aren't going well, I love this country, I love it very much.

My husband was the one most engaged, mainly involved in... well, mainly because here too the Democratic League of Kosovo existed as a popular movement. Later they split and formed other parties. And the political prisoners there also joined. *Bac*³³ Adem [Demaçi] appealed to join this movement, and they united. My husband was an activist, especially for the three percent contribution there, mainly for the salaries, wages of workers, teachers, all of that.³⁴ The funds mainly came from the diaspora, from Switzerland, Germany, wherever Albanians were. He was vice-president of the canton for the three percent, later he was also president of LAPSH, the League of Albanian Teachers and Parents in Switzerland, for the canton. During the war years, for four years, it was very difficult, on one side the war, on the other side the activism, and also the fundraising for weapons. Every family was required to contribute.

He himself didn't go out, but I was there when my husband told me that two thousand francs was [the amount that] every employed person had to give for weapons. That was openly known. And my husband would say to his friends, "Wherever you go, leave it with me at the end," because I was working at that time with my husband. And when they came... they would come straight from work, in their work clothes, exhausted, worn out, without having eaten, and go directly to the fundraising actions. They had such a strong will to do something for their homeland.

One man came, he was from Gjakova, near Gjakova, and he has since passed away. I felt so sorry, I still have him before my eyes. When he came to us, he couldn't even sit down, he just couldn't sit because

³³ *Bac*, literally uncle, is an endearing and respectful Albanian term for an older person.

³⁴ The three percent fund was created by the Kosovo government in exile during the 1990s. All Albanians in the Diaspora and Kosovo were duty-bound to pay three per cent of their salary into this fund to finance Kosovo's parallel institutions.

he worked in construction, what they call *baustelle* [German: construction site] there. But construction is a very hard job, work in Switzerland isn't easy at all. You had to keep the full eight hours, always on your feet. You only got a short break, maybe for a coffee that you drink standing, one lunch break of an hour, and then straight back to work until 4PM.

And they came, and I said to them, "Have you eaten dinner?" They said, "No, no, we don't want to." I took some fruit and some cornflakes, that kind of porridge with fruit, and prepared it with yogurt and served it to them. He didn't even touch it, couldn't sit down let alone eat bread. And then each gave around 2000–4000 francs at that time, 2000 was the fixed amount per person, for every employed one, every employed person. But, as everywhere with Albanians, you know, maybe the husband gave, but about the wife he would say, "No, she's not working, we've already given enough money, no..." They did a few tricks there too, but they still gave money. I can't say otherwise, they gave it. They had the will, they worked hard, they did. Speaking about myself, I really respect those men. The women weren't so involved, but the men worked very hard all over Switzerland, moving across cantons, with their own money, their own gas, their own cars, just so something could be achieved, so we could move forward.

I didn't get involved directly, I just supported my husband very much in everything. There were also demonstrations for the Jashari family when they were killed. We women organized it, we got permission. Zymrije Aliu was there, and we called [Hava Shala](#) from Zurich to participate. Children, women, youth—we ...The children, the women, the youth, and they gave us permission. They gave it, but they limited us a bit, because there was still a lot of Serbian influence. There were Serbian doctors there, in that village, in the town nearby. But when they saw that nothing happened, no incident, they allowed us to go further on. Hava came, and we let her speak, to show respect, she gave a speech. And we gathered for about the first two hours in the city, when we gathered and Hava spoke, and then we dispersed, mostly we dispersed peacefully. Afterwards, the television stations of our canton broadcast it as well, and they even interviewed the children, my youngest son was ... (she cries).

Part Six

Anita Susuri: In the meantime, you also told me about the arrest of your mother, and your younger brother...

Remzije Limani Januzi: In '85, my mother went for a visit to my sister's, she went together with the wife of Hasan Mala, but she didn't have a passport, so they gave her a fake passport and she went. My mother stayed one month, and that woman [Hasan Mala's wife] didn't stay longer, and then they returned. When they returned, someone informed on them, and they arrested Nexhije, Hasan's wife, and then they came and arrested my mother. First they took my brother who was in Gjilan, then about two hours later they arrested my mother. My brother went out in the morning to go to work, and before he could enter the factory, they were waiting for him at the factory gate and arrested him. They took him and kept him for three days. And yes, the most inhumane tortures, they used on him the same tactic they used to beat my older brother.

He was, I think, in the same cell with Esat Brajshori, and my brother told me that before being taken for interrogation, Esat would say to him, "*Bac Sylë, Bac Sylë!*" because he was still young then. "*Bac Sylë,*

stay strong! Stay strong, don't tell the enemy anything, stay strong." That's how he encouraged him, those were the stories my brother used to share. He said, "They would take me away and the inhuman tortures would begin, on my hands, on my face, on my legs, everywhere." And when they brought him back to the cell, Esat would rip apart whatever clothes he had, maybe an undershirt or something, soak it in cold water and press it against his face, his hands, his legs, and lay it over him. My brother couldn't stand on his feet, just like I myself later experienced. I couldn't lie on my right side, nor on my left side, only flat on my back.

