

Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW WITH MÜRTEZA BÜŞRA

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Duration: 105 minutes

Present:

1. Mürteza Büşra (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

Mürteza Büşra: I am Mürteza Büşra. Büşra, our surname [comes from] the times when the Municipality of Pristina allowed the citizens to change their names legally. Some of the families changed their names, their surnames, and my father surely found his grandfather's name appropriate, meaning Büşra. Actually, its meaning is also very nice. Büşra, büşra means happiness, it means receiving good news. It is a nice surname that our father picked, he was the one who brought it about.

Now, the city that I was born in is Pristina, in 1946. My father was born in Pristina around 1911 and my mother as well around 1915. Büşra family, if we reach further back, my father Süleyman, me Mürteza, my grandfather Mürteza as well. Why? Because there was a tradition in the past, a custom of remembering, the names of the grandparents repeated. This was the case not only for our family but many families had this tradition as well. Moreover, Büşra's father, my father used to tell me about him. His name was Yusuf and the name of Yusuf's father was Hacikadrilar, Hacikadri.

Essentially, once upon a time our surname used to be Hacikadrilar, a family that extends for eight generations. I have children and grandchildren today, and when you look back, we know the names of our ancestors six generations back. You see, our grandpa Büşra used to work at, you know the museum today, the mansion next to the Çarşi Mosque and Sultan Murad Mosque? In that place, during the Ottoman era, he was a clerk, in fact a treasurer, he had a duty like that. Surely he received a salary at the time. The currency of the time was *akçe*.¹ It used to be a very valuable currency.

And essentially our house is, you know where the Technical High School is today, the one right in front of the high school, in front of the gymnasium.² In fact, that place today is called the Municipal Archive, adjacent to it used to be a bakery, an old shopkeeper that we used to call Ćika Blago [Uncle Blago], the bakery was his and right next to it were our houses. The old houses built once upon a time used to have large doors. All good, but this house, old house, the building, the house had a front yard and in the back of the house there was another yard as well.

¹ The *akçe*, also spelled *akche*, *akchek*, refers to a silver coin which was the chief monetary unit of the Ottoman Empire.

² A European type of secondary school with emphasis on academic learning, different from vocational schools because it prepares students for university.

The old houses were like this, very convenient for living. Back in the day, people used to keep animals as well. That is why you should have had a house with large gardens so that you would have barns for the animals as well. The baskets that were used to feed the animals, supplying the food, they used to call it *koş*,³ those baskets. Of course, back in the day, every family had gardens and fields as well.

Then the produce that the field had grown that year were kept in these baskets or specially built basements, meaning the places where they used to keep the produce for the winter in the storehouses, they were called *çile*.⁴ I even remember it was such a large house, let alone that it had two great gardens and two basements. One basement on the left and one on the right. The house itself was huge, you would enter it by stairs. There are no more wooden houses like that left in Pristina, now they are very rare. In all of Pristina there are three houses like this that have been converted into museums today.

Ebru Süleyman: Which ones are they? Where are they? Among the old houses there is the house of Hüniler as well, right?

Mürteza Büşra: These old houses, yes. There are three of them, all three of them turned into museums. For example, right now we are next to the Elena Gjika Elementary School in this house. The one that is right in front of the clock tower, in front of the gymnasium, we used to call it Eşref Kara's house. We used to call him Uncle Eşref.

Ebru Süleyman: Eşref Kara?

Mürteza Büşra: Eşref Kara, Uncle Eşref. We used to say Uncle Eşref's house. They have migrated to Turkey, their house was left behind. The state saw it fit and turned it into a museum. Then there was another house left among the very old ones... the Karabeg's house, you know the street right in front of the gymnasium that goes towards the bazaar, that street and neighborhood used to be called *Begler Mahallesi* [Masters Neighborhood] {uses hand gesture indicating the place}.

And inside, there is also the old house of the Emincik's. That house was also turned into a museum. It is a museum rather than a house, because it has remained from the very old times {indicating time passing by hand} and... actually, when tourists visit Pristina, they definitely want to visit one of these houses. Meaning they are historical houses that have remained from the Ottoman era.

The third house is where we are right now, close to the Elena Gjika Elementary School. Adjacent to it are the large doors, you know? {showing with hands how large} The right [Kocadiş] house with a large

³ *Koş*, literally a basket, is the item you could usually find in the barn or in front of the barn where food for bovine animals were kept.

⁴ *Çile* is the dry storage area in Ottoman style houses where people would dry and store the food for longer periods of time.

yard and two floors you see in there. That is also one of the houses transformed into a museum today. Amazing really...

Ebru Süleyman: So the old houses used to be like these ones?

Mürteza Büşra: Previously a lot of the wealthy families lived in the town. The wealthy families also had animals, kept them and therefore had large yards. The houses had big gardens. As a matter of fact, when Evliyâ Çelebi⁵ visited Pristina and Kosovo back in the day, you know what he said? He said that Pristina had magnificent gardens and houses. These were marvelous houses with gardens. Beautiful gardens. Also, back in the day, our spouses, the landladies, gave a lot of importance to the gardens, cared for them and made sure to have flowers.

There were a lot of trees as well, you could always see them in the gardens of the houses. There were a lot of cocoon openers, trees like apricots and plums; vine and grape trees were found in these gardens as well, around the places where people used to live. They had houses like this. (Smiling) What did Evliyâ Çelebi say? This was transmitted from one generation to another; the houses were so beautiful that, essentially he was supposed to record the Ottoman artifacts in his travel journal. He wrote about two or three of the mosques and he was so amazed and impressed by the scenery that he started to describe the beauty of the yards, flowers, and gardens.

Later on, for example, there were six scholars that came [to Pristina]. They observed and traveled the historical places in Kosovo inch by inch. Researched and stopped in Pristina as well. Back in the day, it was said that Pristina had three more mosques that had remained from the Ottoman era. Surely none of these three mosques were rebuilt after they were torn down.

During our time, around 1952, in the neighborhood we call *Lokaç*, the central place of the city, now Mother Teresa [boulevard], a water fountain was uncovered. It shows that a mosque used to be next to it. Exactly that mosque was torn down in 1952 and all that was left [is the water fountain]. When it was torn down, everyone thought that it was an order from the state. In '55, 1955 whatever was old in the central areas of the city was to be torn down and something new built in their place instead. Because that was the central part of Pristina and in fact, it was promised that the mosque would be built in another part of the city, but the promise was never kept.

Ebru Süleyman: Do you remember this mosque?

Mürteza Büşra: Sure, because you see, my father was left as an orphan. When he was a kid, I think around 1919, a very difficult disease called cholera ravaged the city and hit it so hard that a lot of the citizens of Pristina lost their lives at the time.

⁵ Evliyâ Çelebi is a 17th century traveler. He spent more than fifty years traveling the Ottoman administered territories and more. He collected his experiences in his travelog *Seyahatnâme*.

Ebru Süleyman: Your father's... your grandfather...

Mürteza Büşra: My father's father, meaning my grandfather Mürteza's family, both of his sons and he lost their lives to this disease. Meaning it was a very dangerous disease, cholera, that was similar to typhoid. Typhoid is another very dangerous disease that hit Pristina, at a later time, in 1971. So in the past, Pristina was hit by two dangerous pandemic diseases, typhoid and cholera. Surely, previously there was another more dangerous disease, a disease called the plague. It was very dangerous but so was cholera.

Now, why am I telling you this? Among our family members, my father's father, my grandfather lost his life, so did my grandmother and their two sons. My father was the third son and his [immune] system was resistant so he survived the disease. But because he was an orphan, my father's [paternal] uncle raised him. His uncle took care of him, raised him. His uncle was an imam at the Çarşi Mosque, *Taş Camisi* [Stone Mosque]. The Sultan Murad Mosque is called by four different names. Well, Çarşi Mosque, we say *Taş* [Stone] Mosque, Sultan Murad's son Beyazid, Bayezid Mosque is also one of the names of course dedicated to Sultan Murad by his son, Beyazid.

