

Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW WITH SHEFQET MULLAFAZLIU

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Duration: 92 minutes

Present:

1. Shefqet Mullafazliu (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

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you tell us something about your family? Where did you grow up? About your family composition, about... Everything you remember from, from... What are your early memories?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Okay. I was born in Prizren on August 1st, 1943, my father was a trader, and my mother was a housewife, but she finished high school at that time, she finished the madrasa¹ high school in 1917-18 in Skopje. In other words, that was the school at that time. And since she was born in Skopje, even though she was from Prizren, but her father who was some kind of administrator in the Turkish area, they moved from Prizren to Skopje.

That's why she and my [maternal] aunt were educated there, in Skopje, while my [maternal] uncle who was born in Prizren, 15 years older than my mother, he finished high school at the Monastery of Macedonia. Actually, my mother's stories were that he was in the same dormitory as Atatürk of Turkey. Then Atatürk, with the flow of his life, continued his life, my late uncle went to Istanbul to study at the Faculty of Law.

In the meantime, the First World War started and my uncle transfers to Istanbul, with my uncle, who was already in Istanbul, while my mother, my aunt and my youngest uncle go back to Prizren and continue their lives. In other words, after my mother and aunt finished school. Now to tell you in more detail since I started from my mother's time, then I'll tell you about my father also...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: No, give a lot of importance to this dimension, so stories which were carried forward to you, which you did not live through, but are yours.

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Among other things, the main reason why all of us are educated is because my mother was educated herself, and she pressured my late father all the time to send us children to

¹ Muslim religious school, the only school where teaching could be conducted in Albanian until 1945.

school. I'm the youngest child in the family. We were five brothers and a sister. My brothers have died, it's just me and my sister. I finished elementary school in Prizren, I finished high school in Prizren...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was Prizren like at that time?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Prizren at that time... when it comes to my emotions, my experience, a very quiet city, a very generous city, noble, and, of course, beautiful. It doesn't have the same beauty today, because a lot of things are missing, many valuable buildings were demolished, maybe even purposely, so they cover the traces of medieval architecture, actually like they used to say back then, Ottoman architecture.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What's the city's story that was carried forward when it comes to that architecture?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: The city's story about that architecture...I'm not an architect anymore. I can tell you that a local architect from Prizren, who allegedly was in love with Prizren, he eliminated very valuable objects in a very hypocritical way. The shopping mall at the fountain shows that, the location where it used to be is where the craftsmen, gunsmiths, cutlers, jewelers were, and other crafts. He deliberately puts the shopping mall there to try and replace that.

Apart from that, then, since I was also a high school student, back then it was said in Prizren's tower and the Bazaar that he allegedly wanted to preserve Prizren. He had brought a verdict, which the municipality accepted, and they approved that the left side of the city, so from Lumbardhi, it should be preserved, and not be demolished, built, re-built without his approval. While the right side of the city, on the right side, only the League of Prizren was preserved, the building of the League of Prizren, the house of Gani Dukagjinni and, of course, the Hamam, and how do I know, some other buildings that he couldn't and didn't want to... because, of course, it would be investigated.

On the right side, under the League of Prizren, there was, there were some valuable buildings which had special architecture for that time. Among other things, immediately under the building that now exists, the building of the wool workers, it used to be the Kazazi family's building, the Kazazi family were wool workers. The only building, the only machine shop, actually, it was a workshop all over Kosovo that processed water energy.

Now, now, in other words, from the house of Gani Dukagjini, the whole right side of the city was demolished, wherever there were historical, traditional objects of Ottoman architecture, medieval architecture of that time, and like that, slowly Prizren transformed into another city. The road next to Lumbardhi didn't exist back then, but there were buildings over the shore of the river.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Is there talk about what kind of architects came to Prizren, and who built them?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Back then it used to be... my local friend, Stanko Mandić, he lectured at the University of Belgrade. He used to have authority back then and it was convenient back then. Now this is not political, but in architecture the term “tendentious” is used, tendentious architecture to eliminate something so something else prevails. But it’s completely something else if you talk about a flow of urbanism that foreshadows development, what do I know, the growth of the city or any other locality, residence actually.

It’s very characteristic, for example, the Arasta Mosque in front of the post office. There used to be a mosque which was demolished, but as a monument it supposedly has the same architecture, it preserved its minaret. And they put there the bank building back then. And I repeated there were the craftsmen, and what do I know, residential homes and so on.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did this happen during the time you were growing up? Did you see these transformations?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, yes, yes. I was a first-year student, when in front of the Hamam, where Hotel Theranda and the post office are now, those buildings were demolished and I took part in the... as a first-year student of architecture, trying to finish practice. In other words, it was the time around 1962-‘63.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You said that in your family you tried, this will for education was transmitted through your mother especially. What happened to your brothers and sisters?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: My oldest brother, my oldest brother finished the economics high school. The second brother started his education in Gjakova, *Shkolla Normale*,² he was expelled. The reason he was expelled was because he got into the minaret of Gjakova’s mosque to call *ezan*.³ Back then, the partisans punished him and expelled him from school. It doesn’t last long, he enrolled in Novi Sad’s high school of medicine, to continue his education, he finishes it as a medical technician. He comes back to Prizren and gets a job. My third brother was a little different from us, he finished elementary school and didn’t want to continue his education, he continued with crafts, the reason was a little... he wanted a different life from us that were educated. And he went to...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What kind of craft?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: What?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What kind of craft? Did he have the opportunity to...

² The *Shkolla Normale* opened in Gjakova in 1948 to train the teachers needed for the newly opened schools. With the exception of a brief interlude during the Italian Fascist occupation of Kosovo during WWII, these were the first schools in Albanian language that Kosovo ever had. In 1953, the *Shkolla Normale* moved to Pristina.

