

# **Gathering Clouds**

The roots of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.  
Early twentieth-century documents

compiled, translated and edited  
by  
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## Preface

The term 'ethnic cleansing' first became a household term for television viewers around the world in the 1990s. The years of bloody fighting among Serbs, Croats and Bosnians, the latter then called Muslims, in Bosnia, following the dissolution of Yugoslav federation, constituted a chilling example of a war based purely on ethnicity. The Bosnian Serbs, though not only the Serbs, regarded it as their sacred duty to cleanse territory which they believed to be theirs alone, of all other ethnic groups.

The second, equally chilling example followed in the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo. Yet the cleansing of Kosovo, with massive human rights violations, indeed open pogroms, and the organized and well-executed expulsion of half a million people from their homeland, did not take place by accident or independent of history.

The present volume endeavours to throw some light on the historical dimension of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. It is a collection of five seminal texts, written from 1913 to 1944, which demonstrate that ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and elsewhere was a cornerstone of Serbian government policies from the time Serbia took over Kosovo from the Turks in 1913.

The first report, *Albania's Golgotha*, dates indeed from 1913 at the time of the Balkan Wars. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Albania itself had managed to attain independence, but Kosovo was left to Serbia, a tragic mistake for the majority of the inhabitants of the region and one which was to haunt the Balkans throughout the twentieth century. This work, originally published in German, is a compilation of rare news reports which seeped out of Kosovo at the time. Its author, Leo Freundlich, was a Jewish publicist and Austrian parliamentarian who represented the Social-Democratic party in Vienna around the time of the First World War.

The second report included in this collection, originally written in French and entitled *The Situation of the Albanian Minority in Yugoslavia*, is a memorandum addressed to the League of Nations in 1930 by three Catholic priests, Gjon Bisaku, Shtjefën Kurti, Luigj Gashi, who had been working in Kosovo in the 1920s on behalf of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide in Rome. Their desperate appeal shows that the situation of the Albanians in Kosovo had not much improved a generation after the Serb takeover.

The three concluding reports, by Serb authors, document the ideology of ethnic cleansing and its support among members of the Serbian intellectual community at the time. *The Expulsion of the Albanians*, of 1937 and *The Minority Problem in the New Yugoslavia* of 1944 are works of the noted Bosnian Serb scholar and political figure Vaso Čubrilović (1897-1990). As a student in 1914, Čubrilović had participated in the assassination in Sarajevo of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary, the event which precipitated the First World War. Between the two wars, he was professor at the Faculty of Arts in Belgrade. A leading member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Art, Čubrilović also held several ministerial portfolios after World War II. Among his writings is the monograph *Istorija političke misle u Srbiji XIX veka*, Belgrade 1958 (History of political thought in Serbia in the 19th century). Equally blunt in its ideology is the *Draft on Albania* written in 1939 by the well-known Bosnian Serb short-story writer and novelist Ivo Andrić (1892-1975). Andrić was educated in Zagreb, Graz and Vienna. After World War I, he joined the diplomatic service and served as Yugoslav ambassador to Berlin in 1940. The best known of his many prose works is: *The Bridge on the Drina*, London 1959. In 1961, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Before closing, a remark must be made on the use of Balkan place names. The texts presented in this reader were taken or translated from a variety of sources and offer a variety of designations for the same place names. Some authors use the Serbian-language terms for towns in Kosovo, names which are still often found in English-language atlases and guidebooks. Other authors use the Albanian-language

terms which will be less familiar to the Western reader. For the sake of standardization and of neutrality, I have endeavoured here, where no clear-cut English term was available, to give both the Albanian and the Serbo-Croatian forms, e.g. *Gjakova / Djakovica*. I am well aware that this is cumbersome and that there are inconsistencies, but I hope that readers will be patient. It is a rather thorny issue. For the term *Kosovo*, Albanian authors now prefer to use the Albanian form *Kosova* in their works, even in English and other foreign languages, e.g. *Republic of Kosova*. English usage of eastern European toponyms is in flux at the moment. Now that Byelorussia has become Belarus, and Moldavia has become Moldova, there is no particular reason why the traditional term Kosovo should not be replaced by Kosova. I have nonetheless preferred to stick to the commoner form Kosovo for the moment, simply because it still constitutes standard usage in the English-language media.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that this book is not conceived or intended as an indictment of the Serbian people as a whole. They, too, have been victims. In the final analysis, the Serbs of Kosovo themselves have indeed become the ultimate victims of Belgrade's traditional policies of ethnic cleansing. At the most, this volume is simply an attempt to elucidate some of the historical factors which allowed many of them to be manipulated in recent years... and with such devastating results.

Robert Elsie  
July 2001

# Albania's Golgotha

## Indictment of the Exterminators of the Albanian People

(1913)

Leo Freundlich

On the eastern banks of the Adriatic, a mere three days journey from Vienna, live an autochthonous people who for centuries have been fighting for their freedom and independence against enemies and oppressors of all types. This nation has clung steadfast to its roots through countless wars and the cataclysms of history. Neither the great migrations nor wars with the Serbs, the Turks and other invaders have hindered the Albanians from maintaining their nationality, their language, and the purity and originality of their customs.

The history of this nation is an unbroken chain of bloody battles against violent oppressors, but not even the most unspeakable of atrocities have managed to annihilate this people. Intellectual life has flourished among the Albanians even though their oppressors endeavoured to cut off all cultural development at the root. This nation produced great generals and men of state for the Ottoman Empire. Albanians were among the best judges in Turkey and among the greatest authors of Turkish literature. Almost all the merchants of Montenegro were Albanian, as were many fine businessmen in the major cities of Romania. The Albanians played an important role in Italy, too. Crispi was one of them. Greece's bravest soldiers were of Albanian blood.

In the wake of the cataclysms wrought by the Balkan War, the ancient dream of freedom and independence for this people is now becoming a reality. The Great Powers of Europe have decided to grant Albania its national autonomy.

But the Serbian thirst for conquest has now found a means of destroying the fair dream of this courageous and freedom-loving people before it can be realized. Serbian troops have invaded Albania with fire and sword. And if Albania cannot be conquered, then at least the Albanian people can be exterminated. This is the solution they propose.

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On 18 October 1912, King Peter of Serbia issued a declaration 'To the Serbian People', proclaiming:

“The Turkish governments showed no interest in their duties towards their citizens and turned a deaf ear to all complaints and suggestions. Things got so far out of hand that no one was satisfied with the situation in Turkey in Europe. It became unbearable for the Serbs, the Greeks and for the Albanians, too.

By the grace of God, I have therefore ordered my brave army to join in the Holy War to free our brethren and to ensure a better future.

In Old Serbia, my army will meet not only upon Christian Serbs, but also upon Moslem Serbs, who are equally dear to us, and in addition to them, upon Christian and Moslem Albanians with whom our people have shared joy and sorrow for thirteen centuries now. To all of them we bring freedom, brotherhood and equality.”