And so it went on for three days. They took him, tortured him, and then released him. But during those three days, the house was searched. My brother's wife said, "We didn't even know he had been taken. We thought he had gone to work. I had just put the child to sleep." Then, *bam bam bam*, they started pounding at the door. Usually they would pound hard, not just ring the bell and wait. She asked, "Who is it?" They said, "Police. We have a warrant to search the house." She let them in. She told her son, "Don't be afraid." The smaller one didn't understand much, but the older child did. The police searched and left. Then others came again. While they were searching, a cousin neighbor called from outside, "Irfane, don't go out! The whole street is black with cars, police everywhere, UDB men." The ones inside were uniformed police, but those outside were in plainclothes.

Mainly it was Sinan, then Daut, he was from Bilinica, and Halit, Halit Haliti, who even paraded my brother around the village just to show off, "Look, look, we're parading Xhim." They asked, "Are the children afraid?" She replied, "No, they're not afraid." They said, "See? You're not afraid. Good." She said, "I had spread out one rug in the children's room so they could play, and the better rug I kept in another room. But under that rug, Sylë had hidden some photographs of Rexhep [Mala] and Nuhi [Berisha].³⁵" The police found them under the bedcovers. "Do you recognize these?" "Yes, I know this one." "Who is he?" "He's my brother-in-law." "What's his name?" "Rexhep Mala." "And this one?" She said, "No, I don't know him."

They took them, they took my sister's photographs, they took my things, everything of mine they found, also my sister's things from Geneva, everything. "And you know, for about two hours," she said, "We separated into all the rooms, each one into a room, also the kitchen, we turned everything upside down." She said, "All the clothes, everything, everything, they threw onto the floor, everything," she said, "They didn't let me move from that corner. They said, 'Don't move from here.' Whatever they found, then they would come and ask, 'Is this this? Who is this?' And then they left," she said, "they took the photographs, they took them away. The next day they came again, the same ones who had done the search, but fewer policemen, not as many as the first time," she said, "The second time, I didn't see them myself, but the women who were there, the neighbors, they said, 'The whole street was full of policemen and cars. What must have happened?' You know, the neighbors recognized us also in Gjilan... but really, so many cars, so many people."

"They came the second time," she said, "they searched but didn't take anything. And when they didn't release Sylë, my brother-in-law came to me and said, 'Irfan, you go to Pogradjë.' Because word had spread that Sylë had been arrested. So I went there with the children." My brother had been released, but he didn't know that my sister-in-law had gone to Pogradjë. He went back to his own house, but the door was locked. So he went straight over there, to Pogradjë.

³⁵ Nuhi Berisha (1961-1984) was a prominent Albanian activist in the underground movement. He died in 1984 with Rexhep Mala in a shoot out with the police when their hideout was discovered.

“When he came and we opened the door, what did I see?” she said. “He was swollen, as if... as if someone had blown him up like a balloon. His hands, his legs.” He had come by taxi to Pogradë, because there were no buses running that late. And when mother came out to meet him, she said, “That was no longer a mother, she was speechless, not a word came out.” Then my sister-in-law treated him with lotions, with ointments, with whatever herbs she had, she said, “where his face, his legs, his hands were swollen, that’s how he spent two days in Pogradë.” He wasn’t able to go to work until he recovered. “We returned to Gjiat,” she said, “and mother also came with us. The police found out that she had been in Switzerland, and within two or three weeks they came again.”

They went to Pogradë, then they said, “She’s in Gjiat.” They came to Gjiat, and then, “I went out, how could I tell her, since Sylë,” she said, “was at work, how could I tell her, ‘Oh mother, the police are calling for you?’ I said, ‘Oh mother, the police came and they’re saying, Do you have your mother-in-law here?’ And she said to me, ‘May it be for the good, my daughter.’ And I told her, ‘Dress warmly, put on a sweater or something, since you’re old...’ And I gave her a shawl and some longer clothes, and I asked her, ‘Do you have something to wear?’ Because she had those *kule*, *dimija*,³⁶ but just a few. I gave her mine, because my mother never wore *kule*, and I only started wearing them after the war. I even said, ‘How did I ever wear these *dimija*, they’re so many meters of fabric.’” She said, “I gave her the *kule* and pajamas underneath, the vest, the sweater, the big shawl, and they took her, she went.”

Mostly they questioned her; they didn’t physically touch her, but they cursed her. Mostly they asked about Kadri, about Hasan, about Rexhije: “How did you travel? Who gave you your passport?” “What about Rexhije?” “Rexhije?” “I don’t know.” “Did she even have a passport?” “I don’t know about Rexhije.” “What did Kadri tell you? Did he give you a message?” Mostly those kinds of questions. “Did he give you anything for the road?” She said, “No.” “Where did they meet you? Did they meet you?” And everything she said: “No, they didn’t meet me, the bus just left me there and by chance I saw my sister.” By chance, I don’t know how she put it, “I saw my daughter there and she took me.” You know, she slipped up there a bit, but probably not to hurt her. And then they released her. They had kept her from morning until late at night

Anita Susuri: How old was she at that time?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Well... I was the youngest child at the time, and she was around sixty. After the war she lived into her eighties, but she died right after the war, in 1985 or 1986 [sic, mistake]. So, yes, around sixty when they arrested her in ’85.

As for Rexhije, they said she was tortured badly, very badly. To this day, she cannot hear properly, they damaged her ear {points to her left ear}. Especially those policemen from Gjiat: Sinani, Daut... There was also Isa Bunjaku, a chemistry professor, but she said, “He never touched me. He just said, “What can we do, Rexhije, what can we do?” He would only do this gesture {shrug}. But the others did. They beat her, pulled out her hair, an uneducated woman, so defenseless. It was unbelievable! She was sentenced to one year.

