

# Oral History Kosovo

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## INTERVIEW WITH EDMOND PRUTHI

Pristina | Date: July 12, 2019

Duration: 74 minutes

Present:

1. Edmond Pruthi (Speaker)
2. Erëmirë Krasniqi (Interviewer)
3. Besarta Breznica (Camera)

*Symbols in transcription, nonverbal communication:*

*() - emotional communication*

*{ } - the interlocutor explains some gestures.*

*Other rules of transcription:*

*[] - addition to the text to help understand*

*Footnotes are add-ons that provide information about places, names or expressions.*

## Part One

**Edmond Pruthi:** I am Edmond Pruthi, born on March 22, 1974 in Mitrovica. I am from Mitrovica, my family is from Gjakova. We are a small Pruthi family, with three roots. A root from Gjakova, and three roots are in Skopje. To tell you the truth I've been to Gjakova three or four times during my life. I have cousins, but they're mostly in Mitrovica and Pristina.

Since '99 I have lived in New York with my family, now we decided that a part of my family should come back here and restart the family business we've had since the '80s... here in Pristina. We hope to also start our business in Mitrovica, in the northern part of Mitrovica. We believe that will happen soon, we have property there.

I was born in '74, we lived in Mitrovica with my father's family, my grandfather, grandmother, uncle. My grandfather was Faik Pruthi, as a family we brag about it. I'll tell you a detail, a few years ago, four or five year ago, I felt very good when I saw a street in the center of Gjakova that was named after my grandfather. From Mitrovica...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Can you tell me more about him?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes. My grandfather, Faik Pruthi was a soldier in the Second World War and he was in the hierarchy of the highest politics of Kosovo, right after war, after Fadil Hoxha.<sup>1</sup> But it didn't last long

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<sup>1</sup> Fadil Hoxha (1916-2001), Albanian Communist partisan leader from Gjakova, who held a number of high posts in Kosovo and 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 Communist on charges of nationalism.

because of his bragging and because of his personal decisions to not accept political decisions. And soon, after a few years he ended up in Goli Otok Prison.<sup>2</sup> He was in prison for about eight years.

Then when he was freed, he was just a citizen of this country and he worked at the water supply company, so with water, water installation. After he got out of prison, I wasn't born yet, in the '50s, he had a small house in Mitrovica where he lived, with the help of his friends... he had many good friends. I grew up with them because they came to visit often, we also visited them. With his friend's help he had a house in Pristina from '74-'75 on Gazmend Zajmi Street, back then it was called Dubrovníku Street. So, I started my life in Mitrovica for like a year, then in Pristina.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What was the house on Dubrovníku Street like? What kind of life was it? Did you live in that part of the city? What was the city like?

**Edmond Pruthi:** It was a good life. I remember when I went to first grade at Vladimir Nazor Elementary School, now I think it's called Naim Frashëri. My parents took me to school the first day, but I went by myself on the second day. Now that we live in New York, but even here in Pristina, there aren't children younger than fourth or fifth grade that go to school by themselves. Parents take them there, or some sort of organized transportation. It was different.

I remember in '81 when we came to live in Dardania, in '82, '83... o

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Were those new buildings back then?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, because my mother and father worked in Obiliq, at Kosovo B, so they took that apartment through the job. And I remember in third grade when I went by bus, 1 and 2, was the Technical Faculty where the Ministry of Education is now, I think it was torn down. From here, from Dardania, where Edi Club is, there used to be the bus stop, I was in the second, third grade, I would take the bus and go to school on my own.

Maybe it's about safety, or maybe children today are too spoiled, but I haven't seen children who go to school on their own now. But I see the neighbors here that take their children to school holding their hands (laughs). Back then there was more freedom. There was less traffic, less cars, it was more quiet.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** People knew their neighbors...

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<sup>2</sup> Island in the north of the Adriatic sea, from 1949 through 1956 a maximum security penal colony for Yugoslav political prisoners, where individuals accused of sympathizing with the Soviet Union, or other dissenters, among them many Albanians, were detained. It is known as a veritable gulag.

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, also that. I still keep in touch with the neighbors we had in *Bregu i Diellit* [Sunny Hill] and in Dardania. But I don't really know many of the neighbors I have now, I don't. I don't know if they rent the place, or if it's theirs. Another small detail, in '99 when I came back...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Let's go slower...

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** These buildings, what were they called once again?

**Edmond Pruthi:** No, these are the thermal power plant's apartments, in front of the third local community.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Were there all new residents there, or when were they built?

**Edmond Pruthi:** All new residents. People started living there in '81.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What was it like?

**Edmond Pruthi:** It was very nice. The organizing was very good. All the apartments were filled within a month or two, people started living there. Actually...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Did you have friends...

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, that's what I wanted to say. I had many friends, I will not start saying their name even though I know all of them (laughs). But I had many friends. Another small detail, I have a friend in Canada now, Mjellma Hatipi. She loved dogs, I have a dog phobia. But I was so close to Mjellma, her sister Vesa, Arxhira, Arxhira Bislmi, other friends in that building and the one next to it. For example, Gazmend Arifi, was one of the, I started to love the dog that they played with, I'd stay next to them while they played.

To this day I don't like dogs getting near me, you know? But as I said, at that time, there was some sort of warmth, some... we had games that we played in the afternoon. The park of Dardania is behind the apartment where we lived, it's a big park, we used to sit there and play chess or with cards, we would play with anything. The kids would play and the game would go on for... it would take around two hours until we would finish, the person who would lose had to... I think that game was called *tablanet*. They had to go home and take a bottle of water (laughs).

We would stop the game and two or three of us would go get the water, you know? (laughs) It was like a race. I remember the Emshir neighborhood, Emshir that now it's full of buildings, back then, as

children, we used to cross the road, in front of the apartments there is a big parking lot. We would cross the road, they had corn there... I don't know if it was public property, but the houses were very far from the road that takes you to Veternik. We used to go get corn there. If our parents bought them for us we wouldn't eat them, but it was fun getting them and grilling them ourselves. We didn't even know how to do it. (laughs)

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Was the population from everywhere or...

