

Kosova and the Albanians in Yugoslavia as an
emerging issue in the Balkans

I. Introduction

The continuing deterioration of the political, constitutional and inter-ethnic situation in Yugoslavia that could even face an uncontrollable desintegration major regional implications has brought it and its national issues within the the larger Balkan framework again to the focus of the international attention. The seriousness of the situation is illustrated in the following evaluation of the Yugoslav President: "Yugoslavia is politically, economically and juristically desintegrated, furthermore in an illegal and chaotic way, which threatens further conflict escalation".¹ Within this framework the issue of Kosova and Albanians (of Yugoslavia) which has served as the initiator and a strong generator of the current Yugoslav crisis that contains substantial potential of conflict deserves much more attention than it was granted up to now. This is an opinion shared by many analystss that is reflected also in following statement of the Croatian Prime Minister: "The Yugoslav crisis is generated by two sources. One is the collapsing communist system and planned economy whilst the other is the multinational composition of Yugoslavia overwhelmed by Serbian hegemonial aspirations to rearragne Yugoslavia as they see fit. It started with the Serbian bloody surpression of Albanian resistance, which was supported by the Federal authorities. Now the same scenario wants to be reapplied to Croatia".²

The overall crisis in Kosova stems from the inferior constitutional, political and national status of Kosova and its overwhelmingly Albanian population. This inferior status imposed over Albanians by Serbia is aimed and to the largest extent has succeeded in depriving Albanians of equal political, economical, civic and human rights enjoyed by other constituent nation(alitie)s of Yugoslavia. Albanians have thus been reduced to second-rate citizens subjugated by a genuine Serbian colonial oppresion.

As the Yugoslav Prime Minister appraises "The reality in Kosova is tragic: there is total inter-ethnic separation, almost complete paralysis of the system institutions, unemployment and dramatic social issues, and a dishonorably low international reputation of Serbia and Yugoslavia. Under those conditions the human rights and freedoms of Albanians in Kosova have reached the lowest possible level. ... Relative peace is maintained only by means of police repression and political activity of some Albanian opposition parties. ... Such a situation is intolerable and can not be maintained for much longer unless if political action is undertaken to reestablish the normal functioning of system institutions which would lead to

¹ Expose of Yugoslav President of Presidency B.Jovic to the Federal Parliament, Borba, Belgrade, April 26, 1991

² Expose of the Croatian Prime Minister J.Manolic to the Croatian Parliament, Borba, Belgrade, April 17, 1991

consideration of all possible democratic political options".³

The aim of this presentation will therefore be shedding some light on some key parts and aspects of the Albanian issue in Yugoslavia as well as on considering possible options for its just and stable resolution.

II. Some relevant facts about the Albanian population in Yugoslavia

Populationwise Albanians in Yugoslavia account for just about one half of the entire Albanian nation that lives in a compact territorial spreading in the Balkans. In the neighboring states of Albania and Yugoslavia the proportion of their presence is about 1 to 1 which makes Albanians a clear-cut case of a DIVIDED NATION.

The federal multinational state of Yugoslavia was structured basically on its ethnical composition according to the Soviet imperial model with the Serbo-Russian analogy running high in both Federations. With a number of about 3 million people Albanians present the third largest nation(ality) in the Federation coming only after Serbs with about 9.2 millions and Croats with 5.1 million while leaving behind the Slovenes, the Muslims, the Macedonians and the Montenegrins. Albanian language is spoken in Yugoslavia second only to Serbo-Croatian. Many of the other demographic, geographic and other determining features of the Albanian nationality are similar or even more pronounced than those of the Yugoslav nations. Yet in Yugoslavia they are officially regarded as a national minority which has consequently resulted in their distinctly inferior overall status.

Not coincidentally Albanians in Yugoslavia live administratively divided in four federal units. The bulk of them lives in Kosova which is an autonomous province within the framework of the Serbian republic but dualistically enjoys also the status of one of the eight constituent federal units of Yugoslavia as the republics do. Kosova Albanians account for about 90% of the population constituting a clear majority there.

At this point one should mention also the high birth rate of Albanians in Yugoslavia of 2.9%⁶ annually which is greater even than the one in Albania which might result in a greater number of Albanians in Yugoslavia than in Albania. It is estimated that in about 20 years the number of Albanians in their ethnic territories in the Balkans will stabilize at about 10 million which will make them one of the larger Balkan nation.

