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YUGOSLAV COMMUNISTS AND THE ALBANIAN QUESTION IN YUGOSLAVIA 1918–1945

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ABSTRACT: *This paper presents the main developments in the shaping of the leadership's views of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia towards the Albanian population and the issue of the realisation of national rights of Albanians from 1918 to 1945. It first highlights the position of the Serbian social democrats on this issue before World War I, as they significantly influenced the opinions of Yugoslav communists after 1918. It then discusses the position of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia regarding the Albanian question during the existence of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941) and during its occupation in World War II (1941–1945). Finally, it analyses the national policy of the new authorities of the Yugoslav state towards the Albanian minority in the southern part of the country during the establishment of the communist regime in Yugoslavia in 1945. The work was written on the basis of relevant literature and historical sources, mainly from the Archives of Yugoslavia.*

KEYWORDS: Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Albanian question, Serbian–Albanian relations, Kosovo, Metohija, Macedonia, Montenegro

Introduction

The circumstances under which the two Yugoslav states – the Yugoslav Kingdom and Socialist Yugoslavia – emerged and disappeared highlight the exceptional importance of the national question for understanding the historical processes in this part of the Balkan Peninsula during the 20th century. The first one was built on the foundations of "ethnic unity", while the second one arose on the basis of "interethnic reconciliation". The regimes of both states considered the national question to be a "permanently resolved" or "obsolete" issue. However, this belief was contradicted by the circumstances of their dissolution – the abrupt collapse of the Yugoslav idea and the outbreak of civil wars in 1941–1945 and 1991–1995. Thus, the national

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question in Yugoslavia, including the question of the Albanian minority, remained overshadowed by other historiographical topics for a long time.

Scholarly and methodologically reliable academic works on this topic began to emerge only in the 1980s, in parallel with the rapid decline of the Yugoslav idea and the loosening of the constraints imposed by the Yugoslav regime. In the years that followed, a large number of academic studies were produced on the national question in Yugoslavia, focusing primarily on the Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian, and Slovenian issues, as well as the attitudes of Yugoslav communists toward these problems. Recognising the importance of the Albanian question, not only for Serbian-Albanian relations but also for the survival of the Yugoslav state itself, and highlighting the strength of Albanian separatism and the anti-Yugoslav sentiment among much of the Albanian population, most authors directed their research towards the period of socialist Yugoslavia. Their focus was primarily on the government's approach to the Kosovo issue and the status of the Albanian minority. Far fewer studies, however, have been dedicated to the Albanian question in the final years of World War II, especially regarding the position of Yugoslav communists towards this issue. The Albanian question has mostly been considered within the broader context of the national question in the Yugoslav kingdom. In this regard, the research of Gordana Vlajčić,[1] Desanka Pešić,[2] Dušan Lukač,[3] Branislav Gligorijević,[4] Branko Petranović,[5] and Ali Hadri[6] is particularly significant. Although published several decades ago and thus to a varying extent shaped by the ideological context of their time, these studies are based on thorough analyses of archival documents. Also worth mentioning is the large number of volumes of published archival documents produced through the activities of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), which further shed light on the communists' approach to the national question during the interwar and the wartime periods.[7] Finally, memoirs and recollections of communist leaders, such as Arso

1 Gordana Vlajčić, *Jugoslavenska revolucija i nacionalno pitanje (1919–1927)* (Zagreb: Centar za kulturnu djelatnost, 1984).

2 Desanka Pešić, *Jugoslovenski komunisti i nacionalno pitanje (1919–1935)* (Beograd: Izdavačka radna organizacija „Rad", 1983).

3 Dušan Lukač, *Radnički pokret u Jugoslaviji i nacionalno pitanje 1918–1941* (Beograd: ISI; NIP Export-press, 1972).

4 Branislav Gligorijević, *Kominterna, jugoslovensko i srpsko pitanje* (Beograd: ISI, 1992).

5 Branko Petranović, *Jugoslovensko iskustvo srpske nacionalne integracije* (Beograd: Službeni list SRJ, 1993).

6 Ali Hadri, *Narodnooslobodilački pokret na Kosovu 1941–1945* (Beograd: Zavod za istoriju Kosova, 1973).

7 *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije*, tom II: Kongresi i zemaljske konferencije KPJ 1919–1937 (Beograd: Istorijsko odeljenje Centralnog komiteta Komunističke partije Jugoslavije, 1949); *Izvori za istoriju SKJ: Drugi (Vukovarski) kongres KPJ (20–24. jun 1920). Plenarne sednice CPV KPJ (februar–decembar 1920)*, priredili Ubavka Vujošević, Vujica Kovačev (Beograd: Izdavački centar Komunist, 1983); *Izvori za istoriju SKJ: Treći kongres KPJ (17–22. maj 1926). Plenarne sednice CK KPJ (maj–septembar 1926)*, priredili Ubavka Vujošević, Branislav Gligorijević (Beograd: Izdavački centar Komunist, 1986); *Izvori za istoriju SKJ: Peta zemaljska konferencija KPJ (19–23. oktobar 1940)*, priredili Pero Damjanović, Milovan Bosić, Dragica Lazarević (Beograd: Izdavački centar Komunist, 1980); *AVNOJ i Revolucija: Tematska zbirka dokumenata*, priredili Slobodan Nešović o Branko Petranović (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1983); *Zapisnici NKOJ-a i Privremene vlade DFJ 1943–1945*, priredili Branko Petranović i Ljiljana Marković (Beograd: Memorijalni centar „Josip Broz Tito"; Arhiv Josipa Broza Tita, 1991).

Milatović,[8] Dušan Mugoša,[9] Fadilj Hodža,[10] Ismet Šaćiri,[11] Nijaz Dizdarević,[12] and Mita Miljković,[13] are also important sources, although these texts must be approached with great caution due to their inherently biased nature.

The Serbian social democrats and the Albanian question

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, there was a unanimous opinion within the political and intellectual elite of the Kingdom of Serbia regarding the defense of state independence and the unification of the entire Serbian people on the Balkan Peninsula. This position was strongly expressed during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, although there was no unified view on the constitutional and legal framework of the newly annexed southern territories, which were taken from the Ottoman Empire during the military operations.[14] The Serbian social democrats also embraced the idea of liberating the non-Turkish peoples within the territories of the Ottoman Empire, but, according to their view, this should be achieved on principles completely contrary to those of the "bourgeois parties", with war never being considered as viable means for resolving the Eastern Question. Emphasising primarily the class aspect in the national liberation movements that emerged among the non-Turkish peoples in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, the leaders of the Serbian Social Democratic Party (SSDP) believed that freedom could only come through revolution and uprisings carried out from within and from below, through independent action of the broadest layers of the oppressed population, and that it could not be fully achieved through military actions by neighboring states.[15]

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8 Arso Milatović, *Kosmet 1935–1945. Moje svedočenje* (Beograd: Naučna knjiga, 1990).

9 Dušan Mugoša, *Na zadatku* (Beograd: Novinsko-izdavačka ustanova „Četvrti jul", 1973).

10 Fadilj Hodža, *Kad proleće kasni: Iz partizanske beležnice* (Beograd: NIRO „Četvrti jul", 1979).

11 Ismet Šaćiri, *Sećanja*, knj. 1 (Priština: Jedinstvo, 1979); Ismet Shaqiri, *Më kujtohet...*, lib. 2 (Prishtinë: Rilindja, 1985).

