

KOSOVO AND METOHİJA: HISTORY, MEMORY, IDENTITY

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Kosovo Today: Embattled Province of Serbia

SERBIA'S troublesome province of Kosovo (officially Kosovo and Metohija), was first established as a distinct autonomous region within Serbia in 1945 by the Soviet-installed communist regime of J.B. Tito of the post-Second World War Yugoslav federation. Present-day Kosovo and Metohija is a rather small (10,887 sq km) but densely populated, fertile and mineral-rich area. An autonomous province within Serbia inhabited by Albanians and Serbs as the two main ethnic groups, the region has had a long and turbulent past. The Province consists of two distinct areas: Kosovo proper with Priština as its centre and Metohija, with Peć as its hub. A valley between Kosovska Mitrovica and Uroševac, Kosovo proper is eighty-four kilometers long and roughly fourteen kilometers wide. Since medieval times the Kosovo valley has been a densely populated area, an important crossroad of vital transport routes in the Western Balkans, linking the Adriatic Sea with the central and lower Danube basin. Kosovo is rich with both agricultural and mineral resources. The minerals found in Kosovo are approximately seventy percent of all mineral wealth of Serbia, whilst the coal mines (comprising mostly lignite) in northern and central Kosovo are even more important. These reserves of coal are worth dozens of billions of US dollars and they represent almost ninety percent of the overall coal reserves of Serbia.¹

The other area geographically separated from Kosovo by the hills of Drenica has been known for centuries as Metohija (4,684 sq km in area), renowned by splendid endowments of Serbian rulers and landlords. Known as Hvosno in the late medieval period, Metohija probably earned this name during the four centuries of Ottoman domination after 1459. Bordering northern Albania in the west, Metohija is a fertile agrarian flatland that stretches from the town of Istok and Peć to Djakovica and Velika Hoča, all the way to Prizren (the area known as *Prizrenski Podgor*) and its hinterland towards Albania and Macedonia known as Gora and Opolje. Within the larger area that

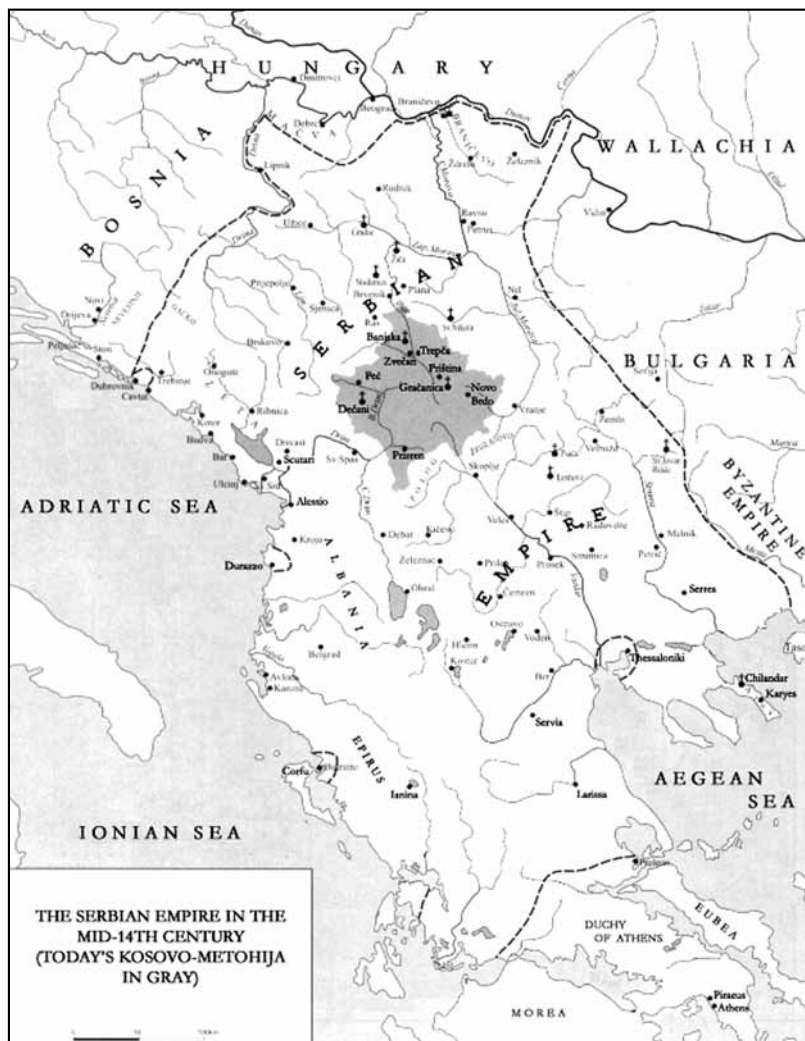
encompasses parts of neighboring northern Albania, Metohija is known to the Albanians as Dukagjin (or “Western Kosovo”). Metohija is about eighty kilometers long and over forty kilometers wide.² In 1968, supported by J. B. Tito, the lifetime dictator of communist Yugoslavia (1945–1980) within the context of further decentralization of the communist federation, the Albanian communist leadership of Kosovo succeeded in banning the name *Metohija*, perceived as excessively Serb and excessively for the desired political image of the Albanian-dominated Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo. In 1990, the term Metohija was reintroduced, as the official part of the name of the Province after its autonomy was limited and the province returned under the jurisdiction of Serbia. The Term Metohija, was eventually re-erased by the UN administration in June 1999. Thus, the whole area today is officially referred to as Kosovo.

Presently, Kosovo covers 10,887 square kilometers that is 12.3 percent of the total area of Serbia. The estimate of the Kosovo population in 1991 was as high as 1,954,747 inhabitants or 20.5 percent of the total population of Serbia.³ Legally a southern province of Serbia, since 1999 war and NATO bombing campaign Kosovo was placed under UN administration by 1244 UN Security Council Resolution. According to the international law Kosovo is a constituent part of Serbia, a successor of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, Kosovo was additionally torn apart by the unilateral proclamation of independence on 17 February 2008, orchestrated solely by the Albanian-dominated *Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG)* Kosovo. This unilateral proclamation of independence was firmly rejected as illegal and void by the Kosovo

¹ Atanasije Urošević, *Kosovo*, Serbian Ethnographic Collection, Monographs, vol. LXXVIII (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1965); Milovan Radovanović, *Kosovo and Metohija. Serbian and Regional Context* (Belgrade: Mnemosyne, 2005).

² Milisav Lutovac, *La Metohija : étude de géographie humaine* Institut d'études Slaves, (Paris : Librairie ancienne Honoré Champion 1935).

³ The number of ethnic Albanians is only demographic projections, after they boycotted the census of 1991 (Branislav Krstić, *Kosovo između istorijskog i etničkog prava* (Belgrade: Kuća Vid, 1994, 11–20). The real number of Kosovo Albanians living in the province through the 1990 was 1.3 to 1.5 million, i. e. 70 to 75 percent of the population, as estimated by demographic expert Milovan Radovanović.



Serbs, the most of Kosovo non-Albanian ethnic groups as well as by the Serbian government and the National Assembly of Serbia in Belgrade.

Imagining Kosovo: Opposing Historical Views Serbian Jerusalem vs. Ancient Albanian Land

The notion of “Kosovo” carries different, indeed opposing, meanings for the different national communities of Kosovo and Metohija. For the Serbs, Kosovo above all signifies an ancient Serbian territory, a Serbian “Holy Land”, the impressive cultural and economic rise of which was in the late medieval period brutally brought to a halt by the Ottoman conquest and cut off from its European and Christian background. The Serb popular and Romantic traditions both highlight the “suffering of Kosovo”, pre-saged by the famous battle of Kosovo in 1389.⁴ Surrender

⁴ Thomas A. Emmert, *Serbian Golgotha: Kosovo 1389, East European Monographs*, (New York: New York University Press 1991); idem, “The Kosovo Legacy”, in *Kosovo*, ed. William Dorich (Alhambra, California: Kosovo Charity Found, Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America, 1992). For more, see Rade Mihaljičić, *The Battle of Kosovo in History and the Popular Tradition* (Belgrade: Beogradski izdavački grafički zavod, 1989); *Kosovska bitka u istoriografiji*, Sima M. Ćirković ed. (Belgrade, Istorijski institut 1990); Smilja Marjanović-Dušanić, “Patterns of Martyrial Sanctity in the Royal Ideology of Medieval Serbia. Continuity and Change”, *Balkanica XXXVII/2006* (2007).

to the Ottomans became a reality for the majority of Christian Orthodox Serbs by the middle of the fifteenth century, as several Serb realms in the southern Balkans and in Bosnia fell one after another: the Despotate of Serbia (covering today’s central Serbia including Kosovo), and a number of remaining independent or semi-independent Serb-inhabited princedoms (1459–1481) including Herzegovina and Montenegro.⁵

The word Kosovo is considered to be symbolically the most important word in the Serbian historical dictionary. After the name of Savior, and Saint Sava (the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the early thirteenth century), the word Kosovo dominates the political and cultural discourse of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Serbia, while in popular culture the Kosovo legacy, through epic tradition in the rural areas of Dalmatia, Herzegovina, Western Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo itself, remains to be a prevailing historical narrative.

In the Serbian language, the word Kosovo (*kos* meaning the blackbird, and *Kosovo*, a field of blackbirds) combined with another historical name, Metohija (derived from the Greek word *metochion*, pl. *metochia*, meaning monastic possessions), is the official name of the southern province of Serbia with its 1,300 churches and monasteries scattered all over the area. Although its majority population is now Albanian, Kosovo is seen as epitomizing both the national and cultural identity of the whole Serbian nation. As the political and cultural core of medieval Serbia, Kosovo gave two of Serbia’s three most important medieval dynasties, the House of Hrebeljanović-Lazarević (1371–1427) and the House of Branković (1427–1459). They ruled Serbia during the decisive ninety years between the Battle of Marica (1371) and the final Ottoman conquest in the middle of the fifteenth century (1459).

The Kosovo tradition became established as a popular legend under the auspices of the Patriarchate of Peć (1557–1766), the restored Serbian Orthodox Church in the first century of Ottoman domination. The Legend of Kosovo gradually merged with popular tradition, taking on almost mythic proportions, and emerged as a cornerstone of modern Serb identity in the age of nationalism. For the average Serb of today, the word Kosovo still stands for an ancient and sacred Serbian land, where the Serbs have been systematically persecuted and expelled from, for being Slavic and Christian Orthodox, over the last three centuries, with the exception of recent periods of occasional repression against the Albanians.

Within this frame of perception, not only were the conquerors—the Ottoman Turks—seen as persecutors, but also their local allies, above all Muslim Albanians—legal

⁵ Nada Milošević-Djordjević, *Kosovska epika* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1990); Thomas A. Emmert, “The Kosovo Legacy”, in *Kosovo*, ed. William Dorich (Alhambra, California: Kosovo Charity Found, Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America, 1992).

and illegal immigrants descending from the highlands of northern and central Albania and settling in the plains of Metohija and Kosovo at various times during Ottoman rule (1455–1912), under the Italian Fascist and German Nazi occupation (1941–1945), and under Tito's communist regime (1945–1990). In 1968, supported by the lifetime dictator of communist Yugoslavia J. B. Tito and in the context of further decentralization of the communist federation, the Albanian communist leadership of Kosovo succeeded in banning the name *Metohija*, seen as too much Christian Orthodox and Serbian for the desired political image of the Albanian-dominated Province of Kosovo. In 1990, the term Metohija was reintroduced, as the official part of the name of the Province after its autonomy was limited and the province returned under the jurisdiction of Serbia.

Waves of spiralling violence continued, remaining the main characteristic of Kosovo and Metohija history. As a phenomenon of *longue durée*, the Serbian-Albanian rivalry in Kosovo–Metohija has been marked by the combined effects of social discontent and religious and ethnic strife, producing several waves of mass migrations during the last three hundred years. Muslim Albanians from the highlands of northern and central Albania, the poorest region of Turkey-in-Europe, were steadily settled in the fertile plains of Metohija and Kosovo by the Ottoman authorities, and their main rivals there were Christian Orthodox Serb peasants, as they occupied most of the arable land.⁶

Occasional instances of interethnic and inter-religious cooperation, as well as rare attempts of mutual communal assistance—usually short-lived and only superficially

⁶ See more in the selected Western sources on various periods of Kosovo–Metohija's history: Simpliziano Bizozeri, *La Sacra Lega contro la Potenza Ottomana. Successi delle Armi imperiali, Polacche, Venete e Moscovite, Rotte, e disfatte di Eserciti de Turchi, Tartari, e Ribelli*, vol. II. (Milano: M.A.P. Malatesta, 1700; Ami Boué, *La Turquie d'Europe : observations sur la géographie, la géologie, l'histoire naturelle, la statistique, les mœurs, les coutumes, l'archéologie, l'agriculture, l'industrie, le commerce, les gouvernements divers, le clergé, l'histoire et l'état politique de cet empire*, vol. I–III, (Paris: A. Bertrand 1840); Ami Boué, *Recueil d'itinéraires dans la Turquie d'Europe*, vol. I–II (Vienne: W. Braumüller, 1854); Abdolonyme Ubicini, *Les Serbes de Turquie, études historiques, statistiques et politiques sur la principauté de Serbie, le Monténégro et les pays serbes adjacents* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1865); G. Muir Mackenzie & A. P. Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe* (London: Daldy, Isbister and Co. 1877); Victor Bérard, *La Macédoine* (Paris: Calman Lévy, 1900); Henry N. Brailsford, *Macedonia. Its Races and their Future* (London: Methuen, 1906); Frederick Moore, *The Balkan Trail* (New York: Smith, Elder & Co 1906); Gaston Gravier, "La Vieille Serbie et les Albanais," *Revue de Paris*, 1^{er} novembre 1911; Georges Gaulis, *La ruine d'un empire. Abdul-Hamid ses amis et ses peuples* (Paris: A. Colin 1913); Maximilian Braun, *Kosovo. Die Schlacht auf dem Amsfelde in feschichtlicher und epischer Ueberlieferung*, (Leipzig: Markert und Petter : Druck von C. Schulze, 1937); Rebecca West, *The Black Lamb and Grey Falcon. The record of a journey through Yugoslavia in 1937* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1941).

tolerant—were not the prevailing political practice. In spite of certain efforts during the last two centuries, for the two main Kosovo communities, Albanian and Serb, as well as for the other non-Albanians in the area (Goranies, i.e. the Muslim Slav, Serbian-speaking community of the Gora region bordering present-day FYROM and Albania; Roma with several names and denominations; ethnic Turks, mostly urban population; other Muslim Slavs in Metohija, renamed Bosniaks since 1999; ethnic Croats in Letnica), interethnic communication remained very limited. Furthermore, interethnic communication failed to survive the mounting Serbian–Albanian conflict at the end of the twentieth century.⁷ Interethnic distance in Kosovo and Metohija has remained highest within the whole of Serbia, with no tangible improvements after the 1999 savage NATO bombing campaign (38,000 combat sorties between 24 March and 10 June 1999) and the resulting establishment of the UN administration (UNMIK) over this southern province of Serbia in June 1999.

For the average Albanian of today, on the other hand, the word Kosovo (or *Kosova* in Albanian) symbolizes an "ancient Albanian land" directly linking the ancient Illyrians of Dardania with the modern Albanian community in this territory. The common self-perception of the Kosovo Albanians is that of the greatest victims of Balkan history—in particular prior to and after the Balkan Wars (1912–1913)—deprived of the right to form a single state with the rest of their fellow Albanians, all proud descendants of ancient Illyrians.

Although interpretable as a Balkan instance of "inventing tradition" and having little to do with the established and verifiable historical facts, the myth of the Illyrian origin of modern Albanians was a powerful ideology that effectively bound together very different religious groups and clans together in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.⁸ In more recent times, for the Albanians, Kosovo has become the symbol of Diaspora nationalism nurtured by their constant demographic growth as a form of ethnic legitimization over the disputed territory. In the case of Kosovo, the Diaspora type of nationalism is almost synonymous with the desire for complete and unrestricted ethnic control over a disputed area.⁹ This

⁷ Cf. Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo* (London: Hurst & Co, 2000). Another sympathetic, useful but incomplete survey highlighting mostly the positive aspect of interethnic relations, in particular between Serbs and Albanians, is available in the journalistic narrative of Petrit Imami, *Srbi i Albanci kroz vekove* (Belgrade: Radio B92, 1998).

⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" in Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1–2.

⁹ Cf. standard works in English and French: Alex N. Dragnich & Slavko Todorovich, *The Saga of Kosovo. Focus on Serbian–Albanian Relations* (Boulder: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, 1984); Arshi Pipa & Sami Repishtit, eds., *Studies on Kosova* (East European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press,

practice has its roots in the nineteenth century, in the Romantic period of “national awakening”. Both Kosovo and Metohija (in Albanian known as *Rafshite e Dukadajinit*) were from the mid–nineteenth century widely known as *Arnavutluk*, a term synonymous with lawless territory on the periphery of the crumbling Ottoman Empire, thus linking the notion of a Muslim Albanian with constant rebellion against Ottoman central authority.¹⁰

Furthermore, the ethnic Albanians are fond of Kosovo as the stronghold of their main national movement, “Albanian League”, founded in Prizren in 1878 on the eve of the Congress of Berlin. All Albanians, including the Kosovo Albanians, see Kosovo as symbolizing an “ancient Albanian land”, a space of ancient Dardania, which directly, in ethnic terms, links the ancient Illyrians with the modern-day Albanian community in the province of Kosovo and Metohija. This romantic historical notion of amateur-historians (Johan Georg von Hahn) and Albanian patriots (Pashko Vassa, Sami Frashëri) before and during the Eastern Crisis in 1878, originally concocted as a scholarly

1984); *Le Kosovo–Metohija dans l'histoire serbe* Radovan Samardžić, ed. (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1990); *Kosovo, Past and Present* (Belgrade: Institute for International Affairs, 1989); Dušan T. Bataković, *The Kosovo Chronicles* (Belgrade: Plato, 1992); Idem, *Kosovo. La spirale de la haine* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1993; 2nd ed. 1998); Branislav Krstić, *Kosovo. Facing the Court of History* (New York: Humanity Books, 2004); Dušan T. Bataković, *Kosovo. Un conflit sans fin?* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 2008); Idem, *Serbia's Kosovo Drama. A Historical Perspective* (Belgrade: Čigoja Štampa 2012).

Cf. also in Serbian: Djoko Slijepčević, *Srpsko-arbanaški odnosi kroz vekove s posebnim osvrtom na novije vreme* (Himelstir: Eparhija zapadnoevropska, 1983); Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1985); Atanasije Jevtić & Živorad Stojković, eds., *Zadužbine Kosova. Spomenici i znamenja srpskog naroda* (Prizren–Belgrade: Eparhija Raško–prizrenska, 1987); D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo i Metohija. Istorija i ideologija* (Belgrade–Valjevo: Hrišćanska misao, 1998); *Kosovo i Metohija u velikoalbaniskim planovima 1878–2000* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2001).

The papers by Serbian, Albanian and Western scholars reflecting different views of the problem are available in the following collection: *Kosovo/a. Confrontation or Coexistence*, eds. Ger Duijzings, Dušan Janjić & Shkelzen Maliqi (Peace Research Centre: University of Nijmegen & Political Cultural Centre 042, 1996). Quite useful for the recent developments is also Thanos Veremis & Evangelos Kofos, eds., *Kosovo. Avoiding another Balkan War* (Athens: ELIAMEP, 1994); William Joseph Buckley, ed., *Kosovo. Contending Voices on Balkan Interventions* (Grand Rapids, Michigan–Cambridge UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2000); also useful is “Kosovo. Six siècles de mémoires croisées”, *Les Annales de l'autre Islam* 7, Actes du colloque tenue en 1999 (Paris: INALCO, 2000). The standard German/Austrian approach available in Jens Reuter, *Die Albaner in Jugoslawien* (Munich, 1980); Wolfgang Petritsch, Karl Kaser & Robert Pichler, eds., *Kosovo/Kosova. Mythen, Daten, Fakten* (Klagenfurt & Vienna: Wieser Verlag, 1999). Among the recent monographs, balanced and accurate is Jean–Arnaud Dérens, *Kosovo. Année zéro*, preface Marek–Antony Nowicki (Paris: Paris–Méditerranée, 2004). See also a very useful book with particular chapters on the Kosovo case: Alexis Troude, *Géopolitique de la Serbie* (Paris: Elipses, 2006).

¹⁰ Nathalie Clayer, “Kosovo: le berceau du nationalisme albanais au XIX^{ème} siècle?”, *Les Annales de l'autre Islam* 7 (2000), 169–182.

theory in Austria-Hungary in the late nineteenth century for the political purpose of finding a common denominator uniting the divided Albanian clans,¹¹ was additionally elaborated between the two world wars, and eventually the Illyrian theory was fully embraced by Albanian historians, becoming an official ideology under the post-1945 communist dictator Enver Hoxha.¹² Thus, the Illyrian theory views Albanians as direct descendants of the pre-Roman Illyrian tribes and labels Serbs as “Slavic intruders” who did not begin to settle in this ancient Albanian land until the seventh century AD.¹³ Due to this ideological pattern imposed on Albanian historiography both by national romanticism and the Stalinist-type communist regime of Enver Hoxha, Kosovo came to be perceived in the twentieth century by the whole Albanian nation scattered in various states bordering Albania, as an “occupied ethnic territory”.¹⁴

Nevertheless, there is no reliable evidence for ethnic continuity between ancient Illyrians and present-day Albanians. The huge gap in the historical record between the sixth and eleventh centuries, however, has produced little effect on Albanian national mythology, or on the inclusion of the Illyrian myth as an ingredient of modern Albanian national identity. As regards to Kosovo—as an alleged Illyrian–Albanian territory—a two-stepped approach has been applied. First, the missing link in the alleged Illyrian–Albanian continuity was found in the ancient tribe of Dardanians. The second step was to multiply efforts aimed at “unmasking Serbian myths” about Kosovo through the rapid growth of ostensibly scholarly publications.¹⁵

¹¹ Stavro Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening, 1878–1912* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

¹² Nathalie Clayer, *Religion et nation chez les Albanais aux XIXe–XXe siècles* (Istanbul: Les Éditions ISIS, 2002), Idem, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais. La naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe* (Paris: Karthala 2007).

¹³ *Studime Ilire. Kuvendi I i Studimeve Ilire*, (Prishtine: Rilindja 1978); *The Truth on Kosova* ed. K. Prifti (Tirana: Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania, Encyclopaedia Publishing House, 1993); Ali Jakupi, “Origins and Motives of Serbian Myths in Kosovo” *Eurobalkans*, no. 34–35, spring/summer Athens 1999, 21–27. In French: Rexhep Qosja, *La Question albanaise*, Paris: Fayard, 1995). For a recent, more scholarly analysis see *Albania and the Albanian identities*, ed. Antonina Zhelyazkova (Sofia: International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 2000); *Albanian Identities: Myth & History*, eds. Stephanie Schwandner–Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer (London: Hurst & Co, 2002).

¹⁴ Cf. more in the standard Enver Hoxha–sponsored, Stalinist-type version of the ancient Illyrian origin of Albanians: Alex Buda, ed., *Albanians and Their Territories* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori: Academy of Science of PR of Albania, 1985).

¹⁵ Cf. a typical example: Ali Jakupi, “Origins and Motives of Serbian Myths in Kosovo”, *Eurobalkans* 34–35 (Spring/Summer, Athens, 1999), 21–27. Notoriously pro-Albanian as regards the Kosovo issue is Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo. A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1998). Cf. the review of Malcolm's book by Aleksa Djilas, “Imagining Kosovo: A Biased New Account Fans Western Confusion”, *Foreign Affairs* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Inc., vol. 77, № 5,

The Serbian monasteries and churches in Kosovo and Metohija—include today four UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Serbia situated in Kosovo:

“The Monastery of Visoki Dečani was the first that was listed as a World Heritage site (2004), and the extension in 2006 included the Patriarchate of Peć, the Monastery of Gračanica, and the Church of the Mother of God of Ljeviša in Prizren (Serbia: Date of Inscription: 2004; Extension: 2006, Criteria: (ii)(iii)(iv); Property: 2.8802 ha; Buffer zone: 115,3879 ha Autonomous province of Kosovo; N42 39 40 E20 15 56; Ref: 724bis). UNESCO describes them as follows: “The four edifices of the site reflect the high points of the Byzantine–Romanesque ecclesiastical culture, with its distinct style of wall painting, which developed in the Balkans between the 13th and 17th centuries. The Dečani Monastery was built in the mid-14th century for the Serbian king Stefan Dečanski and is also his mausoleum. The Patriarchate of Peć Monastery is a group of four domed churches featuring series of wall paintings. The 13th-century frescos of the Church of Holy Apostles are painted in a unique, monumental style. Early 14th-century frescos in the church of the Mother of God of Ljeviša represent the appearance of the new so-called Palaeologan Renaissance style, combining the influences of the eastern Orthodox Byzantine and the Western Romanesque traditions. The style played a decisive role in subsequent Balkan art.”¹⁶

These and many other Serbian monasteries and churches, built in unusually large numbers between the early thirteenth and late fifteenth centuries, were, according to Albanian propagandists, constructed on the foundations of earlier “Illyrian churches”. Some of them indeed were built on earlier foundations, but those were the remnants of Byzantine–era churches, which is a phenomenon typical of the whole of the “Byzantine Commonwealth”, as well as elsewhere in southern Europe and in wider Mediterranean area.¹⁷

The Serbian position is, however, most often supported by tangible evidence. Apart from written historical sources, foreign and domestic, attesting to Serbian presence in the area since the medieval period, there still are in Kosovo thirteen hundred Serb Orthodox Christian churches, monasteries, monuments, and archaeological sites.¹⁸ The process of ethnic change unfolding from the seven-

September 1998). More balanced, but still incomplete is Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian. A History of Kosovo* (London: Hurst & Co., 1988). In the French-speaking countries, an ardent supporter of the most prolific pro-Albanian positions is a geography professor at the University of Toulouse, Michel Roux, *Les Albanais en Yougoslavie. Minorité nationale, territoire et développement* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1992).