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, yes, they were... and it's good. During the summer I didn't have anywhere to go, we didn't have a house in the village. I stayed here in Dardania and I went on vacation to the beach. All of my friends... I remember Armend and Artan Sadiku. They would go, I don't know where they would go, in the village, at their uncle's, or I don't know, when they would come back at the end of the summer their hair would be yellow from the sun, you know? I'd say, "Where were you? Why are you blond?" even though their skin color was dark.

There was also Orhan Acdiu, he lives here in Kurrizi now. Both of us would be in the building all summer long, we didn't have anywhere to go. The only village I sometimes went to in Llukar was at my mother's uncle, you know? I went there very rarely. Sometimes I kid around with my family and friends, "I know that cats and dogs have four little legs, and cows and horses have four big legs. I don't even know what calves look like." (Laughs) Because I didn't get to see them. So, mostly we stayed there in Dardania.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Did you go to Dardania school...

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes. Dardania opened in '84 or '85, I don't remember, I went to fifth grade, the first generation...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Really?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes. Back there there was a microphone in the library and speakers all over the school. My head teacher was the late Zymrije Kavaja, math teacher. We were nine boys and 23 girls in that classroom. And when we used to tease the girls, she would say, "They are just nine, beat them up." (laughs) It was a very good class, the organization was really good. I was a little spoiled. The reason for that was because when you live in Pristina as an albinotype... so it is a special race, one in 20 thousand people in the world are without albinotype pigments.

And others also teased me, you know? So to defend yourself you have to be rude, to create some sort of...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Distance.

**Edmond Pruthi:** Not distance, but some sort of alibi so people don't bother you, you know? I was a little... Adem Miftari, the teacher, he is still here... I don't know if that subject still exists, Basics of Technical Education. He wanted to beat me up, to somehow stop me because... I would... I was a little aggressive trying to defend myself. But also at school, we shared the school. So, for the later generations the school was divided by walls and so on, but at the time when I was there, we shared it. There were also subjects in other languages, English, Serbian...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What was coexistence at that time like? Do you remember?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, yes I remember. Edi Club, I'll tell you about it since we're here. It is a shop in Pristina and Mitrovica, it was known for its diversity. Always. There were different nationalities, they played together. They would hang out, drink something, that coffee shop was for everyone. Even people with the same nationality, for example these are the rockers, these are the punks, these are more... the people from Pristina who talked backwards, what were they called? I forgot.

There were a few divisions, but we didn't notice. I also lived a good part of my life in Mitrovica, so from '88 to '95 or '96. When this....

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Why did you decide to go to Mitrovica?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Well my father, my father is Shkelzen Pruthi, he took real good care of us. He took good care of us as a family. He was a very family-oriented person. He is 72 years old now and he still works in New York, he doesn't stop. In America retiring isn't mandatory. It's optional, you can retire, but you can work for as long as you can. My father still works, he doesn't stop. My father bought a shop in the center of Mitrovica...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Are you a owner...

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, yes, owner. Owner of this one, and the one in Mitrovica. He bought a shop in Mitrovica, around 280 square meters. It's three stories high. That's where the idea for the Edi Club was born. Because in the beginning when this one opened, it was called Cafe Edi. It was small. Then when we opened that one we couldn't call it Cafe Edi because it was very big, so we made it like a youth club. Then we changed the name of this one, so it would be the same as the one in Mitrovica.

That shop took us as a family to Mitrovica and Pristina, but as a young boy I liked it better there, I stayed there more...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** How did you start with this business? When did you start? What year? How?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Well, don't laugh when I tell you how we started it, because it's a cute story. In '83, or '84, or maybe in '85 when I was ten years old... in '83 my father bought it, and it opened in '86. The architect Lulzim Nixha designed the interior, this one was supposed to be a coffee shop also. I don't know if they're still called dividers, those that are decorated... with wood. The workers were there making those. And as a kid I would jump around the saws, the... my father would tell me, "Go on the other side, be careful."

He was scared I would hurt myself. And it was here where the Galaxy Clinic is, there used to be a coffee shop, it was called Galaxy, in '83, '84, '85, I think in '84. They had some flippers, pinball machines, flippers, and some video games. And my father would give me money and would say, "Go there." So I would get out of the workers way, you know? "Go play there." It was around 7:00 or 8:00 in the evening.

When I went here, I was small and short. And I put my hand on the table there and said, "Give me some tickets." Because I didn't know how much I could get with that money. And a person who maintained order there, Hysi, I will never forget him, we are good friends now. He has a *çajtore*<sup>3</sup> at the District Court. Hysi was working there. He was tall, two meters and ten centimeters, he kicked me (laughs) I was a kid. He said, "Go away, this is a coffee shop, not a place for children to play."

I came back crying. My dad asked, "What happened?" Said, "He hit me and kicked me out. He didn't let me go in, come with." He couldn't come because he was working. So that's when he made that decision, he brought video games there and we opened it with video games. Let me just add something from this story. After six months Hysi came here looking for a job (laughs). Since then I am very close to him. We didn't hold a grudge against him, but it was just a trigger that we started working with flippers and video games.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Where did you buy them? Did you understand that technology? Was it new at that time?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Here... it was very new here.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Yes.

**Edmond Pruthi:** Very new. There was no service for the programs. It's... now they were apps that you can just install, you know? But back then there was a program like this {shows with his hands} big, with chips, processors with njama connections with 28 wires. I think even today there aren't any people who fix those. There were repairmen in the states around, but not in Kosovo.

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<sup>3</sup> Tea place, mainly visited by men and typical of small towns.

Here we had a repairman. He was a TV repairman, Ali Bunjaku... He is... now there are some coffee shops in the city park, almost at Rugova's<sup>4</sup> grave, there are some houses that take you to Dodona [city theater]. That's where he used to work, he used to work at home. He would repair TVs. He always repaired video games and all we had.

He was very smart, he was patient. He was patient enough to say, look around, analyze something for two-three hours until he figured out how to fix it. There's something else I want to say about Uncle Ali. When we opened Edi Club on June 6, 2019, we had four video games here. We had some technical issues so we had to get rid of some of them, but we will bring them back. When there were 13 video games here I went to ask Uncle Ali to repair them, because they were here for 20 years while the shop was closed down.