³ *Ezan* in Turkish, is the Islamic call to prayer, recited at prescribed times of the day.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, yes. He first tried the craft of goldsmith, but he wasn't patient enough, and got employed as a student at a shoemaker. And he finished this craft and went into the military. He went to Slovenia and finished his military duty, he liked the way of life there, and when he came to Prizren, he asks for permission from our parents, that's how it was back then, he asked my father and he says, "I want to continue with the craft there, because the shoemaker craft is much more advanced there," and he went to Rijeka. He was in Rijeka the whole time, he came to Prizren when he wanted to get married. He gets married, takes his wife to Rijeka, and they continue their life. He left behind two sons and a daughter, he passed away at 58.

My sister finished school, gymnasium. My other brother, older than me, he finished elementary school and gymnasium in Prizren, then went to Rijeka at the Faculty of Medicine. There he finished the Faculty of Medicine and came back to Prizren as a doctor, where he served and died. After I finished high school, gymnasium back then, I applied to the University of Architecture in Ljubljana, but I didn't speak the language, so I went back to Zagreb to continue. I got accepted there, but there I noticed that financially I'm not... one of my brothers was already studying in Rijeka, it was a huge financial burden for my parents. I went back to Belgrade, but they didn't accept me because it was too late. Back then they had enrollment exams.

I went back to Skopje, I took the exam and I got accepted in architecture, and I continued my studies there, where I finished university in 1969. The reason for the delay was the earthquake in Skopje, because in June 1963, the earthquake in Skopje happened, where the Faculty and life in Skopje got paralysed.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were you there?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, I was preparing for my exams in Prizren, but I felt the shake.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Could you explain to us a bit more about the Faculty? What kind of preparation was it? And firstly, maybe even during high school, how did it prepare you to study architecture?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Well now there's a... these are details of my life, but I will tell you, then you can cut out some things. In Prizren, I was an excellent student in gymnasium, even though I was a little hyperactive, I still kept up with studies. To be able to go to architecture, my late cousin found out that I want to go to architecture, he asks one of his friends, "Let Shefqet get a reexamination in math," "The reason," I said. His judgment, his preparation.

And, of course, they were friends, they studied in Skopje, he was a biologist, while his friend was a mathematician. So I see, before the school year is over, at the end of the year, the professor says to me,

“Come on to the blackboard, do this, do that,” I did them but also did a gesture. He says, “Go sit, you did not do the exercise right,” nothing, a little detail. And I have to retake the exam in math.

My history professor saw that Shefqet had to retake the mathematics test, so history, I had to retake the history exam, also. It was huge news in the gymnasium, “Shefqet had to retake the history and mathematics exams.” They said that Shefqet was spoiled and more energetic. They used to say that, and I accepted it. Then, during the summer break, the professor Masar Shporta prepared me, he was the husband of my [paternal] aunt’s daughter. He continually practiced with me to get prepared for the exams.

I successfully finished them, I got a five⁴ on the history exam, the same grade I had before. So this preparation was thanks to my cousin, who wanted to strengthen my knowledge in math because I was going to study architecture. This is how things were back then, to keep us at a level so we don’t... he was a biology student in Skopje, he experienced those injustices in Skopje, and knowing I was going there, he wanted to make me better. This is the detailed story of my life.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was the architecture school like in Skopje? Was it more established than the one, not in Pristina, because Pristina didn’t have...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: To be honest, at that time, the universities didn’t differ much. The best schools were considered those of Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Ljubljana and Skopje. But there was a phenomenon in Skopje that I couldn’t understand why professors from Zagreb and Belgrade were in Skopje... but back then, we were interested in knowing why people were saying that they all were politically convicted in Tito’s time...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Also professionals.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Professionals, they made deals. “Do you want to go to jail or to Skopje?” So, those professors were from Zagreb and they had finished their studies in Vienna and Europe, those were professors in Skopje. That’s why we didn’t differ much from other university centers. And since Skopje was hit by the earthquake, we advanced in structural knowledge, in other words, of designing and planning the structure for...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Of the buildings...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, no. The structure of buildings for earthquakes, which other faculties did not have, because now the whole world was focused on Skopje, even the most well-known experts in architecture and construction who came to help in Skopje gave lectures to us. Kenzo Tange was there, and some other professors that I can’t remember right now, like this.

⁴ Grade A on an A-F scale (Five-0)

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So the post office was built after the earthquake?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: After the earthquake, in other words, the whole city, urbanism and everything, after the earthquake... it was, how do I say it, like the world's help...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Wow, so interesting.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Like this. Actually, the registration of automobiles back then was SK they used to say that the acronym stands for, *Svetski Kredit*, meaning World Credit.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: I'm interested to know, did they take you, as students, to take these case studies of demolished buildings from the earthquake, or how did it work?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Well, we had many trainings, the buildings that we visited and... the professor would also lecture us. There was an occurrence that was found since then, from experts from all over the world, there were also experts from India, at that time I thought, India, India. Now at this time I think India is an atomic power, while back then I only thought of those Indian movies, while they have a 3-4 thousand years of culture.