IV. A historical perspective of the Albanian issue

The historical aspect of the Kosova crisis seems to be very important for the comprehension of the core of the Albanian issue in Yugoslavia.

³ Expose of the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia to the Federal Parliament, Borba, Belgrade, April 20-21, 1991

⁴ Borba, Belgrade, April 12, 1991

⁵ Borba, Belgrade, April 12, 1991

⁶ Zbornik Kosovo- Srbija- Jugoslavija, H. Islami, Demografski problemi Kosova i njihovo tumačenje, KRT, Ljubljana, 1989

Albanians are an autochthonous population and the direct descendants of Illyrians.

Their legendary national hero George Castrioti withheld the attack of the Ottoman Empire in the peak of its power in the period of 1443-1468 when as Christians they stood at the vanguard of Europe. (By that time the Serbs were fully defeated by the Turks in the Battle of Kosova in 1389. This defeat marked the end of the then-flourishing Serbian medieval state centered in and around Kosova which Serbs regard as the cradle of their nation and culture.) During centuries of oppression by the Empire a part Albanians accepted Islamic religion. According to fairly reliable estimates about 2/3 of the multiconfessional Albanian population is of Islamic religion whereas just over 1/3 are Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox Christians. Their famous Albanian writer Ismail Kadare claims that "about half of the population in Albania is of Christian belief which is a fact that the authorities have intentionally distorted in support of their third-world policies."⁸

In 1878 Albanians succeeded in attaining self-rule for the Albanian ethnic territories under the so-called Prizren League. The League was established in the Kosova town of Prizren but the self-rule was quenched in blood by the Turks three years later.

As a result of numerous uprisings against the Turks in the period 1909-1912 in September of 1912 Albanians liberated Kosova and Western Macedonia again. This liberation from Turks was shortlived because in a months time in the First Balkan War the armies of Serbia and Montenegro won and in their territorial expansion occupied Kosova and Albanians. What happened then to Albanians in Kosova is a sad story of massive massacres, expulsions and crematoria described vividly by the Serbian social-democratic leaders of the time D.Tucovich and K.Novakovich. (The Serbian historiography refers to the same as to the liberation of Kosova.).

At this point it can be said that ever since the domination and subjugation of Albanians of Kosova by the Serbian governments with variations in the intensity of oppression have not ceased to this day.

As an indirect result of the uprisings in Kosova in November of 1912 in Vlora a National Convention of Albanians declared its independence. That's why Kosova is considered to be "the cradle of Albanian rebirth and the prime factor in the historical events that climaxed in the foundation of the state of Albania"¹⁰. "The conflicting interests of the Great Powers led thus to the creation of a 'trunk Albania',¹¹ compromising about 50% of Albanians and of Albanian ethnic territories". The London Conference of Ambassadors in 1913 recognized practically the present-day borders of Albania fulfilling the demands of Russia's historical Balkan Slavic proteges and allies Serbia and Montenegro.

Thus half of the ethnic Albanians were left out of the proclaimed state and fell within Serbia definitely in 1912 respectively Yugoslavia in

⁷ Zbornik Kosovo-Srbija -Jugoslavijska, R.Ismaili, Albanski jezik u Jugoslaviji, KRT, Ljubljana, 1989

⁸ Koha, no.5, Prishtina, March 7, 1991

⁹ Casopis za Kritiko Znanosti, Srbija i Albanci, Ljubljana, 1989

¹⁰ Prifti P., Socialist Albania since 1944, Cambridge, London 1978

¹¹ Society for Threatened People, The Albanians in Kosovo, Goettingen, 1988

1918. This way an already small and unestablished enough nation that the Albanian nation was at the time became also A DIVIDED NATION.

The Serbian-led regime considered the Albanians in Yugoslavia as foreign and hostile elements in their national state and chose no means to eliminate them. According to the notorious genocidal projects like the one of V.Chubrilovich¹² it is estimated that about 400.000¹³ Albanians were forcefully settled out to Turkey. Those expulsions were carried out all the way into 1966. At the same time Kosova was being heavily colonized by the Serbian ethnic element with about 40.000 families¹⁴ in order to change its national structure. Some indicative excerpts of the Chubrilovich project might help explain some of what goes on even in Kosova even nowadays: "... local turmoil can be stirred up which would then have to be surpressed in a bloody manner by the most effective methods available ... one method that Serbia has utilized most effectively since 1878 is secretly setting fire to Albanian villages ... the only effective solution to this problem is the massive expusion of Albanians ... this will be successful only by employing brutal methods ... otherwise the inhabitants with emotional ties to their native country will always be stronger than the colonists." (Another similar project presented on November 3, 1944 by the same author and titled "How to Resolve the Minority Issue in Yugoslavia" seemed to have earned him the position of the Serbian minister for agriculture and colonization in the post-war years).