And when I went to his neighborhood I hesitated a bit, because every time I would go there I would open the door and yell, "Uncle Ali!" And someone would come out. But I hesitated since I knew his old age, I didn't know how he was, I hadn't seen him in a while. I saw his son, Lul, in the yard, I said, "Lul, is your father home?" He said, "Yes." I yelled, "Uncle Ali!" (laughs). He came out. He was around 78 then but he came. From 13 different video games he activated and repaired five of them in four or five days.

He said, "I haven't worked in 15-20 years, but I will come because I grew old with those games." So like this, there weren't many repairmen here.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Where did you buy them?

**Edmond Pruthi:** In Germany. Initially in Germany. I think in Aachen, near the Holland border. That's where he bought them. My father went and bought them.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** And then, how many... it was always opened until '99?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes. It opened, we worked here, a family business. So, my father, my mother, me, my sister Valentina, we all worked there. I have another brother and sister, Ilir and Vlora, but they were little at that time. Then when the Edi Club in Mitrovica opened it got bigger and our family couldn't cover it. So we started hiring people, but it mostly was a family business.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Your parents no longer worked at Obiliq or?

**Edmond Pruthi:** No, they didn't, from '83-'85 neither one of them worked in Obiliq, they opened a business. They were very good collaborators, my mother and father, they worked well together.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibrahim Rugova (1944-2006) a writer and journalist, founder and leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo, and President of Kosovo during the war and after until his death.



**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Okay. Can you tell us about when you went to Mitrovica?

**Edmond Pruthi:** We went to Mitrovica, yes. It was around '88, '89, '90 because the Edi Club in Mitrovica opened on December 7, 1990. Initially the situation all over the federation wasn't good, we didn't know when war was about to start, like... the economy started all the wars but then they gave it different kinds of labels, but it's all about money. But it wasn't good then, it wasn't very safe, the situation wasn't very stable, video games, flippers are... they were very expensive. They still are, if you can find them anywhere, they're very expensive.

The shop in Mitrovica was very big, and there was some sort of hesitation to invest in it when we didn't know what was happening, you know? So we waited to see if the situation would get better. We opened a coffee shop with four snookers. And two other stories were just for coffee. The middle story was a general coffee shop, the first floor was with tables for two, mostly for couples, it was nice. But then we grew immune to that situation, you know? Waiting for what was gonna happen. Whatever happens we will continue with our lives, what can we do now?

Later my father decided to invest and buy flippers, video games, football games, so we worked. The shop in Mitrovica was open until March 24, '99...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** How would you get updates on flippers back then? Because it was new, I don't think many others existed in the market, how did you do it? How did you figure it out?

**Edmond Pruthi:** There weren't many, but my father went to other states like Austria, Italy, Germany, it was a trend back then, sometimes I would go with him. So, everywhere. There were new games. In the beginning when we were working in Mitrovica and Pristina simultaneously until '92-'93, we would change programs. The apps, we would change the games. Mortal Kombat was here, now we would put the Superman game there when it came out, then another game about Michael Jackson, and so on.

At some point, my father said, "You know what," he said, "I am tired of looking for new games," they were also expensive. He said, "But I decided something..." It was a good idea for business then. He said, "Instead of changing the programs..." So the same machine, but different video games, the program would be changed, the app. He said, "Instead of changing programs, let's change the clients." I said, "How can we change the clients?" He said, "Well, when they're little they play, then they grow up and go to coffee shops and so on. The games will be the same but the generations change."

And we started doing that, because going to Europe to buy new games and come back was hard in the '90s. And the last six or seven years we started changing generations not the games, you know? But it was good. Now when the clients we had come here, they're not just from Dardania and Pristina, there were students that were from the cities around, just like now that Pristina has five municipalities, like it is not up to Lipjan.

Many of them went to high school in Pristina. Students from all over Kosovo came to Pristina. So there are many who... there was one guy from Istog, he finished the University in Prishtina, he came with his wife and his children here, where the video games are. His son, I don't remember his name, he was trying to swipe on the screen, but it doesn't move, it isn't a tablet (laughs), but that's how children think today. You see that big screen and everything, it doesn't work with fingers, get the joystick and play.

## Part Two

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What kind of games were they? You mentioned something about... what kind of games were they? Micheal Jackson, Super Mario...

**Edmond Pruthi:** Super Mario (laughs). We had many, many games. For example, the shop in Mitrovica had around 40 video games. The most popular games were Autofront, Albanians called it Autron. It had cars, Ferrari. There was a guy with his girlfriend and they would go to Miami or wherever you chose to go. There was the steering wheel and when you would go on the side it would shake (laughs). Like an illusion of reality.

Then there was Operation Wolf and Operation Bear, it had two names. But here, our customers called it A47 with a rifle. It was a very big video game and for the sensor or whatever it is of the rifle to work, it didn't directly work on the screen, but there was a mirror, so mirroring. The mirror would transmit the signal when they wanted to kill someone. You would see the screen in the mirror and you would shoot.

It was very popular. Maybe because those things were more popular during the '90s (laughs), but we just played games. There was also Mortal Kombat. Mortal Kombat was like Fortnite today, back then it was Mortal Kombat. There was a football game Kick off, now it's FIFA. All these games I mentioned were two-dimensional, there are no turns, now they are 3D.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What was their duration? What kind of experience was it?

**Edmond Pruthi:** They could last three seconds to three hours, it depended on the player. It was, it was like a joke for the players to get to the queen or to get to the crown. Well, the queen... there were different levels, so ten to 15 levels, it depended on the game, it would get harder as the levels passed. The whole point was that your friends would see you play, and at the end you would write your name with three letters. You couldn't type more, just three letters.

Now others would come to try and break the record of the person who was first. In the beginning was Kick off, then Athletics. The Athletics of the Olympiad. To throw the discus, jump, everything, running, someone came... Iliri, behind the Edi Club now they make ice for coffee shops. He said, "Look how my

finger is crooked from playing games here.” (laughs) There are many different memories people who grew up here have.

Another one, a guy came here with his wife and children, and they were very in, you know, the way they talked to each other. His wife said, “You play there with the rifle game, I would come by here with my friends, I would look at you, you wouldn’t see me.” (laughs) You know, she had a crush on him but now they’re married, she reached her goal..

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Weren’t there women here? Girls?

**Edmond Pruthi:** They didn’t come in, they would just walk by here to see their crushes while they were playing and not paying attention (laughs). But I told her, “You got what you wanted, you made him like you. You got married.”

