

INTERVIEW WITH ŞERAFEDİN SÜLEYMAN

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Duration: 167 minutes

Present:

1. Şerafedin Süleyman (Speaker)
2. Ebru Süleyman (Interviewer)
3. Donjeta Berisha (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

Şerafedin Süleyman: My father's time, when I was a little [kid] around four, four and a half years old, even today I would not know my father's day of death and the birthday. When I was four and a half years old, as a small kid I didn't get enough of my father. Thus, me, my brother Remzi and my sister Seniye, three children were left orphaned.

During the time of the old Yugoslavia, the Versailles Yugoslavia, it was known that Yugoslavia belonged to Serbia, Croatia and Slovenes. The other communities didn't have any rights. At the time life was very hard. Before that let me tell you my brother's birth date, [it was] 1925, I was born August 20, 1929. My sister Seniya was born in 1932. This way, we were left orphans. Life was quite hard. Massive poverty, backwardness in terms of education, a lot of backwardness, lack of schooling.

When I was that age, at age seven, my first step towards the school, I registered at the school. Schools were religious back then. It wasn't obligatory but our parents, our father and mother, before anything else tried to register us at school because we would learn the old Turkish literacy there. I learned my first alphabet there, *alif, ba, ta, tha, ayn, ghain, qaaf, ahir, qaa*¹ [reciting the Arabic alphabet], I still use some of the things I have learnt there. The classes would be verbal. We would mostly study by heart. However, the important thing regarding those schools was the foundation they gave for good manners. Primarily, how to treat our elderly at home, how to communicate in public places, how to avoid bad places. This way, our first steps regarding good manners were given by those schools. Other than this Islam and Quran, how to use Quran in life so that with additional information, we do not forget Quran and learn it as well.

We had an old house that I told before; the house was located towards the narrow street at the end of Meto Bajraktar. Our closest relatives, we were almost all connected. On one side my neighbour was a Serbian and on the other side my closest relative, my uncle my brother Ilyaz Ramiz with his kids and family. After them it was Hadji Hasan Effendi.² There were family of Avni Necat, (inc.) Nazüç *Hanim*.³ It

¹ Letters of the Arabic alphabet.

² Efendi, a title of respect or courtesy in Turkish, used for men.

³ *Hanim*, a title of respect or courtesy in Turkish, used for women.

was connected with *kapicik*⁴ in between. At that time in Pristina in general locals were able to communicate through *kapicik*.

At our house, there was a room, a *çüşk*⁵ and I can say a kitchen on the floor below. However, kitchens had big chimneys and there were not even wooden floors on the ground. There, we would prepare meals and all the things that we had to do. Poverty, great unemployment everywhere, eighty-eighty five percent were not able to read; that is why regarding prosperity we experienced very tough and very hard days. Our city, the streets, we were drowning in mud. These roads that we see now, when I try to think back these are amazing things. When we tried to explain these to the newer generations, they did not believe that that kind of life existed.

When I enrolled in school it was close to our house mosque, Sudi Efendi Mosque. We used to have classes there. After all, majority of these kind of schools were all either in mosques or private houses. My teacher was Mullah Maliç was really harsh but also very righteous. Back then, if you did not study or if you did not try to study those lessons, you would get a beating. One of our teachers had a stick, he used a bat as well. Sometimes in order to keep discipline and approve lessons they would use *falaka*. *Falaka* is a sort of heavy execution. They would hold your feet tightly with a stick, one wooden stick and a metal bar and then they would spank the bottom of the feet with a whip so the bad behaviour does not repeat again and the [student] would think he/she is bound to deliver homework. This was the case in school but I can say that regarding good manners and education the schools were generally helpful.

It is understood that the highest most important class was the Quran lecture. How it is supposed to be read, how it is supposed to be continued [applied]. Then there were months of Ramadan at the mosque, there were many *hafiz*⁶ at the river neighborhood but an all-encompassing *hafiz* that has a beautiful voice reading *yasin*⁷ by heart. When he started reading it (quran) in the first day of Ramadan, I was selected to track [the book] and correct him and to notify where he made a mistake because [he] was blind but would recite all of the Quran by heart. I would sit low from the start of Ramadan until the end. It was required to sit low, there was special table where the Quran would be. I am telling you this as an example, later in the mosque there were *tarawih* prayers, these were regular prayers, I would try to participate every now and then but quite rarely.

I think I did tell you, in that period I read the Quran as the whole twice but since it was verbal and by heart most of the stuff is forgotten. So that today I do not know how to read the old Turkish, but back then I used to read and write. It has been forgotten, verbally.

⁴ *Kapicik*, literally means small door in Turkish. These small gates existed between the houses built next to each other, which ensured intimacy, and closeness. The word is also used to refer to easily reached places.

⁵ *Çüşk*, from Turkish, a high rise room that has a ledge commonly seen in Ottoman architecture.

⁶ *Hafiz*, is the person who can recite the Quran by heart. It is an Arabic word that derives from the root “ḥfz”. The word “ḥāfīz” in Arabic is the agent of the verb “ḥafāza” meaning “to save, to remember.”

⁷ *Yasin*, is the thirty-sixth sura of the Quran

Now I mentioned back then, there was poverty, we used to have rough days in the winter. Formerly winters were very frigid, at homes most families were using wooden stoves for heat. In our house in the large room there were large closets for bedding where we put stuff, *hamamcik*,⁸ the windows were a bit apart, the wood stove was always burning but if you'd extinguish it then the rooms would freeze. We would make slurry paper to close those gaps to block the cold so we can somewhat get warmer and go on with our lives. We would buy wood at the bazaar. Villagers would bring wood with carriages on Tuesdays, we would call them *bellek*.⁹ Often we would buy just a small amount because we could not afford it. On many occasions it would be damp; until you managed to light up the fireplace, the whole room would fill with smoke. In short, it was a hard life.

The streets, as I mentioned before, we would drown in mud. What made that mud was mostly when it rained too much, all the water would pour everywhere all the way to the center of Pristina in front of the Union. Because at the time we had two rivers: River Prishtevka and River Velusha. River Prishtevka would flow from the north, Velusha from the Germe forest. These two rivers had differences, Velusha was much faster and much stronger. This one, Prishtevka had a wider stream bed, its water would be used to irrigate the gardens. There used to be gardens in the south and west side where the stadium used to be and is now still. The owners of the gardens would use water from water mills to water the gardens. [There were] many vegetables in the garden. When you start from onion, pepper, tomatoes, okra were farmed there and they would fill the town market with their goods.

In some places towards Tophane neighborhood, there was a trench and a pool and sometimes us kids would swim there in order to cool off in summer days. Another positive thing of the river was that surrounding area contained willow trees and poplar trees that would jollify the air. Thus it had good sides and bad. Bad side was when it overflowed it used to demolish and destroy everything. Bridges, bridges were made of wood, just the strong bridges would endure. Thus we saw benefits and on the other hand its harms.

As time went by, in the socialist system, because when waters were damaging they also polluted the streets. Streets were covered in dirt, garbage, lots of families would pour down stuff to the water stream and those were spreading and causing damage. In 1984 if I can remember correctly, both rivers were covered so that damage would stop. But it was a big mistake. Instead of restoring and finding a solution, they went with an easier way as it required lots of investments. Back then the city did not have strength to start projects like this and thus, Pristina was left riverless.

Another thing was causing pollution on Pristina streets. Military barracks, where the university is today, soldiers of the artillery section; when they were passing from the town with horses carrying weapons, dragging cannons, they would leave mud on the streets. That mud is resin. That resin would

⁸ *Hamamcik*, from Turkish, literally means small bath or hammam.

⁹ *Bellek*, from Turkish, a word indicating a certain measurement or size.

stick like glue. It would not come off for days from the streets, so the next order of agenda was to remove barracks and put them outside of the city as a solution.

Ebru Süleyman: Uncle, which soldiers were they?

Şerafedin Süleyman: Excuse me?

Ebru Süleyman: Which soldiers?

Şerafedin Süleyman: What year?

Ebru Süleyman: Who are these soldiers?

Şerafedin Süleyman: Old Yugoslavia, soldiers of the old Yugoslavia. Because then we moved the barracks from the city to the outskirts. Afterwards NATO bombarded those areas; military, everything changed but city got saved from a lot of stuff.

Ebru Süleyman: Uncle do you remember the First World War?

Şerafedin Süleyman: The First World War, how can I say, I did not see it myself but I experienced its results, those results were felt in the old Yugoslavia. There was no perspective for young people, as I say, unemployment. The only thing existed was three-four mills, in those mills wheat, corn and other similar things that were farmed in villages were ground and used in order to make corn flour. Back then in households corn flour was widely used. In bakeries they would make corn bread and sometimes pastries with spinach using corn flour.

Then many households had animals for continuing life. Cow, sheep and goats were the most [common]. They would use buffalo milk for members [of the family] and to sell them a bit as well. At the time we had a cow as well. That cow used to provide a lot of milk. We would enjoy making yogurt, yogurt and bread mix; me, my sister, my brother he did not care he was older, but [the cow] was helping considerably. Our yard had a long shape, left, right I don't know five-six meters, we would keep the cow there. As the time went by we removed the cow, started with a different system, because the government started getting better, we started buying milk from the outside, like that. In our town other than Serbs, other than Albanians, other than Turks we had many different minorities. In our town we had Gypsy - Roma. Their neighborhood was where the park is now, city park, how should I say...

Ebru Süleyman: Above *Dert Lule*?

Şerafedin Süleyman: North, which one is the other one?

Ebru Süleyman: South...

