

INTERVIEW WITH LJUBOMIR MAKSIMOVIĆ

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Duration | 120 minutes

Present:

1. Ljubomir Maksimović (Speaker)
2. Anita Susuri (Interviewer)
3. Renea Begoli (Camera)

Transcription notation symbols of non-verbal communication:

() – emotional communication

{ } – the speaker explains something using gestures.

Other transcription conventions:

[] – addition to the text to facilitate comprehension

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

Part One

Anita Susuri: Can you introduce yourself, tell us your birthdate and something about your family, ancestors?

Ljubomir Maksimović: My name is Ljubomir Maksimović, I am working as a teacher, otherwise I am a grade teacher. Currently, I am working at the King Milutin Primary School in Gračanica. I was born on April 27, 1955, my mother was Svetlana Maksimović, her maiden name was Marinković, from village Dobrotn, Municipality of Lipljan, and my father is Stojan Maksimović, retired man who besides his 88 years, right now this year marks 50 years since he has been retired. He is one of 500 people who are retired in Serbia, he was a miner working for 17 years. Otherwise, I have three brothers and one sister, all of us brothers have graduated from university. The older brother has graduated from the Faculty of Technology, the other one graduated from the Faculty of Agriculture and my sister is a mechanics technician.

I have three children, two daughters and a son. My son is an environmental engineer, my daughter is an employee, she studied in the Faculty of Economics, she works in Komercijalna Banka, and the youngest one graduated in mathematics last year in October [2019], she is now on her master's degree. Also, I have two paternal uncles still alive, he is a professor, one of them, of chemistry, he lives in Smederevska Palanka, he is retired now, and, and, and one aunt, a bit closer. Otherwise, my grandfather lived up to 92 years of age, he was one of the active people in the what once was Kingdom of Yugoslavia, afterwards SFRY former Yugoslavia, he was the president of the board, so he was what they used to call during the Ottoman period *kmet*,¹ so he was the main for the village Gračanica and nearby villages. Grandmother, his wife Lepasava Sekulić, she has lived for 91 years.

Let me go back a bit, so, how they got married. Grandfather worked there around agriculture in the garden by the Gračanka River in the center of Gračanica, and she passed by, and he also had cows. By him passed by a girl named Lepasava, 16 years old then, so, and he told her, "Lepasava, think, think of one {raises his index finger} thing, and I will marry you." She got ready, and she was washing some

¹ Member of the elderly of the village.

clothes in the Gračanka River, because back then the rivers were clean, that is, and she went and told her mother, mother, “My daughter, that cannot be, you are young.” She, you know love then, probably she got adrenaline rush, to put it that way, and she decided to marry him and she prepared her things in one scarf, so called *šamija*,² basic things, she went through the window {spins his hands in a circle} and married my grandfather. Her father didn’t speak to her, for three years he didn’t enter her house, it was the patriarchal system.

Back then Gračanica, at that time when my grandfather got married, this required a bit of imagination [addresses the interviewer], there were around 150 to 180 houses. The biggest family in Gračanica at that time, and even today in 2020 are {counts on his fingers} Popović, Sekulić, Milovanović, Jovanović, Andrejević and so on. She really insulted me, that father of hers [insulted my grandfather], my grandfather couldn’t stand it, you know. Her brother was also mad, and her brother worked on a road, he was a roadman, he used to clean feces on the sidewalks at that time, because back then, there were rural streets. And then somehow they made peace after that and she gave birth to eleven children, three of whom are alive today. My father, my paternal uncle in Palanka, who is a retired chemistry professor and one aunt from village Preoce, four-five kilometers away from here, so right now she is in Belgrade, lives with her son, both of her sons, so nothing special.

So what is the point? My grandfather spoke Turkish, he was well educated, he went to Turkish gymnasium, he studied in Skopje, and he was a very intelligent old man. They had, his two brothers in that, in that relation, one was working in agriculture, strictly agriculture, and one was attending to cattle, because back then the barns were on a ground floor and he was only dealing with, he used to get wood for winter and other necessities, grandfather would only wear nice suits, black suits with pants, with *opanci*,³ so, and he was always present during the church liturgies. You know that... and it came, it came to that, that apart from his intelligence, he was one of the educated people, it’s like that and he was famous in Pristina as a head of the village and so... he met the consul of the Kingdom of Serbia, he met the famous poet Branislav Nušić. He told us he was a gentleman, he went out with his hat, people had great respect, and when it rained he had his umbrella {as if he was putting an umbrella over his elbow}. He said that he used to hang it on his elbow, here {shows his hand} on his arm.

What my grandfather knew, I will tell you one anecdote, it’s a shame I didn’t write it down at least, it was before he died in ‘89, so what was, after 19 years of... for the last 19 years, I am sorry, the period since ‘88, he got blind, he was blind for 19 years. Grandmother couldn’t move, stroke, and so my grandmother is sitting on one couch, {points in front of him with a hand} and grandfather is sitting on the other one, and out of boredom, in order to do something, he takes one kilogram of coffee beans and on the couch near his right hand, he was counting how many coffee beans there were in one kilogram of coffee. I will never forgive myself for not writing it down in five sentences but there, it’s

² A thin scarf with which women tie their heads or fasten their hair. It is worn on festive occasions as well in everyday situations, since they have become part of Serbian folk costumes under the influence of the Ottoman empire.

³ Traditional peasant shoes worn in Southeastern Europe, made of leather with horn-like ending.

gone {puts his hands in the air}. Then what was, he knew the precise number of coffee beans, he knew precisely how many times it should turn around in the mill to grind one kilogram of coffee and he knew precisely how many beans there were in the mill (smiles).

I will simplify things by giving you concrete examples, he lived in a time period in which there was some discipline, houses were on the ground floor, that is where you lived, so, where was the fireplace and fire, in the middle of the house. They had strict discipline, wives weren't allowed at all {says no with hand} to talk back to their husbands. And they would sit first at the table, then the children, and women would [not] sit during breakfast, lunch, and dinner. So, what was the point in that period, the point is that every woman that was part of the community and there were 38 of them, they parted ways from communal living in '58, so now. So, what is the point, every woman knew what her task was, this is based on the story my grandfather told me. One knew how to bake, the other one how to prepare lunch, breakfast, dinner, the other one how to milk cows, and all the rest, to feed the cattle and yet another one was in the fields and so on until death. Grandfather, since he had so many brothers, but those three brothers were in stable financial condition. What is the point, the point was that the discipline was one, no one was allowed to talk back to you, you couldn't afford not to do something. Children were playing some games, hide and seek, nuts and so on. But, so, everything in its time.

Anita Susuri: I wanted to ask you whether your grandfather ever talked to you about the First World War? Did he remember it?

Ljubomir Maksimović: I can tell you that Grandfather had two brothers in the First World War, so to... they were... one of them remained there and died, his name was Zafir Maksimović, how he, how did he, as far as I can remember, it was a horrible war. So, and he says they were hungrier than... and you had to fight the battles. You know, so called rifle tanks, and so they were poorly dressed, hungry, frozen in the snow, rain, he also took that route across Albania, since you know, the war brings misfortune, and joy brings great happiness. When the other brother came back, he remained there and got killed, the second brother returned, he was exhausted, tortured. You can imagine, my grandfather says he left with 80 kg and he came back with 35-40 kg. Bread, they were limited to hundred grams, hundred grams of bread daily and very grainy bread and so on, the war brought it, but may it never happen again.

Anita Susuri: He came back there from Albania?

Ljubomir Maksimović: In Albania, they crossed Albania to come to Corfu otherwise...

Anita Susuri: Yes.

Ljubomir Maksimović: There were wars in Bulgaria, on the Bulgarian side as well, because it depends how the forces went from one side to the other. But, well, a lot of them died because of great colds, not like these today. I believe that today the natural phenomena and weather has changed since that time. Back then, the winters were terrifying... can you imagine being in a part of the world where Antarctica is today and similar, and even there, it has already intensified climate change, because the glaciers are... I won't go into it, I am not a geographer, they are melting and so on. This happened back then. Grandfather lived modestly and... but he was mad. I will tell you one, one anecdote, it's a bit funny.

Once, my dad was a worker in the Kišnice mine and with 17 years of work experience, and when he was 33 years old, he retired, the four of them in Gračanica. And usually, my dad would like to have a few drinks, and to tell you the truth, but he was powerful because he was the chief of the village in the '80s until the '90s, he was the chief of the village, the president of the local community, back then there were Gračanica, Sušica, Badovac, Ajvalija, and so on. He was a juror for 15 years in the court of Pristina and he was left with no cigarettes and he loved to smoke. And he came to my grandfather to, {point down with his hand} there next to the couch, "Dad," "Yes," "Give me one cigarette", and he turns back, "Sorry, son, but out of all smoking gadgets, all you have is your mouth" (laughs).

Anita Susuri: (laughs)

Ljubomir Maksimović: And that, and so... and he sent all three of us to school. Right now he is retired and his life after grandfather's death and in general during the time of the former Yugoslavia, communist regime, what's that about, well... For example, I was born in '55 in SFRY,⁴ and then I lived in SRJ and now I live... and so on. Otherwise, those circumstances have changed because everything is changing and people have changed a lot. What's my point, my point is that no life has ever brought, except if someone was rich in a family, that they have a lot of, that he is financially well-off, back then there was poverty, you know. For example, he traveled, Dad traveled to Ajvalija, the mine, you need to get up at three o'clock, there was no bus, you had to go on foot, and over that hill {point the direction with his right hand} here, over the hill and he has to arrive at six in order to descend into the pit. Scarce equipment, now the equipment is, now you have all the machines, shovels, everything is electric, back then only carbide lamps and so on. And you lived those thirty something years, how long he worked, because meanwhile, after that he was retired and he was collecting payments for television subscriptions all over Kosovo and Metohija for Radio Television Pristina. And then he was a TV repairman, and so on.