At the same time, Naim was also in prison. When they transferred him from Mitrovica to Lipjan, the prison had separate pavilions for youth, men, and women. When she was taken into the yard, she

³⁶ Billowing white satin pantaloons that narrow at the ankles, Turkish style. They are made with about twelve meters of fabric.

shouted, “O Naim! O Naim!” She was calling for him, but he didn’t answer. “Why don’t you answer your mother?” she cried. They kept her for one year in prison.

During that time, her youngest son was looked after by my sister, while her daughter Fitore was still very young. When Rexhep [Mala] fell in 1984, Fitore was only seven, in first grade. By then she was eight, and her brother Mumin was nine, just one year older than her. So my sister cared for all of them, visiting, bringing food, caring for Rexhije and the old man, and raising the children too. She had to play the role of both mother and father. Their grandfather was too old, he could only go out into the yard, but not take responsibility for everything.”

Anita Susuri: Would you also like to tell me about Rexhep Mala?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, Rexhep used to come to us from time to time, because he also had his own circle in Ferizaj. One day he came from Pristina to Ferizaj and then to us. When he came, Reshat wasn’t at home, he was at work, and I saw all his clothes torn, his shoes, his clothes, you know, old and worn out. I said, “Rexhep, why are you like this?” You know, because economically we were very well-off, they worked hard, they were very hardworking. And he even said, “It’s just that the national question preoccupies us and pains us. If it weren’t for that,” he said, “we would be the first in Gilan,” because they were really hardworking. And he said, “Remzije, I saw my friend, I met a friend, and I saw him completely in old clothes, torn clothes, torn shoes. Could you find me,” he said, “some of Reshat’s shoes?” I said, “Of course, why not, absolutely.”

He wore all of Reshat’s clothes, and the shoes too... with socks and everything. He left his old ones there, and he even forgot his cap. Mejreme said, “Rexhep’s cap, when Rexhep was killed, I gave it to Fitore,” she said, “since he was killed.” I said, “Fitore, Rexha forgot his cap here, so here, I give it to you as a keepsake.” And once, it was springtime, I was hanging clothes and I didn’t see when Rexhep came, and he went: *Paaa!* [onomatopoeia]. You know, like to scare me. And when I turned my head, I said, “Oh, Rexhep!” And when he went home, he told his father, and I was present, “Dad, I scared Remzije.” He said, “No son, Remzije doesn’t get scared. You startled her, you know, you startled her,” and we all laughed.

Rexhep’s activity was... he never stopped, never, even after he got out of prison. My uncle told him, “Son, stay a bit, rest, until you recover from prison, then move again.” But Rexhep said, “Father, I can’t sit cross-legged with you, the regime will never let me rest. I’ll do my duty.” And his father supported him in everything. in material things, weapons, everything. Rexhep’s comrades also received support from uncle Mehmet, since Hasan had already gone to Switzerland, he had left, and uncle Mehmet was Rexhep’s strong pillar, his support for everything. When I visited their house, I often saw Rexhep in the room with sneakers on, always ready so he wouldn’t fall into their hands again. He would say, “I will never fall into their hands again.”

In front of their house, because the road there is a bit long and has many doors {she shows with her hands}, and there’s a kind of field nearby, the UDBa’s civilian car would always be parked there. Many times, the brother-in-law would send his nieces to the shop, “Go see if that car is there,” or his sister, “Is it there?” They would answer, “Yes, it’s there, Rexhep, it’s there.” And then, in Ferizaj, during that time, when they were searching for Rexhep, the UDB’s car would stay parked regularly, and even my husband’s family noticed that a car was always there. But we had moved further away, and they didn’t

know that we no longer lived there. They thought we still lived there and that maybe Rexhep would come in or go out.

Meanwhile, during the search for Rexhep, since he had already escaped them and gone underground, one of the UDB agents came to the house just as the second floor slab was being set. He climbed up onto the slab, thinking he might spot Rexhep in the yard or somewhere nearby. And my father-in-law noticed him and said, "What are you doing climbing up here?" The agent, I can't recall his name, said, "Oh, *hoxha*, I came to check the plan." My father-in-law replied, "What kind of plan are you checking? You could see plans anywhere, there are all kinds of plans!" The agent insisted, "No, but I liked this one."

It wasn't really about construction plans, because the car was always stationed nearby. Later, two more men came to my father-in-law's house. At that time, I hardly ever spoke with my in-laws, maybe just a greeting. When those men arrived, my father-in-law told my sister-in-law's daughter, "Make two coffees," two security officers had come. "Who's coming here to you?" The little girl, Fitore, was only in first grade then. I said, "Magbule, let me make coffee, who knows who they are, and it seems awkward." So I took the tray, went to the door, Magbule followed and told them, "Here's the coffee." I returned, and when my father-in-law saw them, his face completely changed. Meanwhile, Reshat came back from work. My father-in-law told him, "Reshat, two plainclothes officers came asking for Rexhep. Tell him that this is the situation. They asked where he goes, when he comes, what he does." From that time on, Rexhep stopped coming to the house so often, since he realized they were closing in and he went fully underground.

