



On the Record: Civil Society in Kosovo - the Crisis Years

Issue 1: Repression and Resistance, August 30, 1999

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From the AP Editorial Desk

Four months ago, at the height of the refugee exodus from Kosovo, The Advocacy Project started a new series of its electronic newsletter, *On the Record*, on the impact of the refugee crisis on Kosovo civil society.

During the 1990s, the Albanians of Kosovo won the admiration of the world by developing a "parallel society" based on non-violent principles. Like many other people, we watched with deep concern as this unique experiment in civic action came under extreme pressure in 1998. The events of this spring, culminating in the massive exodus, seemed like a certain death knell.

It wasn't. It became clear from the Internet traffic that many Kosovars had responded to this latest ordeal with typical resilience. Teresa Crawford, a member of The Advocacy Project, began to compile some of the e-mail exchanges. We were on the point of developing an entire series out of this material when the Serbian authorities suddenly announced their intention to withdraw from Kosovo after three months of NATO bombing.

This gave us the chance to develop a more ambitious series. Crawford went to Kosovo at the suggestion of a small foundation that has supported our work in the past, specifically to look at women's initiatives. She was joined by Peter Lippman, another member of The Advocacy Project, who took time off from writing his series on refugees in Bosnia.

Neither Peter nor Teresa are strangers to Kosovo. Sixteen months earlier, in March 1998, they had gone to the province with five other colleagues to support Albanian students and observe at firsthand Kosovo's parallel society. They had too little chance to help. After less than a month,

they were arrested by the Serbian authorities, put on trial, jailed, and then expelled. They then watched Kosovo's yearlong descent into hell from the sidelines.

With this new nine-part series of *On the Record*, Peter and Teresa return to Kosovo to pick up where they left off in March 1998.

This series is arranged chronologically. It begins with a brief outline of Kosovo's history and a profile of some of the initiatives that emerged under the "parallel society" during the 1990s. These grew out attempts by the Serbian authorities to suppress Albanian culture.

The series then chronicles events from March 1998 to the present:

Part 2: March 1998 to March 1999 – Countdown to Disaster. Serbian forces attack the region of Drenica, triggering a year of displacement and war crimes.

Part 3: Expulsion and Exile. Civil society regroups in the refugee camps of Albanian and Macedonia.

Part 4: Those Who Stayed. Civic activists who remained in Kosovo struggled to respond to the humanitarian crisis, at great personal risk.

Part 5: Under the NATO bombs. A prominent Serbian women's group forms a "Fear Counseling Team" to help women traumatized by the bombing.

Part 6: Picking up the Pieces. Kosovar activists return from exile and try to rebuild.

Part 7: In the Minority. The plight of Kosovo's minorities (Serbs and Roma) who have undergone a bewildering transformation and are now themselves subject to severe repression.

Part 8: Wiring Kosovo to the World. An uphill attempt to link Kosovo up to the Internet.

Part 9: The Struggle for Democracy. Civic advocates struggle to preserve their space against political extremists and an unwieldy international peacekeeping effort.

As in our series on Bosnian refugees articles are interspersed with extracts from Peter Lippman's diaries – those from 1998 and those written over the last two months.

As our subscribers will know, The Advocacy Project was established to help grassroots advocates use information to further their goals. We hope that this series – examining the perspective of the citizen's of Kosovo – will make it easier to understand the enormous strengths of civil society and the need to integrate it fully into the rebuilding of Kosovo.

From Peter's Diary

Dan, Teresa, and I went with Fjolla and Llora to visit the Mother Teresa women's clinic in the poor part of town. It was a house converted into a clinic. We were given white coats to wear and then sat with the head nurse and a doctor, who told us their stories.

In 1990, all 600 doctors, nurses, and other workers on the staff of the ob-gyn [obstetric-gynecologic] department at the Prishtina [Pristina] hospital were fired. The nurse told us that she was given five minutes to leave, and when she asked for a reason, she was told to ask fewer questions. She had been made to leave by a policeman who came in wearing a white coat and holding a gun in one hand and a bottle of wine in the other.