12 Nijaz Dizdarević, *Albanski dnevnik* (Zagreb: Globus; Sarajevo: Oslobođenje, 1988).

13 Mita Miljković, *Znani i neznani* (Priština: Jedinstvo, 1960).

14 The leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party and the Independent Radical Party believed that territorial expansion of Serbia implied the extension of the full constitutional order to the newly annexed territories, as the Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbia was not limited to a single geographical area but applied across the entire territory of the state. They emphasised that by "new regions" they meant the Serbian lands inhabited by the Serbian people, and that those regions should not be governed as colonies. In contrast, the People's Radical Party argued that the Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbia did not specify how to govern the annexed territories and that the introduction of an "exceptional regime" in those areas, as a temporary measure lasting no more than a decade, could be implemented without prior constitutional amendments or the convening of a Great National Assembly, but rather through regular legislative procedures. [Olga Popović–Obradović, *Parlamentarizam u Srbiji 1903–1914* (Beograd: Službeni list SRJ, 1998), 405–406; Milorad Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790–1918*, knj. 2 (Beograd: IRO Prosveta, 1989), 546–589; Vaso Čubrilović, *Istorija političke misli u Srbiji XIX veka* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1922), 288–295; Jovan Žujović, *Dnevnik*, priredio Dragoje Todorović, knj. 2 (Beograd: Arhiv Srbije, 1986), 10–11, 14–15, 33, 56].

15 Vlado Strugar, *Socijaldemokratija o stvaranju Jugoslavije* (Beograd: Izdavačko preduzeće „RAD", 1965), 27–61; Dušan Lukač, „Srpska socijalna demokratija i nacionalno pitanje", u: *Razvoj socijalističke misli u Srbiji do 1919. godine*, naučni skup (Beograd: SANU, 1970), 2–17; Latinka Perović, *Od centralizma do federalizma: KPJ u nacionalnom pitanju* (Zagreb: Globus, 1984), 175; Dragan

However, national liberation and unification did not represent the ultimate goal of the social democrats' political struggle; indeed, it was merely a temporary alignment with the interests of the "bourgeoisie", and a necessary precondition for the "comprehensive development of the proletariat". Only after the complete national liberation, according to the leadership of the SSDP, could the "proletariat with full enthusiasm stand against its social and class enemy". Although, by their own admission, they were not anti-national, the Serbian social democrats believed that the proletariat "must never lose sight of the fact that its struggle is only successful as an international struggle".[16]

The leaders of the Serbian social democrats began discussing the Albanian question rather late, only during the escalation of the Albanian uprising against the Turkish authorities at the end of the first decade of the 20th century. Dimitrije Tucović, the leader of the SSDP, wrote in 1910 that the Balkan peoples "have no interest in living in irreconcilable hostility with the Albanians" and that "a mutual alliance [...] is the salvation for all of them. And in that alliance there is a place for the Albanians".[17] The guidelines for achieving this "alliance" were established in early 1910 in Belgrade, at the founding conference of the Balkan Socialist Federation.[18]

Before the First Balkan War of 1912, the leaders of the SSDP emphasised the importance of the movement among the Albanian population, whose frequent uprisings against the central authorities in Istanbul assured the party leadership ".that beneath the decaying empire there is vital energy among the oppressed peoples and that the Eastern question will be best resolved by the nations on the Balkan territory".[19] When the military operations began in October of the same year, there was a consensus within the SSDP in condemning the "expansionist ambitions of the [Serbian] bourgeoisie".[20] After the initial successes of the Serbian army, Filip Filipović, one of the prominent representatives of the SSDP, wrote in the Moscow newspaper *Pravda* that "during the capture of Novi Pazar, a dreadful massacre occurred", in which "15,000 to 20,000 Albanians were killed".[21] The Serbian social democrats saw the Serbian army's advance to the Albanian coast at the end of 1912 as the introduction to "bloody affairs" for Belgrade, arguing that Serbia's push towards the sea was neither natural nor economically justified.[22] Therefore, the leaders of the SSDP emphasised that the independence of Albania, proclaimed at the end of 1912, "should be unconditionally respected and efforts should be made to ensure that it, as an

Subotić, *Srpski socijalisti i nacionalno pitanje* (Beograd: Istraživačko-izdavački centar SSO Srbije, 1990), 69; Enver Redžić, *Austromarksizam i jugoslavensko pitanje* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga; Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1977), 344–348; Miloš Vojinović, „Socijaldemokratija", u: *Srbi 1903–1904. Istorija ideja*, priredio Miloš Ković (Beograd: Clio, 2015), 282–283; G. Vlajčić, *n. d.*, 17–19.

16 *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije, tom III: Socijalistički pokret u Srbiji 1900–1911* (Beograd: Istorijsko odeljenje Centralnog komiteta Komunističke partije Jugoslavije, 1950), 237–239.

17 Dimitrije Tucović, *Sabrana dela*, knj. 3, priredili Žarko Jovanović, Sergije Dimitrijević, Milenko Topalović, Lazar Ivanović (Beograd: Izdavačka radna organizacija „RAD", 1980), 40–44; Dimitrije Tucović, „Albansko pitanje", *Borba*, knj. 1, br. 9, 1. 5. 1910, 326.

18 Branislav Gligorijević, *Kominterna, jugoslovensko i srpsko pitanje* (Beograd: ISI, 1992), 82.

19 „Krupni događaji", *Radničke novine*, br. 162, 13. jul 1912, 1.

20 *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije*, tom III, 245–246.

21 Filip Filipović, *Sabrana dela*, tom I, priredio Stojan Kesić (Beograd: ISI, 1987), 506.

22 „Autonomija Albanije", *Radničke novine*, br. 241, 6. novembar 1912, 2.

independent member, joins the Federation of Balkan Republics, so that it ceases to be a pawn of the great powers for disturbing the Balkans".[23]

Among the social democrats in the Kingdom of Serbia, Dimitrije Tucović wrote most extensively about the Serbian–Albanian relations. Summarising his thoughts on this issue, in a study published in January 1914 titled *Serbia and Albania: A Contribution to the Critique of the Conqueror Policy of the Serbian Bourgeoisie*, the leader of the SSDP presented the view that the increase in the number of Albanians and the emigration of Serbs from the area of the former Kosovo Vilayet should be accepted as a natural and irreversible demographic and historical process.[24] This opinion did not have primary significance for the development of the political situation in the country, but it remained present in the following years among the Yugoslav communists. The SSDP's theses on "Serbian hegemony" and the "conqueror's policy of the Serbian bourgeoisie" were fully adopted by the leaders of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, who incorporated them into the foundation of their national policy towards the Albanian population in Yugoslavia after 1918.

The views of Yugoslav communists on the Albanian question in the Yugoslav kingdom 1918–1941

In the period following the end of World War I, the leaders of the CPY showed almost no interest in the Albanian question in the southern parts of the country. Throughout the first decade of the CPY's existence, its leadership was primarily focused on resolving issues in the western regions of the newly formed Yugoslav state, striving to establish unity within the Party while losing strength in internal struggles.[25] The approach to the position of the Albanian population was reflected only in the CPY's overall commitment to the "liberation of oppressed peoples" during the struggle against "Greater Serbian hegemony".[26] In their actions, the communists highlighted as the "immediate goal" a demand to "guarantee the national minorities not only full political and civil equality but also the unlimited right to use their native language in communication with all authorities, compulsory education of children in their native language in all state schools, and the fullest freedom of conscience".[27]

The process of addressing the Albanian question within the CPY began at the end of the 1920s, but even then, it was not the result of an increased interest of the Party leadership in the national demands of the Albanian leaders. On the contrary, it primarily reflected the pronounced anti-Yugoslav sentiment among Yugoslav communists, who were determined to fight until the complete destruction of the "Greater Serbian monarchy".[28] Such a course taken by the CPY leadership stemmed directly

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23 Dragiša Lapčević, *Rat i srpska socijalna demokratija* (Beograd: Štampa „Tucović", 1925), 117.

24 Dimitrije Tucović, *Srbija i Arbanija: Jedan prilog kritici zavojevačke politike srpske buržoazije* (Beograd – Zagreb: Kultura, 1946), 18.

25 *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije*, tom II, 16; Slavoljub Cvetković, *Idejne borbe u KPJ 1919–1928* (Beograd: ISI, 1985), 53–60.