Anita Susuri: And how did it happen that your grandfather studied in Skopje?

Ljubomir Maksimović: He finished Turkish gymnasium in Skopje because, after the suggestion of the priest in church of Gračanica, as a local patriarch, he proposed to him and he finished three years of Turkish high school. Because of the chores around the house, what happened, what would happen,

⁴ Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

because of work, then agriculture and there was no one who could run the household at all. He had to abandon it after three years, but it still remained that he studied, he learned the Turkish language, and after that, when I was a youngster, going to primary school, high school, he started forgetting it. How did it come to that that he studied in Turkish gymnasium, he learned to speak Turkish perfectly well and then he would come after the end [of the school year], he had a very good grade average, back then, well, back then they graded and after that how he was getting used to it in order not to forget it, there was one man from Pristina who was selling bonbons, a barber, he was a Turk as well, he was of Turkish nationality, and he came to cut people's hair every month and that's how they, well, practiced the Turkish language. He came home once every six months, they went to Skopje in a cart, and by the way, their professors were from Turkey. Well, and something happened, there was one Macedonian and "We were studying," he says, "we were in boarding school, modest," you see, he says, "At that time, Turkey was a rich land as well", uh, "food was good, books, everything, but" he says, "you couldn't have students not studying, you had to know, the knowledge was..." he says, "at a certain high level" and at that time, to finish Turkish high school was at the level of, I don't know, comparable to a faculty degree, it was a big thing.

Anita Susuri: What are your first childhood memories?

Ljubomir Maksimović: My first childhood memories are, good question, bravo, I was born in... my mother got... me, she gave birth to my older brother, then me, and then my younger sister, and then this, the youngest brother. I also had a brother who died after 14 days. What caused it, I got ill in '62, my left leg and so I was in hospital in Kosovska Mitrovica from January 9, '62 until November 8 of the same year, I received 210 injections in my left leg. I will come back again to my grandfather's. In order to come from Mitrovica, the journey was, that is, the railroad was Skopje-Belgrade, when I came, he could... I come from Kosovska Mitrovica by train to Kosovo Polje and he would, on foot, on his shoulders {touches his shoulders}, he would bring me from Kosovo Polje to Gračanica, grandfather Bogoljub Maksimović, nicknamed Ljubka Maksimović. For example, my father cannot be recognized under the name Stojan in the village, in Gračanica, but only like Taka, that was the nickname he got.

He used to bring me back because I was his most interesting grandson. I spent, and Doctor Nešković cured me, in what way, he was working at the Kišnica mine, he worked as a doctor in a clinic. I want to tell you what happened, allegedly, my father had some suspicions about him curing me and he drove a motorbike, he lived in Pristina but his work was in Mitrovica and my dad came and took him by {shows his neck} his neck, "Either you'll cure my child or no one will be able to save you." What did he do, how did he do it, which, which medicines and injections, from that day until today with my 65 years of age, since the long gone year of '62, I haven't felt any pain. Secondly, I also had one ear operation in '68, but before that I would like to go back to the fact that I was a student at the High Pedagogical School where they had seven classes in Serbian, eleven classes in Albanian. With all due respects to, probably, well, my director Jusuf Shushka, professor of pedagogy, when he shows up {moves his finger around}

on the streets, that is, when he shows up in the corridors of the High Pedagogical School in Tauk Bahçe...

Anita Susuri: In Pristina.

Ljubomir Maksimović: In Pristina, yes. There was such discipline, let me tell you, don't get me wrong, what did it mean in those long past '60s, '70s, from '70 until '74 when I used to go to the High Pedagogical School, well, what discipline meant. You haven't felt any national intolerance, everyone knew... but it was all because of the discipline, I didn't feel different from students of Albanian nationality from the class next door that I am, that there are any prejudice based on national grounds. We had good teachers, extremely good teachers, I would like to mention Bosat Nasković from Lipljan, then Ivko Jagodić, Nada Ristić for all the courses, mathematics, Časlav Kostić from Donja Gušterica. And, yes, that's how I spent five years at the High Pedagogical School. What is the point of all this, I enrolled at the academy, Pedagogical Academy, grade teaching and I finished it in '77.

I will go back a little. I was very active when I was young, then you had to be a member of the League of the Communists and the Youth Brigade Boro and Ramiz, Ramiz Sadiku and Boris Vukmirović formed the Youth Brigade, and we had to go to work for three months in Zagreb. You wouldn't, well, a little bit of memory for the interview, but I will tell you, you go there, you know, that was friendship, hanging out in Zagreb, you learn how to make photos, you learn how to drive, the driving license, you need to pass the exam and so on. But, what remained in my memory, we were cleaning this big quay, shore in Zagreb on Sava. But one dark spot remained, I am sorry, there was a railroad accident at the southern station, at the train station in Zagreb where there were about 150 dead, so...

Anita Susuri: In what year was that?

Ljubomir Maksimović: '74, I was in my third year of pedagogical school. It's something indescribable. They were calling from the headquarters of the Youth Brigade over the loudspeakers, saying, "Whoever has the courage should come to the doctor" and they immediately measure your blood pressure {touches his forearms} and who is brave enough, who can show the strength, they put us in surgeon's suits and we went to save lives right away. Can you imagine, I mean I remember, you made me recall that memory, that memory with one leg there, the arm over here, but how important surgical competence actually is {moves his arm as if sewing} and they are sewing that and putting the parts together (sigh). Another thing, in '79, I was in the army in Bar, another bad memory. It's Sunday, we are going out to have breakfast, we are leaving breakfast at 8:20 a.m., and {shakes hands} earthquake in Bar. If we hadn't left the barracks, I probably wouldn't be alive. But we saved ourselves, but then the army was clearing up the area, saving the people, and so on.

Anita Susuri: I would like us to go back to childhood a bit more. You lived here in Gračanica...

Ljubomir Maksimović: In Gračanica, I was born here.

Anita Susuri: How was it here back then, that, that, how was Gračanica back then?

Ljubomir Maksimović: I was very active as a young man for all the, I don't want to lie to you but 40 years. Right here where we are sitting right now was once the Cultural Center. I wasn't in any political positions, but I was active as a young man. What's the point of this, I was a member of the cultural and artistic society Janićije Popović, which exists to this day. A member of the folk dance group here, well in Pristina, the famous folk ensemble known all over the world, I have to brag, the famous Shota, but can you imagine what Shota means, I was, so... but those were all pleasurable activities. You know what the point is, the point is that there was no, you couldn't notice the difference among people.

I was usually recording the meetings, at those, at those big ceremonies in the Cultural Center, organizing the parties. It's such a memory that I cannot forget, you know, there were groups, tickets were charged, so, and I was there in the smoking committee, you couldn't light a cigarette in the hall. They were on the side in this hall, now the hall is equipped, the chairs were arranged {makes a circle with his hands on the table} in the circle, on the stage there was, there was this, the music group called Sinkope or other groups and so on, one of the musicians was my cousin, a colleague of mine today. They would start with a male, male dance, {counts on his fingers} and then with a folk dance, and then the dance, and in the end twist {dances} rock and roll, famous group The Beatles, then Mick Jagger and so on.

You know, it was, it was a pleasure to be at a party organized in Gračanica. Groups... it was this crowded {puts his palms together} in front of the Cultural Center and that... the group that was playing was also playing in Kosovo Polje, in Štimlje, in Priluzje, and so on. It was a pleasure working. There was one worker for, two workers were in charge of the Cultural Center, because I was on that committee, I had the privilege as a young person to be on that smoking committee because it enjoyed respect. But what was the point, because the parties... after two times, the dances were repeated, the break lasted for around, and the break lasted for half an hour. The point is that at one o'clock {point at his watch} in the middle of the night, the party is over, end of discussion.

After that, we would gather at the bridge in the center of Gračanica and by the 1914-1918 monument in the center of Gračanica where the Municipality of Gračanica now is, this was another meeting place, place of fun, place to hang out and so on, and so on, because the pleasure was being made. There were, of course, dissatisfactions, but you were adapted how to, you have the finances. What, my father, the four of us, couldn't have a big salary, what was the salary back then, the circumstances were poor and so the pleasure... you know, to begin in one community in one company of friends, to go to High Pedagogical School, to be part of folk ensemble Shota and so on, I need to mention it because I left, it left, such an opportunity for pleasant experience was open for me, you know, the discipline, you

mustn't be late for the rehearsals, you must listen to your choreographer and all of that, you go from one city to another and so on.

Part Two

Anita Susuri: You told me that you were part of a folk ensemble, what was the name of the ensemble and how long were you part of that group?

Ljubomir Maksimović: I danced for around four years in Pristina, it was folk, I have to mention it, folk ensemble, sometimes in provinces and whole Serbia, it was Shota, so and... and in Gračanica there was Simonida, and an amateur theater folk ensemble Janićije Popović, so, and the group that was playing, if you are thinking about the music group that used to play during the dance, they were called Sinkopa, part of it was a music professor, professor in school for music, until last year also a principal at the Music School in Gračanica. You know, there was, there was discipline.

Anita Susuri: Could you tell us a bit more about Shota, when you were in Shota, how was it?

Ljubomir Maksimović: Well in Shota you see, they recommended me to Shota, that's how I became part of it, you have probably heard of Shota?

Anita Susuri: Yes.