Beyazid, you know during the First Crusade, during the Ottoman era, during Sultan Murad's reign after a war, they started to build mosques because of the influx from Anatolia to here. In time, not only mosques but there were more architectural artifacts built in the Ottoman era, there were the *hammams* [Turkish baths] as well. As a matter of fact, as per the tradition, the *hammams* were even built before the mosques were finished.

In addition to these, there were also bridges. Pristina had bridges. You see, two rivers flow through Pristina. One of them is called Veluša and the other one is called Prishtine. These rivers with their pleasant waters were like the pearls of Pristina. All very nice, but sometimes they also created trouble, we witnessed its worst as well. Sometimes, after a lot of rain, they flooded Pristina, the riversides. The flood would even reach the houses in the riversides, damaging them. There are other rivers in Kosovo that would do damage like this as well, for example, Drina in Prizren, would cause calamities there when it would overflow and would flood the city.

The same situation was in Mitrovica as well, the Ibër river. These two rivers in Pristina united right next to the football stadium today, you know the football stadium of Pristina today? Next to the Youth Palace, they merged with Sitnica, then (incomp.), meaning Fushë Kosova. Fushë Kosova and after Sitnica to Llap, the river flows to the Llap river. And, as you know, after Llap, it flows for a long time all the way to Morava, the waters dispersed around Serbia after that.

For now, I have been talking about the matters of my family but if you would like we could talk about other historical places of Pristina as well.

Ebru Süleyman: As you wish. If you would like, you could tell me about both your childhood memories and the historical places of Pristina that you know...

Mürteza Büşra: Ah, then our house, that I told you about, was built in the *Mektepler Mahallesi* [Schools Neighbourhood] (smiles). As a matter of fact, after our house was torn down, a school was built in its place, the Technical High School. It became a school. Now in that neighborhood, there were water fountains as well. The water fountains, I had learned about these while I was doing journalism through talking to the elderly of the time. If you wonder how many water fountains there were in Pristina, now we know the number of mosques, but the number of water fountains was large as well. Pristina had sixty-four water fountains. Today, very easily we know the names of the 45, 46 of them, we know their names. And we have collected, compiled this information in great detail. For example, we wrote about these in our newspapers and magazines.

The scholars who were handling this topic wrote about these artifacts in their works; they recorded all of our artifacts. There are even compilation books on the Ottoman artifacts written by six scholars. Well, now, among the first ones, surely Sami Frashëri,⁶ we have a school in his name. In his time period, another scholar talked about Pristina in his works as well. He had a work I believe known as *Kamûs-ı*; it is said that he mentioned [Pristina] there. Actually the first one to talk about Pristina is Evliyâ Çelebi. His *Seyahatname* [travelog], you know, that one, he has traveled a lot, the whole world and has been to all three of the continents that the Ottoman Empire ruled at the time.

A third scholar again from Turkey, known by the name Ekrem Ayverdi, came over, counted and recorded the artifacts one by one, as an engineer as a scholar. Along with them, again, scholars from Pristina that were educated in our university, scientists like Hasan Kaleshi, Riza, Doctor Riza, Iskender Riza and Mr. Raif, Raif Virmiça who lives in Pristina and who has been the director of *Tan*⁷ newspaper. He analyzed the collected materials and he collected scientific documents and gathered them in one place, and published them into a book. And, today, whoever pleases can easily find Raif Virmiça's book and read about these [artifacts].

Ebru Süleyman: It's about Pristina?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes. Beside the water fountains, many other artifacts survived to this day. You know that there is the clock tower, the high school, it still stands in the yard of Sami Frashëri High School. It is a clocktower that is nearly three hundred years old. For example, it has a story, the clock tower. Now,

⁶ Sami bey Frashëri (1850-1904) was an Ottoman Albanian writer, philosopher, playwright and a prominent figure of the *Rilindja Kombëtare*, the National Renaissance movement of Albania, together with his two brothers [Abdyl](#) and [Naim](#). He also supported Turkish nationalism against its Ottoman counterpart, along with secularism against theocracy.

⁷ *Tan*, literally means dawn, is the first newspaper in the Turkish language in Kosovo after the Second World War, which started its publishing life on May 1, 1969 and closed down in 1992.

it has been built by the masters [landowners], by the state, the clock tower. You see, it was not built well, it was not working well and would break down very often, it would fail very often. And now (incom.) the clocks of the time were very very expensive. To build a huge {gestures big} clock like that requires both money and very good craftsmen.

Now what they did was, and this is a speculation, I do not know whether it is true or not but if it is true then it's very funny. And what was done, you know in Vıçitırn there is a clock tower similar to this one, that one was built about two hundred years ago, about three hundred years ago the clocks were built in Czechoslovakia, you see the Czechs were highly civilized and their technology was relatively more advanced. The clock would be procured, and would be obtained from there. Meaning the clock would be bought from there for all of this region wherever there were clocks, clock towers, you would know that the clocks were produced, crafted by the Czechs.

Now, there is a story that's being told, a funny one about this clock. We said that it would break down very often, and Vıçitırn had one with a clock similar to this but working much better than this one, now they think about it... If they would reach out and say, "Look Pristina is a central place, is the center of *sanjak*⁸ it would be good if you would give us the clock." They thought, suspecting that they wouldn't give the clock. What is there to do then, how would we get the clock now, how could we trick the people of Vıçitırn? They took some dogs, really barky ones and tied some tins and stuff to their tails that would make noises {shows the movement with hands} and just like that they released them [the dogs]...

Ebru Süleyman: Released them.

Mürteza Büşra: There around the clock tower. The artisans, the citizens would look around and wonder what was making so much noise, it attracted their interest, the loud noises that the dogs were making. After that, you know the saying for the thieves: *sarı çizmeli Mehmet Aga* [Joe Shmoe], a thief that was a very capable virtuoso, you know. A group of youngsters like this thief then went into the clock tower, took out the clock in Vıçitırn and the citizens of Vıçitırn never even understood, never realized it. They took out the clock and installed it in Pristina instead of the old one. However, after a while they understood that the clock was switched. Perhaps they might have even realized how it all happened. Look at the robbery ordeal! Meaning, in the name of your city, for the sake of seeing your city better, what haven't people done for it, right? (laughs).

In fact, the mosques, the old neighborhoods, and streets must also have urban legends like this as well, but if you would like this time we could talk about which neighborhoods and old streets existed, and how they were named. For example, in the center where we now call Nëna Tereza [Mother Teresa] today, starting from the parliament building, from the Çarşi Mosque all the way to Grand Hotel, that neighborhood, the street was called Lokaç. Lokaç, you know there is a funny phrase about it. It was

⁸ *Sandjak* which literally means banner in Turkish were administrative divisions of the Ottoman Empire.

raining a lot and the old stone pavements, as good as they were, would produce a lot of mud, dirt, you couldn't get rid of it. All the way up until here {touches his knee} would be all mud. And a person probably infatuated by this situation said it first and it spread around. The craftsmen said, "*Bak bu da Lokaç, tükür de kaç*" [You see this is Lokaç, spit on it and run] a phrase like this... (laughs).

Ebru Süleyman: Like a tongue twister?