So they would send us to those demolished buildings and they would tell us how it happened, in some buildings where there were... where there were two buildings. One was still standing, the other was demolished. The reason... Now I don't know how much information you have about construction, they used to say that when the earthquake in Skopje happened there was like a big mushroom of dust formed in the sky. The reason why that happened was because it was hot when the building was constructed, the concrete dried immediately, so from that, there was dust and sand left. It wasn't well connected, and all of these buildings that were built during summer were destroyed more, they had more damage.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: For how many years did you stay in Skopje?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Well, from '62, '63, '64 was unrealized [education stopped because of the earthquake], then I graduated for five years.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And could you comprehend this transformation that was happening, or was it not obvious what was happening because of the many forces that came together...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Do you know how it is? There's a phenomenon in life, people by nature transform and accept things fast. This is when you don't know what to do, so you have a direction, you can't go back, like this. But it's true, I can't say they behaved nicely, but you could tell when I went to apply for

exams or when I paid for the semester. In the offices, those people from the administration, the employees in student services were always unpleasant, always asking us, “Why did you come here when you have the university in Pristina?” I would say, “We don’t have the Faculty of Architecture in Pristina.” Then experienced professors asked me, “Why do you speak Serbian? You are at the University of Macedonia, you should speak Macedonian.” I would say, “It isn’t a problem for me. When I learn Macedonian, I will speak it, because for me they’re both foreign languages. I finished school in Albanian.” I mean, this is the kind of trouble we had as students back then. Even when it came to grades, we would deserve tens, and we would get sevens, eights.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Weren’t the students from different centers of Yugoslavia?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Yes, yes. There was no distinction. There were students from Novi Sad, Ljubljana, Zagreb. After the earthquake, there was an opportunity for students from Skopje, whoever wanted, it was easier for them to be accepted to faculties, and they would accept some exams, they had already passed. I applied in Ljubljana. But when I got the response from Ljubljana, they hadn’t accepted a few of the exams I had already passed in Skopje. And I said, “Why should I start over?” Even though the conditions were better in Ljubljana. They accommodated us in the dormitory, they would give a partial scholarship, but when they didn’t accept my exams, I withdrew.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When did you come back to Pristina? Did you first go to Prizren, what was the journey from Macedonia like?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: No, the last year in Macedonia I applied to Ramiz Sadik for a scholarship, because, before that, I didn’t have a scholarship. It was approved... of course, why would they approve of a finished product? I was almost done with engineering. My scholarship was approved by the construction company Ramiz Sadiku. They gave me the scholarship, I continued my studies for another year after I got my scholarship, I was obliged to, but I secured a place at the construction company Ramiz Sadiku.

Part Two

Erëmirë Krasniqi: We were talking about those contributions that social organizations made to students. What kind of a system was it?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Okay. As far as I know, every organization could separate a fund for their own staff, for the education of future employees. In other words, it was a retirement fund, I mean scholarship fund. According to economic power, every organization had... For example, the textile factory or the municipal shoe processing factory, or filigree, or the construction organization, and so on, even the municipality.

Of course, people would apply for it. The way people applied for it was very legal, but then how they picked the people, only God knows if it was legal, like everywhere else. Actually even the municipality had a fund for a variety of profiles. In medicine, engineering, and so on. I applied to the municipality and they said, “You can’t get a scholarship, directly, you have big house doors.”

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What did this mean at the time?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: It meant that my late father had a house in Prizren and it meant we were rich. We were a family who loved education, and they saw that we all wanted to get educated, so in a way they would be an obstacle, and so on. My brother was a medicine student, but he did it himself, while I was a burden to my father. Then, after four years, I got the scholarship from Ramiz Sadiku and I continued.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: For how many years were you obliged to work for the association?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Well, apparently... I didn’t calculate it and I didn’t know, but apparently the debt was twice as much as the fund. If, for example, today, I would take 50, I would have to contribute 100 thousand to pay off the debt. But I didn’t leave, because with ten years of experience, I would have the right to get an apartment. And since I moved here and I was working here, my judgment was that I will get married soon and I will have children... I suffered in a way when I went to Skopje during my studies, I didn’t want my children to suffer, they would have the Faculty here and they should freely study here.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was Pristina like in the time you came here? Do you remember?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, I remember Pristina when I came, when I got the first scholarship, I moved in with a friend of mine, who was my age, he was studying civil engineering here. Then I lived in the student dormitory. I got off the bus from Skopje, I went to his place, then I asked, “Where is the headquarters of Ramiz Sadiku?” He shows me from afar, he says, “There, you can see the building.” And from the student center, where the canteen is, it was a cornfield, cornfield. I walked in the fields up to the university library, there were the military barracks, and I walked through the city.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: The military barracks were still there at that time? Which year are you talking about?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: ‘68.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So the university campus wasn’t there?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, no, no, no. Not yet.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Okay. What was it? What kind of grounds? What kind of fields?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Meadow, literally meadow, muddy.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Where was Ramiz Sadiku located at that time?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Ramiz Sadiku was in front of the Iliria Hotel, the headquarters was there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What kind of organization was it?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: It was an organization with eight thousand employees, eleven constructions units, reconstruction unit, with the low construction unit, and so on, with the transportation unit, and so on. There were eleven units.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What did they build at the time?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Well, almost everything you see was built by Ramiz Sadiku back then. Other companies worked rarely. There were companies from Vushtrri, Gjakova, Gjilan, Binačka Morava, and so on. But it's understood that it contributed to keeping the people calm. So, Ramiz Sadiku had an advantage in getting the jobs since it employed eight thousand people.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: It also was an economic calculation.

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Yes, economic.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: I wanted to ask you about... I want to go back to Pristina, everything you remember. Because you came here during a time when the city was changing its character, so it wasn't an Ottoman *kasaba*,⁵ but it was experiencing urban development. You came right in the moment when that starts...

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: It had already started.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes, in the '60s.

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Yes, it had already started.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: With Božur and with Ramiz Sadiku's building starts the modern city and it separates from the Ottoman city. Can you visually...

⁵ Turkish: *kasaba*, town.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: I will more concretely tell you about my experience, I only experienced it passing through, because I wasn't interested in taking notes or remembering it, because my [maternal] uncle's daughter was here, his daughters, and when I came over at their house... I was the same age as his children, as much as I can remember from staying for one or two days.