How have the Serbs understood the declaration of their monarch, which is not even half a year old?

The thousand and thousands of men, women, children and old people who have been slain or tortured to death, the villages marauded and burnt to the ground, the women and young girls who have been raped, and the countryside plundered, ravaged and swimming in blood can give no answer to this question.

The Serbs came to Albania not as liberators but as exterminators of the Albanian people. The Ambassadors’ Conference in London proposed drawing the borders of Albania according to ethnic and religious statistics to be gathered on site by a commission. The Serbs have hastened to prepare the statistics for them with machine guns, rifles and bayonets. They have committed unspeakable atrocities. The shock and outrage produced by these crimes are outdone only by the sense of sorrow that such vile deeds could be committed in Europe, not far from the great centres of western culture, in this twentieth century. Our sorrow is made all the heavier by the fact that, despite the reports which have been cabled home for months now by the journalists of many nations, and despite the impassioned indictment launched to the world by Pierre Loti, nothing has been done to put an end to the killings.

A courageous people full of character is being crucified before the eyes of the world and Europe, civilized Christian Europe, remains silent!

Tens of thousands of defenceless people are being massacred, women are being raped, old people and children strangled, hundreds of villages burnt to the ground, priests slaughtered.

And Europe remains silent!

Serbia and Montenegro have set out to conquer a foreign country. But in that land live a freedom-loving, brave people who despite centuries of servitude have not yet become accustomed to bearing a foreign yoke. The solution is obvious. The Albanians must be exterminated!

A crazed and savage *soldateska* has turned this solution into a gruesome reality.

Countless villages have been razed to the ground, countless individuals have been butchered. Where once the humble cottages of poor Albanians stood, there is nothing left but smoke and ashes. A whole people is perishing on Calvary cross, and Europe remains silent!

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The aim of this work is to rouse the conscience of European public opinion. The reports gathered here are but a small portion of the material available. More than what they contain is already known by the governments of Europe from official consular and press reports.

Up to now, however, the governments have chosen to remain silent. Now, any further silence means complicity.

The Great Powers must tell the crazed barbarians once and for all to keep their ‘Hands off!’ This wave of extermination must be ended with all possible rapidity. An international commission must be set up to investigate accusations made against the Serbian government.

Most important of all, Serbian and Montenegrin troops must withdraw from Albanian territory at once and the Greek blockade, which has cut the country off from all food supplies, must be lifted.

I call upon the governments of the Great Powers, I call upon European public opinion in the name of humanity, in the name of civilization, in the name of the wretched Albanian people.

I turn to the British public, to the nation which raised its voice so virtuously to protest against the Armenian massacres.

I direct my appeal to the French public which has shown so often that it will defend humanity and human rights.

A poor nation, suffering a horrible fate, appeals from the cross for help. Will Europe hear its call?

Leo Freundlich

Vienna, Easter Sunday 1913

## The Albanians must be exterminated!

In connection with the news report that 300 unarmed Albanians of the Luma tribe were executed in Prizren without trial, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* writes: In the case in question, it seems to have been regular Serbian troops who committed the massacre. But there is no doubt whatsoever that even the heinous massacres committed by irregulars were carried out with the tacit approval and in full compliance with the will of the Serbian authorities." At the beginning of the war we ourselves were told quite openly by a Serbian official: "We are going to wipe out the Albanians." Despite European protests, this systematic policy of extermination is continuing unhindered. As a result, we regard it as our duty to expose the intentions of the Serbian rulers. The gentlemen in Belgrade will then indignantly deny everything, knowing full well that journalistic propriety prevents us from mentioning names.

It is evident that we would not make such a report if we were not fully convinced of its truth. In the case in question, the facts speak louder than any full confession could do. One massacre after another has been committed since Serbian troops crossed the border last autumn and occupied the land inhabited by the Albanians.

## A war of extermination

Professor Schiemann published an article in *Kreuzzeitung*, writing: "Despite the rigorous censorship of Balkan allies and the pressure exerted upon war correspondents, private letters which have managed to reach us from the region in which the Serbs and Greeks are conducting their war offer an exceptionally sorry picture." The Serbs, as the article notes, are conducting a war of extermination against the Albanian nation which, if they could, they would eradicate completely.

The *Daily Chronicle* reported on 12 November 1912 that it was true that thousands of Arnauts (Albanians) had been massacred by the Serbs. 2,000 Moslem Arnauts were slaughtered near Skopje and a further 5,000 near Prizren. Many villages have been set on fire and their inhabitants slaughtered. Albanian householders were simply slain during house to house searches for arms, even when no weapons were found. The Serbs declared quite openly that the Moslem Albanians were to be exterminated because this was the only way of pacifying the country.

The war correspondent of the *Messaggero* of Rome reported heinous Serbian massacres of Albanians in the *vilayet* of Kosovo. After Albanian resistance, the towns of Ferizaj / Uroševac, Negotin / Negotino, Lipjan / Ljipljan, Babush / Babuš and others were completely destroyed and most of the inhabitants slaughtered. A Catholic priest reported that fierce fighting around Ferizaj / Uroševac had lasted for three days. After the town was taken, the Serbian commander ordered its fleeing inhabitants to return peacefully and lay down their arms. When they returned, three or four hundred people were massacred. There remained only half a dozen Moslem families in all of Ferizaj / Uroševac. Destitute Serbian families hastened to take possession of the homes of the wealthy families.

The *Humanité* of Paris published an official report submitted to a consulate in Salonika. The report described the activities of the Serbs in Albania: plundering, destruction, massacres. The number of Albanian villages totally or partially but systematically destroyed by the Serbs was estimated at thirty-one. The Kristos of Kumanova / Kumanovo, the Siro Diljovs of Skopje, the Alexandrovos of Štip and other leading guerrilla bands looted all the villages in the districts of Kratovo and Kočani, set them on fire and killed all the Moslem inhabitants. All the Moslems of Zhujova / Žujovo and Mešeli were slaughtered, as were a further two hundred people in Vetreni. In Bogdanc / Bogdanci, sixty Turks were locked in a mosque. They were then let out and slain, one by one. Thirty-four of the ninety-eight villages in the district of Kavadarci have been destroyed. The Turks, some of whom had made payoffs to one guerrilla band hoping to save their lives, were then butchered by another band of guerrillas. All the inhabitants of



Drenova / Drenovo were put to death. Between this village and Palikura, a number of graves were found with the heads sticking out of the earth. These are the graves of wretched individuals who were buried alive!