World War Two found Yugoslavia and Albania occupied by the Axis forces, Albania as early as 1939. The greatest part of ethnic Albanians found themselves within a newly formed quisling regime which let the complete administration in Kosova be run by ethnic Albanians. Thus "occupation" was experienced by Albanians as a relief from the great Serbian slavery¹⁵.

Nevertheless Albanians on both sides of the border took active part in the anti-fascist war. Albanians in Yugoslavia were being mobilized mostly on the hope raised by the proclaimed right for self-determination. But when German occupation ended in 1945 Serbian communist Military Rule was established in Kosova and it was annexed to Serbia in July of 1945 based on the document called "The Resolution for the Annexation of Kosova to the Federal Serbia". Aspirations for Albanian national liberation were outplayed and quenched once again by Serbia.

The highly centralized and hegemonistic functioning of Yugoslavia established after the war based on the Soviet model and subsequent constitutions of 1946 and 1963 came to an end in the 1966. A consistent federal restructuring of the country was carried out by the Constitution of 1974. The status of Kosova was qualitatively advanced now as one of the

¹² V.Chubrilovich, The Expulsion of Albanians, Serbian Culture Club, Belgrade, 1937

¹³ H.Bajrami, Shperngulja e Shqiptareve ne Turqi, Rilindja, Prishtine, June 1990

¹⁴ M.Obradovic, Agrarna Reforma i Kolonizacija na Kosovu 1912-1945, Rilindja, Pristina, 1979

¹⁵ The Military Encyclopedia, 2nd ed., Belgrade, 1972

eight constituent elements of the Federation although still within the Serbian republic. For the first time Kosova acquired its own constitution and the right to veto even at the Federal level.

Nevertheless the economic and social situation in Kosova in the late seventies was still comparatively very bad especially for the greatest part of its Albanian population. This caused major migration of an estimated 250.000¹⁶ Albanians out of Kosova in the period 1975-1988 and of 50.000¹⁷ Serbs for the period 1971-1981.

III. Reestablishing the Serbian rule of force in Kosova

The situation in Kosova deteriorated rapidly after Tito's death in 1980. The standard of living in Kosova dropped dramatically and in the spring of 1981 the Albanians frustrations burst out in demonstrations demanding republican status for Kosova. But instead of the dialogue a brutal police repression against them was unleashed. The attitude of the Serbian authorities was one of a vindictive punishment of the whole Albanian nationality and resulted in the practical suspension of the autonomy. Post-Tito era had begun. Kosova and the Albanians were the openly declared target but the real aim was all of Yugoslavia.

Federal authorities did not have much credit or abilities to counter the hegemonistic Serbian drive. In the late eighties then-charismatic Serbian leader Miloshevic introduced another form of collective political intimidations and campaigns called "antiburocratic revolution". It consisted of a long series of allegedly spontaneous political demonstrations and rallies of thousands of Serbs violently and aggressively demanding an end to the autonomy of Kosova, arms, and a restructuring of Yugoslavia as Serbs saw fit. They brought down complete political leaderships of Kosova, Vojvodina, Montenegro and Bosnia earlier on a politically manipulated scandal charge and replaced them with pro-Serbian ones. Only Slovenia and Croatia withstood this fury whereas the Macedonian leadership had excellent anti-Albanian credentials and as such was not to be disturbed. Miloshevic has thus managed to win over the majority in the Yugoslav Communist Central Committee which he hoped would be instrumental in putting whole of Yugoslavia under tight Serbian control. And that was about to be achieved if it weren't for the democratic Eastern European revolutions that pulled the rug under Communist feet. That was one factor that could have not been anticipated by the "headquarters" of the Serbian "antiburocratic revolution". But once the Serbian-controlled Yugoslav communist party was out of play it was the Serbian-dominated Army that was to be utilized as the ultimate political arbiter of Yugoslavia after "proper" unrest was provoked to justify its deployment. Currently Croatia and Bosnia seem to be vivid examples of such tendencies.