¹⁶ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/724/>

¹⁷ For more see Gojko Subotić, *Art of Kosovo: The Sacred Land* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Comprehensive documentation available in: *Zadužbine Kosovo. Spomenici i znamenja*, passim.

teenth to the twentieth century, by which Albanians gradually replaced Serbs as Kosovo’s majority population, is well documented as well. Among its causes, the primary one was foreign oppression, which often obtained Albanian support. It was for the first international Peace Conference at The Hague that Kingdom of Serbia, as one of founding states, prepared a volume of diplomatic documents exchanged between Belgrade and Constantinople concerning Albanian-organized violence and persecution of Kosovo Serbs in Old Serbia at the close of the nineteenth century, under the following title: *Documents diplomatiques. Correspondance concernant les actes de violence et de brigandage des Albanais dans la Vieille Serbie (Vilayet de Kosovo) 1898–1899*.¹⁹ Nevertheless its official presentation at The Hague was prevented in the last moment after the strongest pressure of Vienna through Austro–Hungarian diplomats in Belgrade on Serbian King Aleksanda I Obrenović and his government to withdraw this document.

The contrasting versions of the historical past of Kosovo and Metohija became a significant factor causing the profound political and cultural distrust between Serbs and Albanians. Nevertheless, the usual approach, often lacking reliable scholarly background, is to compare the Serbian historical account, overwhelmingly based on verifiable data, with Albanian romantic–historical theses that have significantly less backing in sources, in order to offer a kind of “balanced” version of history. However, such attempts to find a middle ground usually produce a distorted and misguided view of the region’s past.

The Rise and Fall of Medieval Serbia

Until the early Middle Ages it was successively included into different Roman and Byzantine provinces and inhabited by different ethnic groups. Its pre-Roman population of varied origin (Illyrian in the west and Thracian in the east and south) was gradually Romanized during the long rule of both Rome and Constantinople.²⁰

With the mass settlement of Slavs during the seventh century most of the central Balkans became a fief of different Slavic tribes under stronger or weaker control of Byzantium. A former Bulgarian and Byzantine possession, the region that has come to be known as Kosovo–Metohija was integrated between the early twelfth century and the middle of the fifteenth century into the medieval Serbian state: the Kingdom (1217–1346), Empire (1346–1371), various princedoms (1371–1402) and the Despotate of Serbia (1402–1459). As a predominantly Serb-inhabited area Kosovo–Metohija became the prestigious centre of the

¹⁹ Belgrade, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères 1899., 149. P.

²⁰ *Illyriens et Albanais*, ed. Milutin Garašanin (Belgrade: Académie serbe des sciences et des Arts, 1990), bilingual Serbian and French edition.

main Serbian political and cultural institutions.²¹ As an area rich in natural resources it was suitable for cultivation, for exploiting silver and gold mines around which thrived mining towns, for building fortresses, palaces, churches and monasteries.²²

Three important bishoprics (Hvosno, Prizren, Lipljan) were founded in Kosovo and Metohija in the early thirteenth century under the first Serbian Archbishop, Sava Nemanjić, the future St. Sava: "Serbia was never to fall under strong Catholic influence [...] Sava's first task was to place all Serbian territory under the jurisdiction of its new archbishop. This necessitated the ousting in 1220 of Greek bishops from the recently acquired towns of Prizren and Lipljan. Sava then proceeded to construct Serbia's Church administration, dividing all Serbia's territory (including Zeta and Hum) up into about ten bishoprics"²³

Furthermore, Kosovo–Metohija was an important political and commercial crossroads for the major Balkan roads leading from Bosnia and Rascia (Raška) to Macedonia, and central Serbia to Dioclea (Duklja, later called Zeta, present-day Montenegro) and other ports in the south of the eastern Adriatic coast.

Within a century, Kosovo, the northern part of Kosovo–and–Metohija, became covered by fortresses and palaces of the Serbian rulers and their prospering nobility. The cities of Priština, Prizren and especially the prosperous mining town of Novo Brdo were among the richest in the western Balkans in the fourteenth and first half of the fifteenth century. The Plain of Kosovo (*Kosovska ravnica*)—stretching from Mitrovica to Kačanik—was dotted with more than 130 churches built by Serbian rulers, church dignitaries and local noblemen. The Serbian Archbishopric, founded and initially seated in Rascia (1219), was relocated to Peć in the Hvosno area (later termed Metohija) and, under Emperor Stefan Dušan, elevated to a Patriarchate in 1346.

Hvosno or Metohija, the western part of the present-day province of Kosovo and Metohija (4,684 sq km in area), was covered with a network of large and rich monasteries built by the Serbian kings, such as Dečani and the Patriarchate of Peć, and a significant number of late medieval churches erected by local Serbian noblemen (e.g. Orahovac, Velika Hoća, Crkolez, Vaganeš, Zočište, Ubožac, Dolac, Prizren etc). Most of Metohija's densely populated villages were granted to the major royal foundations

²¹ For more, see Bariša Krekić, "Medieval Serbia: The Nemanjids and Byzantium" in Speros Vryonis Jr., ed., *Byzantine Studies. Essays on the Slavic World and the Eleventh Century* (New Rochelle, New York: Aristide D. Caratzas Publisher, 1985), 43–52; Sima M. Ćirković, *La Serbie au Moyen Age* (Paris: Zodiaque, 1992).

²² Desanka Kovačević, "Dans la Serbie et la Bosnie medievales: Les mines d'or et d'argent", *Annales, Economies, Civilisations*, vol. 2 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1960), 248–258.

²³ John V. A. Fine Jr., *The Late Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press), 117.

(monasteries) erected between the late twelfth and mid-fourteenth centuries; hence its name *Metohija*.²⁴ The monastery of Dečani alone had more than 2,500 sq km of estates, including villages, forests and vineyards. The monastery of Holy Archangels was granted an even larger estate, not only in Metohija itself but also in the neighbouring areas of today's Macedonia and Albania, stretching from Šar Mountain to Alessio on the Albanian coast. Huge estates were donated to the Serbian monastery of Chilandar [*Hilandar*] on Mount Athos.²⁵ The prospering Serbian economy, especially the exploitation of mines, rich in silver and gold, and large estates that the rulers granted to the Church, made the medieval Serbian monasteries prestigious centers of sophisticated culture and civilization. In the fourteenth century, there were more than 200 churches and monasteries throughout Metohija, and many others were built in the following decades.²⁶

Among the most important royal endowments are: The Mother of God of Ljeviša (*Bogorodica Ljeviška*), a bishopric seat in Prizren built on the foundations of an earlier Byzantine church by King Uroš I Nemanjić (1243–1276) and his powerful successor King Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1281–1321). King Milutin, the main patron of the revitalized mining industry in Serbia, also built two large monasteries in Kosovo: the monastery of St. Stefan at Banjska near Zvečan in northern Kosovo, and the monastery of Gračanica near Priština in central Kosovo. Comparing Salisbury Cathedral with Gračanica, Steven Runciman said that "the former may soar gracefully heavenward; the latter with the simplicity of its design, the comprehensive economy of its balance and its interior, is the work of a people no less spiritual but far more sophisticated and cultured."²⁷

The Jerusalem-type complex of three churches known as the Patriarchate of Peć (Holy Apostles, the Mother of God, and St. Demetrius) began to be built in the mid-thirteenth century and was eventually completed in the 1320s by Archbishop Danilo II.²⁸ The monastery of Dečani near Peć, with its church dedicated to the Pantocrator, was intended as the funerary church of King Stefan Uroš III Dečanski (1321–1331). The monumental monastic complex of Dečani was eventually completed by his son and heir King Stefan Uroš IV—future Emperor Stefan Dušan.²⁹ The

²⁴ Milisav Lutovac, *La Metohija – étude de géographie humaine* (Paris: Institut d'études Slaves et Librairie ancienne Honoré Champion, 1935).

²⁵ Miloš Blagojević, *The Estates of Chilandar Monastery in Kosovo and Metohija, 12th–15th Centuries* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2006), 31–45 (multilingual edition).

²⁶ The comprehensive survey: Gojko Subotić, *The Art of Kosovo. The Sacred Land* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998).

²⁷ Steven Runciman, *The Byzantine Civilization* (London: Methuen & Co, 1975), 285.

²⁸ Vojslav J. Djurić, Sima M. Ćirković & Vojslav Korać, *Pečka Patrijaršija* (Belgrade & Priština: Jugoslovenska knjiga & Jedinstvo, 1990).



Holy Archangels near Prizren, by far the largest medieval Serbian monastery, was the endowment of Stefan Dušan, erected shortly after his coronation in Skoplje as “Emperor of Serbs and Greeks” in 1346. The cathedral of the Holy

²⁹ Cf. comprehensive study by Branislav Todić & Milka Čanak-Medić, *The Monastery of Dečani* (Belgrade: Muzej u Prištini, Mne-mosyne & Manastir Visoki Dečani, 2013), 534 p. Cf. also: *The Monastery of Visoki Dečani*, by the brotherhood of Visoki Dečani (Belgrade: Knjiga Komerc, 2014). See also a bilingual edition: Milica Grković, *The First Charter of the Dečani Monastery* (Belgrade: Mne-mosyne, 2004).

Archangels was the most monumental church built in the Byzantine Commonwealth in the fourteenth century.³⁰

The Serbian monasteries in Kosovo-and-Metohija held in their libraries, in medieval times alone, at least 7,500 manuscripts, with Peć and Dečani as the most important centres. Several thousand new manuscripts and printed books were produced during the following two centuries of the Church’s organized activity under Ottoman rule

³⁰ For more, see Dimitri Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1438* (New York: Praeger, 1971).

(1557–1776). The most prolific genres of Serbian medieval literature were hagiography, biographies of the sainted rulers and church dignitaries (bishops, archbishops and patriarchs), and *memoria*, *eulogies*, *hymns*, and other forms of devotional literature, written in or translated into Old Church Slavonic.³¹

In the process of rapid disintegration of Stefan Dušan's Empire under his weak heir Emperor Uroš I (1355–1371)—the last ruler of the Nemanjić dynasty—Kosovo—and—Metohija came under the control of powerful regional lords belonging to the highest ranks of Emperor Dušan's nobility which subsequently emerged as independent local rulers. After the defeat of Serbian armies in Macedonia at the Battle of Maritsa in September 1371, it was Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović (1371–1389) of Kosovo, the most distinguished among Dušan's nobles, who emerged as the strongest regional lord capable of bringing together the rivaling feudal princes of the former Empire. Having established control over the rich mining areas of the former Serbian Empire in Kosovo, Prince Lazar formed a reliable matrimonial alliance of regional lords for the defence of Serbia against the Ottoman invasion.³²

Although the initial Ottoman raids into Serbia were successfully repulsed (1381, 1385/86, 1388), in 1389 the Ottoman threat became imminent. The decisive battle between the Serbian (supported by their allies from the Bosnian kingdom) and Ottoman armies (supported by many of the Sultan's Slav vassals) took place on The Field of Blackbirds (*Kosovo Polje*), on St. Vitus Day (*Vidovdan*) or 15 (28) June 1389. Both rulers, Prince Lazar and Sultan Murad I, perished in the battle. Prince Lazar's son-in-law, Vuk Branković—most likely unjustly remembered in epic tradition as a traitor who slid out of the battle during its crucial phase—remained the sole independent regional ruler until 1392, when he accepted vassalage to the Ottomans.³³

The immediate outcome of the battle, which engaged some 30,000 troops on both sides, was not perceived as an Ottoman victory. The first reports claimed the victory of the Christian Serbian armies, and various sources confirmed heavy losses on both sides. Most of those contemporary sources that did not perceive the outcome of the

battle as a triumph of the Christian forces emphasized that none of the armies emerged victorious. It was only later, as the legend surrounding the 1389 Battle of Kosovo grew, that the Ottomans began to claim their victory, while the Serbs, deeply affected by the post-Kosovo political situation marked by unsettled internal strife eventually leading to the final Ottoman conquest, began to describe the battle as a tragic defeat.³⁴

Be that as it may, the Battle of Kosovo had far-reaching political consequences for the future of Serbia. Only a year after the Battle, Serbia became a vassal of the Ottoman Empire.³⁵ Nonetheless, present-day Kosovo-and-Metohija with its rich mining centre of Novo Brdo (seized by the Ottomans only in 1455) remained a border region of exceptional economic and spiritual importance until the very end of the Serbian medieval state—under the first Despot Stefan Lazarević (1389–1427), and his less successful successors of the Branković dynasty (1427–1459).³⁶

A second battle of Kosovo, with János Hunyady at the head of a Hungarian–Wallachian alliance, took place on 17–20 October 1448 and ended in disaster for the crusading Christian troops, deprived of support of the ailing Despot Djuradj Branković, reluctant to venture into another risky war. Despite frequent raids and pillaging, Kosovo—and—Metohija remained an important region, in particular for the economy and cultural development, until 1455, when Serbia, on top of major setbacks suffered in previous decades, lost Novo Brdo and Prizren. What had remained of the Despotate of Serbia eventually yielded under the overwhelming Ottoman onslaught on its new capital Smederevo, built on Danube in 1459.³⁷

The rural population of medieval Kosovo and Metohija can be identified due to the charters issued by the Serbian rulers, containing detailed data on taxes, peasant households, family names, origin, etc. The personal names and most place-names are predominantly Serbian. Feudal obligations of serfs were known as the “Serbian Law”, while the nomadic rural population was covered by the “Vlach Law”. Albanians are occasionally referred to as nomads living in the borderland between Metohija and Albania (upper and lower Pilot area). The 1455 Ottoman cen-

³¹ In the early 1980s the Christian Orthodox Serbian monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija had only 359 Serbian manuscripts dating from the medieval and Ottoman periods; 140 of the most precious medieval manuscripts were burnt together with the entire National Library in Belgrade during the indiscriminate Nazi carpet bombing on 6 April 1941. Cf. Dimitrije Bogdanović, “Rukopisno nasledje Kosova” in *Zbornik okruglog stola o naučnom istraživanju Kosova*, Scientific Conferences, vol. XLII (Belgrade: Serbian academy of Sciences and Arts, 1988), 73–79.

³² Sima M. Ćirković, “Serbia on the Eve of the Battle of Kosovo” in: Wayne S. Vuchinich & Thomas A. Emmert, eds., *Kosovo. Legacy of a Medieval Battle* (A Modern Greek Studies Yearbook Supplement vol. 1) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991), 1–17.

³³ Thomas A. Emmert, *Serbian Golgotha. Kosovo 1389* (Boulder: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, 1990).

³⁴ Nicholas J. C. Pappas & L. Brigance Pappas, “The Ottoman View of the Battle of Kosovo” in Vuchinich & Emmert, eds., *Kosovo*, 41–59; Cf. also in the same book Stephen W. Reinart, “A Greek View on the Battle of Kosovo”, 61–88.

³⁵ T. A. Emmert, *Serbian Golgotha*, 42–60. *Kosovska bitka u istoriografiji*, S. M. Ćirković, ed. (Belgrade: Istorijski institut, 1990), passim; *Kosovska bitka 1389. i njene posledice (Die Schlaht auf dem Amselfeld 1389 und ihre Folgen)* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1991), Nikola Tasić, ed. (bilingual Serbian and German edition).

³⁶ Cf. Vojislav Jovanović, Sima M. Ćirković, Emina Zečević, Vujadin Ivanišević & Vesna Radić, *Novo Brdo* (Belgrade: Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Serbia, 2004). Bilingual Serbian and English edition.

³⁷ More in: Momčilo Spremić, *Despot Djuradj Branković i njegovo doba* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1994).

sus shows that only 80 of 600 villages had household heads bearing typical Albanian names.³⁸

Urban centres in Kosovo and Metohija, as elsewhere in late medieval Serbia, were more multicultural than rural areas. Under Byzantine rule, the towns of present-day Kosovo—and–Metohija had a significant Greek population, including administrative and church officials, while Slav or Serb merchants from the Adriatic coast, mostly Roman Catholics from Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and Cattaro (Kotor), were continuously engaged in trade and business in the area. Following the activation of the rich mines of Trepča, Novo Brdo and Janjevo in the early fourteenth century, their number, along with that of Saxon miners, considerably increased.³⁹ Under Despot Stefan Lazarević, the northernmost city, Belgrade, became Serbia's capital and cultural hub, whilst the southern town of Novo Brdo in Kosovo remained the main economic center, as testified by the "Law on Mines" (*Rudarski zakonik*) issued there in 1412.⁴⁰

The presence of a certain number of Albanian miners of the Roman Catholic rite was recorded in Novo Brdo in the 1430s, but the whole area, both rural and urban, remained predominantly inhabited by Christian Orthodox Serbs. Besides Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries, the urban centers of Kosovo and Metohija disposed with several Roman Catholic parishes, for Saxons, Venetians, Ragusans and other foreign traders.⁴¹

Ottoman Rule: Conquest and Decline

From the middle of the fifteenth to the early twentieth century, the whole of Kosovo and Metohija was part of the Ottoman Empire. Conquered in 1459, the Despotate of Serbia, Kosovo and Metohija included, was organized into several Ottoman administrative units (*sanjaks*), while most of the nobility that had not perished in the wars emigrated to neighbouring Hungary, where they kept resisting the Ottomans until the 1526 Battle of Mohács. In Ottoman-held Serbia a certain number of former Serb feudal lords entered into the Ottoman *sipahi* system and were eventually Islamized. Being Christian Orthodox, the majority of Serbs, both urban and rural, as well as all other non-Muslim ethnic groups ("people of the book"), became *reaya*, second-class citizens under the Ottoman Islamic order. Apart from legalized religious dis-

crimination, discrimination became evident in all spheres of everyday life.

The lowered status of the Christian population also implied social dependence, as most of the Christian Orthodox Serbs were reduced to landless peasants liable to paying feudal taxes. They were, like other Christians, not only obliged to dress differently, to pay additional tax in lieu of military service, but they were deprived of such rights as riding a horse, possessing or carrying arms, and so on. Nor had the Christians the right to repair their churches or ring church bells without permission of the Ottoman authorities. It was, however, possible to rebuild some ruined churches, but only with the authorization of the Ottoman administration.

Prizren Cathedral, dedicated to the Mother of God of Ljeviša, was converted to a mosque probably immediately after the Ottoman conquest; the same destiny befell the monastery of St. Stefan at Banjska, one of the most impressive foundations of King Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1281–1321). Stefan Dušan's main endowment, the monumental Church of the Holy Archangels near Prizren, where he had been solemnly buried in 1355, was abandoned as early as 1519 and turned into ruins by the end of the century. Marble blocks from the ruined Holy Archangels were re-used for the remarkable Sinan Pasha Mosque in Prizren in 1615. Most of the Serbian monasteries and churches were devastated and left in ruins, while many village churches were completely abandoned. Not many were restored until after the liberation of Kosovo and Metohija in 1912. The monasteries of Dečani, Gračanica and Patriarchate of Peć were permitted to perform religious services and their medieval estates, although severely reduced, were reconfirmed by Ottoman *firman*s.

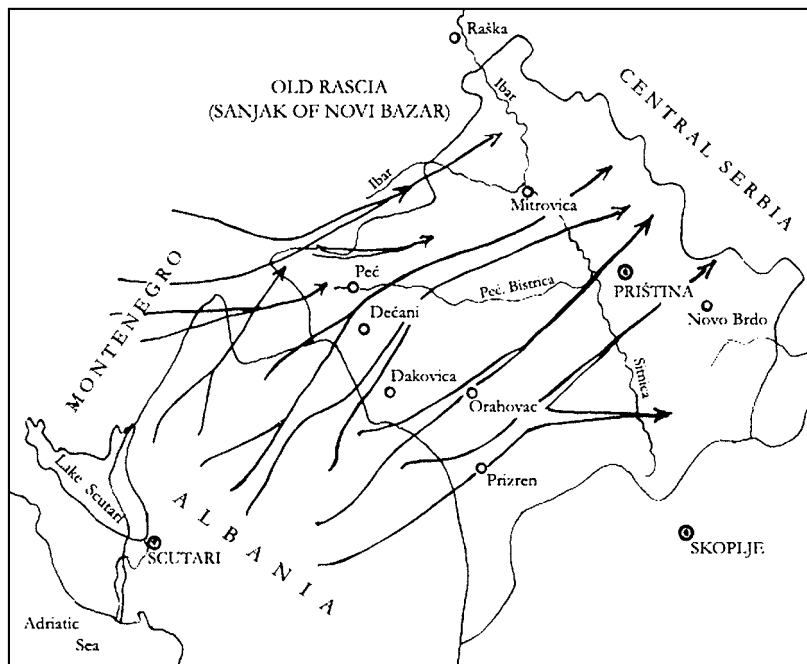
Thorough archaeological surveys have shown that most of the approximately 1,300 monasteries, churches, hermitages and other monuments the Serbs built, or rebuilt on the foundations of earlier Byzantine churches in the area of Kosovo and Metohija, date from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. The magnitude of the havoc wrought by the conquest can be seen from the earliest Ottoman registers combined with censuses (*defters*): in 1455 Ottoman register, apart from the Monastery of Devič in the Drenica area, there were only ten to fourteen active Christian Orthodox churches out of probably hundreds active prior to the conquest. After the consolidation of Ottoman rule in the middle of the sixteenth century, their number significantly increased—fifty-three churches, including eleven monasteries. The large monasteries such as Dečani, the Patriarchate of Peć and Gračanica to a lesser extent were spared from destruction. Nevertheless, their previously wealthy land possessions were reduced to a handful of land estates in the surrounding villages. The *firman*s the Ottoman sultans granted to these three main monastic communities comprised, apart from paying taxes, the obligation to perform different services, including

³⁸ Olga Zirojević, "Les premiers siècles de la domination étrangère" in *Kosovo–Metohija dans l'histoire*, 41–46; D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo Chronicles*, 45.

³⁹ See Desanka Kovačević, "Dans la Serbie et la Bosnie médiévales: Les mines d'or et d'argent", *Annales, Economies, Civilisations*, vol. 2 (1960), 253–258.

⁴⁰ S. M. Ćirković, "Le Kosovo Metohija au Moyen Age" in *Kosovo–Metohija dans l'histoire serbe*, 23–27.

⁴¹ S. M. Ćirković, "The Cradle of Serbia" in *Kosovo. Past and Present*, ed. Ranko Petković (Belgrade: Review of International Affairs, 1989), 24–27.



Migration of Albanian Tribes to Kosovo, 17th–18th century

the service of falconry as well.⁴² In the *Sanjak* of Prizren, according to the 1571 Ottoman census, there were thirty-one Christian Orthodox churches and monasteries, dependencies of the Sultan or the local *sanjak-bey*.⁴³ In the area of Mount Čičavica, remembered as the “Serbian Holy Mountain” in popular tradition, there were, according to the Ottoman censuses of 1525–26 and 1544–45, “a total of fifty-two monasteries and churches.”⁴⁴

The re-establishment of the Serbian Orthodox Church under as the Patriarchate of Peć in 1557 marked the beginning of a vigorous religious renaissance of the Serbian *millet*. The reassembling of the Christian Orthodox into one religious community (*millet*) under the central authority of the patriarchs of Peć brought about a tremendous change in their general position within the rigid theocratic structure of the powerful Ottoman Empire. Sokollu Mehmed-Pasha (Mehmed-paša Sokolović), the Ottoman vizier of Serbian descent, installed his first cousin Makarije Sokolović (1557–1571) on the Serb patriarchal throne and granted him the same privileges as those enjoyed by the Ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople.⁴⁵

⁴² Olga Zirojević, “Les premiers siècles”, 40–46.

⁴³ Olga Zirojević, “Crkve i manastiri u Prizrenskom sandžaku”, *Kosovsko-metohijski zbornik*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1990), 133–141.

⁴⁴ So far thirty-six sites of former churches have been found while “there is a traditional belief among the Serbian and Albanian people that on Čičavica there are seventy-seven spring wells, seventy-seven streams and seventy-seven churches”.

⁴⁵ Radovan Samardžić (Radovan Samardžić), *Mehmed-Paša Sokolovitch* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1994); also available is a Turkish translation of this important historical biography.