Ljubomir Maksimović: Ah, well. I became part of it because a friend of mine who was a student in Kosovo Polje recommended me, his father was one of the people in charge of Shota. You know, they knew, because I was a student, so I was included in the evening classes, rehearsals. But I like that there was discipline, choreography...I was admitted to the group because I showed him I could dance. He shows me the steps, I dance the steps, and then one dance, another dance and then you become a member, otherwise not anyone can be a member of Shota. There were no differences between Albanian folk dance, Serbian, Roma and Turkish, there were no... it wasn't based on that, such things were out of the question.

So, you have to respect the rules. Usually the rehearsals took place in the evening, at seven, half past seven, eight until nine o'clock, and in the morning, it was from ten o'clock, I wasn't present at those in the morning because I was a student and so on. It was an extreme pleasure for me because I had the opportunity to, but not because of school homework, the principal wouldn't let you out of the lessons easily. By the way, I could never forgive myself for the fact that Shota traveled all around the world, whereas I haven't seen anything. Except, except this, here on this terrain, in Kosovo and Metohija, I was in every place here, and well, to do...

Anita Susuri: How was it when you were dancing?

Ljubomir Maksimović: Well, you know, you know when someone applauds you, and you are dancing four, five dances. Because you need to {spins his fingers in a circle} quickly, at that speed you need to change costumes, and you receive everything, when the dance piece shapes up during the concert, for example, in Prizren, in Peć, and so on, especially in Pristina, so, you get the applause. The director would reward us with something and so on, the director of the folk ensemble, but you dance. I regret not becoming a regular member of folk ensemble Shota when I finished high school, I had the opportunity, I had the, um, offer but I was thinking of going to the Faculty because still I am a grade teacher today because of it, and one brother of mine who finished Faculty of Technology and younger brother who finished Faculty of Agriculture and my sister with High school for mechanical engineering, I am a teacher today thanks to my mother, otherwise I have always dreamed to be {counts on his fingers} a teacher, a traffic policeman, or to be an accordionist (smiles).

Anita Susuri: (laughs).

Ljubomir Maksimović: Those were my wishes. You know, let me go back to the folk ensemble, it was, it was, you did your artistic part, you did it eagerly, with such a will. And you get the applause, you bow on the stage, full hall and so on and I will never forget those moments. And what's the point, I apologize, you are girls, when we were undressing, it didn't matter girls, boys, there was no shame at all, in Kosovo, when I took a bus, we kissed and so on. You know, there was no difference so I can tell you that back in the '80s, when I got a job after coming back from the army, I applied 26 times in order to get a job in, in, um, teaching, and they offered me a job in village Drenovac near Klina, to teach mathematics.

The man who helped me enter the world of mathematics, mathematics teacher, was Hasan Crvadiku, when I entered the sixth grade, I didn't know what to tell them, um, but during the whole {spins his hands in circle} period of four years... so, I can tell you honestly, there was one Albanian woman, um, teacher, there were some emotions, I speak plainly with you, I don't know where she is now, but she was kind, and she was kind to me, and I was to her, back in the '80s. How did it um, let us go back to Shota, the biggest number of concerts were held in Pristina, Prizren, but in Prizren it was because of the so called big traditional costumes, in *dimija*⁵ {shows his body with hands} and I don't have such, it didn't entered my, now it's probably left in the archives, I don't have any photos when I was, um, in that Albanian costume, and in the Serbian costume, all you don't, the choreographer is there, the director of the ensemble has no business there, the choreographer is important and the one who decides in which dance are you going to be, in the first one, second one, third one.

⁵ Billowing white satin pantaloons that narrow at the ankles, Turkish style. They are made with about twelve meters of fabric.

Because of the change, until you get off the stage, you get off for one dance, you come to the changing room, your clothes are {as if putting clothes in order} put on racks according to the size you need to be quick, and so on. What is the point, not even one belt can't be loose, or you would be punished right away. You have one strike, two and the third one means that you are out of the ensemble. So it must be, if there were *opanci*, or there was something you didn't... to put it this way, you had to be spick and span because you are going out {puts his arms in the air} in front of the masses and then you get their trust, and you get it from your choreographer as well and then you start thinking about the concerts all of the time, about the constant, um... at some event. It was usually for the Day of Liberation of Pristina or some other event.

I will tell you this, um, how... for some time, I was in Klina for four years, I rented an apartment in Drenovac, I had a landlord who used to make me breakfast, lunch, dinner. 120 dinars at that time, it was like that back then, the value of money, and then I went to Peć to live there. How did I come to the book shop? In the book shop, my mother came and she saw where I was living, the conditions were {frowns} and so on, so, what was I going to do, let me go back a bit. I was preparing one play as a teacher "When Earth was square," it was performed in Drenovac, in Klina, in Goraždevac near Peć, what's the topic? The topic was the First World War.

Anita Susuri: In which year were you preparing that?

Ljubomir Maksimović: I prepared it in '82. And so, during the period of the First World War, everyone had to have the uniforms, the army uniforms. And how I came across the understanding of the authorities of the Municipality of Klina back then, they gave me, and they also gave me guns without triggers {as if holding a gun}, so. You had to make soup, my secretary... I mean, my landlord, the lady in whose house I lived, baked me bread as well. So they had plates, then these spoons {as if eating with a spoon} and so they ate soup in portions at the stage, so it was authentic. I don't have a photo, I will never forgive myself for that, there were photo... um, photographers, but I didn't see them, and so. It was staged {counts on his fingers} in Klina, in Goraždevac, I came back to Drenovac and so on. And one of my first, first ones, the first play I directed was then.

How did I move into the book shop? When my mother came to see me, where I live, the conditions weren't so, she went to my father's, my father's uncle's brother, he is a famous politician, his name is Tomislav Sekulić, he was the secretary of the Provincial Committee, and the president of the Provincial Committee was Rrahman Morina. So, and when she saw me, my mother goes to him, and at that time he was also the president of the municipality, and says, "I am starting a bookshop Jedinstvo⁶ in Gračanica, across the street from the monastery, and you will come to work there." I worked at the

⁶ *Jedinstvo* was a Kosovo daily newspaper in Serbian language. The newspaper was first published on December 25, 1944, at first as a monthly and later as a daily newspaper. The speaker refers to the distribution points of *Jedinstvo* that also sold books in Serbian language.

Jedinstvo bookshop, I was the head of the bookstore. It sells books for pupils, high school students and so on. I spent ten years there.

When father's uncle's brother died, I organized his funeral in Gračanica, and members of funeral were the committee, a famous doctor infectologist and a professor Stevan Baljošević was there, as well as Pavle Vasić, a vice-rector of the University of Prishtina and doctor of physical sciences. The procession started from... {points to the right with his hand} from his house, it was August 8, '93. And we started going, and we are supposed to go on the road Pristina-Gnjilane, it was a big procession, a mayor from Donja Gušterica at that time, Novica Sojević took his {touches his elbow} son-in-law by the arm, who had his niece. And I would run to the monastery to tell the nuns that the bell was ringing according to these customs, I did not see the wire around the monument that is now in the center, in all the speed, and I fell from that wire, so I just don't know how I stayed alive, a miracle because it was a plate.

The whole procession looked at me, the mayor asked, "Who is that?" And one of my brothers is called Čedomir, the other Miodrag, says, "That's Čedomir, Čeda's, and Mija's brother." And my brother was the director of the water supply infrastructure for thirteen years in Pristina, and the youngest brother with the Faculty of Agriculture was the director of the student, youth-student cooperative. He says, "That's Čeda's and Mija's brother," "Bring him to my office." And in 24 hours, I will become the chief of staff in the Municipal Assembly. When I left the bookstore, he called the director of Jedinstvo and said, "As of today, Maksa is no longer your worker and he will be working for me." And I was there from August 12, '94 until 2005 after returning here to Gračanica.

In the Municipal Assembly, I was the chief of staff, you know it was a pleasure because you have... you know my shortcoming is that I did not know English. I learned a lot of Albanian, I must say, to brag a bit. But, and what's the point, the point is because you switch from one, end up as a teacher, a math teacher, then you switch to a bookseller for ten years, and you come for chief of staff and chief of protocol. Let me mention my colleague Fahri Osmani, who was also with me in the cabinet, he had experience, and what is it, this... you know you meet famous people, from political and cultural spheres of life, and foreign delegations and all of that. It was a great pleasure for me, no one dared... for example a citizen came to me, he came and, for example, let's pretend a bit... you come in and you need a birth certificate, I just go grab your birth certificate, take it in my hands I come to the registry office, registry office, he practically didn't dare not finish it right away and I give it to you like this {as if giving something}.

There were different delegations, I had privileges, but I was, well... and I will tell you what happened, one morning, because my wife was a worker at the Ministry of the Interior, we were going to work and I forgot to put on my bow tie. With him, you could not not have a bow tie... and now I will tell you how I came to wear that bow tie. I forgot my bow tie and I cannot show up in the cabinet, in order for me to... the head of the garage, one gentleman from Gračanica, says, "Here is the car, a driver, you need to go and take the bow tie and come back," why should I go back ten kilometers. I went to the shop,

bought a bow tie, put it on, because without it you are not allowed in the mayor's office. That's how I came to wear a suit, bow tie and all of that to this day.

The principal of the May 1 School in Drenovac in the Municipality of Klina, professor of Albanology Sadri Kelmendi, his son is now in the Ministry of Justice of the Government of Kosovo, and he was the director of the prison in Prizren, and I had my first class, and I waited half an hour for him to show up, school secretary, and it was on March 8, during the '80s, he says, "The principal will come soon," he is from village Lutogllava near Istog, Sadri Kelmendi, and he shows up, a cap {touches his head} politely, gentleman, we greet each other, and my father was with me. And I go to my first class, what I said previously, I don't know what to talk about, I come, and all of a sudden, the assistant says, "Maksimović Ljubomir, the principal wants to see you", I enter, "Yes, Headmaster", I stand still {points to the right} by the door, he says, "Mister Maksimović..." and I came there dressed in a denim jacket, jeans, shirt, "I am sorry, Maksimović, but you might or might not have noticed that as of today you cannot wear a denim jacket, you will have to buy or... a suit."

