

## The Concepts of the Socialist Realism in the Architectural Design Of the “ALBANIAN RTV” Building in Tirana

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### ABSTRACT

The building Complex representing the Albanian Radio Television, composed in four buildings, is placed in one of the most central and important areas of the capital city. The complex represents the field of media and communication.

The building is constructed by groups of designers and constructors, who have faced problems based on political factors. It is in general well preserved, except some changes that were made to the initial project since the early implementation phase. One of the four buildings is the Radio, a four-storey building that was opened in December 1965. The initial design, dated in early '60, was made by a Russian architect, of course called to design it in the period of friendship between both countries. After the break relations with the former Soviet Union, as in general used to be, the design was changed. The Party-State supervised the continuation of works with Albanian team architects and engineers. It is an Extension of the Radio Building, which is designed in 1977 by Spartak Bagllamaja. During the Communism period, the architectural concept was that of realism socialist. In our country the rules were very strong. For example was prohibited the concept of high buildings, and despite the ideological justifications against skyscrapers, this was because of the fact that there were no lifts at all. The other building of the complex was the Television Building, constructed later than Radio and opened in 1969. It was designed by the Albanian designer; Semi Pashallari. It consists in 2 different blocs or parts. The Project design is appropriate based on technological solution, and also has a contemporary architectural concept.

Although each building of the complex is constructed in different periods of time, the group of the designers and the constructors shared the same idea for the exterior of the buildings.

### INTRODUCTION

The socialist Style in the Eastern European countries was considered a great style. It was called the “**proletariat style**” that combined the communist ideology with the artistic image, a style that was socialist in content and national in form. The initial development of the architecture of the socialist realism in Albania can be found in the decisions of the Albanian Communist Party and the totalitarian government in the Parties meetings that used to be called “**Plenium**”. As a consequence, after the Second World War, during the years 1945-1980, *the Albanian architecture*, the development conditions of the constructions, and urban planning were radically changed by the ideas of the *socialist realism*. This style in Albania was strongly supported by the group of the post-war architects,

graduated in the universities of architecture in the former Soviet Union, and in other countries of the former communist camp, and it was also supported by the creativity of Soviet architects who were invited to design very important buildings in Albania. The Communist Party and the government led the policy of the construction and architecture in Albania, observing the *Ministry of Construction* as the principal institution for designs, urban studies, engineering and architectural buildings. First buildings of the socialist realism in Albania are those with social, administrative and cultural character. One of those is the ***Complex of the Albanian Radio Television***. It is composed with four buildings and is placed in one of the most central and important areas of Tirana, the capital city. The complex represents the field of media and communication and, according to this function; the choice of the building site is the most appropriate of the time.(Figure1,2)

The building complex is constructed by groups of designers and constructors, who have faced problems based on political factors. It is in general well preserved, except some changes that were made to the initial project since the early implementation phase. One of the four buildings is the ***Radio Building***, a four-storey building that was opened in December 1965. The building is a square shaped with dimensions 48 m by 54 m.

The initial design, dated in early '60, was made by a *Russian architect*, of course called to design it in the period of friendship between both countries. After the break of the relations with the former Soviet Union, as in general used to be, the design was changed. [1]

The Party-State supervised the continuation of works with Albanian team architects and engineers. (Figure 3).

**The Radio Building** is characterized by a ground floor lobby host, much bigger than in the project anticipated by the Soviet Project. In the lobby are faced the main stairs, which are not only highly functional but also with a configuration very impressive at the facade.

The stairs lead to the upper floors where the administration premises and studios are developed naturally according to a well defined technology in terms of function and plan distribution. The stair-well is a good architectural element that makes a contour, serves for the position selected and is a good indication for its shape and size. Even though the stair-well is in the north side of the building, it can light well many premises. Functional zoning in this building is considered *successful*. That's why it's easy to distinguish the *administrative premises* from the *recording studios area*, (Figure 4) those of *broadcasting* and what particularly appeals us more, is the *big symphony orchestra studio*.