Şerafedin Süleyman: South... South side park is the best place to live, it had the cleanest air there. Serbian gypsies there on the Proleter street, there were Ashkali as well. Those are half Albanian half Gypsy but they were living together with other ethnicities working, functioning. Gypsies mostly worked in cleaning but they would do their duties. Then some Gypsies at electrical power plant, old electrical power plant towards the end of the Divan road where the train passes; there some Gypsies would claim themselves as Turks, well mannered, literate. Most of them worked at the post office and other institutes, thus they were spread, there were a lot of them.

Other than them, there were Jewish people in Pristina. According to statistical research that was made in 1931, there were almost three hundred seventy plus Jewish families living in Pristina, however after the Second World War there were just a few left. And when the Germans came, those families still staying here, they destroyed them, threw them into camps in Germany, Austria. They killed a father and a son as first example in Taukbahce, Germans. How should I say, in order to attest that Jewish people were living [here], in Velanija hill in Pristina, across from Taukbahce they have their cemeteries there. For some Jewish people, for burying their dead, there were some places reserved at the Serbian cemetery. Then Jewish people, before Germans came, most of them had shops in the covered bazaar. They were more educated, more scholar than us. Jewelry, dry goods [shops] and other crafts, how do they say, they set an example for us.

Grand bazaar, sometimes called a covered-bazaar. Covered bazaar was only at the entrance where there was a big iron gate. At night they would shut that gate so the thieves could not get to this side [inside]. Shops were closed with shutters. Streets were laid down with pavements. But life there was very energetic. Buying and selling, shopping among people. Just before the entrance, there was the *vakf*.¹⁰ In that *vakf* office, late Hafuz Isak used to work. Well known *hodja*. Its from the family of Sahit barber, their father. In that *vakf*, Muslims would get registered, there you would know all the details of Muslim people. Especially when I started searching my father's history, date of birth, date of death, to this day, I approached the *Bashkësia Islame*, it became *Bashkësia Islame* now, to search knowing there would be some documents remaining from the *vakf*, but what was the answer? Says, "All the archives were burned down by Slobodan Milošević's militants, nothing remained." Thus I lost hope that I could find sources and finalize the dates of birth and death.

According to my prediction, my calculations, my father died in 1936-37, calculating age four, four and a half, it should be that. But that is not exactly accurate. My mother died in 1943. Her right side was paralyzed, a three-month disease. We tried a lot, we even brought Italian doctors. My cousin Abdurrahman Shala, he had connections with Italians. Acquaintances from his side.

¹⁰ *Vakf*, Also known as *Vakıf*, is an institution introduced by the Ottoman Empire which was responsible for keeping the records of the Muslim community of the empire and which generally included a Madrasah within its structure as well. Now this institution is transformed to the Islamic Union [*Bashkësia Islame*].

My mother's name was Behice. Now my daughter's name is, we named her after her. Because I was married after '49. Right after I got married I went straight to the army. I did my duty in Novi Sad, Vojvodina. One night I suddenly get this telegraph. What is happening, they are saying that my first child is a girl, they are asking what name should we give her. I said give her my beautiful mother's name. My mother is from Vuçitrn, I forgot their surname. There were many relatives from her side in Vuçitrn. And the know Hadji Selim Efendi, primary *hodja*. Sabit Efendi, used to come to visit with their families for a long time for *bajram*. Us youngsters we did not know how to keep this connection. Very recently, they migrated from there to Turkey. There was Mazhar, he was managing the small shop where they sold tobacco, cigarettes, he used to walk with crutches. Even in that condition, he would visit every now and then, to see how we are, what are we up to.

Mensur, he is my uncle, grandson of my aunt. He migrated to Turkey. He shined there, engineering, civil engineering, is what he did there. We lost contact with him as well. What happened, what did he do, we do not know. These things are before I registered to school, in Serbian. I turned seven years old, all of a sudden I had to register to this, elementary school. Elementary school was [obligated by] law back then. It was mandatory when you were seven years old. Then I cut with [religious] school. [Religious] schools started to shut down. Government was not allowing it. But they still existed in private houses illegally.

Ebru Süleyman: Uncle, was this after the Second World war?

Şerafedin Süleyman: No, this was before the Second World War, before.

I was saying, the schools did continue this way, still forbidden but in private houses. Parents were trying in every way for kids to go to those schools. With unemployment, what was happening, kids were mostly apprenticing, servants to shops, privates [private businesses]. I did that job as well, I entered to barber workmanship, Foreman Ahmet Kirna, aquintant family, they migrated also. Cavit Kirna, Ahmet Kirna, Sait Kirna family, I did an apprenticeship there for a long time. Their father Foreman Kirna, Ahmet Kirna he was old, he knew how to make medicine for many diseases. Regarding high blood [blood pressure]. I saw a lot of things there, primitively however what he made cured people. At first one horn, he collected blood with an animal horn, but he used to pierce [the skin] with a machine to get the blood first, he did circumcsions, he used to make medicine against scabies, that is what I had to carry multiple times with a pitcher from the bazaar neighborhood to the central area. Their shop was on the main street, Divan Street [UÇK St. today] neighborhood.

Then for a while I did an apprenticeship at a patisserie, there was Pehlivan patisserie. Mostly in holiday times, when schools were on holiday. I would do apprenticeships in order to earn some money, to pay for my school expenses, to buy books, notebooks. Then my brother Remzi, [he used to do] craft he was a tailor. Together with his friend Memduh Zehir, they had a shop as well. In Divan Street. But they

would do tailor work. My brother Remzi carried a heavy burden, for us, to put us forward, we were small, me and my sister Seniye.

What else was interesting then... Huh, seven years primary school in Serbian language. In those schools there was a class for religion once a week. Our teachers from *vakf* would come, [they would decide] who is going to go to which school to teach. They would explain, requirements for Muslims, various things for Muslims one hour, two hours at a time. Government would allow this legally, because it was in the curriculum, elementary school curriculum *vero nauka* [religious education] they would call it in Serbian, meaning they were held for religious reading. Even a woman from Globoder's¹¹ would come and hold lessons. [I completed] the whole schooling in Serbian language.

On the other hand what would happen, when history, history accounts were taught, Kosovo war, the war that happened in the Kosovo in 1389, in history often from the Serbian side they would exaggerate bravery of Miloš Obilić, Car Lazar, Kraljević Marko and whatnot. We could not stand that, Muslim kids, back then there was no Albanian, all of us Muslim kids. Turks, Albanians united. We were not studying those lessons out of spite, that was why we would get minus grades. Many times, after we would go out of the classroom we would fight because of that lesson. Turks on one side, Serbs on the other, until the parents came and intervened. Then they had to complain to the principal about how the harmony is collapsed. I graduated from that school, how do they say, *shembullor*¹² [in Albanian], cannot find the Turkish word for it.

A long time afterwards, in 1941 Germans came, they occupied Yugoslavia, Kosovo in the same wave. Now we stood still, what is going to happen, what should we expect, what will happen? You see, memory weakens. I want to roll back again. There were hardships at the time also from the health standpoint. Many contagious diseases, from poverty, from penury, from inadequate, bad quality food. There was a hospital, in Dragodan hill, that one was left from Turks. Polyclinic, clinic and now municipality health center. There was a clinic across the Turkish houses, the officers' houses. The street towards the bazaar, the clinic was right in front. There were also showers for bathing. Whoever could enter, they would need connections. I used them few times for bathing, because *hammam* closed.

Hammam used to function in old Yugoslavian times. Afternoon for women, morning for men. I did use that [*hammam*], I went there. My brother Remzi also went there. There was Foreman Ali, Foreman Ali, he massaged, bathed; there were bath basins, aluminium bowls, there was even a small pool, but it was used scarcely. Mostly sweating room, washing room, there was cabins in cages in the middle. People used to go there with food, drinks; water fountain in the middle. But that got ruined, wrecked, to this day they do not know what to do. These new people who took it on to repair, they did a lot of damage to those remainings, today their existence would have been very important. Writings on the

¹¹ Globoder is a family name.

¹² With excellent grades.

wall, how should I say, drawings, they are all destroyed. When they arrived to clean it supposedly, they did more damage to it.

And now I graduated a four-year school, Germans came. For the first time in Pristina's history a gymnasium¹³ opened, Sami Frashëri Gymnasium. Serbs completed the construction that gymnasium [building] before Second World War started, '40 - '41. First time a big structure like that to exist; we were amazed, would go out and look how it is. These other houses were all low, old roof tiles, things. But this came prepared.

It was the first time the rights of Albanians and minorities started to be recognized. Albanian flag started to be used freely, but Albanian flag and around it, how can I say, fascist (inc.) [ensigns], the fascist [ensign] was an axe, so it was the eagle and axes on both sides, meaning yes you have the right but you should know fascism is ruling. A new protectorate was installed, protectorate a new government, schools started opening all around Kosovo and Pristina. Albanian language started to be used freely, many traditions became free to practice. Italian army, Germans gave it [control of the state] to Italians, in short notice Italy took over.

What happened when Germans were still here. They built a camp, where the university is, in the garden of the university. In that camp one hundred and five citizens from Albania were executed in one night. Because they rioted against Germans and they took them from Albania and did the thing. There were [people] who lived their lives, part of their lives under torture in this camp in Pristina. For example, our friend Rašit, Rašit of Kocadiš family, his last name... Rašit Beytullah! Sait Zatriçi, Vehap Shita, five-six people from Presheva, locals. My uncle Tefik Shala, my mother's brother, he went there also. Some of them survived, they left them alive, disabled [people], those abandoned from life.