The Serbian patriarchs had the right to dispose with church property, to collect church tax, to decide on heirless property, to confirm all guild regulations, and to preside over civil and criminal cases, all within a self-governing Serbian community. As the head of the Serbian *millet*, the patriarch of Peć became a real *etnarch* of all Christian Orthodox Serbs that were under the jurisdiction of the restored Serbian Patriarchate. Patriarch Makarije was succeeded by other members of the Sokolović family—Antonije (1571–1575), and, alternating with one another, Gerasim and Savatije (1575–1586/7).⁴⁶

The Patriarchate of Peć organized a proficient and full-scale revival of medieval Serbian cults and, in parallel, obtained the Sublime Porte’s permission to restore fully or partially many demolished or damaged churches and monasteries. Based on the tradition of medieval Serbia, the Patriarchate of Peć was largely perceived, especially by the Christian Orthodox Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, as a structural continuation of medieval Serbia that through its chancery, financial and judicial functions became instrumental in preserving both religious and ethnic identity.

The self-governing church communities (*crkvene opštine*), under the auspices of local bishops, became the pillar of the everyday life of both rural and urban members of the Serbian *millet*. The patriarchs had legal authority over certain trade guilds in towns, and disputes within the Serbian *millet* were usually settled through the combined implementation of common law, patriarchal decrees and the Code of Emperor Stefan Dušan (*Dušanov zakonik*), the most enduring legal document of medieval Serbia, used by various Serbian communities until the late eighteenth century.

Epic poetry, spread widely over the centuries by gifted bards playing the *gusle* (one-stringed violin), sent a powerful emotional and political message. The epic ballads, with the Kosovo covenant as their central theme, immortalized national heroes and rulers, both medieval and pre-modern, thus cultivating the spirit of defiance and nurturing the hope of forthcoming liberation from Ottoman domination. Epic poems about the Battle of Kosovo and its heroes described the tragic destiny of the last Nemanjić, the heroism of Prince Lazar and his valiant knight Miloš Obilić, the assassin of the Ottoman Sultan Murad at the Battle of Kosovo. The treachery of Vuk Branković, Prince Lazar’s son-in-law, became a symbolic justification for the tragic consequences of the Battle of Kosovo.⁴⁷

According to the epic legend, on the eve of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, Prince Lazar chose the heavenly kingdom over the earthly one, freedom over slavery. It was described in the epic song the *Downfall of the Serbian Em-*

⁴⁶ The list of patriarchs of Peć with precise dates of their rule in D. T. Bataković, ed., *Histoire du peuple serbe* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 2005), 112 (list established by A. Fotić).

⁴⁷ Ivan Božić, “Neverstvo Vuka Brankovića” in Ivan Božić & Vojislav J. Djurić, eds., *Le Prince Lazare* (Belgrade: Filozofski fakultet, 1975).

pire, considered as “perhaps the best-known summing up of the whole Kosovo myth; and Lazar’s choice is, of course, ‘a repetition and the periphrasis of similar points made in Serbian historical literature in the Middle Ages.”⁴⁸ Transcending their real historical context, many of these ballads, highly popular among the rural population, were sung, as testified by foreign travellers, throughout Serb-inhabited lands, from Montenegro, Herzegovina, Bosnia and Slavonia to Croatia and Dalmatia, and from southern Hungary to Slavic Macedonia.

Demographic Profiles: Urban and Rural Society

The urban landscape of Kosovo and Metohija under the Ottomans was mainly shaped by Islam and its culture. Most of the Orthodox churches in the towns were converted to mosques, and many new mosques were erected soon after the establishment of the Ottoman administration, from Priština and Vučitrn to Zvečan and Prizren. Even several of about a dozen Roman Catholic churches, built under the Nemanjić mostly for the colonies of Saxon miners and Ragusan merchants in Novo Brdo, Stari Trg, Trepča and Janjevo, were gradually converted to mosques. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic communities headed by local chaplains remained in the area and were additionally strengthened by Roman Catholic Albanians newly settled in some urban centres.⁴⁹

Analysis of the earliest Ottoman registers shows that the demographic composition of Kosovo and Metohija did not alter much during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The small-in-number Muslim population consisted largely of members of the Ottoman administration and military, essential in maintaining order, whereas Eastern Orthodox Christians continued to predominate in rural areas. Kosovo and parts of Metohija were registered in 1455 under the name *Vilayeti Vlk*, after Vuk Branković who once ruled this vast area. Some 75,000 inhabitants lived in 590 registered villages.⁵⁰ A place-names analysis of some 8,500 personal names shows that Slav and Christian names were heavily predominant.⁵¹

However, Christian Orthodox Serb tenant farmers who paid taxes and fulfilled additional obligations towards the Empire enjoyed legal protection, while other Serb-inhabited areas that provided auxiliary troops for the Ottoman army (*voynuk*, *martolos*) or secured bridges, forests and mountain passes, enjoyed partial or complete tax exemp-

tion as well as a certain degree of local self-government. Many dues paid in money, labour and kind set aside, the hardest for the Christian Serbs was the form of taxation known as *devşirme*—healthy teenage male children were taken away from their parents, converted to Islam and trained to serve in the janissary corps of the Ottoman army or assigned to various kinds of services in the administration.⁵²

A renewal of patriarchal forms of life within the new political and social framework was characteristic of the Christian Orthodox Serbs in the rural areas of Kosovo–Metohija. Many Serbs accepted the so-called *Vlach* (cattle-breeding) status to avoid that of tenant farmers, while the Christian Albanians, being cattle-breeding nomads during previous centuries, continued to live almost autonomously in the mountain areas bordering on Albania. Settlements with population bearing Albanian names were registered mostly beyond the boundaries of what today is Metohija, i.e. west of Djakovica. An analysis of the names in the Sanjak of Scutari in the sixteenth century shows that those of Slav origin predominated among the Christians. In Peć, sixty-eight percent of the population had Slav names, in the Suho Grlo area—fifty-two percent, in the Donja Klin area—fifty percent, and around the monastery of Dečani—sixty-four percent, while other names were common Christian ones frequent among Serbs as well.⁵³

From the mid-sixteenth century the process of Islamization of the Albanians became very intense in the regions adjacent to Kosovo–Metohija, among the powerful tribes of northern and central Albania. Having converted to Islam, a process which probably acquired larger proportions only in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (especially in the north of today’s Albania), the Albanians gradually became part of the influential ruling class in the Ottoman Empire enjoying distinct social and political privileges. The increasing number of Islamized Albanians holding highest or high-ranking positions at the Sublime Porte generated a similar process on the local level in Kosovo–Metohija: Albanians increasingly replaced Islamized Slavs, ethnic Turks or ethnic Arabs in the provincial administration. Christian Serbs and Muslim Albanians, now divided by religion and religion-based privileges, gradually grew into two opposed social and political groups.⁵⁴

⁵² Hasan Kaleshi, “Kosovo pod turskom vlašću” in M. Maletić, ed., *Kosovo nekad i sad (Kosova dikur e sot)* (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1973), 145–176.

⁵³ O. Zirojević, “Les premiers siècles”, 70–71; D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo Chronicles*, 41–42.

⁵⁴ Cf. Georg Stadtmüller, “Die Islamisierung bei der Albanern”, *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Osteuropas* (Munich: Osteuropa-Institut München, 1955), 404–429; Hasan Kaleshi, “Das Türkische Vordringen auf dem Balkan und die Islamisierung: Faktoren für die Erhaltung de etnischen und nationalen Existenz des albanischen Volkes” in: Peter Bartl & Hans Glassl, eds., *Südosteuropa unter dem Halbmon* (Munich: Oldenburg, 1975), 127–138.

⁴⁸ Svetozar Koljević, “The Battle of Kosovo in its Epic Mosaic” in *Kosovo. Legacy of a Medieval Battle*, 128. Additional comprehensive analysis is available in Svetozar Koljević, *The Epic in the Making* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

⁴⁹ O. Zirojević, “Les premiers siècles”, 53–57.

⁵⁰ Miloš Macura, *Naselja i stanovništvo. Oblasti Brankovića 1455* (Belgrade: Serbian academy of Sciences and Arts, 2001).

⁵¹ *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II (Belgrade: Srpska književna zajednica, 1982), 260–265; D. Bogdanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu*, 72.

The Ottoman sources show that between 1520 and 1535 only 700 of 19,614 households in the Vučitrn district were Muslim (about 3.5 percent), with 359 (2.0 percent) in the Prizren district. In areas beyond the geographic borders of Kosovo and Metohija, in the Scutari and Dukagjin districts, Muslims accounted for 4.6 percent of the population. According to an analysis of names registered by the census of the Dukagjin district, Albanian settlements did not become predominant until south of Djakovica, whilst the ethnic composition of Prizren and its area remained basically unchanged during the sixteenth century.⁵⁵ The Christian Orthodox Serbs, as recorded both by later Ottoman censuses and Western travellers, remained the predominant ethnic group until the late seventeenth century. The Roman Catholic archbishop of Bar, Marino Bizzi, reported in 1610 that Kosovo is full of “schismatic”, i.e. Serb Christian Orthodox, villages.⁵⁶

It was only after the wars and resettlements in the late seventeenth century that members of different northern Albanian clans (Krasniqi, Berisha, Gashi, Shala, Sopi, Krieziu, Thaçi, Bitiqi) began to settle on the abandoned estates of Metohija in more significant numbers, advancing towards Kosovo, while small numbers of settlers came from other Albanian clans (Kastrati, Mertura, Klimenti, Mzi, Drushtina, Hoti, Mertura, Shkrelia). According to an estimate, 704 clans and extended families, with about 4,446 households, settled in Kosovo proper.⁵⁷

The Great Serb Migration of 1690: Generator of Demographic Change

A Serb–Albanian conflict broke out during the Holy League’s war against the Ottoman Empire (1683–1690). The Christian Orthodox Serbs joined the Habsburg troops in their military campaign in Serbia as a separate Christian militia (*Militia Rasciana*, *Razische Feld–Miliz*, *Irreguläre Truppen*). With the exception of the brave Kelmendi tribe of Christian, Roman Catholic faith, the majority of Albanians—as newly-converted Muslims—took the side of the Sultan’s army against the military coalition of Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians. Both Habsburg

⁵⁵ O. Zirojević, “Les premiers siècles”, 66–73; Olga Zirojević, “Prizren u defteru iz 1571. godine”, *Istorijski časopis XXXVIII* (Belgrade 1991), 243–254. Cf. also Selami Pulaha, *Populsia Shqiptare e Kosovës gjate shek. XV–XVI* (Tirana 1984). On economic aspects, see Hasan Kaleshi, “Jedna prizrenska i dve vučitrnske kanunname”, *Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije II* (Priština 1957), 292–293.

⁵⁶ Franjo Rački, “Izveštaj barskog nadbiskupa Marina Bizzija o svojem putovanju god. 1610. po Arbanaškoj i Staroj Srbiji”, *Starine JAZU XX* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1880), 50–156, quotation on p. 121. Cf. also Marko Jačov, *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durantela guerra di Candia (1645–1669)*, vols. I–II (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1991).

⁵⁷ Atanasije Urošević, *Etnički procesi na Kosovu tokom turske vladavine*, Monographs, vol. DLXXVII, Department of Social Sciences, vol. 94 (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1987), 19.

troops and Serbian militia, led by local guerrilla leaders, were defeated by the freshly recruited Ottoman troops in the decisive battle that took place at Kačanik in 1690, closing the strategic pass between Kosovo and Skoplje area.⁵⁸

After the defeat of the Christian forces, tens of thousands of Serb families, headed by the Patriarch of Peć, Arsenije III Crnojević, withdrew from Kosovo and Metohija and adjacent districts to the northern areas, neighbouring Habsburg Empire, in fear of Ottoman reprisals. A local church chronicler recorded the following:

“In the spring of 1690 the [Serbian] patriarch—Arsenije Crnojević of Peć—summoned a vast number of Serbs, 37,000 families [10 to 30 members on average], and they all set off to join the Imperial [Habsburg] army. In the same war there was large-scale looting and dislocation of Christians and plundering of all the Serbian lands. Monasteries, towns, and villages were abandoned, and some were burned down.”⁵⁹

The accounts of Serbian learned monks on the 1690 Great Serb Migration were additionally confirmed by the contemporary Italian historian, don Simpliciano Bizozzeri, who had access to various first-hand sources and testimonies:

“Finding no further obstacles to their bestiality, the Muhammadans [Ottoman Muslims] forced the Serbs, who had nested in Novi Pazar, to seek shelter in the monastery of Studenica; during that time, both the Turks from Bosnia and Tartars from the Kosovo plains hurried to hasten their ruin. The Christians were similarly expelled from Prizren, Peć, Vranje, Vučitrn, Mitrovica and so many other places, even those far away from Kosovo. A spectacle of misfortune ensued, for the barbarian non-believers who arrived were merciless toward these innocent habitants whom they all massacred without any regard for their age and sex; also slaughtered were those who, enticed by promises, abandoned their shelters in the forests where they had fled to save their lives. After all the habitants were butchered, their humble huts were also torched reduced to ashes; spared from flames were only the cities of Priština, Peć and Prizren for the Albanians had settled in them for the winter. [...] There was a horrible scene with Mahmud-Pasha of Peć [...] who set out with the Albanians to destroy those villages he knew had accepted the protection of the [Austrian] emperor, cutting any inhabitants he found in them to pieces, despite the fact that Serbia was their common homeland.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Cf. detailed accounts in Rajko L. Veselinović, *Arsenije III Crnojević u istoriji i književnosti*, Monographs, vol. CLI (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Science, 1949); Dušan J. Popović, *Velika seoba Srba* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1954); Gligor Stanojević, *Srbija u vreme Bečkog rata* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1976).

⁵⁹ Ljubomir Stojanović, *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi* (Belgrade: Serbian Royal Academy, 1905), vol. III, Nos. 5283 and 5302.

⁶⁰ Simpliciano Bizozzeri, *La Sagra Lega contro la potenza Ottomana*, vol. II (Milano: M.A.P. Malatesta 1700), 5–6, 8, cf. *Zadužbine Kosova*, 608.



Serbian troops enter Gračanica in 1878

After the Christian defeat, tens of thousands of Serb families, headed by the Patriarch of Peć Arsenije III Crnojević, withdrew from Kosovo and Metohija and neighbouring areas in fear of reprisals. A local church chronicler recorded that “in the spring of 1690 the patriarch—Arsenije Crnojević of Peć—summoned a vast number of Serbs, 37,000 families [10 to 30 members on average], and they all set off to join the Imperial [Habsburg] army. In the same war there was large-scale looting and dislocation of Christians and plundering of all the Serbian lands. Monasteries, towns, and villages were abandoned, and some were burned down.”⁶¹

Fearing large-scale vengeance and reprisals similar to those organized against the Kosovo Serbs, many other Christian Serbs—from central and eastern Serbia—fled northward to cross the Danube and the Sava rivers into the neighbouring Habsburg Empire. In Metohija and Kosovo, many previously Serb-inhabited villages around the towns of Peć, Djakovica, Vučitrn, Trepča and Priština were destroyed in systematic reprisals carried out by the Ottoman force composed of Tatars and Muslim Albanians. At least 300 villages, as recorded by Habsburg sources,

ceased to exist. Nevertheless, a certain percentage of Kosovo Serbs, having fled into the mountains, survived the reprisals and, after the Sultan proclaimed amnesty, resettled the surviving households, mostly in Kosovo proper.

The Great Migration of Christian Orthodox Serbs in 1690 was a turning point in their history. In Kosovo and Metohija alone, several towns and a number of previously Serbian villages were completely abandoned. The Christian Serb population was additionally decimated by plague, and whatever had remained after that by the reprisals carried out by Ottoman irregular troops. The Serbs that emigrated north of the Danube were resettled in the fertile Habsburg region bordering Serbia—in southern Hungary (today’s Vojvodina). The new churches they built along the Danube in Habsburg Empire were named after those left behind in the old Kosovo homeland. The presence of Kosovo Serbs was recorded in the Buda area of Hungary subsequent to 1700.⁶²

The two wars that followed were just as detrimental to Christians in Kosovo and Metohija. The Habsburg–Ottoman war (1737–1739) caused another wave of forced migration. Namely, a large-scale uprising broke out again in

⁶¹ Ljubomir Stojanović, *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi* (Belgrade: Serbian Royal academy, 1905), vol. III, Nos. 5283 and 5302.

⁶² Radmila Tričković, “La Grande migration des Serbes” in *Kosovo–Metohija dans l’histoire serbe*, 97–107.

Kosovo and Metohija, engaging at least 10,000 Serbs. They were joined by Montenegrin tribes, and Habsburg envoys even stirred up the Climenti (Kelmendi), a Roman Catholic tribe from northern Albania, to join forces against the Ottomans. In the wake of the Habsburg defeat in 1739, thousands of Serbs, led by the new patriarch of Peć Arsenije IV Jovanović–Šakabenta, fled to southern Hungary followed by their Christian Albanian allies.

Oh, in the year of Our Lord 1737 there was great unrest when the Germans took [the city of] Niš [...] After came the pasha called by the name Köpörlü Oglu [...] and took Niš again [...] At that time Serbian Patriarch Arsenije the Fourth fled. O, is there any way in which the Christian faithful did not suffer then and any torture by which they were not tortured? It is not possible at this time to write of this for fear of the Turks. Then Kosovo was plundered, as well. What else can I say: it was not in the days of Diocletian (when the Christians were horribly persecuted) as it is now, for God has unleashed it because of our sins.⁶³

Some of the landed property abandoned by Christian Orthodox Serbs was gradually settled by Muslim Albanian nomadic tribes, whose obligations towards the Ottoman Porte were rather different from those of Christian Serbs.

Islamization, New Settlement, Albanization

Settlement of Muslim Albanians first in Metohija and then in Kosovo proceeded at a slow pace. The number of Christian Orthodox Serbs in the region was still considerable while the refugees began to return to their homes after the large-scale Ottoman reprisals had lost momentum. This new Albanian settlement in Kosovo and Metohija usually took place in waves of varied scale and intensity: once the abandoned land or rich estate was seized from its previous Slav owner, fellow Albanian tribesmen were brought in to protect the vast expanses needed for their large herds and for potential settlement of their large extended families. In this population shift the social aspect played an important role: as everywhere else in the Ottoman Empire, cattle-breeders were constantly in conflict with peasant tenant framers.

The emerging conflict was additionally fuelled by a social and religious dimension: due only to the fact that he was Muslim by religion, an Albanian cattle-breeder was allowed to carry a gun and could, without fear of punishment, persecute and rob an Orthodox Christian, in most cases a Serbian peasant, deprived of any means of self-protection. The series of Ottoman wars against the Hab-

sburgs during the eighteenth century weakened the central authority in Constantinople, inevitably giving rise to anarchy on both the central and peripheral levels of Ottoman power and administration. Prior to the nineteenth century tribal-controlled and Muslim-inspired anarchy acquired large proportions, spreading all over Turkey-in-Europe, including Kosovo–Metohija.⁶⁴

Conversion of Christian Serbs to Islam took place in the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries, when Muslim Albanians began to exert a stronger influence on political events in the region. Many Christian Serbs accepted Islam in order to survive, waiting in vain for the right moment to re-embrace the faith of their ancestors. The Islamized Serbs preserved their language and observed their old customs (especially *slava*—the family patron-saint day—and Easter) through several generations. However, several generations later, the strong Albanian environment pressed them into adopting Albanian dress and into using the Albanian language outside their narrow family circle for safety reasons. Thus a kind of social mimicry developed which enabled the converts to survive, i.e. to avoid further discrimination for not being in conformity with the prevailing social framework.

The enduring process of religious conversion also led to Albanization, which, however, did not begin until after the Islamized Serbs, gradually divested of their previous ethnic identity, began to marry girls from Albanian clans and eventually became absorbed by the Albanian-speaking Muslim community. Christian Orthodox Serbs used to call their freshly Albanized compatriots *Arnautashi* until the memory of their Serbian origin waned completely, though old customs and legends about their ancestors continued to be passed down from generation to generation.⁶⁵

For a long time the Albanized Muslim Serbs (*Arnautashi*) felt themselves as being neither Turk nor Albanian, because their customs and traditions set them apart, and yet, they did not feel themselves as being Serb either, the Serbs considering the Christian Orthodox faith as their foremost national attribute. Even so, many *Arnautashi* retained their old surnames until the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The district of Drenica and the area of Prekoruplje (stretching from Klina to Lapušnik and Mališevo) as well as the Medjuvodje area in Metohija, converted to Islam in the course of the eighteenth century, but continued to be bilingual into the early twentieth century. In the Drenica area, set between the plains of Metohija and Kosovo, the *Arnautashi* bore surnames pointing to their Serbian origin, such as Dokić, Velić, Marušić, Zonić, Račić, Gecić. The situation was similar in Peć and its surroundings, where many Islamized and Alban-

⁶³ Recorded by Petar Andrejić (Lj. Stojanović, *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi* (Belgrade & Novi Sad: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Narodna biblioteka Srbije & Matica srpska, 1987), vol. V, Nos. 7734 and 7737.

⁶⁴ *Kosovo–Metohija dans l'histoire serbe*, 113–139.

⁶⁵ Jovan Cvijić, *La péninsule balkanique. Géographie humaine* (Paris: A. Colin, 1918), 343–355.

ized Serbs carried characteristically Serbian surnames: Stepanović, Bojković, Dekić, Lekić, Stojković, etc.⁶⁶

The eminent geographer and anthropologist Jovan Cvijić, who traveled across Kosovo–Metohija during the last decades of Ottoman rule, was witness to social mimicry among the Serbs: “When a stranger comes to a Serbian home in Metohija, the host will speak Albanian so as not to reveal his origin. But a person familiar with this practice will have no trouble seeing whether the house he came to is Serbian or not, at least from some old and well-kept national costume of a Serb woman. Some Serbs of Metohija were welcomed and stayed overnight in an Albanian house, and their Albanian host had no idea that he was having Serbs in his home. Through this mimicry of appearance the people avoided persecution and violence. But this led directly to conversion to Islam and Albanization. There are families that are only half-Islamized (in the vicinity of Peć, as well as in Gora region near Prizren), where only men accepted Islam while women kept the [Christian Orthodox religion]”.⁶⁷

The eastern parts of Kosovo and Metohija, with their compact Serbian settlements, were the last to undergo Islamization. Earlier Islamization in the Upper Morava Valley and the Izmornik area is identified in the early eighteenth century, while the last wave took place in the 1870s. Slav toponyms of many presently Albanian villages in Kosovo indicated that the Serbs had lived there in the previous centuries, while in some places Christian Orthodox Serbian cemeteries were shielded against desecrators by local Muslim Albanians aware that those were the graves of their own ancestors.⁶⁸

In geographical terms, Kosovo–and–Metohija was considered an integral part of Serbia as recorded by both domestic and foreign sources during the first three centuries of Ottoman domination. In 1830 the Principality of Serbia was established as an autonomous state under Ottoman suzerainty. The Principality covered the northern part of the medieval Kingdom of Serbia, while its southern part remained under full Ottoman control. The name Old Serbia for this southern portion of medieval Serbia first appeared shortly before 1830. Old Serbia encompassed not only Kosovo–Metohija, but also the area of medieval Raška (Rascia) including the former *Sanjak* of Novi Bazar, the Skoplje (Uskub) area and today’s north-western Slav-inhabited Macedonia. The name Old Serbia was also used by both Serbian and European scholars and travel writers to describe the heartland of medieval Serbia. It was

only after 1877, when the *Vilayet* of Kosovo was formed, that the term Old Serbia began to be associated with this Ottoman administrative unit of similar extent.

Growing Tribal Privileges vs. Decaying Ottoman System

Prior to the Serbian Revolution (1804–1813) which led to the establishment of autonomous Serbia (1830), the Kosovo–Metohija area was governed by local Ottoman governors, mostly outlawed Albanian pashas. General conditions under which the Empire’s Christian subjects lived deteriorated apace with the deterioration of Ottoman central authority. Already assigned by the Ottoman theocratic system to a lower social class (*reaya*) than Muslims, they were now exposed to a re-feudalization as a result of the Ottoman administrative and economic decline. The *timar* (*sipahi*) system was turning into a *çiftlik* system, especially harmful to the Christian Orthodox population, predominantly having the status of tenant farmers. Local Muslim Albanian governors in the districts and provinces covering Kosovo–Metohija became hereditary feudal lords as early as the eighteenth century. Albanians of Muslim faith were tolerated by the Sublime Porte as feudal lords or as scofflaw regents because they were seen as promoting the Ottoman order based on *Shariah* and tribal privileges. Their pro-Ottoman culture made them useful even though they corrupted the Ottoman administration. In the early nineteenth century they ruled as semi-independent provincial governors, virtually uncontrolled by the central government in Constantinople.⁶⁹

Several notable Albanian families succeeded in imposing themselves as hereditary pashas (Djinolli or Djinić in the Priština area, Begolli or Mahmutbegović in the Peć area, Rotulli or Rotulović in Prizren etc.). Ruled by renegade Albanian pashas who, similarly to the conservative Muslim beys in Bosnia, wanted to preserve the status quo which would guarantee their privileges in Turkey-in-Europe, the Kosovo–Metohija Serbs were stuck between local outlaws relentlessly persecuting them and frequent Albanian revolts against the central authorities’ attempts at modernization. In that situation, plundering and violence became the prevailing social and political conditions in the area.⁷⁰

Serb cultural activity was limited to church-cultural communities which, supported by the Serbian Principality, made additional efforts to organize a school system for the Serbian children. At several monasteries and church-

⁶⁶ Todor P. Stanković, *Putne beleške po Staroj Srbiji 1871–1898* (Belgrade: Štamparija Dj. Munca i M. Karića, 1910), 111–140.