At that time, I only had my first son, the eldest, and I was pregnant with the second one. My sister knew that Rexhep was still in Kosovo, though he was trying to leave. Then, when I met with her, Kadri Osmani's daughter came to my house. That night, I had seen Rexhep in a dream, he appeared to me dressed in military clothes, and with my younger brother. The next morning, I was telling this dream to Reshat when suddenly we heard a knock at the door, *tak tak*. I said, "Oh, did you hear that?" He said, "Yes." It was Hidajete Osmani. She came in, and immediately my thoughts went to Rexhep, because Kadri Osmani was working with Rexhep, at that time in *Ilegalja*.³⁷ She entered and said, "Remzije, Reshat, Rexhep asked to meet with Remzije." I had to answer yes or no.

I said, "Meeting in Pristina?" On what day? everything... Reshat looked at me and said, 'Why are you staring at me?' Then he said, "Yes, go." So I went, even without his confirmation. I was seven months pregnant at the time, but he told Hidajete, "Whatever happens to her, even if she's caught and imprisoned, we know why she went. I'll take our son to daycare, and we'll manage. Life is like this, life is a struggle, a struggle until we have freedom. If she dies, we'll know why she died. She must go." We set the meeting day.

It was winter, December, the middle of December, a very harsh winter. At the dormitories, as I was leaving Gjilan for Pristina, I told them, "I want to meet, Rexhep has asked me to." Uncle [Mehmet, Rexhep's father] got up from his seat and asked, "Where will you meet? Is it here?" I said, "Here, in Pristina, uncle Mehmet." I met with Rexhep, and we went to Hidajete's family house. Her brother gave me Kadri Osmani's son so that I could go meet [Rexhep] near the park, where the pines are, near the

³⁷ Underground movement for the reunification of Kosovo with Albania and/or the Kosovo Republic.

cemetery, at the edge of the road. I don't know exactly what that road is called, maybe the Park of Freedom.

Anita Susuri: In Taukbahçe somewhere? Or inside the city?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No, behind the theatre, the road that goes toward Germia, where the pines are. That's where we met. When Rexhep saw me, he took me by the arm and said, "Don't be afraid. If you slip, I'll hold you, you won't fall." During that time, when Rexhep had already gone underground, the police had searched his house. They ploughed the entire yard, turned everything upside down, and found a couple of rifles hidden there. For him, it was decided, "Only the barrel of the gun will settle accounts with the enemy. There is no other way out. This is the final moment." They found the weapons and even took uncle Mehmet in for questioning. People went to him, "Come, you must come," and one of them finally said, "Leave him, leave him." So they left him standing outside in the snow in just his pajamas while they searched inside the house. He stood there for two or three hours, because the police had arrived very early in the morning.

Usually, they would come early, to find people asleep and catch them off guard. So, with some anger and bitterness about all this, Rexhep asked me, "How is father? Was he upset about the weapons?" I said, "Yes, it upset him." He replied, "Tell father not to be upset. Those weapons are nothing, just trifles, worthless things." Then he asked, "And Fitore?" I said, "Fitore is well."

"And Hanife?" he asked. Then he said, "I feel sorry for Hanife. I never wanted her to leave [Kosovo]. I may go abroad, but I started this war in Kosovo, and the war will end in Kosovo. I might go abroad for a time, but I will return soon. Very soon, I will be back."

He said, "Tell Hanife that if I am killed, she should go to Albania, because I am afraid they might take her and mistreat her. But if I go abroad, since she has the car, she can join me there. But tell her, Rexhep will not stay abroad, I will be back in Kosovo again." I said, "Rexhep, don't worry at all about Hanife and Fitore, they're fine. They have uncle Mehmet, they live in their own house, not in a stranger's home, and their conditions are good," because they always lived well. Then he told me, "I'm sorry, Remzi, that I wasn't there..." because he had cut Qëndrim's hair³⁸ "that I wasn't there to bring him a small gift." I said, "No, Rexhep, don't worry." He gave me one hundred francs for my son to buy something, German *marka* at that time. I told him, "No, you need this money, you need it more than we do." But he said, "No, I'll never take it back." And he sent a pencil as a gift for Fitore.

Then he asked me, "Could you do something for me?" In Pogradjë, my village, there was a man from our village who had been working in Germany. He had connections with the people of the Movement abroad: Hasan, Halil, Kadri, and Kadri Zeka's brother-in-law. Rexhep said, "They will give you some materials they sent from abroad." I said, "Yes." He said, "Maybe Hanife could do it." I said, "No, no. Hanife is easier to follow, she's more exposed. It's better if I do it." "Will you go?" he asked. "Yes, of course I will," I said, because I was sure of myself. "Good," he said. "When you come to Pristina, meet with Nuhi. He'll come out to meet you and take the material. Do you know him?"

I said, "No, I don't know him. The only time I saw him was when I got out of prison, he came to visit with Ali, Hasan's nephew. I saw him then with a cap and a scarf, that's how I recognized him. Without

³⁸ In Albanian tradition, a child's first haircut is a significant ritual, often performed around their first birthday, to celebrate a milestone and ensure good health. The ritual is carried out by a respected family member, such as the father, grandfather, or godfather, who cuts a small lock of hair as an offering or symbol of passage.

the cap, I wouldn't recognize him." Rexhep said, "That's how he will come out." We said goodbye. My heart hurt, he was a young man. Then I returned to Gjilan, went to Pogradjë, took the material, and came back to my sister again. I told uncle Mehmet that I had met Rexhep. "He sends greetings. Tell father not to be upset about the weapons, they are just trifles."

