**Obituary: Dr Hajrullah Gorani (1931-2020)**

**A Tale of Survival and Resistance**

Dr Hajrullah Gorani passed away on July 6th 2020, at the age of 89. He died in his sleep, surrounded by his closest family, content and at peace. His life resembled that of an archetypal endeavour for a 20th century soul: one of struggle amidst political turmoil, social upheavals, state persecution through enduring idealism embroiled in personal sacrifice.

Gorani was born in 1931 in Peja, a small town in the western Kosovo under the rule of then-Kingdom of Serbia/Yugoslavia, in an Albanian-craftsmen family of distinct Ottoman heritage. As a child he witnessed the WWII through Fascist occupation, followed by massive purges of Kosovo’s Albanian population after the onslaught of the postwar, Communist Yugoslavia. Attempts to voice the popular discontent against the harsh reality of what was to become a longstanding one-party dictatorship cost Gorani his freedom while in his teens. At the age of 18 he was arrested and sentenced during a political trial to a 5-year prison, followed by a compulsory double-timed military service. In jail he endured the news of persecution of his family and relatives, the early death of both parents and his elder sister, while a desolate subsistence was to await him outside as the oldest among surviving siblings.

Since childhood, Gorani’s life was embodied as a struggle of survival and resistance. While working leftover jobs in factories and manufacture accross Kosovo, Gorani finished his secondary education and succeeded to enroll as a part-time university student. Already in his late 20s, his life would take a brief course for the better when he married his youth sweetheart from hometown Peja, the 18-year old Besareta Gashi. It was to became a communion of mutual devotion, empathy and solidarity which blessed young Goranis’ with a family which became their lifetime committment and source of joy. Their two daughters and son were born during 1960s as Hajrullah continued his academic progression: graduation in Economics at Belgrade University followed by a Master’s Degree and a Doctorate in 1977.

Gorani belongs to the first generation of teachers of University of Prishtina which was established in 1970. He was admitted as a teaching assistant in 1971 and retired from it as Professor Emeritus in 2000. In-between and over the years, he became a popular figure among young students and academics in Kosovo due to his educational committment and eloquent criticism of then-Communist regime of Federal Yugoslavia. As a former political prisoner, he had to endure a carreer at the public margin but managed to substitute it through tireless underground political activism. By the late 1980s, Gorani rose to become an emblematic dissident figure among Kosovo Albanians as a new, tragic decade of turmoil was to unfold through the decline of the Communist rule and the ascent of hardline nationalist politics in Serbia – embodied in the figure of Slobodan Milosevic, its infamous president who plunged the former federation into wars, mass murders and ethnic cleansing.

During the disastreous 1990s, Dr Gorani was serving as both the founding father and the first chairman of The Union of the Independent Trade Unions of Kosovo (BSPK), as well as a teacher in the then-prohibited University of Prishtina – alternatively organized in private houses with clandestine attendance. Under Gorani, the BSPK became a leading organisation fighting for the rights of Kosovo workers who were systematically fired and prosecuted from all public enterprises during the years of harsh Serbian dictatorship. Dr Gorani became instrumental in the overall popular efforts of Kosovars to internationalize their plight through tireless networking of his BSPK with international fellow-trade unions, such as the USA’s AFL-CIO, France’s Fource Ouvrier, Germany’s DGB/IG Metal and many others across the globe.

While recognized for his calm and modest personal appeal, Dr Gorani never stopped believing in the political activism and popular resistance. The calamity of ethnic aggression which reached Kosovo in 1997, in the aftermath of wars in Croatia and massacres in Bosnia-Herzegovina, found Dr Gorani a leading supporter of the upcoming armed resistance, organized and led by scores of his former students and fellow BSPK associates joining the rising ranks of the Kosovo Liberation Army. He and his family survived the ensuing two years of war and destruction in Kosovo as part of political and armed resistance, undeterred by personal losses and social despair. On June 12th 1999, after almost 70 years of relentless activism and political effort, Gorani witnessed the liberation of his homeland through international military intervention and popular resistance. ‘It was my second birthday’, he would often recollect.

Dr Gorani retired from BSPK chairmanship and professorship in 2001 and became committed to writing textbooks on economy and professional dictionaries. During his teaching carreer spanning for 40 years he published over 20 titles which are still in use for Economics students in Kosovo’s academia. He spent his last days in the peace of his renowned family house garden, in the company of his wife and attended by his children, their sons and daughters.

Dr Hajrullah Gorani’s funeral took place in Prishtina cemetary in a family ceremony. He is survived by his wife Besareta, his daughters Shqipe and Visare, and his son Dukagjin.