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Did the police notice Edi Club? Would they come to search there or something?

**Edmond Pruthi:** I don’t... as far as I remember and I remember very well because I was here all the time, as I said, it was a family business. We didn’t have any experience like that. We worked at the Edi Club in Pristina and Mitrovica. We worked from morning until evening. Students would come here, I apologize to the teachers whose classes they would skip to come here, because they would do that. But we didn’t have any problems worth mentioning.

The biggest problem was that the comfort of my family and many other people destabilized in March ‘99, when since ‘98, I don’t know if you remember, but there was news that it will end today, no it will end tomorrow, there was Rambouillet<sup>5</sup> and so on. There was news all the time. Back then I was 23, my father, mother and brother got tourist visas to America, New York, but they didn’t travel... we didn’t know what was happening, everything was destabilized.

On March 17 ‘99, my mother, father and brother went to New York as tourists. Because I think on March 15 was the Rambouillet decision, and he said, “I don’t know what’s happening. Let’s go...” he said, “we’ll stay there for a month and we will come back.” Me, Tina, Valentina and Vlora were here. The employers of Edi Club in Mitrovica and Prista were still here and, “The three of us will take charge.” My youngest sister was little back then, thirteen years old, Vlora, “Me and Tina will take care of the shops.” So my parents and my brother could go to America for a month...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Did you have relatives there?

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<sup>5</sup> The Conference of Rambouillet (Paris) in February 1999 was the last, failed effort to negotiate a peace between Milošević and the KLA.

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, my dad's cousin was there, she sent him the warranty so they got a tourist visa. We were left here and... but that's just luck. After a week the bombing started.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What happened? Did they kick you out of your house?

**Edmond Pruthi:** We were in the apartment here in Dardania. On March 24, '99, at 6:00 in the evening, in 8:00 in the evening the bombings started, at 8:04. At 6:00 in the evening Edi Club was closed in Pristina and we talked to Gani Xhaka, he was a very close collaborator of ours in Mitrovica. Gani Xhaka, Shefki Maxhuni, Ferki Maxhuni and many... Xhema, and many others that we worked with, Besim Nura. Most of these were directors or in management in Trepça, but when the violent measures started in the beginning of the '90s, when everyone got fired, my father gathered everyone in Edi Club, "Come work here," to take care of their family.

My father hired 13 employers in Mitrovica, here were three employers who worked during the '90s. The shops closed and me and my sisters were stuck in the apartment. We were unprepared because we weren't experienced with bombing, now we would know, you know? The bombings started, we were stuck in the apartment. The next day... there was a bakery called Arena, it was here in Kurrizi. I went to buy bread and said, "Two loaves of bread." She said, "Boy, when you come out of your house you buy a bag of bread, not just two loaves!" I said, "Why? I'll come buy fresh ones tomorrow."

She just gave me a bag of bread. A bag like this, she told me how much it cost, I gave her the money, she gave me the change and I took it home. It was the first time I bought that much bread.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Were they planning to close it down?

**Edmond Pruthi:** No, but it wasn't safe. While I was buying bread some sort of alarm went off, an alarm, you know? It wasn't safe. We stayed in the apartment for five days, until March 29, when the building emptied.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Did anyone ask you to leave?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Huh?

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Were you influenced by others to leave the apartment or how? Did someone kick you out?

**Edmond Pruthi:** No, it was... I can't say they kicked us, but let's say they walked us out. We left with cars to Macedonia. We took our father's car, an Opel Ascona. Me, my two sisters and two other neighbors, and the other before us, at 6:00 am, early. I remember on our way to Macedonia, in Lipjan,

where Janjevo's crossroad is, we passed tanks, a line of tanks. We were the first ones who passed them.

Then at the border when I talked to my neighbors and stuff... but the last tank had told them, "You can pass." You know, with a hand like this. Then there weren't any cars on the streets, it was very dead. Also in Kaçanik, there was a stone house there, I don't know if it still exists. There were soldiers there, we saw them, soldiers of ex-Yugoslavia, and we went to the border. At 8:00 am we were at the Kosovo-Macedonia border.

Our car was turned on. We will pass the border now, we had six or seven cars in front. We stayed in Bllace<sup>6</sup> for a week with...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What was the experience in Bllace like?

**Edmond Pruthi:** With my two sisters. Four days, sorry, three days, but four days here in Kosovo's territory, we didn't even dare to turn on the car to heat up, because it was cold, the beginning of April '99. It would be cold at night, the car was made out of iron, my sister was young, thirteen years old. And...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** You can take a break.

**Edmond Pruthi:** We stayed three days in Kosovo at the border. We couldn't turn on the car to heat it up because it was cold during the night. When we would turn on the car at 02:00-03:00 am, we would hope that the security guards there were somewhere sleeping. We would turn on the heat for at least three or four minutes. But they would come and hit the car hood with a baton, it was dark, we couldn't even see, you know? We would just hear it *bam* {onomatopoeia} and you would turn off the car.

Maybe it was a strategy they used, because it's easier to control the mass when it's quiet. There were a lot of cars. We were at the border but during the day we could walk around the line of cars, you know? I remember Franklin Seda's family, my childhood friend, Robert, was probably 30-40 cars behind me, almost at Shercen, or whatever that is, made out of concrete. They said the line of cars was from Kaçanik. I don't know, I didn't see it, but that's what they said.

And what impressed me when they allowed us to get into the neutral zone, in the middle of Kosovo and Macedonia, Bllace, it was like a camp. When they let us pass through they didn't even ask for our documentation at the border but... maybe you've done that when you play with cards, those lines that you make, one, two, three, four and five, you know? That's how they wrote down how many people

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<sup>6</sup> Bllace is the border crossing between Kosovo and Macedonia where thousands of refugees were stuck for a few days in March 1999, at the beginning of the NATO intervention, unable to either move into Macedonia or re-enter Kosovo.

were in the car. We were three. And with his hand {shows with his hand}, go. We went... now we stayed in the neutral zone for three more days, so seven days in total.