Other doctors had the same experience, or even worse. One doctor was in the middle of a complicated operation when a policeman told him to leave. The doctor said that he couldn't leave until he finished the operation. He was handcuffed to a radiator and beaten.

Since the firings at the hospital, women patients have been afraid to go there. They fear mistreatment at the hands of Serbian doctors, who sometimes prescribe unnecessary operations. So they give birth to children at home, or go to a private clinic if they can afford it.

The Mother Teresa birthing clinic was founded in June 1996, and is the only charitable ob-gyn clinic in all of Kosovo. It is staffed by volunteer medical professionals, and also offers surgeries.

The clinic is pitifully small for its demands. There are on average 15 births a day there. Women sometimes have to double up on a bed. They are allowed to stay only two hours after giving birth, because of space problems. People having surgery can rest two days.

The clinic comprises 150 square meters, and we were told that 4,000 square meters would be adequate. We looked around. It was a quiet day. Most women in Kosovo were having their babies at home this week, because transport has been disrupted by the massacres and the protests. There were only three newborns, and they were in a separate room, like a little pantry. They were all swaddled up, and soda bottles filled with warm water had been placed between them to keep them warm.

My impression is that in Prishtina the parallel medical infrastructure is nowhere near as organized as education. Of course, the educational system can get by with fewer resources. But there has been a jump in infant mortality – we were told it doubled. Prenatal care is minimal. Many women see a doctor for the first time when they are about to give birth.

Eight hundred babies have been born at Mother Teresa since the beginning of the year. Mother Teresa receives assistance from Mercy Corps International and Doctors of the World. It treats both Albanians and Serbian women. Fewer Serbian women come in because they have access to other facilities, but we are told that the Serbian doctors are under-qualified.

At the time of the Drenica massacre (March 1998), the police took control of the hospitals. The few Albanian caregivers remaining were not allowed to treat victims from Drenica. Autopsies were not allowed. (*March 1998*)

The Roots of Repression, by Peter Lippman

Kosovo was an important part of the medieval Serbian state. Ever since, it has been the focus of conflict between two competing nationalisms, Albanian and Serb.

During the Turkish occupation, most Albanians converted to Islam and found ways to coexist with the Ottoman regime, while many Serbs emigrated to northern parts of Serbia or to areas under control of the Habsburgs.

Upon the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Kosovo and the areas adjacent to it with Albanian populations were not united with the newly formed state of Albania, as Albanians had hoped; instead, they were divided between Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Around 3.2 million Albanians presently live in Albania, 100,000 in Serbia, 50,000 in Montenegro, between 500,000 and 700,000 in Macedonia, and 1.8 million in Kosovo.

During this century, the Serbian proportion of the population in Kosovo (an autonomous province of the Federal Republic of Serbia) fell from 50% to 10%. After World War II, a period of harsh anti-Albanian repression under Tito was followed in 1974 by changes in the Yugoslav constitution which granted Kosovo broad autonomy – almost equivalent to the status of a federal republic.

The Suppression of Albanian Autonomy

Kosovo's autonomy came to an abrupt halt in the late 1980s, as the nationalist president of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, built his campaign for a Greater Serbia on the foundation of anti-Albanian sentiment among Serbs. Kosovo was the site of Serbia's great defeat at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in 1389, which is celebrated by Serbs as a critical date in their nation's history. Milosevic exploited this history, playing up images of Albanian oppression of Serbs in this "cradle of Serbian civilization."

In 1989 Serbia suspended Kosovo's autonomy, taking control of the police and court system. In the following months and years, as Serbia made an effort to change the ethnic balance of the area, the Albanian political structure of Kosovo was driven underground, the Albanian economy marginalized, and human rights systematically abused.

All public administration and publicly funded enterprises were placed under the direct control of the Serbian government. Approximately 123,000 Albanian workers were fired from their positions in government and the media, as were teachers, doctors, and workers in the government-controlled industry – 70% of all Albanian employees were affected.

