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## ALEKSANDAR RANKOVIĆ AND THE KOSOVO ALBANIANS\*

**Abstract:** The paper re-examines the historiographical picture of the leading Serbian communist politician Aleksandar Ranković in the context of his alleged anti-Albanian policies. Based on archival sources and relevant literature, the article tries to establish if there is truth in the generally accepted perception by examining several instances of alleged abuses of the secret police against the Albanians. The general situation of the Kosovo Albanians is examined in order to elucidate the reasons for their discontent that led to police surveillance. Finally, the role/guilt of Aleksandar Ranković is assessed within the communist power structure.

**Keywords:** Ranković, Albanians, Kosovo, Tito, the UDB

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## *Challenging the Myth*

Aleksandar Ranković went down in popular memory and history as a completely misunderstood historical figure. Most Serbs have viewed him (and often still do) as a champion of Serbian interests in communist Yugoslavia.<sup>1</sup> The Albanians and pro-Albanian authors tend to see him as a horrendous Albanian-baiter whose downfall ushered into the free development of the Albanian national minority and Kosovo's autonomy. Thus, in the half-baked but extremely influential Noel Malcolm's survey of Kosovo's history, one can read that Ranković was "the Minister of the Interior, Serbian strongman... who had directed the harshly anti-Albanian security police".<sup>2</sup> In a part-sentence, Malcolm adduces several inaccuracies and falsehoods that epitomize the popular image of Ranković. Almost equally influential and even more one-sided, Miranda Vickers depicts the whole

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1 That was the general feeling among Serbian population when he was toppled in 1966. (*Tajni dosije Ranković, Iz arhive UDBE i KOSA*, eds. Svetko Kovač, Bojan Dimitrijević and Irena Popović Grigorenko (Beograd: Blic, 2020), 84, 167; Александар Ранковић, *Дневничке забелешке*, (Београд: Југословенска књига, 2002), 264.) An estimated 100.000 appeared at his funeral in Belgrade in 1983 – to pay tribute to him, but also to express their dissatisfaction with the unequal political position of Serbia within Yugoslavia (due to its two largely independent autonomous provinces), bad economic situation and eruption of Albanian separatism in Kosovo. (Слободан Селинић, *Србија 1980-1986. Политичка историја од Тита до Милошевића*, (Београд: ИНИС, 2021), 43-64.)

2 Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo. A Short History*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 468.

period after the end of WWII until Ranković's fall as a litany of Albanian martyrdom.<sup>3</sup> Such warped and inaccurate images rubbed off even on general syntheses of Yugoslav and Kosovo history by serious scholars.<sup>4</sup> The present author will try to test the veracity of such perceptions by examining the following questions: Was the situation of Kosovo Albanians really so bleak between the end of WWII and 1966? Did the secret police really have the Albanians as its particular target? What was Aleksandar Ranković's actual share in the creation of repressive policy, i.e., to what extent was he personally responsible for it? Did he have any pro-Serbian and anti-Albanian bias?

### *The Situation of the Kosovo Albanians until 1945*

In order to answer these questions, we first need to take a few steps back and depict briefly the situation of the Kosovo Albanians prior to 1945. The Albanians, especially Muslims (who make up 90% of the Albanians in Kosovo), had a privileged position in the Ottoman Empire. They

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3 Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian. A History of Kosovo*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 143-164. Vickers states that the secret police, the UDB, dealt with the Albanians "as a whole", implying general ethnically-based persecution. (Ibid., 154.)

4 Cf. e.g. Marco Dogo, *Kosovo, Albanesi e serbi: le radici del conflitto*, (Lugo di Cosenza: Marco, 1992), 331; Marie-Janin Calic, *Geschichte Jugoslawiens im 20. Jahrhundert*, (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2010), 231; Holm Sundhaussen, *Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten 1943-2011*, (Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau, 2012), 170; Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Kosovo, Kurze Geschichte einer zentralbalkanischen Landschaft*, (Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau, 2008), 228-233. Schmitt went so far as to call the 1945-1966 period in Kosovo's history "the Ranković era".

used it, as well as the growing weakness of the Empire, to extend their area of settlement at the expense of other ethnic groups and to lord it over them.<sup>5</sup> This was checked and partly reversed by Serbian gains in the war against Turkey in 1878 when most Albanians fled or were evicted from the territories that fell to Serbia.<sup>6</sup> In turn, some of the refugees and expellees settled down in Kosovo, making the life of the local Serbs almost unbearable, forcing many to emigrate to Serbia, thereby reducing their already diminishing share in the total population further still.<sup>7</sup> The

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- 5 *Косово и Метохија у српској историји*, (Београд: СКЗ, 1989), 133-193; Đoko Slijepčević, *Srpsko-arbanaški odnosi kroz vekove s posebnim osvrtom na novije vreme*, (Himelstir: Iskra, 1982) (2nd ed.), 99-126; Риста Т. Николић, *Ширење Арнаута у српске земље*, (Београд: Гласник Српског географског друштва, 1938); Atanasije Urošević, "Ethnic Processes in Kosovo During the Turkish Rule", *Kosovo, Past and Present*, (Belgrade: Review of International Affairs, 1989), 41-48; Димитрије Богдановић, *Књига о Косову*, (Београд: САНУ, 1985), 85-125.
- 6 Богдановић, *Књига о Косову*, 136-141; *Косово и Метохија у српској историји*, 213-219; Slijepčević, *Srpsko-arbanaški odnosi*, 152-155; Miloš Jagodić, "The Emigration of Muslims from the new Serbian Regions 1877/1878", *Balkanologie* 2/1998, 109, 114.
- 7 Slijepčević, *Srpsko-arbanaški odnosi*, 223-233; *Косово и Метохија у српској историји*, 231-238, 243-276; Богдановић, *Књига о Косову*, 148-157, 178-188, 228-272, 277; *Писма српских конзула из Приштине 1890-1900*, ed. Бранко Перучић, (Београд: Народна књига, 1985), passim; *Преписка о арбанашким насиљима у Старој Србији 1898-1899*, ed. Министарство иностраних дела, (Београд: Државна штампарија, 1899); Милан Ракић, *Конзулска писма 1905-1911*, (Београд: Просвета, 1985), 45, 59, 91, 95, 100, 102, 115, 280-289; Михаило Војводић, "Србија и албанско питање крајем XIX века", *Србија и Албанци у XIX и почетком XX века*, ed. Андреј Митровић, (Београд: САНУ, 1990), 72, 76-79, 82-85.

Serbs, for their part, viewed Kosovo as the cradle of their nation since it was in the center of the medieval Serbian state<sup>8</sup> and studded with Serbian churches and monasteries.<sup>9</sup> For these reasons, when Serbia and Montenegro liberated Kosovo and Metohija<sup>10</sup> from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, they had to combat the hostile Albanian majority population whose national awareness had increased over the previous decades. Because of that and due to their own nationalism, the Serbian authorities were not disposed to treat the Albanians as equal citizens. This practice continued after WWI in Yugoslavia until 1941.<sup>11</sup> Agrarian reform, colonization of loyal Serbs,<sup>12</sup> and political, econo-

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- 8 It was also the locale of the epic battle against the Ottomans in 1389 that spelled doom for the medieval Serbian state and ushered into 500 years of Turkish domination. Serbian national mythology developed around the memory of the fateful battle. (Zoran Janjetović, "Kosovo – das 'Heilige Land' der Serben", *Wegweiser zur Geschichte Kosovo*, eds. Bernhard Chiari and Agilolf Keßelring, (Paderborn, München, Wien, Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006), 51-55.)
- 9 Some of the most important, like Gračanica and Dečani are under UNESCO protection.
- 10 The name Metohija refers to the western part of the province that is called just Kosovo in English usage. For the Albanians the term Kosovo covers all Albanian-inhabited territories outside of Albania, except those in Greece. For brevity's sake, we shall use the usual English appellation.
- 11 On complicated and many-faceted events and processes between 1912 and 1941 cf. Zoran Janjetović, *Deca careva, pastorčad kraljeva. Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918-1941*, (Beograd: INIS, 2005), 99-374.
- 12 Although historiography and documents often speak of the Serbs and Montenegrins, the latter considered themselves Serbs at that time. The development of separate Montenegrin national feeling was spurred only by the communists after the WWII.

mic, and educational disadvantages made the Albanians dissatisfied with their position within the new state.<sup>13</sup> Small wonder that they, almost to a man, supported the Axis during WWII – which, in turn, partly determined their position in the communist Yugoslavia.

Having received all sorts of benefits from German and Italian occupiers (schools, administrative posts, de facto revision of the agrarian reform, free hand in pillaging and manhandling the Serbs, all the way to inclusion of most of Kosovo into the fascist puppet-state of Greater Albania), the Albanians were loath to become part of Yugoslavia once again.<sup>14</sup> Their rebellion in late 1944 and early 1945 was due primarily to an unwillingness to accept

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13 On the Albanians in the inter-war Yugoslavia cf. Janjetović, *Deca careva*, 111-116, 165-168, 172-176, 210-211, 214-218, 245-250, 335-344, 354-361; on Kosovo as a whole cf. Божица Славковић Мирић, *Политичке, економске и културне прилике на Косову и Метохију 1929-1941*, (Београд: Просвета, Принцип, 2018); Ali Hadri, “Kosovo i Metohija u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji”, *Istorijski glasnik* 1-2/1967, 51-84; Petrit Imami, *Srbi i Albanci kroz vekove*, (Beograd: Samizdat/FreeB92, 2000), 253-278; on the agrarian reform and colonization cf. Milovan Obradović, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija na Kosovu*, (Priština: Jedinstvo, 1981).