The symphony orchestra studio is square shaped with dimensions 18.80 m x 11.25 m and the height is up to 8 m. (Figure 5). Regarding its function, in this studio are used acoustic materials. The symphony orchestra studio has a main exit in one of the corridors that surround the inner courtyard of this building as a recreational zone for all staff. This yard is also important for the well-lit corridors that surround it. The presence of the internal courtyard of the building is considered as a functional solution and also as a very prominent architectural one. (Figure 8)

*No matter how much and how it is used, no matter how it is used and how it works now, the inner courtyard is a solution* in the general conception of this great building with technological, functional and architectural problems, it can be at any time an inspiration and recreation zone not just for those who work there but also for those who would like to intervene in the improvement of the architecture of the entire complex. The façade of the building is treated in a very *symmetrical way* focused on the *long horizontal windows*. So the window is considered as a key element of the exterior. Also the use of a concrete shelter, such as "*brisoleil*", which are put on the windows and run across the length of the facility, further, highlights its *horizontal line*.

**Violence and dictatorship** had a great impact on a functional and economical architecture, but without great values in terms of aesthetics.

It is an Extension added in the Radio Building, which is designed in 1977 by Albanian well known architect, **Spartak Bagllamaja**, that was a young architect at that period, graduated in Architecture in 1972.[1] The Extension is a four-storey building and, of course, the architectural concept was that of realism socialist. It is important to mention the fact that in our country the rules were very strong.

So was *prohibited* the concept of construction of *high buildings*, but despite the ideological justifications against skyscrapers, this was because of the fact that there were no lifts at all. The Building construction was mainly of brick walls and reinforced concrete.

For technological reasons the floors have the same height, but they changed a bit in different cases. In the ground floor lobby, the main staircase, leads upstairs where you can find the *premises of the administration, recording studios, studio symphony orchestra*, etc., placed in different floors based on a certain function and technology.

Being part of this ideological line, *the Extension of the Radio Building* had fulfilled the leadership needs of that time to achieve the main goal, to propagate the popular mass. That was possible by the construction of the 2 new broadcasting studios. The choice and the location of the studios in the centre of the building, is conditional, like in the existing Radio Building, which allows the rest of the space to be used as offices for the editors, or as technical rooms. Both buildings can be linked in two points, in the inner-courtyard and also, in the one of the upper floors.

The exterior of the building is done mainly with the *window element* without competing the existing radio Building, but rather to be part of it without being noticed as an extension of it. The other building of the complex was **the Television Building** (Figure 6), constructed, of course, later than Radio and opened in 1969. [1] It was designed by the Albanian designer, **Semi Pashallari**. Actually, he was not an architect, neither a civil engineer. He was a geometer and we do not know for what reasons he was chosen to design the TV Building, which was a very important one at that time. It is also a square-shaped building, with dimensions 36 m x 53.50 m.

It consists in 2 different blocs or parts, the western part a four storey building, and the eastern part a three storey building with a studio in each floor. The Building has also reinforced concrete structure and brick walls. The Project design is appropriate based on technological solution, and also has a contemporary architectural concept. After the 1960, **Albania, as a poor country** met the demands, **for a rational, simple and functional architecture based on the modern technology of that time, and industrialization of construction**. The Radio and the TV Buildings are linked together with a passage that in its exterior has the same features of the main buildings. *The general solution of the building is accomplished by having as main goal the division of the rooms according to the function they have, possibly not only in plan but also on different floors*. It is easy to make the difference between the *administrative premises, and the recording and broadcasting studios*. (Figure 7). In the main lobby entrance, is the stair-well that led up to all the floors of the Television Building. It is positioned on the southeast side of the hall. The stair-well is supposed to be noticed according to its designer, made of glass from the bottom of the top. All corridors are *well-lit* because of the light that comes through it. One of the most appealing parts of the TV Building is surely the recording Studio part. There are three studios for live transmission or recording of different programs.

It's good to emphasize that all the premises of the **TV studios**, are coated with acoustic materials and they are built with double walls and a gap between them. All former Socialist countries and states, during three decades of the second half of twentieth century, in the period from 1948 to 1980, defined specific rules that were applied to both urban planning and architecture.