Mürteza Büşra: Maybe like an idiom, he said an idiom like that. Whereas today, the Lokaç neighborhood is one of Pristina's most beautiful neighborhoods, isn't it? It is a splendid neighborhood, a central area today, one of the best ones. Besides, back in the days of our grandfathers, of our ancestors, there was a neighborhood called Tophane. During the month of Ramadan and during the religious holidays at the end of the day, cannons would be fired in Tophana. That is where it got its name Tophane. Thereafter other significant roads, streets, originally Pristina consisted of four {gesturing four} neighborhoods. One of them is Lokaç, the other one Tophane, the third one that was called Varuş, you know the school neighborhood that I mentioned, the neighborhood where the elementary school and high school are. This area was called the Varuş area, you know, except for the schools, that whole area was Varuş.

Ebru Süleyman: How did it stretch out?

Mürteza Büşra: So the Varuş area, back in the day all of Pristina was small, how large could you say it could have been? Fifty to one-hundred meters long. And I remember, for example, my father and my grandfather used to talk about it as well, in that street on the right {gesturing right} the streets of Serbians, the Serbian communities street, their houses on the right side and the Muslims had the other side {gesturing left}. In fact, the population at the time was divided into two, the Muslims population and the non-Muslim population meaning Christians, Orthodox, Jewish communities there were considered as Pristina's non-Muslim citizens. Besides these neighborhoods and streets, another street that caught the eye in the city was called Pirinaz.

Ebru Süleyman: Pirinaz?

Mürteza Büşra: If you stop and look in every street, and certainly there were some ten-fifteen streets, on every street there is a valuable artifact like a *masjid*, a mosque, right. Pristina had three *hammams* [Turkish baths]. You know when they asked you, "Where are you from?" "From Pristina." "From which neighborhood?" And the person would always say one of these four neighborhoods or a version of them. For example, "I'm from the neighborhood of Çarşi Mosque. I'm from the neighborhood of Sultan Murad's mosque" or in this case, the neighborhood carries the name of the mosque as well, Pirinaz.

Ebru Süleyman: Which one is the Pirinaz mosque?

Mürteza Büşra: Pirinaz, you know the road going toward the Tauk Bahçe. Now there is the school if you follow Veluşa all the way to get close to Tauk Bahçe, on the left side.

Ebru Süleyman: Through the street where the madrassah is now?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, this madrassah on Veluşa, later on, on that road on the left you would see [the mosque].

Ebru Süleyman: So the street there, residential area.

Mürteza Büşra: Pirinaz Mosque. And now another mosque that Veluşa takes you to is the Emir Aladdin Mosque. This madrassah in front of us you know, now this neighborhood is the school neighborhood {gesturing the area with hands} the madrassah is also very close within this neighborhood. That is a school where people would receive theological education, it would bring up *hafız*,⁹ students would be brought up.

In fact, sometimes as a joke, my father would say our teachers were not like your teachers, they now have a small stick and would hit the kids who would not behave well, intending to teach manners. Whereas our teachers had a stick from one side to the other {gesturing with hands} ranging three meters, they would scare children, make them focus on work admonish them to read and study and ensure discipline.

Well now, we have talked about the Tophane neighborhood, Pirinaz and there also was [a neighborhood] Gümrükhane. Gümrükhane, you know, at the entrance of Pristina.

Ebru Süleyman: Where is it now?

Mürteza Büşra: Gümrükhane¹⁰ used to be where the university campus is today, if you know the pedagogical school, the pedagogical school right there, Pristina extended only up to there back then.

Ebru Süleyman: So that was the entrance to the city?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, it connected to the Muhacer neighborhood, behind the theater the street that is now called Agim Ramadani. You know the street that is behind the theater, it also used to be called Ottoman street. After the Ottoman, Gümrükhane neighborhood and on the left there was the Muhacir

⁹ *Hafız* literally means the one who protects, the one who preserves. The person who knows the whole Quran by heart is called *hafız*. In Islamic tradition, it is said that they helped preserve the original form of the Quran through learning it by heart.

¹⁰ Turkish: *Gümrükhane*, meaning customs house. The neighborhood in Pristina carrying this name used to be considered the entrance to the city, particularly for the trading goods arriving in Pristina during the Ottoman rule.

neighborhood. The street that took you to the Muhacir neighborhood. The Muhacir neighborhood existed in many cities actually. The movements of people after the war created these neighborhoods, because communities of people would move to the closest habitable city there was. Pristina has a neighborhood like that as well.

Other than these, one of the most significant streets of the city is the Divan Yoli [Divan Street]. You know the Divan Yoli in Pristina that starts from the Sultan Murad Mosque, the straight street stretching all the way to Dragodan. Why was it called Divan Yoli? Because it was so straight, a modern engineer couldn't even make it that straight. This is how Pristina folk would brag about it. Because it was straight and long it was like a *divan* [couch] and they named it that way. And the first street right in front of the municipality today, *Bitli Sokak* [Flea Street], it was called like that. Why flea? Because, you know the *Bit Pazar* [Flea Market] in Skopje, the textile, clothes, and items that are second hand are sold there...

Ebru Süleyman: So you mean the street?

Mürteza Büşra: The first street in front of the municipality, you know the street where Sudi Efendi Mosque is, the first one *Bitli Sokak*, why because a flea market used to be there. Not the goods straight out of the factory, but the second-hand items that had moved from one owner to the other would be sold there. People didn't have much, there was poverty. Once upon a time there was poverty, people couldn't find textiles and fabrics and these things would be sold in flea markets.

Ebru Süleyman: The effects of the world wars?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes.

Ebru Süleyman: You did say that there were epidemic diseases as well?

Mürteza Büşra: Certainly, Pristina was ravaged by two infectious diseases that desolated the community. Meaning, a lot of people lost their lives, died. Even from my family, that I told you, [the diseases] affected almost half of the population. There were two big fires as well. The fires were particularly large because the shops and houses were mostly wooden and you know that they are sensitive to fire. If they catch on fire, they turn immediately into ash. When you see hundreds of houses turned into ash from a fire in one house, it was a painful event for the people, for the craftsmen.

There was an earthquake, it happened twice. There is one that has been told from one generation to another that happened sometime around 1707, a heartbreaking event, a huge earthquake. Some years after that, it repeated, another earthquake and Pristina was badly affected, destroyed a lot... These streets and neighborhoods are the ones that drew the greatest attention.

Ebru Süleyman: The Divan Yoli had its craftsmen and the bazaar.

Mürteza Büşra: Ah now, very true, you reminded me well. For example, I remember that street only slightly, some of them call it *Kapali Çarşı* [Closed Bazaar] now, but in fact, its name is *Ürtülü Çarşı* [Covered Bazaar]. What was covered? It was a large magazine covered to a certain degree and there were trees beside it, grape vines and many acacia trees, some linden trees as well. In some places, the bazaar was covered with the branches and leaves of these trees, and therefore it was called the covered bazaar. But the largest marketplace for the craftsmen was this place.

I even remember my childhood there because my father used to work at a saddlery. When I was a child, I would go there to see him and later I started working as an apprentice as well. Surely, they would give us only the lightest tasks. He [the master] would say, “Make the threads.” The threads had to be made because it was mostly a job of stitching. The saddlers would basically make hoops, saddles for the horses and other animals.

The saddlers would do these kinds of things. They would also make sandals. The necessary essential tool for stitching work was the thread. But the thread needed to be made well and be durable. This required craftsmanship and they would use us for that. When I was a kid our foreman would tell us, “You make the threads, your hands are very suitable for it.” I remember making the threads. So like this, I was helping my father back then. Certainly, some of the old professions like this die over time as technology advances.

You see, the animals were used and utilized only up to a certain point. Back in the day, keeping animals within the city was banned. An order arrived banning the animals from the city. Why? Because they cause damage. First, they require a lot of work, it’s almost impossible to keep the house completely clean when you have animals, therefore, they can also cause illnesses. Because typhoid can actually manifest itself from the situation where animals are kept at the houses, the bacteria grows and brings about the disease. So it is actually good that they were moved away from Pristina and the ban came. And, after that, our city, our town was not hit by a large-scale disease since then.