As a result, Albanians had to rely on farming, private business, smuggling, and foreign remittances to survive, while their old jobs were given to Serbian and Montenegrin immigrants.

Serbs and Montenegrins came to comprise 70% of industrial workers in Kosovo. By mid-1995, over 75,000 Albanian families had no employed members and as many as half a million Albanians were facing food shortages.

Educational opportunities for Albanians were also severely curtailed. Thousands of Albanian teachers and professors were dismissed, and the University of Prishtina was closed to Albanians. Most subjects were required to be taught in the Serbian language, and curriculum revisions dictated that emphasis be placed on Serbian history and culture.

A form of apartheid developed in Kosovo. Place names were changed to Serbian, and the public use of Serbian and the Cyrillic alphabet was required. Swimming pools and discos in Prishtina were set aside for exclusive Serbian use. Regulations were passed forbidding one ethnicity to sell real estate to the other (although in practice Serbs were free to buy from Albanians.) In 1993 alone, 500 Albanian families were evicted from state-owned apartments.

Serbian Pressure

While Kosovo's Albanian society developed strategies for survival under the Serbs, the Milosevic regime practiced intimidation and abuse of basic human rights. The Albanian-language press was banned, and journalists and human rights activists were harassed and jailed. Serbia prevented the distribution of humanitarian aid in Kosovo by international relief organizations.

In July 1993, a human rights monitoring team from the CSCE (now OSCE – The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) was expelled. Meanwhile, incidents of police harassment, violence, and assassinations multiplied. The denial of due process, imprisonment, prosecution on the basis of ethnicity, and the torture and killing of activists while in detention – all were widely documented by Helsinki Watch and other international human rights groups.

Milosevic launched his career on the issue of "reuniting Serbia," a useful rationale for dominating Kosovo. He gained political support through propaganda about the "oppression of Serbian and Montenegrin minorities in Kosovo." Serbia's ultranationalist parties were even more extreme than Milosevic. Led by Vojislav Seselj and Arkan (Zeljko Raznatovic), the notorious war criminal of Croatia and Bosnia, they promised to expel "disloyal" Albanians from Kosovo. Arkan vowed to "liberate Kosovo from foreign citizens...to move 465,000 'immigrants' [Albanians] out, and return Serbians and Montenegrins to their lands..."

In spite of the fact that Kosovo has been the least developed part of the former Yugoslavia, its mineral and energy resources suggested an essential motive for Serbia's domination of the province. Kosovo contains significant reserves of coal, bauxite, manganese, nickel, cadmium, chrome, asbestos, cement, quartz, lead, silver, and gold, amounting to more than 50% of ex-Yugoslavia's mineral wealth and almost as much of its energy output. Gas and oil reserves are also present.

Demographic manipulation began in the early 1990s. As early as 1989, the Serbian government refused to grant permission to Serbs in Kosovo who wished to sell their property and emigrate.

Serbs and Montenegrins were induced to immigrate by the offer of jobs taken from the Albanians. Serbian refugees from the wars in Croatia and Bosnia were resettled in Kosovo in an attempt to shift the demographic balance of the province.

By 1992, 3,500 refugees had arrived in Kosovo and were placed in apartments in Prishtina, Mitrovica, Peja (Pec), and Ferizaj (Urosevac) from which Albanians had been evicted. Some Serb refugees from the Croatian Krajina were placed in settlements in the western part of Kosovo, where Serbian presence had previously been negligible.

By 1998, as many as one-half million young Albanians had already fled Kosovo for Western Europe because of economic pressures and fear of military conscription.

The legal and social infrastructure of the province was eradicated and replaced with one run exclusively by and for Serbs. In a very short time Albanians had been deprived of their school buildings, their hospitals and clinics, and all participation in local governmental functions.

A Portrait of Resistance

The following material was written by Peter Lippman based on interviews conducted in July 1999, with some excerpts from his 1998 diaries.