But, I will tell you now. When I started working at Ramiz Sadiku, when I came... of course, I was accepted immediately, by phone they announced that the new engineer came, and I settled down... the general director directed me to the design bureau where the Ramiz Sadiku colony is, "A new engineer is coming, find him a place." And things like this. The reason behind this was because they were in a way obliged to do this, since I had a scholarship from them.

I settled, but I had to find a place to stay. There was also the employee's standard, where there was the canteen and the employee's housing barracks. They gave me a key to a barrack, where Hotel Prishtina is today, there...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: At the end, towards Rilindja.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Towards Rilindja. There was a big hole there, a wooden bridge, I settled there, I went there. So naturally, what do I do now? Engineer, engineer, but I'm not the only one with blooming spring flowers. I got into a room, we were three people there. It was a nice room. I moved in there. But now as a young man, I wanted to meet a couple of friends that I had here and see the city, in front of Božur, in the *korzo*.⁶ But what would I get, the mud came up to our knees.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: It was muddy there?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: It was muddy, there was no asphalt. I went to buy some boots and I walked to the barracks. When I came back from the city, where the traffic lights are, at the *Heroinat* Memorial,⁷ I hid my boots there, I put on my shoes and went out on a walk with my friends. In other words, up to there Pristina was all muddy.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When do these main roads by which Pristina is known today begin to be constructed?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Well, immediately, in the '70s, it started to be built at a faster pace. This part from Grand Hotel towards the flag, or the roundabout, it was all cobblestones up to the radio.

⁶ Main street, reserved for pedestrians.

⁷ The Heroinat Memorial is a typographic sculpture in Pristina. It represents the number of survivors of sexual violence during the 1999 Kosovo War.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You mean the roundabout...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: The roundabout at the hospital. So, from the center...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: It was all paved with cobblestones?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, it was all paved with cobblestones. The late Nazmi Mustafa, he was the mayor back then, with the laws back then...of course, through the municipality, not through votes, he gave the order and the road was paved up to the roundabout, and trees was planted on both sides, so that was the first road that was paved completely. Now, I don't know if I'm right, and I don't want to be ironic, they used to walk, where the campus of the Faculty of Philosophy and the Deanery, the Agani Memorial are, cows used to graze.

He would order to confiscate, he would take the cows and would take them to the slaughterhouse, to educate people that that is not the place for cows to graze, but it is a place for the citizens. So I mean, in that was used the law at the time, and so on.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were there many houses on that side that enabled livestock grazing, or where did they come from?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, no. The small roundabout was there. There was the Muhaxher's neighborhood, neighborhood, what is the name of the neighborhood near the Cathedral? The houses of...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Pejton.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: It was there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Do you remember the gardens? Or the cornfields?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, not much. From there, yes. From the university, actually from the university campus and the dormitories. As I said, I walked in cornfields.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about the river, do you remember the rivers?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: I remember the river. In front of the theatre, there was a bridge and the river, it was open, but back then I was I kid, when I came to my [maternal] uncle's house, and I remember where the Parliament is today, the bank and the old Post Office, there were some shops there, like in the Gjakova bazaar or the Prizren bazaar that is... I actually look at those pictures in the archive with

nostalgia. I saved all the pictures of Prizren and Pristina on my computer. I also remember the road from the theatre towards the bank, where Soma coffee shop is today, in the direction towards...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Towards the long road?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Yes, the long road is Divan Yoli street, that's it was called. It was always called Divan Yoli. It was always Divan Yoli.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes, that road was tied to Divan Yoli.

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Yes. I remember Dragodan, and in front of the Youth and Sports Center, and where the Prosecutor is, there was the association of...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Writers?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: No, no. I'm thinking of it in Serbian, and I want to translate in Albanian.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Say it in Serbian.

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Automobile association, the directorate was there. People were trained to drive there, and they got their driver's licence... there, it was on the corner of the crossroad. And after that, it was still a field. Dragodan was the motorcycle racer's stage.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Up until when was it like that? Everybody mentions these kinds of sports that happened there. When did the houses start to be built...

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Until '67, I think. Something like that.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Could you maybe tell us something about these houses which were built by architects, like a wave of projects that were executed in the new neighborhoods, like Talixhe and Dragodan. What was that? Also in Aktash, there are a lot of phenomena like that, here and there.

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Listen, back then, as far as I know... Because Pecić, Pecić, Dragomir Pecić had the monopoly, Dragomir, he was in charge. Then Dragan Radulović was in Ramiz Sadiku, Miroslav Čučanović, Palve Pavlović. Palve Pavlović had worked in BVI for... BVI for, for, for...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: For residency?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: BVI for construction land, that's how they called it. Where the prosecutor is today, that's where their office was.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Pavle Palloviçi had a house I think...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: He built his house near the church.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Which church?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: The Catholic church in Ulpiana. Back then traveling to see construction and the development of architecture in Yugoslavia was very preferable. Of course, also in the world, but the opportunities were limited to travel the world. The architect's association was still functioning, even though we had less funds, but we found ways to visit places and travel.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What were these professional study trips like?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: The professional study trips were organized by the architect's association and the organization. And the Entity of Urbanism could organize most of these trips, Pecić was a director there. Of course, I created the opportunity for myself and young architects to travel.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you tell me, in as much detail as you can, about your first job, Ramiz Sadiku, and the community that was built by Ramiz Sadiku as an organization. So, did you live together in a way, you were systemized, then the neighborhood had infrastructure, it had...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: That infrastructure was mentioned and it was awarded, that area there, that colony, because Miodrag Pecić worked in that colony... At some point he worked at Ramiz Sadiku. So that, that building was built under his supervision. Now I remember the Basara⁸ that you asked for the last time, exactly that... Basara... the Basara building where the LDK⁹ association and Tiffany are, Pecić designed them. I told you last time that it was Basara himself, but then I remember that Pecić built it.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can we go back to the neighborhood, colony?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, let's go back to the neighborhood. The neighborhood was surrounded in a way... around it there were residence buildings for Ramiz Sadiku's workers, of course, with their families. The design bureau and Ramiz Sadiku's ambulance were in the same yard. At the time when I

⁸ Svetomir Arsić - Basara (1928) was born in the village of Sevce, the Sharr-Mountains. He is a Serbian sculptor and storyteller. In 1958, he graduated from the Academy of Applied Arts in Belgrade, under Rade Stanković. Arsić was a member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo, and was widely known in Yugoslavia for his war monuments.