I remember, the director of the hospital of Tirana was one-armed, I wrote his name somewhere, cannot remember it, he stayed at our place for three months after they left the camp, released these [people]. We had to feed them, clean them, they had not washed themselves. Even those who stayed, they organized quickly who wanted to go back to their own country. This, with flags, trucks, things, surrendered, they went back to their homes. Such that, the camp was a very painful thing. At night we could hear the sounds of guns, when they were shooting [people]. Those people who were going to get shot, those people dug the ditches and then they would lie in them. Then after they removed (inc.). What is more in protectorate time. What was interesting. Government was installed.

Part Two

And a lot of new things were initiated, how do they say, were encouraged. After the end of the Second World War people had an enthusiasm. One, no... I skipped [something]... I skipped, this happened

¹³ A European type of secondary school with emphasis on academic learning, different from vocational schools because it prepares students for university.

when Germans left, when independence was happening.

Ebru Süleyman: When Italians came, right?

Şerafedin Süleyman: Excuse me?

Ebru Süleyman: When Italians came.

Şerafedin Süleyman: Italians, where the museum is, there is the general headquarters of the Italians. Every night they would raise the Italian flag with the music and their anthem, we used to go out and watch it. Then they organized something in the schools for kids. *Balilla*,¹⁴ small scouts. They would give us overcoats and caps, so they [kids] would connect to the fascist party, shape them from childhood, they would show kids around, travel, like excursion. I enrolled in that scout organization as well.

Now my brother used to work as a tailor, he was enrolled with Memduh at CRZ,¹⁵ syndicate organization. Workers they had their own organisation there, my politic life started there somehow. During this forty-year period, I have work experience of forty years effectively, nineteen days and three months when I retired. I can say approximately fifty, fifty-five percent my life was connected to politics. All the work I did, I performed many different functions but I did professional work also. I did most of my work with health issues.

Ebru Süleyman: So, Uncle, how did you connect after the Second World War?

Şerafedin Süleyman: Now when the Second World War ended, independence happened, on the 19th of November 1944 Partizans and Bulgarians entered the city. We were waiting in the middle of the night in the old house that someone would come from somewhere. My uncle's daughters were preparing the proletariat flag with the sickle and hammer, red flag. They were working on it at night so we can go out the other day and greet them. In the morning this guy comes, Božo Ričkin, Serbian, knocking on the door, "Neighbor come on we survived" he was shouting. Together with Remzi we said, "This guy is a *chetnik*¹⁶ is this freedom?" "Leave!" When [he] left we rushed in front of the city hall.

City Hall was, there is the Çarşi Mosque, there was a market in front of the Çarşi Mosque it is also demolished, and right there was the city hall. We went out in the morning, we put red bandages

¹⁴ Italian, *balilla* is a member of a Fascist paramilitary youth movement in the time of Benito Mussolini.

¹⁵ CRZ, possibly an early workers' organization for craftsman.

¹⁶ Serbian movement born in the beginning of the Second World War, under the leadership of Draža Mihailović. Its name derives from *četa*, anti-Ottoman guerrilla bands. This movement adopted a Greater Serbia program and was for a limited period an anti-occupation guerrilla, but mostly engaged in collaboration with Nazi Germany, its major goal remaining the unification of all Serbs. It was responsible for a strategy of terror against non-Serbs during the Second World War and was banned after 1945. Mihailović was captured, tried and executed in 1946.

{showing with hands} to show we are for the party. In front of the house of Menduh, there Bulgarian soldiers, “Stop!” Stopped us. “You can not...” But we explain {pointing to the bandage on his arm}. They left us somehow, we went to the city hall. As soon as we went in front, Serbs had multiplied! Serbian flag, “*Živela sloboda*” [Long live freedom]. They are not even mentioning the party no “Long live the Communist Party.” We were shocked. Is this what we hoped for? Pity on us. Muslims all of them closed up, closed the doors. Bulgarian soldiers started to break stuff, cruelty, from house to house. Hypocrites, Serbians they would point Muslim houses to them. Here is a concrete example: That day, everyday people gathered in front of the city hall, municipality. And we saw Bulgarian soldiers with bayonets, they tied an Albanian, villager, with wires on his hands and dragged him to execution [by shooting]. In that moment Mustafa Hoxha Mylshevci, partizan commander and his Montenegrin comiser, with horses and machine gun in front, white hat, *plis*¹⁷ but with the Albanian flag.

He helped Pristina folk a lot. Gathered musicians, drums, tambourines, hand drums of people. People following him from one street to another, he opens the doors, “Go out. It is our victory too!” But at that moment they stopped them over the table when they were taking the Albanian. Mustafa Hoxha Mylshevci is asking, “What’s that?” Are they sending him to execution or jail? We do not know. He orders and tells the soldier to release the guy. Bulgarian soldier says we do not care about partisan orders, only general staff can give us orders. He turns the machine gun, these guys released the guy to his two friends to send him to his home. Removed those wires. Then we started celebrating, we have [the victory] as well, it is not just theirs. Then to demonstrations everyday. Demonstrations went from street to street and it is a different atmosphere, people started to relax. But that (inc.) who was knocking on the door, they murdered him in Veternik. What happened, so and so [he] went to Veternik. They would clean people in Veternik who still wanted the old Yugoslav system back.

Before that I spent my childhood in the Bazaar neighborhood. Bazaar street where the bazaar is today. There my closest friends are again children of my relatives. For example, big brother Ilyas’ kid Mühedin, Şemsi he was closer with Remzi more. His step brother Necmi, my aunt’s kids Kurteş. Kurteş, Parteş, Süleyman. The son of my other aunt Kemal. Again the son of my other aunt Süleyman, Şevki. Apart from these, Ilyaz from the Hacıağuş family, who was a minister of Albania and Mustafa Hacıağuş, brother of Ilyaz Ağuş. Their grandkids Ali Ağuş, Bürhan, Ridvan, Virdan and their sister Zeynep, I think her name was, we grew up with them together. Plus these are kids of my relatives.

Why in the Bazaar neighborhood? Inside where there is a bazaar now, where they sell the old stuff, there used to be a big garden. Pears, apples and other fruits, property of Ilyaz Efendi and Mustafa Efendi. They [fruits] were grown for them. Also the entrance was narrow, like now when you enter the bazaar. Bazaar was in front and there was a covered structure, there they would hold the bazaar on Sundays meaning Tuesdays. Wheat, corn, these kind of stuff that are under danger from rain used to be sold there. On this side they made canopies later, I have pictures. [Under] those canopies dairy,

¹⁷ Traditional white felt conic cap, differs from region to region, distinctively Albanian.

milk, creams, pickles what have you, villagers would bring them and sell them, that was the bazaar in general.

Animal bazaar was where Avala¹⁸ is, actually where the *dom* [house] is, it used to be the house of the officials there. Zahir Pajaziti that boulevard down there, where now I do not know is UNMIK, there used to be a beautiful structure with a pool, house of officers. We could enter there with a billet. Me, the kids also happened to catch a swim there but people could not get that billet. I had a privilege to get it since I was involved with administrative functions.

Ebru Süleyman: Uncle, when you survived after the Second World War...

Şerafedin Süleyman: Yes.

Ebru Süleyman: Can we continue from there, when Yugoslavia formed and how everything started to change?

Şerafedin Süleyman: I did not tell you about the gymnasium. In the gymnasium in 1946-47 I graduated from the gymnasium. Did not continue until the eighth grade. Why? The situation in Kosovo made them turn towards our school gymnasium with the need to gather us youngsters. So I was the head of youth in a school in a gymnasium. "Who is answering to be a volunteer teacher?" Some twenty-thirty people registered. New schools opened in all the villages, no teachers. In order to train teachers we had to stop school to continue [with the teaching], us who separated as volunteers, after a week they said get ready to go to Prizren with a truck. They lectured us for three months on pedagogics on how to execute teacher duties. I continued with those lessons, finished the course, came back to the city, now we are waiting for the decisions. The decision came for me "*Şerafedin Süleymani po emërohet për mësues në katunin Petashnice*" [Şerafedin Süleymani is appointed to work as a teacher in the Perashnica village].

No no, that is not it, the first village they appointed me to I am forgetting the name, I was scared to go there, there were still gangs strolling, I did not go. Then the second decision came for the *katunin Rrufc, Rrufci vjetër* [village of Rrufc, Old Rrufc]. In the Municipality of Lipjan, Lipjan city hall. You have to walk for two-three kilometers from Lipjan to the school on foot. I took the decision and there was a henchman who was appointed to school, he was waiting for me in (inc.) station. He knew when I was supposed to arrive, [was] waiting. "*Hajde daskal. Hajde daskal*" [Come on teacher, come on teacher]. But we are walking with a stick, and we passed some cemeteries, "*Ku o bre ai katun?*" "*Edhe pak, edhe pak.*" [Where is that village? Just a little bit, little bit more.] Then all of a sudden, bam. We went and the villagers were waiting, "*Na ka ardh daskali! Na ka ardh!*" [Teacher arrived! He arrived!] I said come on. That night [they] hosted, dinner is ready *flija*,¹⁹ pies, where am I going to settle down. "*A nesër po*

¹⁸ Avala was a coffee house next to the plato in the Pristina city center.

¹⁹ *Flija*, traditional pastry dish.

shkojm në shesin e shkollës, me ndreq, me rregullu” [Tomorrow we are going to go to school yard, to fix, to restore].