26 Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), Zbirke reprodukovanih dokumenata (790), Komunistička internacionala – sekcija KPJ (790/1), KI, 1924/71.

27 AJ, KI, 1923/66.

28 *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije*, tom II, 195.

from the policy of the Comintern, which viewed the Yugoslav state as a bulwark of the Versailles system and an anti-Soviet buffer zone in the Balkans. Hence, it was demanded that independent republics of Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia be created, while simultaneously recognising the "right to secession [...] for the Hungarian national minority in Northern Vojvodina". In their struggle against the Yugoslav state, the "Versailles system", and "imperialist peace treaties", which had left "about a third of the Albanian people under the rule of the Greater Serbian bourgeoisie", the party leaders called on "the working class to fully support the struggle of the divided and oppressed Albanian people for an independent and unified Albania".[29] Although the borders of this envisioned Albanian state were not clearly defined, its framework would certainly encompass "significant Albanian territories" on Yugoslav soil, i.e. areas predominantly inhabited by the Albanian population.[30]

As a legacy of the political principles of the Serbian Social Democratic Party, the position within the CPY remained that the territory acquired in the First Balkan War of 1912 did not belong to Serbia. The Yugoslav communists viewed this area as a "complicated mosaic of various national minorities and ethnic groups", among which the Albanian population was numerically dominant.[31] At the end of the 1920s, the leaders of the CPY advocated for the formation of a "free and independent Albania" as one of the eight "worker-peasant republics" to be established on the territory of Yugoslavia,[32] while simultaneously demanding the "expulsion of Serbian occupiers, Serbian troops, officials, gendarmes, and Serbian Chetniks[33] [...] from Kosovo".[34]

At the same time, among Yugoslav communists an awareness started to emerge about the existence of a unified region between the Kopaonik and Šar Mountains. This awareness was strengthened during the construction and consolidation of the CPY's organisations in the southern part of the country during the second half of the following decade. In early July 1937, it was adopted that "Kosovo and Metohija should – due to the specific position of the Albanian minority, terror, national extermination, and the confiscation of land from peasants[35] – represent a unified territory, as this area, by its national composition, economy, and all other attributes, forms a whole and should not live divided between Montenegro and Serbia".[36] However, at that time, the borders of this region were not clearly defined.[37]

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29 *Idem*, 153–154, 162–163.

30 *Idem*, 154, 182.

31 AJ, fond 507, Savez komunista Jugoslavije, CK Komunističke partije Jugoslavije, 1940/14–12.

32 AJ, KI, 1930/3.

33 It refers to the members of volunteer units who participated in the wars between 1912 and 1918.

34 AJ, KI, 1934/86.

35 One year earlier, the confiscation of land from the Albanians began on a larger scale, primarily in the border area with Albania. Thus, the agrarian issue became the most important problem for the Albanians, which further strengthened their anti-Yugoslav sentiment. [Zoran Janjetović, *Deca careva, pastorčad kraljeva: Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918–1941*, (Beograd: INIS, 2005), 331; Božica Slavković Mirić, *Političke, ekonomske i kulturne prilike na Kosovu i Metohiji 1929–1941* (Beograd: IP Prosveta; IP Princip, 2018), 235–254; Vladan Jovanović, *Vardarska banovina 1929–1941* (Beograd: INIS, 2011), 322–341].

36 Moma Marković, *Sazrevanje revolucije (Sećanja 1931–1941)* (Beograd: BIGZ, 1984), 102–103.

37 Pavle Jovićević i Mita Miljković, *Borba pećkih komunista između dva rata 1918–1941* (Peć: Opštinski odbor SUBNOR, 1981), 352.

With the territorial framework of the Kosovo-Metohija Party organisation insufficiently defined and the unresolved question of the further development of autonomy, there was a lack of a unified position from the CPY leadership regarding the administrative structure and the legal status of this region within the state in the period after the expected victory of the revolutionary forces and the change of government. All of those issues were pushed aside at the end of the 1930s "in the face of the danger threatening the independence of the people of Yugoslavia and the threat of Yugoslavia being drawn into war".[38] During the rise of fascist powers in Europe, it was far more important for communists to rebuild the party and strengthen its structures across the entire territory of Yugoslavia, especially in those areas where there had previously been no party organisation.[39] The mild indications of party organisations being strengthened in southern Yugoslavia were evident by the increase in the number of CPY members at the very end of the 1930s. As the war in Europe broke out at the end of the 1930s, the leadership of the CPY held that the "national question of Kosovo" was "essentially [...] the issue of the local Albanians".[40]

Yugoslav communists and the Albanian question during World War II 1941–1945

The disintegration of the Yugoslav state in the conflict with the Axis Powers during the brief April War of 1941, and the establishment of the occupation regimes in the spring of the same year, significantly weakened the CPY, especially in the southern regions of the country, where there were no strong party organisations. During the second half of the same year, there were only 150 members of the CPY across the entire territory of the Kosovo-Metohija District Committee, mostly Serbs. The process of rebuilding the CPY began at the end of 1941, with the simultaneous acceptance of new members.[41] The new membership, however, was "young and inexperienced". The weaknesses of this method of replenishing the ranks of the CPY became evident as early as the following year, when the number of party members significantly declined.[42]

For the Kosovo-Metohija regional Party leadership, the fundamental problem was the extremely weak response of the "Albanian youth", whose attitude towards the national liberation forces did not differ from the general mood of the Albanian population.[43] The establishment of "Greater Albania" under the Italian protectorate, which, in addition to "Old Albania",[44] encompassed significant areas of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, awakened hope among Albanians for the accomplishment of the dream of uniting all Albanian population within a unified "ethnic Albania". In stark contrast, the CPY's

38 *Izvori za istoriju SKJ. Peta zemaljska konferencija KPJ*, 235.

39 *Idem*, 32.

40 AJ, 507, CK KPJ, 1940/14–12.

41 Pavle Jovićević, „Politička situacija i rad partijske organizacije na Kosovu i u Metohiji pred rat i u 1941. godini", u: *Ustanak naroda Jugoslavije 1941. Zbornik*, knj. 2 (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački zavod JNA „Vojno delo", 1963), 235.

42 AJ, fond 792, Dokumenti centralnih, pokrajinskih i nižih organa KPJ i SKOJ, Srbija, II/202, prilog br. 1: Sastav OK Kosmeta – biroa i plenuma – od V zemaljske konferencije do oslobođenja, 1–5.

43 A. Hadri, *n. d.*, 345.

44 It refers to the territory of the Albanian state from 1912.

national policy was guided by the goal of re-establishing the Yugoslav state on the foundations of "brotherhood and unity" among its peoples. As during the interwar period, the majority of Albanians remained permanently distrustful of a political party that carried a Yugoslav designation in its name and whose organisational structures in the southern occupied regions of the country were predominantly filled with Serbian cadres. The calls issued by the CPY for the Albanian population to join the fight against the occupiers produced almost no results. For the same purpose, in some regions separate Albanian communist organisations were created, operating in parallel to the already existing party structures.[45] Only after the capitulation of Italy, in early September 1943, did a smaller number of Albanians join the national liberation forces under the leadership of the CPY.[46] At that time, there were just over 400 members of the Party in the Kosovo and Metohija region, of which only 45 were Albanians.[47]

The strength of the party structures in the southern parts of occupied Yugoslavia determined the dynamics of the development of partisan units and the national liberation movement in this area. All brigades formed under the auspices of the CPY's Kosovo and Metohija Regional Committee were established only in the second half of 1944, and even those were in the territories outside the jurisdiction of this party organisation. The majority of their members were Serbian fighters.[48] In such circumstances, the leadership of the CPY did not address the Albanian question in Yugoslavia, nor any other sensitive issue that could weaken the struggle of the national liberation forces. There was also no discussion about the specifics of the future internal organisation of the state. The only decision on this matter was made at the Second Session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (ACNLY), held in Jajce at the end of November 1943, where a principled decision was adopted to build Yugoslavia on a federal basis, thus guaranteeing full equality for its peoples.[49]

Contrary to the instructions of the CPY leadership, however, the communists in Kosovo and Metohija raised the issue of the future status of this region at the founding conference of the National Liberation Committee, held in the Bujan village in Albania between December 31, 1943, and January 2 of the following year. The text of the Resolution adopted at this conference emphasised that the entire territory of Kosovo and Metohija was "a region predominantly inhabited by the Albanian people, which wishes, as it always has, to unite with Albania". It was stressed that this could only be achieved through the joint struggle of the Albanian population with the other Yugoslav peoples against the occupiers, and that the Albanian question would be resolved by the Albanians themselves after the war, through self-determination and the right to secession.[50]

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45 Vlado A. Ivanovski, *Osloboditelnata vojna vo Zapadna Makedonija 1941–1944* (Skopje: Institut za nacionalna istorija, 1973), 103–104; A. Hadri, *n. d.*, 158.