When I came back, I finished, I traveled from Gračanica to Pristina, that is, Gračanica-Pristina, Pristina-Peć for six months. Sometimes on the bus from Pristina for six hours, I remember it was only me, the driver and the conductor, no one, there were no passengers. And when I arrive to my class, it's easy, I arrive at half past seven, but when I come back, you know, you teach five lessons, the bus doesn't stop in Drenovac, so I go to Klina, and you need some time to go to Peć from Klina, and the traffic {puts his palms together} and I come home and I had to rent out. And so, I went to Varteks⁷ from Varaždin together with my father, it used to be in Pristina, a suit store in the city center where used to be an old shopping mall Grmija and I buy three suits, and that's how I started wearing a bow tie and even with my, let's say, not from my high school days but from the first day of the '80s until this day, I don't take off my bow tie, it's part of my look. I am the only one who still wears it in school where I work now. But what's the point, in school in order not to get dirty, you know, you write using chalk and so in front of the students I wear a coat, blue coat with my name on it, it's something only I use currently.

Anita Susuri: I wanted to ask you, you mentioned Grmija in Pristina, what are your first memories of Pristina? What was Pristina like in your youth?

Ljubomir Maksimović: Well, you see, all those generations in the last 30 years, well, you know and all the harmony among, if we want to speak precisely, among Serbs and Albanians was in a good position. Yes, on the right side in front of Grmija the Serbs would walk, and on the other side, Albanians would walk, but there was no intercommunity hatred. You know, Grmija was a merchant organization, a famous one, it was equipped, you know what you want on four, three-four floors at that time. And I remember cinema Vllaznimi, cinema Doma JNA, cinema Omladina. People lived together, there was no hatred, let me mention that as well, you know, I had friends and so on.

⁷ Varteks, a Croatian-based store, established in 1918 was among the top brands in Yugoslavia.

I, for me, it was really fair that it wasn't, what is the point here, later this came among us, I will not go into it, I have no rights. But otherwise, a full city, every night there was an event, a concert. Then, to continue, Football Club Pristina in the first federal league in former Yugoslavia, now until '98-'99 the football station Pristina, you can imagine, the football players and so on. Cultural and artistic associations, meetings, to put it that way, so it was, it was really good, bars were open, that is taverns were, taverns were mostly working. Factories were producing shock absorbers, the textile industry Kosovka, the electric power plant in Obilić was working. You can imagine, life was taking place in one environment where it was, it was a pleasure to live in Kosovo and Metohija.

Anita Susuri: Could you, for example, tell me where did you go out, what was the society like back then, a bit more about it?

Ljubomir Maksimović: Well, you see, I am...

Anita Susuri: What bars there were, where were they?

Ljubomir Maksimović: All the young men specifically from Gračanica went to Pristina just to spend... because they were, well, young men, they were also students. We went out to bars, to taverns in Pristina, the famous tavern Tri Šešira, which is now across from Radio Pristina, then this tavern Duga. And I felt it the most as the head of the cabinet, because I had this, I had such a position, I had the privilege in all the taverns because guests normally come to the president, the mayor and I have to provide them with accommodation, breakfast, lunch, dinner, and so on.

I will tell you one true anecdote. So, a delegation came from all over Serbia and with guests, about a hundred of them, if I am not mistaken. You have to accommodate them in what is now the Grand Hotel, I had to know every room number where my guests were, yes you have a list in case. On one occasion, an emergency session came and then, I had to inform them to come to the meeting and in order not to call the head of the garage to give me a vehicle from the Municipal Assembly in Pristina, {shows the route with his fingers on the table} so, to where this is located next to this, the green market next to the Grand Hotel, I arrived in eight minutes to inform them by loudspeaker to come to the meeting.

Can you imagine, the president of the state Zoran Lilić and the mayor Novica Sojević came, just to mention them, and now, how are they supposed to sit, the president of the state, but I am the head of protocol, his head of protocol, the president of the state looked at me and I said, "Sir, you will sit here, {shows chair next to him} the mayor will sit here {show where he is sitting}." Why, because the rules are the one who chairs the meeting, he sits at the top. This one looked at me, his chief of protocol, it wasn't unusual to him, and so it happened. The meeting is over, he has to travel to Belgrade, cutlery is provided here, it is provided, the one opened for the first time, the security authorities try the soup

because that was for security reasons. He tries it seven times, the eighth time the soup can be poured on the table {finger knocks on the table}

Anita Susuri: The eighth time?

Ljubomir Maksimović: Yes, {raises his index finger} that was...

Anita Susuri: In which year was that?

Ljubomir Maksimović: It was in '95. And before that, normally, uh, security for ten days, exactly who entered the building, who did all that... It was up to the carpet, the security. No one could enter, only the mayor, me as the head of the cabinet, the head of protocol and the secretary, and that's it. The order arrives, an emergency meeting in Belgrade, the helicopter arrives {slaps palm to palm} no, no lunch. And everything {raises his index fingers} is secured, he goes. The bill came, the director Milan Đorović delivered it and the Municipal Assembly paid the bill, you couldn't argue.

The celebration of Vidovdan, the celebration of Vidovdan was in 1989, there were 500 thousand people here in Gračanica. I was in the bookstore, I worked all night, I had the biggest turnover, so in one night, let me tell you, you won't believe me, I had two thousand marks at the time, various souvenirs. The buses were lined up from the entrance in Gračanica to Laplje Selo in that one row, all on the left and right side, now that you are heading towards, towards Laplje Selo, the meadows, it was all under tents and buses. Such mass in such great numbers. I was taking minutes from the first founding meeting, that president I mentioned a little while ago, Tomislav Sekulić, he was the chairman of the board.

And then, with the blessing of the bishop of the patriarch and the bishop because you can't enter, even now when it is held every year on June 28, you can't enter the church if you don't have the blessing of the bishop. Because then, there are concerts, there are events that are held for a whole month under the auspices of the ministry and the organization of the Cultural Center. I was the scorer, then Gračanica got another contour, the streets were asphalted, lighting was done, um, street lighting, so Gračanica in 1089 [1989] looked really in a very good spirit, in a good atmosphere. But I have never seen such a great number of people, and...

Anita Susuri: Was that during Milošević?

Ljubomir Maksimović: Yes! When Milošević was in power, he gave a speech at Gazimestan, it can never come back. And I was in the bookstore so that {points left with his finger} the tourists who came, I couldn't receive them, it's across the street from where the monastery is now, I couldn't receive them {makes a semicircle with his hand around him} um, in the bookstore, they were sleeping on the floor. I had a variety of these souvenirs for sale, from that barbecue, the barbecue then, that is, it was indescribable. But uh, what are you going to do at times like this. Yes, and this is the case, such a

manifestation is still multimedia, it continues to be held from June 1 to June 28, and so today, there is this {shows the magazine} The *Vidovski Glasnik* [Voice of Vidovdan] is published, which is used for a year and here they are... please [offers the magazine to the interviewer] that I will give you, where in a year {puts on glasses, looks at the magazine} the most famous art colonies here are held {browsing the magazine} paintings in here in the {shows right} foyer in the hallway and theatrical performances.

What is the point, thanks to the organizing committee of the writer from Gračanica, Ratko Popović, who is one of the initiators and when you have, you know, when you give an idea, when you give an idea and you get approval for the idea {takes off the glasses}, then it's easier for you to go and you push things forward. He gave... that manifestation is held on June 27, every year, every year Vidovdan Poetry Communion, all poets from Kosovo and Metohija and the whole of Serbia, and the Republic of Srpska and the whole world came and read their part of the postponement. This exhibition of fine artists lasts for ten days, so this year the Golden Cross is awarded every year, which weighs about eighty grams, the Kosovo Maiden condiment, then the Despot Lazarević's Feather. And when it comes to the young generation, awards are given, and this, the exhibition of Dimitrije Popović, who died...

Anita Susuri: It's awarded to the artists?

Ljubomir Maksimović: Aha. Who died in 2004 and he is one of them who, those awards are in possession of one of the artists who are famous, like painters from several of these exhibited paintings in the world, individual or collective, and one of those awards goes to the best painter.

Anita Susuri: You were also the president of the jury for the selection of Kosovo Maiden?

Ljubomir Maksimović: I was the president of the jury for the selection of the Kosovo Maiden, you were [right]... for 19 years. In all places in Kosovo and Metohija {spreads his arms}. What is the point, all that {rises and shows the magazine} was organized on the occasion of Vidovdan, I was the main organizer, and with the help of the Cultural Center, they helped financially, they helped in all places, this... What is the point, first we go around, we go around, from June 2, we go, for example, from Štrpce, Velika Hoča, Goraždevac, Peć, this Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zvečan towards Šilova, Parteš.

Part Three

Anita Susuri: If you could repeat this once more, the part with how many years you were there, because the camera [stopped]...

Ljubomir Maksimović: Yes, so I organized it. I was the president of the jury for 19 years. What is the point, we were in all places in Kosovo and Metohija, from Štrpce, Velika Hoča, Goraždevac, Zvečan, Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zubin Potok, this Štrpce ... Pasjana, Šilova, and so on. And I want to tell you I did

it with pleasure. And that is one of the manifestations where the girl had to be dressed in national costume, Prizren costume, maybe other costumes, Serbian costumes here, I can tell you that it was not a problem at all whether an Albanian girl would participate, but there were no such girls. This, uh, otherwise there was no opportunity at all for someone to stop that from happening {showing sign for no using his index finger}, no, no.