Ebru Süleyman: Other than the saddlers, what other professions are not around anymore?

Mürteza Büşra: For example, my father, after the saddlery died out, you know some of the old professions died out. New technology, when cars and engines came about and life changed, the transportation changed then, cars were being used for that.

Ebru Süleyman: During your childhood, the transportation was with phaetons, right?

Mürteza Büşra: With phaetons. For example, when my mother would visit my uncles, my uncles lived in Lokaç. You know Master Shaban today, the kebab place, right there we had an old house, so it was considered a bit embarrassing for my mother to walk from the school neighborhood to there on foot with kids. Just the way we use taxis now for visits, phaetons were used that way and through Divan Yol we used to go to Lokaç, I remember it very well.

But, as old professions die out, new ones emerge. For example, a profession that could be considered close to saddlery - my father's profession, is furniture-making, making sofas. What we call couches now. For the first time in Pristina, this profession was established around 1955, '56 when foremen came from Belgrade to teach it. Saddlery is different, the product is different and the furniture-making is different, it requires different materials, different craftsmanship, therefore, you need to gather experience for that, take a course or get training to acquire knowledge.

The foremen arrived from Belgrade and right on the outskirts of Pristina, on the way to Fushë Kosova, on the right side of the road a factory called *Napredak* [Prosperity] was built. It was one of the first factories. Now with it, instead of the old sofas in our old houses, we were going to have couches. It was the fashion back then and a profession came into existence. And through those foremen, my father took up another profession that was close to saddlery, he knew the stitching part. Surely quilting was also quite close to it, but in time, the saddlers, foremen and apprentices became workers at the factory to produce couches.

And they made such durable couches and sofas that they were sold quite widely in Kosovo and exported outside of Kosovo as well. Back in the day, the couches perhaps looked a bit simple but they had a lot of labor invested in them. I remember helping my father to make the couches, we would put the strings in the couch, they would be tightened up (incomp.) with screws and the rest would move on to stitching work, the threads would be tied so tight. Apparently, there were two different styles to tie them, one of them is the French style and the other the German style. The German style was like this {shows with hands} certainly a craft that arrived from Germany, the strings would be tied and they would not move at all. Afterward, it would be filled with something called seaweed, with that rather than the sponges which are used today.

The couches made from sponge are slightly damaging, the medical professionals claim. Whereas the ones that are filled with seaweed are not, after all, it is something that grows in nature, something from the sea that has benefits. The couches were made so strong that the couch that I made with my father fifty years ago still stands, you would think it was made yesterday, today. The couches now are made with sponges as per the fashion, but as the fashion changes the business changes as well. Nowadays everyone chooses the easiest option, those strong strings are not being used anymore, they are not being tied as before and all there is to couch is that special type of foam sponge. This craft has become this profession today.

Ebru Süleyman: And besides the saddlers?

Mürteza Büşra: Other than saddlers, for example, we could talk about the watchmaking craft, if we consider it there are still people who continue the craft they learned from their fathers and grandfathers in Pristina, for example my friend Faruk Pandukli, he has a shop in front of Grand Hotel, it is one of the oldest shops in the city. His father or grandfather even was a watchmaker and he continues the same craft based on the knowledge he learned from them. Nowadays the new technology is so effective that there are factories being built and watches are also made in those factories, right? And since they are being produced en masse, the old professions and crafts are lapsing and are losing significance. So, you look at how these crafts are disappearing one by one when now factories are being built, and they now repair old watches.

For example, today we can even repair old couches. If they have a defect or need renewing, we renew it. Some crafts die out and some professions come to life with new technologies. You see, a lot of crafts like this disappeared. When I was doing journalism, I got curious about it and I went to Skopje because Skopje has a larger numbers of tradesmen and markets, wealthier folks that used to trade. I would ask the elderly about the old crafts that do not exist anymore, which ones were they. They would count more than thirty professions for me. Nowadays 90 percent of them do not exist anymore. We have to adapt to a contemporary world, right?

What new technology didn't bring about? For example, there were tape recorders, telephones, the telephone has a long history and a past, the telegraph as well. You see, now we use phones, very modern ones. Essentially the newest models are the best. Imagine today you can absorb knowledge through a laptop, you can work through it, read on it. The phones were invented, you look at it and after a while they have computers inside the phones. Meaning, all of the sciences of the world are advancing, look at the levels they have reached. With contemporary technology today, you have a phone in your hand and endless knowledge of the world in your palm.

Now, what else would it affect, certainly the publishing of the books would be affected, perhaps the children's habit of reading books would be something of the past, but I hope that it would not last long and the old habits will remain. Because maybe the pace of receiving such knowledge could be damaging. Perhaps getting the knowledge like before, from the books, writing on paper would be more beneficial. So... there it is...

Ebru Süleyman: Uncle Mürteza, you remember Divan Yoli of the town back in the day? You said you remember the covered bazaar...

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, I practically grew up there. In the covered bazaar there were many crafts...

Ebru Süleyman: Do you remember who lived in the town? Which languages would you hear on the streets?

Mürteza Büşra: Ah well... I told you if we go way back, the population will be divided in two. They said the Muslim and the non-Muslims. Whereas in the new Yugoslav times, for example, when the Ottomans left, this place had its fair share of disasters. The Balkan Wars which started in around '11 or '12. In 1913, there was the Second Balkan War, another disaster and Pristina suffered a lot, went through painful days... There were painful events happening, could a city, a neighborhood, develop right after the war? It had to start life from zero again. I'm telling you Pristina's fate, just like many other cities. But why specifically Pristina, because Kosovo made a bridge to Serbia and Hungary, you see, if someone needs to go south they have to pass through here. This is a passage and thus Kosovo encountered several disasters, right after the Balkan Wars, the unfortunate World Wars happened. The First World War lasted four years from 1914 to 1918. What happens then? The city falls into ruins.

Part Two

Mürteza Büşra: The ruins, the difficult times, finding bread was troublesome. How would you cultivate produce, what would you grow, what would you do? It falls into ruins. The war... it is tremendously hard to develop after the war. It could trigger diseases as well, everything, all kinds of damaging things. But in 1918 Yugoslavia was formed for the first time. Back at that time, you know the United Nations organization we have today, back then they had the Berlin Congress. World affairs would be shaped based on the decisions made in Berlin. So based on one of the decisions, Yugoslavia was going to be formed for the first time, meaning after 1918 when Yugoslavia was formed, it had the three official languages: Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian. Meaning the official language and administration would be under these three nations.

However, Yugoslavia had eighteen other different nations living in it. They may have had human rights to some degree but not legal rights. Meaning only Serbians had the legislative rights and they ruled Yugoslavia. However, in time, you look at the era of the [Yugoslav] Kingdom, how many years did it last? '18, '20s to '40s, about twenty years. After twenty years, the society starts to change as well, there is another war, the Second World War, this one lasts for three-four years as well. Other than that, the city was devastated, and like this...

Ebru Süleyman: Do you remember the migrations?

Mürteza Büşra: The migrations happened from the First World War until the Second World War. For example, besides Serbs, Turks and Albanians used to live in these areas as well, meaning Kosovo and Pristina. Additionally, there were other minorities as well. For example, I have heard from the elderly

that there were even Armenians [living here]. The elderly would tell me, Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Jewish, Roma [would live here]. Roma also had Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the city. And the population consisted of these communities. Ah, and, even though some reforms were made during the era of the Kingdom, human rights did not see much progress. For example, you would enjoy legal rights only if you were Serbian, Croatian or Slovenian, however, the other minorities did not have such rights.