46 AJ, 792, Srbija, II/674, 3.

47 *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavije*, tom I, knj. 19 (Beograd: Vojnoistorijski institut, 1969), 419.

48 Petar Brajović, „Kosovsko-metohijske brigade", *Vojna enciklopedija*, tom 4 (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1972[2]), 662–663.

49 *Prvo i Drugo zasedanje Antifašističkog veća narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije (26. i 27. novembra 1942; 29. i 30. novembra 1943): Po stenografskim beleškama i drugim izvorima* (Beograd: Prezidijum Narodne skupštine FNRJ, 1953), 288, 293–294.

50 AJ, CK KPJ, 507–1944/22, Rezolucija sa I Konferencije Narodno-oslobodilačkog Odbora Kosova i Metohije.

The Resolution of the National Liberation Committee of Kosovo and Metohija contradicted the decisions of the ACNLY regarding the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Yugoslav state. Therefore, in March 1943, the leadership of the CPY once again reminded the communists in Kosovo and Metohija that their most important task should be the fight against the occupiers, and that all other issues, including the Albanian question, would be resolved after the war.[51] In the middle of the same year, the leadership of the CPY adopted the opinion on the formation of a unified autonomous region in the area of Kosovo and Metohija.[52] During an informal conversation, Josip Broz Tito, Edvard Kardelj, and Vladimir Bakarić agreed that, "for the sake of the stability of the first post-war period", there could be "no border adjustments" nor "the possibility of Albania joining the Yugoslav federation at that time". Thus, "the issue of the division of Albanians into those living in Albania and those living in Yugoslavia" was "postponed", but it was established that Albanians in the area of Kosovo and Metohija "must have autonomy".[53] The issue of the rights of the Albanian population in other regions of Yugoslavia was not addressed.

The Albanian question during the establishment of the communist regime in Yugoslavia 1944–1945

The advance of the units of the Red Army from Romania and Bulgaria towards the southwest in the late summer and early autumn of 1944, as well as the landing of the British forces on the Greek islands, signalled the imminent collapse of the Wehrmacht in the Balkans.[54] The withdrawal of the German Army Group E from Greece towards the north, which began in September of the same year, was further complicated by the merger of the forces of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army (YPLA) and the Red Army in the middle of the following month.[55] Further retreat of the German units was only possible through the valleys of the Vardar and the Ibar rivers towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, and then towards Austria.[56]

The last German units left the territory of Macedonia by November 13, 1944. Their withdrawal was protected by around 12,000 determined and well-armed Albanians, who resisted the Yugoslav army while simultaneously maintaining control over Kičevo, Gostivar, and Tetovo.[57] A few days later, the forces of the YPLA completely took

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51 AJ, 507, CK KPJ, 1944/117.

52 Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josip Broza Tita*, tom III (Beograd: Rad, 1984), 168–170.

53 AJ, CK SKJ, Izvršni komitet CK SKJ (III), 507-III–K.2/2, Stenografske beleške sa Proširene sednice Biroa Predsedništva CK SKJ održane 31. oktobra 1968, 38.

54 Piter Kalvokorezi i Gaj Vint, *Totalni rat* (Beograd: Rad, 1987), 389–392.

55 *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavije*, tom XII, knj. 4 (Beograd: Vojnoistorijski institut 1979), 1139–1168.

56 *Završne operacije za oslobođenje Jugoslavije 1944–1945*, urednik Velimir Terzić (Beograd: Vojni istorijski institut Jugoslovenske narodne armije, 1957), 17–112; Венцеслав Глишић и Гојко Миљанић, *Руковођење Народноослободилачком борбом у Србији 1941–1945* (Београд: ИСИ, 1994), 237–289; Branko Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939–1945* (Beograd: VINC, 1992), 642–650.

57 *Završne operacije za oslobođenje Jugoslavije 1944–1945*, 184–185; *Oslobodilački rat naroda Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, knj. 2 (Beograd: Vojnoistorijski institut, 1965[2]), 369–372; Rade Gogov, „Aktivnost 8 (makedonske) divizije KNOJ-a na obezbeđenju oslobođene teritorije Makedonije", u: *Za*

control of the territory of Macedonia, capturing around 13,000 Albanians.[58] In the same way, the Albanians supported the German units in Kosovo and Metohija, which were retreating towards the northwest during October.[59] In the second half of November, the mentioned area was placed under the control of the YPLA, but by the end of the same month, there was widespread hiding of weapons in Albanian villages, the flight of Albanians to avoid mobilisation, and desertion of Albanians from the Yugoslav army. All of this indicated the outbreak of a rebellion against the Yugoslav regime.[60]

The scale and intensity of the actions of the Albanian rebels, which broke out in the winter of 1944, affecting large areas of Kosovo and Metohija and northwestern Macedonia, testified to the deep divide between the Albanian population and the new Yugoslav authorities. By early February 1945, after two months of fighting, Military Administration was imposed in Kosovo and Metohija, and in order to suppress the actions of the Albanian rebels, just under 40,000 members of the Yugoslav security forces were engaged. The main force of the rebellion was crushed by the end of the spring of the same year, although smaller-scale rebel actions continued until the early 1950s.[61] In the period between December 1944 and the first half of March 1945, according to subsequent research, 650 members of the Yugoslav forces were killed, around 1,360 were wounded, and 1,256 went missing.[62] Archival documents from the work of the Yugoslav State Security Service show that the number of armed

pobedu i slobodu. Završne operacije za oslobođenje Jugoslavije. Učesnici govore, naučni skup 23. i 24. april 1985 (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1986), 614.

58 *Završne operacije za oslobođenje Jugoslavije 1944–1945*, 189; Bora Mitrovski, *Petnaesti (makedonski) udarni korpus NOVJ* (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1983), 251–270.

59 *Završne operacije za oslobođenje Jugoslavije 1944–1945*, 196–202; *Oslobodilački rat naroda Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, 374–377; *Kosovska Mitrovica i okolina* (Priština–Beograd–Kosovska Mitrovica: Institut za istoriju Kosova–Institut za savremenu istoriju–Odbor za izdavanje monografija, 1979), 404–413; Milutin Miljković, *Prva kosovsko-metohijska brigada* (Beograd: VINC, 1991), 192–261; Vojislav Nikčević, *Peta kosovsko-metohijska brigada* (Beograd: VINC, 1989), 53–74; A. Hadri, *n. d.*, 375–386; Branislav Božović i Milorad Vavić, *Surova vremena na Kosovu i Metohiji: Kvislinzi i kolaboracija u Drugom svetskom ratu* (Beograd: ISI, 1991), 460–477; Milorad Madić i Dušan Jončić, *Dvadesetpeta srpska brigada* (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1989), 103–127; Živojin Nikolić, *22. srpska divizija* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1972[2]), 348–371; Branko Bošković, *Narodnooslobodilačka borba u ibarskom bazenu (kosovsko-mitrovački i studenički srez)* (Priština: Zajednica naučnih ustanova Kosova i Metohije, 1968), 309–320; Mirko Ćuković, *Sandžak* (Beograd: Nolit, 1964), 521–547; Branislav Božović i drugi, *Partizanski odredi: Kopaonički, Šaljski, Ibarski* (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1981), 314–329, 511–536; Gojko Medenica, *Kosovsko-metohijski proleteri: Prva kosovsko-metohijska narodnooslobodilačka udarna brigada* (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1986), 127–133; Sekula Joksimović, „Oslobođenje Kosova (oktobar–novembar 1944)", *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, br. 1, (1975), 67–107.