## Manhunts

Fritz Magnussen, war correspondent for the Danish newspaper *Riget*, who is generally known for his pro-Serbian sympathies, described the crimes committed by the Serbs against the Arnaut population in a telegramme that he had to send by special courier from Skopje to Zemun to avoid the rigorous censorship:

Serbian military activities in Macedonia have taken on the character of an extermination of the Arnaut population. The army is conducting an unspeakable war of atrocities. According to officers and soldiers, 3,000 Arnauts were slaughtered in the region between Kumanova / Kumanovo and Skopje and 5,000 near Prishtina. The Arnaut villages were surrounded and set on fire. The inhabitants were then chased from their homes and shot like rats. The Serbian soldiers delighted in telling me of the manhunts they had conducted.

The situation in Skopje is equally appalling. Rigorous searches of Arnaut homes are carried out and if anything vaguely resembling a weapon is discovered, the inhabitants are shot on the spot. It is very dangerous to travel the roads because of the constant shooting in and out of the houses. Yesterday, 36 Arnauts were sentenced to death by a military tribunal and shot on the spot. No day passes without Arnauts being put to death in the most barbarous manner. The river upstream is full of corpses. Hunting expeditions take place every day in the surrounding villages. Yesterday, a Serbian officer invited me to take part in such a hunt and boasted that he had put nine Arnauts to death the previous day with his own hands!

The *Reichspost* received a dossier about the massacres committed by Serbian guerrilla bands and regular troops in Albania from a person whose name and high rank is guarantee enough of the authenticity of the reports it contains. In the dossier we find the following information:

The city of Skopje and the surrounding district have been witness to inhuman crimes committed against the Albanians. For days on end, I saw manhunts conducted by armed Serbian bands and regular troops. For three days I could see the flames of burning villages in the sky. When the horrors were over, five villages in the direct vicinity of Skopje lay in ruins and their inhabitants were almost all slain, even though the Albanians offered no armed resistance to the invading Serbs. Behind the fortress of Skopje is a ravine which is still filled with the corpses of over one hundred victims of this campaign. Eighty Albanian bodies are also to be found in the ravine of Vodno / Vistala Voda near Skopje. Shortly after the invasion, a reliable informant of mine, whom I spoke to myself, visited the hospital in Skopje and encountered during this first visit 132 Albanians patients. The next day he could find only 80 and a few days later a mere 30 of them. The treatment meted out to these wounded Albanians is beyond imagination. They were refused food and drink, such that, according to witnesses, some of them died of starvation. Many of the patients, it is alleged, were still alive when they were thrown into the Vardar. The river flows through the town and is carrying with it twenty to thirty corpses a day. There were a number of Serbian volunteers quartered in my hotel in Skopje who boasted quite candidly of their marauding and manhunts, in particular when the wine got their tongues. One evening, they went out onto the street and shot a couple of unarmed Albanians who were simply passing by and minding their own business. The two murderers, who thereafter returned to the hotel and got drunk, were not bothered by the military authorities at all, even though everyone in town knew

that they were guilty of the crime. A bloody scene also occurred in town at the Vardar bridge. Three Albanians who tried to cross into town to go to market were attacked by Serbian soldiers and simply murdered without trial. Digging graves seemed to be a problem for the soldiers, in particular since the earth is frozen over, so bodies have been thrown into wells. An informant counted 38 wells around Skopje which have been filled with Albanian corpses. Bandits play an important role in the pogroms, too. I myself was witness to a Serbian soldier who was showing off the two watches and 150 Turkish pounds he had taken as booty. When he saw a well-dressed Albanian pass by, he shouted in an almost genuine show of sympathy, "Pity there are so many of them. Otherwise, I would gladly spend a bullet on him." The Albanians are considered fair game and are protected by no law or court. Many of the excesses are, however, committed under the influence of drink. The most outrageous crimes were, indeed, committed by bands of drunken soldiers breaking into homes.

As I speak Serbian fluently, many Serbian officers and soldiers regarded me as one of theirs. And so it was that a Serbian soldier boasted to me of their attack on an Albanian village near Kumanova / Kumanovo. "Many of the villagers who were not able to flee, hid in their attics. We smoked them out, and when their houses were in flames, they came out of their hiding places like moles, screaming, cursing and begging for mercy. We shot them at the doorways, sparing our bullets only with the children on whom we used our bayonets. We destroyed the whole village because shots had been fired out of one of the houses bearing a white flag." The military authorities did nothing to hinder these bloodbaths and many officers took part in the atrocities themselves. There was no Serb to be found who had not acted in the full conviction that, with these atrocities, he was doing his country a great service, and one which his superiors wanted of him.

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Eighty-five Albanians were slain in their homes in Tetova / Tetovo and the town was looted without sign of an armed uprising beforehand. The heinous deeds committed against the women and girls, including twelve-year-old children, are indescribable. To top off such horrors, the fathers and husbands of the victims were forced by revolver to hold candles and be witness themselves to the outrages committed against their daughters and wives in their own homes. The town of Gostivar was only saved by paying off the Serbian commander with a sum of 200 Turkish pounds. Here only six Albanians were shot.

In Ferizaj / Uroševac, as opposed to the above-mentioned towns, the Albanians offered organized armed resistance. Fighting continued here for twenty-four hours, during which a woman whose husband had been slain seized a rifle and shot five Serbs before she was killed herself. Over 1,200 Albanians fell victim to the carnage in Ferizaj / Uroševac. The town is almost devoid of inhabitants now. There are only three Moslem Albanians over the age of fifteen left. In Gjilan / Gnjilane, too, where the Albanians put up no defence, almost all the inhabitants were killed by fire and sword. A very small number of fugitives survived the carnage. Now only ruins are left as witness to the destruction of Gjilan / Gnjilane.

The Serbian occupation of Prishtina was even bloodier. The Albanians estimate the number of their dead at 5,000. In all fairness, it must be noted that the flag on the parliament building was severely misused. After the white flag had been hoisted, Turkish officers suddenly opened fire on Serbian troops, apparently with the intention of thwarting the latter's cease-fire negotiations with the Albanians. Hundreds of Albanian families, even babies in their cradles, paid for this deed with their lives.

In Leskovac near Ferizaj / Uroševac, eight unarmed Albanians were stopped by Serbian soldiers and shot on the spot.

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The town of Prizren offered no resistance to Serb forces, but this did not avert a bloodbath there. After Prishtina, Prizren was the hardest hit of the Albanian towns. The local population call it the 'Kingdom of Death'. Here the Serbian bands did their worst. They forced their way into homes and beat up anyone and everyone in their way, irrespective of age or sex. Corpses lined the streets for days while the Serbian victors were busy with other atrocities, and the native population which had survived did not dare to venture out of their homes. The attacks continued night after night throughout the town and region. Up to 400 people perished in the first few days of the Serbian occupation. Despite this, the commander, General Janković, with rifle in hand, forced notables and local tribal leaders to sign a declaration of gratitude to King Peter for their 'liberation by the Serbian army.' As Serbian troops were about to set off westwards, they could not find any horses to transport their equipment. They therefore requisitioned 200 Albanians, forcing them to carry goods weighing up to 50-60 kilos for seven hours during the night along bad roads in the direction of Luma. Seeing that the wretched group of bearers had managed to reach their goal, though most of them collapsed under the inhumane treatment they had suffered, the Serbian commander expressed his satisfaction and approval of the action.