Many features as, **monumentalism, axis layout, symmetry of the composition, rescaled proportions, were used in the architectural concepts of that time.**

Anyhow the **3-dimensional** of the building complex is **acceptable**, *practical related to road system of the area*. It was built regarding the urban request for an attractive exterior of the building. The exterior is treated in a very symmetrical rhythm focused on the long horizontal windows, as a feature of this building complex. Its façade is not rich in architectural elements, referring to the construction period. It is a compact volume that does not excite you, in accordance with the principles established in all countries of the former socialist camp, regarding facilities in architecture. The socialist realism style in the Albanian architecture was treated as a political and ideological approach, and always was mentioned by political propaganda, that this style is strong and conceived in such way to fight against the foreign architectural models of the capitalist countries.

Although *each building* of the complex is constructed in different periods of time, the group of the designers and the constructors shared the same idea for the exterior of the complex in general.

### Tables and Figures



Figure 1 The Albanian RTV Complex (view of the TV Building)



Figure 2 The Albanian RTV Complex (view of the Radio Building)





Figure 3 The Radio Building, 1967

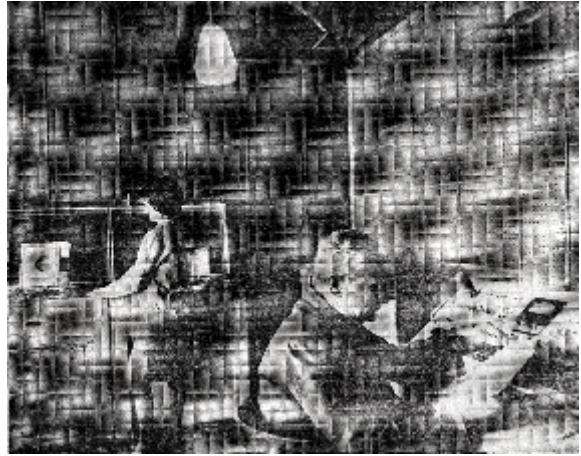


Figure 4 A Recording Studio

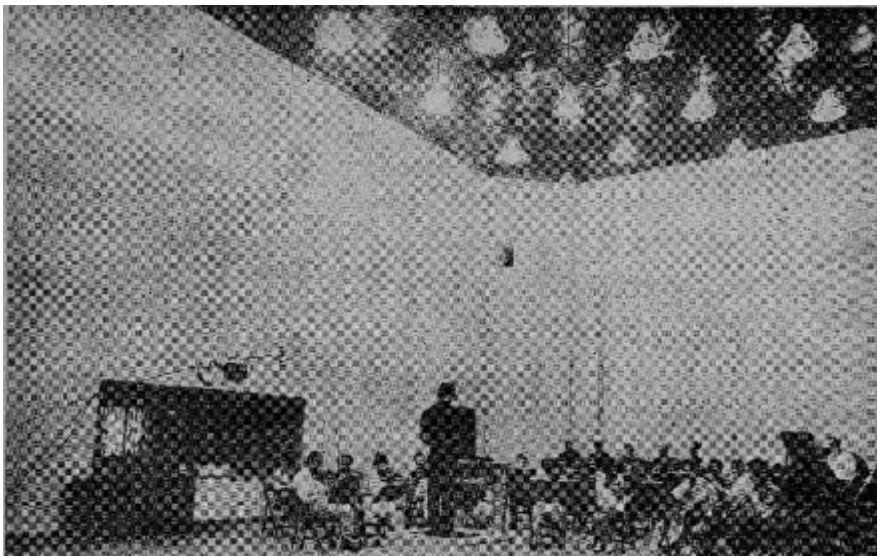


Figure 5 The big symphony orchestra studio

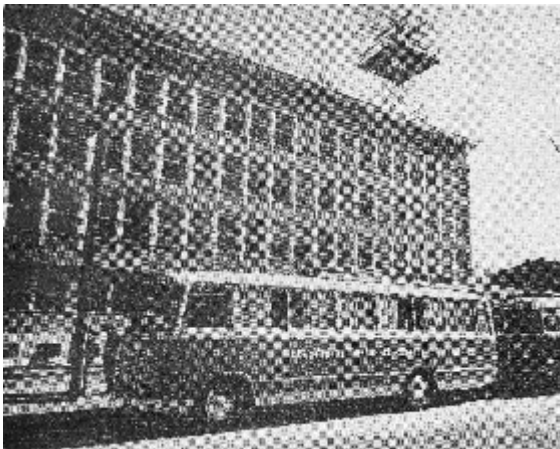


Figure 6 The TV Building, 1974



Figure 7 A Broadcasting Studio

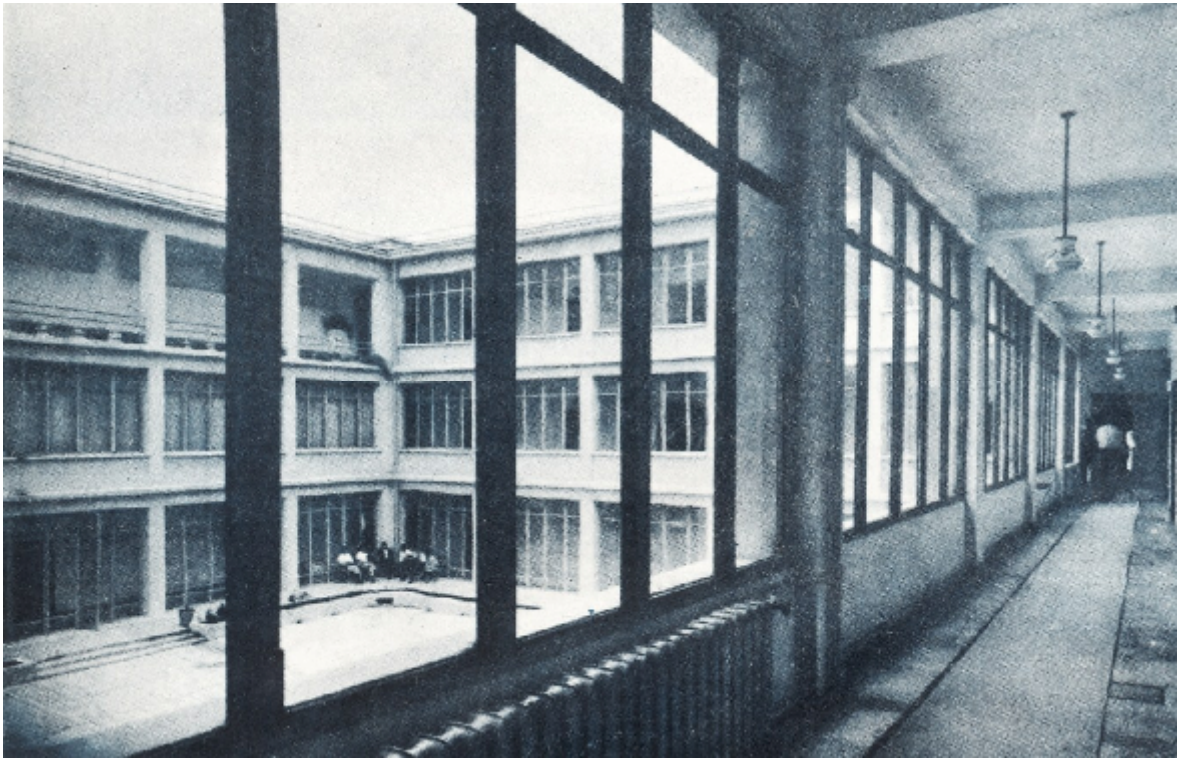


Figure 8 The inner courtyard of the Radio Building

## **CONCLUSION**

The Radio and The TV Complex, is a typical Socialist Realism concept of architecture and construction. We have to say that was realized in the best way of the time.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1] Skifter Këlliçi (2003), Historia e Radio-Televizionit Shqiptar (1938-1990)