⁶⁷ Jovan Cvijić, *Osnove za geografiju geologiju Makedonije i Stare Srbije*, vol. III (Belgrade: Serbian Royal Academy, 1911), 1162–1165.

⁶⁸ Atanasije Urošević, *Kosovo*. Serbian Ethnographic Collection, vol. LXXVII, Department of Social Science. Vol. 39 (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, & Naučno delo 1965); Dj. Slijepčević, *Srpsko–arbanasčki odnosi*, 95–127.

⁶⁹ *Histoire de l’Empire Ottoman*, Robert Mantran, ed. (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 250–264; Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Empire 1700–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 46–53.

⁷⁰ For more, see Vladimir Stojančević, *Južnoslovenski narodi u Osmanskom Carstvu od Jedrenskog mira 1829. do Pariskog kongresa 1856. godine* (Belgrade: PTT, 1971).

es (Gračanica, Visoki Dečani, Devič, Duboki Potok, Vračevo, Draganac), additional buildings were constructed to accommodate the growing number of students of monastic and, subsequently, secular schools. Religious schools were established in all major towns (Priština, Peć, Mitrovica, Vučitrn, Gnjilane and Djakovica), while the best private schools, funded by church communities and guilds, were located at Prizren, Vučitrn, Mitrovica, and the villages of Donja Jasenovica and Kovači.⁷¹

After the Patriarchate of Peć was abolished in 1776, all the Serb bishoprics came under the jurisdiction of the Greek-controlled Patriarchate of Constantinople. Nevertheless, several Serb bishops remained in office. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the establishment of new Serb schools was urged by the dynamic Serb metropolitans Janičije and Hadži Zaharije of the Raška–Prizren Diocese. When in 1830 the Prizren bishopric chair was taken over by Greek bishops, efforts were made, in particular under Greek Metropolitan Ignatius (1840–1849), to open Tzintzar (Hellenized Vlach) schools in different urban centres, where lessons in Greek would also be attended by Serbian children.⁷² According to the available data, in the 1860s several dozen primary schools in Metohija and Kosovo were attended by at least 1,300 Serbian students. A number of talented students from Kosovo and Metohija were trained as teachers in Serbia from the early 1860s, owing to generous scholarships granted by the wealthy Prizren Serb merchant Sima Andrejević Iguanov (1804–1882), the founder of the Theological School (Seminary or *Bogoslovija*) in Prizren in 1871.⁷³

According to reliable Serbian sources, the first half of the nineteenth century in Kosovo–Metohija was marked by spiralling violence mostly directed against the Christian Orthodox Serb population, resulting in their occasional conversion to Islam and increasing emigration to the Principality of Serbia.⁷⁴ Appalling Serb testimonies of both religious and social discrimination against them, perpetrated mostly by Muslim Albanian outlaws, were additionally confirmed by both Western and Russian travellers.⁷⁵

The Serbian ruler Prince Mihailo Obrenović's (1860–1868) and his Prime Minister Ilija Garašanin's ambitious

⁷¹ Jagoš K. Djilas, *Srpske škole na Kosovu od 1856. do 1912. godine* (Priština: J. Djilas, 1969).

⁷² Cf. the most important studies: Petar Kostić, *Crkveni život pravoslavnih Srba u Prizrenu i njegovoj okolini u XIX veku* (Belgrade: Grafički institut "Narodna misao" A. D., 1928); Idem, *Prosvetno-kulturni život pravoslavnih Srba u Prizrenu i njegovoj okolini u XIX veku i početkom XX veka (sa uspomenu pisma)* (Skoplje: Grafičko-industrijsko preduzeće Krajičanac a. d., 1933).

⁷³ Vladimir Bovan, *Sima A. Iguanov. Život i delo* (Priština & Prizren: Narodna i Univerzitetska biblioteka "Ivo Andrić" & Srpska Pravoslavna Bogoslovija Svetog Kirila i Metodija, 2004).

⁷⁴ For more, see Dušan T. Bataković, ed., *Savremenici o Kosovu i Metohiji 1852–1912* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1988).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

plans for an all-Christian uprising in Turkey-in-Europe in the late 1860s paved the way for future cooperation with powerful Muslim and Roman Catholic clans from northern Albania. Nevertheless, the Belgrade government's friendly relations with the clans of northern Albania had no tangible effect on either the Kosovo renegade pashas and their lawless clans or on the improvement of the difficult position of the persecuted Christian Serb population.⁷⁶

The decrease of Serb population caused by tribal anarchy and forced migration was partially compensated by a high birth rate in the rural areas. In rural areas, the Christian Serbs, as well as the Muslim Albanians, lived in extended families (*zadruga*) comprising several generations and with up to as many as eighty members, but twenty to forty on average. The demographic structure was different in the urban population. According to the renowned Russian scholar A. F. Hilferding who conducted extensive, highly reliable research on his voyage to the region in 1858, the composition of the main towns was as follows: Peć—4,000 Muslim and 800 Christian Orthodox families; Priština—1,200 Muslim and 300 Christian Orthodox families; Prizren—3,000 Muslim, 900 Christian Orthodox and 100 Roman Catholic families.⁷⁷

In the 1860s the British travellers M. McKenzie and A. P. Irby recorded that Serb villages were not the only target of Albanian outlawed raiders. During their visit to Vučitrn, a Serb priest explained, in the presence of an Ottoman official (*mudir*), the position of urban Christians: "There, said he, the *mudir* sits—one man with half a dozen *zaptis* [policemen]—what can he effect? There are here but 200 Christian houses, and from 400 to 500 Mussulman [Muslim], so the Arnaouts [Albanians] have it all their own way. They rob the Christians whenever and of whatever they please; sometimes walking into a shop, calling for what they want, and carrying it off on promise of payment, sometimes seizing it without further ado. Worse than this, their thoroughly savage, ignorant, and lawless way of living keeps the whole community in a state of barbarism, and as the Christians receive no support against them, no enlightenment nor hope from Constantinople, they naturally look for everything to Serbia;—to the Serbia of the past for inspiring memories, to the Principality [of Serbia] for encouragement, counsel, and instructions."⁷⁸

The demographic structure of Old Serbia (Kosovo, Metohija, the former Sanjak of Novi Bazar and present-day north-western Macedonia) prior to the Eastern Cri-

⁷⁶ Sadulla Brestovci, *Marrëdhëniet shqiptare–serbo–malazeze 1830–1878* (Priština: Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, 1983).

⁷⁷ Aleksandar F. Giljferding, *Putovanje po Hercegovini, Bosni i Staroj Srbiji* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1972), 154–165 (Serbian translation from the Russian original of 1859).

⁷⁸ G. Muir Mackenzie and A.P. Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*, vol. I (2nd rev. ed., London: Dadly, Isbiter & Co, 1877), 246.

sis (1875–1878), according to Austro-Hungarian military intelligence sources in 1871, was as follows: 318,000 Serbs, 161,000 Albanians, 2,000 Osmanlis (ethnic Turks), 10,000 Vlachs, 9,000 Circassians and Gypsies. Of them, 250,000 were Christian Orthodox, 239,000 Muslims and 11,000 Roman Catholics.⁷⁹

Two wars that Serbia and Montenegro, supported by the Russian Empire, waged against the Ottomans (1876, 1877–1878) resulted in the defeat of the pro-Ottoman Muslim Albanian troops and the migration, both voluntary and forced, of at least 30,000 Muslim Albanians from the liberated territories of present-day southeast Serbia, the former *sanjak* of Niš. Conversely, dozens of thousands of Serbs fled from various parts of Old Serbia, mostly Kosovo (Lab and other areas of eastern and northern Kosovo), into the newly-liberated territory. Their exact number, however, has never been determined. Prior to the Second Serbo-Ottoman War (1877–78), Albanians were the majority population in some areas of *sanjak* of Niš (Toplica region), while from the Serb majority district of Vranje Albanian-inhabited villages were emptied after the 1877–78 war.⁸⁰ Reluctant to accept the loss of feudal privileges in a Christian-ruled European-type state, most Muslim Albanians emigrated to Metohija and Kosovo, taking out their frustration on the local Serbs.⁸¹

Religious Affiliation, Tribal Society and Rise of Nationalism

The *Vilayet of Kosovo* (1877–1912), an administrative unit of 24,000 sq km extending from Novi Pazar and Taslidje (Pljevlja) to Priština, Skoplje and Tetovo, was synonymous with Old Serbia during the last decades of Ottoman rule; it was a large political unit subdivided into *sanjaks*, *kazas* and *nahis*. In addition to Christian Orthodox Serbs and Muslim Albanians as the two major ethnic groups, its population included significant numbers of Muslim Slavs, Bulgarians, ethnic Turks, Hellenized Vlachs and Greeks. According to diverse data, in the Vilayet of Kosovo, with Priština (until 1888) and Skoplje (1888–1912)

⁷⁹ Peter Kukulj, Major im Generalstabe, *Das Fürstentum Serbien und Türkisch-Serbien (Stara Srbia, Alt-Serbien). Eine Militärisch-geographische Skizze (Im Manuskript gedruckt)*. Wien. Aus der kaiserlich-königlich Hof- und Staatsdruckerei 1871, 147–149.

⁸⁰ For example, prior to 1878 the Prokuplje area in the region of Toplica had 2,031 Serbian, 3,054 Albanian and 74 Turkish households. After 1878, only a few Albanian villages remained, while 64 were completely deserted (for more, see Djordje Mikić, “Social and Economic Conditions in Kosovo and Metohija from 1878 until 1912” in Vladimir Stojančević, ed., *Serbia and the Albanians in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries*, Academic Conferences, vol. LIII, Department of Historical Sciences, No 15 (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1990), 241–242).

⁸¹ Radoslav Pavlović, “Seobe Srba i Arbanasa u ratovima 1876. i 1877–1878. godine”, *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta* 4–6 (Belgrade: Ethnographic institute, 1955–57), 53–104.

as its successive seats, Albanians accounted for less than one half of the population until the late 1870s.⁸²

The number of Serbs declined during the following decades. Prior to the First Balkan War (1912) Albanians were already a majority in most of Metohija (Prizren, Djakovica and Peć), while Serbs remained a relative majority in the rural areas of Kosovo (Mitrovica, Priština, Gnjilane, Zvečan, Ibarski Kolašin, Novo Brdo area), and in the region of Rascia (former Sanjak of Novi Bazar). In total, there were 390,000 ethnic Albanians and 207,000 Christian Orthodox Serbs in the whole of Old Serbia.⁸³

Until the Eastern Crisis (1875–1878), the Muslim Albanians were wavering between being generally loyal to the Ottoman Empire and defending their own local interests which required opposition to the measures implemented by the central authorities. Defending their old privileges, the Muslim Albanians became, just as the Muslim Slavs in Bosnia, a serious obstacle to the modernization of the Ottoman Empire during its declining period.⁸⁴ Their national movement took an organized form at the very end of the Eastern Crisis. The Albanian League (1878–1881) was formed on the eve of the Congress of Berlin and based in Prizren. The Albanian League called for a solution to the Albanian national question within the borders of the Ottoman Empire: it was conservative Muslim groups that prevailed in the League’s leadership and commanded 16,000 men-strong paramilitary forces operating in several Ottoman vilayets.

The main cause of their discontent was the territorial enlargement of Serbia and Montenegro, two new independent states recognized by the Congress of Berlin in July 1878, while the main victims of their combined religious and national frustration were the Christian Serbs that remained under Ottoman rule, seen as the decisive pillar of support for the aspirations of the neighbouring Balkan states. Dissatisfied with the Porte’s concessions to major European Powers, the Albanian League tried to sever all ties with Constantinople. In order to prevent further international complications, the new Sultan, Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), ordered military action and brutally destroyed the Albanian movement.⁸⁵

The real nature of the Albanian League and its attitude towards other ethnic communities was described in detail in a confidential report sent to the Serbian government in Belgrade by Ilija Stavrić, Dean of the Serbian

⁸² Prior to the First Balkan War (1912) the Vilayet of Kosovo covered an area of 24,000 sq km and consisted of six *sanjaks*: Skoplje (Uskub), Priština, Peć, Sjenica, Taslidja (Pljevlja), with the Sanjak of Prizren, previously part of the Vilayet of Monastir (Bitolj, Bitola), included into it of 1897. As in previous administrative reorganizations, present-day Kosovo and Metohija encompassed mostly the areas of the *sanjaks* of Peć, Priština and Prizren.

⁸³ D.T. Bataković, *Kosovo Chronicles*, 134–137.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 83–88.

⁸⁵ Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878–1912* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 31–53.

Theological School (*Bogoslovija*) in Prizren. A first-hand account of the Albanian League meetings, it reported that Albanians were determined to “expel the Serbs and Montenegrins back to the former borders [...] and if they return, to put these infidels [Kosovo–Metohija Serbs] to the sword”.⁸⁶ Well-informed and Albanian-speaking, Stavrić added that the Serbian community in Prizren was forced by a member of Albanian League “on the 13th of this month [...] to cable a statement of our loyalty as subjects and our satisfaction with the present situation to the Porte; moreover, [we were forced] to declare that we do not wish to be governed by Bulgarians or Serbia or Montenegro. We had to do as they wished. Alas, if Europe does not know what it is like to be a Christian in the Ottoman Empire?”⁸⁷

Nevertheless, a revived loyalty to the Sublime Porte emerged among the Albanian Muslims only a few years later as an ecstatic response to the Sultan’s proclaimed pan-Islamic policy. Lacking the component of Islamic fanaticism, the new policy of the Sultan, who assumed the title of religious leader (*caliph*), meant to Muslim Albanians in particular the renewal of their tribal privileges and autonomy as well as both political and social predominance over their immediate neighbours, the Christian Slavs. Thus the Muslim Albanians in the western Balkans were encouraged by the Sultan and Caliph Abdülhamid II to relentlessly suppress all Christian-led unrest as a potential threat to the internal security of the Empire’s European provinces.⁸⁸

Furthermore, modern Albanian nationalism, stemming from its tribal roots, gave priority to tribal rather than any other loyalties. Although defined in ethnic terms, the Albanian national movement was still dominated by a Muslim majority and burdened by conservative Islamic traditions additionally reinforced both by the Pan-Islamic policy and by fears of European-style reforms. During the Greek-Ottoman War in 1897, according to confidential Austro-Hungarian reports, the Kosovo–Metohija Muslim Albanian volunteers demonstrated absolute solidarity with the Ottomans, while their patriotism, directed against Christians, was easily transformed into religious fanaticism.⁸⁹

The slow progress of Albanian national integration gave the Dual Monarchy the opportunity for broad political action: in this early process of nation-building the

⁸⁶ Arhiv Srbije, Ministarstvo inostranih dela, Političko odeljenje [Archives of Serbia, Belgrade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Political Department], 1878, fasc. IV, No 478, a confidential letter of the dean of Prizren Seminary (Prizrenska Bogoslovija) Ilija Stavrić of 26 June (8 July) 1878 from Prizren.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Cf. Peter Bartl, *Die albanischen Muslime zur Zeit der nationalen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung (1878–1912)* (Wiesbaden: O. Harasowitz, 1968).

⁸⁹ Haus, Hoff und Staatsarchiv, Wien, Politisches Archiv, vol. XII, Türkei, carton 170, 1901, *Studie des konsul Simon Joanovic uber der Sandschak von Novi Pazar*.

Albanian elites were divided into three religious communities, and so was the whole nation. Its members were of different social statuses, of mutually opposed political traditions, spoke different dialects and used different alphabets. In order to minimize the differences, Vienna launched important cultural initiatives: books about Albanian history were printed and distributed, the national coat-of-arms invented, and various grammars written in order to promote a uniform Albanian language.

The Latin script, supplemented with new letters for non-resounding sounds, was intended to become a common script for Albanians of all three confessions: until the early twentieth century, a variety of scripts was in use for texts in Albanian, including Greek, Cyrillic, and Arabic characters. Special histories were written—such as *Populare Geschichte der Albanesen* by Ludwig von Thalloczy—and distributed among the wider public in order to awaken national consciousness and create a unified national identity of the Albanians of all three confessions. The most important element in Austria–Hungary’s political and cultural initiative was the theory of the Illyrian origin of Albanians. This was a deliberate choice intended to “establish continuity with a suitable historical past”, a case of “invented tradition”, but with an important difference from the similar pattern applied elsewhere in Europe: the “inventors” and propagators of the “invented tradition” were not members of the national elite but their foreign protectors.⁹⁰

Similarly to other belated nations (*verspätete Nation*), when confronted with rival nationalisms Albanians sought foreign support and advocated radical solutions. The growing social stagnation and political disorder produced anarchy that reigned almost uninterrupted during the last century of Ottoman rule: there the Christians, mostly Serbs, were the principal victims of political discrimination and the Muslims, in Kosovo–Metohija mostly Albanians, were their persecutors.⁹¹

False rumours that the Serbs were going to rise to arms in Kosovo on the very day Serbia was proclaimed a kingdom in March 1882 resulted in the establishment of a court-martial in Priština. For the five years of its uninterrupted activity, based on suspicion rather than hard evidence, roughly 7,000 Kosovo Serbs were sentenced for “sedition”, while another 300 were sentenced to between six and hundred-and-one years’ hard labour. The prominent Serb urban elders were imprisoned, along with teachers and merchants, priests and some prosperous farmers. The sentenced were sent to prisons in Salonika or exiled to Anatolia. Only in 1888, due to the joint mediation of Russian and British diplomacies, were some

⁹⁰ E. Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions.” Cf. also Milorad Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790–1918*, vol. II (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1989), 451–455.

⁹¹ *Kosovo–Metohija dans l’histoire*, 192–215.

of the surviving Kosovo Serb convicts eventually pardoned.⁹²

Kosovo Serbs: Discrimination and Persecution 1882–1912

In was in 1882 that Sima Andrejević Igumanov published a terrifying testimony: *The Current Regrettable Situation in Old Serbia (Sadašnje nesretno stanje u Staroj Srbiji)*, a book of credible and verifiable data on harassment, discrimination and atrocities committed by the Turks and Muslim Albanians in the early phase of the court-martial's activity. Fearful that Serbia would fail to pay enough attention to the sufferings of her co-nationals in Turkey-in-Europe, Sima A. Igumanov attempted to draw the public eye to the new wave of ethnically and religiously motivated violence:

“Our homeland [Old Serbia] has been turned into hell by dark crazed bloodsuckers and masses of melting Asian tyrants. Banditry, violence, deletion, spying, denunciation, daily arrests, accusations, trials, sentences, exiles, seizure of property and life in many ways, wailing and mourning for the dead and burial of the executed, all these have become ordinary events everywhere in Old Serbia and [Slavic] Macedonia.”⁹³

A mixture of religious, socially-based antagonisms and growing national rivalry added to the intensity of the Serb-Albanian conflict: “It is true that the Albanians in Kosovo, who were preponderantly Muslim, identified themselves religiously with the Turks, and on that basis were identified with the [Ottoman] Empire. They naturally regarded [Orthodox] Christians, being enemies of Turkey, as their own enemy. However, as far as the Slavs were concerned, the hatred of the Kosovars [Kosovo Albanians] was not founded on religion—although religion intensified it—but on ethnic difference: they fought the foreigner (the *Shkja*) because he coveted their land.”⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the religious dimension, although not predominant among Muslim Albanians, remained the basis of social reality: many Muslim Albanians in Kosovo–Metohija believed Islam to be the religion of free people, whereas Christianity, especially Orthodox Christianity, was seen as the religion of slaves. European consuls observed an echo of such beliefs among the Albanians as late as the early twentieth century.⁹⁵

⁹² *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. VI–1 (Belgrade: SKZ, 1983), 323–326. Cf. also Janićije Popović, *Život Srba na Kosovu i Metohiji* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1987), 247–248.

⁹³ D.T. Bataković, ed., *Savremenici o Kosovu i Metohiji*, 101.

⁹⁴ “*Shkja* – plural *Shkje* – is the word the Albanians use for the Slavs. The derivation is from Latin *sclavus* in the meaning of Slav.” (Quoted from S. Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, 202).

⁹⁵ “*Les musulmans d'origine albanaise [...] sont cependant fanatiques et leur fanatisme se base sur la conviction que l'Islam est la religion des gens libres et des patrons tandis que le christianisme est la religion des esclaves.*” (Quoted from D. T. Bataković, “Mémoire du

Serbia struggled to implement stronger diplomatic monitoring, to revive the issue of re-installing Serbian Metropolitans in both Prizren and Skoplje, as the first step to re-establish Patriarchate of Peć and to obtain wider international support for the official recognition of Serbs as a separate nation and their legal protection in Old Serbia. To the network of Serbia's diplomatic missions in Turkey-in-Europe, a general consulate based in Skoplje (Uskub) covering the whole of the Vilayet of Kosovo was added in 1887, while in 1889, after a long delay, a Serb consulate was eventually established in Priština.⁹⁶ The immediate response was Albanian-led anarchy that developed into a large-scale attempt to drive out the Christian Serbs from Metohija. In April and May 1889 alone, around 700 persons fled Kosovo and Metohija to Serbia. The Russian consul to Prizren, T. Lisevich, in his evaluation of the anarchy in Kosovo and Metohija, concluded that the Muslim Albanians' goal was to cleanse all areas between Serbia and Montenegro and thus deprive Old Serbia of its Serbian character. Anti-Serbian feelings culminated in the murder of Serbian Consul Luka Marinković in Priština in June 1890. Based on information received from the Serbs of Priština, the Serbian government maintained that an Albanian conspiracy was responsible for the assassination, while the Sublime Porte sought to present the murder as an act of general Muslim antagonism towards Christian foreigners. His successors, including the greatest Serbian playwright Branislav Dj. Nušić, succeeded in getting the first Serbian bookshop started and sponsored the renovation of the primary and secondary Serbian school in Priština.⁹⁷

After the death of Meletios, the last Greek Metropolitan in Prizren, the concerted diplomatic effort of Belgrade

vice-consul de France à Skoplje (Uskub) sur les Albanais de Metohia de 1908” in *Miscellanea* 20 (Belgrade: Institut d'histoire, 1990), 112.

⁹⁶ *Spomenica Stojana Novakovića* (Belgrade: Srpska književna yadruka, 1921), 171–173. Until the end of the First Balkan War in 1912 daily reports on the living conditions of Serbs and the political situation in the Vilayet of Kosovo were sent regularly from the Serbian consulates in Skoplje and Priština (while copies were circulated to the Legation of Serbia in Constantinople). Several thousand comprehensive documents stored in the Archive of the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Arhiv Srbije, Beograd, Ministarstvo inostranih dela, Prosvetno-političko odeljenje i Političko odeljenje 1878–1912*) have been only partially published. Cf. the published diplomatic correspondence in Vladimir Ćorović, ed., *Diplomatska prepiska Kraljevine Srbije*, vol. I: 1902–1903 (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1933); and additional three volumes edited by the archivist Branko Peruničić, *Pisma srpskih konzula iz Prištine 1890–1900* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1985); *Svedočanstvo o Kosovu 1901–1912* (Belgrade: Naučna knjiga, 1988); *Zulumni aga i begova u kosovskom vilajetu* (Belgrade: Nova, 1988). Cf. also diplomatic correspondence published in *Zadružbine Kosova. Spomenici i znamenja srpskog naroda*, eds. R. Samarđžić, M. Vojvodić and D. T. Bataković, 607–738; Milan Rakić, *Konzulska pisma 1905–1911*, ed. Andrej Mitrović (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1985).

⁹⁷ D. T. Bataković, “Entrée dans la sphère d'intérêt de l'Europe” in *Kosovo–Metohija dans l'histoire serbe*, 179–185.



The Vilayet of Kosovo, 1977–1912

and Cetinje, bolstered by the Russian Embassy in Constantinople, resulted in a Serb prelate, Dionisije Petrović (1896–1900), being appointed as Raška–Prizren Metropolitan. In accord with the Belgrade government, the new metropolitan, as well as his successor Nićifor Perić (1901–1911), carried out a broad reorganization of both ecclesiastical and educational institutions for the Christian Serbs, opened new schools, renewed teaching staff, established new church-school communities, and coordinated all activities relating to important national affairs.⁹⁸

Serbia, on her part, planned to open a consulate in Prizren (1898–1900) so as to facilitate daily communication with the Raška–Prizren Metropolitan and to provide moral support to the discriminated local Serb population. However, as the local Muslim Albanians threatened to burn all Serb houses and shops in the town and sent fierce protests to the Porte, Serbia eventually gave up the idea altogether.⁹⁹

Systematic persecution against the Serbs in Kosovo, Metohija and Slavic-inhabited Macedonia, flaring from 1882, was an integral part of Sultan Abdülhamid II's pan-Islamic policy. Seeking to put an end to this situation, Serbian Envoy to Constantinople Stojan Novaković made a solitary effort of diplomatic pressure on the Sublime Porte

⁹⁸ Novak Ražnatović, "Rad vlade Crne Gore i Srbije na postavljanju srpskih mitropolita u Prizrenu i Skoplju 1890–1902. godine", *Istorijski zapisi* XXII/2 (1965), 218–275; *Istorijski srpskog naroda*, vol. VI–1 (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1983), 303–305; Archimandrite Firmilijan Dražić was first appointed administrator of the Metropolitanate of Skoplje in 1897, and eventually confirmed as the Serbian metropolitan of this diocese in 1902. The whole of Vilayet of Kosovo (Old Serbia) was thus covered by the Serbian metropolitans of Raška–Prizren and Skoplje.