I remember in the neutral zone, I'll tell only one thing. People we know here in Pristina, I wanted to mention Mc Beka, Bekim Latifi, he was engaged with the Red Cross or I don't know. He comes at 2:00 or 3:00 am and he sees me sleeping in my car, he knocks on my window. I looked at him, Beka, I said, "What are you doing, Beka?" We both grew up in Lakrishte, "Do you want milk?" said, "No, thank you!" (laughs) In that neutral zone there was milk, there was bread, but bread with raisins, not normal bread. Get rid of the raisins, you know? (laughs) We couldn't eat it.

There was food, but there was mostly luxurious food, give me some water, because milk... (laughs)

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Did the Red Cross give these out?

**Edmond Pruthi:** I don't know, some organization. I don't know. Then it was difficult when we wanted to get something when aid would come with trucks from Macedonia. The Bllace camp, but we were over it with cars. When the trucks would come, some basketball player would get in front of us and... because they would just throw them out. You couldn't get anything that you needed. Biscuits or whatever they brought. And when some Albanian would spread their arms they would get everything for themselves (laughs). I would say, "Bro, you got everything, move out the way, shorter people are behind you."

There were funny moments, you know? So the situation would be more relaxed after...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** So the Macedonians didn't allow you to pass the border, that's why you were stuck in the neutral zone?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, yes. We were stuck in the neutral zone because Macedonia didn't accept refugees. At the same time some embassies started to accept refugees to take them to a third state, further than Macedonia. But Macedonia wasn't making any deals with them... the news I listened to in the car, you know?

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** So you could listen to the channels from one side? Radio channels?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, from Macedonia. There was also Haraqina Radio, it was in Albanian. In the '90s the radio was strong. The long antenna outside (laughs) it would work very well. There was another moment, we were mostly Albanians there, there were some of the Roma community from Ferizaj in a van. But they had everything for themselves, we were unprepared. They would feed us sometimes, they would give us food.

At some point, I will never forget it, they came from the Embassy of Turkey and said, “We have a deal with the Government of Macedonia that 100 cars can pass through Macedonia, Bulgaria and go to Turkey. I will never forget it, all Albanians and Roma, maybe Ashkali I don’t know, would speak Albanian. When suddenly they all started to speak Turkish. I thought, “*Uee* {onomatopoeia}, where am I? What changed?” They started speaking in Turkish, they would write the car plates, names and last names. They asked me, “Will you write them?” I said, “No, what would I do in Turkey?” I said, “I will go to Macedonia, if I’m lucky enough I will join my family. They will come to Skopje, or we will go to New York, I don’t plan on getting out of here.” We had a normal life.

And after... when they got those hundred signatures, me and my sister didn’t sign that list. Then the Government of Macedonia ignored that, they canceled the deal. So they came back, they all became Albanians again (laughs). It’s hard, but this is reality, it happened in front of my eyes. Our car broke down, it wouldn’t start. Opel Diesel, it’s normal. Albanians defend it by saying that Diesel doesn’t cost as much. It didn’t start, we pushed it.

Now I thought when we would go to Macedonia we would pull it with another car or something to Skopje. If we can’t find a place to sleep we would sleep there, you know? There’s no other way, you have to find a way to survive in the most imaginable situation of my life. There was a friend of mine, he died in ‘99 after the war in a car crash here at Xhevdet Doda, at the Cathedral, Albert Caka. His mother went to a house there... it was in the neutral zone. She found flour and a well. She got water and would do something with the flour, there was a wood stove there she would make, how do we call them? Crepes, *kurtz kurtz* {onomatopoeia} you know? (Laughs)

She would put the batter there and make them, you know? A little bit of salt. Flour, salt and water. And at some point Alberti, he was a very good guy, he said, “Hey...” his father was the Minister of Education...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Parallel, of the Parallel System.

**Edmond Pruthi:** Of the Parallel System, he was an education inspector. He said... they would make it through the month, you know? But he was a good friend of mine, we were together all the time. Me, him and Drilon Shala, he had the Art Photo, a photographic studio here at Kurriizi, Naim Shala’s son. And Albert said, “You have shops, you have a good life. My father is an inspector and here we are, the same...” I said, “We were the same there, too. Since we were good friends it doesn’t matter, we were the same.” “No...” he said, “I mean family financial conditions.” So in that moment there were no rich people, no poor people, we were all the same.

So Albert’s mother would make us that bread or I don’t know what to call it. We passed the border, we pushed the car somehow. I’ve never shared these experiences before, never (laughs). I was in a car crash in ‘97 at the crossroad of the Hospital and since then I never drove again, even though it wasn’t

my fault. And when we passed the border there was a guy dressed in all white, a young boy, he had a sweater with braids. He was dressed well. He had a nice, big Mercedes, I don't know the model, but it was big.

He said, "It doesn't start?" I said, "No, I'll wait for a van or something to tow us to Skopje." He said... he opened the trunk and pulled out the tow. He said, "Here, let's do it." I said, "No, I won't tow this car." The car looked very expensive...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** From Kosovo or Macedonia?

**Edmond Pruthi:** From Macedonia, I didn't know him, but later I realized who he was. After like a month I found out who he was. He laid down with those white clothes and towed our Opel with his car. He said, "Let's go." My sister, Tina, didn't want to drive because she said, "I've never done it, I will hit the car in front, I don't know how to do it." There I broke my oath to not drive, but to this day I've never driven again, except there. I've never driven since then, I only broke my oath when he towed us...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** You never drove again?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Never again, never. That day I took over the steering wheel to Skopje. We went there, we went to an auto mechanic at the entrance of Skopje. I didn't have the number of my family in America in a paper or something because I didn't know what would happen until we got to the border. Where would we go, what would happen, I didn't know. I thought if someone would stop me and find that American number they would get angry, what is that number, you know? I would think about all kinds of things. So I memorized the number in Pristina, and I would repeat it in my head when we went to the border so... I would remember it.

I called my family from that auto mechanic's shop and they... they knew we were fine, we were in Macedonia. After a month I went with one of my friends from the village... yes, we were refugees in Studeniqan village of Skopje, 18 kilometers from Skopje. And with a friend of mine who passed away a month ago, Ismet Aliu, we went to Saraj, it's a neighborhood where a lot of Albanians lived in Skopje. And in a coffee shop there I see that person. After a month in Macedonia I saw that person sitting in a coffee shop.