In response to Serbian pressure, Kosovo's Albanians developed their renowned and remarkable parallel society.

They held clandestine multi-party elections in 1992, and established an underground Parliament. Primary, secondary, and university classes were held in students' homes, with unemployed teachers and professors paid by Albanian parents. A parallel government was set up in exile. Sports teams, cultural institutions, trade unions, and an independent marketing and tax system all came into being.

This unprecedented civic action made up in enthusiasm for what it lacked in material resources. Albanians in the Diaspora community were mobilized and, for those with access, email networks developed that linked the communities. Websites were designed in Kosovo and hosted on servers in other countries for protection. As Igballe Rogova of the organization Motrat Qiriazhi told me, "At that time there was great solidarity. All of Kosovo was doing some work in the parallel society, volunteering."

Without attempting to be comprehensive, the following collection of short profiles of alternative Kosovar organizations provides a snapshot of the Albanian parallel society.

The Mother Teresa Society

Founded in 1990, the Kosova humanitarian and charitable society "Mother Teresa," which developed an alternative health sector with clinics that were open to all Kosovars – including Albanians, Serbs, Croats, and Roma, became the centerpiece of the parallel health system.

Due to discrimination in the Serbian-run health system, public vaccination programs for Albanian children came to an end in the early 1990s and children's health care was generally inadequate. In response to this, Mother Teresa, with assistance from the World Health Organization, conducted a polio immunization program in 1996 that reached 300,000 children.

By 1998 there were over 7,000 volunteers in the organization. Mother Teresa set up 92 clinics around the province, with an emphasis on providing food, medical, and hygienic services to remote locations. In 1996 alone, Mother Teresa recorded over a million admissions. The organization also operated a birthing clinic in Prishtina, provided special services to the disabled and elderly, and distributed food and clothing to over 30,000 needy families a year.

The Center for the Protection of Women and Children

From Peter's diary:

We went to the Center for the Protection of Women and Children, near the neighborhood of Vellania. The Center is a small storefront with several offices where the special needs of women and children are looked after. At the time we arrived, the staff was in the middle of trying to help dozens of people who had escaped from the Drenica area and were stuck in Prishtina.

We entered the main office and were met by Vjosa Dobruna, a pediatrician who donates time to the organization. Vjosa told us that the Center provides medical counseling and sex education to women and young people, as well as contraceptives. It also provides instruction on human rights monitoring and conflict resolution.

The Center began operating in 1993, growing out of the need to systematize the informal work in the following fields: health prevention and protection, sexuality and reproductive rights, and women's and children's rights. It was started by women who recognized the need to address issues concerning women.

According to the Center, its goal is to "develop in women a better awareness of themselves, of their own needs and their bodies; also to increase awareness of their relationship with their children. We are trying to encourage women to increase their self-confidence as decision makers within their families." The Center provides a place where women can meet, and deals with issues of human rights abuse, as well as the physical and psychological health of women. (March 16, 1998)

The Humanitarian Law Center

The Humanitarian Law Center was founded in Belgrade in 1992 as a response to the human rights violations associated with the growth of nationalism in the former Yugoslavia, and to the ongoing wars in Croatia and Bosnia. A chapter of the organization was formed in Prishtina in 1996.

The Center's goal is to conduct field research on human rights violations. It collects data on war crimes, monitors political trials, and sends reports to Amnesty International, Human Rights

Watch, and other international organizations and embassies. Funding has come from the Open Society Institute, among other donors.

Elena

The women's organization "Elena" was founded in the late 1990s to promote human rights for women. Activist Nazlie Bala explains the organization's background and its work:

"I had six months of human rights training in Norway, and one year in Geneva in 1992, where I learned how to do field research. I then worked for five years as a field coordinator for the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms. I taught people how to take a statement and gave general advice about human rights work.