⁹⁹ D.T. Bataković, "Pokušaji otvaranja srpskog konzulata u Prištini 1898–1900", *Istorijski časopis* XXXI (1984), 249–250.

in 1898/99. In his diplomatic note submitted to the Ottoman Foreign Minister, Novaković stressed that "crimes and robberies are daily occurrences, and the perpetrators not only remain unpunished, they are not even pursued by the [Ottoman] authorities. The number of refugees fleeing across the border for their lives is enormous, and increases daily. According to the data the Royal government [of Serbia] possess, more than four hundred crimes have been perpetrated in the *sanjaks* of Priština, Novi Pazar, Peć and Prizren within a few months, last summer and winter. They include murder, arson, banditry, desecration of churches, rape, abduction, robbery, raiding of whole herds. This figure accounts for only part, one-fifth at most, of what really happened, since most crimes have remained unreported because the victims or their families dare not complain."¹⁰⁰

Formal investigations by Ottoman authorities had no significant results, nor did they in any way improve the security of the Serb population in Old Serbia. Deprived of Russian support in Constantinople, the government in Belgrade accomplished nothing. A plan to submit a bilingual "Blue Book" of diplomatic correspondence on richly-documented Albanian violence against Christian Serbs in Old Serbia to the 1899 International Peace Conference at Hague was prevented by Austria-Hungary, after the protest sent to King Alexander I Obrenović of Serbia, politically bound to Vienna by secret treaties. In the absence of official support, Serb refugees from Old Serbia and Slavic Macedonia sent a memorandum to the Conference, but their complaints about being systematically discriminated by Muslim Albanian outlaws were not put on the official agenda.¹⁰¹ The policy of impunity of which the Muslim Albanians, under the auspices of Sultan Abdülhamid II himself, took full advantage in the 1880s and in particular the 1890s, gradually turned into uncontrolled anarchy which was causing serious troubles for both the governor (*vali*) of Kosovo and the central government in Constantinople.¹⁰²

Western travel accounts from the very end of the nineteenth century vividly portray the precarious situation of the Christian Orthodox Serb population in Kosovo and Metohija and the neighbouring areas of Old Serbia (*Vilayet of Kosovo*):

¹⁰⁰ *Documents diplomatiques. Correspondance concernant les actes de violence et de brigandage des Albanais dans la Vieille Serbie (Vilayet de Kosovo) 1898–1899* (Belgrade: Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, MDCCCXCIX). It is a bilingual French/Serbian edition of diplomatic correspondence of Serbian Minister to the Sublime Porte Stojan Novaković with Tefik-Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs. Serbian title: *Prepiska o arbanaskim nasiljima u Staroj Srbiji (Kosovski vilajet) 1898–1899* (Beograd: Ministarstvo inostranih dela, MDCCCXCIX).

¹⁰¹ D.T. Bataković, "Memorandum Srba iz Stare Srbije i Makedonije Medjunarodnoj konferenciji mira u Hagu 1899. godine", *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* LIII–LIV (1987–88), 177–183.

¹⁰² *Pisma srpskih konzula iz Prištine 1890–1900*, 185–187.

“Of the rest of the Christian Servian [Serbian] population of Old Servia, for every nine who remain, one has fled in despair to Servia [Serbia], within recent years. The remainder, unarmed and unprotected, survives only by entering into a species of feudal relationship with some Albanian brave. The Albanian is euphemistically described as their ‘protector.’ He lives on tolerably friendly terms with his Serbian vassal. He is usually ready to shield him from other Albanians, and in return he demands endless blackmail in an infinite variety of forms. [...] They can be compelled to do forced labour for an indefinite number of days. But even so the system is inefficient, and the protector fails at need. There are few Servian [Serbian] villages which are not robbed periodically of all their sheep and cattle—I can give names of typical cases if that would serve any purpose. For two or three years the village remains in a slough of abject poverty, and then by hard work purchases once more the beginning of the herd, only due to loose it again. I tried to find out what the system of land tenure in this country, where the Koran and the raffle are the only law, is what Albanian chiefs of the district chooses to make it. The Servian peasant, children of the soil, is tenant at will, exposed to every caprice of their domestic conquerors. Year by year the Albanian hillmen encroach upon the plain, and year by year the Servian peasants disappear before them.”¹⁰³

A similar first-hand account was recorded by a notable American traveller:

“It would be difficult for the Turks to carry out there the custom of disarming [Orthodox] Christians. But the Ottoman Government had secured the loyalty of Christians [Roman Catholic Albanians]—as well as Mohammeden Ghegs [Muslim Albanians] by allowing them to pillage and kill their non-Albanian neighbours to their hearts’ content. They are ever pressing forward, burning, looting, and murdering the Servians [Serbs] of the Vilayet of Kossovo [Kosovo]. The frontier line of Albania has been extended in this way far up into Old Servia [Old Serbia]. Even the frontier of Serbia proper is not regarded by these lawless mountain men. They often make raids into Bulgaria when quartered as soldiers on the border. The Albanians have overrun all Macedonia. They have found their way in large numbers as far as Constantinople. But beyond their own borders and the section of Kosovo from which the Servians have fled, they are held within certain bounds. In many Albanian districts the Albanians are exempt from military service, but large numbers of them join the Turkish army as volunteers. They enlist for the guns and cartridge.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Henry N. Brailsford, *Macedonia. Its Races and their Future* (London: Methuen & Co, 1905), 275–276.

¹⁰⁴ Frederick Moore, *The Balkan Trail* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1906), 223–224.

A detailed list of Christian Serb households in the Bishopric of Raška–Prizren, compiled in 1899 by Metropolitan Dionisije, amounts to 8,323 Serbian houses in the villages and 3,035 in the towns of Kosovo and Metohija, which gives 113,580 persons (with ten persons per family on average). By comparison with the official data of the Serbian government registering some 60,000 Serbs forced to emigrate from Kosovo, Metohija and the neighbouring regions to the Kingdom of Serbia between 1890 and 1900, statistics show that the number of Serbs in villages had declined by at least one third from the time of the Eastern Crisis. Most of the remaining Serbian houses were in larger towns, where they were relatively protected from violence: in Prizren (982), Priština (531), Peć (461), Gnjilane (407) and Orahovac (176), and they were much fewer in small towns such as Djakovica (70) and Ferizović (20).¹⁰⁵

The area of Metohija, however, remained the main target of continuous ethnic cleansing of Christian Orthodox Serbs. Metropolitan Nićifor Perić negotiated in 1903 to entrust the administration of Dečani Monastery to the brotherhood of the Russian skete of St. John Chrysostom from Mount Athos. The Russian monks were brought with the hope that they would protect the Serbs in Metohija, deprived of both Russian and Serbian diplomatic protection, from the unrestricted oppression of Muslim Albanian outlaws, restore monastic life in the impoverished monastery and bar the growing influence of both Austro–Hungarian and Roman Catholic propaganda. As far as the protection of Christian Orthodox Serbs was concerned, Russian diplomacy was also expected to provide assistance. Dissensions that arose between Belgrade and St. Petersburg, and divisions among the Serbs of Metohija for and against the actions of the Russian monks now in charge of Dečani monastery had additional negative effects on Serb national and cultural action in Metohija.¹⁰⁶

According to Austro–Hungarian statistics of 1903, the population of Kosovo and Metohija consisted of 187,200 Serbs (111,350 Christian Orthodox, 69,250 Muslim and 6,600 Roman Catholic) and 230,300 Albanians (Muslim 215,050, Roman Catholic 14,350 and Christian Orthodox 900). These statistics, however, should not be completely trusted, given difficulties in collecting precise data and having in mind the Dual Monarchy’s strong political interest in supporting Albanians at the time of data collection—at the very beginning of the Great Powers’ reform action in Old Serbia and Macedonia, the three so-called

¹⁰⁵ S. Novaković, *Balkanska pitanja i manje istorijsko–političke beleške o Balkanskom poluostrvu 1886–1905* (Belgrade: Serbian Royal Academy, 1906), 515–527; *Documents diplomatiques. Correspondance concernant les actes de violence et de brigandage des Albanais dans la Vieille Serbie (Vilayet de Kosovo) 1898–1899*, 136.

¹⁰⁶ For more detail, see D. T. Bataković, *Dečansko pitanje* (Belgrade: Prosveta & Istorijski institut, 1989; 2nd updated edition by Čigoja Štampa 2007) (with the earlier literature).

“Macedonian Vilayets” (1903–1908). Within this international effort comprising gendarmerie from most European Powers, only the Serb-inhabited areas of the Vilayet of Kosovo were excluded from the reform project as a result of Vienna’s adamant demand.¹⁰⁷

Liberation from the Ottomans

With the First Balkan War (1912) the tide turned. A series of Albanian rebellions (1910–12) had precipitated the formation of a Balkan Alliance (Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro), which, motivated by the deteriorating status of the entire Christian population in European Vilayets, declared war on the Ottomans. Prior to the war, Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić offered the Albanian leaders an “accord on the union of Serbs and Albanians in the Vilayet of Kosovo”, whereby ethnic Albanians were offered, within the Kingdom of Serbia, religious freedom, the use of the Albanian language in Albanian municipal schools and administration, preservation of the Albanian common law and, finally, an Albanian legislative body in charge of religious, judicial and educational affairs. At the huge gathering held in Skoplje on 10 October (and subsequently in Priština and Debar), the Albanians opted for armed defence of their Ottoman fatherland, and for using the arms obtained from Serbia against Serbia.¹⁰⁸

Kosovo Albanians were supplied with 63,000 rifles from the Ottomans alone to organize full-scale resistance against the Serbian troops. And yet, no more 16,000 Muslim Albanians of Kosovo came to the frontline to face the Serbian army. The Serbian artillery scattered Albanian irregular (*bashibozuk*) units without encountering any serious resistance. Having been soundly defeated the Albanian chieftains Bairam Curri, Riza Bey and Isa Bolletini fled to Malissia in northern Albania. Oskar Prochaska, Consul of Austria–Hungary in Prizren, tried in vain to incite Albanians to resist the Serbian troops.¹⁰⁹ Whilst most of Muslim Albanians remained hostile, Christian Serbs in all of Kosovo and Metohija greeted the Serbian and Montenegrin armies with exhilaration.

The first Serb soldier to enter liberated Priština was the famous poet and former Serbian consul in Priština Milan M. Rakić, who had joined the army as a volunteer. After

the liberation of Priština (22 October), and the decisive Serbian victory over the considerably stronger Ottoman troops at Kumanovo (23–24 October), the war was over in both Old Serbia and Slavic-inhabited Macedonia.

The Third Serbian Army, led by General Božidar Janković, later known as “the avenger of Kosovo” for liberating the most of Kosovo proper, attended the solemn liturgy at the Monastery of Gračanica celebrating the centuries-awaited liberation of Kosovo.¹¹⁰ The military authorities issued proclamations in Priština and other towns calling Albanians to put down and surrender their arms. Even in the traditional hotbed of outlaws, Drenica, and in the Peć area Muslim Albanians eventually accepted partial if not full disarmament. However, as a result of anti-Serbian agitation by tribal leaders many Albanians fled and took shelter in the mountains. Serbian officers kept reassuring the Albanian population that Serbia is at war against the Ottomans, not against them. Serbia quickly established civil administration in the newly-liberated areas. Kosovo became part of the Lab, Priština and Prizren districts. Montenegro reorganized liberated Metohija into the Peć and Djakovica districts.¹¹¹

The London Treaty of 30 May 1913 fixed the borders of Serbia, Montenegro and newly-established Albania, with the exception of some disputed portions left to an International Commission to decide on subsequently. Both Kosovo and Slav-inhabited Macedonia were officially incorporated into Serbia on 7 September 1913 by a solemn proclamation of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Serbia, while most of Metohija was integrated into the Kingdom of Montenegro by a similar decision.

In late July 1914, two days before Vienna declared war on Serbia, Austro–Hungarian consular officials in Albania were instructed to provide full financial and military support to an Albanian insurrection in Serbian territory. The Muslim Albanian leaders of Kosovo in exile Bairam Curri, Hasan Prishtina and Isa Bolletini obtained significant financial support as well as arms and ammunition supplies from Austro–Hungarian consuls in order to prepare armed incursions which would instigate a full-scale Albanian rebellion in the Serb-held territories of Metohija, Kosovo and north-western Macedonia, inhabited by a mixed Muslim Albanian and Christian Serb and Slavic population.¹¹²

In Constantinople, an agreement was concluded between the Hapsburgs and the Ottomans: Austria–Hungary was to incite and finance the Albanian rebellion, while the Young Turks were to be responsible for propaganda, military organization and operations. Incursions into the

¹⁰⁷ For more, see Milan G. Miloievitch, *La Turquie d’Europe et le problème de la Macédoine et de la Vieille Serbie* (Paris: Arthur Rousseau, 1905).

¹⁰⁸ Djordje Mikic, “The Albanians and Serbia during the Balkan Wars” in Bela Kiraly & Dimitrije Djordjević, eds., *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars*, War and Society in East Central Europe, vol. XVIII (Social Science Monographs, Boulder Columbia University Press New York, 1987), 165–196. Elaborated in Dj. Dj. Stanković, “Nikola Pašić i stvaranje albanske države”, *Marksiistička misao* 3 (1985), 157–169.

¹⁰⁹ John D. Treadway, *The Falcon and the Eagle. Montenegro and Austria–Hungary, 1908–1914* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1983), 121.

¹¹⁰ Elezi Han, one of the smaller towns, was renamed after him to Djeneral Janković. It now is on the border with the FYROM.

¹¹¹ *Prvi balkanski rat*, 416–417, 464–469; for more, see Mikić, “Albanians and Serbia”, 163–166.

¹¹² More detail in Andrej Mitrović, *Serbia’s Great War* (London: Hurst & Co, 2007).

Serbian territory and the Muslim Albanian rebellion in Kosovo, Metohija and north-western Macedonia were to pave the way for opening another front against Serbia. After the Austro–Hungarian attack in July 1914, Serbia deployed most of her troops along the border with the Dual Monarchy. The initial small-scale attacks from Albania were recorded as early as the beginning of August 1914. The Ottoman and Austro–Hungarian alliance was becoming tighter, which sealed the fate of the six-month reign of the freshly-elected Prince of Albania, Wilhelm von Wied. After several unsuccessful attempts to crush the insurrection, the German prince was abandoned by his volunteers and left Albania for good in early September 1914.¹¹³

When the retreating Serbian army, followed by countless refugees, reached Kosovo, sabotage and surprise attacks began. In many Kosovo villages local Albanians refused to provide food without differentiating between soldiers and civilian refugees. In Istok, a small town in Metohija, on 29 November 1915, a unit of exhausted Serbian soldiers lagging behind the main military column was massacred by Albanian brigands. Near the Monastery of St. Mark of Koriša in the vicinity of Prizren, Albanians of the Kabash clan treacherously disarmed, robbed and brutally executed some sixty Serbian soldiers.¹¹⁴

After the Serbian army's retreat from Peć, Albanian outlaws pillaged many Serbian homes and shops. Austro–Hungarian guards prevented them from entering the hospital in Peć and massacring the wounded Serbian soldiers. Local Albanians set ambushes near [Kosovska] Mitrovica as well, killing exhausted soldiers and robbing unarmed refugees. Serious crimes were committed against the Serbian civilian population in Suva Reka and elsewhere in Kosovo as well.¹¹⁵

Following the agonizing withdrawal of the defeated Serbian troops to central and northern Albania—held by the Serb-friendly regime of powerful General Essad-Pasha Toptani in his Adriatic capital Durazzo—Austria–Hungary and Bulgaria established their rule in occupied Serbia (1916–1918).¹¹⁶ Kosovo and Metohija were separated and made parts of two different Austro–Hungarian occupation zones: Metohija was included in the General *Gou-*

vernment 'Montenegro', a smaller portion of Kosovo with Kosovska Mitrovica and Vučitrn became part of the General *Gouvernement* 'Serbia'; the largest portion of Kosovo proper with the Prizren area (Priština, Gnjilane, Ferizović, Prizren, Orahovac) was included into the Bulgarian Military–Inspectional Region 'Macedonia'.¹¹⁷

As protectors of Albanians, Austro–Hungarians were quick to establish schools and local administration in the Albanian language. Kosovo Albanians remained privileged, whilst Serbs were utterly distrusted. Things were even worse in the Bulgarian occupation zone: massive oppression, internment of civilians, forced Bulgarization, persecution and murder of Serbian priests followed the establishment of Bulgarian rule. Nićifor Perić, former Metropolitan of the Raška–Prizren Diocese, was interned and murdered in Bulgaria. Serbian priests suffered most, persecuted and murdered in both occupation zones and by both Albanians and Bulgarians. The Metropolitan of Raška–Prizren, Vićentije, and his deacon, Cvetko Nešić, were taken from Prizren to Uroševac on 23 November 1915 and burned alive two days later.

In Kosovo rural communities Bulgarians often appointed ethnic Albanians and Turks as chiefs, officials or gendarmes, who then assisted their compatriots in plundering local Serb property, in winning court cases against Serbs, and in hushing up occasional murders. In some Kosovo villages, Turks and Albanians jointly oppressed Serbs without fear of punishment, just as it was during the last years of Ottoman rule.¹¹⁸

The restoration of the Kingdom of Serbia, carried out by the forces joined into the *Armée d'Orient* under the supreme command of General Franchet d'Esperey in the autumn of 1918, started after the Serbian armies made a major breakthrough on the Salonica Front, an event that changed the course of the Great War. Commanded by French General Tranić, French and Serbian troops reached Kosovo in early October, subsequently liberating Priština, Prizren, Gnjilane and Mitrovica. Serbian *komitadji* units, led by Kosta Milovanović Pećanac, met French troops at Mitrovica and immediately set off to Peć. Serbs surrounded the city and compelled the considerably stronger Austro–Hungarian garrison to surrender; it was only after that that the French cavalry trotted into town.

Muslim Albanians, however, took arms left behind by the defeated Bulgarian and Austrian troops and attacked representatives of the Serbian civil and military authorities, while the order to surrender arms met with strong armed resistance, in particular in Drenica and the rural

¹¹³ Bogumil Hrabak, *Arbanaški upadi i pobune na Kosovu i u Makedoniji od kraja 1912. do kraja 1915. godine: nacionalno nerazvijeni nejedinstveni Arbanasi kao orudje u rukama zainteresovanih država* (Vranje: Narodni muzej, 1988), 124–145.

¹¹⁴ *Zadužbine Kosova*.

¹¹⁵ P. Kostić, *Crkveni život pravoslavnih Srba*, 141–143; Bogumil Hrabak, "Stanje na srpsko–albanskoj granici i pobuna Arbanasa na Kosovu i u Makedoniji" in *Srbija 1915*, Zbornik radova Istorijskog instituta 4 (Belgrade: Istorijski institut, 1986), 80–85; B. Hrabak, *Arbanaški upadi i pobune*, 186–195.

¹¹⁶ D.T. Bataković, "Serbian Government and Essad–Pasha Toptani" in *Serbia and the Albanians in the 20th Century*, Andrej Mitrović, ed., *Conferences*, vol. LXI, Department of Historical Sciences, no. 20 (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts 1991), 57–78.

¹¹⁷ A serious crisis broke out in 1916 over the issue on dividing occupational zones between Bulgaria and Austria–Hungary. Cf. *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. VI–2 (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1983), 146–148; for more, see Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War*, passim.

¹¹⁸ Janićije Popović, *Kosovo u ropstvu pod Bugarima* (Leskovac, Štamparija Ž.D. Obrenovića, 1921); on the persecution of the clergy, see additional documentation in *Zadužbine Kosova*, 745–750.

surroundings of Peć. It was not until mid-December 1918 that Serbian forces finally managed to crush Albanian resistance and partially disarm the rebels. The Second Serbian Army briefly introduced martial law and re-established civil administration only after the eventual restoration of law and order.¹¹⁹

Within the Serbian and the Yugoslav Realm: Reconstruction, Agrarian Reform, Resettlement

After Montenegro's unconditional decision to unite with Serbia on 26 November 1918, and the formation of a common Yugoslav state (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) on 1 December 1918, Kosovo–Metohija remained an integral part of Serbia and her different political units (*oblast* and *banovina*). The purpose of the centralized system that was established was to give a common, European-like Yugoslav identity to different religious, ethnic and national groups divided not only by their different pasts, customs and traditions, but also by many related prejudices, stereotypes and self-referring grievances. For the ruling Karadjordjević family, restorers of Serbia, liberators of Kosovo and founders of Yugoslavia, it was a tremendously difficult task to find a European-type pattern that would be able to unite disparate elements within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and to reconcile their often opposing political traditions.

After the First World War, the role of the main protector of Albania and the certified interpreter of Albanian interests was taken over by a new regional power—Italy. Rome continued its old practice of stirring Serb-Albanian conflict, now with the newly-established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929), over supremacy in the Eastern Adriatic. For several years (1918–1924) Kosovo—and–Metohija remained a restless border area constantly threatened by Albanian outlaws (*kaçaks*), supported by the “Kosovo Committee”, an organization of Kosovo emigrants struggling for a “Greater Albania”.

The Kosovo Committee in Albania was financed by various Italian governments. In Yugoslavia, as in pre-war Serbia, the ethnic Albanians were a minority hostile towards the new state ruled by their former serfs. The Kosovo beys reached an agreement with Belgrade about their own privileges, satisfied that their kinsmen were guaranteed religious rights but not adequate minority rights, deprived of secular schools and wider cultural activities in

their native language.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, Kosovo Muslim Albanians, as a predominantly conservative patriarchal community, often preferred religious to communal schooling, and Islamic to secular institutions.

The leading Albanian beys from Kosovo, Metohija and north-western Macedonia founded the *Çemijet* political party in 1919. They made direct arrangements with Belgrade, offering political support in exchange for partial exemption from the agrarian reform. Supported by the local Muslim population, mostly Albanian, Turkish and Slav Muslims, the *Çemijet* won 12 seats in the Yugoslav Parliament in the 1921 elections, and was even more successful two years later (14 seats). The *Çemijet*, serving mostly religious and social interests rather than political ones, gradually evolved into an organization that combined religious affiliation with distinct national goals. As early as 1925, however, the party was banned by the Royal Yugoslav authorities for its clandestine ties with the remaining *kaçak* groups and the anti-Belgrade government in Tirana. It continued, for a certain period of time, to operate clandestinely, recruiting followers, mostly young men, for the Albanian national cause.

To the challenge of both Kosovo Albanians and their kinsmen from Albania, Belgrade responded by taking two-fold measures. First, repopulation of Serbs in Kosovo was undertaken with the aim of restoring the demographic balance disturbed during the last decades of Ottoman rule. Second, as the initial step in pulling these regions out of their centuries-long backwardness, the feudal system was abolished in 1919. Serfdom was put to an end and former serfs were declared the owners of the land they tilled. For the first time, the native Kosovo Serbs as well as many landless Kosovo Albanian families obtained their own land. Following the *Decree on Settlement in Southern Regions* (24 September 1920), colonization began in late 1920, albeit without adequate preparations. It has been suggested that implementation of the colonization project “was entrusted to feeble and unskilled officials”, which led to dangerous mismanagement.¹²¹

Thus the first Serb settlers were left to themselves, while the royal authorities charged with carrying out the resettlement project often took advantage of flaws of the reform to engage in various forms of abuse. Many Kosovo Albanians were deprived of their former property, at least partially. After the first decade of implementation, both the agrarian reform and colonization, although aimed to upgrade the economy and secure interethnic balance, proved to suffer from major shortcomings, which had the worst consequences for the Serb settlers them-

¹¹⁹ Bogumil Hrabak, “Učešće stanovništva Srbije u proterivanju okupatora 1918”, *Istorijski glasnik* 3–4 (1958), 25–50; Idem, “Reokupacija oblasti srpske i crnogorske države arbanaškom većinom stanovništva u jesen 1918. godine i držanja Arbanasa prema uspostavljenoj vlasti”, *Gjurmime albanologjike* 1 (1969), 255–260; Andrej Mitrović, *Ustaničke borbe u Srbiji 1916–1918* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1988), 520–522.