A Fani woman called Dila took the road to Prizren with her sons, another relative and two men from the village of Gjugja in order to buy goods for her daughter's dowry. Before reaching Prizren, she applied for a laissez passer for herself and her companions from the command post of General Janković in order to proceed unimpeded. She was given the passes. When the group of five arrived in Suni, about four hours from Prizren, they were robbed of their possessions and the four men were tied up and thrown into a pit. Soldiers then shot the men from the edge of the pit. The mother, who had witnessed this scene, called out in desperation to her son. Seeing that he was no longer alive, she threw herself to the feet of the soldiers, begging them to kill her, too. They had tied her to a tree by the time some officers came by, having heard the shooting. The soldiers showed the officers a loaf of bread they had seized from the women, in which they had pressed two Mauser bullets as proof that the men had been trying to smuggle ammunition. The officers thereupon ordered the soldiers to go their way. The poor woman remained tied to the tree at the edge of the pit, in full view of her slain son, from Monday afternoon until Wednesday. On Wednesday, starving and exhausted by the chill of the late autumn nights, she was taken to Prizren. She was locked up that night and presented to the commander the next day. Although General Janković must have known that the poor woman standing before him was innocent, she was still not released. Instead, she was taken to the residence of the Serbian bishop where she remained in custody until the following day when she was given over to the Catholics, taken to a church and tended to.

In Prizren, there lived a baker named Gjoni i Prek Palit who supplied the Serbian troops with food. One day, a sergeant came by to order bread for the troops and happened to leave his rifle in the bakery. When soldiers later entered the bakery and saw the rifle, they arrested the baker for violating the weapons ban. He was taken to a military tribunal and executed. When Gini, the baker's brother, heard of the arrest, he ran to the sergeant and took him to the military police where the latter admitted the rifle was his and that he had only left it in the bakery for a short time. He knew the number of the rifle and recognized it immediately. Gini and his Serbian witness were then beaten up and chased away. Gini learned nothing of the fate of his arrested brother. Ten days later, the mother of the dead baker, who had been searching day and night for her son, came upon the body outside of town. She requested to be given the corpse so that she could give her son a Christian burial. This request was refused. A Catholic priest then hastened to the commander and in the name of religious freedom requested that the body be buried in the Catholic cemetery. He, too, was refused, and they were obliged to bury the body on the spot where they found it.

Officers also took part in the atrocities. It is said in Prizren that a soldier asked his officer for shoes or sandals. The officer replied he should confiscate the sandals from the next Albanian who happened to pass by. "Why else do you carry a rifle?" asked the officer, pointing to his own sandals.

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Three Albanian villages in the vicinity of Prizren were totally destroyed and thirty local officials slain. They were accused of being pro-Austrian. In one of these villages, the soldiers forced the womenfolk out of their homes, tied them to one another and forced them to dance in a circle. They then opened fire and amused themselves by watching one victim after another fall to the ground in a pool of blood.

When it was reported to General Janković that the Luma tribe was preventing Serbian troops from advancing westwards towards the Adriatic, he ordered his men to proceed with extreme severity. All in all, twenty-seven villages on Luma territory were burnt to the ground and their inhabitants slain, even the children. It is here that one of the most appalling atrocities of the Serbian war of annihilation was committed against the Albanians. Women and children were tied to bundles of hay and set on fire before the eyes of their husbands and fathers. The women were then barbarously cut to pieces and the children bayoneted. My informant, a respected and thoroughly reliable man, added in his report: "It is all so inconceivable, and yet it is true!" 400 men from Luma who gave themselves up voluntarily were taken to Prizren and executed day after day in groups of forty to sixty. Similar executions are still being carried out there. Hundreds of bodies still lie unburied in the Prizren region. Gjakova / Djakovica is also in ruins and its population decimated.

Sixty Albanians were slain in Tërstenik / Trstenik, thirty-two in Smira, twenty in Vërban / Vrban, nineteen in Ljubishta / Ljubište and all the males in Kamogllava / Kameno Glava, which is home to fifty families. In the latter village, the men were forced to appear for roll call and to salute. They were then tied up and executed without trial. Not very many survived in Presheva / Preševo either.

The total number of Albanians slain in the *vilayet* of Kosovo is estimated at 25,000, a figure which is by no means exaggerated.

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On 20 March 1913, the *Albanische Korrespondenz* published this item: We have received the following report from reliable Albanian sources in Skopje. Serbian troops and volunteers are committing unspeakable atrocities in the vicinity of Skopje against the population of the territories they have occupied. European circles have been particularly outraged by the following events which were reliably recorded. The Serbian army took the village of Shashare at the end of February. Having removed all men and boys from the village, the soldiers then proceeded to rape the women and girls. Serbian soldiers committed the same heinous crimes in the village of Letnica. It must be stressed that both Shashare and Letnica have an exclusively Slavic and Catholic population. Serbian troops, thus, do not even stop at committing such degenerate acts against their own Christian people. Shashare is a settlement of over one hundred families.

These savage troops have committed even worse crimes in other areas. Two hundred eighty farms belonging to Albanian Moslems were set on fire in twenty-nine villages in the Karadag (Black) mountains and all the male inhabitants who had not flown fell under a hail of bullets and under the bayonets of the soldiers. The Serbs marauded like the Huns from village to village. Other such pogroms have been carried out in the villages of Tërstenik / Trstenik, Senica, Vërban / Vrban, Ljubishta / Ljubište and Gjylekar / Djelekare. Two hundred thirty-eight men were pitilessly slaughtered here. In Sefer, an old woman was burnt alive together with her Catholic servant. The suffering of the population knows no limits. In the village of Ljubishta / Ljubište, the atrocities have reached such a point that Moslem Albanian women have sold themselves to surviving Moslem men to serve them more or less as slaves. The Serbs took a man, an old woman and two children captive and burnt them alive in this village. In Gjylekar / Djelekare a pregnant woman had her belly slit open with a bayonet and the offspring wrenched out of her body. In

Prespa, an Albanian women whose husband had been taken away shot five Serbian soldiers. The Serbs then set the whole settlement aflame, ninety farms in all, and let it burn to the ground.

The Serbs are laying waste to whole regions and slaughtering their inhabitants. Their fury is directed against both the Moslems and the Catholics. The survivors remain behind in unspeakable misery and despair.