⁹ *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.

was hired, there were 44 people in the design bureau. There was a tracer, a furnisher and the guard who spoke Albanian, we were Albanian. The others were Montenegrin, Serbian, there were no Bosnians. Now I'm trying to... but I can't be wrong. Čučanović, Dragan, the other Dragan, Jova. There were eleven graduated engineers, I was the only one who was Albanian. And then there were technicians of different profiles, construction, water supply and sewage, electricity and machinery. There were also economists who worked in...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Finance, accounting...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, yes, accounting. The communication was normal, but it's understood that they did not accept us with pleasure, because we discomforted them. In our presence, they couldn't... they talked, but they couldn't talk as freely as they did in the church (laughs). Then slowly employment developed, then in the meantime the late Esat Mekaj came, then Lulzim Nixha and Shqipe came, then Salihu came. But their work didn't last much, of course, they found better jobs and different positions. While since I was obliged to stay at Ramiz Sadiku because of my scholarship, I endured it and I stayed. Then it started to grow [in me] even more, how do I say, the ability to resist surrounding pressure, so it doesn't seem like I couldn't take it and I had to leave.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So the design office in a way was the center where you designed and then those designs were taken and executed by the organization...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, yes.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Ramiz Sadiku.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: The advantage was that... I'm talking in the sense of engineering, the advantage was there every person could design there, they could go and follow how their project is developing. That was considered normal, as a pleasure for the engineer to see how the building is getting built. Even though in the beginning, we didn't want to since it was muddy, but later we experienced it differently.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Which building did you closely work on?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: The building in front of Maxi on the boulevard...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: The street above?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: In front of the ABC Cinema, the old Brotherhood, the cinema... then the Rectorate, behind the bank, so the bank is there and then behind, there's the building over the Rectorate...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Residential area?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Over the Rectorate. I couldn't follow up on the building of the bank and some other building because I went into military service and so on. I took part in the construction of Kosovo's B power plant, that building... It was a pleasure, not only as a young architect, but in experiencing a technology of a kind in Kosovo for the first time, which could build a building in 24 hours without a stop. That technology was such that the concrete had to be produced [and flow] like a river so we could build it, there couldn't be interruptions.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Why, what would happen if you stopped?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: The concrete wouldn't form. That building was like that, so all the time...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Where did you get the technology from?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: I think we got the technology from France, but a machinery engineer from Serbia worked there. It was more expensive to get someone from France, and, of course, like everywhere else, technology is either copied or you make an agreement to take it, in other words, we were also capable of doing that.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How long did it last?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: For a short period of time, a short period of time. 160 meters were done in 24 hours. It was built very fast, it was built in twelve days.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Extremely fast. Which year?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: '74, '75.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you talk about Bankkos in more detail, tell us about the design and how did you decide to design it like a butterfly, two buildings, as many details as you can share with us.

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Well it was, the inspiration came a little from being a student in Skopje... Skopje back then offered adventures and courage in architecture, and how do I say, patience, also criticism, positive and negative ones. So... in our world we think about criticism and understand it as insults, or negative criticism, while criticism can also be positive. So in cooperation with the head designer, who, I told you last time, was a student from Skopje, whose hobby was fishing. We would go fishing, and would leave me to do the work. And when he came back from fishing, sometimes, or during the whole

time we were together, we had a very professional correspondence, we didn't hold back. We could... I don't think I could have had the same experience with him with anyone else there.

Maybe he wanted to reward himself since I was doing more work than I had to, or maybe he saw that I also had good ideas, even though he had five or six years' worth of experience more than me, so we collaborated. I offered it to him, I proposed my idea to him and he said, "Where did this idea come from?" I said, "I got the idea because I finished University in Skopje, and Skopje is built. The whole world is talking about Skopje. That's how I got my idea..." So he accepted it and so on. It was a small gesture for today's...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Tell us, what was it?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: At the intersection, you know, from Zahir Pajaziti Square and from this side of the Garibaldi Street... because in architecture, at the intersection, the corners always get blocked. The reason was not to block the view, and I came up with the idea to propose that solution, and he accepted it. Opposite of blocking the view, it attracted a lot of attention. I proposed a triangle, it does not have any function, but it's like the makeup on women's faces. He accepted it, and this is how the idea was born. The bank being a bank has its standards and one cannot step out of those standards: the counters, the administrative section, the treasury on the first and second, and so on.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did the bank commission this?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: No, the bank has an advisor in the bank. We have submitted our proposal, the record exists, we have explained how the banks are being designed in the world. Though they were bankers, they have traveled, but to design did not know how and they could not.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So the head of the bank...