¹²⁰ Under the Treaty of Saint-Germain (1919), minorities in Serbia within the borders of 1913 (including Kosovo–Metohija) were excluded from international protection. Cf. Radošin Rajović, *Autonomija Kosova. Pravno-politička studija* (Belgrade: Ekonomika, 1987), 100–105.

¹²¹ B. Krstić, *Kosovo. Facing the Court of History*, 83.

selves but also provoked growing discontent among the Albanians.¹²²

However, of the total amount of land allotted to Serbian settlers in Metohija and in Kosovo only five percent was arable. In two huge waves of colonization (1922–29 and 1933–38), 10,877 families (some 60,000 colonists) were allotted 120,672 hectares (about 15.3 percent of the land of present-day Kosovo—and–Metohija). Another 99,327 hectares planned for settlements were not allotted. For the incoming settlers, 330 settlements and villages were built, with 12,689 houses, forty-six schools and thirty-two churches.¹²³

Two inter-war official state censuses (1921, 1931) used questionnaires containing questions regarding religious affiliation and native language, but not ethnic origin or national identity. Nevertheless, in demographic terms, the present-day Kosovo–Metohija had a relative Albanian majority, excluding therefore all propaganda speculation, both inter-war and post-war, on alleged mass migrations or mass expulsions of Kosovo Albanians (1919–1941). According to the 1921 census, Kosovo had 436,929 inhabitants; Albanians (i.e. inhabitants using Albanian as their native language) constituted 64.1 percent (280,440). Religious affiliation gave the following results: 73 percent Muslim, 26 percent Christian Orthodox and nearly two percent Roman Catholic. According to the 1931 census, using the same questions, present-day Kosovo—and–Metohija had 552,064 inhabitants, of which 347,213 were Albanian-speaking (62.8 percent). Religious affiliation provided the following data: 72 percent Muslim, 26 percent Christian Orthodox and two percent Roman Catholic.¹²⁴

Within the French-inspired *banovina* system, established by King Aleksandar, the distribution of ethnic Albanians was as follows: 150,062 or sixteenth percent in *Zetska banovina* (most of Metohija and today's Montenegro with Dubrovnik); 48,300 or 3.36 percent in *Moravska banovina* (central Serbia with northern Kosovo) and 302,901 or 19.24 percent in *Vardarska banovina* (eastern and southern Kosovo, Prizren and Gora area, and Slavic-inhabited Macedonia). As for the ethnic Turks, they numbered 124,599 or 7.91 percent of the population in *Vardarska banovina*, mostly in the Prizren area.

Recent estimates for the 1921 and 1931 censuses, plus the 1939 internal military data, show an increasing trend both in percentage and in absolute terms as far as the Serbs in present-day Kosovo—and–Metohija are concerned: in the 1921 census they numbered 92,490 (21.1

percent); in 1931 they numbered 148,809 (26.9 percent); and in 1939 there were 213,746 of them (33.1 percent). By contrast, the Albanian population increased in absolute terms but decreased in percentage: in 1921 it numbered 288,900 (65.8 percent); in 1931, 331,549 (60.1 percent); and in 1939 it increased to 350,460 (54.4 percent). The ethnic Turks as the third largest ethnic group decreased in both terms (27,920—6.3 percent; 23,698—4.3 percent; 24,946—3.8 percent).¹²⁵ The increase in the number of Serbs was caused not only by the influx of settlers, but by some 5,000 state officials and technicians of various professions as well.¹²⁶

In terms of security, the whole area was frequently raided from Albania. The Serb colonists as well as the Yugoslav state officials were the most frequent victims of numerous Albanian outlaws, especially in the Drenica area. In 1922, Albanian outlaws (*kaçaks*), considered by the local Albanian population as national heroes, committed fifty-eight murders, eighteen attempted murders, thirteen assaults and seventy-one robberies. In Metohija alone there were at least 370 active *kaçaks*, led by Azem Bejta in the Drenica area. The Serbian Orthodox Church remained the favourite target of *kaçak* attacks to the extent that in the 1920s both the Monastery of Dečani and the Patriarchate of Peć—in the Ottoman period racketeered by local Albanian chieftains for armed protection against their fellow tribesmen—had to be placed under military protection. The royal Yugoslav authorities, continuously trying to establish long-term security, responded with severe and often brutal military and police measures against local outlaws and raiders from Albania, occasionally harshly retaliating against Albanian civilians as well.

The *kaçak* activities decreased after their leader Azem Bejta died following a fierce fight with the Yugoslav military forces.¹²⁷ It has been difficult to estimate the exact number of Albanians who immigrated to Albania from Kosovo and other Yugoslav areas: from 1924 to 1926 some 849 persons immigrated to Albania, while an additional 8,571 left between 1927 and 1934. The practice of temporary migration makes it difficult to establish how many settled permanently in Albania or elsewhere. Neverthe-

¹²² Milovan Obradović, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija na Kosovu (1918–1941)* (Prishtina: Institut za istoriju Kosova, 1981).

¹²³ Nikola Gačeša, "Settlement of Kosovo and Metohija after World War I and the Agrarian Reform" in *Kosovo. Past and Present*, 100–110.

¹²⁴ Interwar censuses quoted by Hivzi Isljami, "Demografska stvarnost Kosova" in *Sukob ili Dijalog. Srpsko–albanski odnosi i integracija Balkana* (Subotica: Otvoreni univerzitet, 1994), 40.

¹²⁵ Milan Vučković & Goran Nikolić, *Stanovništvo Kosova u razdoblju 1918–1991. godine* (Munich: Slavica Verlag, 1996), 80–82; Julie A. Mertus, *Kosovo, How Myths and Truths Started a War* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 315–316.

¹²⁶ Djordje Borozan, "Kosovo i Metohija u granicama protektorata Velika Albanija" in *Kosovo i Metohija u velikoalbanskim planovima* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2001), 125–126.

¹²⁷ The extensive documentation from the Serbian and Yugoslav archives for the 1920s is available in Ljubodrag Dimić & Djordje Borozan, *Jugoslovenska država i Albanci*, vol. I–II (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1998); Dragi Maliković, *Kačacki pokret na Kosovu i Metohiji 1918–1924* (Leposavić & Kosovska Mitrovica: Institut za srpsku kulturu, 2005). For the Albanian, mostly romantic perspective on the *kaçak* movement, see Limon Rushiti, *Lëvizja kacakë në Kosovë (1918–1928)* (Prishtina: Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, 1981).

less, recent claims by certain Western scholars that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia drove out as many as half a million or even more Albanians in the interwar period in order to resettle Serbs on the confiscated land are based on propagandistic figures supplied by Albanian emigrants of the 1920s and 1930s. These figures, embraced by Albanian and some Western scholars sympathetic to the Albanian cause, find corroboration neither in the Serbian/Yugoslav archives nor in the available statistics (both public and confidential) of interwar Yugoslavia.¹²⁸

In order to strengthen its influence in Italian-dominated Albania and to pacify Albanian outlaws in Kosovo and Metohija, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes became actively involved in the internal power struggle in Albania. From the time of Balkan Wars plans were developed for the Serbian political, economic and even military penetration into the northern areas of Albania. In the early 1920s Belgrade strongly supported the establishment of a separate state of the Mirditës, a Roman Catholic tribe of northern Albania headed by Mark Gjoni. In the mid-1920s Belgrade financed the return to Albania of the exiled political leader Ahmed Zogu, who promised to stifle the activities of the anti-Serbian and anti-Yugoslav Kosovo Committee. Zogu organized the assassination of his bitter rivals Bairam Curri (1925) and Hasan Prishtina (1933), the most prominent leaders of the Kosovo Committee. Nevertheless, with Mussolini's growing influence in the region, Belgrade was unable to impose its decisive influence on the Tirana government. Under Ahmed Zogu, a former protégé of Belgrade and the future King Zogu I, Albania eventually came back under the political and economic influence of Fascist Italy.¹²⁹

The conflict with Italy and the Rome-controlled Albanian national movement was given fresh impetus as the Second World War approached. Under Mussolini's patronage, Albanian emigrants from Kosovo–Metohija, the pro-Bulgarian IMRO movement in Yugoslav Macedonia, and the Croatian fascist forces (Ustasha), coordinated their guerrilla actions against the politically vulnerable Yugoslav kingdom.¹³⁰ Belgrade's ambitious plan to avert the growing danger for the stability of its southwest borders by the means of an organized mass migration of the eth-

nic Albanian and Turkish populations from both Kosovo and Slavic Macedonia to Turkey (1938) was never implemented due to the death of Kemal Atatürk, the fall of Milan Stojadinović's government (1939), unsettled financial terms with Ankara and the outbreak of the Second World War.¹³¹ However, the growing discontent of Kosovo Albanians, who hoped to receive decisive support from the Fascist camp after Italy occupied Albania in 1939, remained a latent threat to Yugoslav security.¹³²

The Second World War: Rage, Resettlement and Repression

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was dismembered by German Nazis, Italian Fascists and their Bulgarian and Hungarian allies after a blitzkrieg in April 1941. Most of Kosovo–Metohija, western Slavic Macedonia and Montenegrin border areas went to Fascist Albania, occupied by Italy two years before. Bulgaria took a small eastern portion of Kosovo, but its northern parts with the rich Trepča mines were assigned to German-occupied Serbia. A decree of King Victor Emanuel III, dated 12 August 1941, solemnly proclaimed a "Greater Albania". In this new satellite Fascist-type state, the Italian Government set up an Albanian voluntary militia numbering 5,000 men—*Vulnetari*—to help the Italian forces maintain order as well as to independently conduct surprise attacks on the Serb population. In addition, a campaign to settle Albanians from northern and central Albania into the abandoned estates of both native Kosovo Serbs and Serb settlers started as early as 1941: "The Italian occupation force encouraged an extensive settlement program involving up to 72,000 Albanians."¹³³

The main consequence of establishing a Fascist-sponsored and Nazi-supported "Greater Albania" was the merciless persecution and expulsion of some 60,000 to 100,000 Serbs, mostly colonists. Roughly 10,000 of them, native Kosovo Serbs included, fell victim to punitive actions of various Albanian militias. Both Fascist Italian and Yugoslav Communist propaganda portrayed the Kosovo Albanians as victims of "Greater Serbian hegemony". The new Fascist rulers gave the Kosovo Albanians the right to fly

¹²⁸ Muhamet Pirraku, "Kulturno prosvetni pokret Albanaca u Jugoslaviji 1919–1941", *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis* 1–4 (1978), 356–370; Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

¹²⁹ Živko Avramovski, "Albanija između Jugoslavije i Italije", *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* 3 (1984), 153–180; Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, *Nazione e religione in Albania (1920–1944)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), 151–166; Marco Dogo, *Kosovo. Albanesi e Serbi: le radici dei conflitti* (Lungro, C. Marco, 1992), 147–219.

¹³⁰ Cf. Giuseppe Zamboni, *Mussolinis Expansionspolitik auf dem Balkan* (Hamburg: Burke, 1970), 301–338; Cf. also Stefan Troebst, *Mussolini, Makedonien und die Mächte 1922–1930. Die 'Innere Makedonische Revolutionäre Organisation' in der Südosteuropapolitik des faschistischen Italien* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1987).

¹³¹ Individual proposals concerning mass emigration or even expulsion of the ethnic Albanians within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, such as the infamous proposal by the historian Vasa Čubrilović in 1937, were neither discussed nor accepted by the Yugoslav government which remained focused exclusively on the bilateral agreement with Ankara. Contrary to what is often strongly suggested by most Albanian and some less reliable Western scholars, neither in the Serbian nor in Yugoslav military or civilian archives is there any evidence for any link between this document of Čubrilović and official Yugoslav policy.

¹³² Branislav Gligorijević, "Fatalna jednostranost. Povodom knjige B. Horvata 'Kosovsko pitanje'", *Istorija XX veka: časopis Instituta za savremenu istoriju* 6, 1–2 (Belgrade, 1988), 185–192.

¹³³ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 123.

their own flag and to open schools with instruction in Albanian. The tribal and mostly peasant Kosovo Albanian population received the newly acquired national symbols enthusiastically, but was not ready to restrain its actions to the cultural and political plane. In reality, the Albanians planned to organize a full-scale revenge against the Serbs, perceived as oppressors under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

During the first few months of Fascist occupation, Italian and Albanian forces burned down nearly 10,000 homes of Serb settlers in frequent night raids. The owners and their families were expelled to Montenegro and central Serbia, and some were sent to internment camps in Albania. At least 900 Serbs were sent to the Porte Romano concentration camp in Durazzo (Durrës). Most of them were from Gnjilane, while others were from Prizren, Priština, Peć, Uroševac and Lipljan. Roughly 600 Serb prisoners from the Gnjilane area drowned on a cargo ship on their way to concentration camps in Italy. In the Italian-Balist *questura* of Prizren, the large building of the Roman Catholic Seminary was used as a prison for Serb detainees, who were often tortured to death. Many Serbs “ended up in concentration camps in Priština and Mitrovica. These Serbs were apparently used as a labour force for fortification works in Italian Albania, and in the Trepča mines working for the Germans.”¹³⁴ The Albanians, both locals and fresh settlers from Albania, used to plough the colonist fields afresh to erase every trace of Serb settlement and forestall Serb return. If Serbs did try to return after the war, they would find it hard to recognize their seized property.¹³⁵

The main targets were, as earlier during periods of anarchy or wars, the priests and monks of the Serbian Orthodox Church and their flock: Andrija Popović, a priest from Istok, and Nikodim Radosavljević, a hieromonk of Gorioč monastery, were murdered by Albanians in 1941 together with 102 Serbs from the parish of Istok; Damaskin Bošković, a renowned hieromonk of Devič monastery, was tortured and murdered by local Albanians in mid-October 1941, while the medieval monastery of Devič was burned down and destroyed; parish priests of Uroševac

¹³⁴ Bernd J. Fisher, *Albania at War 1939–1945* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999), 87.

¹³⁵ Cf. extensive documentation in Nenad Antonijević, *Albanski zločini nad Srbima na Kosovu i Metohiji za vreme Drugog svetskog rata. Dokumenti* (Kragujevac: Muzej žrtava genocida, 2004).

Sanjak of Pljevlja and the Vilajet of Kosovo, Vienna 1897



(Dragoljub Kujundžić) and Djakovica (Slobodan Popović) were murdered in 1942; the parish priest of Kosovska Mitrovica (Momčilo Nešić) was murdered in 1943; parish priests of Peć (Mihailo Milošević) and Ranilug (Krsta Popović) were murdered in 1944, etc. At least twenty-six Serb churches and monasteries were desecrated, pillaged or burned; some, like Gorioč monastery, were used as prisons for the Kosovo Serbs; dozens of smaller Serb churches were razed to the ground and the medieval monasteries of Gračanica, Sokolica, St. Mark of Koriša and St. Peter of Koriša were looted on a regular basis by local Albanians. During these frequent raids several monks and nuns were either wounded or killed.¹³⁶ Many Christian Orthodox graveyards were devastated or desecrated by local Albanians to erase every trace of Serb settlement.

Large-scale destruction of Serb colonist villages was a major component of a strategic plan: to demonstrate to potential post-war international commissions drawing new borders that Serbs had never lived in Kosovo. A prominent Kosovo Albanian leader, Ferat-beg Draga, solemnly proclaimed in 1943 that the “time has come to exterminate the Serbs [...] there will be no Serbs under the Kosovo sun.”¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *Zadužbine Kosova*, 783–793.

¹³⁷ Hakif Bajrami, “Izveštaj Konstantina Plavšića Tasi Diniću, ministru unutrašnjih poslova u Nedićevoj vladi oktobra 1943, o kosovsko-mitrovačkom srezu”, *Godišnjak arhiva Kosova XIV–XV/Prishtinë: Arkive të Kosovës*, (1978–79), 313. Cf. also Jovan Pejcin, *Stradanje Srba u Metohiji 1941–1944* (Belgrade: Arhivski pregled, 1994).

New persecutions of the Kosovo Serbs ensued after the capitulation of Italy (September 1943), when Kosovo and Metohija came under the direct control of the Third Reich. The Albanians' nationalism was spurred on by the creation of the "Second Albanian League", while the infamous Albanian-staffed SS "Scanderbeg" division launched a new wave of violence against the remaining Serbian civilians.¹³⁸ According to the first, although incomplete, post-war Yugoslav estimations, there were in Kosovo and Metohija 5,493 killed or missing persons and 28,412 imprisoned or disabled persons, mostly Serbs,¹³⁹ while about 75,000 Albanians from Albania had settled on the abandoned Serbian farms during the Fascist and Nazi occupation.¹⁴⁰

In the membership of the newly-established Communist Party of Albania (formed under the supervision of Yugoslav instructors Miladin Popović and Dušan Mugoša), there were numerous advocates of the Greater Albanian idea. Its leader Enver Hoxha had taken the first step towards an agreement concerning the creation of a post-war Greater Albania. Albanian communists joined forces with the Balli Kombëtar, an active Kosovo Albanian nationalist organization. Nevertheless, the agreement reached in the village of Mukaj on 2 August 1943 turned out to be a short-lived one.¹⁴¹ In addition, the Bujan Declaration of Kosovo Albanian communist representatives (including numerous representatives of Albania), issued on 2 January 1944, called for the unification of Kosovo and Metohija with Albania after the victory of the communist guerrilla. This decision was quickly dismissed by the Yugoslav communist leadership under the Moscow-appointed military leader Josip Broz Tito as premature and damaging to the common communist goals in the final phase of the Second World War.

¹³⁸ Bataković, *Kosovo Chronicles*, 13–17; for a detailed account, see Laurent Latruwe & Gordana Kostic, *La Division Skanderbeg. Histoire des Waffen SS albanais des origines idéologiques aux débuts de la Guerre Froide* (Paris: Godefroy de Bouillon, 2004).

¹³⁹ Arhiv Jugoslavije [Archives of Yugoslavia], Belgrade, 54–20–47. The only available official state report, of 1964, obviously incomplete, recorded the following number of war victims: 4029 Serbs, 1460 Montenegrins, 2177 Albanians, 74 Jews, 47 Croats, 32 ethnic Turks, 28 Slav Muslims, 11 Slav Macedonians, 10 Slovaks, 9 Slovenes, one Hungarian and 98 unspecified others (N. Antonijević, *Albanski zločini*, 39).

¹⁴⁰ According to the census of 1948, despite heavy war losses claimed by Albanians themselves, the number of Albanians augmented by 75,417 within nine years. Cf. Predrag Živančević, *Emigranti. Naseljavanje Kosova i Metohije iz Albanije* (Belgrade: Eksportpres, 1989), 78. The latest research, based on official, although incomplete documentation, scales down the number of immigrants from Albania in the 1950s, who were using Yugoslavia only for transit towards Western countries, Cf. Bogumil Hrabak, "Albanski emigranti u Jugoslaviji", *Tokovi istorije, Časopis Instituta za noviju istoriju Srbije* vol. 1–2 (Belgrade 1994), 77–104.

¹⁴¹ The short-lived agreement with the CPA and the Balli Kombëtar of 1942 turned into full cooperation of Balli Kombëtar with the Nazis after the capitulation of Italy in September 1943.

The Communist Experiment: A Failed Reconciliation

Soviet-type communism was believed to be the model for long-term historical reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians. The ambitious reconciliation plan within this new Stalin-led social project soon proved to be infeasible: despite tremendous ideological changes, the Balkan geopolitical realities remained unchanged; the old territorial rivalry simply acquired a new ideological framework. It was *realpolitik* that compelled the Moscow-appointed communist leader Josip Broz Tito to preserve Yugoslavia's integrity so that the new communist Yugoslav federation could become the legal successor of the Yugoslav Kingdom in the post-war period. At the same time, J.B. Tito had to take into account the sentiments of the Serb communists and partisans that constituted the overwhelming majority of his forces fighting in different regions of Yugoslavia against Nazi Germans, Fascist Italians, Fascist Croats (Ustasha), the SS Handjar Division in Bosnia, the SS Scanderbeg Division in Kosovo, and so forth.¹⁴²

A large-scale Albanian rebellion against communist Yugoslavia in late 1944 underscored the necessity of maintaining Kosovo–Metohija within Serbia even under the new Soviet-type federal system. In November 1944, Kosovo–Metohija was liberated from Nazi occupation by Tito's communist forces—the partisans. The *Balli Kombëtar* supporters and other Albanian units, rearmed and freshly recruited into partisan formations (November–December 1944), organized the large-scale uprising, attacking Tito's partisan forces. The Albanian revolt was brutally crushed only when additional Yugoslav troops were brought in, and military rule was set up in Kosovo and Metohija between February and May 1945.

The decision that Kosovo and Metohija should remain part of Serbia as a distinct region (*oblast*) was made after the abolition of military rule on 10 July 1945. As a concession to Kosovo Albanians, the Yugoslav communist leadership issued a decree, a temporary measure on paper, forbidding the return to Kosovo–Metohija and Slavic Macedonia of all interwar Serb settlers (at least 60,000), including those forcibly displaced by the wartime authorities of 'Greater Albania.' The notorious "Temporary Ban on the Return of Colonists to their Previous Places of Resi-

¹⁴² The first Yugoslav anti-fascist guerrilla (headed by Colonel Dragoljub Mihailović, from early 1942 General and Minister of War of the Royal government-in-exile), known as the Ravna Gora Movement (*Ravnogorski pokret*) or traditionally *dražinovci* or simply Chetniks, were also fighting the occupation forces, including those in Kosovo and Metohija. Nevertheless, having been betrayed by the Partisans in November 1941, they entered into armed conflict with the communist guerrilla, adding another quagmire to the civil war. For more, see Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies 1941–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987).

dence” was issued on 6 March 1945 and entered into force 16 March 1945. Some 1,757 Serb families were settled outside Kosovo—and–Metohija until 8 October 1945, while another 2,918 families of Serb interwar colonists remained in Kosovo awaiting resettlement to other regions of Serbia.¹⁴³

The ban was followed by the “Law on the Revision of Land Allotment to Colonists and Prospective Farmers in Macedonia and the Region of Kosovo and Metohija,” passed on 3 August 1945. It was further cemented by the “Law on the Revision of Land Allotment to Colonists and Prospective Farmers in the People’s Republic of Macedonia and the Autonomous Region of Kosovo and Metohija,” passed on 2 November 1946. Only a few thousand Serb interwar colonists succeeded in returning to Kosovo in later periods, mostly those from communist families.¹⁴⁴ A special law on the management of the abandoned land of Serb colonists in the Autonomous Region of Kosovo–Metohija was endorsed by the Presidium of the Serbian National Assembly on 22 February 1947, while another decree (30 September 1947) made it possible for just a few hundred families—those that met the difficult ideological requirements for keeping ownership of land—to return to Kosovo.¹⁴⁵ The revision of the rights of pre-war settlers and their families sharply reduced this population to one third of their pre-1941 number. The rest were mainly resettled in Serbia’s northern province of Vojvodina.¹⁴⁶

The main reason for forming a distinct territorial unit of Kosovo–Metohija in 1945 was to prepare its unification with Albania, should Tirana accept to become the seventh Yugoslav republic, or to enter, united with Kosovo–Metohija, into a larger Balkan federation. The Titoled Balkan Federation was supposed to include Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and, possibly, in case of the communist victory in the civil war, Greece. The whole project was abandoned in the wake of the Yugoslav split with Stalin in 1948. Kosovo and Metohija thus became an internal Yugoslav issue.¹⁴⁷

After 1945, Yugoslavia became a six-member federal communist state based on a mixture of Soviet-type federalism and a Habsburg-inspired Austro-Marxist form of

¹⁴³ “Privremena zabrana vraćanja kolonista u njihova ranija mesta življenja”, *Službeni list DFJ* 13, 16 March, (Belgrade: Službeni list DFJ, 1945).

¹⁴⁴ “Zakon o reviziji dodijeljivanja zemlje kolonistima i agrarnim interesentima u Makedoniji i Kosovsko-metohijskoj oblasti”, *Službeni list DFJ*, 5 August 1945. Cf. also *Službeni list DFJ* 89, 1946.

¹⁴⁵ More details with data in M. Obradović, “Revizija agrarne reforme na Kosovu”, *Kosovo*, vol. 3 (Priština: Zavod za istoriju Kosova, 1974), 367–412.

¹⁴⁶ Dj. Borozan, *ibid.*, 103, fn.1.

