

FREEDOM: Yugoslav family continues independence fight

Continued from Page 1

apartment. Today he is not driving his cab, which is how he now earns most of the family's income. He has no vacation home, no condominium, and he is anonymous in his adopted country. He has freedom, and it is enough.

Kadriu, an ethnic Albanian and a rabble-rouser (a "big mouth," Shahe says), fled Kosovo in 1991 with the Serbian police at his heels. Shahe and the three children came later, after tricking customs officials into thinking they were leaving only temporarily.

Like most of Kosovo, which is 90 percent Albanian, the Kadriu family had found itself a majority in a land ruled by an increasingly harsh minority. By the late 1980s, the Serbs were closing the Albanian schools and forcing businesses to fire their Albanian workers.

Now, Balkans experts are warily eyeing Kosovo for signs of further violence. Should the Serbs move militarily against the ethnic Albanians, an all-out war could result with neighboring nations; Macedonia, Albania, Greece and Turkey all have high concentrations of

Albanians and could move to protect them.

"There is a potential for a holocaust, a massacre, whatever you want to call it," says Nicolas Pano, a history professor and associate dean at Western Illinois University, who is doing research on Kosovo.

Pano says that while the world's focus has been on Bosnia for the past few months, soon it will shift to Kosovo.

"This is now the big conflict," Pano says. "The Albanians of Kosovo want independence. The Serbs, of course, are unwilling to grant them independence."

A full-scale Serbian attack on Kosovo would be fierce enough to make the Bosnia situation "only a painful memory," warns Ramadan Bekteshi, president of the Democratic League, an Albanian-American nationalist group, in a recent letter to President Clinton.

During the late 1980s, Kadriu became increasingly angry over the grip the Serbs were exercising over his small region. He made the decision to fight back — he organized rallies and led demonstrations. And he was watched.

"It was a very dangerous situation. We were followed all the time

by Serbian police," said Kadriu, 44. "We were scared, but when you see the nation go down, you don't have to ask what to do. You put yourself in the front of the line."

Ilaz Kadriu was born in 1948 in Kercove, in southwestern Macedonia, a time of relative calm for Yugoslavians, who suffered terribly during World War II.

"There wasn't frustration, no violence," he says. "People were tired of the war."

Kadriu attended a high school that was half Albanian and half Macedonian. He graduated in 1968, just when trouble was beginning to brew. Albanians were demanding their own schools, the right to display their own flag, and the right to speak their own language. Until then, their children were being taught in Serbo-Croatian. They won an uneasy victory in 1974, when the Serbs and Macedonians ratified a constitution that gave them autonomy.

Kadriu escaped the uncertainty by going to Paris to study French, where he earned school money working as a forklift driver for Renault and selling auto parts. In 1971, he received a degree in French that allowed him to translate the language outside France.

He also is fluent in Albanian, Serbian and Macedonian.

Kadriu went back to Yugoslavia and enrolled at the University of Prishtina in 1971. He graduated in 1976 with his third degree in French and literature. He married Shahe, and taught at various colleges in Prishtina, teaching French and Latin.

In 1980, Peugeot opened a shock absorber factory in Prishtina and a friend hired Kadriu as a French translator for the worldwide car manufacturer.

In addition to his work with Peugeot, Kadriu was a court translator in Prishtina, translating for judges. His work carried him across Europe. In 1984, Peugeot sent him to the United States to learn English. He opted for Harper College because he already had friends in the Northwest suburbs.

During this time, the political situation in Kosovo had returned to relative calm. He and the Kosovans still were enjoying rights granted them under the 1974 constitution, which recognized Kosovo as almost its own republic.

But in 1989, Serb tanks rolled into the region. A year later they dismissed the Kosovan parliament and executive council and shut down the TV and radio station in



Ilaz Kadriu, fluent in five languages, is driving a cab until his citizenship clears. After that he hopes he can get a job at an American college or university.

Daily Herald Photo/Bob Chwedyc

Prishtina. The schools, hospitals and universities were closed. Rumors about atrocities began circulating, including one that claimed some Albanian schoolchildren had been poisoned.

Frightened families pulled their children off the streets. The Kadrius' oldest child, Merita, 16, remembers how her life changed.

"We used to go out and stuff and then when it (fighting) started, we had to be more careful," she says. "We had to be in when it got darker. I didn't like that."