"Our organization was named after Elena Gjika, who was an Albanian activist in the nineteenth century. She lived in Romania and also went by the name of Dora d'Istria. She worked to create a standardized Albanian alphabet and an Albanian literary language. She also collaborated with the Qiriazi family, three sisters who lived in Albania. They published the first edition of a booklet for women. They opened a school for emancipated women in Korca, Albania. So, in the nineteenth century there was already a movement for the emancipation of Albanian women.

"We founded Elena in October 1997. We had seven paid staff, of whom six were women. We focused on human rights, and organized workshops in women's rights. We also held workshops for traumatized children, once a week for two months.

"We analyzed human rights violations, collaborating with Amnesty International, the Humanitarian Law Center, and the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms.

"We have not been in conflict with the Serbs just these last ten years, but throughout this century. First of all, until 1967-70 the schools, beyond elementary school, were not in the Albanian language, but only in Serbian. So we had no right to education in our own language.

"Secondly, after World War II the Serbian regime organized life according to the ideas of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, especially in Kosovo. They always tried to stop education for Albanians in Kosovo, especially for women. People who agitated for the opening of schools were arrested or killed. Some of them spent 25 or 30 years in jail. We also had difficulties registering our organizations and getting the right to work openly.

"The events of 1968, 1981, 1989, and January of 1998 (the student demonstrations) were like a revolution for the Albanians; we demanded education in our own language because as a nation we have the same rights as every nation. But then we were pushed to war, because the Serbian regime has always been afraid of educated Albanians."

The Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms

During the period of increasing repression in Kosovo after 1989, a pattern of human rights violations became evident, prompting international condemnation. The Council for the Defense

of Human Rights and Freedoms published a quarterly report in Albanian and English, and provided information on human rights violations in Kosovo. It reported cases of persecution of human rights activists, arbitrary detention, torture, and murder.

During the 1990s, the Council worked with a staff of 15 human rights activists. It also maintained a network throughout Kosovo of over 2,000 volunteer informants, people who reported regularly on human rights infractions in their respective areas.

Motrat Qiriazhi

Motrat Qiriazhi (The Qiriazhi Sisters) is a rural organization that works in the Has region of villages between Prizren and the Albanian border. It was founded in 1991, but intensified its operations in the area after 1994.

The organization describes itself in this way: "Motrat Qiriazhi is a group of rural women activists from Kosova. We work with rural women and girls to support them in taking control over their lives and making positive changes for themselves and their communities. This is done through consciousness raising, education and training, and community sub-projects. All of our work flows from what rural women and girls identify as their needs."

Igballe Rogova, one of Motrat Qiriazhi's founders, recounts the story of the organization: "I used to work at the television station, and I was fired in 1990. My sister Safete is an actress. Her director was a Serb, and she was fired too. So both of us were free to do this work. At that time there was great solidarity. All of Kosovo was doing some work in the parallel society, volunteering. The Serbs tried to kill our society, but we woke up instead.

"We formed Motrat Qiriazhi as a rural organization because we wanted to provide a voice for village women. There has been a serious separation between rural and urban life in Kosovo, and in this situation, rural women did not have a voice. Our group realized that there was rising illiteracy among women, so we began literacy courses.

"We wanted to create a strong regional organization. We were the first rural group, and we supported the formation of two others: Legjenda and Aureola. These two organizations are similar to ours; they provide health care or whatever is needed in the different areas where they work. Legjenda is working in the Viti area and in Aureola, around Obiliq [Obilic]. Together we formed the Rural Women's Network.

"We met with these groups once a month for support, training, and networking. We helped them get funding and make contacts with groups outside of Kosovo. We also organized parties to cheer ourselves up when we were depressed or tired. Dancing and singing are very important in Albanian culture; without it we can't survive.

"We went to visit the villages, and found activists to work with us. Our principles were to go to the people and get to know them, to live with them, to love them, and to learn from them. I went to live in the villages. My roots are there, anyway. We found the strengths of the people, and

worked with them, so that they could say, 'We did the work.' We met in the school buildings and schoolyards. This was possible because there were no Serbs in the Has area.