Tomorrow (inc.) head of the intermission school. We came to school and what to expect? Windows are broken, desks are piece by piece, blackboard where it used to be worked on is gone, rush people to clean it, fix it. Somehow we managed to fix it and correct it, I continued with the kids in Albanian. There were some ninety students. First grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade. Could not get notebooks in an orderly way. We did those things, we drew, we did things where we are supposed to give grades and whatnot. But the conditions are not good. “*Këtë javë me Mulla Shabanin*” [This week at Mulla Shaban’s], one blanket on my shoulder. Food and stuff there. This other week in other one, the other week I do not have a place to shower, no place to clean myself. In the meantime I am still giving lessons at nights in conferences with the folks. What a pity, what kind of bad luck is this, this is unbearable. However, people really liked me. They trusted me.

Inspector Shefqet Velihu comes, he was known as a good person, he just recently passed away. He tried asking the kids, before he went two days later he wrote his opinions. Super. Before I go home I say, “*Shoki inspektor, kom dy fjalë. Unë me kto kushte ktu nuk rri.*” [Comrade inspector, I have a word or two; I cannot stay here under these circumstances]. “*Mo, katunarët me ty po bojnë be*” [Don’t, villagers are doing [well] with you]. “*Ja thash unë jom shehërlë*” [No I said I am townee]. “I cannot continue in these conditions. There is no place to clean myself, no place to do stuff, just get me out of here however you can”. “Do not worry you just carry on”. A week did not pass, a decision came. Go to New Rrufci, distance between Old Rrufci and New Rrufci, I do not know maybe around one kilometer. But in New Rrufci Montenegrins. School is how a school should be. Serbs, in Serbian [language]. What am I doing here? To my surprise Albanian kids from five Albanian villages go there. They are together there Serbs and Albanians in the same structure. But they gave me a room, they gave me a rifle just in case. There were still gangs rolling in Kosovo.

Ebru Süleyman: What are those?

Şerafedin Süleyman: Those who did not want parizans, communist system.

Ebru Süleyman: Who? Serbs?

Şerafedin Süleyman: *Balli Kombëtar*,²⁰ the party of Albanians yes. But there in the middle somehow illogical, that director woman Vera Stanojević, her husband, they were not married yet they were getting together, preserving [themselves] from me. She was the manager of the school for a long time, but I was constantly scuffling with her because I would let the classrooms to be used for meetings.

²⁰ *Balli Kombëtar* (National Front) was an Albanian nationalist, anti-communist organization established in November 1942, an insurgency that fought against Nazi Germany and Yugoslav partisans. It was headed by Midhat Frashëri, and supported the unification of Albanian inhabited lands.

Socijalistički Savez [Social Alliance], young people were meeting occasionally. She was getting mad because the school was getting dirty, then it needed to be cleaned and whatnot.

Then one day a call arrives, “You have to report immediately, *oblasni komitet* [regional committee], youth director and you should notify, there was Lazo Razović and Refki Davut from Prizren,” but he was in the committee also, paid officer. I went to Pristina the next day, I said, “This is really good”, waiting in the office. The office is where RTK is now. I saw [him], “*Znašlo, zdravo, mirë se je ardh*” [how is it, hello, welcome] whatnot. “*Çka ka? Šta ima novo?*” [What’s up? What’s new?] “*Pripremi se ti*” [Get ready], Kosara Balavanović, wife of Ramadan Vranić, was Serbian. Ramadan was married with her. She was a journalist, she had children broadcast and village broadcast in Radio Pristina. Tahir Beriša from Gjilan, Fahri from Ferizaj. Us five people and Drita Dobroshi. Our Dobroshi looks like, you see how long the story goes. That Drita was a beautiful girl, girl but avid. Us five to Belgrade. Where to? Three month training, for managing trainers, directors and youth organization in the future. There was most famous firms Boris Kidrić, Egber Kadlec (inc.) these firms were giving lectures to us. There I cleaned up my Serbian. I finished that as well.

Ebru Süleyman: What year?

Şerafedin Süleyman: Excuse me?

Ebru Süleyman: What year is this?

Şerafedin Süleyman: What year, this is before ‘49. I can say before ‘49 but I do not know it exactly because when I came back from there I was getting worried because in municipality committee, party committee, I was a paid officer. I used to be in charge of *Agit Prop*²¹ sector and for the secretary staff. Years go by, I am just a high school graduate. The time will crush me. In ‘49 finally, pedagogic course is opened again in Peja. There again the staff is getting ready for the schools, schools are constantly spreading constantly opening.

My committee secretary was I do not want to say illiterate but stiff. “*Partija misli o tebi*” [The party thinks about you]. I said, “*Slušaj Miloš ostavi partiju, vreme prolazi. Ja hoću da idem da pohađam kurs da sticem kvalifikaciju*” [Listen, Miloš leave the party, the time passes. I want to go get a course to qualify]. “*E idi pitaj Xhavit Nimani*” [Then go ask Xhavit Nimani]. Xhavit Nimani is the *bog batina* [main guy]. “*Dobro*” [Okay], I go to Xhavit and say, “So and so, I want to go there”. “But we have to ask Predrag Ajtić (inc.) for you”. Predrag Ajtić and Đoko Pajković are high calibres of the Provincial Committee. Predrag spoke Turkish, he was from Prizren. I went to him and said so and so, he said “do not let Xhavit mess around, you just go there”, I wrote a letter to Peja. I return back, “Xhavit write that” I say, he wrote a letter, I took the letter and went to Peja. The course in Peja is Serbian and Albanian. Serbian for Serbs, Albanian for Albanians...

²¹ Agit Prop, short for *Agitacia i Propaganda* in Serbian, meaning agitation and propaganda.

Ali Rexha was a chief director. “*Qet’ letër ka dhënë shoku Xhavit*” [This letter is from Comrade Xhavit]. “*Po, po, për juve funksioner gjithmonë intervenime*” [Yes, yes, for you operators always with interventions]. *Thashë*, “*Unë nuk di çka pe shkrunë, po m’ka thonë me dorëzë*” [I said “I do not know what it says there, they just told me to hand it over]. He read it, there it said take him and enroll. He says “*nuk bon, gjysa kursit ka kalu, programi ka kalu, gjysa*” [you can’t, half of the course is passed, program has passed, half of it]. It took three months, half of the program is gone. I started shaking. Radovanović is the director of the entire pedagogical course. He knew me. “*Ajde Alija nemoj da se zezaš, daj çoveku*” [Come on Alija, do not play around, give it to the man]. Let me enroll. He told me go to this classroom, told me where to go, “the professor will be there”. I knock {door knocking gesture}, Beqir Maloku.

He is a famous pedagogue, a famous professor, I even have a picture with him. “O, come on Şeraf”, he thought I came with an intervention. I told him “*shoku drejtor dërgoj si ndegjusë*” [comrade director sent me as a listener]. “*O urdhëro*” [Okay sit down]. He sat me down in front. Then I see who are behind. Apparently they are all the staff who came continuously to the teacher school, that continued in Gjakova. They gathered them like us. After the class they would send them also to villages. There, lessons are academic level because some of them came from schools. I thought I was going to compromise. I went out on a recess, the long one. Parallels are there, parallel class, those are half and halves, like me. All from Kosovo, “*O Şeraf paska ardh*” [O Şeraf is here] we gathered “*Şeraf erdh, Şeraf po kthehet*” [Şeraf is here, [but] Şeraf is going back]. “*Mo*” [Don’t], they gave me motivation June, July, August hottest months. I changed my class, went and became class C. There the lectures are different, slower more stable, I collected myself a little. However I am thinking how will I manage the thing, that one month and a half that is passed.

They would go on vacation, I am in classrooms shut inside, writing, reading, writing, reading. I got the gist of it, but in my life generally I never cared for maths, physics, chemistry, ever. Physics and chemistry [had] only one professor Mymin Jakupi from Gjiilan. I had a problem with him a scuffle, before going to school. I slowly go up to him. “*Zotni Mymin*” [Mister Mymin]. “*A çka ka Şeraf?*” [Yes what is it Şeraf?] *Thashë* “*ti e din çë jom ardh ktu me përcjell mësimet.*” [I said “you know I am here to follow lessons]. *Thashë* “*jom n’hall me kimi edhe me fizik.*” [I said, I have problems with physics and chemistry]. “*Hajde mëso mëso ti, mëso, mëso.*” [Come on, learn, learn you learn, learn]. In actuality he is saying do not worry. Now I get up, everyone has passed exams already I am the only one. Go to the blackboard. I get up there, like kids that they do shenanigans in school. I have no clue, but they were giving me forms, quickly I am pretending to write as if he is not looking. “*A u bo?*” thom, “*Po, po*” *thotë* [Is it done? I say. He say, Yes, yes.] Looking still, “*Mirë shko n’vend*” [Alright go to your place]. He gave me a passing grade. That was how I passed physics and chemistry.

(inc.) arrived. I am taking an exam for all subjects. That day in that commission where exams are taken, they came from the province to listen. I have to pass the history now in addition to the other ones.

There comes the journalist from *Rilindja*. Tomorrow in the paper it goes, “*Şerafedin Süleymani ka ardh me vonesë në kursin pedagogjik, kur ka dal me dhonë përgjegjet prej nga landa historisë mes tjerash...*” [Şerafedin Süleymani came late to the pedagogical course, he went out to explain answers from history class among others...]. [The paper] now dictates my words. I graduated school with excellence, that pedagogic course. With that I got my diploma, became *msusi diplomuar, i diplomum* [graduate teacher, a graduate]. I am not half anymore, I am whole. I finished the course and came back here. Now I have to check my notes.

When I came back from military service in '51, as soon as I came back here the rights of the Turkish people were expanding. While I was in the army this situation got better. Now they are waiting on to see how I will declare myself. Since I had always studied in Albanian, they were hoping I would continue as Albanian. Now I have to get a personal ID card, I came back from the army. I go (inc.) to the section secretary Branko Ćurović, his name was. He says, “*Ovde nacionalnost kako da pišem?*” [How should I write the nationality here?] “*Kako da pišeš, Turčin!*” [How else, Turk!]. There is the first time I declared what I am, he liked it, I was the authority back then.