But there are a lot of changes after the Second World War. It is then the continuation of the federation state but in a socialist setting. A new order comes about and certainly, life is different in the new order, it is better, it is within the Brotherhood and Unity [political paradigm]. And then, the federal state consists of republics, second Yugoslavia. How many states are in the Federation: starting from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro. Serbia has two areas which become autonomous areas later Vojvodina and the second one area of Kosovo then is linked with the Serbian administration. Meaning we had to start from zero once again after the Second World War. War, the war is over, once again...

Ebru Süleyman: You have maybe heard from your father about the Second World War, back then Germans, Italians occupied Kosovo and perhaps most of the Jewish community died out back then?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, it fell apart.

Ebru Süleyman: Do you maybe know a Jewish family or an Armenian family? I had never heard of it.

Mürteza Büşra: Now when there is a certain economic crisis, during the old Yugoslavia as well, when there was an economic crisis, why would people immigrate? People immigrate mostly because of the economic crisis. Meaning, when folks were left without land during the era of the Kingdom, the reforms were made. What do the reforms mean? If you had land larger than ten hectares, you couldn't field it, it was etatised. Then the state would give you a *renta* [support], some aid, and about twenty-five percent would go to the landowner. But, on the other hand, you are giving 75 percent of it away very cheaply, the state uses all that land and area. It's good but what happens with the people who are left without the land? They feel the need to immigrate and they immigrate. Now, who immigrates the most? Of course, the people who do not have land, our house, the people who were left homeless. What were they supposed to do?

Besides, it was not that easy even if you wanted to immigrate to the motherland. I mean, we saw some of the examples of it even today. For example, migrations from Bulgaria, the mass migrations with animals, cattle, cows, carriages, they immigrated. There weren't even any trains for transportation. It was wartime, difficult times, the migrations started during the turmoil.

After that, what else, the climate is another factor that affects the migration of people but war had the greatest effect. During the war, some nations perished, disappeared. For example, when Yugoslavia was first formed from '18 to '42 or '45, some nations disappeared. There were no more Jewish citizens left, chased by the Germans, they dispersed, ran away from here. There is no Bulgarian, or anyone with Bulgarian descent even, there are no Greeks or people of Greek descent.

But in some nations, there is a population boom, high levels of natality. Migration always exists but so does natality. Now coming to that, when we look at the birth rates around '45 and after 1945, meaning after the Second World War, you see the natality in the Muslim communities, among Albanians, Turkish, Bosnians, they have a population boom. That is why, for example, if you would compare the population in '51, what were the levels of the Albanian population, Turkish population, Serbian population, Bosnian population, Roma population? You would see that the largest percentage would be in the Albanian nation because of the very high natality rates. If you look at it at some point, it was half of the population, however, I remember it even now in the census taken in the '70s, they were forming about 75 percent of the population.

Ebru Süleyman: Yes.

Mürteza Büşra: And besides them, the second largest group were Serbians and the third one was Turkish, and others. All well, but in thirty years, for example, where would the population boom lead us to? Right now 90 percent of Kosovo's population are Albanians, right? Eh then, who are the remaining ten percent? Among Muslims Bosnians, Turkish, Roma and others. Montenegrin... they form the population today. This is a large difference in proportions, population booms.

Ebru Süleyman: Do you remember when you started school, which year was it?

Mürteza Büşra: I remember it very well. Now, I was born in 1946 but when I was five, I started going to school. Why? Because of my [maternal] uncle, he was one of the first teachers. In 1951 the elementary schools started operating. The decision was made, regulations, and an order came from the state that starting from 1951, schools would open in the Turkish language. And most of the people were five, six, seven years old, even eight, nine and ten as well, we were all in the same class. I remember we stepped in the school for the first time in '51.

Since my uncle was a teacher, he took me in a bit early, when I was very young. I remember it as if it was today, we were learning the letter "C" and the teacher was explaining the letter "C" and some of the letters from the alphabet, and I said, "Uncle, uncle" instead of "Teacher" when I wanted to ask for permission to explain the letter "C" and the reading piece for it. He came next to me and said "Look," "my son Mürteza, beware, and don't call me Uncle again." "How should I call you then?" "Either say Mr. Teacher or Teacher," "Oh, all right, it's like that?" I said all right and didn't call him Uncle again, I called him Teacher.

Ebru Süleyman: What was your uncle's name?

Mürteza Büşra: One of the first teachers, Mr. Ali, Ali Efendi. There were actually two [with the same name], one of them was designated as the director, Ali Ömer and the other one Ali Efendi, that is how they used to call my uncle. One of the first teachers. For example, we were extremely crowded in the first class. In a sense, when that kind of liberty and freedom was given to you, when the possibility of education in Turkish was given... up until then, many families who sent their kids to school in Albanian or Serbian switched to Turkish and continued the school there. And among the old teachers, besides my uncle, besides the first founders that were these two teachers both named Ali, there was also the likes of Bedri Selim, Necmi Selim, Brother Şükrü, [Şükrü Zeynullah](#), our teacher. Other than that, the teachers who had passed away, they had put in a lot of work for education, to these crowded classes. I'm telling you, in my classroom, there were fifty, there was no place and it was very crowded.

Ebru Süleyman: Did you go to school at Meto Bajraktar?

Mürteza Büşra: We studied here, at Elena Gjika, previously known as Vuk Karadžić, in this school right here {gesturing the direction with hand}. And it wouldn't fit us all, I mean there was not enough room, a lot of students were coming, they wanted to study in Turkish, it was too crowded. You know Emin Durak Elementary School towards the bazaar now, there used to be Turkish schooling, on the ground level of the gymnasium [Sami Frasheri], in the basement, because of the lack of space and at the place that we today call the Municipal Archive, the old building, there were classrooms for education in Turkish as well. So in about five-six different places because there was a need for space.

Most of the Turkish people were definitely pro-receiving education in their mother tongue and thus the parents registered them so, and it was very crowded. All well, but in 1953, with such crowded classrooms and high numbers of students, there were also a lot of extracurricular activities. School days, official holidays, state holidays were noted and some programmes were prepared. I remember the programmes.

Then I remember in 1953, my sister was older than me when she was in higher grades in Pristina, at the stage plays of the schools, the best-performing students would be selected for the city theater. The city theater, back in the day, there was the old *korzo*,¹¹ the *korzo* area, you know that we mentioned the covered bazaar, nowadays it is actually where the parliament is, right in front of it used to be a street, I know the first *korzo* right there where the youth would go there walk, entertain themselves. The cinema posters, pictures, wall newspapers were there as well. Like this...
What else would you like to listen to, what else can I tell you?

Ebru Süleyman: Anything that you would like, was there a cinema on the street...?

¹¹ *Korzo*, a main street, reserved for pedestrians.

Mürteza Büşra: Ah how did the theater came about, you are right. The most successful students, the most successful ones in drama, were able to become members of the theater. As a matter of fact, [the theater] produced, revived so many good plays that the whole city was curious about what was going on in the theater saying, “Wow, these kids are really bringing up amazing plays on stage.” There really was a huge interest in 1953, the kids were active, there were extracurricular activities. I remember it like it was yesterday, the Puss with Boots, Homework drama plays and the theater artist named Mazhar Kadriu used to come as a director, and thanks to him the plays were very successful. Whole Pristina was curious about it, the adults would come there as well, our fathers, our mothers, they would come to see what the kids were doing, great artists.

Ebru Süleyman: So your sister had a role?

Mürteza Büşra: My sister had a role as well and I was curious about it so I would go watch the rehearsals and wouldn't miss any of the plays. When I was a kid I imagined that I would become an actor when I grew up, because the theater attracted a lot of attention in the city. For example, the theater plays were made in Serbian and Albanian as well, but the most successful ones were the ones made by the [Turkish] students. But after that, you know the catastrophe of migration that happened to society.

Ebru Süleyman: It was in the '50s right?