14 Državni arhiv Srbije (DAS), holding BIA, III/121, Uprava Državne bezbednosti AKMO, Izveštaj po pitanju šiptarske nacionalne manjine, Priština, October 10, 1952; Ненад Антонијевић, *Косово и Метохија 1941-1945. година – ратни злочини*, (Београд: Музеј жртва геноцида, 2017), 105-381; Ђорђе Борозан, *Велика Албанија. Поријекло – идеје – пракса*, (Београд: Војноисторијски институт Војске Југославије 1995), 266-447; Branislav Božović, Milorad Vavić, *Surova vremena na Kosovu i Metohiji. Kvislinzi i kolaboracija u Drugom svetskom ratu*, (Beograd: ISI, 1991), 29-174, 265-365, 461-475.

the “Serbian rule” again but partly also to the heavy-handedness of the military authorities, requisitions, executions of some well-known collaborationists, and especially to forcible recruitment into partisan units with the aim of sending them away to fight for liberation of the rest of Yugoslavia.<sup>15</sup> Although polycentric and unsynchronized, it was crushed only after the deployment of considerable partisan forces.<sup>16</sup> The Military Administration was impo-

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15 DAS, BIA, III/139, Referat o političkom stanju u toku okupacije i posle oslobođenja; DAS, BIA, III/139, Jovo Bajaj, Referat o političkom stanju u srezu [podrimskom] od oslobođenja do sada, Orahovac, November 15, 1948; Милутин Фолић, “Појава контрареволуције на Косову крајем 1944. и почетком 1945. године и напори КПЈ на њеном превазилажењу”, *Оснивачки конгрес Комунистичке партије Србије, Зборник радова*, (Београд: Институт за историју радничког покрета Србије, 1988), 141, 143; Radošin Rajović, *Autonomija Kosova. Istorijско-pravna studija*, (Београд: Економика, 1985), 184; Božović, Vavić, *Surova vremena*, 483; Isabel Ströhle, *Aus den Ruinen der alten erschaffen wir die neue Welt! Herrschaftspraxis und Loyalitäten in Kosovo (1944-1974)*, (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2016), 61-62; Ali Hadri, *Narodnooslobodilački pokret na Kosovu* (henceforth: *NOP na Kosovu*), (Београд: Завод за историју Косова у Приштини, 1973), 389; Душан Бојковић, “Албанско становништво у процесу изградње ‘народне власти’ на Косову и Метохији 1945”, *1945. Крај или нови почетак? Тематски зборник радова*, (Београд: ИНИС, 2016), 123; Miloš Mišović, *Ko je tražio republiku Kosovo 1945-1985*, (Београд: Narodna knjiga, 1987), 36-37; Imami, *Srbi i Albanci*, 304-305.

16 Most sources speak about some 40.000 troops, but some authors mention as many as 50.000 – which is probably exaggerated. (Pavle Dželetović Ivanov, *Balistički pokret 1939-1952, Masovnost, saradnja sa italijanskim i nemačkim okupatorima i zločini nad Srbima*, (Београд: Архив Србије, 2000), 273, 293; Božović, Vavić, *Surova vremena*, 505; Vicko Antić, “Dejstva KorpUSA narodne odbrane Jugoslavije na razbijanju kontrarevolucionarnih snaga u po-

sed in Kosovo in February 1945 and lasted until August. The actual number of casualties is still unknown. Predictably, Albanian nationalists claim it went up to 47.300 Albanians killed in action or shot (28.400 in Kosovo alone.)<sup>17</sup> However, the now accessible Serbian documents suggest much lower figures.<sup>18</sup> It seems Michael Portmann's esti-

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slednjoj godini rata”, *Za pobedu i slobodu. Završne operacije za oslobodjenje Jugoslavije. Učesnici govore*, (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1986), 605.) 50.000 are mentioned by Dušan Bataković (Dušan Bataković, “Les Albanais du Kosovo en Yougoslavie 1945-1995: minorité en Serbie, majorité dans la province autonome”, *Minorities in the Balkans, State Policy and Interethnic Relations (1804-2004)*, ed. Dušan Bataković, (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2011), 174.)

- 17 Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 312. Malcolm does not accept that number at face value, but Miranda Vickers does. (Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 143.) Few pages further, she vacillates between 36.000 and 48.000, not realising that such large discrepancy between the two numbers makes both of them unconvincing. (Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 148.)
- 18 For a detailed, although not quite complete survey of most villages and the number of persons shot at the end of the WWII cf. DAS, BIA, IIII/140; BIA, V/117; BIA, V/4; BIA, V/112. Cf. also DAS, BIA, V/112, Spisak lica koja su neprijateljski elementi, a koja su u toku okupacije i posle oslobodjenja odlukama i presudama narodnih vlasti osuđena na kaznu smrti i nad kojima je kazna izvršena; DAS, BIA, III/121, Ispostava SUP-a Uroševac, Analiza šiptarske nacionalne manjine, Uroševac, March 20, 1956; DAS, BIA, V/100, Predmetni registar. Spiskovi streljanih lica, [s.a.]; DAS, BIA, III/139, Jovo Bajat, Referat o političkom stanju u srezu [podrimskom] od oslobodjenja do sada, Orahovac, November 15, 1948; DAS, BIA, III/139, Referat o državnom aparatu [u srezu Suva Reka, 1949? ]; DAS, BIA, III/117, Referat o federatu [u Peći]; DAS, BIA, III/117, Referat o crnoj košulji, [u Peći]; DAS, BIA, III/117, Referat o Državnoj policiji u okrugu Peć.



mate that some 2.000 Albanians were killed by the communist forces from January through April 1945 is the most realistic one.<sup>19</sup> Insurgent bands were active for a couple more years, but they were quickly melting away under blows of government forces, thanks to amnesty and because the expected British help never materialized.<sup>20</sup> Bands of insurgents continued their precarious existence until the late 1950s, but their actions against the regime seemed increasingly like pin-pricks. Furthermore, the bulk of outlaws and anti-communist bands in Yugoslavia operated not in Kosovo but in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia and comprised mostly Croatian (ustasha) or Serbian (monarchist) members.<sup>21</sup>

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- 19 Michael Portmann, "Communist Retaliation and Persecution on Yugoslav Territory during and after WWII (1943-1950)", *Tokovi istorije* 1-2/2004, 74. To be sure, one should reckon with some more killed over next couple of years, but these victims could not increase the death-toll dramatically.
- 20 In late 1944 and 1945 an estimated 16.000 Albanian outlaws roamed Kosovo. (Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), holding 507, Savez komunista Jugoslavije, XVIII – k. 4/1-22, Referat o šiptarskoj nacionalnoj manjini, December 31, 1952; Božović, Vavić, *Surova vremena*, 485-486; Bojković, "Албанско становништво", 113.) By the end of 1945 1.370 Albanian rebels in whole of Yugoslavia remained. In March 1948 only 76 Albanian insurgents were still at large and only 55 by the end of the year. (Дмитар Тасић, *Корпус народне одбране Југославије (КНОЈ), 1944-1953* (henceforth: *КНОЈ*), (Београд: ИНИС, 2021), 143, 192-193, 201.)
- 21 Božović, Vavić, *Surova vremena*, 505-514; Тасић, *КНОЈ*, 150, 156, 160, 162-163, 191-192, 201; Бојан Димитријевић, *Ранковић: други човек*, (Београд: Вукотић Медиа, 2020), 111, 121-122. Already in fall 1945 Kosovo bands were irrelevant on the Yugoslav level. Klinger's claim the KNOJ was most active in Kosovo and Macedonia in the late 1940s and early 1950s, causing allegedly thousands of

## *The Role of Aleksandar Ranković in the Communist Terror*

What role did Aleksandar Ranković play in all these events? He was one of the four communist top-brass (together with the supreme chief, Marshal Josip Broz Tito, the ideologue Edvard Kardelj and ideologue-cum-spin-doctor Milovan Đilas) and headed the OZN (Odeljenje za zaštitu naroda – Department for Protection of the People)<sup>22</sup>, the partisan secret police since its foundation in May 1944, as well as the unit for special purposes KNOJ, (Corps of People's Defense of Yugoslavia, that was set up in August 1944), partly from among members of the OZN and that was supposed to assist the OZN.<sup>23</sup> This implies his responsibility was great since these two organizations were in charge of the ruthless extermination of all communists' foes – real, imagined, or potential. In this capacity, he directed purges of collaborationists, traitors, “enemies of the people”, and war criminals *throughout the country*. In a multi-national country such as Yugoslavia, the victims of these repressive measures belonged to all ethnic groups,

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dead, is baseless. (William Klinger, *Il terrore del popolo, Storia dell'OZNA la polizia politica di Tito*, (Trieste: Edizioni Mosesti, 2013), 143.) He adduces no sources for this claim in his otherwise well documented book.

22 In early 1946 it was renamed after the Soviet model, Uprava državne bezbednosti (UDB) – Administration for State Security.

23 On foundation, organization and activities of the OZN and the KNOJ cf. Kosta Nikolić, *Mač revolucije. OZNA u Jugoslaviji 1944-1946*, (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2016) (3rd ed.); Zdenko Radelić, *Obaveštajni centri, Ozna i Udba u Hrvatskoj (1942.-1954.)*, (Zagreb: Hrvatski institute za povijest, 2019); Klinger, *Il terrore*, 13, 109-160.

i.e., the OZN and the KNOJ did not choose their victims according to their ethnicity but rather according to their role during the war, political importance, and possible damage they could do to the communist regime.<sup>24</sup> For understandable reasons, very few explicit orders to that effect survived,<sup>25</sup> none of them for Kosovo. This comes as no surprise, not only due to the sensitive nature of such orders but also due to milder repression in Kosovo.