This duty that I was doing as a secretary they called and said “If you please leave that job, there are Turkish programmes started in Radio Pristina. You can go as *krye redaktor i emisjoneve gjuhën turke*” [head director of programmes in Turkish language]. I left the job and went to the radio. Now at the radio, the broadcasts continue Turkish. I met there Selahattin Kelmendi, a gentleman from Pristina, now recently his children, two of his kids died. He passed away earlier. Before he was there he used to work on electric departments, director was Alush Gashi, a famous old warrior from '41. He was also pleased that I got transferred. Because none of them could really do well in Turkish, but they thought I will do *who knows what* [meaning something great]. He congratulated and made the salary, a small office. That office was in front of our apartment.

Then after I forgot to tell you how we moved. In front of us, in front it was prepared it to be a kitchen when they built it for that office. There was a typewriter, a closet, a desk, Selahattin and I. Selahattin used to do translations from Serbian to Turkish, from Albanian I do not know he did not do it, translated from Turkish. Oftentimes it happens he has to go and read the news in Turkish. Once I also tried, not knowing very well but he was writing, I was reading it with proper old Turkish. But what happiness and enthusiasm, we were just starting. Slowly I did three years of duty there.

In the meantime the Turkish Musical Orchestra was assembled with Rasim Sali and his group; Bayruş Kırveş, Adem Macula, Şükrü Gırnataci, he was a Roma. Then Cultural Arts Society, Yeni Hayat group, music group, they joined as well, regular programs were going on, it was broadening. With Turkish we almost had a seven percent share in the program. Regular news, separate broadcasts for kids. Then we would engage in radio programs from abroad. More famous friends, such as Süreya Yusuf, Ali Aksoy, Eyüp Safçı, Emin Mecihan, particularly Enver Baki and many other school teachers. We engaged them in the radio programmes. Such that the programme flared up.

As I said I worked there for three years, then someone else took on running it. I cannot remember who took over afterwards. There was another problem they called me again. “You almost finished your mandate here. You have to get selected, Kosovo youth president”. Twenty eight years old when I became the Youth President of Kosovo.

Ebru Süleyman: What year?

Şerafedin Süleyman: That year, 1956 - 1957. But for a short time, did it for one year. What happened after that? Hey... (smiles) I, as Kosovo Youth President went to Prizren, to the youth conference Prizren roundtable. I attended and was going to give a salute on behalf of the province .

First day of the conference happened, it started in the afternoon solemnity and all that, next day it became more serious orders and stuff. [Some people] arrive at the Committee of Prizren. “Şeraf the car is ready you have to go to Pristina immediately”. “How do I leave the conference?” “I beg of you this is what they said from the Provincial Committee; for you to go to the Regional Committee”. What a pity, what is this?

That day to my surprise deputies of the *srez*²² were gathered to select the mayor. There Elhami Nimani, Xhavit Nimani’s brother used to be the president. Same *nosioc spomenice* [monument bearer] but he was appointed to be general director of the biggest firm in Belgrade. He has to go there, who is going to replace him? Here state deputies of *srez*, who should we select? But there was a habit of selecting those who always used to get appointed. Monopoly, no one else can come. Should have to be a warrior from ‘41, should have to have positive characteristics. That is why they cannot find someone to be a local, townee. They had to have these characteristics, always.

I came there to walk down to that yellow structure, where the Ministry of Education is now, the one in the center. There used to be a large hall. Councilors were gathered, walking around waiting for the start of the meeting. At the same time where RTK is Dušan Mugoša with his deputy mayor groups are talking about who it should be? Who, who, who? But here people are waiting. Someone stands up and says “There is a proposal, Şerafedin Süleyman!”.

Hashim Mustafa, I never mentioned this to anyone before, was very jealous, “*Jeste odličan je ali mlad, neiskusnan*” [Yes he is excellent but young person, not experienced]. Dušan Mugoša replies. “*Neka je neiskusnan, bacimo ga u vatru, ako je sposoban neka ugasi, ako ne nek izgori. Odluka pala.*” [Whatever if he is not experienced, we throw him into the fire, if he is capable let him be, if not let him burn. The decision fails]. They come down to the hall, I am strolling around there, “*Hajde počinjemo*” [Come on

²² Serb.: *srez*, was a second-level administrative unit, a district that included several town or village municipalities. It was abolished in 1963–67 in SFR Yugoslavia.

let's start]. I sat down to the first row with Hashim. Hashim says, "It's done?" "What is done?" "You'll hear." Before even talking with me if I am accepting it or not. "*P'e nisim*" [Let's start].

"The eldest began with the procedures. "*P'e hapim mbledhjen e srezit, a ka kush propozim për predsednik?*" [We are starting the municipal meeting, anyone have proposals for the mayor?] Sometimes in Albanian, sometimes in Serbian (smiles)... Stanoja Aksić stands up, he was Municipal Committee Secretary, a strong man and he believed in young people, in giving opportunities to youth. "*Unë në emrën krejtve, bazë nenit* [I, in the name of everyone, based on the article] such and such, based on the law, *kemi propozim* Şerafedin Süleyman, *momentalisht osht' në Prizren.*" [We propose Şerafedin Süleyman, who at the moment is in Prizren]. They did not even know I arrived. Someone says, "*Jo, jo këtu osht'!*" [No, no he is here]. "*Le t'çohët*" [Let him stand up], I stand up. The corridor is full, everyone is very excited about who was going to get elected. "*A ka kush ndonjë propozim tjetër?*" [Does anyone have a different proposal?] "*Nuk ka.*" [There is none]. "*T'lutna kryetarin*" [May the mayor approach]. I climb the stairs [to the stage]. I was really young, 28-29 years old. I cannot see anyone down there. My eyes blacked out. I went there sat down took my notebook. I thanked them with few words in Serbian, in Albanian."

"*Po kalojmë pikën e dytë*" [Let's move on to number two]. I now continue, deputy mayor. Smajo Jusufi, an old official, has gone through so many things regarding the economy. "*A ka propozim tjer?*" [Is there another proposition?] "*Nuk ka*" [No, there is not]. He came and sat down next to me. We move on to third point. Second deputy chairman, second chairman, Alexa Vučinić a Serbian from Ferizaj. Because we needed to cover the whole agenda. We elected him too, third chairman "Abdullah Hoxha *prej Kaçanikut*" [Abdullah Hoxha from Kaçanik]. We elected him as well, "*Me këto mbarum*" [With this, we are done]. Ended the process. "*A dëshiron dikush fjalë?*" [Does someone want to speak?] Fadil Hoxha,²³ "I do." He goes up, Fadil. Duties! Obligations! I say [to myself] {holding his head in worry} how did I end up here, I had never worked for the government! In youth sections *dragi-drugovi* [among friends], there were no legal clauses, would I remember the paragraph right, the laws, if I slip, I am done!

The meeting is over, they congratulate me, hug me whatnot. And here I am thinking I got off easy, this is a big post, how am I going to handle this? Elhami Nimani was paying attention that I took in onto myself fearfully, he worked with me, my eyes wide open for a week, lifting my morale, "This is this way, that is that way, this is this, do not do this, do not fall into doubt. You just go for it, you have people to help you all around. Just be careful from this big one, he is a megalomaniac!" Besides, these structures in Fushë-Kosovë were made during his time. *Prištino Gračanički Srez*²⁴ started, from Podujevo until General Jankovich. *Srez* had twenty municipalities, two hundred and fifty thousand households, two

²³ Fadil Hoxha (1916-2001), was an Albanian Communist partisan leader from Gjakova, who held a number of high posts in Yugoslavia, including the rotating post of Vice President of the Federal Presidency, the highest leadership post in Yugoslavia under Tito, in 1978-79. He retired in 1986, but was expelled from the League of Communists on charges of nationalism.

²⁴ *Srez, Prištino Gračanički Srez* - Administration Municipal Unit used during Yugoslavia that was larger than a municipality but smaller than a region.

hundred and fifty thousand population, the largest *srez* is Kosovo. On all of Kosovo there were five deputies. Kadri Reuf in Mitrovica, Lazar Ivkov in Gjilan, Mehmet Maliqi in Prizren, Alush Gashi in Peja and me from Pristina, I was the youngest.

Tomorrow in the papers, "*Najmladi predsednik sreza Kosova i Metohije*" [The youngest president of the Kosovo-Metohija region] with pictures, writings all of Yugoslavia bought it. Pity me, how I will deliver. I started with equanimity, slowly. I found people who I can rely on, who I can trust. How do they say, I did the job for a year, honorably. In the meantime, before the year is over, the order comes from Belgrade, "*srezovi se ukidaju u Jugoslaviji*" [*srez* are getting abolished in Yugoslavia], I said thank god, I'm saved. *Srez* [structure] is dying out, the state institutes. Before it continues I hand it over to Smajo Jusufi, he is the eldest. I say you continue and finish it. There was a month left or something like that for the mandate to be over. They gave me seven books of Ivo Andrić as presents, then a certificate of appreciation, then nice words, thanks, whatnot, applause because I did my job honorably. With this *srez* were closed, wait then what did happen after...

Back then, I am 28-29 years old. Then I moved on to Socialist State Union as a high official in order to not be unemployed. And a function like a secretary of the thing. Back then the president was Sinan Hasani, if you mention Sinan now, he became a traitor, they made him oh my God! I spent there, let me see...