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: Well then the head, they had the committee, and the committee approves it, and that's how it got approved. Even though, even then, the applications were internal. We applied, the Entity of Urbanism applied, even someone else applies, but our application was more attractive and we got accepted.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you apply as a Ramiz Sadiku architect or an independent architect?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: No, no, with the Ramiz Sadiku organization, as Ramiz Sadiku.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Okay, in general, it was done by Ramiz Sadiku.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: As Ramiz Sadiku. Then Ramiz Sadiku took over the construction of the building. Because the project was approved, the project was done, then it was announced for construction. Now even for construction there were different companies that applied, from Gjakova, Gjiilan, Prizren, and so on. But Ramiz Sadiku took it.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you tell us about the materials that you used?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Well, the materials, the materials were very... of course, it was always... there was some sort of policy to not use materials from outside of Kosovo, the reason for that was so that the materials and the producers of materials would be from Kosovo.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What kind of materials were produced in Kosovo?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: For example, concrete was produced here, cement was from Hani i Elezit, the sand was from here, and so on. We only took iron from Zajednica, Bosnia and so on. The doors...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about marble?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: The marble, I told you, the marble... after we had traveled, we had buildings all over Kosovo, we accidentally saw that beautiful marble in Deçan. And the head designer said... My nickname was Sheki back then, and he said, "Sheki, do you see what kind of marble this is, it is the same marble in the United States of America." I said, "Don't joke around..." The television was black and white back then, he said, "When there's a session of the United States of America on the television, you will see the marble behind." I was convinced, so we approved decorating that triangle at the bank with that marble.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was it? Because it isn't there anymore.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: It was a dark green color with some, those, texture of white stripes. I don't know how to explain it. It was hard marble, granite.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was it easy to work on it?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, they worked then. It stuck, the marble was thick, three centimeters or more, if you grabbed it... we had to put it there with anchors so it didn't get deformed by the cold or the heat that comes through the marble, even though... there was the risk of it breaking off and falling over the pedestrians.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: No, I asked about the marble, because it was used a lot at that time, and all the facades and buildings...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Even Grand Hotel...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: All of them, even Eximkos which was near there, I remember...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, yes. All of these were done with the help of the construction technology and supervision. To be honest, everything goes wrong if you are not cautious.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What other projects did you work on?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Well, the schools.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Which?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Schools all over Kosovo. We had won the project for 110 schools, for two to twelve classrooms.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Are they a variation of the same model, or are they different?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: They're different, different according to the ground. Because the ground affected it. In the beginning, we were planning to design them almost the same, then there were supplements for each of them in every location... because classrooms are unique. You, the length of it, the width, the height, the direction, was always preferable to be southeast, laboratories and libraries were north, there were some standards like this.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Let's go back to the Ramiz Sadiku colony. I'm interested to know for how long did you live there?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, I didn't live there. I worked there.

Part Three

Shefqet Mullafazliu: I worked there...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: A, the barracks...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: The barracks, the barrack used to be where Rilindja's yard is now. I lived there for about two months, then they gave me a studio apartment this small {shows with his hands} as big as

this room we're in, on Marshall Tito Street, so under the new Post Office, where the Health Care is, the first building there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So those buildings existed?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: I lived in those buildings. The room there... I would joke around when they asked me, "Where do you live?" I would say, "In an apartment of 13 square meters." And it is true, it was 13 square meters. The entrance, bathroom and the bed were all in the same place, but it was enough for a person. I soon went into military service and it was empty for a year. When I came back from military service, they gave me another apartment, which was bigger, I also got a wife and so on. (laughs)

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When did you meet your wife? When did you start a family?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: I met her before going into the military. Then we kept in contact, when I came back, we continued seeing each other, after a year we got married, and that's how I started a family.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: I'm interested to know about the political situation that was happening. You mentioned some ethnic tensions, when it happened in '70... not '70, but...

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: '81.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: '81. Was it reflected in the workplace?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: In '81, I was still at the design bureau of Ramiz Sadiku, we were a few people left there, the others had left. Ramiz Sadiku slowly started to dim down in a way. And demonstrations of '81 were organized... in the center near Eximkos, Ramiz Sadiku, my employees, so to say, my co-workers, I was the oldest there, there were Serbians and Albanians. It was interesting because the work the Albanians did, not that we separated by ourselves, but we were in two different halls.

Serbians worked with electronics, machines and structure and static, so the Serbians were in a hall. While us, in architecture and design were in another hall. At 9:00 AM, they went out for breakfast. Women went out to the stores and, at 9:30 AM, everyone came in and signed their names and continued working until 2:00 PM. Ramiz Sadiku worked seven days a week, I mean six days a week, they worked even on Saturdays from 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM. We did not have weekends.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You all ate at the canteen or individually?

Shëfqet Mullafazliu: No, no, whoever wanted went to eat at the canteen, others went on with their plans, or bought something out and ate. The demonstrations took place, at the office we had

economists that were part of the other Ramiz Sadiku office, who dealt with payments and accounting. I, as a leader, they started... the turmoil started, and everyone ran scared back to the office because they were at the Radio, in front of the Radio, they were buying something to eat. They came back, and everyone was scared, we had no idea that something was happening.