*The Treatment of the Kosovo Albanians at the End of  
WWII and the Conditions Defining it*

Despite the claims of Albanian nationalists and although the exact figures still evade the researchers, it is safe to claim that the Albanians suffered less at the hands of the OZN, the KNOJ, and the Yugoslav Army than was the case with members of other ethnic groups. There were several reasons for that. Firstly, communist leaders perceived anti-

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24 Vladimir Geiger, "Ljudski gubici Hrvatske u Drugom svjetskom ratu i poraču koje su prouzročili Narodnooslobodilačka vojska i Partizanski odredi Jugoslavije/Jugoslavenska armija i komunistička vlast. Brojdbeni pokazatelji (procjene, izračuni, popisi). Case study: Bleiburg i folksdojčeri", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 3/2010, 708; Nikolić, *Mač revolucije*, 151. Retaliation and settling of accounts occurred on lower levels.

25 Thus, in mid-May 1945 he complained that the OZN killed too few people in recently liberated Zagreb: only 200 in ten days, although the order was to finish the dirty work in matter of days. (Radelić, *Obaveštajni centri*, 154, 168; Klinger, *Il terrore*, 140.) In a telegram of October 23, 1945 he complained that chetniks, ustasha and other "bandits" were captured alive instead of being shot on the spot, except for those worthy of being interrogated. (Nikolić, *Mač revolucije*, 199.)

communist nationalists from among the largest Yugoslav peoples – the Serbs and Croats – as the main threat to their power: Serbian anti-communists appealed to Serbian monarchist tradition and their Croat counterparts to Croatia's historical statehood that, in their view entitled the country to independence. Both groups had numerous adherents among their fellow nationals, which earmarked them for a much more brutal treatment – due to the pivotal role these two ethnic groups had in Yugoslavia. The numerically, socially, and historically much weaker Albanians were by no means as dangerous for the projected regime. On the other hand, the Yugoslav communists promised equality to all nationalities in the country;<sup>26</sup> on that platform, they tried to win over the Albanians throughout the war but with next to no success.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the Albanians were all heavily armed, and they lived more or less compactly in a countryside full of wooded hills and mountains, which was perfect for guerrilla warfare. Even though they had no common leader and organization, for these reasons, they posed a formidable challenge to the new authorities in the areas where they lived. No doubt, these military difficulties could be overcome at a price, but in order to spare the troops nee-

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26 On November 29, 1943 AVNOJ, Yugoslav communists' quasi-parliament proclaimed national equality and announced that Yugoslavia would be a federation after the war, although it did not elaborate on the future position of national minorities. (*Jugoslovenski federalizam. Ideje i stvarnost. Tematska zbirka dokumenata, I, 1914-1943*, eds. Branko Petranović and Momčilo Zečević, (Beograd: Nolit, 1987), 801.

27 Rajović, *Autonomija*, 165, 167; Борзан, *Велика Албанија*, 408; Hadri, *NOP na Kosovu*, 285.

ded for other tasks, the communist leaders were willing to make a number of concessions to the Albanians.

There was also an overriding foreign political reason to give precedence to political rather than to police and military means. With the Comintern's blessing, the Yugoslav communists patronized their comrades in Albania since 1941 – not quite selflessly.<sup>28</sup> During the war, Tito wanted to have allies on the Adriatic shore who would defend his western flank from a possible British landing and spread his influence over Yugoslav borders.<sup>29</sup> At the back of it was the idea of a

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28 The delegates of the Yugoslav communist party were instrumental in uniting various Albanian communist groups into the Communist Party of Albania in November 1941. The new party and its armed units stood under strong Yugoslav influence that sometimes verged on dominance. (Spasoje Đaković, *Sukobi na Kosovu*, (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1984), 76-83; Bernd J. Fischer, *Albania at War 1939-1945*, (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999), 121-125, 135; Александар Животић, *Југославија, Албанија и велике силе (1945-1961)*, (Београд: Архипелаг, 2011), 99-101, 103, 110-111, 113-115; Rajović, *Autonomija*, 153.) After the war the relations between the two parties were translated into the relations between the two countries. Yugoslavia supplied economic, cultural and political aid, joint companies were established and laws and institutions were synchronized. The Yugoslav leaders hoped to prepare the unification of the two countries in that way. To that end they even dangled the possibility of unification of Kosovo with Albania within the future federation. (Животић, *Југославија*, 116-170; Branko Petranović, *Balkanska federacija 1943-1948*, (Beograd: IKP Zaslou, 1991), 136-171).

29 This included sending agents and creating network in Albania, Greece and Italy. (Klinger, *Il terrore*, 107-108.) In the Albanian case, help for the CPA was intended also to help spur the Albanians in Yugoslavia to join Tito's partisans. (Petranović, *Balkanska federacija*, 55, 58, 62; Животић, *Југославија*, 102-105; Борозан, *Велика Албанија*, 398-400; Hadri, *NOP na Kosovu*, 270).

Balkan federation – to be sure, under his domination. By the time eastern parts of Yugoslavia, including Kosovo and most of Albania, were liberated, plans for unification of the two countries were ripening. These plans made a large-scale bloodbath impossible and even restricted drastically the number of Albanians who were declared war criminals and punished as such.<sup>30</sup> Ranković was the member of the narrowest circle around Tito discussing these issues, although it was eventually Tito who determined the aims of policy and made ultimate decisions on how to realize them.<sup>31</sup> For that reason,

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30 Koča Jončić, a policeman during the time of liberation and an expert for national minorities during the 1960s, adduced in 1962 friendly relations with Albania in 1945 as one of the reasons for mild punitive policy toward Albanian war criminals. According to him, between 1945 and 1947 some 300 Albanian war criminals were captured but only some 20-30 were sentenced thanks to policy of appeasement of the Albanian national minority and friendly relations with Albania. (DAS, holding Savez komunista Srbije, Đ2, Komisija za nacionalne manjine CK SKS, k. 1, Stenografske beleške sa sastanka Ideološke komisije i Komisije za nacionalne manjine, March 23, 1963.) The Commission for Establishing the Crimes of Occupiers and their Abettors declared 103 people from Kosovo (most of whom were on the run or abroad) war criminals. By September 29, 1945 military tribunals sentenced 281 persons, 71 of them to death. (Борозан, *Велика Албанија*, 523.) By the first half of 1948 (when good relations with Albania turned sour over night) the Commission listed 247 members of the Albanian minority as war criminals. Together with Albanian citizens, 297 Albanian war criminals were registered which roughly confirms the number given by Jončić. (Божковић, “Албанско становништво”, 126.) Srđan Cvetković adduces 300 listed and 17 executed. (Srđan Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića. Represija u Srbiji 1944-1953*, (Beograd: ISI, 2006), 258).

31 Milovan Đilas, *Druženje s Titom*, (Harrow: Aleksa Đilas, [1980]), 60; Idem, *Vlast*, (London: Naša reč, 1983), 15.

whatever the degree of reprisals against communists' enemies in Kosovo and elsewhere was, Ranković was not directly responsible for it; until the decision was made, he had only an advisory say. He was responsible for the execution of reprisals once their targets and scope were determined. This remained so until his fall from Tito's grace in 1966.

The need to fortify their power, prove the credibility of their national policy, and the desire to draw Albania into federation with Yugoslavia (and possibly Bulgaria) spurred the Yugoslav communist top-brass to make visible and speedy concessions to the Albanian minority – especially in Kosovo.<sup>32</sup> The first was the temporary ban on the return of the inter-war Serbian colonists whom the Albanians had expelled during WWII.<sup>33</sup> Another equally im-

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- 32 The second-largest Albanian group in Yugoslavia lived in western Macedonia. The Macedonians were not recognized as a separate ethnic group during the inter-war period so the communists strove to win them over by recognizing their national individuality and helping them organize their own national republic. In order not to offend Macedonians' sensitivity and newly awakened national pride, the concessions given to the Albanians in Macedonia did not match those of their co-nationals in Kosovo. (Виолета Ачковска, *Братството и единството 1944-1974, Помегу хармонија и дисхармонија*, (Скопје: Институт за национална историја, 2003)).
- 33 Nikola Gaćeša, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Jugoslaviji 1945/1948*, (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1984), 162; Idem, "Насељаванье Косова и Метохије између два светска рата и решавање насељеничког питања после Другог светског рата", *Радови из аграрне историје и демографије*, (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 1995), 254; Mišović, *Ko je tražio republiku*, 46; Борозан, *Велика Албанија*, 520-521. Part of the colonists were eventually allowed to return, some received land in the Vojvodina and some lost it altogether (political undesirables, former gendarmes, civil-servants and

portant measure was the induction of the Albanians into the Communist Party, “mass organizations” and government organs on all levels.<sup>34</sup> Over the next couple of years, this brought into the Party and government organs a large number of ideologically unaffiliated people, opportunists, and murky characters who wanted to whitewash their biographies and join the victors<sup>35</sup> – making further work for the OZN/UDB.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, thus the vicious circle of infiltra-

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other non-farmers). (Борозан, *Велика Албанија*, 129; Božović, Vavić, *Surova vremena*, 572). Serbian nationalist bemoan the “expulsion” of the pre-war settlers to this day ascribing to it the ethnic misbalance in favor of the Albanians (that had already existed before the WWI).