Due to a very stiff constitutional order of Yugoslavia Serbia's prime objective in the eighties was to "swallow" Kosova constitutionally. That's why Kosova was put under an immense political and police pressure. The rest of Yugoslavia as well was politically "blackmailed" to contribute to this aim and they succumbed.

¹⁶ Society for Threatened People, The Albanians in Kosovo, Goettingen, 1988

¹⁷ Zbornik Kosovo-Srbija-Jugoslavijska, H. Islami, Demografski problemi Kosova i njihovo tumacenje, KRT, Ljubljana, 1989

Although the technicalities of adopting unitaristic constitutional amendments were meant to leave the impression of legality they were ratified in the Kosova Assembly under the previously declared state of emergency, in an unconstitutional procedure and after Serbian police intimidated and threatened even Albanian delegates of the Assembly. Popular Albanian revolt broke out against these changes on March 28, 1989 the day the amendments were formally approved in the Serbian Assembly. Violent Serbian police action left 36 Albanians killed and hundred wounded in the streets at the same time when Belgrade TV would defiantly televise celebrations of what they later called "Serbian Unification Day".

The constitutional changes left Kosova with a very limited autonomy in the most vital fields. Within the Serbian republic Kosova was stripped even of the right to veto its eventual future constitutional changes, a right which contradictorily enough it still enjoys at the Federal level under the Constitution of 1974 and which at the same time points out to the unconstitutionality of such constitutional changes. Still tighter control of Kosova that was to be left with no autonomy at all was to be achieved by a new Serbian constitution which was drafted couple of months later.

Realizing that no constitutional or legal norms were being observed by the Serbian authorities in what evidently was a structural rearrangement that Yugoslavia as all other East European countries was irreversibly undergoing Albanians in Kosova for their part articulated their political will by the adoption of their Constitutional Declaration in the Parliament of Kosova that was adopted on July 2, 1990. The Constitutional Declaration declared Kosova to be an independent and equal federal unit of Yugoslavia out of the Serbian Republic framework. This Declaration was given wide popular support by the Albanian population. On July 5 the Serbian Assembly responded in a clearly unconstitutional and unprecedented act and dissolved the Parliament of Kosova and its Executive Council altogether. Contrary to provisions of Constitution of 1974 the assembly of a federal unit dissolved the assembly of an another federal unit. This act of the Serbian Assembly was legalistically basen on the unconstitutional Special Circumstances Law¹⁸ of June 26, 1990 it had enacted in premeditated legislation anticipating the Declaration and similar acts intended to safeguard Albanian right political autonomy. For the practical purposes of governing Kosova a Serbian governor was appointed by the Serbian assembly.

In the mean time on September 7, 1990 the delegates of the unconstitutionally dissolved Assembly of Kosova in a closed session adopted a new Constitution declaring Kosova an equal and independent Republic of the Yugoslav federation. This act also was not in conformity with the Federal constitution.

In October of 1990 the Serbian authorities adopted the current Constitution of Serbia that stripped Kosova formally and practically of any autonomy and abolished Kosova's federal unit status contrary to the provisions of the current federal constitution. Legalistically speaking this Constitution was again unconstitutionally brought to being since it had not been considered and given approval by the previously dissolved Assembly of Kosova as the Serbian consitutional procedure required.

¹⁸ Official Gazette of Serbia, Belgrade, June 26

Based on this new unitaristic Constitution of Serbia the first Serbian multiparty elections were held on December 7, 1990 but were plebiscitary boycotted by Albanians in Kosova in a clear statement of their political intentions and aspirations for equal political status in Yugoslavia. Another principal reason for boycotting these elections was the belief that they would be giving legitimacy to the asquired constitutional and political subjugation of Albanians and Kosova. The new Serbian government continued the previous extremely unitaristic policies of forcing Kosova out of the Federal level and squeezing it tightly into Serbia. Their latest moves in that respect were the removal of the legitimate member of the Federal Presidency from Kosova, the abolishing of the Presidency and the Constitutional Court of Kosova and finally the proposal for the further territorial dismemberment of Kosova into four district governorships¹⁹ to be run directly by Serbian appointed governors like in "good old colonial days".