In a report published on 19 February 1913 by the *Deutsches Volksblatt*, we read: Few towns and villages (in the occupied areas) have escaped the attention of the Serbs completely and there are many Albanians who now press to take vengeance for the deaths of their wives and children. When the order was issued in the towns for the immediate surrender of all weapons, only very few people complied. Most of them hid their weapons at home or fled with them, for it is easier to separate an Albanian from his whole farm than from his rifle. In order to enforce the order, patrols were sent out to search homes. A gruesome fate awaited those caught with weapons. The military tribunal came to its findings within a matter of hours. One spectacular case took place in Tirana. Serbian soldiers went to the shop of a local merchant to buy goods. As they had no money with them, one of them left the merchant his rifle as security. Petrified at his own deed, the soldier subsequently went to his commander and brought charges against the merchant for stealing the rifle. A patrol was sent out in search of the Albanian and found him with the rifle in question. He was taken to a military tribunal and, despite his protestations that the rifle had only been left as security, was shot.

An Albanian from the village of Zalla, west of Kruja, shot a Serb who had broken into his home and was assaulting his wife, and took to flight. When the Serbs subsequently arrived at the scene of the crime and could not find the culprit, and - such is the sad truth - they slaughtered all the inhabitants, over one hundred persons including women and children, and set the village on fire.

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## The Serbian thirst for blood

The special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* reported the following: All the horrors of history have been outdone by the atrocious conduct of the troops of General Janković. On their march through Albania, the Serbs have treacherously slaughtered not only armed Albanians, but in their savagery even unarmed individuals - old people, women, children and babies at their mother's breasts.

Drunk with victory, Serbian officers have proclaimed that the only way of pacifying Albania is to exterminate the Albanians. They slaughtered 3,000 people in the region between Kumanova / Kumanovo and Skopje alone. 5,000 Albanians were murdered by the Serbs in the Prishtina area. These people did not die with honour on the battlefield, but were slain in a series of gruesome raids. The Serbian soldiers have found new methods of butchery to satisfy their thirst for blood. Houses were set on fire in several villages and the inhabitants slaughtered like rats when they tried to flee the flames. The men were slain before the eyes of their wives and children. The wretched women were then forced to look on as their children were literally hacked to pieces.

Executions were a daily entertainment for the Serbian soldiers. All inhabitants who had been found with weapons in their homes were executed. They were either shot or hanged. Up to thirty-six executions took place a day. How strange it is that the Serbian nationalists living in Hungary should complain about massacres in Albania. Mr Tomić, the former secretary to the Serbian Prime Minister Pašić, reported on his trip from Prizren to Peja / Peć that on both sides of the road he saw nothing but the remnants of burnt-out villages which had been razed to the ground.

The roads were lined with gallows from which the bodies of Albanians were hanging. The road to Gjakova / Djakovica had become a Boulevard of Gibbets.

The Belgrade newspapers reported quite without shame on the heinous atrocities of the Serbs. When Colonel Osbić's regiment took Prizren, he commanded his compatriots, "Kill!" When his order was heard, so the Belgrade papers report, "the Serbian soldiers stormed into homes and slaughtered every human being they could lay their hands on."

The *Daily Telegraph* then gives the authentic statement of an Albanian notable: Anyone who denounces an Albanian to the Serbs can be sure that the Albanian will be executed. There were people who owed money to Moslem Albanians. They went and denounced them to the Serbs as traitors. The wretched Albanians were immediately hanged and the informers later found ways of acquiring the home and land of their victims for a ridiculously low price.

In Skopje, unarmed Albanians were simply shot and killed by Serbian officers. If even a hunting knife was found in a home, its owner was executed.

In Ferizaj / Uroševac, the Serbian commander invited Albanian fugitives to return to their home and surrender their weapons. When over four hundred of them did return, they were slaughtered. There were no more than a dozen Moslem families left alive in Ferizaj / Uroševac. The war correspondent of the *Messaggero* has confirmed this report.

In Pana, the Serbs killed their prisoners, in Varosh / Varoš and Prishtina the population was literally decimated. Serbian officers admitted themselves that they were on the 'hunt' for Albanians, and one of them boasted having killed nine Albanians in one day with his own hands.

A doctor working for the Red Cross reported, according to the same source: The Serbs have been massacring throughout Albania with no sign of mercy. Neither women nor children nor old people have been spared. I have seen villages burning in Old Serbia every day. Near Kratovo, General Stefanović had hundreds of prisoners lined up in two rows and machine gunned down. General Živković had 850 Albanian notables put to death in Senica because they had offered resistance.

The *Albanische Korrespondenz* reported from Trieste on 12 March: A letter from Kruja near Durrës (Durazzo) dated 27 February of this year was read out at the Albanian congress here. It read: All the buildings as well as the villas of Mashar Bey and Fuad Bey (n.b. who were taking part in the congress at the time) have been burnt to the ground. Ali Lam Osmani's brother was caught by the Serbs in Vinjoll near Kruja, buried to his thighs in the earth, and then shot. The letter concludes with the words: We shall never see one another again. Farewell until we meet in the other world!

## The marauding Serbs!

Ahmed Djevad, secretary of the Comité de Publication D. A. C. B. reports, according to several witnesses: The most incredible amounts of valuables have been robbed and stolen by the Serbs in Strumica. Major Ivan Gribić, commander of the fourth battalion of the fourteenth Serbian line regiment alone had eighty wagons filled with furniture and carpets transported back to Serbia. All the young women and girls of Strumica have been raped and forcibly baptized. The rest of the wretched Moslem population is dying of starvation, destitution and disease...

The *Albanische Korrespondenz* reported from Trieste on 21 March 1913: The suffering in Albania has reached an unspeakable zenith. The Serbian troops who took Durrës (Durazzo) were immediately ordered to proceed into the countryside although no provision had been made for their food and drink. They were therefore forced to rely on food they confiscated from the population, which they did with exception cruelty. They took nine-tenths of all the stocks available, and refused to give written receipts for the goods they requisitioned.

The Serbian troops not only confiscated goods for their own usage. They seized or destroyed all the food that fell into their hands. Ancient olive trees which had been planted in the Venetian period and had provided sustenance to generations were cut down by the Serbs. Farm animals were slain. No sheep, no chickens, no corn which the Serbs could get their hands on remained untouched. They conducted extensive raids and looted wherever they could. In Durrës (Durazzo), the Serbs loaded ships with carpets

and other stolen goods for transportation to Salonika whence the cargo was transferred back to Belgrade. Even antique benches from the government offices in Durrës were confiscated and loaded onto the booty ships.

Fazil Toptani Pasha, to whom we showed this report for confirmation, stated: Everything written in this report is true. These facts are but a small portion of the outrages committed in our country by these barbarians. They flooded into Albania slaughtering, looting and burning, and have caused more destruction than anyone could possibly imagine.

Dervish Hima told us: Tell the public that a good proportion of the Albanian people is on the verge of starvation. Spring has come, the time to sow the land, and the Serbs have stolen all the seed. Even if the Albanians had seed, they would not sow it, for they now have a saying: "Even if something manages to grow, the Serbs will destroy it." Such is the fear of the Serbs among our people!