In December 1989, Kadriu and nine fellow intellectuals formed the Democratic League of Kosovo. The group opposed Serbian domination of Albanian Kosovans and promoted democracy. The league is now the ruling party for Albanian Kosovans, who declared their independence in 1991 and subsequently elected their own president, Ibrahim Rugova. Violence persists because the Serbs have refused to recognize this independence.

Kadriu risked his life daily. He organized rallies, led demonstrations, and railed against the Serbian government. To the Albanians, his eloquent voice was an inspiration. To the Serbs, he was a menace.

"I was scared for him, because he had big mouth. He talked too much," Shahe says. "Every night he come home, I told him, please don't do that. Don't talk too much... maybe something happen with our children."

On Aug. 22, the retribution on Kadriu finally appeared, in the form of two Serbian police officers carrying machine guns.

"Two policemen came to my office, asked me who I am, and gave me a paper (which) said you have to leave your office," Kadriu said. "Two machine guns — well, what do you have to do? I was forced to accept it. If you don't, they would shoot me."

Six months later, Kadriu made a run for the United States, using visas he had obtained on his international travels. Last August, he was granted political asylum.

"It was very hard to leave all the family and big problems in the middle of Prishtina," he said. "But I had to do that. Nobody knew the next step that would be taken with the police."

And now, from his unlikely spot in suburban Chicago, Kadriu is determined to stay a major player in Kosovo's fight for independence.

His arena has changed. Today, he is trying to pressure the Clinton administration to move against the Serbs in both Bosnia and in Kosovo.

Kadriu wants the United States to militarily intervene in an effort to put a stop to the war in Bosnia and to prevent the war from ever spreading to Kosovo and Macedonia.

He helps direct the Illinois chapter of the Democratic League of Kosovo, which a few weeks ago brought 2,000 people to Washington, D.C., where they demonstrated loudly in front of the White House for the U.S. to intervene.

The Kadrius live in a modest two-bedroom apartment in Mount Prospect. Shahe and the children followed Kadriu here eight months

after he arrived.

The children go to school here: Merita is a sophomore at Prospect High School, and Mentor, 15, is a freshman there. Meriton, 10, is a third-grader at Robert Frost School.

Shahe is a clerk at Venture and Kadriu drives for American Taxi; a job he got through a close friend. Bekteshi estimates there are some 500,000 Albanians now living in the United States.

And while the Kadrius enjoyed the freedom they now have, they miss their former life. The adjustment to virtual anonymity has been difficult for Kadriu.

Because he will not become a citizen until August at the earliest, he cannot work a more profitable job. U.S. universities do not hire teachers who aren't citizens.

"I had to change from professor to physical worker," he says. "It's not easy to recycle myself."

For Shahe, it's even more difficult. While Ilaz's parents have since died, her parents remain in Prishtina as do her siblings and Ilaz' siblings.

"What can I say?" she says. "You work here and you see. In my country, I had good life... But now, it's not too much good life. I cannot buy nothing."

But for now, they are trying to enjoy what they have. Kadriu says that freedom still outweighs everything.

"People in America, they don't know how lucky they are to be born in a free country," he says. "When somebody has a freedom, he doesn't respect this freedom. If somebody loses their freedom then he will see."



Ilaz Kadriu, left, and two friends joined the 2,000 Albanian-Americans who rallied last month in Washington, D.C., calling for American intervention in the Balkans.

BULLS: Big question remains — What happens when Jordan retires?

Continued from Page 1

words will start to be uttered in their presence, words like "history" and "dynasty." And while the Bulls will surely have earned a place in the former, becoming only the third team in the league — the first in 25 years — to win three championships in a row, any claim to the latter would find many a sports fan itching for an argument.

"I don't know whether I would want to use that word," said Jerry West, general manager of the Los Angeles Lakers and architect of the five-championship, nine-trips-to-the-finals "Showtime" Los Angeles Lakers of the 1980s. "I don't like to talk in those terms normally... They are on the doorstep. But I guess I have to wonder where they are going to be without Michael Jordan."

Therein lies the rub. Jordan and the rest of the Bulls may have rattled off three championships in a row if they win this week. But compare that to the 11 garnered by the Bill Russell-led Boston Celtics — a team so steeped in talent that at one time it carried three future Hall of Famers on the bench — or to the five rings won by the Lakers of the '80s, and the Bulls clearly still have work to do.

Chicago is merely poised to join the three-championship Celtics of the Larry Bird era, who still have two trips to the finals on the Bulls and who might have four-peaked from 1983 to 1987 had they not co-existed with Magic's Lakers.