Anita Susuri: And what were the costumes like?

Ljubomir Maksimović: The costumes were, the costumes were, uh, all in a *dukat* [gold] here, {he shows his neck and chest with his hands} with a scarf {as if tying a scarf}, a girl who goes on stage... first, the semi-finals were held and the final show was on June 26 every year, only in '99 it wasn't organized because of the known events.⁸ In costumes with slippers, serious, makeup has now appeared in the last few years with makeup, then it was not allowed to appear in makeup, makeup is not there. The girl has to be natural. With a pitcher⁹ to carry on her shoulder {as if putting something on his right shoulder} and then passing in front of the jury, the jury had five to eight members. As the president of the jury for 19 years, I have never been to places except one, I was a member of the jury five years ago here in Gračanica, I never accepted to be a member, president of the jury or a member of the jury in Gračanica, and all this took place in the yard of the Monastery of Gračanica, where, if Bishop Teodosije doesn't give you a blessing, you can't enter.

The stage, we have the stage, this one company from Pristina is doing the assembly of those elements. And registering name and surname, ID number, height, weight, which school they go to and that she is dressed. It's based on how many of them apply, if there is one, ten of them applied, so the three of them go, first, second, second, first one is the winner, first and second runner-up, runner-up. They came directly into the yard for the final competition on June 26, the jury had five members, {shows five with his hand} three members. It was to tell you honestly, there were interventions, why I did not accept to be in Gračanica, except five years ago, because I had strong pressure, strong pressure, as a member of the jury, everyone calls you because they want the daughter of that man to win, and stuff like that. But I haven't, I haven't...

Anita Susuri: Is it organized nowadays?

Ljubomir Maksimović: Nowadays as well, it is held on every June 26 in the backyard of the Gračanica Monastery.

Anita Susuri: I wanted to ask you a bit more about your monastery here, what are your memories, something more about the monastery?

⁸ The speaker refers to the war in Kosovo in 1999.

⁹ Ceramic bowl with a handle used for storing and pouring liquid.

Ljubomir Maksimović: About the monastery?

Anita Susuri: Yes, about the Gračanica Monastery.

Ljubomir Maksimović: The monastery in Gračanica was built, the building started in 1317. According to my grandfather's retelling, 'cause he was a villager who tended to the house, but he was smart, so I should bring him up, so according to his retelling of the building, some builder Rade, in collaboration with King Milutin, who was the feudal lord. He was married five times so his youngest wife, let me show you, Simonida, who was only five {shows five with his hand} and the daughter of a Byzantine emperor, I wouldn't be able to tell you what his daughter is called. Anyway, he married her when she was five, he built forty churches when he started the Gračanica Monastery. He built the foundation, I'm telling you based on the testimony of my grandfather, he built the foundation and fled with his group, his name was builder Rade.

When King Milutin came to see what's going on, "Bring him to me and find him no matter what!" He ordered his guards, his, his army. They found him in Turkey... in Bulgaria, he probably willingly came and bowed to the king and kissed his leg. "Your royal highness, if I build this church, it won't even last twenty years", but the foundation was geologically lowered and that's how it was stabilized, "This church will last for thousands and thousands of years." Either way he threatened him so badly he didn't show up for three days {shows the number three with his fingers}, he was ready to find him and to have his crew of executioners cut his head off, here, until today 1317, it started in 1321. The monastery is functional, a very big Byzantine one. On the left hand side, when you enter the church, is Simonida, his wife, and on the right one, her husband, King Milutin, he built forty churches.

What's the point, the point is that that was what painting was, frescos with old Slavic written language so there are elements today that, um, won't be seen again, so... except the makers of frescos today write in a contemporary way, like in Saint Sava temple in Belgrade. But the historical core of it, that pattern of the mosaic of those frescos can't do that anymore. I just can't understand, going back to... I studied Marxism at the High Pedagogical Academy and Abrashi taught me, he was the Socrates of his own time, the Plato for the circumstances of those times. The Gračanica Monastery is a bright future for all those who live in Kosovo and Metohija and I can tell you that that kind of historical monument should be praised even more, except for King Milutin, who built all that, now others are being built and other religious buildings, I don't want to sound offensive here, just to tell you, and mosques and Catholic churches, like the big one you can see in Pristina.

May the Orthodox religious buildings like this one, they symbolize that the people here exist and the Gračanica Monastery is a symbol of the Serbian people, not to offend anyone. It's a female monastery for nuns and I have to mention that I met them, I know quite a few of them, they're mostly de facto ninety percent nuns with higher education, there's civil engineering, there's, uh, surgeons so when I had surgery for my hernia, pardon me, the female doctor that did the operation was a nun. And here...

they've devoted their lives to their calling, the life of a nun, but what the point is, the point is that during her monastic life, which lasts for three years, she can't eat meat, especially pork.

Anita Susuri: Something like fasting.

Ljubomir Maksimović: Something like fasting. She has to, strictly, it's custom... and then she passes the test, and moves on, to higher ranks, so to speak, 'cause it could be a priest, a deacon, a protodeacon, a *stavrofor*, I mean a *protostavrofor*¹⁰ and so on and so forth until they reach the rank of *vladika*.¹¹ Because, as you know, *vladika* doesn't get married. Priests get married but if, by chance, I feel like you should know this, if his wife dies, he has the right to, but he loses the property. But until he marries, until he's married, he's a priest, if he gets married he's a pope. And then after that, he can't become a *vladika*.

Anita Susuri: But why do some remain priests and some...

Ljubomir Maksimović: Well that's, that's everyone's discretionary right...

Anita Susuri: Something personal, I see.

Ljubomir Maksimović: Discretionary right, that's perfecting, in order to be a professor at the Belgrade Faculty of Orthodox Theology, or anywhere else, like Foča or something, you have to finish this faculty if you want to become a professor. Otherwise you remain a priest, and so on.

Anita Susuri: Do you...

Ljubomir Maksimović: Here I'll mention something {takes his folder with documents} that happened in 2009, I was thirteen, it says so in this book {touches a book next to himself}, thirteen years as a teacher of the council of teachers in Belgrade. The council happens once a year and all teachers from schools all around Serbia gather. I was there thirteen times and out of those, I was a lecturer for eleven, I presented my work. What I presented was how education happens within less than a year on the territory of Gračanica Municipality, on the territory of the city of Pristina, in education. What was perfected, the new school that was built, the annex of the school opened, more classes were added, the winner of the Saint Sava Award, etc.

In 2008 I filmed a movie {shows the folder with the document} when, um, "Literacy throughout centuries," thanks to the then Bishop Artemije and I was the first one {raises his index finger} who entered his library, [hands the folder to the interviewer], there's also an English version [addresses the

¹⁰ *Protostrator* is a term indicating a Byzantine court office in the past. It now indicates a higher ranking church official.

¹¹ *Vladika* or *Wladika* is a Slavic title and address of bishops in the Eastern Orthodox Church. In Old Church Slavonic, the meaning of the word is *Mr.*

interviewer]. I was the first to enter the library, where no one beside his closest associates can enter, and high officials, where he gave me all the information.

Anita Susuri: Like a documentary...?

Ljubomir Maksimović: As a documentary. I walked 310 kilometers until I came to these materials, I had my cameraman. The film lasts 27 minutes. It was shown in 2008 at the first congress, where I was in Novi Sad for the first time. I walked, I say it again, about 310 kilometers, thanks to the cameraman Goran Andrejević, then to Srećko Todorović, he was the screenwriter, Goran Andrejević was the cameraman, the cameraman, the cameraman. I had Zoran Popović who worked at Radio KFOR, a guy with a very good diction of speech, he was my narrator in the film, and so I described how literacy came to be in Gračanica in general.

In the picture, you are looking at now [addresses the interviewer] is the current nun who has been living her monastic life in Gračanica for 47 years, her name is Ružica and she describes one of these details. I showed the film here in Gračanica and I invited school representatives, invited my students and it was shown in the big hall of the House of Culture. These are the pictures at the parliament [gives the photos to the interviewer] while I am waiting, for example, for the presentation {looking at the documents} and, for example, further in 2015, in front of the school called King Milutin I give lectures on King Milutin in front of Bishop Teodosije. I prepared that one paper and it was a pleasure for me.

I will show you that I {searching for documents on the table} in addition to organizing the selection of Kosovo Maiden for 19 years, during the final competition, 30 girls are coming out, five-member jury, eight-member jury, that is, I apologize cannot be an even number, must be a negative number, an odd number, so five, seven or nine. Everyone pulls to their side for the girl, when she appears on stage, she circles around {makes a circle on the table with his finger}, appears and bows to the jury. The first round, if 30 are eliminated, there must be a third round, three girls must come to the third round. Now there is discontent, you know, but, in the meantime, there is a cultural and artistic program, cultural and artistic associations from the territory of the Municipal Assembly of Pristina, the program is going on. So, even when she was elected, she received a cash prize this year, that is, last year there was a cash prize worth I think of 500 euros.

For the last five or six years, I have not been involved because young workers have come to the House of Culture, but this House of Culture {spreads his arms} has given me a great opportunity to flourish as a cultural worker in this area, thanks to everyone, {counts on his fingers} Vesko Stojković, Srećko Todorović, to mention Ratko Popović and all those numerous people who raised the level of culture in Gračanica in the '70s, in terms of cultural and artistic societies, cultural events such as Vidovdan Poetry Communion, this, and other manifestations. But all of this was the foundation for what still exists today.