Part Three

Until 1963, 30-33 years old. After that, municipality, there was a need to elect a mayor for the Pristina municipality. Who was it going to be, Đoko Pajković, Dušan Mugoša, all of these people, it must be someone from Pristina, someone from the town, a candidate from the city. People are talking, arguing, doing stuff, finally there someone remembers and mentions me. The representatives there, applause, Šerafedin Süleymani. I was elected the mayor for four years, from '63 - '67. There was a subsidiary, economist Božović, then Nexhat Karahoda, then who else, who else, who, I can't think of all of them, assisting for me to run (inc.).

At the time in the constitution, the constitution that was adopted in '74 in Kaçanik and before it, in the constitution rights of the Turkish community became equalized with those of Albanians, Serbians. Administration [was run] all together. I was present in the municipality during those best times, and very often I would open the meetings in Turkish, to state our existence. But most commonly [the meetings] were in Serbian and Albanian.

If I can remember right, a lot in there, only that this time I had some experience, be it from the *srez* or from other [administrative] functions, I had learnt a lot. How can I put it, I had improved myself while conducting these duties and I got selected with my knowledge. In '73 - '74, after the four-year mandate

was completed, a discussion opened up about who was going to take Şeraf's place. They needed to find someone from the town again. No chance that I could remember right now, who was the one succeeding me.

Ebru Süleyman: So uncle, how did the city change during those years?

Şerafedin Süleyman: Excuse me?

Ebru Süleyman: During these years, how did the city change?

Şerafedin Süleyman: Pristina. Two issues were the most significant while I was a mayor. During those years, the directors at the municipality opened up a very serious problem, Pristina does not have water. There's no river. Pristina is getting bigger both numerically and physically. That is why, Kosovo's, how do you say, *kryeqyteti* [capital city]?

Ebru Süleyman: Capital city.

Şerafedin Süleyman: To be relocated to Mitrovica. Mitrovica has Ibar, and the water, is wider. People started assigning places for where the parliament was going to be. We Pristina natives were left out in the cold. Then we adopted a decision at the municipality, a group of experts. [We were] to travel throughout Yugoslavia to find experts who would come to us to find a solution to the water problem. After we travelled throughout, a very well known hydro, what was it, I am forgetting the terminology, the [expert] who deals with waters and research. A meeting, all of the officials of the city were in that meeting. [The expert] was going to present a report. How is it going to be, what.

There were three alternatives. We had prepared it previously, to suggest them to him and see what he would say. First suggestion was that we collect water from Germe. To create a lake and use that water, the first alternative. The second alternative, to turn the Llap River towards Pristina. Llap [river] there, from Podujeva. However, in order to do that there was a need to bore a mountain. There was a need for a tunnel to be constructed, large investments, where would the money come from. The third alternative, the Graçanka stream, in Graçanica, it could be the source of water.

The expert said, "Germe option could not be realized, it was calcareous, limey. The water would get lost, would not stay and you would still have a problem. For the other one, who is going to fund that kind of an investment? That is why the only way out is the Graçanka". We said, "Graçanka is only a stream". He said, "We are going to calculate the lowest possible values, we will calculate the precipitation there, precipitation in winter and summer and snowfall in winter, there is water, and snow is falling". He says, "I am ready to account if the lake would not be all filled for two years". He took it on, is that it, that is it. Decision. The construction of the dam began. The water started to fill up.

In truth, before too late, it was filled up with water. He came again, we were meeting, following how the process was going on. He said, “There is enough water, it will suffice”.

At the time Pristina had a population of 200,000-250,000, there was plenty, 812 liters of water per second. When it was completely full, the lake opened up, there was a manifestation, celebration. The ones from the province gave up from Mitrovica, came back to stay in Pristina, “Let Pristina be the way it was before”. Later then we were joking among ourselves. I asked the person, engineer, I said “Since it became a lake, could it be used for tourism.” “Why not.” I asked, “Could people swim in there?” “Of course.” But then he says, “Pristina natives would not know how to swim, they would drown.” (laughs) Once, how would you say it (inc.) during our conversations. Then, as the time went by, the whole city started to [get water] from Graçanka. And to this day it still is Graçanka.

All very well but during this time Pristina grew a lot, both physically and numerically, five-six times larger than what Pristina was before. Let us continue the research, in the aftermath of that Mustaf Hoxha Mylshevcu who I told about, he knew all the hills of those parts by heart. Him and an engineer for waters called Krstić in the state, and me with a *gazika*²⁵ were going through those roads the way Mustaf Hoxha was guiding us. We went all the way up to Orllat, this village there and Krstić says “*Posle par godina videćete ovde čamci*”. [After some years you’ll see boats here] , I say “*Ajde more nemoj da zezaš*” [come on don’t mess with us]. We were telling him not to mock us, he said “*Ja predpostavljam, tako će biti*”. [I predict that it will be so]. After some time, the second lake was completed, Batllava. This way, the water capacity of the city was strengthened once again. Still even nowadays water problem is still on the agenda because the city grew a lot and businesses are using the water in large quantities, so as far as I know they are doing research on new sources of water so that they would not come to the point of crisis like we did in those years.

These were the novelties, when I was a mayor, journalists asked me, “*Me çka mundësh m’u krenu për punët që i ke kry?*” [What would you take pride on about the work you did?” *Thash, për çështjën e ujit që i kemi zgjidh. Çashtja dytë, aprovimi i planit urbanistik. Me vitin 53.*” [I said the issue of water that we have solved. Second issue, approval of the urban plan. In the year ‘53]. Until that year, Pristina did not have a plan. The construction authority would work on patches, more like that; there was Vojin Karadžić engineer for the structures and Nistrić. These two would run it. Karadžić was from Pristina, he loved Pristina, had love for it and really worked hard trying to find solutions in every way, patch by patch would care about it, until the time a plan was created. The new plan was created. In ‘53 a ceremony was held in Germe, we all celebrated. The engineer who made the plan Partonić from Belgrade, he was the author. However, when we started to implement the plan, we saw gaps, shortcomings, mistakes.

²⁵ Serbian: the term *gazika* means a four-wheel truck, produced by GAZ, which was a Soviet automobile manufacturer.

But in general it took that stance, those were the times when the demolitions began. Demolishing the old, there was no criteria in bringing down, very significant things, for example the Lokaç Mosque was demolished. The small Catholic Church that was there on the way to Panadurište was brought down. The most significant street was left narrow. It needed to be much wider. All of these things brought new problems.

A meeting was held that all the officials from the municipality were present. The municipality had Bashkim Fehmiu²⁶ as the urbanist architect. His brothers, all three of them died actually, but Bashkim had worked with me. I supported him a lot. He became the director of *Enti për Erbanizëm* [the department for urbanism]. He designed *shtëpia e mallrave* [The Shopping Mall], the large [building], it is his opus. His work is the street going towards there, the hospital, that wide road in front of the *komitet*.²⁷

All good but in time, the mistakes were confirmed, these problems brought on a decision that there be a meeting, where the public would come and all the officials, and the author Partonić would be invited. There was a large hall in the house of the officers, the *gjyqtar, prokuror* [judge, prosecutor] and *kryesues* [presiding judge] were chosen there. All of us were present there, experts, ordinary citizens, judging, how was it in Albanian *shqyrtimi i gabimeve të planit urbanistik* [reviewing the mistakes of the urban plan] was in the agenda. Then he stood up, I get confused sometimes, *paditësi* [plaintiff], the one taking the claim to the judge, how was it ... He is listing the mistakes.

On the back there, we prepared schemes, models about what was done wrong, all that. Fadil Hoxha stood up and talked about the road to the hospital where there were two structures, where the headquarters of that party was, I could not remember anymore... Him, Pacolli, there is like a headquarters there I do not know of which party. He wanted those structures to be demolished so that it would become a road, boulevard system. No actually, Bashkim [Fehmiu] wanted it brought down, so that it would not disrupt the boulevard project. Fadil Hoxha stood up and complained about how this could have happened after so much investment, that and finished. He [raised] his arm, Bashkim the way he was, self-opinionated. He said, “*Shok Fadil, ti ke qenë ushtarë, partizan, komandant i partizanëve. Ti si ushtarë si komandant mundësh mu idhnu, a komandant për urbanizëm unë jam, prandaj nuk vjen parasysh ato që po kërkon*” [Comrade Fadil, you were a soldier, partisan, commander of partisans. You as a soldier as a commander can take offence, but I am the commander for urbanization, thus, what you are asking does not matter]. He cut them off all right.

To cut it short, Partonić there he started to get red, sweaty, from the difficulty of listening to the criticism. The shortcomings of the plan. The meeting was over and we, how would you say it, morally put him to shame. We revealed his intentions. After it, seemed as if he had done some of the things

²⁶ Bashkim Fehmiu (1930-2008) is a well-known professor, architect and urbanist from Kosovo that has contributed to Pristina’s urban development particularly after the Second World War.

²⁷ Albanian: *Komitet*, Socialist Party’s central management building. It used to be at Mother Teresa Boulevard, in the building where nowadays the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport is located.

intentionally. Then he approached me and said, “Why didn’t you tell me what was going to be the content of the talk?” We had not told him on purpose. We brought him there to hear everything directly. He went to Belgrade and never ever stepped into Pristina again, because, how would you say it, he got his share from the mistakes that were done and capitulated. However, the way it was, the plan was a beginning. Later on Bashkim Fehmiu and new architects made the corrections around the city. *Sunčani Breg* [Sunny Hill] was constructed also more neighborhoods so at the very least the plan initiated, opened the way of Pristina to grow based on a plan, and shine. I think this is enough for now, we belabored. What is next...