Still, unlike Larry and Magic and Kareem and Dr. J, whose deeds now reside permanently in the history books, the Bulls are a living, breathing, running thing. Just how long they can live and breathe and run at the top will spell the difference between a place in history as "those great Jordan teams" or an even higher place as "the Bulls Dynasty of the

"The great teams learn how to win. I look at the Bulls and they are very calculated now. They don't get too high when they are winning or too low when they are losing. They work."

— Jerry West, Lakers' general manager

'90s."

To find out what it takes to reach this lofty perch, one must seek advice from those who live there: West, the Lakers' general manager, and Arnold "Red" Auerbach, Boston's president, who, while they are struggling to rebuild teams that have fallen to the middle of the NBA pack, nevertheless own 23 world championship rings between them.

"Basically you've got to be a little lucky," said Auerbach, who once was lucky enough to get Bill Russell with a second draft pick because his owner promised the first-picking Rochester Royals the popular and lucrative Ice Capades for two weeks every year.

"You've got to be lucky and you've got to have the players," he said.

Boston Globe sportswriter Dan Shaughnessy, author of "Evergreen," a 1990 history of the Celtics, amended Auerbach's assessment somewhat.

"You have to work hard all the time," Shaughnessy said. "Red always worked harder than everyone else. That's how he got the guys."

Whether by luck or by hard work, both West and Auerbach agreed that great teams are built around a linchpin — a Jordan, a Russell, a Johnson, a Bird — with management constantly making minor adjustments.

"When you get to a certain point, you really have the opportu-

nity to go out and get veteran players who are looking for a chance to play with a winner," West said. "They seem to relax and have a real interest in playing again."

He pointed to his Lakers teams of the early '80s, who boasted a potent attack that included Magic Johnson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Jamaal Wilkes, only to be able to come off the bench with former three-time scoring champion Bob McAdoo.

Auerbach, meanwhile, constantly was scouring the country for talent, spotting players — like hall-of-famer Don Nelson — who were passed over by others. Later he would constantly tinker with the Celtics teams, trading the popular Gerald Henderson in return for a draft pick, a deal that left the World Champion 1986 Celtics picking second in the draft, just a pick away from landing Patrick Ewing.

Auerbach pointed to the Bulls drafting Croatian star Toni Kukoc, who is expected to join the team next year. While the jury is still out on the vaunted European

guard, Auerbach said such moves are needed for sustained success.

"The Bulls at the time could afford to take the pick and go after him," Auerbach said of Kukoc. "I don't know how good he's going to be. But those are the things you have to do."

Beyond adding new players, however, both West and Auerbach agreed the core players on successful teams must remain focused.

"The players need to respond to each other," West said. "They need to respond to the coach."

"You need a rare group," Auerbach said. "A team gets so good, there is a tendency to let down. They get bored of each other. They get bored of hearing the coach's voice."

Auerbach also talked about an old Celtic nemesis now more familiar to the Bulls.

"You're it," he said. "Everybody's gunning for you. They beat you and it makes their season."

"The great teams," West said, "stand alone. They are the target."

West said the great coaches are able to seize on goals to motivate their players. The Lakers always wanted to beat the Celtics or they wanted to repeat as champions, he said.

Consider the Bulls, whose players say they won their first title for their long-suffering fans and their second one for themselves, to prove they were not a fluke. The third is being pursued for the his-



Red Auerbach



Jerry West

tory books, for the rare three-peat. Shaughnessy, writing in "Evergreen," talked of the Russell-era Celtics using these same year-by-year motivational tactics.

"They wanted to repeat, and then they wanted to prove they could beat Chamberlain, then they wanted to prove they could win without Cousy... No 8 was for (retiring coach) Red Auerbach," he said.

"The great teams learn how to win," West said. "I look at the Bulls and they are very calculated now. They don't get too high when they are winning or too low when they are losing. They work."

The big question, everyone agrees, is what will happen when Michael Jordan — now in his ninth

season — hangs up his Nikes.

"I think they will adjust," Auerbach said.

West, however, is not so optimistic. Jordan is "the most talented player I have ever seen," he said. "He creates so many shots for his teammates just by his mere presence. I don't see Scottie Pippen stepping into that kind of role."

No one knows, of course, how Pippen will respond, or how long Jordan will remain at the top of his game, or whether some heretofore unknown star will step up to take the mantle. That is both the fun and the curse of following a team that has moved beyond merely winning.

"How do you keep it going?" Auerbach asked. "That's the question."

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