The process of subjugating Albanians and taking away their constitutional, political, national and other legitimate rights legally enjoyed under the federal Constitution of 1974 met a determined RIGHTFUL but PEACEFUL institutional and uninstitutional RESISTANCE by the Albanian population. They kept insisting on the establishment of democracy, rule of law, free multiparty elections that would enable the legal articulation of their political interests and aspirations for equality with other nation(alities) of the multinational Yugoslav federation. That legitimate and just struggle that induced only moral and verbal support from the domestic and the international community was not successful and consequently produced massive and drastic violations of their collective and individual human rights.

In less than one year over 75 Albanians were killed²⁰ and hundreds were wounded by Serbian brutal police and other violence in peaceful demonstrations on the streets only because of expressing their political will. For the same reason the Parliament and the government of Kosova was dissolved and criminal prosecution for the Parliamentarians and the Cabinet ministers initiated which made them go to exile. Radio and Television Prishtina and the only daily "Rilindja" in Albanian were closed down altogether. Massive arbitrary dismissals of Albanian employees from work on grounds political "loyalty" reached nearly 70.000²¹ or out of 186.854 employed²² or over a third of the employed ones. This left only 1 out of 20 Albanians employed in Kosova whereas the ratio for the Serbs was 1 out of 4. The economy of Kosova which was placed almost completely under Serbian emergency management was thus practically ruined. Only in the period 1981-1988 police treatment in Kosova underwent according to officially released figures 584.373 people which is almost a third of Kosova population.

And yet, no serious consideration was given to the Albanian issue in Yugoslavia by the authorities not even from the human rights aspect not to speak of the political aspect which is its principal generator. On the contrary due to the political clout and the aggressive defiance of the Serbian authorities Albanians and Kosova have been unconstitutionally

¹⁹ Expose of the Serbian Prime Minister to the Serbian Parliament, Borba, Belgrade, April 24, 1991

²⁰ Zeri i Rinise, Prishtina, no.1399, April 20, 1991

²¹ Politika Weekly, no.46, Feb.2, 1991

²² Bujku, nr.43, Prishtina, April 31, 1991

excluded completely even from the current political talks about the future rearrangement of Yugoslavia thus setting up the scene for future instability and potentially confrontational upheaval in the area. The current tense peace maintained in Kosova under intense Serbian oppression should not lead anyone to believe that Albanian issue will not jump up soon on the Yugoslav political scene.

IV. In search of options for resolving the Albanian issue

The question of how to resolve the afore mentioned situation is clearly interdependent with the search for appropriate solutions for Yugoslavia. In considering this one has to bear in mind the collapses of the East European communist regimes which proved once again that ethnicity continues to be one of the most enduring and meaningful categories of contemporary societies. Ethnicity has actually proved so strong as to challenge even the integrity of states especially those of multinational composition such as Yugoslavia or Soviet Union that were built but can hardly survive on imperial premises. The recidives of "Versailles national majority approach" have to be definitely abandoned. By not recognizing this fact that implies a substantial degree of the right to self-determination to Yugoslav constituent units and/or nation(alitie)s, Serbia is practically blackmailing the rest of Yugoslavia and taking the responsibility for the consequences of its possible violent desintegration that could open up a new Balkan crisis. Conceivably escalation of such a crisis could face Balkan with it real self. Considering the integration processes and a new emerging order in Europe as well as the ethnic realities in Yugoslavia on the other hand this right to self-determination would preferably have to be exercised within some form of a "very loose" federal structure or a "tighter" confederal structure that might eventually reintegrate itself on genuine democratic and market economy premises.

The issue of Albanians in Yugoslavia could also be adequately solved and remedied within these principles. The national and political consciensness of Albanians has reached the point from which they do not see ANY solution of their issue within the framework of Serbia except ones imposed by brutal force. Given the existing realities in Yugoslavia and the current resolute Serbian stand that no republican status is to be granted to Kosova, a viable compromise could be found in maintainig only the federal unit status that it formally still enjoys constitutionally whilst dropping the other. The Serbian fear of alleged secession would thus be dealt with and the Albanians would have a democratic opportunity to establish themselves out of the Serbian domination and tutelage. Although that kind of resolution could meet considerable resistance from the more radical options on both sides it could be dealt with politically and worked out practically. It would mean a recognition of reality and rationality on behalf of both parties that would allow this potential conflict to defuse itself gradually and resolve naturally. Currently such a solution would also be face-saving for both sides and would not mean jumping into the unknown and would not involve internal territorial changes among the federal units and could thus be facilitated fairly easily. Such a solution would not even mean jumping into the unknown and could offer all viable guarantees for the Serbian community in Kosova. For the greatest part it would mean a return to a an improved version of the Constitution of 1974 which with the market economy could just function. It is reasonable to expect that such an arrangement would enjoy the support of the major international factors.