60 Vojni arhiv, fond Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije, kutija 184, fascikla 29, dokument broj 30/1; 31/1; 32/1; 34/1; 37/1; 39/1; 45/1; 46/1; 47/1.

61 Rajko Vidačić, *Obračuni sa balistima 1944–1952* (Beograd: Stručna knjiga, 1990), 41–43; M. Madić, D. Jončić, *n. d.*, 182–183; Spasoje Đaković, *Sukobi na Kosovu* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1984), 244–252; B. Božović, M. Vavić, *n. d.*, 491–504; Pavle Dželetović Ivanov, *Balistički pokret 1939–1952: Masovnost, saradnja sa italijanskim i nemačkim okupatorima i zločini nad Srbima* (Beograd: Arhiv Srbije, 2000), 265–272.

62 Dmitar Tasić, *Korpus narodne odbrane Jugoslavije (KNOJ) 1944–1953* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2021), 162–163; Savo Drljević, „Kontrarevolucija na Kosovu i Metohiji – zavođenje vojne uprave februara 1945. godine", *Istorijski zapisi*, br. 4, (1986), 195.

Albanian rebels reached 16,000, and that around 3,000 Albanians lost their lives in armed conflicts.[63] In contrast to that, some authors estimate that during the six-month operation of suppressing the rebellion by the Yugoslav forces, 48,000 Albanians were killed in the southern part of Yugoslavia.[64]

The strength and perseverance of the Albanian rebels relied on the support of the majority of the Albanian population in the southern part of the country. Locals provided the rebels with food, medical supplies, and other necessities, hid them in dugouts, passed on information about the deployment and movements of Yugoslav security forces, gave false information to the Yugoslav authorities, and offered sporadic resistance during village searches. In such circumstances, the Yugoslav regime sought to pacify the rebelled region and integrate the Albanian minority into Yugoslav society.[65]

The national and cultural policy of the Yugoslav authorities toward the Albanian minority

The policy of the Yugoslav state leadership towards the Albanian population during the first post-war year was rooted in the general stance of the CPY leadership, according to which the "democracy of the people's government" was directly reflected "in resolving the issue of minorities".[66] However, the thus envisioned national policy faced opposition in practice due to difficulties in inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations in the southern part of the country. In this regard, the leaders of the CPY emphasised that the principle of "brotherhood and unity" had been only partially achieved, and that there was "still great hatred, intolerance, and a readiness for mutual confrontation".[67] The leadership of the CPY saw the cause of Albanian distrust towards the Yugoslav authorities in the "backwardness of the Albanian masses", who, due to their strong "religious and national ties with their reactionary forces", were not familiar with "the essence and the goals of the National Liberation Movement".[68] On the other hand, there was dissatisfaction among the Serbian population caused by the suppression of the fact that there was mass collaboration of Albanians during the war and by the inclusion of former Albanian rebels in the structures of the "people's government". The CPY leadership saw this sentiment among the Serbs as chauvinism, which "manifested in a desire for revenge".[69]

In line with the pre-war principles of the CPY's political program, the leadership of the Yugoslav communists persistently assured the Albanians that there would be "no reverting back to the old ways" in the "new Yugoslavia", and that the position

63 AJ, CK SKJ, Komisija za nacionalne manjine (XVIII), 507-XVIII–K.4/1, Referat o šiptarskoj nacionalnoj manjini. UDB-a za Kosmet, 4.

64 Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 143.

65 B. Božović i M. Vavić, *n. d.*, 481–531; Đorđe Borozan, *Velika Albanija: porijeklo – ideje – praksa* (Beograd: Vojnoistorijski institut Vojske Jugoslavije, 1995), 494–507.

66 AJ, fond 313, Ministarstvo prosvete Vlade FNRJ, fascikla 5, arh. jed. 11.

67 *Osnivački kongres KP Srbije (8–12. maj 1945)*, priredili Milan Borković i Venceslav Glišić (Beograd: Institut za istoriju radničkog pokreta, 1972), 75.

68 AJ, CK SKJ, 507-XVIII–K.4/3, Albanska nacionalna manjina u Jugoslaviji, 14.

69 *Osnivački kongres KP Srbije*, 43, 55.

of the Albanian minority would be based on the principles of national equality, primarily expressed in terms of national, political, and cultural emancipation of the Albanian population.[70] This was also guaranteed by the new Yugoslav Constitution, proclaimed on January 31, 1946, which emphasised that national minorities must enjoy "the right and protection of their cultural development and the free use of their language".[71] Alongside the establishment of the first organs of the "people's government" in the southern part of Yugoslavia at the end of 1944 and the beginning of the following year, the Albanian population was granted the use of Albanian national symbols and the Albanian language in official communication.[72] At the same time, a process of mass inclusion of Albanian cadres into the CPY organisations and state government structures was underway.[73] Implemented abruptly and unsystematically, this process led to numerous difficulties in the functioning of state organs and institutions, as a significant number of uneducated, inexperienced, and disloyal individuals were among the newly appointed cadres, including those who were later found to have collaborated with the occupiers during the war. Among them were those who committed crimes against the non-Albanian civilian population.[74]

The collection of witness statements and other evidence related to war crimes was conducted by the State Commission for the Establishment of the Crimes of Occupiers and Their Collaborators, which was founded on November 30, 1943. However, in the southern part of the country, this process began much later, only in mid-1945. During the summer and the early autumn, the lower-level commissions submitted the collected data, but the State Commission assessed them as incomplete. As a result, at the end of January 1946, the State Commission instructed its lower bodies to regather all statistical data.[75] According to the new data collected by the end of April that same year, Albanians in the region of Kosovo and Metohija killed 5,722 civilians during the war,[76] 1,177 in other parts of federal Serbia,[77] 959 in Montenegro,[78] and 885 in Macedonia.[79] In Yugoslav and Serbian contemporary historiography, the reliability of the collected data has often been questioned, especially in the region of Kosovo and

70 „Delegacija Šiptara sa Kosova i Metohije posetila je maršala Tita", *Borba*, br. 85, 7. 4. 1945, 2; „Poseta delegacije sa Kosmeta maršalu Titu", *Jedinstvo*, br. 6, 30. april 1945, 3.

71 *Službeni list FNRJ*, 10/1946.

72 „Deklaracija Narodne vlade federalne Makedonije", *Politika*, br. 11963, 26. april 1945, 3; *Rad Skupštine Crne Gore 1945–1950*, priredili Čedomir Popović i Nevenka Ilić (Titograd: Skupština Socijalističke Republike Crne Gore, 1986), 38; „Govor pretsednika Vlade Blaža Jovanovića", *Pobjeda*, br. 23, 22. april 1945, 6.

73 Branko Petranović, *Političke i pravne prilike za vreme Privremene vlade DFJ* (Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka, 1964), 135–145; Branko Petranović, *Politička i ekonomska osnova narodne vlasti u Jugoslaviji za vreme obnove* (Beograd: ISI, 1969), 42; AJ, 507-XVIII–K.4/13, Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji, 2.

74 *Antifašističko sobranie na narodnoto osloboduvanje na Makedonija*, tom I, kn. 6: Dokumenti (Skopje: Državen arhiv na Republika Makedonija, 2001), dok. br. 16: Izvestuvanje na Jordan Blaževski, člen na ASNOM, do Prezidiumot na ASNOM, od 7 dekemvri 1944 god. za sostojbata so golemoalbanskata reakcija vo Tetovo, 81.