Mürteza Büşra: From '53 to '56, the theater continued working and achieving great success. Additionally, there was a considerable number of students in all the schools. So much so that, if we had those numbers today, we would lack space again, we wouldn't fit in this school [Elena Gjika]. But what happened next, the Turkish and Albanians won their rights. They had some freedoms, but on the other hand, the state also gave way for the migration as well. When this became an option, the families slowly started to migrate to Turkey and that was how it began. Slowly in '53 and '54 and it accelerated in '55 and '56.

Ebru Süleyman: What do you think, why so much migration in these years?

Mürteza Büşra: Well, as we talked about before, the reasons for migration... what could it be? It could be the economic crisis. When one is left without land, garden, farm, goes into poverty and looks for a way to survive, and what they chose is migration, it is their fate then. And what else could cause migration, oppression? For example, the minorities were so oppressed and that is why there was so much migration. Many migrated from Kosovo.

Ebru Süleyman: The population decreased?

Mürteza Büşra: Certainly, yes, the population decreased by half just like it happened after the wars. Let's say if it had 16 thousand people, whenever a war happens, half of the population goes, leaves these places and the city empties out by half. Just the same with migration, you look at it and you see, neighbors migrating, relatives migrating, even from fear as well. We lived through this about twenty years ago.

We were frightened by the pressure. You know they say, "*Korki daglari bekler*" [Fear guards the mountains]. As a result, people migrated out of fear. So the same situation continued in the years of 1956, '57, '58 until 1960. It decreased by the year 1960 but certainly, migration continued until the 1960s. This way our classes at school emptied out. Half of the population or maybe more, because when looking at the photos from the year 1951, 55 there are 40 or 50 people in the photo. Where are they today? You see that you do not have your classmates around, this is when you understand.

When I did my duty as a journalist, I would often visit Prizren and Mamusha and arrange children broadcasts in schools. While arranging, in Mamusha's Hacı Lütü Ömer school, the principal and the teacher always said there are six hundred students. I was saying "How is this possible? Every time I come there are six hundred students." They asked Nasreddin Hodja,¹² "How old are you?" He always responded that his age was forty. "Nasreddin Hodja, how come you are always saying that you are forty?" Like these ones in school, there are always six hundred (laughs). But with my inexperience, I could not understand that migration and birthrates were balancing each other. As much as there is migration, there is also birth rates. It's a coincidence. Turns out that this was what I did not understand.

Life is like that, migrations never stop. Twenty years ago we went through this. When there is pressure you need to seek for remedy, you will have to migrate. Half of the folks have migrated, of course, most of them to neighbors like Albania, some of them to Turkey and Europe countries, our nation disbanded. It took just a few days for half of the population to migrate. What does fear mean? That's it.

Ebru Süleyman: You said that you had been going to Korzo in your youth?

Mürteza Büşra: Oh, how were we educated in school? We received a primary education in the school {points out the school} in front of me. Education for the Turkish language. Previously, we did not have a high school. Preparation for high school started only in 1962. In 1963, it became possible. In the academic year 1962-1963, the gymnasium opened. Turkish students filled classrooms at the high school. I registered at the gymnasium in 1963 as the third rank of my class. After I finished primary school, I continued on to high school.

¹²Nasreddin Hodja was a *Seljuq* satirist of the 13th century who lived in present-day Turkey. He has been considered a populist philosopher and a Sufi who is remembered for his funny stories and anecdotes.

While my parents were sometimes saying, “Son, better work with crafts, there is no need for further education.” For them, a craftsman’s son should be a craftsman as well. That was their preference. But that year, I was thinking of becoming a radio broadcaster. As a kid fifteen-sixteen years old, from one of the brand new professions, I wanted to be a radio broadcaster. There was no television back then, only radio. I wanted badly to be a radio repairman or radio broadcaster. But that year there was no enrollment for the profession, it did not happen, I had no luck.

So in order to not be separated from my classmates, I continued on to high school. As you know, after four years of education again with excitement, we were questioning whether to continue with undergraduate or not. Perhaps taking any job would be a better path, and we were discussing it with our parents. Well, that year I was saying that there was a Turkish-language pedagogical school that opened in Pristina in 1962. Actually, it first opened in Prizren, and after the first generation graduated, they moved to Pristina. We formed the first generation in Pristina, about thirteen-fifteen students were regular and about the same number of students were part-time.

Late Süreyya Yusuf, Bayan Sabahat, Mahmut were there, from Prizren, Süleyman Brina they all passed away. After all this, there were major changes at the Pedagogical School. The education was two years and we wanted it to be four years long, but we could not succeed because authorities suggested that we open an Orientalism Department. In the Orientalism Department, lectures are often in Arabic, there is Arabic language and literature, Persian language and literature. That’s all very well, but some of the teachers in Pedagogical School stated that it is better if we opened a Turkology Department. Although we could not succeed again, that year the Turkish Language and Literature Department could not open but the Orientalism Department did.

At the time, the famous Yugoslav Orientalists including Hasan Kaleshi were giving lectures as professors in the Orientalism Department. It lasted for around ten years. Later in 1988 after our requests, the Turkology Department was established in the Faculty of Philology. Following the establishment, the number of students increased, quite a lot of students became personnel until now the Turkology Department is still in progress (smiles). It is better this way, to be educated by your mother tongue is joy and it is an honor.

Ebru Süleyman: You graduated from the Pedagogical School, after that what happened?

Mürteza Büşra: I immediately started my job as a teacher at Meto Bayraktar Primary School. At that time, there was Turkish education at that school. Back in my time in the 1970s, there were vacant job positions in schools because teachers retired, so I took the position and started working. I loved my job (smiles) at the beginning, who doesn’t? We embraced our profession and tried to recreate the best professors, because we started working with love and devotion, as we work like this. We really created an excellent generation and in that period there were a lot of students in school (smiles).

Ebru Süleyman: What years are we talking about?

Mürteza Büşra: The first time I started working as a teacher was in March, 1970. After working for five-six years while I was working with all my heart during the significant school days, I was doing a good job with program presentations. Some of my friends had liked it and thanks to them [I got an invitation saying] “Come on over because Radio Pristina does not have journalists, does not have children’s broadcasts, we are in need of personnel, would you come?” They took me there and said, “You should definitely do children’s broadcasting.”

Some of my friends say even today that I was a good teacher. They said, “You would have been a great teacher if you had continued that career.” It really was a profession that I loved. Working in education was truly sacred to me, that was an honor in itself and I loved it. But you know, unfortunately, fate... When I moved to the radio, I started doing the children’s broadcast. Back at the time, we had a tape they called *nagır*, a huge device made with the technology of that time. I would take that tape, carry it like a porter all the way to Prizren since the programmes were realized only through visiting the elementary schools.

Moreover, I remember when we were doing the children’s broadcasts then, we would work on four central themes. One of these primary themes was named *Okuldan Sesler* [Voices from the Schools] and this one required you to travel for sure, to all the places that had education in Turkish, we would visit all those schools.

Ebru Süleyman: This was around ‘74?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes around ‘74 or ‘75, actually in ‘74 the new building, the Radio Pristina of today, was opened up for use. There was one in Slovenia, Ljubljana like this one, a greatly designed, modern building and one of these buildings is being constructed in Pristina. Because of the lack of space, radio and television could not share the same places anymore and they were separated [into different buildings] and radio got a building of its own. The radio had a lot of workers, more than [television] and it also had a long tradition, it was established a very long time ago {gesturing the back with the hand}. Radio began [working] after 1944 or ‘45, whereas the television programmes came about only after the ‘80s, so [radio] is an old profession. So that is why...