The technicalities of reaching this aim would have to consist on basis of the political will declared on legitimate Parliaments of Yugoslav federal units as well as in the Federal one on consensual basis. Ignoring or rather overrunning the existing constitutional order, basic principles of consensus democracy and political intimidation on basis of the existing balances of power will render impossible a peaceful and democratic resolution of the Yugoslav crisis.

Unfortunately just this seems to be the way Serbian authorities chose to restructure Yugoslavia or it that does not work²³ out to get the largest chunk of it as an expanded Serbia. The statement²³ of a prominent Serbian constitutional expert and "democratic" leader R.Stojanovich is indicative in this respect: "The Constitution of 1974 was not meant to be applied ... borders are drawn by blood and force." On the other hand territorial and political expansion which Serbia has managed for over a century seems to have part of the Serbian mentality. That mentality finds it difficult to shrink its control back to its predominantly ethnic territories and let genuine not "ethnic" democracy and rule of law take care of the rest. But "the ruling nation syndrome" does not let go easily and hence the completely contradicting and inconsistent arguments and principles Serbian authorities employ in defending their positions. They deny the ethnic principle in Kosova and employ the historic and the territorial integrity ones. In Croatia they Kosova quite the opposite. They abolish the autonomy of Kosova as a federal constitutional category claiming republican integrity and support the establishment of the autonomy of Kraina in Croatia as an unexisting constitutional category. They use massive police and other repression against Albanians in Kosova claiming "defence of the constitutional order" but when that order is violated by Serbs in Croatia they get the Serbian-controlled Yugoslav Army overrun legitimate Croatian police action by claiming "defence of citizens", presumably from the establishment of the constitutional order. When asked by reporters about the greatest political sin done to Serbs in Croatia by the current Croatian authorities he replies defiantly: "They have imposed national minority status to Serbs in Croatia".²⁴ For Albanians on the other side national minority status is all they deserve. "How does one deal with this?" seems to be the only appropriate comment to the above.

A genuine federal unit status for Kosova is not to say that the current inferior constitutional and political status of Albanians should and would not be remedied even more consistently by granting it the status of a Yugoslav republic. It just means that given the existing circumstances it does not seem likely that Serbia will be willing to grant Kosova republican status in the short run without any major political and inter-ethnic shake-up or turmoil of a confrontational kind that the international community wants justly enough wants to avoid. In the long-run it will prove to be the only feasible way of returning the national liberty and dignity to the oppressed and relieving the Serbian state and people from the heavy burden of holding on to its 80-year-long colonial prey of half of the divided Albanian nation. Because this burden would mean an oppressor status in the international community which is hardly tolerated nowadays and usually brings about international isolation felt to an extent even in the Serbia of today; that would mean an impossibility of genuine democratization of Serbia ending up in its militarization and further economic deterioration that

²³ TV Belgrade, Panel Discussions, April 26, 1991

²⁴ TV Titograd News Conference of the Yugoslav Republican Leaders, April 29, 1991

would in turn cause social and other kinds of tensions and turmoil among Serbian nationals themselves. This was clearly manifested in Belgrade demonstrations of March 9, 1991 that demanded the resignation of the key creator of the current Serbian oppression of Albanians in Kosova.

It is evident that "the classical" model of majoritarian democracy the basic principle of which is "the sovereignty of the majority" or governing by the numeric majority of the people can not function in Serbia primarily due to Kosova. Namely this model is efficiently applicable only to nationally homogenous societies with exceptional democratic traditions and rule of law neither of which seems to be the case in present-day Serbia which has over 30% non-Serbian population. Regarding the rule of law in it suffice it to quote the Serbian Deputy Minister of Interior Surejanovich as according to the daily Borba saying: "Had the Belgrade demonstrations happened in Kosova, instead of two there would probably be 100 people killed". In the given circumstances even an ethnically based consociational democracy could hardly work.