## Wholesale murder

A Romanian doctor, Dr Leonte, reported in the Bucharest newspaper *Adevărul* on 6 January 1913 that the horrors he saw committed by the Serbian army far outdid his worst fears. That hundreds of Moslem captives were forced to march a hundred kilometres was the least of what these wretches were to suffer. Whenever any of these poor individuals collapsed of hunger and exhaustion at the roadside, they were simply bayoneted by the first soldier passing, and the corpses were left to rot. The fields were still strewn with the bodies of slaughtered men and women, young and old, even children. When Serbian troops marched into Monastir / Bitola, all Turkish patients being treated in the hospitals were slain in order to make room for wounded Serbs. The soldiers stole whatever they could get their hands on. Even banks were robbed. A Bulgarian professor who made himself unpopular by proposing a toast to King Ferdinand has disappeared without a trace since the evening of the toast. Dr Leonte gives other reports of atrocities similar to those committed in Kumanova / Kumanovo, Prizren etc.

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The well-known war correspondent Hermenegild Wagner reported from Zemun on 20 November 1912: During my three-day stay in Nish, I heard shocking details of the inhumane acts committed by Serbian troops. I wish to note in this connection that I have respected witnesses for all details referred to.

In the fortress of Nish was a fifty-year-old Albanian woman being held on suspicion of having thrown bombs at Serbian troops marching into Ferizaj / Uroševac. Instead of bringing the accused before a military tribunal, she was given over to Serbian soldiers who literally shattered her skull with the butts of their rifles.

A Turkish lieutenant named Abdul Kadri Bey was beaten to death in the fortress of Nish. The autopsy showed a broken nose and a traumatized liver. The victim was kicked to death.

An Albanian who attempted to escape was bayoneted to death. The body was dreadfully battered about by the soldiers even while it was being taken to the morgue.

In the hospital of Nish, a number of Serbs entered a ward where Turkish patients were being treated. One of the Serbs called out, making a joke, "That's the one who wounded me!" Thereupon, a whole group of Serbs attacked the helpless patient and kicked him to death.

A Red Cross doctor told me with horror that the prisoners and injured patients one encountered in Nish and Belgrade were only there for show. "The Serbs," he added, "know no mercy. All Albanians caught, whether armed or not, are butchered on the spot. Women, children, old people. Dreadful things are happening down there (in Old Serbia). I don't know how many villages have been razed to the ground

by Serbian troops. I saw them burning day after day... Near Kratovo, General Stefanović had hundreds of Albanian prisoners lined up in two rows and mowed down with machine guns. The general then declared: This brood must be exterminated so that Austria will never find her beloved Albanians again.

General Živković massacred 950 Albanian and Turkish notables near Senica when ten thousand Albanians slowed down the advance of Serbian troops.

The Serbs took very few of the wounded prisoner after the Battle of Kumanova / Kumanovo. King Peter himself visited the field hospital in Nish. One of the injured Serbs complained that the Albanians were firing upon the Serbs with rifles stolen from the Serbs themselves, and that he, too, had been wounded in this manner, to which King Peter replied: "The swine will pay for it!"

Serbian witnesses who were present at the battle told me with smiles on their faces how after the battle, all of the dead and injured Turks and Albanians were hurled into a shallow grave. The battlefield looked frightful after a heavy rainfall because the Turkish mass grave collapsed, leaving the hands, feet and skulls of distorted bodies sticking out of the mud.

## Devastated villages

In Skopje, a returning Serbian officer explained quite seriously to me the justice of burning down eighty villages in Luma territory.

On 14 February, the *Deutsches Volksblatt* published a report from southern Hungary, warning: The Serbian government must come to realize that their official denials only serve to destroy Serbian credibility even further. We saw examples of such rallies following the murder of the king. At that time, the government solemnly and officially denied that King Alexander and Queen Draga had been murdered by the perjured officers, insisting instead that they had been quarrelling and had killed one another...

With regard to the Albanian massacres, it is extremely sad to note that the description of events which has filtered through to the public is indeed in full accord with the facts and has only one shortcoming, that it is incomplete. Many Serbs have confirmed the events themselves, often with great pride. Let it suffice for us to quote a statement made by someone who himself took part in the first stages of the war and who, though a Serb from the Kingdom, prefers to exercise his profession in southern Hungary for the moment, under Austrian 'oppression', in order to avoid as far as possible the 'cultural and religious liberality' reigning in his native land. This classic witness took obvious satisfaction in declaring that Serbian soldiers had ruthlessly mowed down whole groups of Albanian farmers, whose only 'crime' was that weapons had been found in their homes. When I expressed my astonishment at his statement, he replied placidly, "Should we have wasted our time escorting these people to some distant garrison town? It was much less work this way. We were then free and could go for a drink!" This pragmatic attitude seems to be extremely widespread among Serbian soldiers. An injured patient at a Belgrade hospital told a visitor, "We left the Turks alone but slaughtered the Albanian dogs wherever we could get our hands on them." Another indication is to be seen in the letter by a Serbian officer, published in the journal *Magyarország*, whose Balkan correspondent was Ivan Ivanović, Austrian deserter and former head of the Royal Serbian Press Office. In this letter, the officer declares that, after the occupation of Monastir / Bitola, he had with his own eyes seen his soldiers seize ten Turkish men, women and children each and burn them alive. Such statements can be heard from all the Serbs returning from the war. To their misfortune, they have not read the official Serbian denials published in the foreign press...

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An Albanian from near Skopje reported: "When we saw the Serbian soldiers approaching our village, everyone ran back home. I myself was not afraid and, wanting to get a look at the strangers, came out in front of the house. There they were already. I offered one of the soldiers a small coin. He struck me on the head and I fell to the ground, where the soldiers left me. Storming into the house, they murdered my mother and father, set the house on fire, and proceeded to slaughter everyone else. When I finally got back up on my feet, everything was in flames."

In Sefer in the region of Gjilan / Gnjilane, the Serbs set fire to a cottage and hurled its two elderly owners, who had not had time to flee, alive into the conflagration. They tied the hands of one man together, told him to run away, and then shot him as he ran off.

Varying explanations were given this month for the burning down of the following towns and villages: Limbishte, Koliq / Kolić, Tërpeza / Trpeza and Gjylekar / Djelekare. In the last three villages, everyone was slaughtered, including women and children.

In the village of Bobaj in the district of Gjakova / Djakovica, four Serbian soldiers who had been caught trying to rape the women, were beaten up. This was enough for a punitive expedition to be sent in and Bobaj was put to the torch. All the inhabitants were slaughtered. When they had finished their work, the *soldateska* came upon seventy Catholic Albanians from Nikaj, who were going to market. Here, too, the soldiers carried out their bloody handwork.

In Peja / Peć, Serbian soldiers carried off three women. The Montenegrins also carried off three girls.

In Luma territory, thirty-two communities were burnt to the ground, and anyone who was captured there was slain.