One is proud of this as well, I embraced children's broadcasting, I’ve told you one of the main programmes was called *Okuldan Sesler* [Voices from the Schools] and I would go to Prizren very often. We had only two elementary schools back then whereas there were six of them in Prizren! Meaning there was a lot of work to do, you could fill the tapes for hours, there were a lot of pupils, in numbers...

Ebru Süleyman: Back in the day were Prizren and Pristina even more different? When you were traveling around the cities of Kosovo..

Mürteza Büşra: No but...

Ebru Süleyman: Were you encountering interesting things perhaps, during your visits?

Mürteza Büşra: Now when you say differences, what do you mean, there are certainly several kinds of differences. We would go to Prizren and it made our job easier, you would fill up the tapes much faster, there were six elementary schools, just elementary schools, six of them! Whereas we essentially had only two elementary schools. Mamuşa was also close to Prizren, so we would go there and record there as well. There would be either school performances, we would visit when there were performances or when it was some day of significance, a festival or something of that kind. And we would record the performances of the children, extending the microphone to them to record them authentically in whatever they had to say. Or we would also record the drama performances, the songs, songs of the choirs, we would collect these and would broadcast them from the studio very easily.

I mean, I used to love working there, I embraced it a lot. I spent my life in the children's world, with the children, visiting schools... In addition to this, I also had a broadcast that included adults as well, in *Okuldan Sesler* [Voices from the Schools] we would have conversations with teachers as well. Those broadcasts contained some interesting subjects as well. I used to give the interviews that I was doing with adults either to the news programme or this other programme that I mentioned by name.

Ebru Süleyman: You were preparing the interviews?

Mürteza Büşra: Well now, when you would go to the studio, you had to be a technician yourself. Us as journalists, when we would take the tapes with us, there was no need for a technician to come with us as well. But, for example, during the performances, particularly if it was a big one, if there was a big celebration of some sort, it required a lot of work and didn't use to be easy to record it just like that. Just like yourselves now with the cameraman, [the interviews] were only possible with two or three people then we would take technical staff with us.

Primarily we would also need a driver for the car, right? And we would need the sound technician, together with the journalist, it would add up to three, four people. We would go to a school to watch the activities there. So, this is how it was realized. Back in the day, we had extremely heavy tapes {gesturing heavy weight with hands}, heavy and huge things, in time you realize that they got smaller, in the miniature style that the Japanese had invented, more compact.

Ebru Süleyman: Easier to carry.

Mürteza Büşra: Easier to carry. In similar fashion nowadays, there are such recorders like this {gesturing his palm} which made our profession much easier, now we do not need all the technicians we do it ourselves.

Ebru Süleyman: The questions and the concept of the broadcast programmes were made by you?

Mürteza Büşra: Well, certainly, working on children's radio broadcasting is very similar to being a teacher and I had used that experience of mine and we would easily produce the children's broadcasts. For example, we would record all of the activities of the kids. Or yourself, I used to prepare some of the radio dramas myself, there were a lot of plays dedicated to the children's world. You would select one of them and do every step of the production yourself, the prelude, the epilogue, the directing and you had to calculate all of the technical details as well, the entire body of work was completed by the broadcast director, we were doing it as a journalist, all of it.

There was not much need for a production director either. Only for the New Year's programmes or if so happened that we attended races or competitions. We would attend all kinds of competitions. The competitions would take place in Ohrid, once we got third place and at another time the children's broadcast won first place. You see, like that, [we achieved it] based on our experience, got a lot of help.

Ebru Süleyman: Yes, it is quite special to be able to talk to children and record what they have to say, create something.

Mürteza Büşra: Now, look there is an artist called Halit Kıvanç in Turkey. He had directed numerous children's festivals and hosted them. You know, he was the presenter, he directed extensive productions taking place all around Turkey. And in Kosovo, us, I was side by side with my friends who were working with children as well but before me. There was [Enver Baki](#), for example, from our generation he was the first to produce a children's program.

However, after Enver Baki, there was Cevahir Halaç, who passed away. He was working on children's programming as well and was producing very good work. He was the one who handed it over to me. After that, our chief Muhamet Ustaibo was also engaged in children's broadcasting. In the generations before our ones, back in the day, for example, the radio was built in 1951 for the first time and began broadcasting but it was just oral. It wasn't like today, not in these conditions, they had to do live broadcasts. If there was something to be transmitted, some news to be read, they were doing it live. If there was a choir to sing a song, they would go inside the studio {gestures squeezing in} and they would sing their songs to be transmitted live. For example, with the orchestra as well. As a matter of fact, you needed to bring a large orchestra to the studio because you could only broadcast live, the technology was like that, very simple technology.

So the broadcasting was initially live but in time the construction of the studios was very beneficial. Why? Because then the broadcasting could be done proactively, in a well-prepared way. And, like this, our broadcasts used to be very good. Meaning, when you could prepare well for a conversation with someone, it is more favorable, right? We would actualize our broadcasts in the studio. And after that, you would directly submit it to the archive. And Radio Pristina became so powerful, the receiver and transmitter antennas were one kilowatt. One kilowatt [made possible for the broadcast] to be heard in almost all of the Balkan countries, the news from Kosovo and the carried-out radio broadcasts...

That is why I am saying the studios made our work much easier. The tapes, instead of carrying all those big tapes, now we have the smaller ones {gesturing with hands}.

Ebru Süleyman: How many years have you worked for the radio?

Mürteza Büşra: I have been able to work at the radio for exactly 25 years (smiles). Well as you know, after the last war, some possibilities did not exist anymore and for that reason, it wasn't possible [to continue]. Us, the more experienced journalists, the older journalists, we had to slowly leave our jobs and leave our places to the young, to the young journalists that were appearing and coming in. So they continued after the war.

In this case, how many were we, I think thirty people on the editorial staff and I think only about five or six of them today are working there, maybe if they hire staff, one or two more could be added, very few. In comparison, back in the time, we had a lot of broadcasting, 22 different broadcast shows if you consider the time it takes, [the length of the programmes] had reached, five, six, seven hours. I think it was important that we were able to broadcast for such a long time in the Turkish language.

Ebru Süleyman: Yes, to have that much time allocated.

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, quite so. Also, it had a long past, if you think about it starting in 1951, how many years have passed? Our jubilee is coming close to about seventy years. 1951 is a very important year for the Turkish community. Namely, we are able to have education in Turkish, in our mother tongue, and in addition to it, Radio Pristina starts broadcasting. Other than these associations being formed, for example, for the first time in Pristina, an amazing society called *Yeni Hayat* [New Life] formed by the Turkish community came into existence. *Doğru Yol* [The Right Way] association in Prizren as well. These are the oldest associations. Meaning, they are the associations formed in 1951.

Ebru Süleyman: And the radio starts broadcasting '51 as well?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, in the beginning, as I told you, they were live because there were no studios.

Ebru Süleyman: What about the newspapers and magazines?

Mürteza Büşra: Ah yes, yes, later on *Tan* newspaper was this was about '69 almost '70. *Tan* newspaper was a very rich one in content, it was a weekly gazette but it was quite rich. For example, teachers would go there often to cooperate, they would cooperate with journalists. They would join the *Tan* newspaper as correspondents. It was quite rich and had an intriguing content and was beloved quite a lot. This was also circulated around in the Balkans among the Turkish communities living there. Our newspaper would reach very far places as well.

There was also a children's magazine *Kuş* within the scope of the newspaper; we had a magazine. Meaning, in addition to the adults, the children's world was provided for as well. There was a page dedicated to children within the newspaper as well, but this was from that children's magazine with the name *Kuş*. With the honor that *Kuş* brought us, we would attend ceremonies all around Yugoslavia. It used to be organized in Novi Sad back at the time, it was called *Zmajeva Deca*, Jovan Jovanović,¹³ Dragon's Children Festival. All of the people living in Yugoslavia, from all the representatives, one or two kids from every republic would attend the competition with their teachers. With the poems, prose we would go there and be together at that ceremony organized in Novi Sad. It was a large jubilee, organized every year.