- 34 There were some 300 Albanians in the Party in Kosovo in 1945 (out of some 1.000 members); by December 1946 the number of their members rose to 1.771 (out of 5.509). (Kosta Nikolić, Srđan Cvetković, *Srbi i Albanci na Kosovu i Metohiji u 20. veku (1912-1990)*, (Beograd: ISI, 2014), 43). Although their share did not increase, the absolute number did, which was important for implementing Party’s policy among the Albanian masses.
- 35 DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 123, Godišnji izveštaj o delatnosti i stanju partiske organizacije sreza šarplaninskog za godinu 1947, [Prizren, December 22, 1947.]; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 125, [Godišnji izveštaj SK KPS Srbica], Srbica, December 20, 1947; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 121, Miloš R. Džudović, Izveštaj o radu i stanju partijske organizacije sreza gnjilanskog u toku 1947 godine, [Gnjilane, December 22, 1947.]; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 123, [Godišnji izveštaj o radu SK lapskog sreza], [Podujevo, November 18, 1948.].
- 36 The number of Albanian nationalist who infiltrated the state apparatus (including the police and the UDB) was considerable. (AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 4/1-22, Referat o šiptarskoj nacionalnoj manjini, December 31, 1952; Božović, Vavić, *Surova vremena*, 533-534, 537, 541-545; Антонијевић, *Косово и Метохија 1941-1945. година* –



tion, discovery, purification, and new infiltration began. To be sure, Albanian nationalists perceived the actions of the UDB as oppression, but they usually overlooked the fact that the secret police acted against all opponents of the regime, not just Albanian separatists.<sup>37</sup>

A further measure aimed at winning over members of the Albanian national minority was setting up schools in Albanian. No such schools existed during the inter-war period, and the German and Italian occupiers opened some during the war.<sup>38</sup> Now, the communists wanted to fulfill one of the basic minority demands and, at the same time, try to enlighten the Albanian population in order to capacitate them to build socialism. At the same time, schools were important vehicles for imparting the new ruling ideology to masses of all nationalities. Thus, the process that eventually led to the opening of the Priština University started right after the war: first with the opening of elementary schools and several secondary schools as well as of teachers training colleges.<sup>39</sup> However, in the begin-

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*ратни злочини*, 527; Ivanov, *Balistički pokret*, 293-294, 334-335, 338, 344, 346, 380).

37 Srđan Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića, II. Politička represija u Srbiji 1953-1985*, (Beograd: JP Službeni glasnik, 2011), passim. Despite the title Cvetković often deals with whole Yugoslavia.

38 Славковић Мирић, *Политичке, економске и културне прилике*, 327-331; Janjetović, *Deca careva*, 246-248; Dogo, *Kosovo*, 290-296; Игор Вукадиновић, “Просветна политика Краљевине Албаније на Косову и Метохији током Другог светског рата”, *Токови историје* 1/2021, 109-132.

39 Veljo Tadić, “Education and Cultural Transformation of Kosovo”, *Kosovo, Past and Present*, (Belgrade: Review of International Affairs, 1989), 197-208; Schmitt, *Kosovo*, 238-242; Ströhle, *Aus den Rui-*

ning, the authorities had a hard time convincing the Albanian masses that attending schools was useful. It was particularly difficult to make patriarchal Albanian parents send female children to school.<sup>40</sup> While lifting vastly the educational level of the Kosovo Albanians, this process also made more work for the UDB, police, and judiciary since most Albanian nationalists were to be found among intellectuals, teachers, pupils, and students.<sup>41</sup> As we shall

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*nen*, 129-153. The Priština University was opened in 1970. Although it offered lectures in Serbian too, it soon developed into predominantly Albanian university and the bulwark of Albanian nationalism. Cf. Vujadin Milanović, *Univerzitet u Prištini u mreži velikosalbanske strategije*, (Beograd: Književne novine, Jedinstvo, 1989), especially 151-166.

40 DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 123, [Godišnji izveštaj o radu SK KPS lapskog sreza, Podujevo, November 18, 1948.]; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 123, Zapisnik sa sastanka Biroa SK KPS, Prizren, December 13, 1948; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 123, B. Nedeljković Centralnom komitetu KPS, [Godišnji izveštaj o radu SK od 1. I do 15. XI 1948.], Lipljan, November 28, 1948; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 120, Godišnji izveštaj o radu partiske organizacije sreza istočkog, [Đurakovac, December 8, 1949]; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 122, Lakić Simonović, Godišnji izveštaj o radu M.K. K.P.S. za Kosovsku Mitrovicu u 1948 godinu (sic), Kosovska Mitrovica, November 20, 1948; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 17, Zapisnik sa održane III sreske Partijske konferencije u bujanovcu (sic), December 3, 1948; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 120, Izveštaj o godišnjem radu partiske organizacije u srezu lapskom za 1950 godinu, [Podujevo, December 5, 1950]; Ströhle, *Aus den Ruinen*, 133-134, 145-146.

41 DAS, Đ2, Kontrolna komisija IB, k. 15, Predrag Ajtić za Oblasni komitet KPS za Kosovo i Metohiju Centralnom komitetu KPS, Priština, August 16, 1949; DAS, BIA, III/136, Stanje šiptarskog pro-

see presently, keeping an eye on the enemies of the regime among the intellectuals was used to discredit Ranković once Tito decided to remove him.

### *The Situation after the Resolution of the Cominform*

Chronologically, the second big wave of repression appeared in mid-1948 when Tito fell out with Stalin, who thought that his Balkan ally was becoming too independent. Yugoslavia found itself between the devil and the deep sea: already isolated from the west, it was now cut off and threatened from the east, too. Under such circum-

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svetnog kadra na terenu Autonomne kosovsko-metohijske oblasti, [1953?]; AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 4/1-22, Referat o šiptarskoj nacionalnoj manjini, 31. XII 1952; , DAS, BIA, III/121, Vujica Sekulović, Uprava državne bezbednosti AKMO, Priština, Izveštaj po pitanju šiptarske nacionalne manjine, Priština, October 10, 1952; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 118, Izveštaj o radu partiske organizacije sreza lapskog za 1950 godinu; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 119, Zapisnik sa održanog sastanka Gradskog komiteta KPS za grad Kos. Mitrovici (sic), March 23, 1951; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 120, Godišnji izveštaj SK KPS sreza đurakovačkog za 1950 godinu, Đurakovac, December 9, 1950; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 120, Izveštaj o godišnjem radu partiske organizacije u srezu lapskom za 1950 godinu, [Podujevo, December 5, 1950]; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 17, Dragomir Stošić, [Godišnji izveštaj sreske partijske organizacije Preševo, January 2, 1948]; Животић, *Југославија*, 371. Party committees complained in the late 1950s that it had been easier to deal with the nationalist collaborators during the war than with the young nationalist intelligentsia. (AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 1/1-22, Stenografske beleške sa sastanka Komisije za nacionalne manjine CK Saveza komunističara Jugoslavije, Belgrade, March 20, 1957).

stances, the government had to act swiftly. Speed brought numerous mistakes and was coupled with undue severity. People who plumped for Stalin and the USSR were arrested and, in most cases, sent to prisons or the Goli Otok concentration camp in northern Adriatic, where prisoners were maltreated in the most fiendish ways. The camp was Tito's idea, but it was put into practice by Ranković. However, he did not know what actually went on there, and when he learned about it, he took steps to alleviate the situation, but he did not abolish the camp.<sup>42</sup> The conflict with Stalin was important for the Kosovo Albanians inasmuch as Albania sided with other East European countries against Yugoslavia. There were extremely few Albanians among the adherents of the Informbureau<sup>43</sup> Resolution who have been condemned in Yugoslavia<sup>44</sup> because

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42 According to Đilas, he (Đilas) suggested disbanding the camp in 1949, but Kardelj and Ranković were against it. Ranković said there were too many adherents of the Informbureau for the regular courts to cope with them. (Đilas, *Vlast*, 191-194; Idem, *Druženje*, 72-77.) Also, according to Đilas, Ranković was unhappy he had to deal with Stalinists in a Stalinist way. (Đilas, *Druženje*, 74).

43 International association of communist parties under Soviet dominance. On June 28, 1948 it passed a Resolution accusing Yugoslav communists of heresy and of pandering to capitalist interests. It was Stalin's tool in his attempt to bring Yugoslavia back under his control. Although not a member, Albania immediately sided with Stalin's policy.

44 Out of some 160.000 people condemned for supporting the Informbureau Resolution, 437 were Albanians which makes 2.68% of the total, at the time the Albanians made up 4.75% of Yugoslavia's population. (Miroslav Jovanović, Aleksej Timofejev, "Spisak lica osuđivanih zbog Informburoa 1948-1961: skica za statističku analizu", *Zatočenici Golog otoka. Registar lica osuđenih zbog Infrombi-*

most Albanians were political, anticommunist and cherished traditional hatred of Russia.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, the Yugoslav-Soviet split and Albania's realignment ended hopes of unification in the framework of a Balkan federation, which heated Albanian nationalism. It was used by the Albanian secret service that engaged its co-nationals as agents, propagandists, spies, guides, etc. It was mostly with them that the UDB had to deal in Kosovo – apart from very numerous Montenegrins who were overrepresented among adherents of Stalin. The very fact that the UDB clamped down not only on separatists but also on Stalin's sympathizers (out of whom some two-thirds were either Serbs or Montenegrins)<sup>46</sup> and others goes to show

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*roa. Dokumenti Uprave državne bezbednosti FNR Jugoslavije*, eds. Dragoslav Mihajlović, Miroslav Jovanović, Goran Miloradović, Aleksej Timofejev, (Beograd: Arhiv Srbije, 2016), 39). Thus the claim about thousands of arrested Albanians that Miranda Vickers took over from British documents is completely false. (Cf. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 155).

- 45 Ströhle, *Aus den Ruinen*, 205; Sinan Hasani, *Kosovo. Istine i zablude*, (Zagreb: Centar za informacije i publicitet, 1986), 155-156. According to an analysis this hatred of Russia was one of the factors preventing the spread of communist ideology among the Albanians. (AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 4/1-22, Referat o šiptarskoj nacionalnoj manjini, December 31, 1952.) The real meaning of Yugoslavia's conflict with the USSR eluded the Albanian masses. (DAS, BIA, III/121, Živko Mitrović, Referat o šiptarskoj nacionalnoj manjini – od Rezolucije IB do danas na terenu sreza sitničkog, Lipljan, October 8, 1952; DAS, BIA, III/121, Uprava državne bezbednosti AKMO, Priština, Izveštaj po pitanju šiptarske nacionalne manjine, Priština, October 10, 1952).
- 46 46% of the arrested on charges of supporting Stalin were Serbs and 21% Montenegrins. (Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića II*, 57).

that the secret police and its chief made no ethnic distinction among the regime's foes.