I feel sorry he was kept like that, but that's how war is, war brings hardship. As for Hanife, I told my sister everything. She stayed very strong, always strong. I never saw her cry, never in her life did I see tears in her eyes. She was always prepared, she knew even her marriage wasn't going to be easy. She knew that Rexhep had already been imprisoned in '68, two or three times before. She knew.

She used to say, "Even if only once I had given my word to Rexhep, even if he were killed, I would never, ever take anyone else after him. I would never remarry." That night, I stayed over. I had taken that letter and the material, and also a map. I came to my sister's, and I had a long coat. I had sewn the material into the lining of my coat like a cartridge, it was secret, illegal, and had to remain hidden. I stitched it in, left the needle in the coat, and put the map into my bag. It was a map of Yugoslavia, so I thought there was no problem with that. I went out on the road to Pristina, near Gavran, where a new neighborhood had just been built before '81. The bus passed me by, I couldn't catch it, and I couldn't walk any further.

Then I thought, "What should I do?" Rexhep had told me that Nuhi would wait for me near the hospital. But what should I do? In prison once, there had been a case, a woman had been kidnapped by some men from Peja, she did not want to, by force. The man had been married, and she was caught up in it unwillingly. Later, she killed him in the post office. They had forced her into a car. And so I always feared strange cars, traveling with strangers, it was difficult in those times, Anita {she addresses the interviewer}. Anyway, I told myself: no matter the danger, I'll just put out my hand and stop a car. I thought, I'll tell whomever stops, that my husband works in the court because Albanians are a bit afraid of the court.

Walking along the road, I always knew myself, even in school, I was always in class with mostly boys, only two girls, so I never had problems speaking with men. A man stopped and asked, "Where are you going? Are you married? Where do you live? How many children do you have? Do you work?" I said, "No, I don't work." He said he was a teacher. I asked, "In Pristina?" He said, "Yes, every day I travel." I said, "Oh, that's a lot. And your wife?" He asked, "What about your husband?" I said, "He works in the court." He asked, "What's his name?" I thought I shouldn't change his name, in case someone checked, so I said, "Reshat Januzi." "How long has he worked in the court?" he asked. I said, "For two years." He thought about it and said, "No, I don't know him." I said, "Well, how would you know every teacher and every judge?" He replied, "No, I don't teach, I work in State Security." *Ajajaj!* {onomatopoeia}.

You know, that was hard for me, very hard. But I pulled myself together and thought, at least it's good he told me. Then I told myself inside, "look at whom you are sitting with, and where you are going, to meet..." Well, then he let go, and we had a normal conversation. I said, "Stop me here at the hospital. How much do I owe you?" He said, "No, what payment?" I said, "Well, even on the bus I pay." He said, "No, no, no. Goodbye!" "Goodbye!"

Then I saw Nuhi waiting for me there, because the bus wasn't even five or six minutes late. The bus was slower, the car faster, and when I got closer, I said, "Nuhi, is that you?" "Yes. Are you Remzi?" "Yes,"

I said, “straight to the hospital.” So we met at the hospital and sat down, there wasn’t a single person there. Then I took the material. He said, “Did you finish the job?” “Yes, I did.”

I gave him the letter and said, “I sewed it into the coat.” “Oh, you arranged it very nicely,” he said. I unstitched it there, took out the needle, and fixed the coat again. I said, “Nuhi, you can’t imagine the search they did at uncle Mehmet’s. They plowed the whole land, all of it, and the weapons they found, the ones uncle Mehmet kept... They cut open all the suitcases with knives. They didn’t let my sister or her sister-in-law move from their place at all.” And he said, “Remzi, don’t worry. Even if all of Kosovo burns, I will never leave Rexhep alone.” And indeed, he never did.

That day, when I said goodbye to Nuhi, when we parted (cries), it was very hard (cries). They had all tried to escape abroad, into the Slovenian mountains. Rexhep himself told me about it. He said, “We tried to escape, but we got stuck in the Slovenian mountains, heavy snow, no food, no drink. We hugged each other just to keep warm, and we melted snow to drink instead of water. And just when we thought, ‘Finally, we’re in Austria,’ we would still end up back in Slovenia. At that time it was very hard to cross, because the controls were extraordinary, especially for me.”

Anita Susuri: After how long was he killed?

Remzije Limani Januzi: After... In January they killed him. I met him in November. In January, they killed him, yes.

Anita Susuri: How was it for you?

Remzije Limani Januzi: Well... I remember I was in Ferizaj. Always sitting with my ear turned, listening, what’s happening, you know? The first to hear the news were my brother-in-law and my husband’s family. They said on the news, “They committed suicide.” Rexhep would never do that. Then they came to us. We hadn’t turned on the 5 o’clock news, as usual. They saw we didn’t know anything, and they didn’t tell us anything either. They stayed a little while and left. When I listened to the 7:30 news, then... the announcement (cries). I think it was Mustafa [Muçaj] who read the news. I don’t know, I can’t say what kind of experience, what kind of... I don’t know, I was in shock.

We set off. At that time we didn’t have a car. Early in the morning, we took the bus. Only Reshat and I were on the bus. The driver kept looking at us, because my tears wouldn’t stop, I couldn’t hold them back. When we arrived there, uncle Mehmet gave us strength, the old man, Rexhep’s father. And people started gathering, so many people, as soon as they heard the news, because to these ones they had cut it off, they had shut off the electricity in their house, the electricity.