I asked Ismer, "Who is that person?" He said, "Why?" I told him the story, I told him he towed my car to Skopje. He said, "He is Enver Idrizi." The Albanian Jean-Claude Van Damme (laughs). Maybe you know Enver Idrizi, he is a well known karateist, but I didn't know him. So I went to talk to him, and I introduced myself. He said, "Yes, I remember you." Then Enver Idrizi opened a club in Germany, we were in New York. He came to New York to organize an evening... this happened later, I had a radio, Radio Melosi in New York, where I helped people with marketing and everything.



So we became friends since that car two, but I'm still in contact with Enver, he is a very good person. At least that's my experience with him.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** How did you get to New York? Did you sign a list, or how did you go from Skopje to New York?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, with IOM, International Organization for Migration. Me and my sisters were in Studeniqan. My parents and brother were there with the IRC, International Rescue Committee, which prepared the documents for refugees. So they notified the IRC and then we were on the second or third plane to America. We went there in May '99.

I want to mention that in Studeniqan we lived in an old man's house, Osman Atullahu, Osman Xhemajli, he is still alive with his three sons. We visit them often, they visit us, we... we stayed there for a month and a half but it felt like ten years. We had a very good time with them. Then there was the Universal Hall in Skopje. They called us on the phone at 12:00 in the afternoon and told us to be at the Universal Hall at 5:00, it was like going to Vushtrri from Pristina. (laughs) We went there slowly.

We went there, and some busses took us to the airport. We didn't check in, we went directly to the runway. There were some doors with wires, I remember, in the afternoon. At 5:00 we were supposed to leave from the Universal Hall, we left at 8:00, and we got to the airport at 9:00. And it was a charter flight. When we got on the bus everyone was Albanian, when we got on the plane everyone was Albanian, it was a different experience (laughs). 300 Albanians on a plane. But it was good, we were all happy, they weren't... I couldn't believe it.

I remember that on that plane when the doors opened there were American soldiers... so as refugees we didn't need to go through the airport but there was a way with soldiers who saluted us like this {shows with his hands} and we got to the plane stairs. We went to New York, we... the flight was through Dublin, Ireland. We stopped there and from there we went to New York, so we went there on 15...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What were you thinking when you went there? Did you want to come back or stay in America?

**Edmond Pruthi:** We didn't know, we didn't have a clear idea. I'll tell you another small thing. There in Studeniqan there are two coffee shops. One was PDSH [Albanian Democratic Party], some people of the party stayed there, I would hang out at both of those coffee shops because I didn't want to create a split as a refugee. We saw two trucks with red blocks, and I said to Ismet, my friend, "What are these blocks, Ismet?" He said, "We have started to build houses on the hill for the refugees, for ten to 15 years and then you might go back to Kosovo."

So, back then there wasn't a clear idea of what is going to happen after a month or a year, we didn't know. We went to America to meet our parents and brother. We rented an apartment in The Bronx and we started a life there spontaneously. When the war ended, I came back here on August 4. I came back because... I started working there. I finished an English course at Marymount College...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Did you speak English?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Huh?

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Did you speak English? Your family?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, we did. Tina, my brother who was twelve-thirteen years old, and my youngest sister could speak English. I understood it, but I wasn't good at grammar, so I couldn't express myself. We went to an English course at Marymount College in Manhattan. The teacher was Ukrainian, he said that whoever learns the most in two weeks will get a job at Marymount College as an administrator to register new students.

So, I got the job, because I spoke Serbian and Albanian, I wasn't shy, and I decided to learn. At the end of those two weeks I was the best English student in the class. I worked there but I came back to Kosovo on August 4. Just me. My family said they would come back in September. I started working at UNMIK, at the police station number 1, there at Boro Ramiz, at the Palace of Youth and Sports Adem Jashari now. It's known as Boro Ramiz.

I started working as a translator from September '99 until April 26, 2000, when I was threatened by those who were questioned by the police and I went back to America.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** You came back with the idea of living here?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes. My parents came back in September, my sister and brother started school there with the idea of coming here in the second semester or during the summer of 2000. But back then there was some sort of anarchic freedom. Freedom, I don't know how to say it, we were free, but it wasn't safe for the family, you couldn't have... so when you stop and think about your family you decide to go back and keep staying there. Year after year you have more life and daily responsibilities, and you get used to living in another place.

### Part Three

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What happened to Edi Club after the war??

**Edmond Pruthi:** It was closed down. I know from the experiences of my father's friends who were in England, America as refugees, they had shops in Pristina, there were many injustices with documents. They would rent it, they would sell it twice. Then you had to go to court for your own property, you know? So my father didn't want to rent it. It stayed closed for 20 years.

We were interested in renting it out to a safe financial institution, banks, for example, for a small branch or something. We couldn't do that... I couldn't do it because I was the one who came here to deal with these things because my friends would tell me that I needed to know someone who worked there, and I didn't know anyone so we never put it for rent. While the shop in Mitrovica was usurped after the war in '99. Even today, 20 years later, we still don't know who owns our shop.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** You said it was in the north?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes. I don't know who owns it. There are many rumors, they said it was resold many times. They resold it to each other. They say it was a club, a grocery store, drugstore and many other things. It is in the center at the main crossroad, near Ibri's bridge, where they put that memorial. It's there, a 14-story building. It is in the center, a very good spot, but we as a family don't know who has that property, I don't know. We can't...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Did you have a house there?

**Edmond Pruthi:** No, our apartment is in the south. As children we... we lived in a Bosniak neighborhood in Mitrovica but my grandfather sold that house to build the one in Pristina.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** How did your life continue in America in 2000?

**Edmond Pruthi:** In America, yes... it was hard because everything I would apply for a job... You couldn't stay and do nothing, you had to work, you had to do something. With my brother Ilir, even though he was 14-15 years old back then... even though before the war we worked as a hobby, web development, from '96-'97 or something. I'll tell you that the internet came to Kosovo in '95, whoever says differently lies.

In the '95 there was a company called EU, EU.net from Belgrade. Now when people complain about how much they pay for a month, I'll just tell you that back then we paid by the hour. You would buy 100 hours and you would go online, you would download the websites you wanted to read or something and you would turn it off. You would read the websites offline. While now you have the internet on the phone for 24 hours a day. It was hard.