Many enemies of the regime and, indeed, of Yugoslavia among the Albanians were to be found among the former collaborationists who had infiltrated the new governing structures. After the split with Stalin, they started promoting irredentist goals more openly and did not shrink from attacks on members of the Communist Party and "mass organizations".<sup>47</sup> Several more prominent members of the communist hierarchy fell away from the state apparatus and took to the woods or emigrated to Albania or organized enemy groups. Due to large Albanian families, such leaders often recruited followers from among their relatives, as well as some prominent members of local communities.<sup>48</sup> Since pure Stalinist propaganda

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47 DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 120, Godišnji izveštaj o radu partijske organizacije sreza istočnog, [Đurakovac, December 8, 1949].

48 DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 120, SK KPS Lipljane (sic) Centralnom komitetu KPS, Lipljan, December 9, 1949; DAS, BIA, III/135, Spisak ubijenih odmetnika u toku 1949 godine; DAS, BIA, III/122, Izveštaj Organizacija "NDŠ", [after 1954]; DAS, Đ2, Kontrolna komisija IB, k. 15, P. Ajtić za Okružni komitet Kosova i Metohije Centralnom komitetu KPS, Priština, June 15, 1949; DAS, BIA, III/121, Izveštaj: Analiza: Nacionalne manjine i IB-e zemlje, Priština, March 16, 1956; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 117, Ajtić, Zapisnik sa sastanka Oblasnog komiteta KPS za Kosmet, May 16, 1949; Hrvatski državni arhiv (HDA), holding 1561, Služba državne sigurnosti Republičkog sekretarijata unutarnjih poslova Socijalističke republike Hrvatske (SDS RSUP SRH), šifra 1, 10/33, FNRJ, DSUP, UDB I odeljenje, Jugoslovenska emigracija u IB zemljama 1952-1953. godine, Beograd [after 1952]; DAS, BIA, III/121, Analiza u vezi nacionalne manjine na teritoriji grada Prištine,

was not very catchy, Albanian secret services increasingly played the nationalist card.<sup>49</sup> They helped organize groups that sometimes engaged in acts of terrorism, such as causing two train crashes, blowing up a pylon of a long-distance power line, bombing an event in Vučitrn, or murdering officials and even members of their families.<sup>50</sup> It is known that inform bureau émigrés made up the bulk of commando groups Albania's secret services sent to Yugoslavia,<sup>51</sup> but also many more members of the national minority were willing to hide and guide these groups – some out of fear, but most out of sympathy for the irredentist cause.<sup>52</sup> The density of the network of supporters and in-

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Priština, March 22, 1956; AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 4/1-22, Referat o šiptarskoj nacionalnoj manjini, December 31, 1952; Đaković, *Sukobi*, 167-168; Ivanov, *Balistički pokret*, 374-375, 378, 407-408.

- 49 AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 4/1-22, Referat o šiptarskoj nacionalnoj manjini, December 31, 1952.
- 50 DAS, Đ2, Kontrolna komisija CK KPS, k. 183, Buda Đorđević, Neprijateljska delatnost na Kosmetu, June 20, 1950; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 120, Blažo Radonjić, Izveštaj o radu partiske organizacije sreza vučitrnskog u 1950 godini; DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 214, Neprijateljska delatnost na Kosmetu, June 24, 1950; DAS, Đ2, Agitprop komisija/Ideološka komisija, k. 4, Dušanka Cvetković, [Lebane, 1949]; Hasani, *Kosovo*, 153-154.
- 51 HDA, 1561, SDS RSUP SRH, šifra 1, 10/1, Obrada IB emigracije i emigranata iz istočnoevropskih zemalja u Jugoslaviji, [1961?].
- 52 DAS, BIA, III/121, Živko Mitrović, Aktivnosti unutrašnje reakcije iz redova šiptarske nacionalne manjine u toku 1955 godine, [s.a.]; DAS, Đ2, Agitprop komisija/Ideološka komisija, k. 4, Dušanka Cvetković, [Lebane, 1949]. From the overview of the number of concealers of outlaws, adherents of the Informbureau and collaborators of the Albanian Intelligence Service in villages it is clearly discernable that aiding Albanian agents after the Informbureau Resolution was a mass phenomenon. (Cf. 1956, DAS, BIA, III/140, Gliša

formers of the Albanian Intelligence Service in villages proves that the identification of the members of the national minority with their mother country was massive.<sup>53</sup> Three hundred ninety-nine people having ties to Albanian services were uncovered between late June 1948 and the end of December 1952. Out of that number, only 152 were punished, which disproves the claims of large-scale persecutions.<sup>54</sup> Local bands of outlaws also enjoyed broad support, and some of their abettors were members of the Communist Party.<sup>55</sup> Gradually, a typical blend of Albanian nationalism with the Albanian-style Stalinist (for propaganda purposes called “Marxist-Leninist”) communist ideology developed during the late 1940s and early 1950s that would be characteristic for Albanian separatists during the next few decades.<sup>56</sup> All this means the UDB had to be very vigilant in Kosovo, but certainly not that it dealt with the Kosovo Albanians “as a whole”, as Vickers would have it.<sup>57</sup>

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Krstić, Analiza u vezi sa situacijom oduzimanja oružja sa terena ispostave za unutrašnje poslove u Đakovici, Đakovica, May 31; DAS, BIA, III/ 140, Analiza po pitanju oduzetog oružja, Peć, July 1956; DAS, BIA, III/ 140, Analiza po pitanju oduzetog oružja, [s.a.].

53 DAS, BIA, III/140, Gliša Krstić, Analiza u vezi sa situacijom oduzimanja oružja sa terena ispostave za unutrašnje poslove u Đakovici, Đakovica, May 31, 1956; DAS, BIA, III/140, Analiza po pitanju oduzetog oružja, Peć, July 1956; DAS, BIA, III/140, Analiza po pitanju oduzetog oružja, [s.a.].

54 AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 4/1-22, Referat o šiptarskoj nacionalnoj manjini, December 31, 1952.

55 AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 4/1-22, Referat o šiptarskoj nacionalnoj manjini, December 31, 1952.

56 Hasani, *Kosovo*, 158-159.

57 Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 154.



*Emigration to Turkey – voluntary or forced?*

The same author, following Albanian nationalists' narrative, claims that the Yugoslav authorities opened Turkish-language schools in Kosovo in 1951 in order to halt the development of Albanian national consciousness.<sup>58</sup> According to her (and her sources), after the conflict with Stalin, the authorities pressured the Albanians to declare themselves Turks to expel them to Turkey. Allegedly, many of them opted for Turkish ethnicity to avoid the pressure and "were quickly shipped to Turkey".<sup>59</sup> To be sure, starring in the main roles of the bad guys in this fairy-tale were the UDB and Ranković. The word fairy tale is best suited to describe the essence of that nationalist myth. The truth was much more complicated: massive emigration of Muslims to Turkey started only in 1953 – after Tito's gentlemen's agreement with Turkish Foreign Minister Fuad Köprülü, after Stalin's death, after the pressure from the East started to wane and after Yugoslavia had already obtained support from the West. Indeed, fri-

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58 In fact Turkish-language schools existed in Macedonia since the end of the WWII. In Kosovo the number of ethnic Turks was much smaller and ethnic boundaries among Muslims blur, so the authorities started opening Albanian schools first. Lack of teachers was a factor for late opening of schools in Turkish too, and presumably also the wish not to irritate Albanian nationalists. As the communist power was strengthened and the Albanian-language educational system was developing, it looked increasingly incongruent with the proclaimed policy of ethnic equality that the Turks were left without schools in their language.

59 Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 149.

endlier relations with Turkey, as well as the Balkan Pact between Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey, were part and parcel of that rapprochement with the West. In order to please the new friends, Tito consented to let certain number of *ethnic Turks* emigrate from Macedonia (where most of the Turks lived) to Turkey.<sup>60</sup> Many Muslims dissatisfied with the economic, religious and social measures of the communist regime used the opportunity to leave the country.<sup>61</sup> There was interest in emigration also in Kosovo, Sandžak, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Emigration became

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60 Zoran Janjetović, "Emigration of the Kosovo Albanians into Turkey during the 1950s", *Tokovi istorije* 3/2022, 97-100. The communist authorities were averse to emigration from Yugoslavia, especially massive one, because emigration was a sign of dissatisfaction with communist policies and a tacit admission of their failures. Exceptions were made reluctantly only for reasons of foreign policy: thus the Poles, Czechs and Slovaks were allowed to emigrate during the first post-war years when relations with their mother-countries were friendly; some 60% of the surviving Jews were also allowed to emigrate once the state of Izrael was founded; the remaining ethnic Germans were also allowed to leave when diplomatic relations with West Germany were taken up. However, these were exceptions and it was difficult to obtain the passport even for a normal trip abroad until early 1960s. (Janjetović, "Emigration", 95-96).

61 Apart from measures that caused general discontent (mandatory sale of agricultural products at prices below market value, compulsory work in industry and at building sites, forced joining peasant cooperatives, lack of political freedoms) there were some additional grievances typical for the Muslim population, irrespective of their nationality, such as the obligation to unveil their womenfolk, mandatory education (especially for girls), ban on certain religious customs etc. (Cf. Radmila Radić, *Država i verske zajednice 1945-1970*, I, (Beograd: INIS, 2002), 256-260; Ströhle, *Aus den Ruinen*, 115-124, 137-139).

quite massive, so the government had to seek ways to limit it. Thus areas in Macedonia from which emigration was allowed were designated. Only people with Macedonian citizenship were allowed to emigrate. The authorities, as well as the Turkish Consulate in Skopje, checked the ethnic affiliation of the applicants.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, they had to have letters of guarantee from relatives or friends already living in Turkey who had to set in motion the administrative procedure by asking for a visa for prospective immigrants.<sup>63</sup> While emigration from Macedonia was allowed, from Kosovo it was not until 1958, so people desirous of emigration had to move to Macedonia first, and obtain the citizenship of that federal republic, before applying for emigration as alleged “Turks”. It was in this context that the alleged Albanian-baiter Ranković (since 1953 no longer minister of the Interior) expressed his opinion in March 1955 that emigration of ethnic Turks was acceptable, but not that of the Macedonian Muslims. A year later he was of the opinion that the emigration of the Albanians would be politically embarrassing.<sup>64</sup> In late 1957 he tho-

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62 Janjetović, “Emigration”, 97-100; Edvin Pezo, *Zwangsmigration in Friedenszeiten? Jugoslawische Migrationspolitik und die Auswanderung von Muslimen in die Türkei (1918 bis 1966)*, (München: Oldenbourg, 2013), 308; Radmila Radić, “Iseljavanje stanovništva sa jugoslovenskog prostora sredinom pedesetih godina”, *Istorijski zapisi* 1-2/1999, 160-161. Like in most federations, people had Yugoslav citizenship through having citizenship of one of Yugoslavia’s federal republics.