Two UDB officers came and said, “We are looking for uncle Mehmet. Can you call him?” *Bam bam* {onomatopoeia} banging on the door, they already knew it was UDB. When they came in that day, at the bottom of the stairs, they said, “Are you calling the old man?” And our sisters had come to visit, as it usually happens in the village. They didn’t know what else to do. They went downstairs, they had a basement, and the house had three floors, and [Remzije’s sister] she said, “I went down to bake something, a *kërlanë*³⁹,” she said, “at least that,” you know, “and we had washed the clothes,” she said,

³⁹ *Kërlanë* is a traditional Albanian layered pie made with thin dough sheets filled with ingredients such as cheese, spinach, potatoes, or pumpkin, depending on the region and season. It is typically baked in a large round pan and resembles *byrek*, another popular Balkan dish.

“I went out to hang them, and *inxhe*⁴⁰ was helping me.” And she said, “Why did the power go out?”, you know, talking about the electricity.

When they came in, they banged on the door and a child opened it, and then they said to call the old man for the UDB. “Come on, please!” He said, “I will put on my shoes and come,” because usually they’d say, “Come on, come!” And he, “I am coming.” But this time, “No, no, don’t go out, we didn’t come to take you.” They asked, “Where are your sons?” He said, “You know, Hasan is in Switzerland. Rexhep went to get some building material for the house,” because they had begun digging foundations in Gavran, in the new neighborhood, but he laid that foundation in disguise, because UDBA wouldn’t allow him to work.

“He went for building material from Switzerland,” you know? he said, “for the house,” and they said nothing more. After an hour, she said, “they came again,” she said, “and again, father dressed and got ready, put on his shoes. He said, “No, no, don’t go out.” She, “I was upstairs, still hanging the clothes...we had been interrupted halfway through, so I was putting them out and they told father, ‘Uncle Mehmet, your son has committed suicide.’ But he never accepted that. He said, ‘No man, son,’ he said, “Rexhep would never commit suicide. I know my son. You’ve killed him.’ Then he said, ‘*Kuku*⁴¹ *inxhe*, they’ve killed Rexhep!’” [The old woman] said, ‘No, no, no,’ you know, trying to make him stop saying that. [Remzije’s sister] said, “They must’ve killed him, because I heard them telling father.” They went downstairs, and the UDB men left.

They had cut off the electricity on purpose. “Father said, he told us, ‘You two, sit down here! They’ve killed Rexhep, we must be strong, war brings these things. We’ve come this far, our work has borne its fruits, and from now on, it will bear even more because for every flower that is cut down, many more flowers will bloom.’” That’s when my sister said, “I pulled myself together. Oh God, give me strength!” She didn’t shed tears anymore. Not even half an hour later, the house was filled with people, family, everyone. Then my brother and my mother, when they heard, immediately traveled that same night. They spent the whole night awake, waiting.

The next day, my sister went to take the body. They took two blankets, some sheets. She said, “One of the men asked, ‘Which one is for Rexhep?’” She said, “I’m his wife.” “Do you have children? Did he leave children?” “Yes, a daughter.” She said, “He was deeply moved and stepped back.” “For Nuhi as well,” she said, “We are also here for Nuhi.” So she took everything, to cover both Rexhep and Nuhi. “And one policeman told me, ‘Don’t cover him, because it will get soaked in blood.’” She answered, “No. This blood is the blood of freedom. I will cover him” (cries).

Part Seven

Anita Susuri: Earlier we talked about your engagement in Switzerland where you collected funds for the war and for people who worked in the parallel system. How were those years? At the end of ‘98-’99 when NATO began bombing, the war began with greater intensity.

⁴⁰ *Inxhe* is a respectful term used to address or refer to an older woman.

⁴¹ Colloquial, expresses disbelief, distress, or wonder, depending on the context.

Remzije Limani Januzi: Yes, we were in the diaspora, and we experienced it as a very difficult period, because when you are far from your fatherland it is more difficult, we watched more foreign TVs, the ones we had. We didn't have enough broadcasts from our own television, and from our television we heard that a Kosovo television station had been opened in Albania... but the foreign televisions broadcast everything in more detail, more broadly, for example, interviews with Fehmi Lladrovci when he spoke with foreign media, or many other interviews. Living through it was extremely hard for us, but despite the pain, people in the diaspora always found strength to come together, to find ways to help, to send supplies, uniforms, clothing, but mostly money, because money was the easiest to get through.

Of course, there was also food and clothing. I myself, together with my friend Zymrije... when the first refugees arrived in Kukës, Albania, the Bajram Curri Association took the initiative. My husband said, "There is such and such an action happening." I said, "Can I also join?" He said, "Yes, but you have to go yourself." I said, "I'll also call Zymrije, she will come too." He said, "Of course, go." It's interesting, we were the only two women, and it still amazes me today when I think about it. So we went, and they gave us the responsibility to go out and collect. And when we reported back, we had collected more than all the men combined, we collected 5,000 francs.