In Dibër / Debar, too, Serbian soldiers committed dreadful atrocities. They stole whatever they could get their hands on. Then fresh troops arrived and set twenty-four villages on fire, killing all the inhabitants...

In Prizren, the Catholic priest was not allowed to administer communion to the dying. Whoever approached the parish priest was brought before a military tribunal.

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The following report was received from Durrës (Durazzo) on 6 March: Serbian troops have burnt the following villages to the ground: Zeza, Larushk, Monikla, Sheh and Gromni. In Zeza, twenty women and girls were locked in their homes and burnt alive.

The inhabitants of the village of Kruja-Kurbin have taken to the mountains, in order to save their lives, leaving behind all their possessions.

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On 12 March, the *Albanische Korrespondenz* reported from Trieste: Letters from Tirana inform us that Serbian troops have recently been committing atrocities in the vicinity. The inhabitants of Kaza Tirana had offered accommodation to a unit of Albanian volunteers and given them food and drink. When the Serbian military commander got word of this, he had his troops encircle the village, whereupon all the houses, including the estate belonging to Fuad Toptani Bey, were burnt to the ground. Seventeen people died in the fire. Ten men and two women were executed.

## The Serbs are also murdering Christians

On 20 March, the *Reichspost* published a letter from Albania, reading as follows:

The parish priest of the sanctuary of Cernagora or Setnica, Don Tommaso, was robbed by Serbian soldiers of all the funds belonging to the church. The soldiers drew their bayonets, forced him to open the safe and took out all the money belonging to the pilgrimage site.

The parish priest of Gjakova / Djakovica was threatened with death. He was told, "Either you give up your links with the Austrian protectorate or we will roast your brains!" The courageous reaction of the priest blew the wind out of their sails, however.

For three months now, the Serbs have been hindering the parish priest of Ferizaj / Uroševac in his freedom to exercise his office. They have been jailing anyone who talks to him or who goes to mass or confession. The same thing has happened to two priests from Prizren.

All imaginable pressure has been exerted against the Catholics of Janjeva / Janjevo (four hundred families, almost all of whom are ethnic Slavs) to convert to the schismatic church.

For hundreds of years now, about 8,000 Catholics, so-called Laramans or secret Catholics, have been living in this archdiocese. Because of Turkish persecution, they did not profess their faith openly. When the Serbs arrived, several hundred of these Laramans wanted to declare openly that they were Catholic. When a representative of the new government got word of this, they were ordered, "Either Moslem or Orthodox. Not Catholic!"

Near the sanctuary of Letnica is the village of Shashare (ninety families, all of them Catholic). Serbian soldiers took the village, assembled the men on a field and tied them up with ropes. They then looted the homes and brutally raped the women and girls.

Countless Albanian Catholics have been murdered. In Ponoshec / Ponoševac, for instance, thirty men were slaughtered one day while they were going about their business in the village. Their only crime was to admit that they were Albanian Catholics.

Near Zhur / Žur, entire families of innocent Catholic tribesmen who had come down to Prizren to purchase salt, oil, sugar etc. were treacherously murdered on their way. The same thing happened near Gjakova / Djakovica where a further seventy Catholics from the parish of Nikaj were slaughtered. The Catholics are persecuted, whereas the native Orthodox are left alone.

In the vicinity of Dibër / Debar and Monastir / Bitola, as well as in Kosovo, many villages have now been burnt to the ground. The looting is unspeakable. It is sufficient to note that sheep are now being sold at a price of two francs each because nobody knows what to do with them all. So many have been stolen from the Albanians by the Serbs and Montenegrins.

They are now trying to stop us from speaking Albanian. A number of schools teaching Albanian have already been closed down.

The letter ends with the words, "May God have mercy upon us, and may Europe come and save us. Otherwise we are lost!"

\* \* \*

In its issue of 21 March, the *Neue Freie Presse* reports: We have been told by informed sources that, according to recent reports, Catholics and Moslems are being persecuted both in the district of Gjakova / Djakovica and in the district of Dibër / Debar. Many deaths occur every day. The population has fled, leaving behind all their possessions. It is not only the Albanians who are the object of such persecution, but also Catholic and Moslem Slavs.

## Slaughtered priests

On 20 March, the *Neue Freie Presse* reported: On 7 March, the *soldateska* joined fanatic Orthodox priests in and around Gjakova / Djakovica to forcefully convert the Catholic population to the Orthodox faith. About 300 persons, men, women and children, among whom Pater Angelus Palić, were bound with ropes and forced under threat of death to convert. An Orthodox priest pointed to the soldiers standing by with their rifles in hand and said, "Either you sign the declaration that you have converted to the one true faith or these soldiers of God will send your souls to hell."

All the prisoners then signed the forms prepared for them which contained a declaration of conversion to the Orthodox faith. Pater Angelus was the last. He was the only one of them who had the strength, in a calm and dignified manner, to refuse to give up his faith. Pater Angelus stood by his word, even when ordered three times to convert and even when entreated by the other forcefully converted Catholics. The result was one of the most appalling scenes imaginable in twentieth-century Europe.

After a sign from the Orthodox priest, the soldiers fell upon the Franciscan, ripped off his tunic and began beating him with the butts of their rifles. Pater Angelus collapsed after several of his bones and ribs had been fractured. At this moment, the Orthodox priest stopped the soldiers and asked him if he was now willing to convert. Again he shook his head and said placidly, "No, I will not abandon my faith and break my oath." Pater Angelus was beaten with the rifle butts again until one of the soldiers plunged a bayonet through the priest's lungs and put an end to his suffering.

## A Serbian decree for more bloodshed

A decree was issued to the local authorities in the district of Kruja in western Albania, reading: "If anything occurs in the future or if but one Serbian soldier is killed in the town, in a village or in the vicinity, the town will be razed to the ground and all men over the age of fifteen will be bayoneted." The decree was signed: Kruja, 5 January 1913. Commanding officer: A. Petrović, Captain, first class.

Kruja is the birthplace of Scanderbeg, the national hero, whose castle still stands in the town. It is a place venerated by all Albanians!

## Serbian voices

The *Deutsches Volksblatt* reported on 8 February: The Serbian Minister of Culture and Education, Ljuba Jovanović, has published a declaration in a Slav newspaper, stating: "The Moslems will of course be treated the same as everyone else with regard to their rights as citizens. As to their religious affairs, the *Vakuf* properties (belonging to religious foundations) will remain under Moslem jurisdiction and their monasteries will be held in the same respect as are the Christian ones. With the exception of the regular troops, the Moslems have not put up any resistance to Serbian occupation and, as a result, were not harmed by Serbian forces. The Albanians, for their part, have resisted the Serbian occupation and even shot at soldiers after having surrendered. Such shootings have taken place not only outdoors but also from within houses in occupied villages. This has led to what happens everywhere when non-combatants oppose a victorious army" (i.e. the massacre of the Albanians).