1967 when I finished the mandate. In 1969 I went to what is now the executive council, executive Committee in Kosovo, there I did two-year mandates. Until ‘68-‘72 I spent four years there, then I came back to the Pristina City Hall Socialist Organization. When I was there, they, people here from Kosovo, offered me to become President of Socialist Organization of the Serbian Republic, in Belgrade. I did my duty there for a half a mandate, half a year. Also when I was there, with people’s suggestion, let me tell you how old, 44 years old, at the federation level, they selected me as Secretary general.

Dr. Bojan Špicar, Slovenian, *doktor i shkencave* [science doctor], health secretary, how should I say, *sekretar i bashkësisë vetëqeverisje të shëndetësisë Jugosllavisë* [secretary of the Yugoslavia self-government health community]. There I worked between the years ‘73-‘76, meaning it adds up to three years. *Bashkësia, bashkimit, të bashkësive për shëndetësi të republikave dhe krahinave* [Community, union, healthcare communities of republics and provinces] which is the highest [level]. Bojan Špicar, the Slovenian science doctor was older. I was his assistant. Especially there was a meeting in Cavtat for all Yugoslavian delegates from these organisations I gave the prologue there. Almost two hundred people attended that meeting, ehere I spent around four years also. I was successful there. Finally when the mandate was over, I requested myself, always far from home, always go back and forth by train, car. Besides I am getting older, I wanted to go back to Pristina immediately.

The time came, the mandate was over, I came back to Pristina, now what am I going to do in Pristina? Again in Pristina *Sekretar i Bashkësisë Vetëqeverisëse për Shëndetësisë Kosovës* [Secretary of the Autonomous Community for Health in Kosovo], same job just now in a different territory, only around Kosovo. There I did two mandates also, four years each, eight years. Now I am 58 years old, no no 52, I will be 58 when the mandate is over, Kosovo Parliament Deputy Chairman. And there I have spent two years, altogether 40 years, three months and 19 days of practice that I did. Just as I turned 58 years old on December 31, 1988, I retired.

However, I did not stay put after retirement. I was additionally invested for publicity of Pristina, in any case Pristina should shine like other towns in Yugoslavia. I had in mind for us to become *velegrad* [big city]. On that topic, there was a meeting being held in Sarajevo, a big meeting, conference of cities of Yugoslavia, city conference. Hundred cities, among them Pristina was included. In that association I took part under the name of Pristina for two mandates from the Kosovo side in Sarajevo, but I went

and collected opinions and suggestions from other important states so we can do a meeting like this, the next one in Pristina, for Pristina's publicity. I stood up and gave the speech in Sarajevo, when the delegates heard that, a frenetic applause. However, now we have to make preparations, there are so many delegates coming from all over Yugoslavia, where are we going to put them? We calculated the capacities in Mitrovica, Pristina the closest hotels where they would settle. In '68, the meeting was held, however I was not there anymore. Jova Pečenović took over, for this reason all of the tributes after those works went to the person after me. Jova Pečenović, a well mannered professor, townee, he also continued for a long time until his mandate was over. I did that as well.

Then with my initiative, my adjustment, I mentioned previously I did two monographs for Pristina. Those monographs were for the Kosovo Embassy, Pristina Embassy. They were translated into a few languages, English, French, Turkish and we gave them away when we had guests from the outside. Very often delegations would come to Kosovo, especially in Kosovo, whether you like it or not you will come to Pristina. We would give these monographs as gifts to those delegations. The monograph's editorial staff, 34 famous writers, journalists, artists, as well as people who were in politics joined. Thus those two [monographs] played great roles. Those were the reasons, and I saved all of those writings that were written from the monographs.

Hence I decided before retirement that I will do the third monograph myself. That monograph got published, went out for the first time in 2011 and they [printed] five hundred samples in the Albanian language. I could not do it in Serbian and Turkish. This is a must, since we are talking, our people were not interested in this book, not even the book but for Pristina as well. Albanian friends, I did talk on all of the radios and TV stations. With their initiatives, their desire. No one thought of coming here and talking about it. I felt offended. That is one issue.

What did I want to say, image, the image of the town it was a great burden for me. This last book that I am mentioning, I wrote most of it. However, I had some collaborators who helped me. Municipality, when Isa Mustafa was mayor, he gave me 2000 euros for expenses, printing. I gave my thanks to him at that time. He understood and I donated some of the books to the municipality. Lots of pictures of old Pristina, landscapes, important buildings of old Pristina, I gathered them and printed them in the book but there was a flaw, pictures were not clear. Pictures lack harmony, how do they say, one small, one big, we have some explanations under the pictures that was helping a little bit to ease this flaw.

However I wanted to add new things to this monograph. For example, we talked too little about Germia in the text. It is necessary for Pristina's image. I prepared it in the meantime but could not add it. The book went out, I struggled but my health gave up on me, my strength gave up. I was hoping to add them so there would be a complete full book in order to reveal Pristina, but even with those flaws, the book has been received well. Until now, I checked there were few *revista* [magazines], how to say it in Turkish, where my book is mentioned. There were no flaws found in the text until now. I was waiting for the criticisms, however [instead] I received praise, respect, and that is my last contribution of work

that I did for Pristina in my life that will remain. Also, for these newcomers, new citizens who do not know how times were in Pristina, how youth were in Pristina.

The Klan television is Albanian, right? When I went there to speak, twice I was there, they surrounded me in order for me to show pictures and talk about some memories. Even they did not know much, how it was once upon a time in Pristina. Look, the old Pristina had its beauties, it had vitality, but it had its own flaws too, yet still with some stuff, with some traditions. Let's say Germia was so crowded in summer days, surrounding it were sheds of owners of the vineyards, music, folk dances, old enthusiasts who still remember old songs by heart. Later on, Yeni Hayat and Gerçek resurrected them. There was Yakup Havaci, elderly. He taught us a few plays, spoon play, glass play, and folk group. Yeni Hayat, Gerçek, it was before that. Musician Rasim Sali and his group, he did so much for Pristina and Kosovo and also for the Turkish community, because of that we have to never forget him. Poor man, how do they say, he left life in a modest way, without pursuing anything but he was let's say the nightingale for Turkish songs.

Part Four

Migration matters as far as I can remember started in 1954. It started in the worst time when the Turkish community started to prosper. In our town there were Turkish lessons being held in every school, and we started training Turkish teachers. What a pity that this migration issue put a weight on the Turkish community mostly. Schools started to fade away, no perspective. What is the solution? It is better to go to Turkey, they have jobs there, working there is easier. Even if you graduate school here where would you go? Because other propaganda started, a cold wave, distance was introduced among folks. Many schools went dark, closed down. Many, few, not a few but a lot. Teachers, they started to struggle also.

Before the migration started, still in the old Yugoslav times, there were families here and there who went there [Turkey], relatives, close ones, but it did not have the same effect as this last one. Then the cruelty started, not just towards Turks but towards Albanian folk in general. They searched people for guns, because people had weapons in their houses after the war. Now in order to not use those weapons against the regime, people, an initiative came along to gather them from people. They went too far in those collections. Many people who had no weapons were forced, and most of them were sent to jail. Torture started. That was the case that pushed some people away, who could not bear this kind of behavior. [They] left their belongings, their property, their birthplace. We got up, tried to convince them to stay, to be patient to even endure the cruelty. Yes, but everyone looked for remedies to their situation.

Here my closest relatives, my uncle, my aunt, all my aunts migrated. İyaz Ramiz, Muharrem Parteş, Mehmet cannot figure out his [last name], together with the family, their grandkids, their kids are

grown up. Most of them I do not know, we stayed. We were talking at our home, “We should go!” Everyone left, together with my brother and my mother, she was alive then, we were discussing how they left before, not like now. Was not meant to be. Even my uncle Ilyaz, who was like a father to us when we were orphans, randomly told me that he wants to leave. I saw him at city hall, city hall secretary office. Uncle Ilyaz came for document photos. He came in, when he saw me he hesitated, I said, “Come on, come on please. What is it?” “Ah Şeraf, for those document photos.” “Why?” “We are ready to go.” “May you have good luck!” I said. Then the secretary Luka Ulahović says, “*Šta ti je on?*” [What is he to you?] *Ma kažem “stric”* [I said “My uncle.”] *“Ma nemoj”* [You do not say]. He intervened so that they could give him [the photos] and he could leave the office quicker. There I heard for the first time that they were ready to leave. But only a *kapicik* separates us.

Tragic details from that time. When the train starts to move towards Skopje, those tears, those hugs, those separations. It left very touching things [memories]. From one side, most of them who left were better off there, they prospered, they moved on. Firstly, as an example my aunt’s son Selahattin Parteş, until he was here he was working for a dry goods store. Also police dry goods store. He opened a store there at Etiler. His little brother Süleyman, the middle one, even he, he moved too, worked hard, he was a worker but he had luck as well. There were some lands that he bought when he migrated there. A big company that wanted to build apartments, new structures, loads of money went his way and that was the reason got better off. Smallest brother Kurteş, he had a big store in front of Aksaray, but he first, the youngest, died first, then Süleyman and the last, the eldest Selahattin. Selahattin and Süleyman, even Kurteş, whenever they came to Yugoslavia they would visit us. They did not forget us however, grandkids, those, those do not know me, neither I know them.

One more thing I forgot to tell you, when talking about the family, our family, I had an elderly brother also, Faik. He was working for Şilek shoemakers, making shoes. Even I went there sometimes to fix the nails and to see how they work at the shoemaker. The shop was central on the street of Divan. Around the shop there was a water fountain, a round water fountain covered with concrete. Water never stopped there and collected so that shop owners would take the water and sprinkle and clean in front of the shops. Look now one thing led to another, those shops that were in a covered-bazaar were kept pretty clean. You shouldn’t find anything [dirty] in there. This way, when the customers would come, say from the villages, from villages with rawhide sandals or with those rubber shoes but when you would wake up in the morning it would be shining clean. Therefore, it would be kept, how do they say, at a high level.