In the meantime {takes the document in his hands}, I have to tell you, when I saw that there was some turmoil, turmoil in politics, I left school in 2005, left the Municipal Assembly and went to school as a class teacher and so on. In 2015, I had a student who won all over Serbia, [shows the document to the interviewer] Petar Perić, he is now in the eighth grade. He won on the topic “Birds are not flocks that migrate”, and he won in front of two hundred teachers in Novi Sad, in the technical school, I get applause, I go out as a teacher on stage and I get this one, I get a commendation (smiles).

Not to take it too long {takes the document in his hands}. The House of Culture started a newspaper, a children’s magazine, no, for young people *Naše polje* [Our field] and I write essays {shows the document} in Cyrillic authentically, as the science of calligraphy is called, and it is called “Ljuba’s student anecdotes.” For example, here is a written work {reads the document} “Students write an essay on the topic ‘What would I do if I were the principal?’” Mihajlo sits and waits, “Mihajlo, why don’t you write?” The teacher asks him. “I’m waiting for the secretary to dictate it to her” (smiles).

Anita Susuri: (laughs).

Ljubomir Maksimović: {reads the document} Ljubomir Maksimović, class teacher at King Milutin in Gračanica. I have a few of them {takes a few documents in hand} not to take time, and they evaluate it, then... and this {takes a document} to connect you, just to find this {search for documents} sorry, here {takes a document} I was the organizer of Miss Gračanica for eight years, here is one of those I brought it for you to see pageant in 2010. Thanks to the Municipality of Gračanica, I have to praise the work on the Kosovo system, but it’s a pleasure of mine to mention my godfather who was the first Mayor of the Municipality of Gračanica, Bojan Stojanović, who died three months ago, a sudden death.

You see, girls, Miljana, Miss Kosovo and Metohija, I am in the middle, um, it is being organized and a selection is being made. What is the point, the point is, we are at the Hacienda swimming pool and we present to them what we can award them with, and I suggested the idea, what to offer to the girl who comes, who will be the first. She receives, “Do you want a thousand euros, or do you want seven days in Turkey? Everything is paid, from the moment you get at the airport in Slatina, on the plane, Turkey is waiting for you and everything is secured there.” Um, that’s something that I lack, the fact that I don’t know English, but I used those who knew English in Gračanica. Nobody wanted to go to Turkey, they wanted a cash prize of a thousand euros {as if putting money on a table}. Five hundred euros was the second prize, the third was, well, three hundred euros.

Cultural-artistic program, famous, some of the most famous singers and so on and the girl won when I organized, here, for example, {shows the document} here’s how the invitation looked like, the invitation, [reads the document] “We are extremely honored to invite you to...” 2009 here it is, see it has the crown {shows picture} the crown we had, we bought it in Pristina, we had, we awarded one to the green market, across the Municipal Hall to the green market to Radio Television Pri... I mean, Kosovo, one guy that sells wedding dresses {pulling his hand towards himself}, crowns, you know. And

then one Nina Marković, for example, won, she now works at the Red Cross in the Municipality of Leposavić. Um, let me tell you, I was, I have to tell you openly (laughs), even though I was married with three children, I was attracted to them (laughs), and so on.

Part Four

Anita Susuri: Can you tell me, um, can you tell me how you met your wife?

Ljubomir Maksimović: (laughs) You know the situation. So here is the story: I was working in the bookshop in Gračanica, across the monastery, and my brother-in-law came from the village Preoce, and he comes one day and says, “Brother-in-law, a girl came to her godmother” and that godmother was my aunt, my mother’s sister and says “You should see her,” he says, “a very pretty girl.” She is from the village Paralovo near Gnjilane, 28 kilometers from here and he says, “You should get ready and come to meet her.” And she, my aunt, had already provided an introduction, about whom it is about, about me. She couldn’t have even imagined it. You can imagine, the girl was born in the year ‘70, and I was born in ‘55 (laughs).

And I got ready I close, it was Saturday, 5th of February ‘88, and then I was working in the bookshop from eight until noon, since it was Saturday, I got ready and on the bus Gračanica-Pristina, Pristina-Preoce, I get off in Laplje Selo and go. I went to my sister, my aunt came with her, she started talking, “Come on, may you live long,” one word “may you live long!” A word of affection means, that gives... you know, when you say, “May you live long”, it means saying it with excitement, you say that word with love. “I have one child, my nephew, you know that” and she came, she was greeting {puts his hands as if he is greeting someone} at my sister’s, twenty to five, Saturday, and nothing, I was in my jacket. “May you live long” says, and she says, “This is my nephew, there, let me meet the two of you, why not” and we remained there at my sister’s for two, three hours.

My brother-in-law, who is with one distant cousin of mine, that is, not my brother-in-law, the brother-in-law of my aunt from Crkvena Vodica near Obilić, he says, “Tonight we have to go out” in Gračanica, then there was a tavern across the monastery, parties, and we went out. At nine o’clock he started the car and deliberately brought it where it is now on the road Pristina-Skopje in the center, not in the center, but on the road in Preoce, and I am waiting to go home and he comes across, as if it had been previously agreed, it was already coincidence itself. I saw a 17-and-a-half-year-old girl, she didn’t go to high school, her father... she had a dangerous father. And we, and I go out with her and went to the dance in Gračanica, and I remained there until about twelve o’clock in the evening. “Let’s go to my older brother’s house,” my brother was the director of the water supply system, he lived in the center of Gračanica, where the Municipality of Gračanica is now, there was the so-called former building of the local community.

The local community is a local institution dealing with the problems of one community, that is, Gračanica, Laplje Selo, Preoce, Sušica, Šaškovac, Kišnica, Ajvalija, and so on. And I went to my brother's house and my brother drank a little, he didn't know anything, he went down because it was upstairs, a two-storey building, "When you come in, you cannot go out," said Čedomir. And I come in, daughter-in-law there as well and so. "And you will be my sister-in-law, you will be my sister-in-law" and to tell you this, and then we go to the room a little tenderness, we cuddle a bit, I have to tell you honestly and I walk her home, it was February 5, I haven't seen her for thirteen days, no message, especially pagers were in vogue then, no phone, nothing. On February 18, that is, on the 17th, we prepare everything at home.

Anita Susuri: Like a wedding?

Ljubomir Maksimović: Well, yes, half-celebration. And we got ready, surely a dozen of us, not to lie to you, but I think about twenty of us, four... five cars. Brothers from my aunt, not to tell you, and we leave at half past seven, we get there Paralovo is a village that is on the hill of the Municipality of Gnjilane. Her last name is Maksimović, her name is Trajanka, and how did she get her name, because her mother gave birth to three children and they all died, and then a woman told her, after that story, "Give your next child [the name] Trajanka, Trajanka, Traja and more..." and since that day, they are six of them, five sisters and one brother. And she did so, and that's why she got the name Trajanka [name's meaning: to last]. But what is coincidence, that my wife's last name is my last name Maksimović, and my older brother, who is the director of the waterworks, his wife from Donja Gušterica and is also Maksimović, what is this coincidence {he connects his fingers and hands}. And the younger brother from Preoce, Milenković.

And we got ready, I say we have arrived, and now that we have arrived, we park the car on the road Pristina-Gnjilane. I did not receive any, nor did she make a promise, and she had a young man who now lives in Switzerland, with whom she was in a relationship. When we got upstairs, her close relative heard some noises, some people approaching the house and went to my father-in-law, her father, the late father-in-law, this father of mine, I mean, my wife's, he died in '98. "*Bre*,"¹² he says. "Tomislav, someone is sneaking around, hasn't Trajanka made a promise to someone?" Trajanka was in her room, no crying and such things. Her father was dangerous, so he didn't let her go to the dance *auu* {onomatopoeia}, to the dances, and in Paralovo there were dances, for example, from four o'clock in the afternoon to evening at eight, it's not like in Gračanica. Here from nine to one and that's it.

He was so alarmed that he went out with the pitchforks, with the pitchforks, that we barely saved our lives. Mission failed. I didn't ask what happened next in the house and I haven't asked her up to now how, what happened. But you can think that my brother, my older brother, was in all sorts of ways so

¹² Colloquial: used to emphasize the sentence, it expresses strong emotion. *Bre*, similar to the English *bro*, brother.

as not to hurt him, that instead of a car he had Zastava 101,¹³ that instead of going to Gračanica, he was going to Gnjilane, he was so, so afraid. It's so, so, so, running, running down, down that hill from her house, it was unbelievable. We come home, an unsuccessful mission, we sit down as a board of directors, {spreading our hands over the table}, Dad says, "No, tonight we did it this way, we're going straight to the house tomorrow." At eleven o'clock {shows his watch}, the guests gather what else is on the table, this menu, so.

And the next day, now how are we going to get her out. We are going and what's the point, we park the vehicle again and go on foot and directly to the house, before half past twelve you have to leave {shows his watch} because that was, for example, the custom. And so, and we arrive, we enter, they are not ready {raises his hands} and then prepare anew, set the tables for us. No, her father doesn't want to give her, no way, only on July 26, not on February 18, but on July 26, on the day of his *slava*, my father-in-law's. "No, it's out of the question," but one hour, two hours, persuasion, and so on. I go with her into a special room to have a conversation "No," she says "as my dad says. No way." And we come to where the guests are, "What have you decided?" "Let Dad decide." Old grandpa, her grandfather pulls out a gun on my wife Trajanka {as if holding a gun in his hands} an open window in the living room, a small window, takes out four bullets, Trajanka will marry me (smiles).