75 AJ, fond 110, Državna komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača, 49–99.

76 The table was compiled based on data from: AJ, 110–72–126.

77 AJ, 110–62–116.

78 AJ, 110–50–101.

79 AJ, 110–50–103.

Metohija, where, according to modern historical research, around 10,000 civilians were killed.[80] During the first post-war years, the leadership of the CPY did not insist on addressing the issue of collaboration and crimes committed by Albanians, aiming to suppress the Albanian uprising and integrate the Albanian minority into Yugoslav society.

In addition to national and political emancipation the process of integrating the Albanian minority after the fall of 1944 involved the implementation of cultural emancipation for the Albanians. This was an integral part of the cultural policy of the CPY, which directly resulted from the Party program for the overall transformation of society, the economic and industrial reconstruction of the country, and "general national progress". The main goal of the CPY's cultural policy was to overcome inherited cultural backwardness and to radically democratise culture, raising the cultural and educational level of the "working class", creating new forms and introducing new content into the process of educating the youth.[81]

In terms of the implementation of cultural policies by the Yugoslav authorities towards the Albanian minority during the first post-war years, a significant aspect was the process of mass literacy campaign and the establishment of schools with curricula in the Albanian language. This was particularly important because in the region of Kosovo and Metohija, which was the core area of the Albanian minority, less than 10% of Albanians were literate at that time.[82] However, the absence of traditions and experience in the work of cultural-educational institutions, widespread backwardness, unfavorable material conditions, and a high illiteracy rate, all significantly hindered the efforts of cultural and educational institutions. Among the members of the Albanian minority, there were significantly fewer teachers than among the Serbs. In addition, "many Albanians opposed sending their children to school, especially girls, so the people's government had to resort to punishing certain individuals", while also issuing appeals to the Albanian minority "through party organisations and conferences".[83]

At the center of the cultural and educational policy of the Yugoslav authorities towards the Albanian and other minorities after World War II was the education of children. In accordance with the decisions adopted at the Second Session of the ACNLY in late November 1943, the new state community guaranteed "all nationalities" the right to education with instruction in their native language. The Yugoslav Ministry of Education, in the spirit of the "democratisation of the school system", emphasised that schools should be opened "wherever minorities live", not

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80 Nenad Antonijević, *Albanski zločini nad Srbima na Kosovu i Metohiji u Drugom svetskom ratu – dokumenta* (Beograd: Muzej žrtava genocida, 2009[2]), 27; Nenad Antonijević, *Kosovo i Metohija 1941–1945. godina – ratni zločini* (Beograd: Muzej žrtava genocida, 2017), 469; Dželetović Ivanov, *Balistički pokret 1939–1952*, 75; B. Božović, M. Vavić, *n. d.*, 399–403; Ljubodrag Dimić, *Srbi i Jugoslavija: Prostor, društvo, politika (Pogleda s kraja veka)* (Beograd: Stubovi kulture, 1998), 153–154; Dušan T. Bataković, *Serbia's Kosovo Drama: a historical perspective* (Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2012), 97–98; *Kosovo i Metohija u srpskoj istoriji* (Beograd: SKZ, 1989), 314, 413.

81 Ljubodrag Dimić, *Agitprop kultura: Agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945–1952* (Beograd: Rad, 1988), 19; B. Petranović, *Politička i ekonomska osnova narodne vlasti u Jugoslaviji za vreme obnove*, 379–380.

82 *Osnivački kongres KP Srbije*, 44, 204, 217, 223.

83 AJ, 507–XVIII–K.4/2, Istorijat šiptarske nacionalne manjine u Narodnoj republici Crnoj Gori: Šiptarska nacionalna manjina u srezu barskom, 9.

only at the request of the minorities themselves but also on the initiative of "the people's authorities".[84]

In August 1945, it was decided that new state minority schools would be opened "wherever needed", provided that there were at least 20 regular students and there was no other school in the locality. Otherwise, if there was "any primary school" with at least 30 students, a "minority department" should be formed within it. It was also stipulated that teachers in minority schools had to be Yugoslav citizens and "always, without exception, members of the respective minority", although initially, the employment of foreign nationals as teachers was allowed. The language of the instruction in all minority schools was to be "the native language of the respective minority", and students attended classes in the official language of their federal unit three times a week from the third grade onward. The Serbo-Croatian language was compulsory only in secondary schools. Textbooks were printed in Yugoslavia, while the import of books from neighbouring countries was allowed only with the permission and oversight of Yugoslav educational authorities.[85]

By the first half of 1945, minority schools with instruction in Albanian language existed in all cities in Kosovo and Metohija, although there were "very few" of them in the villages.[86] By the beginning of the summer of the same year, additional 67 primary schools were opened, so by the end of the 1944/1945 school year, there were a total of 135 Albanian schools and 143 Serbian schools in Kosovo and Metohija.[87] Most of the aforementioned Albanian "schools" were actually departments with instruction in the Albanian language within Serbian schools. The fact that "there were more Serbs than Albanians in the schools" was seen by the regional educational authorities as an "anomaly" and "a serious problem that our government must address".[88] By the end of the 1945/1946 school year, there were 423 primary schools in the region with 755 departments.[89]

In the rest of the federal state of Serbia, in areas inhabited by the Albanian minority, there were no primary schools with instruction in Albanian language during the 1944/1945 school year. Some archival sources suggest that by the start of the next school year, 1945/1946, three Albanian schools were opened in Preševo and its surroundings, while by the end of December 1945, there were 10 Albanian schools operating in this region.[90]

In the southeast of Montenegro, six Albanian schools were opened during the winter of 1944, but only three of them were operational due to a lack of teachers.

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84 AJ, 313–5–11, Manjinske škole.

85 AJ, 313–5–11, Manjinske škole; Okvirni nastavni program srpsko-hrvatskog jezika za manjinske škole u Demokratskoj Federativnoj Jugoslaviji; Okvirni nastavni plan i program za osnovne škole Demokratske Federativne Jugoslavije.

86 *Osnivački kongres KPS*, 223.

87 AJ, 313–5–11, Statistika manjinskih škola za 1944/1945. godinu.

88 *Narodni odbor Autonomne Kosovsko-metohijske oblasti 1943–1953* (Priština: Narodni odbor Autonomne Kosovsko-metohijske oblasti, 1955), 20.

89 *Školstvo u FNR Jugoslaviji od školske 1945–1946. do 1950–51. godine* (Beograd: Savet za nauku i kulturu Vlade FNRJ), 66.

90 AJ, 313–5–11, Pismo Ministarstva prosvete Srbije upućeno Ministarstvu prosvete DFJ, 10. novembar 1945; AJ, 313–4–7, Izveštaj Odeljenja za školstvo za decembar 1945, Prilozi, tabela br. 3.