"In the villages, there was a 'bride price.' That means that the groom's family would pay the bride's family. In this way she was something like property. Girls would finish primary school, and then they would start getting ready to get married. They were like slaves. Some girls wanted to go to high school, but they had no opportunity.

"We wanted to keep the good traditions of our people, while helping them to move forward. We went to talk to the parents about their daughters going to high school. They said to us, "We would like them to go to high school, but the school is in Prizren, and that is far from here." So we said, "Let's build a school here." We arranged for funding and built three schools in the area: one gymnasium (general studies) and two medical-preparatory high schools.

"When girls became educated, then they could decide for themselves whether they wanted to marry, and when. In three years, 500 girls registered to attend the high schools. We added sewing classes, and other subjects that the girls wanted.

"The girls wanted literature classes. This was a problem because the Serbian authorities had burned many books that were in the Albanian language. So we encouraged publishing companies in Prishtina to reprint books in Albanian, as well as international literature. This was a kind of cultural revolution.

"In two years, seven new libraries were built in the area where we were working. (Two of them were burned during the NATO intervention.) It was risky, but we were careful. The police came to investigate what we were doing two times. But they didn't harass us too much, because they think that women are stupid.

"I love the word 'revolution,' because it means big changes are happening. For example, these girls had never played volleyball before. We taught them to play, and in 1997 we helped organize a tournament.

"We also encouraged local women to write about their rights. One woman wrote about her life story, and we made an audiotape out of it. This was aired on the radio in Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro, but not in Kosovo, because we did not have the right to run our own radio station. The only exception was in Gjakova [Djakovica], where there was a private radio station.

"We distributed the tapes to families, girls, and schools. We gave them away; we didn't sell them. We wanted everyone to have them. People played the tapes on the buses. We continued this work until 1998, when the war started. Then, since Has was in the border zone with Albania, we could no longer go there.

"In Has, people were nervous about our work for the first three years. But now they speak highly of us. Men were involved in helping us. They support the high school, and help girls to go to school now.

"I am a feminist. Feminists in the world, friends of mine, ask me why I work with men. The answer is simple. I am a feminist and I work with men."

The Catholic Church

Catholics form a significant minority of Albanians in Kosovo. Father Nash of the Catholic Church in Prishtina provided me with some background on the position of the Albanian Catholics under Serbian repression:

"After World War II, the state took over the Catholic Church land in the area where the Grand Hotel is now. There were punishments for being Catholic. At that time the Catholic population was around 6% to 7% per of Kosovo. Many Albanian Catholics were removed to Croatia after WWII.

"At that time, Rankovic was Tito's minister of the interior and he worked to compel Albanians to leave Yugoslavia. Catholics were no exception. Rankovic was devilish in his strategy. He tried to make the Albanian Muslims go to Turkey. But he tried to force Catholics to marry Orthodox Serbs or Montenegrins. For intellectuals to have a good job, they had to be married to Serbs.

"During the period of the Milosevic regime, the government did not permit the building of Catholic churches. Our printing house was closed, and we had to do some of our work illegally. The number one enemy of Greater Serbian nationalism in Kosovo is the Catholic Church, because it maintains the continuity of Albanian history. So if the regime forbids the work of the Church, then it forbids the existence of the Church.

"Tolerance between Albanian Catholics and Muslims is very high. There is no record of a fight between members of the two religions. We have mutual respect. In fact, the Muslims refer to Catholicism as the "old religion," or "fea e vjeter." After all, Albanian Muslims are more Albanian than they are Muslim."

Norma – the Society of Women Legal Professionals

Norma is an association of women lawyers and legal professionals that provides legal assistance to the women of Kosovo. The organization was formed in December of 1998. It was created in response not only to the repression of the Serb regime, but also the inequality of men and women in Kosovo society.

Norma was created with support from OXFAM and the Open Society Initiative, among others. The first phase of its work, as described below, was to organize workshops on various legal issues affecting women. The organization planned to open an office in April this year, but this was delayed due to the NATO intervention and the ensuing expulsion of most of its activists.