At four o'clock, we leave the house happily, and I was like that, let me tell you something, I was in a jacket, I don't know what color it was, so somehow I presented myself as if I was poor, I am sad, I can't, I believe 31 years have passed already. We come home happy, we play the instruments. I will mention my aunt, when she heard that I got married, she put on these rubber slippers, instead of wearing them right, left and right, she put them on in a wrong way (smiles). I came and I got married, relatives came, but that, that case where we could have suffered... today the boy is alive and he is not married. He has been living in Smederevo for 50 years, but such fear that yes, it really was this {nods his head}. I talked about how I got married everywhere, but it truly was tense.

I was happy to marry a girl of 17 and a half years of age and we have three children. But what's the point, the point is because the only brother-in-law enrolled into high school later and one sister-in-law, she [his wife] didn't have it, I finished agricultural school after this, and youth, so yes, I'm happy with life, my wife, she is a good housewife, I have to praise her, but such fear... it was really scary because you know someone with scythe, with pitchforks, it was like that, so my son-in-law who was the initiator of that action, up until today, we talk about it when we go to *slava* on Thursday and on Friday, I always mention that to him and I will one day in the name of God, my wish is to write a book and write it down because it was behind the stacks of those {makes a triangle with his hands} hay in the form of a pile suddenly came out, and then the village was, relatives came, neighbors came. Uh, yes, but it ended well.

¹³ Car manufacturer located in Kragujevac, Serbia, made Fiat-based cars for the Eastern European market. The company became a subsidiary of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles in 2014.

I want to tell you about my wife, a worker in the Ministry of the Interior, and how I could lose my job. And I am the head of the mayor's office, this is the period already in '96, when she graduated from the agricultural school, dairy department, I in cooperation with the head of the Ministry of the Interior, to mention him Đorđe Kerić in Pristina, at the Ministry of the Interior of Pristina and he the mayor announced, he says, "Maksimović," the mayor, "prepare me a picture of the Gračanica Monastery" {raises his hand up to show the size}, the size of the photo was, I don't want to lie to you, but at least one meter. I had to take it to the head of the Ministry, I don't know now, I can't remember what it was like in the middle of the ceremony, whether it was a birthday or not, I wouldn't go into details. So, but what was the chance that my wife would get a decision to be a worker at the Ministry, and she was a technical worker, a technical chief, she was a chief for cleaners, for maids and so on, the current Ministry in Pristina.

I prepared the photo and brought it at eight o'clock, and not at eleven o'clock, as the mayor said, and I brought the photo, the chief serves me whiskey, I quickly say, "I have to go back," "Thank you, Maksimović" without knowing that I had agreed with the mayor. At eleven o'clock {shows his watch} that day, the mayor called me through the secretary, "Let Maksimović, the chief of staff, come in," "Yes, mayor," "Have you prepared the photo?" "I have." And well, I just looked at him "Sorry, Mayor, but I have already delivered the photo." He didn't say anything because he had, he had directors of public companies there. At twenty to three the driver who drove it but I have to tell you, the driver who drove it, he drove and now, the current, current official, well-known Isa Mustafa, a man who graduated in political science in Belgrade, speaks Serbian fantastically, and he was the President of the Executive Council of the Municipality of Pristina.

I drove him for eight years thanks to him, and he received his wife as an economist in the assembly, so. And he comes down, the mayor goes down the stairs in his home and he threatened him, to tell you honestly, his name is Gradimir Jovanović, otherwise he is from Pristina, lives in Gračanica and works, he is still an employee of the Municipal Assembly and his wife left last year, the one who got a job by Isa Mustafa, so, he is currently retired. And he said, "Mr. Mayor, if you get rid of Maksa as head of protocol, I will not drive you," and he said back, "Is that the case, Gradimir," his name was Gradimir, "Then let Maksimović remain head of protocol and head of cabinet." And I stay there and so on.

So I can tell you that, with, with all due respect... [shows the photograph to the interviewer], you saw this picture, here it is in color, how the pageant looks. What is the point, in Gračanica in the House of Culture, there were events of Gračanica Evenings, what is the point, we were supposed to choose the first voice of Gračanica, young people, you choose by choice, you choose a folk song with the orchestra and it was, and there was a quiz, I was one of the participants in the quiz until I passed as in, as the president of that, that manifestation Gračanica Evenings. One year, on May 29, 2006, I organized the Retrospective of Gračanica Evenings, you know what a retrospective means? [addresses the interviewer]

Anita Susuri: Yeah.

Ljubomir Maksimović: So it was fifteen years ago, it happened in one night. There was laughter, we had a great acting team of amateurs who performed various adventures we had. There were prize games, a bag, you put yourself in a bag up to your waist, and you have to reach out and jump to go to the stage and you get a prize and so on, one of those. And so it was very important and very, one of the founders was Srećko Todorović, Vesko Stojković, Svetomir Dimitrijević, I have to mention them and there was a team of incredible actors to mention Zoran Arsić, Zoran Nikolić, I have... I will also mention one recently deceased singer, the best one in this area, currently in Gračanica, Žika Arsić and so on. I worked with the team, the good team of the current director of Radio 038 in Gračanica, Srđan Perić, I had a good team of hosts and so on, and so on.

I am really satisfied with that cultural life in Gračanica and as a teacher in general, and a lot of these have come out of my initiative, a lot of these... let me tell you, reports have been written, a lot of texts have been written in all places and I don't know when I gave an interview about schooling on Radio Antena in Laplje Selo, these are, for example, the students of the school {shows photographs to interviewer} with whom I say goodbye this year, I hope I will find the understanding of the Ministry to leave me for 31 days so until the retirement to end it with this generation since it is fourth grade. By the way, I am writing for one educational review {shows the document}, the Cultural Art Association Janićije Popović, the children's theater "Giant as a mill", I am writing an educational review, it is a novelty that is given to teachers, professors that work in school only. And I am one of the writers about that, here it is, Ljubomir Maksimović. What can I tell you here...

Anita Susuri: I wanted to ask you a bit more about...

Ljubomir Maksimović: Just in short, I took thirty students in 2014 {shows a picture to the interviewer} from three municipalities with the director of the office Marko Đurić, to one of the events that this year will be in less than a month and a half, called The Biggest Easter Egg which is held in time of, during Easter, here in front of the House of Culture {shows right with his hand} thanks to the House of Culture, thanks to the Municipality of Gračanica which financially helps, um, where eggs are beaten in two categories up to fifteen years, and from fifteen years, last years I had 85 competitors and younger than 15, this older generation I had thirteen of them. The winner received an icon signed by Bishop Teodosije, and this is the sixth time this year that it will be held.

I am organizing the Saint Sava Ball for educators this year. It was supposed to be the fifth year, but let me tell you honestly, with the lack of understanding of educators, it was not held and so it was canceled. I don't know what it is, yes, January is the longest month, so there are big holidays, but this one, the personal gain is fantastic. So I will not talk because I was sorry it would be the fifth time in a row. It is the Saint Sava Ball, girls, [we award] the most beautiful dress, the most beautiful dance couple, the best ethno singer and two years ago I introduced the award for the happiest guest. The

most beautiful dress must be... it doesn't matter in what design, the mayor hands it over with the medal, and the best ethno singer, who sings best, we get together. The first year there were 150, 110, 150 people and the year before last there were 130 so this year it was not held. I did not find an understanding of educators although I did interview and there were principals of primary and secondary schools at the meeting and so on.

Anita Susuri: I wanted to go back a bit to some historical events, for example, where were you during the demonstrations in the '80s, how did you perceive that?

Ljubomir Maksimović: During the demonstrations in '81, I was in Drenovac, I lived in Peja, when the demonstrations started, I was in the cinema, in the cinema in Peja, I was watching a movie with my good friend, I have to mention him, he is from the village of Glavičice, Duško Mikić, he is now retired. What can I tell you, in '81, I was already 26 years old in Peja, it was kind of, not restless, but a little seesaw in relation to Pristina, but I don't know what to tell you, politics is a complex thing, Serbs and Albanians have to respect each other, I have to tell you, I apologize, but this politics has led to it that two peoples living together for such a long period of time, I can tell you, it doesn't matter whether I am historian or not, but this should not have happened.

First and foremost, as a province, it was ruined, one institution that brought evil, especially the war of '99. You see, you can be involved in politics, but sometimes you have to be a sincere friend. I can't understand that I went to a school where there were eleven Albanian classes, there were six, seven, five of us in the High Pedagogical School, so it was, so it was in that domain and politics, let alone hatred, but so it came to that tragedy, that should not have happened. I didn't know politicians much, I knew, I had the opportunity to sit with Isa Mustafa, then when I was at the Municipal Assembly because the mayor was Žika Mitrović, so we knew each other and I can't understand that someone... that it could come to such a tragedy, the population and families were killed.

People lost, everything was lost, the economy fell, companies and so on. I wouldn't want to talk about it because you know, if I'm giving an interview, I wasn't an active politician but to tell you that people in Pristina lived better than Albanians, Serbs and other nationalities, they lived better than in Chicago, I can tell you from a perspective because I worked in Pristina for eleven years. Um, people didn't think about moving or going abroad. The factories worked, they worked... You know, politics is an awkward thing, but it's terrible, terrible, I don't want to, I want to defend my people now, the Serbian people, whether I want to condemn the Albanian people is not up to me, historical facts exist. But let me tell you that we had Albanian friends, we had neighbors where they lived in places where there were most Albanians in the villages. Still so much, so much until '99 it was, that friendship and not exactly in the sense of a hundred percent, but it was still closer, enduring because you know we have to be clear that I'm sitting I was not the last two, three years, I was with Azem Vllasi.