Shortly thereafter, an additional eight schools with instruction in the Albanian language were opened in the Podgorica, Bar, and Andrijevica districts.[91]

The network of schools and other educational institutions was the least developed in the region of Macedonia.[92] During the first half of 1945, 41 schools with curriculum in the Albanian language were operating in Debar, Gostivar, Tetovo, Skopje, Kumanovo, Bitola, Ohrid, Struga, and Resen.[93] There were no significant changes at the beginning of the next school year, so by mid-October 1945, there were 50 Albanian schools operating in Macedonia.[94] A larger number of Albanian schools were opened by the end of autumn of the same year. By December 1945, there were 163 primary schools with instruction in Albanian language in the territory of Macedonia.[95] By the end of the 1945/1946 school year, there were a total of 298 primary Albanian schools with 565 departments in Yugoslavia.[96]

The agrarian issue and the Albanian minority

The Yugoslav educational authorities believed that among the Albanians there was no "will for science and school".[97] For the majority of the Albanian population, the agrarian issue was far more significant. The leadership of the CPY viewed this problem in the same light, believing that the revision of the agrarian policies of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia would create the conditions for a fundamental connection between the state and the "Albanian masses". It became clear that there would be no "reverting back to the old ways" in early March 1945, when former colonists, the majority of which consisting of the Serbs who had fled or had been expelled during the occupation from the area of Kosovo and Metohija and Macedonia to Montenegro and central Serbia, were prohibited from returning to their previous places of residence.[98] At that time, there were already around 4,600 former colonists in Kosovo and Metohija who had returned on their own initiative from Montenegro after the withdrawal of the German army, awaiting a decision from the Yugoslav authorities regarding their future status.[99]

The resolution of this issue became possible after the adoption of the Law on the Revision of Land Allocation to Colonists and Agrarian Interests in Macedonia and the Kosovo-Metohija region on August 3, 1945,[100] and the Law on Agrarian Reform and

91 AJ, 313–5–11, Statistika manjinskih škola za 1944/1945. godinu; Pregled razvoja manjinskog pitanja na teritoriji Jugoslavije, 11–14; AJ, 313–4–7, Izveštaj Odeljenja za školstvo za decembar 1945, 2.

92 *Školstvo u FNR Jugoslaviji*, 19.

93 AJ, 313–5–11, Statistika manjinskih škola za 1944/1945. godinu; Pregled razvoja manjinskog pitanja na teritoriji Jugoslavije, 11–14; „Makedonska komisija nalazi se u Tirani", *Borba*, br. 43, 18. 2. 1945, 3.

94 I. T., „Uspeh narodne vlasti na kulturno-prosvetnom uzdizanju Makedonije", *Borba*, br. 253, 18. 10. 1945, 4.

95 AJ, 313–4–7, Izveštaj Odeljenja za školstvo za decembar 1945, Prilozi, tabela br. 3.

96 AJ, 313–5–11, Referat o iseljeničkim i manjinskim školama, 3.

97 AJ, 317–48–71, Izveštaj o prosvetnim prilikama na Kosovu i Metohiji, 2.

98 *Službeni list DFJ*, 13/1945.

99 B. Petranović, *Politička i ekonomska osnova narodne vlasti u Jugoslaviji za vreme obnove*, 401; Nikola L. Gaćeša, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Jugoslaviji 1945–1948* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1984), 162.

100 *Službeni list DFJ*, 56/1945.

Colonisation on August 23, 1945.[101] According to the estimate of the Yugoslav Ministry of Social Policy, in the autumn of 1945, there were between 40,000 and 50,000 former Serbian colonists in Kosovo and Metohija.[102] By the end of January of the following year, a total of 5,010 hectares of land had been allocated to Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija.[103] According to official data from the Yugoslav authorities, of the total 52,294 colonists who were in this area at the end of 1939,[104] about 37% did not return to their properties. In the academic literature, estimates of the number of permanently displaced Serbian families from the group of Serbian colonists range between 4,725 and 11,000. The majority of them were granted permission to relocate to Vojvodina.[105]

The sharp decline in the proportion of the Slavic element in southern Yugoslavia was further emphasised by the influx of population from Albania during the war, and their presence after the fall of 1944 was accepted as an accomplished fact in the process of demographic changes in the region. Although archival sources do not provide an answer to the question of how many Albanians moved to Yugoslav territory in this way, Serbian historiography estimates that the number ranges from at least 15,000 to as many as 300,000 individuals.[106] In foreign, primarily Western literature, it is most commonly stated that there were 70,000 immigrants from northern and other regions of Albania.[107] In contrast, contemporary Albanian historiography denies this process.[108] The new Yugoslav authorities did not raise the issue of the return of immigrants from Albania either in 1945 or in the later period, which allowed for their assimilation into the Yugoslav state. The Law on Citizenship of the Democratic Federal

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101 *Idem*, 64/1945.

102 AJ, Fond 97, Komisija za agrarnu reformu i kolonizaciju, 3–33, Dopis Ministarstva socijalne politike DFJ upućen Ministarstvu kolonizacije DFJ, 21. oktobar 1945, 3.

103 N. Gaćeša, *n. d.*, 169.

104 Due to the lack of reliable archival sources, the issue of interwar colonisation in Yugoslavia has not been fully researched, nor is it possible to determine the total number of colonists settled in the area of "Southern Serbia". According to estimates by the Ministry of Colonisation of the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia, it is estimated that there were 20,000 families. [AJ, 97–2–20, Sadanje stanje i problemi zemljoposeda i poljoprivrede i preduzete mere za obnovu i unapređivanja]. The 1939 population census of the Vardar Banovina established that the number of interwar colonists in Kosovo and Metohija amounted to 52,294. According to the data from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 17,607 families, or 87,743 people, were settled in the southern regions of the country. Meanwhile, Jovan Trifunovski states that there were slightly over 6,000 households with about 40,000 members in Macedonia alone. [V. Jovanović, *n. d.*, 44, 101]. Nikola Gaćeša established that, on the territory of the future Kosovo-Metohija region, a total of 10,714 settler families were settled before World War II. [N. Gaćeša, *n. d.*, 162].

105 B. Božović, M. Vavić, *n. d.*, 572; Aleksandar Životić, *Jugoslavija, Albanija i velike sile (1945–1961)* (Beograd: Arhipelag; INIS, 2011), 123.

106 B. Petranović, *Jugoslovensko iskustvo srpske nacionalne integracije*, 109; A. Životić, *n. d.*, 123, nap. br. 289; Predrag Živančević, *Emigranti: Naseljavanje Kosova i Metohije iz Albanije* (Beograd: Eksportpres, 1989), 23–50; Vuksan Cerović, *Kosovo: Kontrarevolucija koja teče* (Beograd: Nova knjiga, 1989), 117, 122; Momčilo Pavlović, „Srbi na kraju Drugog svetskog rata", *Istorija 20. veka*, br. 1–2, (1993), 161. According to research by Branislav Đurđević, in 1948, there were 44,837 people born abroad in Kosovo and Metohija, who can be confidently said to have been predominantly of Albanian nationality, meaning they had migrated from Albania. [Branislav S. Đurđev, *Posleratno naseljavanje Vojvodine. Metodi i rezultati demografske analize naseljavanja Vojvodine u periodu 1945–1981* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1995), 41].

107 M. Vickers, *op. cit.*, 123.

108 Julie Vullnetari, *Albanian migration and development: state of the art review* (Amsterdam: IMISCOE, 2007), 8–30.

Yugoslavia, published on August 28, 1945, stipulated that "any foreign national" who had reached the age of 18 could obtain Yugoslav citizenship if they had "resided continuously in the territory of Yugoslavia for at least 5 years before applying".[109] In this way, the Albanian immigrants who settled in the southern part of Yugoslavia after the April 1941 war were able to become full-fledged Yugoslav citizens as early as mid-1946.

Establishing the Autonomous Region of Kosovo and Metohija

The establishment of administrative borders among the future Yugoslav federal units was one of the most significant issues in the process of creating a new sociopolitical system in Yugoslavia and building the state itself during the first half of 1945. Due to the complexity of the Serbian question, Serbia was the last Yugoslav province to be integrated into the new Yugoslav community in terms of its legal and state status. During the winter of 1944/1945, the status of Vojvodina, Sandžak, and Kosovo and Metohija was still not clearly defined.[110]

The inclusion of Vojvodina to the federal state of Serbia, announced in November 1945, was carried out during the second half of the following summer.[111] At the same time, the issue of Sandžak was resolved by incorporating the largest part of the region into the federal state of Serbia.[112] The future status of the Kosovo and Metohija region was discussed during the winter and spring of 1945 within a narrow circle of the CPY leadership. Proposals for dividing this territory between the federal units of Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the idea of handing the entire area over to Albania, were rejected. Instead, the leadership adopted the view of creating an autonomous region.[113] At the Regional People's Assembly of Kosovo and Metohija, held between July 8 and 10, 1945, a resolution was adopted on the inclusion of this region into the federal state of Serbia.[114] This decision was legally confirmed on September 1 of the same year, when the Law on the Administrative Division of Serbia was adopted,

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109 *Službeni list DFJ*, 64/1945.