¹⁴⁷ Branko Petranović, “Kosovo in Yugoslav–Albanian Relations and the Project of a Balkan Federation, 1945–1948” in Andrej Mitrović, ed., *Serbs and Albanians*, 1991, 88–98. Cf. also Branko Petranović & Momčilo Zečević, *Balkanska federacija 1943–1948* (Belgrade: Zaslona, 1991), 77–104.

cultural autonomies. In his 1971 interview with the Parisian newspaper “Le Monde”, the Yugoslav dissident Milovan Djilas (one of the founding fathers of the Montenegrin nation) did admit, however, that the division of Serbs amongst five of the six republics had been aimed at subduing the “centralism and hegemonies of the Serbs”, seen as a major “obstacle” to the establishment of communism.¹⁴⁸

The first, Royal Yugoslavia (1918–1941) had been a French-inspired nation-state marked by the Serbian, Jacobin and centralist, vision of Yugoslavism, whereas communist Yugoslavia (1945–1992) was based on an opposite model: federal, Croat vision of Yugoslav unity. Within such a context, the Albanian minority of Kosovo and Metohija was to play an important political role. National integration of Albanians lagged a whole century behind the other Balkan nations. Kosovo Albanians considered Yugoslavia as a transitional phase on their path to national emancipation and eventual unification with Albania. A failed attempt by communist Albania to take hold of Kosovo within a broader Balkan federation in late 1940s, left the Albanian minority within Yugoslavia profoundly dissatisfied. Although the Albanians remained in communist Yugoslavia against their will, they shared with other nationalists in the communist ranks some strong anti-Serb interests, highly compatible with the main ideological goals of the ruling Communist Party.¹⁴⁹

Within such a system, the Kosovo Albanian minority was to play an important political role. In order to erode the interwar political domination of Serbs as the majority nation, Tito chose to follow the Soviet model and established six new federal units, or republics. In order to rebalance the interethnic relations, at first, in 1945, Kosovo—and–Metohija was created as an autonomous region (*oblast*) within the federal unit of Serbia. In 1959, the Serbinhabited municipality of Lešak was attached to Kosovo—and–Metohija Region in order to strengthen the Serb community in the area. By the 1963 Constitution, the Kosovo—and–Metohija Region was upgraded to an Autonomous Province within Serbia. The 1974 Constitution bestowed upon the Province wider powers additionally limiting Serbia’s authority. The powers were only slightly different from those of the republics: the main provision Autonomous Province lacked was the right to self-determination, reserved only for the republics within the Yugoslav federation.

The political and cultural emancipation of the Kosovo Albanians within Serbia began to be fully promoted immediately after the war. In 1949, the official second to

¹⁴⁸ *Le Monde*, 30 December 1971. Cf. more in Aleksa Djilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919–1953* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

¹⁴⁹ D. T. Bataković, “Frustrated Nationalism in Yugoslavia: from Liberal to Communist Solution”, *Serbian Studies. Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 11/2 (1997), 67–85.

Tito proudly stated that the “Albanians in the Autonomous Region of Kosovo–Metohija, who had been oppressed in the old [Royal] Yugoslavia, have now been completely guaranteed a free political and cultural life and development and an equal participation in all the bodies of the popular authorities. After the liberation [1945], they acquired their first primary schools—453 primary schools, 29 high schools and 3 advanced schools. Studying from textbooks in their native [Albanian] tongue, some 64,000 Albanian children have so far received an education and about 106,000 ethnic Albanian adults in Kosovo and Metohija have learned to read and write.”¹⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the restless Albanian population, still favouring unification with Albania, was put under the strict control of the Serb-dominated state and police apparatus. Until 1966, Serbs in the state security forces in Kosovo and Metohija accounted for 58.3 percent of the security service cadres, 60.8 percent in the police and 23.5 percent in the total population; Montenegrins made up 28.3 percent of the cadres in the security service, 7.9 percent in the police and 3.9 percent of the total population; Albanians accounted for 13.3 percent in the security service, 31.3 percent in the police and 64.9 percent in the total population.¹⁵¹

The concern that considerable quantities of arms were still hidden in private possession was confirmed by the occasional shoot-out with Albanian outlaws, from 1948 supported by military agents from Albania. An extensive operation of collecting hidden arms was carried out in the winter of 1955–56. Serbs and Albanians suffered almost equally, despite the fact that larger quantities were found in Albanian possession. The operation was not motivated by concealed ethnic discrimination but rather by immediate ideological and state reasons, which became evident from numerous complaints lodged not only by Albanians, but also by dignitaries of the Serbian Orthodox Church reporting numerous abuses of the Serb– and Montenegrin–dominated secret police in the region.¹⁵²

Nonetheless, the Kosovo communists, both Serbs and Albanians, who had executed the most prominent Kosovo Serb novelist Grigorije Božović as early as 1945, continued to arrest and harass Serbian monks and priests, considered as enemies of the communist dictatorship. It was under the auspices of Tito’s state officials that an impressive pre-war Serbian Orthodox church in Djakovica was demolished on St. Sava’s Day in January 1950, in order that a monument to the fallen partisans of Kosovo

¹⁵⁰ Aleksandar Ranković, *Izabrani govori i članci* (Belgrade: Kultura, 1951), 184–185.

¹⁵¹ *Intervju*, Belgrade, 4 September 1978. Cf. an analysis on interethnic relations, ethnic stereotypes and social conditions, Srdja Popović, Dejan Janča & Tanja Petovar, *Kosovski čvor. Drešiti ili seći? Izveštaj nezavisne komisije* (Belgrade: Hronos, 1990), 18–19.

¹⁵² For more documents, see *Zadužbine Kosova*, 805–813.

could be erected in its place.¹⁵³ Yugoslav communists were equally brutal in suppressing the Stalinist-oriented Albanian nationalists advocating unification with Albania, represented since the 1960s by fanatic and able activists such as Adem Demaqi.¹⁵⁴

During the period of Soviet-type centralism in Yugoslavia (1945–1966), Albania, as part of the Soviet bloc (1948–1961), was hostile towards Yugoslavia. Therefore, Tito relied on the Kosovo Serbs as the main guardians of the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. The State Security Service (*UDBA*), headed by Tito’s first deputy, Aleksandar Ranković, persecuted both Serbs and ethnic Albanians as ideological enemies throughout the 1950s. After the ideological reconciliation with Moscow (1955) and within the policy of gradual *rapprochement* with Albania (1966–1971), Tito favoured an advanced level of political emancipation of the Kosovo Albanians. The Yugoslav dictator had hoped, in vain, to reinstall Yugoslav influence in Albania. Instead, the power bestowed upon Albanians in Kosovo by the Constitutional amendments of 1968 and 1971 was diverted to serve primarily the Albanian national cause.¹⁵⁵

The new model of federalism launched in Yugoslavia after 1966 was rounded off by the 1974 Constitution. A model of *national-communism* was introduced where the power of federal jurisdiction came to reside in the ruling communist oligarchies of the six constituent republics. Thus, the communist *nomenklatura*, becoming sovereign in their own republics, came to represent the majority nationality. As the only republic with provinces, Serbia was the exception, since, under the 1974 Constitution, both of her autonomous provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo could use, in many cases, the power of veto against the central authorities of Serbia.¹⁵⁶

Through the model of *national-communism* the 1974 Constitution introduced majority rule of the majority nation in each of the six republics and two provinces of the federation. The result was continued discrimination—to a greater or lesser extent—against smaller-in-number nations or national minorities within each republic or province.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 803–804; D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo. La spirale de la haine*, 47–50.

¹⁵⁴ On Kosovo Albanian subversive organisation, see Sinan Hasani, *Kosovo. Istine i zablude* (Zagreb: Centar za informacije i publicitet, 1981), on Demaqi, pp. 162–163.

¹⁵⁵ For internal politics of Yugoslavia, Cf. more in Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *The Improbable Survivor, Yugoslavia and its Problems 1918–1988* (London: C. Hurst & Co.), 34–47; B. Petranović & Momčilo Zečević, *Agonija dve Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Zaslona, 1991), 307–319; D. T. Bataković, *Yugoslavie. Nations, religions, idéologies* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1994), 143–182.

¹⁵⁶ On the fall of Ranković in 1966 and the subsequent period, see Steven L. Burg, *Conflict and Cohesion in Socialist Yugoslavia: Political Decision-Making since 1966* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

The new political course in Kosovo and Metohija emboldened the nationalists and advocates of unification with Albania. The Albanians saw the new party policy, drafted by the 1968 and 1971 Constitutional amendments, not as a fresh opportunity for intensified national and cultural emancipation but rather as a long-awaited chance for historical revenge against the Serbs, perceived exclusively as their long-time oppressors, and they used the newly-gained political, judicial and legislative powers as a tool against them. The historic term Metohija was officially removed from the official name of the province.

The policy of entrusting rule over Kosovo to ethnic Albanians exclusively was endorsed by J. B. Tito, anxious to pacify the growing Albanian nationalism in Kosovo. Being a renowned leader of the non-aligned movement and a high-ranking statesman on the international scene, Tito could ill afford to have in his neighbourhood a small Stalinist Albania continuing her violent ideological attacks on communist Yugoslavia, thereby challenging both her ideology and her state unity.¹⁵⁷

In late November 1968, on the occasion of the National Day of Albania, the Albanian students in Priština and several other towns voiced not only demands for a separate Kosovo republic within Yugoslavia, but shouted Greater-Albanian, pro-Enver Hoxha slogans as well. These demonstrations, severely suppressed by the army and police forces, were hidden from the wider public, although they heralded long-term goals of Albanian nationalism in the Province. Kosovo Albanians considered Yugoslavia as an imposed, transitional phase on their path to eventual unification with Albania.¹⁵⁸ Only several years after the 1968 Kosovo Albanians demonstrations praising Albania's leader Enver Hoxha in Priština and two other towns of Kosovo, did Tito allow closer cooperation between Priština and Tirana in the vain hope that this rapprochement would appease the national discontent of the Yugoslav Albanian community.¹⁵⁹

Obviously, the ideological and national model for Kosovo Albanians was not the official Titoist vision of communist-inspired policy of "brotherhood and unity" but the Stalinist-type of ethnic nationalism orchestrated by the communist dictator Enver Hoxha of Albania. Several generations of the Kosovo Albanian youth had, through

¹⁵⁷ More on Albanian–Yugoslav relations: Milorad Komatina, *Enver Hodža i jugoslovensko–albanski odnosi* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1995), 135–145; Branko Komatina, *Jugoslovensko–albanski odnosi 1979–1983. Beležke i sećanja ambasadora*, (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1995). Useful overviews are available in: Nicolas J. Costa, *Albania. A European Enigma*, (New York: East European Monographs, 1995), and Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians. A Modern History*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995).

¹⁵⁸ Miloš Mišović, *Ko je tražio republiku Kosovo 1945–1985* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1987), 78–93, 150, 240–241, 346–347.

¹⁵⁹ Further documentation in: *Pero Simić: Raspeto Kosovo. Dokumenta o Kosovu I Metohiji* (Belgrade: Novosti & Narodna knjiga, 2006).

educational arrangements with Tirana, been receiving an education based on a collectivist communist-type approach to the national question mixed with romantic nineteenth-century, in practice rather aggressive, nationalism. Therefore, Enver Hoxha's official theory that the Albanians were the direct descendants of ancient Illyrians was considered to be the ultimate "verification" of the historical right of Albanians to the whole of Kosovo. From that perspective, Serbs, who had settled in the Balkans in the late sixth and seventh centuries A.D. (i.e. centuries after the ancient Illyrians), were stigmatized in the popular Kosovo Albanian view as intruders into lawfully "Albanian lands".¹⁶⁰

From Party-Sponsored Discrimination to Ethnic Mobilization

In Kosovo and Metohija, this new nationalistic policy resulted in a behind-the-scenes combination of political pressure and ethnic discrimination against the non-Albanian population. In the provincial administration, most of the Serbs and Montenegrins were either replaced by Albanians or politically marginalized. By a tacit agreement within the Communist Party, the Serb officials who had lost their positions in the Kosovo administration were almost automatically accepted and employed elsewhere in Serbia, so as to tone down their discontent. Continuous administrative, judicial, police or direct physical pressures orchestrated by the Albanian-dominated Kosovo communist *nomenklatura* primarily targeted Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins. Their quiet but steady migration, mostly to central Serbia, was a process tacitly approved by the federal Yugoslav authorities.¹⁶¹ The few officials who dared to denounce the ethnic discrimination, not only Serbs but also ethnic Turks (such as Kadri Reufi), were punished and expelled from the Communist party. By contrast, the Serb officials who cooperated with the Kosovo Albanian leadership were rewarded with higher posts in federal institutions or diplomatic bodies.¹⁶² The most prominent Kosovo Albanian scholar Hasan Kaleshi was among the first to denounce, in the 1970s, the ethnic hatred propagated by Tirana-inspired textbooks and related historical writings. Often insulted or boycotted by other colleagues for his criticism of Albanian nationalism, Kaleshi died in suspicious circumstances a few years later.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ For the Albanian view on Illyrian theory and the ethno-genesis of Kosovo, see *The Truth on Kosova* (Tirana: Encyclopedia Publishing House, The Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania, 1993). Cf. also D. T. Bataković, "Kosovo–Metohija in the 20th Century: Nationalism and Communism", *Eurobalkans* 30–31 (Athens: A. Papadopoulou S.A., 1998), 21–27.

¹⁶¹ Pedro Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia 1963–1983* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 160–163.

¹⁶² D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo Chronicles*, 70.

¹⁶³ For more, see M. Mišović, *Ko je tražio republiku*.

THE POPULATION OF KOSOVO AND METOHİJA

Nationality	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981
Albanian	498,242	524,559	646,168	916,168	1,226,736
Serb	171,911	189,869	227,016	228,264	209,497
Montenegrin	28,050	31,343	37,588	31,555	27,028
Turk	1,315	34,343	25,764	12,244	12,513
Muslim	9,679	6,241	8,026	26,357	58,562
Gypsy	11,230	11,904	3202	14,593	34,126
Others	7,393	9,642	15,787	14,512	15,978
Total	727,820	808,141	963,988	1,243,693	1,584,440

During this silent ethnic cleansing the Serb population in Kosovo and Metohija was reduced by almost half, from 23.6 percent in 1948 to 13.2 percent in 1981, notwithstanding their relatively high birth rate during the whole period of Tito's rule. The Montenegrin population in Kosovo dropped from 3.9 percent in 1948 to 1.7 percent in 1981. Between 1961 and 1981, 42.2 percent of all Kosovo Serbs and 63.3 percent of all Kosovo Montenegrins left the province to settle in other parts of Serbia or Montenegro. Only 15 percent of these migrations were, however, motivated by economic reasons: all others were triggered by inter-ethnic tensions, pressures and harassments by Albanians which remained unpunished by the local police and judicial authorities.¹⁶⁴

This ethnically motivated persecution also targeted the Serbian Orthodox Church, perceived as the pillar of Serbian identity in the Province: bishops, priests, monks and nuns, cemeteries and landed property. Numerous instances of continuous persecution both by Albanian nationalists and by Albanian provincial bureaucrats were reported to the Holy Synod by the Raška–Prizren Diocese on 19 May 1969. Patriarch German, then the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church, was compelled to ask Tito, the communist dictator of Yugoslavia, for protection:

“The violence decreases somewhat only to reappear elsewhere in an even more serious form. During the last year its forms have become extreme. There not only has been destruction of crops in the fields, destruction of forests (monasteries of Devič, Dečani, Gorioč near Peć), desecration of graves (Kosovska Vitina and elsewhere), but even physical assaults on nuns (last year in the monasteries of Binač near Kosovska Vitina and Mušutište near Prizren, and this spring, in Devič—where the prioress suffered serious physical injuries, a novice of the Dečani monastery was injured by the axe, a hieromonk of Gorioč monastery was hit in the head with a stone, priests around

Kosovska Mitrovica were stoned, etc.), which has resulted in the emigration of our faithful from those regions.”¹⁶⁵

The Patriarch's request, just another one in a series of similar complaints to the authorities of Serbia and other federal institutions, produced neither short-term nor long-term results. Namely, J. B. Tito promised protection and law enforcement but, in practice, no tangible results were achieved. Numerous complaints, including copious verbatim reports by Serb citizens and believers subsequently published in various church magazines, remained entirely ignored by the communist authorities both in Belgrade and Priština until the early 1980s.¹⁶⁶

Moreover, the Kosovo Albanian *nomenklatura* often allotted the land of the expelled Serbs to immigrants from Albania. From 1945 until Tito's death in 1980, the number of Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija almost tripled, which gives a population increase of 164 percent from 1948 to 1981. The number of immigrants from Albania has never been exactly determined.

In the first post-war years, their settlement in Kosovo and Metohija had been aimed at facilitating the expected annexation of Albania to the Yugoslav federation as the seventh republic. The second wave of Albanian settlement was organized between the late 1960s and the early 1980s by the Kosovo Albanian *nomenklatura* in order to bolster the ethnic supremacy of Albanians in the Kosovo districts with mixed population and a stronger Serbian presence. The spectacular demographic growth of the Kosovo Albanian population, facilitated by the socialist welfare system and huge federal and Serbian investments into the economy of the Province, gave additional social stimulus to the hostile nationalism of new generations of Kosovo Albanians, at liberty to be educated on a dangerous mix-

¹⁶⁵ The whole letter is reproduced in *Zadužbine Kosova*, 833.

¹⁶⁶ For further documentation from the Archive of the Holy Synod in Belgrade concerning continuous persecution of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Raška–Prizren Diocese between 1945 and 1981, see *Zadužbine Kosova*, 793–838. Cf. also Dimitrije Bogdanović, “The Serbian Church during the Kosovo Hardship” in Predrag D. Kijuk, Dušan T. Bataković and Slobodan Mileusnić, eds., *The Battle of Kosovo, 1389–1989* (Belgrade: Homeland, 1989), 142–144.

¹⁶⁴ Detailed analysis based on extensive field research can be found in Ruža Petrović & Marina Blagojević, *The Migration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo and Metohija. Results of the Survey Conducted in 1985–1986* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1992).

ture of nineteenth-century romantic nationalism and Enver Hoxha's Stalinist-type ethnic-communism. As a result, despite abundant political and social advantages they obtained after 1945, Kosovo Albanians still considered Yugoslavia as a transitional phase: they aspired to the status of a constituent republic of Yugoslavia endowed with the right to self-determination, i.e. secession, which they looked upon as a stepping-stone to eventual unification with Albania.

This barely hidden political goal of the Kosovo Albanians was recognized by experienced American journalists travelling in the area in the early 1980s: "The [Albanian] nationalists have a two-point platform [...] first to establish what they call an ethnically clean Albanian republic and then the merger with Albania to form a greater Albania."¹⁶⁷

Economic frustrations of the Kosovo Albanians as a predominantly agrarian population lacking job opportunities was, therefore, largely diverted into national dissatisfaction through a massive propaganda campaign led by intellectuals proliferating national mythology. The political goal of the coming rebellion was symbolically announced by the fire Albanian extremists set to the historic seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Patriarchate of Peć, in March 1981. The large-scale Albanian rebellion in March and April 1981, described initially as a student revolt, evolved within weeks into a nationalistic movement demanding the status of a federal republic for Kosovo within Yugoslavia. The demand arose only a year after the death of J.B. Tito, disrupting the sensitive balance of power in the federal leadership of communist Yugoslavia.¹⁶⁸

Attempts to appease the Albanian revolt in Kosovo and Metohija by means of the standard communist practice of repeated party purges and by continuous repression (actions of the federal military and police forces against Albanian protesters, large-scale legal prosecution and punishment, mostly of younger people) did not yield expected results. The League of Communists' parallel efforts to minimize the problem of discrimination against the Serbs and of their forced migration from Kosovo and Metohija only resulted in the growing frustration of Serbs all over Yugoslavia in the years that followed.

The foreign press frequently reported on the Yugoslav police retaliation against young Albanian protesters shouting slogans against federal Yugoslavia while praising Enver Hoxha, the communist dictator of Albania. The Kosovo Serb claims, supported by Yugoslav officials in Belgrade about Albanian-organized ethnically motivated persecution, discrimination and harassment were strongly and concertedly denied by Kosovo Albanians, Hoxha's of-

ficials from Tirana and their supporters on the international scene. The Kosovo Serb claims, often minimized by foreign correspondents and special envoys to the region were confirmed from independent sources, by unbiased American journalists fully acquainted with regional conflicts, developments and dilemmas. In the well-informed American reporter's view, the following process was the major development in Kosovo: "Serbs have been harassed by Albanians and have packed up and left the region. Some 57,000 Serbs have left Kosovo in the last decade [...] the exodus of Serbs is admittedly one of the main problems [...] in Kosovo."¹⁶⁹

Similar balanced reporting on continuous hardship of the Kosovo Serb population both before and after the 1981 riots was drowned out by an orchestrated media campaign. In the late 1980s, Western reporting, with a few noble exceptions, was focused exclusively on constant violation of the human rights of the rebelled Kosovo Albanians. The conflict in Kosovo was often presented as internal ethnic strife, omitting the real ideological background of Albanian nationalism, fostered by the Albanian regime in Tirana.¹⁷⁰

Nevertheless, in 1987 the *New York Times* came out with a detailed report: "the current hostilities pit separatist-minded ethnic Albanians against the various Slavic populations of Yugoslavia and occur at all levels of society, from the highest officials to the humblest peasants. A young Army conscript of ethnic Albanian origin [Aziz Kelmendi] shot up his barracks [in Paraćin, central Serbia], killing four sleeping Slavic bunkmates and wounding six others. The army says it has uncovered hundreds of subversive ethnic Albanian cells in its ranks. Some arsenals have been raided."¹⁷¹

It should be noted that, in retrospect, this kind of both credible and verifiable reporting provides a clear and indisputable account of the hidden political objectives of Kosovo Albanians and confirms the claims of Kosovo Serbs about being persecuted, discriminated and pressured into leaving the province. Managing to undermine the whole federal system as established by the 1974 Constitution, the Albanian question in Serbia and Yugoslavia produced a domino effect, arousing Serb concerns over their own position both in Serbia and in the Yugoslav federation. Much classified information about interethnic tensions in Kosovo and Metohija was leaked to the public and eventually found its way to Western press reports. It was reported that "ethnic Albanians in the Government have manipulated public funds and regulations to take over land belonging to Serbs. And politicians have exchanged

¹⁶⁷ Marvin Howe, "Exodus of Serbians Stir Province in Yugoslavia," *The New York Times*, 12 July 1982.

¹⁶⁸ Nora Beloff, *Tito's Flawed Legacy. Yugoslavia and the West since 1999* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), 209–214.

¹⁶⁹ *The New York Times*, 12 July 1982.

¹⁷⁰ The official position of Albania in 1981 is available in the collection of articles from Tirana's *Zëri i popullit* daily: *A propos des événements de Kosove* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1981).

¹⁷¹ David Binder, "In Yugoslavia, Rising Ethnic Strife Brings Fears of Worse Civil Conflict," *The New York Times*, 1 November 1987.

vicious insults. Slavic Orthodox churches have been attacked, and flags have been torn down. Wells have been poisoned and crops burned. Slavic boys have been knifed, and some young ethnic Albanians have been told by their elders to rape Serbian girls.¹⁷² The goal of radical Albanian nationalists was described as the formation of “ethnic Albania that includes western Macedonia, southern Montenegro, part of southern Serbia, Kosovo and Albania itself. That includes large chunks of the republics that make up the southern half of Yugoslavia. Other ethnic Albanian separatists admit to a vision of a greater Albania governed from Priština in southern Yugoslavia rather than Tirana, the capital of neighbouring Albania. [...] As Slavs flee the protracted violence, Kosovo is becoming what ethnic Albanian nationalists have been demanding for years, and especially strongly since the bloody rioting by ethnic Albanians in Priština in 1981—an ‘ethnically pure’ Albanian region, a ‘Republic of Kosovo’ in all but name.”¹⁷³

It was also observed, correctly, that the “growing tension between Albanians and Serbs here this year has converted this poor southern region from a chronic local trouble spot into the potential flash point of a country increasingly divided by national rivalries. Since the outbreak of riots here in 1981, authorities of the autonomous province of Kosovo have faced a steady challenge from separatist and nationalist groups among the dominant Albanian population. More than 1,000 people [Kosovo Albanians] have been jailed for seeking Kosovo’s independence from Serbia, the Yugoslav republic to which Kosovo nominally belongs, or unification with the neighbouring nation Albania. The significance of this conflict has been multiplied this year by the emergence of concern among Yugoslavia’s Serbs, the country’s largest ethnic group, about the ‘forced emigration’ of Serbs from Kosovo under pressure from the Albanians. Small farmers, tradesmen and professionals have been steadily leaving the province’s cities and the small Serbian villages around them, raising the prospect that a historic seat of the Serbian nation will soon be populated only by Albanians. More than 20,000 have emigrated since 1981 out of a total Serbian population of about 220,000. Meanwhile, the Albanian population of over 1.2 million is expanding at the fastest pace in Europe. The local Serbs arguing that Albanian-dominated provincial authorities have offered them no protection from violent attacks, have signed petitions and staged several demonstrations outside Priština this year. To the embarrassment of [Kosovo Albanian] authorities, they have also sent three delegations to press their case in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia and of Yugoslavia. The acts have inflamed nationalist feeling among Serbians outside Kosovo and prompted demands by intellectuals and even Serbian communist political leaders for constitutional changes and oth-

er drastic action to stop the emigration and restore Serbia’s control over Kosovo. The Serbian outbursts, in turn, have provoked concern by leaders of Yugoslavia’s five other, smaller republics, who sympathize with some complaints but are wary of Serbian national aspirations. The last delegation of Serbs to visit Belgrade early this month, meanwhile, warned that they would take up arms against their perceived tormentors among the Albanians.”¹⁷⁴

The intransigence of the national-communist *nomenklatura* in the Yugoslav federal leadership, tacitly patronizing Albanian extremism, created dangerous tensions which were difficult to control: from 1981, self-organized Kosovo Serbs gradually gained wide popular support after frequent mass protests before federal Yugoslav institutions in Belgrade.¹⁷⁵ Since the very beginning of their open protest against discrimination, the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija enjoyed both moral and political support of priests, monks and bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church — generally perceived as the archenemy of the communist regime. With its open letters to the public de-

¹⁷⁴ Albania itself, the world’s most rigid Stalinist government has kept the nation so isolated and poverty-stricken that about 5,000 refugees have fled across the heavily guarded border to Kosovo. A powerful tradition of close-knit clans has bound the community together, raised the birth rate and discouraged emigration to other parts of Yugoslavia. The result, said economists and government officials, has been pressure for land in Kosovo even from those Albanians who are neither separatist nor anti-Serbian. “Let me explain the psychology of an Albanian farmer about the land,” said Abrashi, himself Albanian. “For centuries these people have been defining their existence and their worth only through land. They are ready to make great sacrifices, to work 30 years, to go and work abroad, to live in terrible conditions so as to collect, penny by penny, the money to buy a piece of land. And the land must be near that of the rest of the family. For that they will pay almost any price.” Land prices in Kosovo, despite its poverty, are five times those in Serbia and typically range around \$35,000 for an acre of good farm land, Abrashi said. Newspapers have reported sales of farms for over \$1 million. As a result, Serbs, who unlike the Albanians have attractive alternatives outside the province, have had a powerful economic incentive to sell their land to Albanians. For the Serbs who have remained; frustrated Albanian youth have kept up a steady harassment ranging from the painting of hostile slogans on Serbian homes and vandalism of Serbian graveyards to beatings and rapes. “One cannot speak of these developments as being only the deeds of individual [Albanian] groups anymore,” said Serbia’s interior minister Svetomir Lalović in a recent speech. “At issue are seriously disturbed interethnic relations.” Few killings have been recorded since the 1981 riots. But in the three months of July, August and September, authorities recorded 34 assaults by Albanians on Serbians. Two instances of rape provoked outraged demonstrations near Priština and motivated the last, angry delegation that marched on the federal parliament in Belgrade. Yugoslav officials predict that it will take many years to resolve the tensions in Kosovo, and dissidents are even less sanguine. (Jackson Diehl, “Ethnic Rivalries cause unrest in Yugoslav Region,” *Washington Post* Foreign Service Saturday, 29 November 1986).