I remember one year, as the head of the execution, head of the administration of the *Kuş* magazine, our very famous and great poet Necati Zekeriya, you know? He came. It was a great honor! A well known, Yugoslavia-wide known poet and writer was preparing the *Kuş* magazine here in Pristina! This was a big deal. Then at these ceremonies that were being organized every year in Novi Sad, I remember one year they needed someone to talk about the subject of Turkish literature at this ceremony that was Yugoslavia-wide at a high degree. And then our late brother Necat made such an introduction to Turkish literature that the most valuable writers and poets of Yugoslavia were astonished. They said, "Look, Necat Zekeriya introduced us to Turkish literature."

There was a lot of interest as well. You know, Turkish literature has a long past and we have very valuable literature. And, just like that, Necati talked about the value of *Kuş* magazine, how it was realized, who were the supporters and talked about the Turkish Yugoslav men of letters as well as the worldwide known Turkish writers. About the books, education, children's world in Turkey, he explained it so well and wrote such a good introduction that everyone was curious about it.

And... you could really tell from his looks that he was a poet, from his manners. He was devoted to friendships, loved socializing and had friends everywhere. At some point, you look and children's magazines come from his friends in Slovenia, come from Vojvodina, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia... He

¹³ Jovan Jovanović Zmaj (1833-1904) was a Serbian poet. Jovanović worked as a physician; he wrote in many poetry genres, including love, lyric, patriotic, political, and youth, but he remains best known for his children's poetry.

received and welcomed friends and magazines [sent by friends] from everywhere. That is why he also thrived in creating for us a very valuable *Kuş* magazine. He was very witty, a very intelligent man.

And he created a boom in the children's world with his stories. His stories were translated to all languages, all languages of the Balkans. He had some widely read stories and children loved it a lot. And thus, our lives as journalists passed like this. And so after the war, we sort of retired, had to leave our profession, and grew old. It was left to the young people. How does the saying go? The children are the intellectuals of tomorrow. And so, like this...

Ebru Süleyman: I forgot to ask you, you said that your mother was from Pristina as well, from which family? You mentioned a bit about your uncles, their house.

Mürteza Büşra: The Siçan lineage. There are some surnames like Siçans, Çeçis in Pristina. So the Siçan family line. And how did they get this surname? Let's see, when Pristina was very small, say about a hundred years ago, our grandfather while coming from Tauk Bahçe had gotten wet from the rain, and people said, "Oh, look, Ali Efendi got soaking wet." You know the way it is said, "I got wet like a rat." So from that idiom, the family got the surname Siçan. We have some odd names like this, Çeçi, Kocadiş, like this. So because it was a very small town, even a very small event could lead to a nickname. Like this.

My mother's house was in the center. I remember when roads were built in Pristina from cut stones, you know how nowadays roads are made with asphalt? Back then they were made out of cut stones. It was fantastic, the old pavement would be moved away and this one was a cleaner more beautiful way of paving the road for transport. And there used to be motocross races (smiling). My mother's old house has two stories. I even see that house in pictures of the old Pristina. I will also give it to you if I find it [addresses the interviewer].

Ebru Süleyman: So there are photographs of it?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, it was nice scenery. On the second floor, all of our family would gather there, my uncle's children. My uncle had six children, they were six siblings, us three, and my aunt's sons would come as well and we would be about fifteen children. We loved going to that house, a huge house. On the second floor, we used to watch the race. Every activity that was taking place in Pristina, we could see it from there very easily. And there were motocross races.

Ebru Süleyman: So that was the center already?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, definitely. All the races would take place there. Right there motocross races used to take place {making a circular motion with hand}.

Ebru Süleyman: And how do you mean motocross? These were motorcycles?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, yes, motorcycles. There weren't even any cars around back then. I'm talking about '52 or '53 to '55. In '55 what happened to this street? Based on the urban plan, everything that was old was going to be torn down and something new built instead. Well, ok, very well, but they had already torn down the covered bazaar. Look at Sarajevo now, they have their old bazaar, they preserved it. There is the old bazaar in Skopje, they preserved it. Why wasn't it preserved here? This is actually what should be pitied.

Ebru Süleyman: So then, you saw all the demolitions during this time, what did you feel about it, about the city changing?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, of course. After having gone to my father in the covered bazaar, having spent my holidays there I certainly long for it, look for it and want it. If we only still had our old bazaar, why not. You see, only God knows how correct are some of the decisions made, instantly eradicating the environment of the craftsmen, their output, their art, how correct could it be? How beneficial could it be? We couldn't preserve it. Pristina couldn't preserve it. It would have been better if people in power had thought of it. We would have street fairs. I remember, people would go to Gilan to street fairs as well, but we had them here too.

For example on Tuesdays, in the area where we called the covered bazaar, there were more than five hundred shops, the most shopping would be done on Tuesdays. Taking as an example, the saddlers, their products, bridles, saddles, and hoops were sold for animals because the villagers, the people who worked with animals would come to Pristina, they would buy it. There would be large sales on Tuesdays. Us as the apprentices couldn't even move away from our masters not for one minute starting from 5 a.m. early in the morning all the way up to the night. Why? Because we were going to win our five dinars,¹⁴ our weekly pocket money since we helped our master. It was like that, we used to love working as an apprentice at an early age.

Ebru Süleyman: You were three siblings, your older sister, you, and?

Mürteza Büşra: Yes, and my brother. Our father retired at a very young age. Astonishingly really, in the old Yugoslav era, or the new Yugoslav era during Tito, because it was the socialist system, what was important was your years of experience. My father had worked since he was a little boy and after you collect 35 years of experience you can retire. So my father retires at 55, starting from 20, no sorry, you don't retire at 20, of course, but whenever you have 35 years of work experience you can retire. He was 55 years old, he was young. Today we retire at 65. Back then you could retire ten years earlier than that. Why? Because they cared about labor. You know, the socialist system had rules like that, if you had completed 35 years of work, you could retire.

¹⁴ Dinar was the Yugoslav currency. Now it is the basic monetary unit of Serbia.

Ebru Süleyman: And your mother was a homemaker?

Mürteza Büşra: Our mother was a homemaker, as per the tradition back then. Back then women went to the madrassah¹⁵ for some years and learned to write and read in Arabic. And she could read it, for example, easily read *Yasin*, meaning she had learned well at the madrassah. She was capable of reading the verses and the sections of the Quran. So back then, my mother was born in 1915 so they were the kids of '25. What could it have been back then? There were only madrassah and no other possibility of education in Turkish, not in Albanian, only in Serbian. Meaning after '18 to 1940. Education was like that back then?

Ebru Süleyman: When did you get married?

Mürteza Büşra: Well, now. You see, man has 32 teeth right, the medical professionals say that. So we would joke about it and say "Look, mom, as soon as I'm 32, I'll get married." "Oh yeah?" "Yes, exactly." And so it happened that I really got married when I was 32. Now I am 72 years old and it has been 40 years. We have two children, a daughter, and a son. My daughter works at Eurokoha. She graduated from Tourism and Hotel Management, and studied in Bursa. My son was here, he didn't have a chance to go to university. he works here now and earns a living. We live together with my son and grandchildren and we're very happy, we are grateful, what a beautiful life (smiling). What else would you like to talk about, is it enough?

Ebru Süleyman: If you would like to tell me anything else, I am all ears.

Mürteza Büşra: I hope that it won't stay only at this, come again, come next year, we can elaborate and talk some more. If you're happy with it, then I'm happy with it. Good luck on your broadcast and work.

Ebru Süleyman: Thank you very much.

¹⁵ Muslim religious school, the only school where teaching could be conducted.