110 Ljubodrag Dimić, *Srbija u Jugoslaviji* (Novi Sad: SANU Ogranak u Novom Sadu; „Beseda" izdavačka ustanova pravoslavne Eparhije bačke; Društvo istoričara Južnobačkog i Sremskog okruga, 2001), 284–288.

111 *Zasedanja Antifašističke skupštine narodnog oslobođenja Srbije i Narodne skupštine Srbije (7–9. april 1945. i 26–27. jul 1946.)* (Beograd: Prezidijum Narodne skupštine Narodne republike Srbije, 1946), 9–11; *AVNOJ i Revolucija: Tematska zbirka dokumenata*, priredili Slobodan Nešović i Branko Petranović (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1983), dok.: Zapisnik plenarne sednice Glavnog narodnooslobodilačkog odbora Vojvodine, Novi Sad, 6. april 1945, 730–732. The Law on the Establishment and Organisation of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina was adopted on September 1, 1945 [*Službeni glasnik Srbije*, 28/1945].

112 *Zasedanja ASNOS i NSS*, 5–9.

113 Branko Horvat, *Kosovsko pitanje* (Zagreb: Globus, 1989), 86; Igor Vukadinović, *Autonomija Kosova i Metohije u Srbiji (1945–1969)* (Beograd: Balkanološki institut SANU, 2021), 139–289; *Jugoslovenski federalizam: ideje i stvarnost. Tematska zbirka dokumenata*, priredili Branko Petranović i Momčilo Zečević, knj. 2 (Beograd: Beogradski izdavačko-grafički zavod, 1897), dok.: Kritičke reakcije Milana Grola na federalni status Crne Gore i Makedonije, 203, nap. br. 19; Zoran Lakić, „Položaj Kosova i Metohije u sastavu Jugoslavije", u: *Kosovo i Metohija: prošlost, sadašnjost, budućnost. Zbornik radova sa međunarodnog naučnog skupa održanog u Beogradu 16–18. marta 2006. godine*, urednik akademik Kosta Mihailović (Beograd: SANU, 2007), 113.

114 *Narodni odbor AKMO*, 37.

stating that the Autonomous Region of Kosovo and Metohija (ARKM) was an integral part of the federal state of Serbia.[115]

The formation of the ARKM represented a completely new reality on the political map of Yugoslavia, with no reliance on previous experiences in administrative organisation or interstate territorial demarcation in that area. The party leadership insisted on the uniqueness of the entire region as a unified and indivisible space, despite its heterogeneous nature in cultural, ethnographic, economic, and geographical terms. Contrary to the reports in the Yugoslav press, the borders of the ARKM did not represent an expression of the "people's will", as there were no field survey commissions or referendums on this matter, nor were they established based on the principle of national demarcation. The very idea of creating the ARKM was based on the Yugoslav communists' belief, established during the interwar period, that the Albanian population in Kosovo and Metohija should be granted full autonomy. In that way, the Albanian question was reduced to the "Kosovo question", despite the presence of a significant number of Albanians outside that area. In other regions of Yugoslavia, the state and party leadership did not address the Albanian question, although such demands existed, particularly in the western parts of Macedonia.[116]

Conclusion

During the first decade of the existence of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, its leadership was primarily focused on addressing the issues in the western parts of the newly formed Yugoslav state. The process of raising the Albanian question within the CPY began only at the end of the 1920s, as a result of the influence of the Comintern's anti-Yugoslav policy. In the following years, the CPY advocated for the disintegration of the Yugoslav state and the creation of an independent Albanian republic as well as other republics. This orientation was abandoned before the outbreak of World War II due to a sudden shift in the Comintern policy during the rise of fascist powers.

During World War II, contrary to the expectations of the leadership of the CPY, the majority of Albanians refused to join the fight against the Italian and German occupiers because they perceived them as liberators. As a result, the national liberation movement in the southern occupied regions of Yugoslavia developed much more slowly compared to the other parts of the country. Albanian leaders were not aligned with the CPY's slogans of "brotherhood and unity" of the Yugoslav peoples, nor with the idea of the restoration of the Yugoslav state within its pre-war borders.

During the war, as well as during the suppression of the actions of the Albanian rebels against the communist regime, which affected significant parts of Kosovo and Metohija and western Macedonia during the first half of 1945, the leadership of the

115 *Službeni glasnik Srbije*, 28/1945.

116 According to the 1948 census, outside the borders of the Autonomous Kosovo-Metohija Area, i.e., in the other regions of the People's Republic of Serbia, as well as in the People's Republic of Macedonia and the People's Republic of Montenegro, there were 250,000 Albanians. [*Konačni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 15. marta 1948. godine. Knjiga IX: stanovništvo po narodnosti* (Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1954), 301, 437–454]. There are indications that during this census, a certain number of Turks and "Muslims" in the southern Yugoslav regions were included in the Albanian national group. [Bogoljub Kočović, *Žrtve Drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji* (London: Veritas Foundation Press, 1985), 81–83, Dragoljub S. Petrović, *Konstituisanje federalne Srbije* (Beograd: Nova knjiga, 1988), 155–156].

CPY assured Albanians that the position of the Albanian minority in the new state would be based on the principles of national equality. By the end of 1944, the Albanian population in the southern part of the country was allowed to use national symbols and their native language in official communication. A mass recruitment of new Albanian cadres into the CPY structures, state services, and the units of the Yugoslav army was carried out. Significant efforts were made in terms of the cultural emancipation of the Albanian minority, particularly through the organisation of literacy courses and the opening of schools with curricula in the Albanian language. Additionally, a revision of the agrarian reform, implemented in the interwar period (1918–1941), was carried out, with a significant amount of arable land and forests allocated to Albanian peasants.

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YUGOSLAV COMMUNISTS AND THE ALBANIAN QUESTION IN YUGOSLAVIA 1918–1945

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Summary

Interest among the Yugoslav communists in the Albanian question within the Yugoslav state emerged at the end of the 1920s, several years after the founding of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. At that time the communists, who were focused on struggle against the Yugoslav regime, advocated for the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the formation of independent worker-peasant republics on its territory. Support was expressed for the Albanian demands for secession from Yugoslavia and the unification of the Albanian population with the Albanian state. However, this communist direction did not result in a mass influx of Albanians into the ranks of the CPY. This "gap" between Albanians and the communists became even larger before the start of the World War II, when the CPY adopted a stance of defending the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from attacks by the fascist countries. During the war, communists advocated for a change in the socio-political system by carrying out a socialist revolution, but they did not question the borders of the Yugoslav community. Such a policy was not close to a majority of the Albanian population, which welcomed the dissolution of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the establishment of occupation authorities, and the creation of a "Greater Albania" under the protection of Italy. The anti-Yugoslav sentiment among the Albanian population was further confirmed by the large-scale armed uprisings against the new Yugoslav authorities, which spread across significant areas in the south of Yugoslavia in the winter of 1944 and during the spring and summer of the following year. In the first post-war years, the new Yugoslav state leadership persistently assured the Albanians that in the "new Yugoslavia" there would be no "return to the old," guaranteeing national rights to the Albanian minority. In this regard, significant measures included the proclamation of the right to use the Albanian language in official communication, the right to education for Albanian children in their native language, the implementation of agrarian reform, as well as the realisation of political autonomy through the formation of the Autonomous Kosovo-Metohija Region.

KEYWORDS: Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Albanian question, Serbian-Albanian relations, Kosovo, Metohija, Macedonia, Montenegro

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