We didn't prepare food packages, no, because money was easier to get through than goods. And then, when it came time to report, the president of the Bajram Curri Association would shake the men's hands if they collected 3,000 at most, saying "Bravo." But when it came to us, we had collected 5,000, he didn't shake our hands, he didn't say "Bravo," nothing. There was a kind of disregard, maybe because it was women who had collected more money than the men, I don't know, but he ignored us. And I told my husband, "Did you see that? The president of the association himself gave only 100 francs, while we gave much more. And yet, he ignores us." My husband said, "Well, you can't compare." I said, "No, you can't compare. If he's in the leadership, he should set an example for the others. And even though we were women, we worked hard and gave more ourselves. I don't know, but he ignored us." And that's how it began, people worked.

I saw it myself, because my husband was involved in organizing with those of LAPSH, and I saw how much they worked. It also happened that I was present in the League of Albanian Teachers, because when a meeting was held... There needed to be a coordinator — Meriman Braha, Muhamet Bicaj, and Shefik Osmani were there representing the writers of Albania, living in Tirana, and they came here to Switzerland. They wanted every canton to create groups on Teacher's and Parents' Day, to elect a chairperson, a treasurer, a secretary, everything, and to try to negotiate with Switzerland about opening school points. They wanted every canton to create groups on Teacher's and Parents' Day, to elect a chairperson, a treasurer, a secretary, everything, and to try to negotiate with Switzerland about opening school points.

In our canton, Reshat took them in and said to them, "Come to my place. My wife doesn't work, she will prepare the food for you, and we have space to sleep. Do whatever you need while you're here." Because he was always at work, it usually fell on me to take care of them in the evenings, or during the day if someone else was free to host them. In the end, for dinner, they would all come to our place, Shefik, Muhamet, Meriman, they stayed at our house for three, four, sometimes five days.

And the work was done, with a lot of sacrifice, with a lot of effort. It was not easy at all, but people worked. As for the war in Kosovo, for my part, I bow before the deeds of every single soldier, because it

was not easy, it was not easy. You had countries like Croatia, Slovenia, even foreign states, and they still couldn't manage the way it was needed. The Slovenians yes, but the Bosniaks and Croats, it was a bit different. But for us, we had nothing, nothing left, because everything was destroyed before the war even began. There was only the parallel system. And you were very young then, but you know, people were expelled from universities, from factories, from schools, from everywhere. I remember when my friend Qibrija sent me a letter, which I still keep in my archive today, I love to keep letters, and she described the ordeal she faced when she tried to go to Pristina. She wrote what difficulties she had on the road, what kind of fear. Fear that they might catch you with just a university index card and... She said, "There were police at every step, with automatic weapons." And so, you were forced to face that fear, with her sacrifice, and the sacrifice of everyone else, all the teachers, professors, school staff, women who worked, and all the others who did their part wherever they could. It was a very, very great sacrifice.

By chance, there was this one occasion when my husband met, and they talked about how we could help, you know, with Family Helps Family.⁴² There were many cases where people expressed the wish that they would be supported, and we too expressed our wish. When my brother came out of prison, he had great difficulties surviving, because he had four children, his wife, and himself, six in total, it was very hard. So then we told him, "If you want to stay in Kosovo with your children, we are ready to help you." Now, one hundred francs wasn't much, it really wasn't, but that's all we could afford. We gave the same to Qibrije and Ymer. He said, and Bahri always mentioned this, "Reshat, when you sent us that money..." because we used to send it every six months, not every month, as we couldn't afford that. Whenever someone was traveling, we would send it, sometimes even earlier, but never later.

And he said, "When you sent it to us, we were in such difficulty. I, a professor of language, was forced to go work in the fields, to harvest with the combine, to tie up sheaves with my hands, completely covered in dust. When I came home, my daughters didn't recognize me, I was so covered in dust, and they cried, asking 'Who is this?'" And he said, "When you sent us that money, even if someone gave me 10,000 today, it would not have the same value. At that time, it had immense value." He reminded me of this often, and I told him, "Qibrije, please never mention this again. We did it as a national obligation. Not because you are my friend, but because I respected your work, your sacrifice. Don't mention it again. This is the first and the last time you tell me this. It was a trifle, nothing at all. We only did it because you were living there, and we were happy that you were surviving there. For me, even the stones on those roads where you endured had value, let alone a human being."

Later, we experienced the war very heavily, because my family was displaced, completely scattered, some abroad, some in Macedonia, in Blace. The others with children, my mother with the children, all went to Tirana. I even had my brother's son studying in Tirana. So my husband went to visit them, brought them money, and said, "Let me buy them an apartment." And there were also the sons of Rifat Berisha,⁴³ who had been killed, who had fled as well. Because Rifat Berisha had graduated in Albania, over there, and got acquainted with people... When I went to visit their family, I saw his wife bareheaded, Rifat's widow, and I said, "Bac Ylber," since their son had been an engineer, a pilot, "Did

⁴² *Familja Ndihton Familjen*. Family Helps Family was a movement that started after the closing of the Trepça mines in 1989. The miners' families were put in touch with economically better standing families from another area, and were supported by them.

⁴³ Rifat Berisha was a military man who participated in the Anti-Fascist liberation war but disagreed in the end on Kosovo annexation to Yugoslavia and was executed after WWII.

your mother really go bareheaded in those times?” He said, “Yes. Because my mother was from Gjirokastër. My father came here for schooling, then returned to Kosovo, became, I think, the mayor of the municipality, but they did not let him live, they killed him, after the war. They killed Rifat after the Second World War. Then my mother, with the children, not very small, but still young, she took us to Albania, and we continued life there. My father was killed by the UDB in Kosovo.”