63 A. Elif Becan, “Une familière Étrangeté, L’accueil des immigrants musulmanes des Balkans en Turquie (1923-1964)”, (Ph.D, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Marseille 2021), 181-183.

64 Janjetović, “Emigration”, 110-111; Pezo, *Zwangsmigration*, 313.

ught that large-scale Muslim emigration was unacceptable and that it would be politically awkward if a large number of Albanians emigrated.<sup>65</sup> In other words, he acted like a conscientious federal statesman who thought in Yugoslav and not in narrow Serbian nationalist terms.

### *Disarmament in Kosovo 1955/56*

This fact demolishes another favorite Ranković-stereotype: that he instigated and executed “brutal” disarmament action in Kosovo in late 1955 and early 1956 with the alleged goal of forcing the Albanians to emigrate.<sup>66</sup> It is true that the action did not correspond to the present-day understanding of human rights nor to the then standards of legality, but that is about the only true thing about it. It was started at the time emigration from Kosovo was not allowed – so how could its aim be instigating emigration? There is absolutely no evidence that

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65 Janjetović, “Emigration”, 111; Pezo, *Zwangsmigration*, 313-314; Radić, “Iseljavanje”, 167. Even the most powerful Kosovo Albanian politician, Fadil Hoxha, attested in his memoirs that Ranković’s attitude toward Albanian emigration had been “correct”. (Quoted in: Игор Вукадиновић, *Аутономија Косова и Метохије у Србији (1945-1969)*, (Београд: Балканолошки институт, 2021), 403). According to Hoxha, by the end of 1957 only some 200 Kosovo Albanians emigrated to Turkey. (Ibid., 405.) Two years later the total was 1.200. (DAS, BIA, III/121, Aktivnosti unutrašnje reakcije iz redova šiptarske nacionalne manjine tokom 1955 [recte: 1959] godine).

66 The accusation surfaced only after Ranković’s downfall when Albanian and other politicians scrambled to heap poorly substantiated accusations on him and the UDB. (Вукадиновић, *Аутономија*, 413.) For a summary of all sorts of malfeasances of the UDB cf. Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 344-345.

Ranković initiated the action, but there is enough evidence that it was started by the UDB of Kosovo<sup>67</sup> with the aim of reducing the number of weapons in the population, both Albanian and Serb,<sup>68</sup> and that the leading politicians in Kosovo agreed that it be realized in the whole province.<sup>69</sup> The leadership of the Province and of Serbia were kept informed of how the action proceeded,<sup>70</sup> and it is almost certain that Ranković, as Vice-Prime Minister in charge of security (as well as Tito himself) was informed.<sup>71</sup> Although local authorities and Party secretaries were supposed to aid the police, they were rather passive.

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67 Mišović, *Ko je tražio republiku*, 95; Ljiljana Bulatović, *Prizrenski proces*, (Novi Sad: Književna zajednica Novog Sada, 1988), 179.

68 This was neither the first nor the only such action conducted in Yugoslavia after the WWII. (DAS, BIA, V/59, Izveštaj o muslimanima u deževskom i šavničkom srezu, April 28, 1952; AJ, holding SIV, 130, 992/1502, Stenografske beleške sa sednice Odbora za unutrašnju politiku SIV-a, Belgrade, May 18, 1956; Димитријевић, *Ранковић: други човек*, 181; Ранковић, *Дневничке забелешке*, 159). Weapons were kept because of vendettas, opposition to the authorities, tradition (Albanians) or fear of the Albanians (Serbs). (DAS, BIA, III/140, Živorad Topličević, Osvrt na akciju za prikupljanje oružja 1956. godine, [Kosovska Mitrovica?], [after 1960.] (henceforth: DAS, BIA, III/140, Živorad Topličević, Osvrt na akciju); DAS, BIA, III/140, Akcija prikupljanja oružja).

69 Вукадиновић, *Аутономија*, 410; Мишović, *Ко је тражио републику*, 92, 95.

70 DAS, BIA, III/140, Živorad Topličević, Osvrt na akciju; DAS, BIA, III/140, Izveštaj o radu Komisije na utvrđivanju deformacija i zloupotreba i o preduzetim merama na reorganizaciji Službe državne bezbednosti u AP Kosovo i Metohija, Priština, November 1, 1966; Вукадиновић, *Аутономија*, 411.

71 Мишović, *Ко је тражио републику*, 92, 95; Димитријевић, *Ранковић: други човек*, 179.

In some cases, they even hid the weapons themselves or even led the opposition to the disarmament. The UDB used violence where verbal demands failed and there were suspects; in villages where there was no information about who had guns, no pressure was applied. In other words, the UDB pressurized those who were suspicious of hiding weapons, and it was often that the acknowledged enemies of the regime proffered most assistance to the police – no doubt not wanting to get on the wrong side of the government again. On the whole, the Serbs and Montenegrins gave up weapons more readily – which testifies to their higher acceptance of the authorities.<sup>72</sup> Because of that, and since their villages were not perceived as “problematic”, less pressure was put to bear upon them. However, this was the case with some Albanian villages, as well as with those about which information was lacking.<sup>73</sup> This proves that pressure and violence were not applied generally and undistinctly, not even to the ethnic Albanians. On the contrary: violence, although certainly illegal, was targeted and limited. Thus, the use of violence was undeniable,<sup>74</sup> but the number of its victims and of its perpetrators is debatable.

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72 Nevertheless, opposition-minded Serbs and Montenegrins were also disarmed, sometimes with the use of force. (DAS, BIA, III/140, [Bez naslova], [s.l. s.a.].) Indeed, the largest prize among some 12.000 confiscated rifles and other weapons was a canon found on an estate of a Serb.

73 Zoran Janjetović, “Sticking to Guns: The Disarmament Action in Kosovo 1955/56”, *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 1/2021, 75-81; Вукадиновић, *Аутономија*, 409-413.

74 The UDB reports themselves speak about “heavy pressure” that was applied in some cases. (DAS, BIA, III/140, Analiza sela, [s.l. s.a.].)

*Ending the UDB Malpractices or Deposing Ranković?  
Clearing Irregularities or Creating a Myth?*

It is also certain that the use of violence, as well as other malfeasances of the UDB, became an issue only after Ranković was toppled in 1966 on trumped-up accusations that he had Tito's premisses bugged – that should have been the conclusive proof the UDB had become a state within the state. Until then, all levels of government were happy with the functioning of the UDB and its leadership (until 1953) or supervision (until 1963) of it.<sup>75</sup> Since the accusations were made in order to discredit him they were never followed up and therefore it is difficult to determine to what extent they were true: some of the UDB leading officers were deposed, some executives on lower levels were investigated, but only a handful tried and punished.<sup>76</sup>

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75 Radelić, *Obaveštajni centri*, 61, 85; Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 128; Jože Pirjavec, *Tito i drugovi*, (Zagreb: Mozaik knjiga, 2012), 500. The leading Croatian politician Vladimir Bakarić praised the UDB in the loftiest terms, just a year before he helped topple Ranković. (Димитријевић, *Ранковић: други човек*, 275).

76 Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 349. 763 Albanians, and 51 Serbs lodged complaints against the UDB – which goes to show that not only Albanians had reasons to complain. (Ibid., 348; Миомир Гаталовић, *Бурна времена. Косово и Метохија у државној политици Југославије 1966-1969*, (Београд: ИСИ, 2018), 66, 73). The delegation of Kosovo politicians treated Tito to somewhat different data on UDB crimes committed not only during the disarmament action. Allegedly 995 Albanians and 44 Serbs lodged complaints against the UDB. 382 state officials were indicted, 143 from the Security Service – proving that the UDB was by no means the only violator of human rights. According to the delegation's claims the UDB committed 96

Tito pardoned Ranković and his right-hand man Svetislav Stefanović Čeća and 18 others: eliminating a political rival was fine, but subverting the future loyalty of the secret police by persecuting past transgressions (real and alleged) was another matter – especially if one was in charge at the time they were committed.<sup>77</sup> To be sure, the official version was that the UDB officials were forgiven because of their previous valuable services to the country.<sup>78</sup>

This was the tactic followed also by Albanian politicians of Kosovo: those who had been in power (or indeed among the secret police's top-brass) when the UDB was "persecuting" the Albanians washed their hands in innocence while all supported Tito's version that the UDB got out of hand, for the advancement of Kosovo's autonomy – and consequently for an increase in their own power.<sup>79</sup>

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murders (39 by beating), instigated 7 suicides and caused GBH in 83 cases. (Гаталовић, *Бурна времена*, 78.) Despite that, the number of officers convicted in courts was incredibly small and in no proportion to the number of suspects. (Ibid., 102-103).