Then PTK [Post and Telecom of Kosovo] came, it was the second internet provider in '95. 160 were the maximum hours you could buy, you could buy them twice a month. So...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** So if you ran out of minutes you had to wait until next month?

**Edmond Pruthi:** No, we had the EU.net. If you wanted to try with the other one, to make it to the end of the month, you know?

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What would you do on the internet at that time?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Well, at that time...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Did you have emails?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes. I've had an email since '97. Other people ask me why I didn't change my email but that was my first. Now I have a Gmail account, but I've had the same Hotmail account since '97. My name, my last name, Edmond Pruthi, that's how it was, and I still use it. But Hotmail deletes the archives. I think every five or six years it deletes previous emails. That's the downside. But there were also websites. Back then Yahoo was known. Google wasn't used. There was a website Kosova.com, there was news there, they would put a link with the date, day, month and year. You would click on it and it would open a HTML page in the end, you would read news there.

You would save it, there was like a page there if you pressed A4 there were 30-40 A4s. You would save it as a HTML in the computer and...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Who maintained those?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Kosovo Information Center, from LDK<sup>7</sup> back then. They were the ones. Then in '97, '98 the second website opened, Kosovapress. They also had the same system with HTML. There was a page that was maintained from America, Albanian.com. But they didn't update it often. There were pages from the region, I wanted to know what was happening. The minute culture started, you know, you didn't have to wait for the 7:00 news to know what was happening.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Real time?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, real time. Yahoo also had a lot of news, information on technology. The browser we used back then was Netscape Navigator, I don't know if it exists anymore. Netscape Navigator had an editor or creator of HTML files of web pages. Then some better programs were introduced. With my brother, in '97 my brother was around twelve, thirteen years old... the age when they either stay on the

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<sup>7</sup> *Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës* - Democratic League of Kosovo. First political party of Kosovo, founded in 1989, when the autonomy of Kosovo was revoked, by a group of journalists and intellectuals. The LDK quickly became a party-state, gathering all Albanians, and remained the only party until 1999.

streets with their friends or they do something. And in accordance with my father I went to Belgrade by bus and bought a big tower computer, it was a Pentium 166, Pentium 1, 66 megahertz.

I bought it, I bought the headphones, the mic, I wanted it to be ready so I could tell my brother, “Make some music, do something.” Not just him, but my brother is 35 years old and he is a rapper (laughs) it is his hobby. He still makes music for fun. He was thankful that I did that in the beginning, but now he can’t get rid of it.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What would you develop? Web pages or what did you do?

**Edmond Pruthi:** We started developing web pages with my brother. Actually, we followed Kosova.com so much before the war, and after the war... my brother was the one who voluntarily developed their site in 2004. Web site, not with those links but he did the program with PHP, he programmed it. My brother studied software and engineering in Pace University, New York and we would work with websites. Then I opened a radio, an Albanian radio in New York. Radio Melosi was...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What happened? Why? What were you trying to address through that radio?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Before talking about the radio, I wanted to say something very important. It’s the American experience, whoever goes to America knows what it means. When you apply for a job in every interview they ask, “Do you have American experience?” How was I supposed to have an American experience when I’ve been here for a week, you know? I have experience in what I’m applying for, I can do that job, but American experience, I don’t know what they were thinking, but have you worked in America? If you haven’t worked in America it’s very hard to find a job.

I mean working in an office, not other jobs. So I got a job in 2000, in October 2000 at IRC, that organization that got our documents ready. I was hired there as a volunteer. I was hired in the IT Department to repair computers. I’ll tell you a funny thing, my boss Charles Zunro, he is still alive. When they interviewed me, “Do you know about imaging?” I thought he was asking me about Photoshop, you know? I know Photoshop, Corel, Photoshop, no problem, and I said, “Yes.”

It was the only time I lied to him. I didn’t lie on purpose, I just didn’t know what he was asking me. I didn’t know what imaging was, I thought it was something about photography and design...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What is it?

**Edmond Pruthi:** Imaging when you install everything on a computer. You do ghost imaging for Windows, Word and all the other programs on one computer, then if you have 20 more computers of the same model you can just restore it, you put that imaging on other computers, that’s how it works. I

had never done it before, but Charles gave me a Dell GX 110 computer and said, “Here are the disks...” floppy 1.44, two disks. 1, 2 and , “Here are the disks for imaging.”

I took the discs, I saw 1 but, aha, this turns on the computer. I inserted the disc and turned on the computer. Insert disc two. I inserted it and it said imaging file Okay, browse and I said some files. One of them was called GX 110, which was the computer’s model. I clicked on it, it was processing for five minutes and one of the computers turned on with Windows and everything. I thought, “Oh this is imaging. Yes, I know. I know how it’s done.” So this is how I learned imaging, but I told him I knew how to do it beforehand.

I worked as a volunteer for three weeks, and after three weeks they hired me as a part of Support Specialist, they were content with my work. And it was the first time they didn’t ask about the American experience. Then they promoted me to manager, manager in the Help Desk Units of the IT Department of IRC. IRC is all over the world, it used to be in Kosovo. There are around 10 thousand people employed there.

It’s a big organization. A non-governmental organization. After that I would work with websites a little with my brother. But there, out of IRC, I always had the luck of working with people I grew up with, with Albanians. Me and my brother opened Kosova Click, Kosovaclick.com, we would sell web hosting, domain, web designs. The clients were in Kosovo, we were in New York.

Then I opened Radio Melos with music, because music started to change, so I thought I’d keep the music process alive. Who? Ed. Well with Berat Gashi, Berat grew up here in Ulpiana, we were very good friends, we still are. He lives in Virginia. We opened Radio Melos and we started throwing parties for Albanians in New York. so, we threw parties every Friday with Berat every Friday until 2009.

It isn’t hard to throw parties here because there are a lot of Albanians, you know, 200 people would come. But throwing parties with 200-300 people in New York is hard because you can’t find Albanians. They’re far from there.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** How did you connect?

**Edmond Pruthi:** In colleges. It was Berat’s and my idea. We went... every college has student slubs, Albanian, Spanish, Puerto-Rican. So we went to the admin office in some colleges in Manhattan, Baruch Hunter College and so on and we asked for the Albanian Club. Give us the contact of the director of that club and we would meet them. So we created a staff of twelve volunteers from twelve colleges that would have a broadcast a week, voluntarily. So they and the other Albanian students in colleges would get together somehow so we started throwing parties.