But the Serbs knew or they had, how to say, information or they were notified in advance or they knew. And one of them starts, I hear them speak loudly, "Look if Sheki is there, if he went out because he is unsuitable." He was talking about me. I hear them, but they don't know I am at the office. And at the office I had my desk, the door, it was like that when you open the door, you don't see the desk and... "He is not there, not there." Literally, they started gathering material against me. These other guys came and said, "Don't go anywhere, stay where you are. You never know what to expect from them." In a way, that's how we survived their attack, how to say it...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: From what was happening outside...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, and I want to say that the relations were always getting worse at that time. They were always prepared for attack, while we were all the time... we were a minority in the office, as workers and coworkers, and like that. You know, they always had... it's true that the design bureau was considered the brain of Ramiz Sadiku. Because the idea was born there. We are not undervaluing the other construction... but the genesis of the work was there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Is it there... the colony is one of the neighborhoods from where the city starts to get built? Could we talk about it in that sense?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, I wouldn't say that, but people were interested in that neighborhood that is under... so, how do I say... What was that neighborhood called? I forgot.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: The Peyton Place.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: The Peyton Place was an orderly neighborhood ever since Miodrag Pecić came up with an urbanization plan.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Aha, for Peyton.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: For Peyton. In this way, every house has its own yard, its own entrance, how it is proper for a city, there were no... to be fair, they did not even dare to build whatever they wanted, there were principles and laws that followed the construction on the part of the Municipality.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So, there was a standard, one-storey, two-storey house?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Then to be able to build another floor, again, you had to ask for a permit from the Municipality, whoever has the means to build, but not according to your wishes, but again according to the design and the housing project.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: I have two more questions about Ramiz Sadiku. I'd want to talk more about... because they did construction in Yugoslavia... not only in Kosovo...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, yes, yes.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And the second question, maybe talk about how it started to fade out as an organization, how was Grading [company] created as an alternative organization to Ramiz Sadik. Maybe touch upon these two topics.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Ramiz Sadiku did construction outside of Kosovo. There were employees in Baghdad, Libya, even in the Czech Republic. We were also invited to Germany and the Czech Republic to build power plants. The bridges on the coast road towards Ulcinj were built by Ramiz Sadiku, the bridges to Skopje were built by Ramiz Sadiku, the motel at Gazivoda Lake also. I designed the project, so towards Montenegro from Mitrovica, I designed it.

What else, there was a planned neighborhood for 610 houses for workers near Ulcinj, which was never realized. Because the riots happened, the political changes and what do I know. They gave us that location on purpose because it was a wetland. But we had economic and manpower, also the mechanism, we agreed to urbanize that neighborhood like the one in Kumenovo, the one near Budva. When the earthquake happened in 1979, that neighborhood that was planned to be used by workers of Kosovo on their holidays, it was used as shelter for people who lost their houses in the earthquake in Montenegro. And I have no idea what happened after that, I just know that they started to get built and we were done, but we didn't give permission for usage.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So you also built holiday houses in different coastal places?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: We had them in Kumanova and Ulcinj.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In Croatia?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Other organizations had them in Croatia. For example, the bank had them in front of Dubrovnik, Lupus island. We also had them in Croatia, in Hvar, even in... I mean, as organizations of Kosovo, not Opatija, but near Pula, in these small places.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: This was as an extra service that the organization provided?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, it wasn't. It was for workers with many kids who couldn't financially afford to go on holidays, so back then, that was like help for them. They always had priority to use them, the transport was either organized, or they went themselves. Of course, we used them, too, the directors and leaders since... because often someone made, how do I say... the appointment to use it, but then they couldn't go, so then it would be exchanged.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did Ramiz Sadiku have a newspaper?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, it had a newspaper and... It had a newspaper, actually while I was an architecture student in Skopje, I had the opportunity to, how do I say...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You were invited to write?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: I wasn't invited, but I had a friend in journalism, he offered me, "Shefqet, do you want to be a press editor for Ramiz Sadiku's newspaper, since you're from Pristina?" He said, I said, "Why not?" The payment was good, the student's dormitory was near where I was living, also the Macedonian print house was right in front. And I went there once a week as a press editor, and I was taking a small salary.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Do you have any of them?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, no, no. Now when I look at these brochures, these architecture magazines, I tried to give them to the university, but they didn't want them, so I gave them to some guy. Now I see they're being sold on the boulevard, my books. But it's still good they're selling (laughs).

Erëmirë Krasniqi: (Laughs) Maybe it's yours..

Shefqet Mullafazliu: It would not be a surprise. That one, yes {points with his finger} the one with the letters. Probably, I don't think anyone would...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: No, no, I bought this one on the boulevard, I was interested to know what had happened in the past. I can give it back if you want (laughs).

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, no I gave them away. Actually, since you have it here, maybe I'll find some other books and bring it to you. Because you know what? Honestly, I want to give it to someone who will use it. Now I'll tell you the story of my children, my daughters, who got into the Architecture Department, but never finished it. Not that we didn't want to, but because the political circumstances and life didn't let us.

My oldest daughter, when she applied to the architecture department, I told her, “Why? What do you want? You know you’re a woman, you will have family obligations other than men in the future. As a man, I sometimes can’t reach everything, let alone you when you’ll have children in the future.” But she convinced me, “Dad...” she said, “You invested in books and work tools for 20-30 years. If I choose anything else, I’ll have to start over. Why? When I have everything ready to study architecture.” I agreed, and she got it. But then war started, and so on.

The second daughter did the same thing, she suffers even more, she is in America. She applied to architecture. Since the competition was big, she also applied to graphic design. The entrance exam for graphic design started at 8:00 AM until 12:00 PM, while the exam for architecture started at 11:00 AM or later. She would go there, work on it, finish on time, and I would drive her to Dragodan. That’s how she was accepted and started studying architecture.

Before war started, from Skopje since we left from here, she got a boyfriend in America, they communicated by phone, they found each other, she got on a plane and they got together there. But both of them didn’t finish it. Then the one in America studied electronics and got her master’s degree and... but she suffers.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did Ramiz Sadiku fade out? Let’s finish this...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Ramiz Sadiku started to fade out because it was in the interest of a technical director, who at the same time was a professor at the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Serbian, Serbo-Croatian language. So their interest was for Ramiz Sadiku to fade out slowly so they could, what do I know what their plans were, so we were left like... just like when the leaves fall during fall, the workers slowly scattered.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: During what years?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: In ‘82-’83. Then in ‘83 I applied to the United Bank, I was the last... I’m talking about the design bureau, I was the last of the leaders to leave. Then after me they all scattered.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In which year did you start working at the United Bank??