And we bought the apartment from him, because they were the ones building the housing blocks, and we bought the apartment so that my family could be sheltered there. Of course, they had to keep all the furniture and things inside, and support them until... but as soon as the war ended, with one of the first buses that were organized, they returned to Kosovo. And the way my brother's son brought my mother back, for me it's astonishing. A neighbor woman told me, “Everyone went out, everyone left, but she stayed,” she called my mother *inxja* out of respect for her, she said, “*inxja* and Agron stayed behind, and I said to him, ‘Agron, go on, leave the old woman, it's okay,’ but he answered, ‘No, I cannot. The first step I take without her will feel like a curse, like a punishment, as if something bad will happen to me for abandoning her. I cannot. No way.’”

And so, he put my mother in a cart, though she was already sick then, since she passed away right after the war. I don't know how many kilometers he carried her, but it was even shown on television, and my sister saw it on Swiss TV, on Geneva television, which broadcast it. Even my eldest brother-in-law told me, “I have so much respect for Agron, seeing how he managed to carry her, while leaving his own children behind on the road.” And they heard others saying, “He left his children, but he carried his mother and father.” So he never abandoned her. And later, in Blace, people saw them together when they came out, and they greeted whoever they recognized from Pogradë, relatives or acquaintances, and they informed my sister, “Your mother is here with Agron until they get registered here and begin the journey to Durrës... Tirana.” And they stayed in Tirana for about two months. Especially when the NATO bombings started, that's when they left.

Anita Susuri: And how was it for you, returning to Kosovo after the war?

Remzije Limani Januzi: (laughs) Oh... when they told me that Kosovo was liberated, I immediately bought a ticket, took my youngest son, and left for Tirana to be with my family. During the war I had traveled there to visit them, to bring clothes, to arrange things, because they had left with only the clothes they were wearing, nothing else at all, and I had to help them with everything. And the last time I went, since in Kosovo during those nine years it was such hard work, they had already gone by bus, so I too took a simple bus to Kosovo. And I don't know, it was unimaginable that Kosovo was free. Everything seemed like a dream, as if I were dreaming.

I went to Ferizaj, and I saw the grass in those places where they used to tell legendary stories, the grass had grown 70–80 centimeters high, you know, as if no one had lived there at all. Everything seemed deserted, completely abandoned. People looked... I see them differently now, but back then they looked to me impoverished, weak, sickly, I thought mentally unwell, too. That's how they seemed to me at that time, like something was not right with them. I experienced it very heavily, such great joy, I could not describe how it felt to have the enemy removed from your land, to see them gone, it was so very hard before, extremely hard. Such a huge joy, but also such heavy suffering, grief and happiness all at once.

After the war we organized an aid action, went to Drenica. An old woman told us, “The Serbian police took my daughter-in-law, kept her for a week, then brought her back.” That horror, you know, horror, horror. Their house had been burned, and they had turned the barn into a room, painted it a little, and the whole family lived in that one room. We collected quite a sum of money and delivered it to families. We split into two groups. The Kosovo Television was there too, Imon Beqiri was working for CDF then, and with the Tv...with their car they drove us. We wanted the donors in the diaspora to know that their money had reached the families, it had not been misused.

The experiences were so heavy, especially in Mitrovica. We visited one family where three sons had been killed. An Austrian organization had donated them a small wooden hut, where three families lived, each family in one room, all of them cramped. They took the old man...the old man was paralyzed, and the mother-in-law, the mother of the killed sons, was blind, couldn’t see, and there was no power and we took them outside. And they told us, “They came in,” he said, “ the Serbian police, soldiers, all with headscarves,” he said, “they were,” he said, “all in black, they were dressed in black. With knives and weapons, with automatic weapons, that’s it.” And he said, “They killed, they lined up,” he said, “our sons. They made us watch as they killed them,” said that old woman. And she said, “When they killed them, she said, and the daughters-in-law also said, “when they killed them,” they said, “they came back again,” they said, “they were shooting, and the bodies jumped like chickens,” you know, like headless chickens, you know, “jumped,” horror of horrors. Meanwhile, when we left to go to another family, we left 700 Marks with this family, and then we left and then went to another.

There, a young man, maybe 23 or 24 years old, had lost his mind because of the war. His mother held him by the arm and said, “O,” she said, “the war, he experienced the war here, never left,” she said, “and he is now,” she said, “in this condition,” she said, you know, horror... All those families where a mother or a mother in law said, “They took my daughter-in-law...” you know and also said, “Oh,” she said, “you, don’t even pray,” she used those words, “don’t even pray, don’t even fast, you are angels {looks above} who came down.” “No,” I said, “we are your sisters, and you are one of us,” I said, “we suffered, yes, but you suffered more, because you witnessed all this.” She said, “Don’t mention them to me at all because I’m not one of theirs.” “No,” I said, “you went through all this, it is you who defended Kosovo, not me,” I said, “I only gave a little help and came to visit.” Believe me, we cried from Drenica all the way to Pristina. When we arrived home, I personally couldn’t even speak {raises the shoulders as a sign of despair}, I couldn’t, such experiences, such stories they told, horror, horror, horror...

Anita Susuri: Would you like to add anything at the end, in case we forgot to mention something?

Remzije Limani Januzi: No (laughs), I think I’ve said everything. Maybe I forgot something, but I think we covered most of it.

Anita Susuri: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Remzije Limani Januzi: Thank you as well.