Norma activist Zifa Hoxha describes the situation of women in Kosovo:

"Women in the villages have been less educated than in the towns and cities. This has been the effect of the patriarchal system that has been particularly strong in the villages. There, often you

will have a complex of families that are related, that is, an extended family. There may be, for example, three or four brothers who have set up families and stayed together. In this situation, the oldest male is the one who 'holds the law.' Respect for elders and guests is strong.

"In a situation like this, traditionally one son in a family would be educated and the others would work. Daughters would receive less education than the sons. However, after World War II women in the villages became more emancipated, more educated. Also there were more machines to do housework. But after 1990, with the repression from the Serbian regime, the situation went backward. Schools were closed. Life became more difficult, and nearly every family had one member working abroad to send money home.

"It is far from a situation of equal rights for women in the villages, partly because women don't have time to assert their rights. They are very occupied with taking care of the children and the house. Women are very oriented towards the family; it is the most important thing for them. It is different in the city, where women already know what their rights are."

Referring to the period after the removal of Kosovo's autonomy, Hoxha says, "This nine years without work has set us back seriously. For many of us it could have been the best years of our career and our life."

Vjosa Nimani Zylfiu was a judge on the high court of Kosovo until she was removed from that position in 1990. A women's rights activist and founder of Norma, she further describes the background of women's rights in Kosovo:

"There is a great difference here between women who are sophisticated, educated, and those who do not know their rights. For instance, in Kosovo daughters do not receive an inheritance from their parents. This is not because of the law, but because of custom.

"Yugoslavia has ratified all the European rights conventions, so our Kosovo laws guarantee the rights of women. But there is a difference, because there is a poor economic situation here in Kosovo and low employment.

"In the laws, women had all the same rights as men. But the realization of those rights was completely different. For instance, there were very few women in politics. They were there as an ornament. However, before 1990 there was a high percentage of educated women, over 90%.

"In employment, there were more than 50% women in the municipal courts. There were fewer women in the higher courts. There were 18 men and 4 women in the supreme court. In the cities a majority of the nurses and medical technicians were women, and there were many women doctors.

"Women were getting more education until 1989. Then after 1989, there were fewer women in schools. Before 1989 there were medical department buildings in the villages, but then they were closed. In response to this our famous writer, Ismail Kadare, said, 'We have been stabbed.'"

Zylfiu describes the makeup and goals of Norma: "We are an organization of 15 legal professionals with expertise in all areas of law. Our program is, first of all, to work on family, criminal, civil, housing, and inheritance law. Secondly, we want to hold workshops to acquaint women with their rights. For example, women do not know that they have the right to keep their own last names and give them to their children.

"Each of the members of Norma has a specialty. These include family law, criminal law, inheritance law, work obligations, and contract law. We wanted to register the organization with the Yugoslav government. It would have been a good thing for those many of us who have been out of work for nine years.

"We have two Supreme Court members, one deputy district manager, two municipal managers, one director of the legal department of a company, one secretary in a small firm, one member of the Constitutional Court, and one who worked in a bank. All of these people hope to return to work when the institutions are working again.

From Peter's diary:

Students protested here today, but they had other things on their mind than education. The big change in the situation here is the massacres that happened in the Drenica area in the last two weeks. This pushed school issues to the background and changed the focus of today's demonstration.

Yet education remains at the heart of the struggle by civil society. The schools here have been closed to Albanian students since 1989. The students and professors have an underground school system that meets in people's houses and is supported by a parallel tax system, as organized by Kosovo's parallel government. The students started organizing protest demonstrations last October [1997]. These were the first organized non-violent protests in seven years. Two demonstrations in October and one in December were attacked by the police. Today's protest was planned over a month ago.

Albanians anywhere in Kosovo can be picked up by the police at any time and taken to the station for "informative conversations." Torture and disappearances are not unusual. Beating is routine. One of my hosts was beaten for having a library card. He told me that you could be beaten for not knowing the Serbian language. (March 13, 1998)