77 Гаталовић, *Бурна времена*, 102-103; Mišović, *Ko je tražio republiku*, 98-99; Ströhle, *Aus den Ruinen*, 278-279, 283; Bataković, "Les Albanais", 180. Tito practically said as much to a small group of Serbian politicians before his visit to Kosovo in 1967: he told them not to rake up muck of fifteen plus years ago, and especially not from the time people were getting killed at the border and one had to defend the country. (Milutin Živković, "Stenografske beleške sa sastanka Josipa Broza Tita i visokih partijskih funkcionera održanog 20. marta 1967. uoči posete Kosovu i Metohiji", *Arhiv* 1-2/2012, 228).

78 Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 339; Pirjavec, *Tito i drugovi*, 516.

79 Ströhle, *Aus den Ruinen*, 242, 254, 257, 263, 268, 370-373. Slovenian, Croat and part of Serbian politicians acted in the same way for



Thus the legend of the allegedly anti-Albanian UDB was created – even though no mention of Kosovo or persecution of the Albanians was made at the Party plenum on the island of Brioni when Ranković was deposed.<sup>80</sup> Such “proofs” started emerging only weeks and months later, although several prominent Albanian politicians were present at the Brioni plenary session. Apart from the disarmament action, among the “proofs” of the alleged persecution of the Albanians by Ranković, two other things were singled out. The one was the so-called “Prizren Trial” from 1956 against a group of ethnic Albanians charged with connections to Albania’s security service. That in itself would not have been something extraordinary had not some of the leading Kosovo Albanian politicians been implicated. As the investigation pointed their way, the officers in charge asked the higher-ups how to proceed. Ranković, Serbian Prime Minister Slobodan Penezić Krcun, and Tito decided to try the small fries but leave the big fish alone – to prevent political difficulties.<sup>81</sup> After Ranković’s fall, the convicted were par-

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the same reasons. Indeed, it was the Slovenian and Croat politician who reoriented Tito toward larger autonomy of Yugoslav republics; the Kosovo politicians just jumped at the opportunity to enlarge Kosovo’s autonomy within Serbia too.

80 Димитријевић, *Ранковић: други човек*, 394; Vojin Lukić, *Sećanja i saznanja. Aleksandar Ranković i Brionski plenum*, (Titograd: Novica Jovović, 1989), 175-176, 191, 198-199; Ströhle, *Aus den Ruinen*, 241; Ранковић, *Дневничке забелешке*, 277.

81 Вукадиновић, *Аутономија*, 419, 422; Bulatović, *Prizrenski proces*, 59-60, 79, 81-83; Lukić, *Sećanja*, 212; Mišović, *Ko je tražio republiku*, 108-109. Implicated were the *capo di tutti i capi*, Fadil Hoxha, his relative, Minister Mehmed Hoxha, justice Ramadan Vraniqi, district Party chief from Đakovica (and Kosovo’s Interior Minister af-

done, but the trial was not repeated – which indicates that there was something fishy: if the trial had been rigged, why was it not repeated in the correct manner? If the Albanian politicians had been innocent, why did the buck stop with the lesser suspects? Instead, the story was spun with the claim the Prizren Trial was an attempt by the UDB to discredit the Albanian politicians!

### *Nailing the UDB Coffin*

Although Ranković was removed due to the clash between “centralists” (whom he favored) and “federalists” (who secured Tito’s decisive support)<sup>82</sup> after his fall seemingly plausible accusations against admittedly repressive UDB have been raised – by people who from the day one had been part of the establishment that the UDB was upholding. The Albanian politicians from Kosovo who played a secondary role on the Yugoslav stage until then,<sup>83</sup> wanted to distance themselves from the oppressive regime they have also supported,<sup>84</sup> to fortify their own position (in the eyes

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ter the 1966 purge) Xhevdet Hamza, Zekeriah Rexha and others. The official reasons for leaving them out of the trial were the facts that the deed has been done three years before and that the witnesses were not reliable. It was decided that security benefits would be too small to warrant such great political damage. After Ranković’s fall the documents about the case went missing in 1981 and were uncovered only recently by Igor Vukadinović who gave the most accurate report on it. (Cf. Вукадиновић, *Аутономија*, 414-424).

82 Pirjavec, *Tito i drugovi*, 488ff.

83 Ströhle, *Aus den Ruinen*, 285.

84 Most Kosovo Albanian politicians remained in office for decades since they had the pedigree of having been partisans or (pre)war

of the Albanian masses and in the nomenclatura), to enlarge Kosovo's autonomy, and consequently, their own power. In order to do that, they, just like other political elites in Yugoslav republics, had to discredit the political police and secure its obedience. To that end, accusations were leveled not only at Ranković but also at the UDB in general. Apart from the above-mentioned cases, the Kosovo politicians raised two more accusations concerning the ethnic Albanians. The first one was that they have been sorely underrepresented in the UDB and the police in general. This was true,<sup>85</sup> but it had to do with the role of the Serbs and the Albanians in WWII: while almost all Albanians collaborated with the occupiers, the bulk of the partisans (especially in Serbia, Kosovo, the Vojvodina and Bosnia-Herzegovina and parts of Croatia) were Serbs. In a regime where ideological reliability had supreme importance, it is clear that such a sensitive service as the UDB had to be entrusted to the most loyal. This explains the huge overrepresentation of the Serbs (and even greater of the Montenegrins!) in it.<sup>86</sup> Af-

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communists. This was the general tendency in whole of Yugoslavia, but in Kosovo it was more pronounced since old communist cadres of Albanian nationality were few.

85 DAS, BIA, III/140, Izveštaj o radu Komisije na utvrđivanju deformacija i zloupotreba i o preduzetim merama na reorganizaciji Službe državne bezbednosti u AP Kosovo i Metohija, Priština, November 1, 1966; Гаталовић, *Бурна времена*, 67; Ströhle, *Aus den Ruinen*, 206. Ljiljana Bulatović adduces the data that are somewhat more favorable for the Albanians, but unfortunately not her sources. (Bulatović, *Prizrenski proces*, 146).

86 For the very same reasons the Serbs were over-represented in other law-enforcing agencies in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the Army. (Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji. Od za-*

ter the purge, the share of the Albanians rose to 45% – which was still less than their share in the overall population.<sup>87</sup> This shows that one could not do without the old reliable Serbian cadres altogether. In criticizing the UDB the Albanian politicians tended to forget that there were also Albanians in the UDB, and especially that some of the leading Albanian politicians were also among the executives of the UDB in the Province.<sup>88</sup>

Another key proof of the alleged oppression of the Albanian national minority was the surveillance of intellectual life in the Province and the number of personal files in Kosovo. General surveillance no doubt existed, but was by no means confined to Kosovo! There were some 2.754.923 million personal files in Yugoslavia in 1966. Out of that 692.250 were in Serbia: as many as 270.000 in Belgrade alone, 225.175 in Serbia proper, 144.475 in the Vojvodina, and 52.400 in Kosovo.<sup>89</sup> These figures do not sug-

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*jedništva do razlaza 1945-1991*, (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006), 257, 357; Mile S. Bjelajac, *Jugoslovensko iskustvo sa multietničkom armijom 1918-1991*, (Beograd: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 1999), 50, 52).

87 There were 58.3% Serbs and 28.3% Montenegrins and only 13.3% Albanians in the UDB in Kosovo prior to 1966. (Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 111).

88 Bulatović, *Prizrenski proces*, 146; Đaković, *Sukobi na Kosovu*, 222. Đaković was an old UDB executive from Kosovo so he knew the situation first-hand.

89 There were 316.445 files in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 90.885 in Montenegro, 826.965 in Croatia, 243.374 in Macedonia, 270.678 in Slovenia and 692.250 in Serbia, as well as 364.326 files with the federal UDB in mid-1966. (Bojan Dimitrijević, “Odjek Brionskog plenuma na službu unutrašnjih poslova 1966-1970”, *Istorija 20. veka* 2/2002, 83-84).

gest that the UDB kept a specially vigilant eye on Kosovo: if one followed the logic of the Albanian politicians, one could say that the population of Belgrade was much more “suspicious” than that of Kosovo. A large part of these files was of no relevance to the regime’s security, so they were eventually discarded.<sup>90</sup> However, after the security service was reformed after Ranković’s fall, only 52% of files were destroyed in Kosovo – as opposed to 77% in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 86% in Slovenia, 85% in Macedonia, 82% in Serbia, 87% in Croatia and 73% in Montenegro<sup>91</sup> – even though the new incarnation of the UDB, the SDB, was now in the hands of the Kosovo Albanian elite. This implies that unlike in other parts of the country, almost one-half of the files were relevant in Kosovo – presumably for a reason. If the general number of files before the purge did not seem to warrant the accusation of special focus of the UDB on Kosovo, the number of files on politicians, intellectuals and scholars did: the commission that had the task to “clear” the malfeasances of the UDB found that there were 997 such files in Croatia, 149 in Montenegro, 126 in the Vojvodina, 272 in Serbia proper, 117 in Belgrade and 900 in Kosovo.<sup>92</sup> However, as was already pointed out, the most active opponents of the regime in Kosovo came from among the intelligentsia, and as several defections during the conflict with Stalin and the investigation

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90 Those irrelevant files were created for every individual applying for a passport or some similar administrative matter, for peasants who did not fulfill their economic duties during the first post-war years, or refused to join peasant cooperatives until 1953, or were dead etc.

91 Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 117.

92 Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 116-117.

for the Prizren trial showed, even higher Albanian officials were not without reproach – which explains the interest of the UDB in these strata.<sup>93</sup> The demonstrations of Albanian students in 1968 and 1981 that enjoyed the support of many university professors and academicians proved that it was not just malicious stalking but that the UDB had good reasons to keep an eye on them too.<sup>94</sup>

### *Surveillance in Context*

So, was the UDB practice in Kosovo harsher than in other parts of Yugoslavia, and did the level of surveillance/pressure/oppression and severity of punishment surpass those in other parts of the country? Based on punitive policy Srđan Cvetković, the best expert on political oppression in Yugoslavia, established periods of stronger and milder treatment of political opponents from 1944 until the mid-1980s. According to him the periods of severe oppression were 1944-1946,

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93 After the WWII, as Đilas aptly put it “the secret police became the tool of the leadership over the Party – overlord over the new lords”. (Đilas, *Druženje s Titom*, 63.) In other words, it was not only the Albanian top-brass that was watched. (Cf. Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 114, 130.) According to Vojin Lukić, former Serbian Minister of the Interior, it was Ranković’s close collaborator Svetislav Čeca Stefanović who suggested setting up a special UDB unit to stalk intellectuals in 1958. Allegedly, ministers from other republics agreed to this, and Lukić was the only one who was against it. (Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 129).