From those parties we would split the winnings in 14 parts, those 12 and me and Berat. We were all volunteers, but my and Berat were initiators, nothing more. And we did this until 2009. And we became friends with all of them. They're still my friends, I follow them on Facebook, Instagram, everywhere. We worked together, it went well. And it was the only party in New York, Melosi party, that didn't need bodyguards to maintain order, we didn't need them.

When someone who was troublesome came there they didn't fit in with those people. There were mostly people... young students from Pristina, Mitrovica, Peja, Gjakova, cities of Kosovo. We wanted people from Albania or Macedonia to come... but we had different tastes in music. They didn't fit in. we didn't have, we didn't have music from other places. Berat didn't even know to play them in order. Just then, for example in 2006 some new songs came out here... in 2003, 2002 Arta Bajrami started to sing a new style of music.

Later came Vesa Luma [Albanian pop star] and others. We would play all of them, people there were regions that didn't like that music. We didn't know when we should play Gjyste Vula, or we didn't have her songs at all, what can we do? But he had fun. We did this until 2009.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** When did you get married? Or when did you start your life...

**Edmond Pruthi:** Marriage...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Personal question, did you meet in New York or were you already in a relationship?

**Edmond Pruthi:** No, no. I didn't. We were refugees, you know, in Skopje then in New York. That was in '99, I was 25, the right time to start thinking about creating a family. But I couldn't do it until I got U.S. citizenship, because if you get a green card, if you get married... I wanted my wife to be from Kosovo, I don't know why I got that in my head. I hope she doesn't listen to this interview (laughs). In 2005 I got U.S. citizenship and after a month I got married.

I have been with Jehona since 2004, she is from Podujeva. We were in contact, we met in 2005 and I got U.S. citizenship and we got married. I don't know why but we married in Mitrovica, that place draws me. I was born there. We went there, we still talk about it, "Why did we get married in Mitrovica?" But we did (laughs). Axha Mursel performed our marriage. Axha Mursel married all the people in Mitrovica. In 2007 Jehona came to New York and we started out life there. We became parents of Roni and Rika in 2011. Ron comes from *rron* [lives] but with one "r" not two, Ron.

So it's a name that works. My daughter's name... they're twins. My daughter's name is Rika, it has a few meanings. Rika is the small *rika*, the small geese, they called *rika* in Albanian grammar. Also it is a very common name in Asia. I thought that maybe after 30 years when she finishes university she might

need to go to Asia, she would fit in. While she is in America, it also works there... Vlora, my youngest sister named her. So in 2011, now they're eight.

Now we're here. We extended our vacation. Someone said to me kiddingly, "Are you back for good?" I said, "No, just for myself." We're here this summer this Jehona, Roni and Rika...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Why did you decide to reopen Edi Club?

**Edmond Pruthi:** 20 years passed and I was, I can't say pressured, but good pressure by the people who knew me...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** The community, family...

**Edmond Pruthi:** They would say, "Open it, just so it's open..." Because we all work in New York now, our financial situation is good, we can live a comfortable life. Not like Ramiz Lladrovci (laughs). A comfortable life (laughs).

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Modest.

**Edmond Pruthi:** Modest (laughs). Yes, no, no, much lower. So, "Open it, open it, open it." "Okay." So I came here in January of this year and opened it. Always in accordance with my father, because he is the owner of this one and the one in Mitrovica. So I opened it here and Milot, Milot is a friend of mine, Milot Hasimaj, he drove by here and he messaged me on Instagram, "Did you open Edi Club?" I had just opened it, it was full of spider webs. I said, "I just opened the door..." I said, "You saw me." He said, "Yes, I passed by there. Leave it like that, I'll come and make a TV story."

He did it because he felt it. "Okay," I said, "I'll leave it like that." We agreed on Thursday. When I went in with a friend of mine I said, "Let's remove these spider webs because the camera won't be able to record anything." The windows were broken and there were tin vessels on the outside because of a bomb that went off in 2005. And...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** At Enver Sekiraqa's coffee shop.

**Edmond Pruthi:** Yes, yes. So there were tin vessels there, it was like a barn... and slowly I repaired it. I wasn't in a rush, I wasn't paying rent. Very slowly. The electrician was here, Ali Baruti, my father's friend, he always took care of our shops and the apartment in the past. So he repaired all the wires for about two-three weeks, electricity installation, which is very important.

And all the other repairmen came and did their job. I wanted to paint it but no one would accept it. A guy came... they advertised on the internet painting a square meter for 50 cents but when they came



here, “No, so many turns, I will be stuck here for a week,” he said, “This needs to be painted with a brush.” And then with Florim Gashi, he is an architect here, he has a master’s degree. He said, “I’ll ask my brother, we have time, we can paint it slowly.” And they did, they painted it within a week.

It opened on June 6. It was a very spontaneous decision. But now I hope we will soon open the one in Mitrovica, as a family. Why not. I want to be... not just here, but all over the world, I want people to divide into good and bad people, nothing else. We had a good life before, we can have the same life now.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** If you have anything to add to the interview that I don’t know how to ask, you know, something you’d like to say at the end.

**Edmond Pruthi:** I don’t know.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** A message, something to add to the interview, some personal story or in some other aspect.

**Edmond Pruthi:** Okay, you can have a good life wherever you live when you want to. When you want to work hard you can do it anywhere and you will gain enough for a modest life. We went to America in ‘99, it’s the same as here. There is greenness, asphalt, a common life... Kosovo only lacks three small things, education, economy and health system. Only these three, these three need to improve. It’s just like any other advanced country of the world.

I want all of us to work together for our country, to have a good life. To stop... the good and generous words, uplifting people who steal. Because people often tell me, “Ah, he is a good guy, he took care of his family by dealing with some tenders.” We have to quit with these things, we have to worry about the future of all of us, because our children will grow up here, so will the children of our children. Life isn’t about a moment, we can’t damage our property, because our country is our property, it doesn’t belong to the government. We hire them with our votes. We hire them, they complete their jobs as administrators but this is our country. We have to take care of our property and not run away. No one runs away from their property.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Thank you.

**Edmond Pruthi:** You’re welcome.