With Kosova as a an equal Yugoslav republic the greatest part of national aspirations of Albanians in Yugoslavia would have been accomplished and their internal national drive would not get so strong as to challenge the international borders of Yugoslavia that is to invoke the application of the partitionist approach for the managment of ethnic conflict. Albanians would than seek the national integration, which is by the way principally speaking a legitimate aim most frequently claimed by Serbia, within the European and regional integrations processes.

But if Albanians are left at the mercy of the Serbian ethnic domination i.e. Serbian republic as they have, there will certainly emerge forces within the Albanian population not only of Yugoslavia, that could seriously challenge the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia in their quest for fullfilling the (national) freedom in unification with Albania, regardless of the international community not supporting it. This possibility comes into play in the case of Yugoslavia falling apart and ceasing to exist as an international subject under Serbian hegemonial pressure and would be enhanced proportionally with the democratization of Albania. The impact and consequences of such an approach would certainly condition the reconsideration of Helsinki Accords regarding international borders in Balkans once the conflict would cease. It would then be reasonable to invoke partion in order to have the bulk of ethnic Albanians within an Albanian state. It should be emphasized that this form of conflict resolution would probably imply great destruction and misery especially if applied hastily. The modalities of reaching such a hypothetical aims might range from peaceful negotiations to open multilateral armed conflict resulting in what has come to be known as "Kurdish Safe Havens". High-level and high-powered international arbitrage would have to implement such a major restructuring of Balkans.

Besides other principal reasons that's why the colonial policies of the Serbian authorities treating the Albanians in Kosova as inferior and second-rate citizens unworthy of being an independent political subject in Yugoslavia should finally come to an end.

But Serbian authorities on the other hand keep insisting that Albanians be treated and percieved as a national minority which according to the prevailing policies and practise of international law denies them the right to self-determination i.e. the establishment of their own republic within the Yugoslav Federation. Serbian authorities seem to reason that

since Albanians are a non-Slavic population they would not have the right to be treated as one of the equals in what they believe is the land of the South Slavs. And that's why it is important to make it clear especially for the international public and political opinion that the Albanians in Yugoslavia are by no means a national minority but rather the other half of a divided nation. The importance and weight of this fact has been overlooked and neglected altogether for a long time and a variety of reasons the principal one being the balance of power in favor of the Serbian state.

Fortunately in the recent years self-determination²⁵ is getting to be a leading and binding principle of the international law and in this respect adequate consideration should be given to the Albanian issue in Yugoslavia as well, needless to say with all institutional and international guarantees for the equality of the Serbian community in it too. This would also greatly contribute and could prove to be the cornerstone of a much quicker institution of parliamentar democracy and long range political stability in the whole of Yugoslavia and in the Balkans for that matter.

V. Conclusion

Albanians in Yugoslavia are a unique case of a an unrecognized divided nation in Europe which has had national minority status and consequential Serbian oppression imposed over them. As such they deserve much more domestic and international attention than they have been given up to now. The resolution of their issue should consist in granting Kosova and Albanians an equal political and constitutional status with the other Yugoslav federal units and/or nation(alitie)s. Such resolution will defuse possible tendencies for secession and national reunification with Albania.

Due to the current defiant and unyielding Serbian policies based primarily in the balance of powers and their factual control of the Yugoslav Army it is not likely that this (and other national) issues will be resolved rationally and thus enable a democratic and peaceful restructuring of Yugoslavia. In order to avoid a possible uncontrollable desintegration of Yugoslavia which could become a prime issue of European security, active institutional mediation and arbitrage of the European Community and UN should be required and employed before a conceivable outbreak of inter-ethnic hostilities.

Within this framework the Albanian issue is emerging as a major unresolved ethnic issue in the Balkans that will have to be adequately faced and accomated. Otherwise in a relatively short time it will bring about a possible confrontational situation in the Balkans in which about 10 million Serbs might be faced with about 10 million Albanians claiming their national and political rights, regardless of the fact that they might be divided by state and other administrative borders. Such a conceivable confrontation could instigate other inter-ethnic conflict implicating Serbia bringing about a flare up in the region that could prove to be too strong a challenge for the existing Balkan borders as fixed and recongnized by the Helsinki Accords. The consequences of such a turn of events evidently need no further comment.

²⁵ I. Kristan, Selfdetermination as a Human Right - Yugoslav Experience, snd International Human Rights Conference, Leningrad, Sept. 1990



Note: Shaded areas present territories inhabited
predominantly by ethnic Albanians