94 Although his book was not written without personal grudge, Vujađin Milanović collected a gallery of Albanian nationalist university teachers and officials, many of whom had started their careers before 1966 and in some cases already before the WWII. (Cf. Milanović, *Univerzitet u Prištini*, 59-173).

1948-1951, 1958, 1971-1976, and 1981-1985 (the last mentioned after the flare-up of Albanian separatism from 1981 onward). As periods of mildness (under the influence of foreign policy and reduced opposition in the country) he singled out periods after 1951, and especially after 1953; from the early 1960s until the early 1970s, 1977, and the second half of the 1980s as the regime started to disintegrate.<sup>95</sup> A brief glance discovers that during Ranković's tenures as Minister of the Interior until 1953 and Vice-Prime Minister in charge of security until 1963 and as Vice-President until his fall in 1966, there were both waves of mildness and extreme harshness – the worst one being at the end of the WWII. For Kosovo the pattern is somewhat different: Cvetković detected that Kosovo had the highest ratio of political prisoners per capita since 1954. Most of them were Albanians, whereas until then it was the Serbs and Montenegrins.<sup>96</sup> So, even the larger share of Albanians among political prisoners in certain periods does not prove some anti-Albanian bias of the UDB. On the contrary: the prevalence of one or another ethnic group among political prisoners proves that not *ethnic* but *political* considerations were decisive. The number and ethnic make-up of political prisoners depended on the actual developments on the spot and security threats the UDB operatives perceived in them. If

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95 Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 184, 621, 672. As the longest mild period Cvetković roughly sees years between 1953 and 1968 – due to economic prosperity and international stability. (Ibid., 227).

96 Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 597-598, 605-606. He explains it by the fact that since that year the number of adherents of the Informbureau and peasants opposing peasant cooperatives decreased, whereas the number of Albanian nationalists rose. The largest number of nationalists in the mid-1960s was registered in Kosovo and in Croatia.

the UDB operatives and executives had acted on ethnic sympathies, there would not have been so many Serbs and Montenegrins arrested during the conflict with the Cominform,<sup>97</sup> i.e. members of certain nationalities would have a steady share among the political prisoners. It was as simple as that: the secret police targeted those who have been deemed dangerous for the regime, whatever their national affiliation, and for that reason the share of prisoners from certain ethnic groups changed over time.<sup>98</sup> This remained so even after the SDB was decentralized after 1966: after “gross malfeasances” allegedly under Ranković’s auspices (that did not bother anyone in the establishment until 1966), general modes of operation continued, only under polycentric leadership.<sup>99</sup> To be sure, “legality” was somewhat more respected, but then, that was the case also from 1947 or 1952 on, when persecution of political enemies was scaled down – under Ranković. This only goes to show that the severity of persecution did not hinge on Ranković, even at the times he was directly in charge as Minister of the Interior.

For researchers of the communist Yugoslavia, this comes as no surprise since it was Tito who decided on most crucial things from 1944 until his death in 1980. Even if we discard Ranković’s claims,<sup>100</sup> other witnesses

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97 The same reasons prevailed in Croatia in that period. Out of 6.953 arrested, there were some 1.400 Croats and some 5.000 Serbs (Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 244) (at the time the Serbs made up some 15% of the Republic’s population).

98 Individual ethnically-motivated excesses could occur with some individuals, but they were not the policy of the UDB or its executives.

99 Đilas, *Druženje s Titom*, 67; Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 102, 354, 618, 629.

100 Ранковић, *Дневничке забелешке*, 95, 156.



confirm it.<sup>101</sup> This does not mean Tito did not consult his closest collaborators (Ranković, Kardelj, and Đilas – until 1953) on most important issues,<sup>102</sup> but the final decision was his. More precisely, Tito made decisions concerning foreign and defense policy and the Army alone, but consulted Ranković on matters of the Party, judiciary, and internal affairs.<sup>103</sup> Ranković's role was advisory before the decision was reached and executive afterward.<sup>104</sup> As a disciplined Party member, he implemented even the decisions he intimately disagreed with,<sup>105</sup> and was as willing to be merciless in persecuting the “enemy” as his fellows.<sup>106</sup> However, he was neither unduly cruel nor sadistic.<sup>107</sup> He helped build an oppressive system but he was by no means

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101 Pirjavec, *Tito*, 513. The most prominent insider-turned-critic was Đilas.

(Cf. Đilas, *Druženje s Titom*, 60, 72, 82; Idem, *Vlast*, 14, 22, 64, 84, 131).

102 After his fall Ranković claimed that the most important decisions on security policy were reached between Tito, Kardelj and himself.

(Ранковић, *Дневничке забелешке*, 136).

103 Димитријевић, *Ранковић: други човек*, 256.

104 Đilas has summed it up nicely: “Ranković’s arm was Titos’s extended arm – depending on the estimate and the needs, sometimes hard and sometimes mild.” (Đilas, *Vlast*, 14.) Ranković himself neither overestimated nor underestimated his role – and his share of the responsibility/culpability.

As he wrote in his notes after his downfall: “However, I believe our public is politically savvy enough and knows full well that I have been just a link in all that – but if you please – a very important and steadfast link.” (Ранковић, *Дневничке забелешке*, 74).

105 Đilas, *Vlast*, 199-200, 221; Idem, *Druženje s Titom*, 74, 78, 139.

106 Димитријевић, *Ранковић: други човек*, 65, 67, 86-87, 92, 110; Svetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 40, 94, 218; Đilas, *Vlast*, 13-14, 32, 36, 191; Radelić, *Obaveštajni centri*, 155, 168; Nikolić, *Mač revolucije*, 112, 174, 180, 199; Klinger, *Il terrore*, 140.

107 Nikolić, *Mač revolucije*, 140; Radelić, *Obaveštajni centri*, 172, 176, 178; Đilas, *Vlast*, 47-48, 193-194; Idem, *Druženje s Titom*, 75-78, 119.

the sole responsible neither for its harshness nor for its gradually increasing leniency that was the product of political and social development at home and abroad.

*Ranković, the Serbian Nationalist?*

Finally, let's turn to the stereotype of Aleksandar Ranković, "the Serbian nationalist". As we have convincingly shown, the UDB had no national preferences and in this, it mirrored fatefully the views of Ranković himself. He thought and acted as a convinced *Yugoslav communist*. Time and again he espoused "brotherhood and unity" of the peoples in Yugoslavia and fulminated against nationalism, especially against Serbian nationalism.<sup>108</sup> For all we know, he was nationally indifferent,<sup>109</sup> although keenly aware of the national problem. In that context, he criticized the situation in Kosovo at the 5th Party Congress in 1948 with regard to the organization of the CPY and the mood among the Albanian masses.<sup>110</sup> We have already quoted his reactions to the mass emigration of Muslims,

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108 Димитријевић, *Ранковић: други човек*, 100, 233; Ранковић, *Дневничке забелешке*, 53, 86, 108, 196. The image of Ranković as Serbian nationalist was spread by some Serbian politicians who wanted to kowtow to Tito after his (Ranković's) fall. (Димитријевић, *Ранковић: други човек*, 307.) Before he was toppled the accusation that he had prepared a Serbian coup d'état was invented so as to discredit him. (Ранковић, *Дневничке забелешке*, 90). To be sure, Kosovo Albanian politicians used the myth of his nationalism for their own ends. (Ранковић, *Дневничке забелешке*, 264).

109 According to the former high UDB officer, Selim Numić. (Quoted in: Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića*, II, 98).

110 Димитријевић, *Ранковић: други човек*, 177-178.

and particularly of the ethnic Albanians during the 1950s. He certainly had Yugoslav strong-arm centralist leanings<sup>111</sup> and his alleged Serbian nationalism was mechanically derived from that fact and used as a convenient tool to discredit him once he was deposed.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, it can be said he fell because he had no ear for the complicated and ever-changing balance of inter-ethnic politicking.<sup>113</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Aleksandar Ranković was one of the leading Yugoslav communists after WWII. As such he contributed significantly to creation of the post-war regime and was instrumental in the persecution of its political enemies. In this, he was led by his communist and Yugoslav convictions and Tito's orders and not by any ethnic preferences. He was not cruel by nature, but he did not shirk from utmost severity when the interests of the revolution and the regime demanded it. The waves of harsher and milder persecution of political opponents did not depend on his personality but on the politi-

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111 Pirjavec, *Tito i drugovi*, 483, 490.

112 Huge headway the Albanian minority made in all spheres of life, especially in development of national culture while he was in office, were conveniently forgotten. (Cf. Zoran Janjetović, *Konfrontacija i integracija. Nacionalne manjine u Srbiji 1944-1964*, Beograd: INIS, 2022, 313-314, 490-492, 496-502, 551-552, 556-559, 562-570, 583-596, 607-610, 615-616, 629-634, 651-653; Imami, *Srbi i Albanci*, 424-434; Ströhle, *Aus den Ruinen*, 129-153; Tadić, "Education", 197-208; Schmitt, *Kosovo*, 238-243).

113 Pirjavec, *Tito i drugovi*, 498.

cal and social changes. Thus the UDB also acted in the same way regardless of his leadership. It never targeted the Albanians in particular, but only those who were deemed dangerous to the regime. Accusations of anti-Albanian bias of the UDB and of Ranković himself were raised only after his fall from power and were clearly opportunist in nature.

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