Shefqet Mullafazliu: ‘83.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: For how long did you work there? Until...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Until Milošević fired us.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: ‘91.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: ‘90...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What did you do then?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Nothing, then...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What happened to you then?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Nothing, then I started, near this building, I asked a friend who had a grocery store for a job. I worked there. The reason I did that was to not stay at home, because if you stay at home, people forget about you. Staying in contact with people is different. For as long as I worked there, I was in contact with the late Rexhep Luci, my friends, and then I was hired by a private company. I worked there for a while, then, I changed it and continued...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: An architecture company or what kind?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, no. A construction company. Then I continued with another private company. They were mistreating me... It's interesting, people who don't have knowledge in the profession are bothered by people who are professional, even though they need them, they're bothered by them. I am a person who has lived, we were prepared by our teachers, our professors in university. They would say, "Listen, you are engineers, but there will be times when you will get offended and belittled by simple workers. But you have to endure or dismiss that moment." But since I needed work to support my family, I endured as much as I could, until it was too much. The diagram was increasing and I put a stop to it and quit. Then, the war started not long after...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Where were you during the war?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: During the war, I was in Skopje with my family. I didn't go anywhere else, except Canada or Sweden, I couldn't go to Germany because I didn't know anyone there. So that's how I settled. My daughters were working at the border since they spoke English, until the problem with my youngest daughter got solved and she got on a plane to America. Me, my wife, my oldest daughter and my son were left in Skopje.

I registered my son at school there so he wouldn't waste time, while my daughter was working at the border as a translator with the Finnish army. When the time came, we came back, life went on, my daughter got a job. I was hired by the internationals at the Danish Red Cross as an expert, as an architect that helped... I recorded and repurposed 440 individual houses. At the same time, they couldn't stand headstrong people, because I endured a lot... it's true that they helped, but they are also considered incapable.

After a while I started working at the Norwegian Red Cross. At the Norwegian Red Cross, they had a plan for the renovation of... readaptation of Agricultural High School of Lipjan. I stayed there for a long time, I designed those alcoves that were like a farm, like a school and a classroom. Like this. After that then... in the meantime, I got accepted into AAB University as a professor, I lectured...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You lectured...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: I lectured.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In the '70s, '80s as an assistant.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, also as an assistant, that was while I was working at Ramiz Sadiku. I lectured at AAB for as long I did, some corrupt practices started, then the staff had to be renewed.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When did you retire?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: I retired ten years ago. I retired ten years ago. I'll tell you this, for as long as I was a bank designer, and when I went to Skopje as a soldier, after I came back from the military, I got accepted to the Architecture Faculty, no, Civil Engineering, as an assistant. In the meantime, the Architecture Faculty, I worked there as an assistant and so on.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Who did you assist?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Professor Skender Hasimi.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Skender Hasimi?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Skender Hasimi.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: He is one of the first architects, right?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, he was before, it was Professor Bashkim.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes, that generation.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, yes, yes, yes. There was Qemal Nabllani, Medi Raci, and after them, it was me. Even though we were in the same generation of studies as Mejdi Raci.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Do you have anything to add? Because I think we reached the end of the story.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Nothing, you're welcome to ask.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Something you didn't mention. What do you do today?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Today, I work on the computer as much as I can, even though a lot of people, now I'm talking about myself, a lot of people were surprised, "Why are you doing it? Why do you need it?" "I want to follow the achievements on architectural design." When I drew, I would draw for days, months, and now on the computer, the project is done in a few minutes, hours, however I want, and I see it 3D and things like this. But, of course...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Do you still design?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, but I don't get paid. That's why I don't do it (laughs). I draw. I love aquarelle, I draw aquarelle and so on.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Is this something you started doing lately?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, I've always loved aquarelle. And I forgot to tell you, after I left the job at the bank, I was unemployed, as I said earlier, I never was lazy when it came to work. I never was picky about work, it's better to work than be ignored. I started with gypsum design and I worked with interior decorations. I produced them myself, did them myself, which was new in Kosovo, where people worked in a more primitive way. While I would do the designs myself, the framework, I would produce them myself, like this, I used to work with a friend of mine.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In what style or pillars were they?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Both pillars and decorations and figures how do I say... Do you know why? I had the opportunity to travel a lot, I had the opportunity to see a lot of things. I saw how they did gypsum decorations in Poland, Romania, in Turkey, in Austria in France. But in a way, I can freely say I have an artistic soul that drew me, I didn't have left hands, I had two right hands. I could design, and I did because I understood the technology of gypsum and I did. I even made frameworks of...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you have a workshop?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Yes, in a basement this big {shows with his hand} I had a corner, that's where I worked. I worked in secret, because I didn't dare, there was a Serbian guy over my basement, and it would bother him. He would pressure me to leave the basement and some...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Really?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: I had made the relief of the President Ibrahim Rugova, and I would make many copies of the same, I would sell it and so on.

Ermirë Krasniqi: What is a relief?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: It's photography, not photography but refined photography.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you make it for his residence or...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, no, no. I did it for myself. I started to make one of Ismail Qemali on November 28th, this is in the '90s... In the shop that I was working at, when I saw I couldn't do Ismail Qemali, it started looking like Lenin... but I couldn't do it. When November 28th was close, I would, why shouldn't I make one of the president, it was near Tiffany here, I thought I would go and take a picture of him. I took his picture and I created it. When I told some of my artist friends, they said, "It is so on point."

They motivated me, so I started creating it out of gypsum, I colored it, and this is how I lived.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Very Interesting. What year was this, you started saying twice, 19...

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Which one?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When you created this relief.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: '95.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What kind of moment was Rugova then? Was it a key moment?

Shefqet Mullafazliu: No, he was here, he was. He had pressure and so on. But I was inspired since it was near me.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Mister Shefqet, I would end the interview here.

Shefqet Mullafazliu: Thank you very much.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Thank you very much.