There is one more thing, the parallel streets. The Divan street, the other *kazancilar* [boilersmiths] street, *kasaplilarin* [butchers] street these three streets in parallel, and even though there wasn’t an urbanist man [urbanism expert], small streets between them would be made so the communication among people would be easier. This means that there was a certain amount of planning even then. These were experiences from oriental cities that Pristina also used. The streets were paved with

stones. The most, the most preserved one Divan street from where you'd start from the museum all the way down to the Šümendefer street, the pavements in front of the shops were very well kept. They had an advertisement in front, from where you would enter Divan street from the closed bazaar and where the water fountain was, there would be the entrance and exit. The craftsman had coffee and tea houses, they were situated next to the grand library, in front of the buildings there was a big bookstore. Serbians would own those, Boro Toplaović and Jovan Kostić. Big shops, filled with books in every language, mainly Serbian, but how do they say there were many.

Then after we talked about the entertainment nights. On those entertainment nights my brother used to regularly read *Zabavnik*²⁸, I on the other hand used to read *Mikamiš*, they would come daily or weekly. We could not wait to purchase most of the stuff we learned there, I heard a lot of things, newspapers and other. When the cinemas were full, there was no other entertainment. And we would mostly watch cowboy movies. These more attractive movies that those cinema workers used to bring. There was a cinema of Branko, later son of my uncle Abdurrahman Shala as an artist he opened one too (inc.) in Union. He would bring mostly Italian movies from Italy. Sentimental movies used to arrive there. Young people would fight for the tickets, but there is no other place.

There were these entertainment nights, or as we used to call them play nights, where young people met each other. I say, I met my late wife there for the first time. We did not know how to dance tango, foxtrot, and whatnot that well but we won the all. We studied them, learned them. As time went by, we have been lovers for a long time. She used to work in a printing house, I was busy with politics, sometimes we would decide where to meet up secretly. I missed, could not leave the meeting, our meetings would be problematic. But all in all there was a sweet life. Until we got married officially with a registrar at the end of '49. *Alaturca* songs, music, modern; at the old house. There was an army commander named Velko, I had met him, he let me use the military jeep. Twenty four hours of nonstop music, dance in the garden. We strolled around the city with the car after.

Then there was something interesting about Pristina, phaetons. Phaetons were mostly used when kids got circumcised. With music, they would take a stroll, tour around the whole city; then they would come back to the house and continue the other traditions until it was time for the circumcision. Circumcisions were opulent, mostly *alaturca* songs, *alaturca* music, tambourine, hand drum, violin, clarinet; drums were used less, but sometimes drums were involved in the songs as well. Then close ones, acquaintances, would visit the circumcised, gifts for weeks, tips, like that.

Ramadan nights are different again. Very late, until the late night, young people would meet up in the streets, many times groups would sing songs. Then there was this tradition only when it was late *bozaci* [a seller of *boza*, thick, slightly fermented millet drink] would go from street to street. Sour *boza*! We would go out from our homes with pots and cups to get *boza*. *Sahlep* was sold in the

²⁸ *Politikin Zabavnik* is a popular magazine in Serbia, published by *Politika* Newspapers and Magazines. The first issue came out on 28 February 1939.

daytime. This sort of life, interesting, different, different style. When the modern moments came, those customs started to disappear, forgotten, left behind, (that is) normal. Every new coming, every progression brings its own novelties, tries to affirm them, make them central. This stuff I still remember when I think about the past. What more can I tell?

We discussed migration, I do not know if I could explain it, there were many tragic details back then. Apart from the cold, there was another thing that caused schools to be shortened. In the school of Meto Bajraktar, Eyüp Safçi, Şaban Maksut from Skopje but he was from around here, was the principal. At Meto Bajraktar I spent a lot of time there, eight years in total. Some teachers took part, and my friend Süreya Yusuf made a big contribution, played a big role. That guy as an intellectual, how should I put it, as a scholar, he taught with experience. Furthermore, classes, lesson times were held during the Yeni Hayat association. He taught those lessons. Lots of [people] gathered knowledge from him. The sections of Yeni Hayat were affected by his help, his great help.

However, I talked about songs, we cannot pay him back for what Rasim Sali has done and for the knowledge that he gave to youngsters, musical knowledge. Interestingly, if you look at these youngsters he was older. He never said "I am tired, I cannot do it, I cannot do it." He was ready every hour, every minute. There were concerts ever so often. There would be big crowds at concerts, which would be held together with workers of Ramiz Sadik in the town. There would be artistic performances often. All three would join, Gerçek, and later even Romani had an association. Thus this solidarity, in work, in entertainment, in profession left beautiful memories.

The times changed, regimes changed. An unnecessary separation came. On one side Serbs, the other side us. When the problems started to happen in the '80s, the Turkish community also joined but attentively. In some protests the Turkish flag would unite, the Turkish flag with the Albanian flag to show them that we are united, not separated. Nevertheless nationalism left [us] bad wounds. However, we demolished that as well. When we were saved from this adventure of Milošević, we started to promote the new regime. In those first days, independence days, in the meetings, in the gatherings, Turkish language was used carefully, because you have to speak Albanian, it should be Albanian. Thus some part of the Turkish community was avoiding those meetings. But look, in a short amount of time, in '74, the decisions that were taken got us closer again.

To continue the Turkish community, restore Yeni Hayat, and regulate it. There were big hopes that after independence we would live a better life. Intentionally I was discussing with my family many times, because we were tired, I was, not physically but mentally, doing many different tasks without experience. When we retire, we will go on holiday, we will rest, and live a better life. All these hopes went under water. We were left with a 14 euro retirement, later it became 80, today because I am a faculty graduate 230 a month. We lived with this day-to-day. Kids were fired from jobs. My daughter was fired, she was working in radio. Erol was working at this big firm Eximkos. Small one was working

with engineering, engineering institution, they threw them out forcefully, with contributions and orders of Slobodan Milošević.

We pulled through many disasters. We lived through war. In the war time, in those three months, it was unknown if we would survive or not. Dark at night we did not know who would knock on the door. Me and my wife, we were home alone. Kids, my oldest son went to Macedonia with his family, with his son. My daughter with a group from radio, those people from the radio proposed to go to Turkey and they endured calamities in Turkey. Youngest one, went to Montenegro one day before the war started.

We were all over the place. We stayed without having any connection with anyone. More accurately, the groom, husband of my daughter, groom and his wife, a wool maker, stayed as well. There was an apartment at *Sunčani Breg* [Sunny Hill]. We were here, windows closed, in darkness, we thought let's escape the disaster let's go to the groom. Groom was alone also, he did not know what to do from distress. We got up and left. We barely made it from the streets. *Harambaş*²⁹ everywhere, with weapons and stuff.

One day the phones were working, and my uncle's grandson, grandson Agron, is letting us know with the phone. He says "Şeraf they broke the house". I ask "Did they burn it?" "No". The next day I wake up and go to the house walking slowly from the fields to see what happened. It was a mess. On this floor, upstairs they made coffee, left the oven open. If I did not come and turn it off, it could have caught on fire itself. Downstairs where the little one is, you could not move from broken glasses. They broke the windows and things. Those doors there, I made *u na kirsno* [a cross shape] with wooden pools. I wanted to open the outside door, but it broke. We still have the mark when he came and kicked the locks off in the living room. We fixed them also. When I returned back, they were concerned. On the road NATO started bombing. On the other side, no news from the kids, no news from my daughter. We came back to our house again, and the groom came with us.

They were walking around constantly, "*Šta radite tu?*" [What are you doing here?] "*Šta radimo?! Sedimo usvoj u kuću!*" [What are we doing?! We are sitting in our house!] "*Imate li nekog unutra?*" [Do you have anybody inside?] "*Nikoga nemamo. Uđite*" [I do not have anyone. Get in]. "Get in". With rifles, machine guns, things. Right across the army is going to the other side. God forbid, if you slightly do something, immediately they start to steal, they would carry televisions and stuff from houses. We all saw that. Throwing stuff in trunks. Long hair, some beards, scarves over their heads, gangs.

We endured. We passed that stuff but were still concerned for kids, no news. Behice is trying to see if we are still alive through loudspeakers. My eldest son Erol, he heard over there that they burned these parts. [He wondered] Are they alive? Cruelties without borders, but thank God, we passed them all. But we never thought, never speculated that something like this would happen. A little bit of an illusion for us. We thought Tito would continue always, after Tito, again Tito. However those

²⁹ Turkish: *Harambaş*, means a person who constantly creates problems, loots, steals, fights etc.

calculations were wrong. New expunctions came, new regimes, I said it correctly, new expunctions. However, on those elements, man should adapt, endure, and be patient. How do they say, us Kosovars, we are used to being patient, but patience has an end too.

Again we thought this new system would be better, it has been eighteen years, we still cannot stand still, always some new stuff, new things. How will it be unveiled? God help us. We believe in God, maybe we can fix these hardships, these wrong states at some point and the population can breathe freely again, live through better days. Me, for myself I sent my family. I have gotten old now. That is unknown, it is up to God. Whatever happens we have to accept it. I thank you also, that you thought of preserving these memories, because I believe that in that book, I left some good stuff behind. Purposefully for these new citizens, youngsters. They do not know how life was in the past. What happened in the past. A lot happened. I tried to mention some parts from that past, to recall them and to draw them somehow, so it stays with the new generations. That is it.