So my colleague, a teacher who now works with me at school, taught Serbian for eleven years, to Albanians in Koliq, near Keqekollë. He had an invitation to be, to be a translator for Azem Vllasi. Azem Vllasi is one of the high-ranking officials in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, meaning the second man as president of the youth after Tito. But he could... I couldn't go on about it because I was at the RTK 2 celebration three years ago and I was invited by the director of RTK and the director of RTK, so I was with Azem Vllasi, you know. There are politicians we can condemn, there are politicians who we can praise and so on. But this should not have happened. Who will be right and that, I would not like to know more about that, but this, still... people lived, people lived just like that, just like that.

You can imagine one thing, I will tell you something, so in terms of numbers, I wouldn't like you to... as the head of the cabinet with more than 300 workers, 200 were Albanians and there were 110 Serbs, or a bit more, 150, 180, when I worked at the Municipal Assembly. For example, the treasurer was from Gnjilane, Shefki Rudaku, he traveled every day from Gnjilane-Pristina. The head of the buffet, Tahir Borovci, was the head of the white-glove buffet {touches his hand} when he shows up at the mayor's when he brings and I meet him he brings {holds his hands up as if carrying something} to the guests, the mayor, white {touches his hand}. Inspectors, inspection services, they had, I had Zylfa Ukelli in my... when after this, I moved from the head of the cabinet, when the mayor was changed, then I, then the second mayor, he chose his cabinet, otherwise, it is the mayor's to select his cabinet, that is, no one can tell him whom he will take, for the driver, for the chief of staff and so on, um.

But let me tell you this, Chief of Staff... I said a moment ago that I didn't have any experience, you transfer from the bookstore and then transfer to Chief of Staff, but that's how I got the condition {counts on his fingers} for the assembly of Belgrade, to the assembly of the city of Novi Sad, to the assembly of the city of Kragujevac, to the assembly of the city of Niš, I was there for five days, but there is another thing, they all speak English there, all dressed nicely, this one chief of staff and so on. And I had mentioned Zylfa Ukelli, who worked after I moved to the office. I was the head of the office, her husband worked at the Provincial Committee. I had such great collaborations from the official position, I had great collaborations with Albanians. I never felt any intolerance.

But I can't understand it, it shouldn't have happened because one people and one nation had to be kept alive. Now we are all displaced, now there are both, from Subotica to New Zealand and so on. For example, I, the director, the general director of Radio Pristina Agim Zatriqi,¹⁴ who was then in Belgrade, when Radio Pristina was working it had everything, everything. But I wouldn't say that anymore, about that political situation, because I really don't hesitate to say that. But I can't understand, because I can't understand that I came from Pristina to Gračanica to work when I saw political examples in the Municipal Assembly, I saw it, I went to school. But let me tell you, it was done even

¹⁴ Agim Zatriqi (1950-2017) was a media specialist, and after the war in Kosovo was the executive director of RTK-Radio Television of Kosovo for eight years, from 2001-2009.

today, there are Albanians who receive their salaries, who are supported by the institution and so on, but this shouldn't have happened! There.

Anita Susuri: I just wanted to ask you about your custom *slava*.¹⁵ Which *slava* do you celebrate and how is it organized?

Ljubomir Maksimović: I celebrate the *slava* of Saint Cosmas and Damian, it is celebrated two times a year, July 14 and November 14. On these days, you probably know, of course, Eid, Ramadan, and so on. I know that, thank God, so, when it falls on Friday, Wednesday, then fasting, we strictly eat only fish, whether it is evening or day, but Wednesday, Friday and so on further. They were, the Holy Doctors, they were Doctors Cosmas and Damian who treated the people for free. According to my grandfather, let me tell you right away, it's a little inconvenient, as my grandfather told me, my father Bogoljub, they went from village to village and treated people, people for free.

I will tell you the history of what the point is, if... according to what my grandfather says, God forbid that day at my celebration, it doesn't have to mean it is true because those are folk beliefs such that, if you get sick that day, there is no salvation for you. I haven't heard if it happened to someone, otherwise it is the most solemn moment like yours with Ramadan and Eid, various food tastings are being prepared, families are happy, guests are coming, and then guests are sitting, thank God, now you can drink whatever you want, there is a menu, what do you want it's on the table, it is arranged in such a way that the whole family is involved. And in the evening, if, for example, someone on July 13 or November 13, but I will tell you that my three brothers, in agreement with my dad, we took to celebrate that *slava* 25 years ago.

Dad has been celebrating it for a very long time from grandfather and great grandfather, only once it was, it was hard... there was widespread poverty, there was a bottle of *rakija*¹⁶ circling around, thank God that soft *rakija*, the so-called *šoma*¹⁷ and paprika that was something... peppers, where there were tomatoes, peppers and pork were usually used only during Christmas and during the feast. In the evening of the *slava*, when usually {he looks at his watch}, it is seen that no more guests will come, at nine o'clock, you lit the incense over the table. The lady of the house prepares bread with a cross, wheat in a bowl, a candle is lit, wine and guests get up and a prayer for *slava* is read. In the name of Cosma and Damian, those holy healers, this *slava* goes on and ends, everyone tries, they cross themselves, everyone tries the wheat, whether with a spoon or a hand, which is watered {as if watering by hand}, one watered with wine. The candle is lit and so on.

¹⁵ *Slava* is part of the Serbian Orthodox religious tradition. Once a year, every family celebrates the day of a particular saint who is believed to be the guardian of the family.

¹⁶ *Rakija* is a very common alcoholic drink made from distillation of fermented fruit.

¹⁷ *Šoma* is a type of *rakija* with a smaller percentage of alcohol in it.

You sit down, there is a song, crossing of hands, now it is modernized, there is a crossing of hands, you have to make a toast and you have to drink that glass to the bottom, which is not good. When the time comes, the time of dinner comes, it comes, the lady of the house makes and kneads the bread, the white bread and that bread is placed in front, at the head, who sits at the head, as here {shows left with his hand} where the director sits, for example, and is put in front of the guests. Usually, it is the guest who is the first neighbor of the house who celebrates *slava*. If the closest neighbor is not there, then the first guest who is the oldest is the one who sits at the head of the table. People get up, break the bread, break it three times, and you break the bread, kiss it three times, put the bread together, and then divide it among people, first one piece of bread, you put the piece of bread for yourself {as if putting something in front of him} and then to each of your guests.

You sit down and then the housewife brings the dinner to her guests with her daughters, whether it's *sarma*,¹⁸ whether it's stuffed paprika depends on whether it's fasting day, whether it's fish, carp, trout, and so on, these are the things. The next day, the host gets up, takes the bread, comes to the church, and the priest welcomes him. He knows exactly all the places that celebrate the *slava* in Gračanica; the biggest *slava* is Mitrovdan from St. Demetrius is celebrated on November 8, and the biggest, biggest in all of Serbia, where half the population is going to *slava*, half is coming and that is St. Nicholas on May 19 and December 21. So, the next day, to continue, the host leaves with the bread, with wheat with wine and in the church the priest greets the families celebrating *slava*, reads a prayer and then takes the cake and cuts {as if cutting with his hand} this in the form of a cross {makes a cross on his palm} and approaches this celebrant and they kiss the bread three times, put it together and so on and so forth. The host comes home and each, every celebration of a religious event continues.

Anita Susuri: Mister Maksimović, if you have anything else for the end, if you have forgotten something?

Ljubomir Maksimović: If I haven't forgotten something. I have to praise you, thank you very much, and to your colleague {points towards the camera with his hand}.

Anita Susuri: Thank you as well!

Ljubomir Maksimović: There, I'm surprised, God bless you, because in all respects, I never run away from interviews, my family is a bit skeptical, you know, when I give interviews. By the way, I can brag to you that, I didn't count it, but the RTK 2 team counted that I was somewhere around 90 times on that television (laughs), so, I appeared, but everything is in the style of education like this and I followed all the events, it's not a problem for me to tell you. When everyone is... everything that happened in this House of Culture, this is one of the buildings, especially since the arrival of the new director, it has

¹⁸ *Sarma*, commonly marketed as stuffed cabbage leaves—rolled around a filling of grains, minced meat, or both. The dish is mostly cooked in Southeastern European and Middle Eastern cuisine. *Sarma* is part of the broader category of stuffed dishes known as *dolma*.

become a gathering place for many villages... there is no such thing in Serbia, no such thing as in Gračanica. Something happens here every day and that is, I go if I am not already busy, otherwise I go there and follow cultural events.

I have not been involved in any manifestation for the last five years, but it is not out of the question, I am satisfied and we will continue to do so because I want to be informed about cultural events and to hear otherwise. And thank you, to you [addresses the interviewer] that is, I wish you and your associate happiness, continue like this, be objective, don't let me introduce you to that system now because I have no rights, be objective, be brave, be brave with a job that you will love without any ambiguities, God forbid, but let me tell you, I'll go back to my grandfather's anecdote, you can write it down and maybe not, he says, "When you speak, you gotta have the appetite for it," just like when you eat lunch, think it through and then... so when you speak you better have the appetite.

Anita Susuri: You have to take pleasure from it.

Ljubomir Maksimović: Yes, you have to take pleasure from it. And that, but it's not easy to be a journalist, you will be remembered for something, every text is recorded, someone follows you, but I wouldn't, you know best, but if I were... if it were me, when you called me, I wouldn't refuse a journalist not to give an interview and otherwise to tell you that journalists are quite awkward in asking questions and waiting for a counter answer, but when you do something, you work with the will to have it in your heart, that when you go home, when you go to bed you sleep, your head is calm, it won't call you "Hey, what did you write, and what did you say", because if you come across criticism, if, if positive criticism is there, it's hard work, but people are cruel and you have to know how to be careful. Here it is, and thank you very much.

Anita Susuri: Thank you!