¹⁷⁵ Cf. “Kosovo polje—dnevnik događaja,” *Intervju* 127, 11 April 1986; Atanasije Jeftić, *Od Kosova do Jadovna* (Belgrade: Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva, 1986); Kjell Magnusson, “The Serbian Reaction Kosovo and Ethnic Mobilization Among the Serbs,” *Nordic Journal of Soviet & East European Studies* 43 (1987), 3–30.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

nouncing “cultural and spiritual genocide” directed against the Serbian Christian heritage (desecration of churches, monasteries and graveyards, harassments and attacks on monks and nuns, etc.) widely distributed through the religious press, the Patriarchate, no longer seen as a parochial and conservative organization, but as a natural protector of national interest in dangerous situations, gradually regained the confidence of the wider public and established a new moral influence on a largely secular Serb population.¹⁷⁶

Despite the growing support in all Serb-inhabited areas of Yugoslavia—from Slovenian enclaves, most of eastern and western Bosnia, Dalmatia and the whole of Krajina (areas of the former Habsburg Military Frontier) in Croatia to Herzegovina, northern Macedonia, Montenegro and Vojvodina—for the protection of the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija, the main federal institutions, still fully controlled by the old-age dogmas of the League of Communists, remained hostile to any significant change of political or legal provisions or to any kind of new constitutional arrangements that could impose restrictions on the discrimination against Kosovo Serbs and other non-Albanian ethnic groups and harmonize the legal system in the whole of Serbia.

On 25 October 1987, the eight-member Federal Presidency decided to deploy federal police forces to Kosovo and Metohija in order to maintain order. The Kosovo Albanian *nomenklatura* read this act as clear evidence of losing support among other nationalistic leaderships inside the Federation. Eventually supported by official Belgrade, local Kosovo Serb communists emerged victorious in this conflict, which ended up with repeated purges of Albanian communist leaders in Priština as well as elsewhere in Kosovo and Metohija.

As a result, after the federal authorities failed to ensure the protection of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, the problem was bound to become a means of highly orchestrated political manipulation, in particular when a new communist hardliner, Slobodan Milošević, using a populist strategy, imposed himself in the middle of 1987 as the sole protector of Serb national interests. Milošević’s intention was to re-establish the influence of the discredited League of Communists on the basis of a newly-discovered Serb nationalism, a model already applied a decade before in other constituent republics of federal Yugoslavia. Most Serbs perceived him as a genuine Serb patriot who pretended to be a hard-line communist. Milošević, however, turned out to be a communist only pretending to be a Serb patriot.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ “Declaration of the Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church against the Genocide by the Albanians on the indigenous Serbian Population, together with the Sacrilege of their Cultural Monuments in their own Country”, *South Slav Journal* 11/2–3 (40–41) (London: South Slav Journal, 1988), 61–64, 87–89.

His neo-communist populism gained momentum as the collapse of communism encouraged by nationalism was already underway in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union itself. Milošević’s hard-line communist approach to the national question soon proved to be the most discrediting element for general Serb interests in Yugoslavia.¹⁷⁸

Even before Milošević rose to power in 1987, the secessionist movement of the Kosovo Albanians had been able to mobilize a large spectrum of Albanian Diaspora in the West, using a mixture of traditionally right-wing accusations against the Serbs and an ultra-left “Marxist-Leninist” rhetoric furnished over the years by Enver Hoxha’s Albania. After the 1987 party coup in Belgrade, Albanians skilfully portrayed themselves as the main victims of the neo-communist regime of Slobodan Milošević, while Serbia was often portrayed as the “last bastion of communism in Europe”.¹⁷⁹ Using politically correct liberal rhetoric, and staging well-organized pacifist demonstrations, Kosovo Albanians managed to attract the attention of the Western media and their political elite.¹⁸⁰

Nevertheless, in reality, while maintaining full control over the key institutions and executive power in the Province, Kosovo Albanians, and extremist nationalists in particular, continued to harass and discriminate the non-Albanian population. A rare first-hand American correspondent noted that “ethnic Albanians already control almost every phase of life in the autonomous province of Kosovo, including the police, judiciary, civil service, schools and factories. Non-Albanian visitors almost immediately feel the independence—and suspicion—of the ethnic Albanian authorities.”¹⁸¹

The Kosovo Albanians, following the pattern of strict tribal obedience, were organized as a homogeneous political movement bound by common nationalist ideals. Political freedom and human rights, as viewed by the Kosovo Albanians, were exclusively linked to their collec-

¹⁷⁷ For more, see Slavoljub Djukić, *Kako se dogodio vodja* (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 1991); Kosta Čavoški, *Slobodan protiv slobode* (Belgrade: Dosije, 1992).

¹⁷⁸ J. F. Brown, *Nationalism, Democracy, and Security in the Balkans* (Brookfield: Dartmouth Pub, 1992); Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia’s Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

¹⁷⁹ D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo. La spirale de la haine*, 71–77.

¹⁸⁰ For an Albanian point of view, see Ibrahim Rugova, *Independence and Democracy* (Prishtina: Fjala, 1991); Alush Gashi, ed., *The Denial of Human and National Rights of Albanians in Yugoslavia* (New York: Illiria, 1992); *Open wounds: human rights abuses in Kosovo* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993).

¹⁸¹ The obvious result of such a policy was the following: “while 200,000 Serbs and Montenegrins still live in the province, they are scattered and lack cohesion. In the last seven years, 20,000 of them have fled the province, often leaving behind farmsteads and houses, for the safety of the Slavic north.” (David Binder, “In Yugoslavia, Rising Ethnic Strife Brings Fears of Worse Civil Conflict”, *The New York Times*, 1 November 1987).

tive rights and were confined to their claims for unrestricted majority rule in a territory defined as “the Republic of Kosovo” within the Yugoslav federation.

Protests of Kosovo Albanians provoked another wave of ethnic mobilization. It was the Trepča Albanian miners’ protest of November 1988 followed by a similar Albanian miners’ hunger strike in January 1989 that generated a series of Albanian-organized solidarity strikes in Belgrade-based, state-owned companies throughout Kosovo and Metohija. In addition, between November 1988 and September 1989 mass strikes or other work boycotts took place in at least 230 companies throughout the province, producing a tremendous loss of two million working hours. Albanian-sponsored strikes soon became the chief weapon of the Independent Trade Unions of Kosovo (BSPK), organized in 1990 to substitute the provincial Federation of Trade Unions (FTU). On 3 September the BSPK called for a one-day general strike to protest against the dismissals of 15,000 Albanian workers. The general strike of Kosovo Albanians, fully boycotted by the Province’s thirty-five percent Serb and non-Albanian population, managed to halt most of the big companies all over Kosovo and Metohija and demonstrated the power of ethnic mobilization and solidarity. However, the strike failed to achieve its aims; rather, Serbia responded by firing an additional 5,000 workers who had refused to comply with the strict rules of workers-self-management that were still a legal obligation for all workers in Yugoslavia.

Conflicts, Parallel Worlds, Confrontation

The final result of the limitation of Kosovo autonomy imposed by Serbia was another huge wave of unrest and, in turn, severe police repression. As Albanian protests continued, the Yugoslav leadership, at the request of the authorities of Serbia, deployed the federal army forces to Kosovo and Metohija in February 1989. During the ensuing March protest some protesters, some of whom were armed, were killed while hundreds were arrested in conflicts with the federal army. That same month, the Albanian communist leader Azem Vllasi and another fourteen Albanian communists were sentenced for “counterrevolutionary activities undermining the social order”, for organizing the riots of miners at Stari Trg and Albanian ethnically motivated demonstrations throughout Kosovo.¹⁸²

By the 26 March 1989 amendments to the Constitution of Serbia, the autonomy of both Serbian provinces, Kosovo (with the term Metohija reintroduced) and Vojvodina, was reduced to the level enjoyed under the 1963

¹⁸² It was later that their sentences were abolished under the pressure of the international and Yugoslav public. Cf. Hugh Poulton, *The Balkans. Minorities and States in Conflict* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1991), 67–68.

Constitution.¹⁸³ The limitation of autonomy meant in fact the removal of all constitutional provisions perceived or treated as elements of potential Kosovo statehood. It also ended the unrestrained, ethnically motivated political domination of Albanians in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo.¹⁸⁴

The Albanian members of the dismissed communist Assembly of Kosovo responded on 2 July 1990 by proclaiming the Republic of Kosovo within Yugoslavia, i.e. a federal unit separate from Serbia. Furthermore, the Kosovo Albanian representatives, fully ignoring the political rights of Kosovo Serbs and other national communities and ethnic groups, adopted their own Albanian “Constitution” at an assembly held secretly in Kačanik on 7 September 1990. These acts, followed by a widespread Albanian boycott of all official Serb-dominated institutions, from schools to hospitals, were regarded by Serbian authorities as illegal attempts at secession.¹⁸⁵

Belgrade’s immediate response was to fire all Kosovo Albanians who challenged the restored statehood of Serbia. The next measure was harsh police retaliation against often violent Kosovo Albanian protesters. Unyielding in their aim to obtain independence from Serbia, Kosovo Albanians at first chose a strategy of passive resistance, personified by Ibrahim Rugova, a prominent communist intellectual that became leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), a political party functioning as a mass Albanian national movement. Rugova’s policy was to refuse all contact with official Belgrade and the Serb-dominated authorities in Kosovo, labelling them illegal institutions that violated 1974 Kosovo autonomy. Furthermore, throughout the early 1990s, Kosovo Albanians adamantly rejected frequent calls, supported by the international community, for a democratic compromise through political compromise with the anti-Milošević democratic forces in Serbia. Kosovo Albanians, therefore, invested nothing into the promotion of democracy or human rights in Serbia. The majority of Kosovo Albanians boycotted all post-1990 multiparty parliamentary elections in Serbia while in parallel denouncing Milošević’s communist regime as pursuing “colonial” and “apartheid” policy.

The only beneficiary of the situation was Milošević, who rose to power through being perceived as the main protector of discriminated Kosovo Serbs. In practice, Milošević manipulated the Kosovo issue for his own short-term needs, primarily as a safe reservoir for at least twenty-six parliamentary seats needed for maintaining his undisputed power in Serbia. In return, Milošević tolerated

¹⁸³ “Ustav Republike Srbije”, *Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije* 1 (Belgrade 1990).

¹⁸⁴ Cf. “Amandmani na Ustav Srbije 1989”, *Službeni glasnik SR Srbije* 11 (Belgrade 1989).

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Shklzen Maliqi, “A Demand for a New Status: The Albanian Movement in Kosova” in Veremis & Kofos, eds., *Kosovo. Avoiding Another Balkan War*, 210–218.

the parallel political system established by Albanians for their own community in Kosovo and Metohija. The long-term strategy of Kosovo Albanians remained unchanged during the wars of Yugoslav succession waged in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia: they sought to obtain international support, first political and eventually military, for the cause of Kosovo's secession from Serbia which, in April 1992, formed a common state with Montenegro: the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁶

Kosovo Albanians, therefore, kept rejecting all calls for democratic struggle within Serbia and for cooperation with the nascent democratic bloc in Belgrade. Milošević was, for his own ends, using Kosovo to remain in power, stifle the democratic opposition and suppress any discussion about his communist-inspired policy, Kosovo included. Already in 1992, Milošević lost mass support and resorted to electoral fraud to maintain power, while using the international embargo imposed on Serbia and Montenegro in June 1992 to increase his control over the economy, politics and media through both security and army services. The Serbian democratic opposition (DEPOS) was eventually supported by the highest-ranking representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church in their often joint efforts, during 1992, to stop the bloodshed of the civil wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to pave the way to compromise and peace through political dialogue and international mediation:

"The Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian people have never adhered to godless Communism or to any other totalitarian ideology. [...] The Serbian Church openly dissociates and distances itself from this and this kind of [Milošević-appointed] government and its supporters. We wish to remind all [persons] in power, especially in Serbia, that no one's chair [political position] is more important than the destiny and freedom of the whole nation and that no one has a monopoly on the people and the future of our children. [...] Also, we appeal to all authorities in Serbia and all factors in Europe and the world to respect the rights and responsibilities of all who live in Kosovo and Metohija, and not to impose solutions under pressure from any side; instead, [we appeal for] true support to a compassionate and just democratic order that will ensure protection for all people and nations in this region, which, because of its spiritual, national and cultural significance, is to Serbs what Jerusalem is to Jews."¹⁸⁷

After the Dayton Peace Accords of 1995 Serbia's President Slobodan Milošević, as one of the signatories of the hard-won peace, went from being the demonized "butcher of the Balkans" to being the guarantor of the post-war

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Albanian point of view in Elez Biberaj, *Kosova: the Balkan Powder Keg* (London: Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, 1993).

¹⁸⁷ The entire text of the *Memorandum* of the Holy Assembly of Bishops (held 14–27 May 1992) was published in *Glasnik Srpske patrijaršije* 6 (June 1992), 94–97.

settlement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Despite growing opposition to his oppressive neo-communist regime throughout Serbia and the three-month protests against electoral fraud in the winter of 1996, Milošević still enjoyed almost unconditional Western support and even became the chief Serbian negotiator for the pending Kosovo crisis. However, the increasing efforts of different international mediators demanding a peaceful solution to the Serb-Albanian conflict in Kosovo failed due to procrastination within the Belgrade regime, but also due to the opposition of Albanians who demanded, as a first concession, the restoration of the autonomous status granted by the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution.¹⁸⁸

The attempts to normalize the education process for ethnic Albanians by allowing them to use public schooling facilities and thus to reduce interethnic tensions in Kosovo did not produce the expected results: Serbian officials presented the problem of the education system as primarily a humanitarian issue, whereas the Albanians saw the problem as inseparable from the future political status of Kosovo.¹⁸⁹

While Albanians saw the restoration of the autonomous status of 1974 merely as a transition to their full independence from Belgrade, different semi-official Serbian proposals called for a permanent solution to the problem through the partitioning of Kosovo along ethnic lines. In parallel, the democratic opposition in Belgrade proposed various transitional solutions, ranging from regionalization (Miodrag Jovičić) to cantonization (D.T. Bataković) of Kosovo and Metohija, hoping to prevent further aggravation of interethnic relations which would obviously lead to uncontrolled armed conflicts in the nearest future.¹⁹⁰

The opposing attitudes of Serbs and Albanians, with their leaders Slobodan Milošević and Ibrahim Rugova entrenched in their uncompromising positions, blocked the various mediation efforts of EU or US representatives. The general impression of foreign analysts was that Kosovo was turning into two "parallel worlds", with each side demonizing or simply ignoring the other.¹⁹¹ Albanian-sponsored terrorist attacks and more than sixty assassinations

¹⁸⁸ D.T. Bataković, "Kosovo–Metohija Question: Origins of a Conflict and Possible Solutions", *Dialogue* 7/25 (Paris 1998), 41–56.

¹⁸⁹ The Milošević–Rugova agreement, signed under the auspices of Sant'Egidio, never came into effect due to different interpretations: *Naša Borba*, Belgrade, 3 and 4 September 1996. An overview of different initiatives with corresponding documentation in Stefan Troebst, ed., *Conflict in Kosovo: An Analytical Documentation, 1992–1998*, ECMI Working Paper No. 1 (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 1998). Cf. also a detailed account of the negotiation process by Predrag Simić, *Put u Rambuje, kosovska kriza 1995–2000* (Belgrade: Nova, 2000).

¹⁹⁰ D.T. Bataković, "Progetti serbi di spartazione", *Kosovo: Il triangolo dei Balcani*, *Limes* 3 (Roma 1998), 153–169.

¹⁹¹ See the analysis: *Parallel Worlds*, Institute for War & Peace, Media Focus 3, London, 4 December 1998.



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from 1995 to 1998, notably of Kosovo Serb policemen and civilians, but also of Kosovo Albanian officials loyal to Serbia, were aimed at destroying the last bridges of communication between the two communities, and punishing all the members of the Albanian community unsympathetic to the secessionist cause.

The Albanian clandestine paramilitary organization KLA (the Kosovo Liberation Army) announced armed resistance in February 1998. This was a major turning-point after which the decade-long passive resistance of the Albanians gradually turned into armed rebellion and afterwards into full-scale civil war in the Province. Milošević's regime responded with severe, often excessive, police measures targeting both terrorist KLA groups and, occasionally, civilians involved in providing logistics. After a series of persistent clashes between the KLA and Serbian police forces, the armed conflict escalated in the summer of 1998.¹⁹²

After the failed Rambouillet negotiations on the future status of Kosovo, NATO decided to resolve the crisis by military action.¹⁹³ Officially, the NATO campaign against Yugoslavia, lacking legal authorization from the

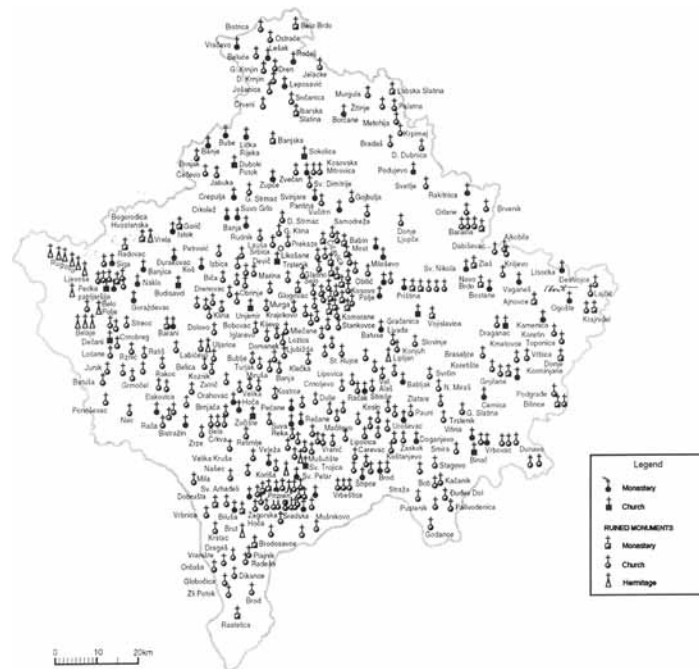
UN, had five initial objectives: 1) safe return of Albanian refugees; 2) withdrawal of all Serbian forces from Kosovo; 3) NATO military control on the ground; 4) extended autonomy for Kosovo; and 5) the gradual introduction of multiethnic democracy. Another two objectives were added subsequently: overthrowing Milošević and no commitment of ground troops.¹⁹⁴

The bombing of Yugoslavia that started on 24 March 1999 strained Serbian-Albanian relations in Kosovo to the limit. The Kosovo Albanians supporting the paramilitary KLA units openly rejoiced at the bombs falling on Belgrade and other towns in Serbia. In addition, the KLA forces resumed operations against Serbian police units and local Serbian civilians, but also against those Albanians or members of other ethnic groups (such as Roma, Muslim Slavs, Gorani and others) that had remained loyal to Serbia throughout the conflict. In response, the Serbian police and military forces launched full-scale operations against Albanians, and the KLA forces, apart from small pockets in central and north-eastern Kosovo (the Dreni-

¹⁹² Cf. "Serbia: Democratic Alternative", *Special Report by US Institute of Peace*, Washington DC, June 1998, p. 7. For more, see D. T. Bataković. "The Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. War, International Protectorate and National Catastrophe", *Eurobalkans* 36–37 (Autumn/Winter 1999), 23–40.

¹⁹³ David Gompert, "How to Defeat Serbia", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 4 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Inc., 1994).

¹⁹⁴ "A Bungled War", *The Economist*, London, 8 May 1999, 11. See a rather critical analysis of the Kosovo crisis development and NATO operations in Ignatio Ramonet & Alain Gresh, eds., "La nouvelle guerre des Balkans", *Le monde diplomatique*, *Manière de voir* no. 45 (May–June 1999). Cf. another, less critical, Western perspective by Ronald Dannreuther, "War in Kosovo: History, Development and Aftermath" in Mary Buckley and Sally Cummings, eds., *Kosovo. Perception of War and its Aftermath* (London & New York: Continuum, 2001), 12–29.



Serbian church monuments in Kosovo-Metohija, 1998

ca and Lab areas), were crushed and pushed into the mountains towards the Albanian border (the Junik area). With many crimes against civilians, committed by both sides, plus the high percentage of civilians, mostly Albanian, displaced to neighbouring countries, interethnic relations sank to their lowest level since the Second World War.¹⁹⁵ Nonetheless, it was the brotherhood of the Serbian monastery of Dečani that sheltered some 200 local Albanian women and children trying to escape from persecution and revenge.

According to UNHCR data on 25 May 1999, there were 957,913 ethnic Albanian refugees who left Kosovo since the first armed attacks of the KLA on the Serbian police in March 1998. The large-scale exodus of Albanians from Kosovo was, from the Albanian standpoint, variously explained: first, as ethnic cleansing organized by Serb paramilitary forces; second, as flight from Kosovo to avoid the NATO bombing; third, Kosovo Albanians found themselves coerced by the KLA. Indeed, the KLA made an effort to legitimize the NATO air strikes and “secure” the arrival of NATO troops in Kosovo. During April 1999, it was also a way for a part of the defeated KLA units to be transferred to Albania or Macedonia along with the refugees in order to avoid destruction by the Yugoslav army

¹⁹⁵ Predominantly pro-Albanian interpretation of the events in the report of the International Crisis Group, *The Kosovo Spring*. The International Crisis Group Guide to Kosovo (Brussels 1998); for Serbian attitudes, see pp. 77–82. Cf. also D. T. Bataković, “Kosovska kriza: izazovi i ishodi”, *Književne novine* 971, Belgrade, 1 April 1998.

(*Vojska Jugoslavije*) and police forces of the Milošević regime.

The Hague Tribunal (ICTY) indictment against Milošević for war crimes unsealed in the middle of the NATO bombing campaign contributed significantly to his decision to accept the total withdrawal of Serbian military and police forces from Kosovo, with the proviso that the new international protectorate should not extend to other parts of Serbia which were to remain under his control. According to the military-technical agreement signed in Kumanovo on 9 June 1999, Kosovo, after the withdrawal of all Serbian forces, was placed under the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) military protectorate. The authority of the United Nations civil administration was introduced by UN SC Resolution No 1244 of 10 June 1999. Although an international protectorate, Kosovo and Metohija, by the provisions of UN SC Resolution 1244 legally remained within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.¹⁹⁶

The centuries-long interethnic conflict between Serbs and Albanians in Serbia’s troublesome province of Kosovo and Metohija, still heavily burdened by religious, national and ideological antagonisms, remained unsettled, and was only deepened after the unprecedented seventy-eight day-long NATO bombing campaign in the spring of 1999—the alliance’s first and last attack on a sovereign nation in post-Second World War Europe.

¹⁹⁶ For a legal aspect, see Robert M. Hayden, *Blueprint for a House Divided. The Constitutional Logic of the Yugoslav Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 167–180.