The Belgrade newspaper *Piemont*, which serves as the mouthpiece of radical circles within the army, dealt in its issue of 20 March with the problem of Shkodër (Scutari) and declared that Shkodër must

fall to Montenegro. "If this does not happen," continued the newspaper, "the town must be razed to the ground."

## Serbian officers boast of their vile deeds

The *Albanische Korrespondenz* reports from Durrës (Durazzo): The carnage perpetrated by the Serbs in Albania is outrageous. Serbian officers boast openly of their deeds. Serbian troops have acted infamously in Kosovo in particular. A Serbian officer reported here: "The womenfolk often hid their jewellery and were not willing to hand it over. In such cases, we shot one member of the family and, right away, were given all the valuables." Particularly shocking was the behaviour of the Serbs on Luma territory. The men were burnt alive. Old people, women and children were slaughtered. In Kruja, the birthplace of Scanderbeg, a good number of men and women were simply shot to death and many houses set on fire. The Serbian commander, Captain Petrović, published an *ukaz* officially announcing the evil deeds. In Tirana, several Albanians were sentenced to corporal punishment. The Serbs thrashed the wretched individuals until they died. In Kavaja and Elbasan, people were also officially beaten to death by the soldiers. A well-known, respected and wealthy gentleman, son of a Turkish officer, was shot in Durrës (Durazzo). The Serbian command later made his sentence known by wall posters on which they wrote that he had been accused of theft and sentenced to death. The Serbs have destroyed Catholic churches, saying that they are Austrian constructions and must disappear from the face of the earth. Serbian soldiers and officers harass the population day and night.

A Serbian soldier was recently found murdered. The Serbian commander ordered the immediate arrest of five Albanians who had nothing to do with the murder and had them shot.

## A bloodbath in Shkodër (Scutari)

The *Albanische Korrespondenz* reports from Podgorica: After the battle of Brdica, which resulted in a sound defeat for the Serbs, Serbian forces entered the village of Barbullush on their retreat. The terrified inhabitants came out of their homes with crucifixes in their hands and begged for mercy, but to no avail. The crazed troops attacked the unarmed villagers and slaughtered men, women, old people and children. The maimed body of an eight-year-old child was found to contain no less than six bayonet wounds.

## The Serbian denials

In recent times, the Serbian government has countered most reports of atrocities with official denials. Such disavowals have always been issued promptly, but all too often they lacked any semblance of credibility. Such grave and detailed accusations cannot be repudiated by a simple statement that the events in question did not occur.

The present and by no means complete selection of reports from various sources, not only Austrian, but also Italian, German, Danish, French and Russian, should have more weight in any court of human justice than all the formal denials issued by the Royal Serbian Press Office.

In an official denial dated 8 February, the Serbian Press Office declared that, “Such atrocities alleged to have been perpetrated by the Serbian army are simply unthinkable today on the part of a people who are exceptionally religious and tolerant.” We can only answer: An army whose officers assault their king and queen in the middle of the night, murder them, maim their corpses with fifty-eight sabre cuts and then throw them out the window is quite capable of such atrocities, in particular since the leader of the bloodbath which took place in the *konak* of Belgrade was none other than Colonel Popović, one of the leaders of the Serbian attack on Albania and currently commander of Serbian occupation forces in Durrës (Durazzo).

Vienna 1913

[Taken from *Albaniens Golgotha* (Vienna 1913). Translated from the German by Robert Elsie]

# The Situation of the Albanian Minority in Yugoslavia

Memorandum  
presented to the League of Nations  
(1930)

Gjon Bisaku, Shtjefën Kurti and Luigj Gashi

TO HIS EXCELLENCY MR ERIC DRUMMOND,  
Secretary General of the League of Nations,  
Geneva

Excellency,

We, the under-signed,

Dom Gjon Bisaku of Prizren, until recently priest in the parish of Bec, District of Gjakova / Djakovica, Yugoslavia;

Dom Shtjefën Kurti of Prizren, until recently priest in the parish of Novosella / Novoselo, District of Gjakova / Djakovica, Yugoslavia;

Dom Luigj Gashi of Skopje, until recently priest in the parish of Smaç / Smaç, District of Gjakova / Djakovica, Yugoslavia;

all three of us being missionaries of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, and Yugoslav citizens of Albanian nationality,

have the honour to submit to you, on behalf of the Albanian population of Yugoslavia, this petition on the state of this ethnic minority and beg Your Excellency to bring it to the attention of the Members of the League of Nations:

Mr Secretary General, we are not the first envoys of the Albanian population living in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to have addressed the League of Nations concerning the lamentable state of this minority, created by Serb rule, and we will certainly not be the last to protest before this high institution of international law unless the political course taken by the rulers in Belgrade towards their Albanian subjects alters its bases and procedures.

This political course, which is already replete with excesses and misfortune, can be summed up in one phrase: To change the ethnic structure of the regions inhabited by Albanians at all costs. The strategies used to this end are as follows:

- a) various forms of persecution in order to force the population to emigrate;
- b) the use of violence to forcefully denationalize a defenceless population;
- c) forced exile or extermination of all people who refuse to leave the country or to submit peacefully to Serbification.

These three strategies correspond to three categories of oppression:

The victims of the first category are the over one hundred forty thousand Albanians who have been forced to leave their homes and belongings and to emigrate to Turkey, Albania and other neighbouring countries, anywhere they can find shelter, a bit of food and a little more human kindness.

The second category includes the population of 800,000 to 1,000,000 Albanians, Moslems for the most part, who live in compact settlements along the border to the Kingdom of Albania up to a line including Podgorica, Berana and Jenibazar in the north, the tributaries of the Morava river in the northwest and the course of the Vardar river in the south.

The last category includes the ever increasing number of Albanian figures in Yugoslavia who have been banned from the country because of their patriotic sentiments and the long list of obituaries of those who have paid with their lives for their opposition to denationalization, the most recent victim of which is our brother in Jesus Christ, the reverend Franciscan Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi, trapped by the gendarmes in an ambush and assassinated on 14 October last.

Excellency,

In order to be spared the fate of our esteemed advisor and friend Gjeçovi, we have been forced to abandon our homes and our sacred ministry on behalf of our grieving and wretched compatriots. Our main concern is to make known to the League of Nations and to the civilized world the suffering of our brethren living under Yugoslav oppression.

Condemned by misfortune to pass from one yoke to another, this part of the Albanian nation, no less important in numbers than that in the independent state of Albania, has not, for one single moment over the past centuries, known the benefits of liberty. The right to self-determination, proclaimed by the founder of the League of Nations, an apostle of international peace, remains our sacred aspiration. Indeed the League of Nations, which has set as its basic goal the elimination of the grounds of conflict between states, has also endeavoured, by means of Treaties on Minorities, to prevent the causes of misunderstanding between states and their subjects belonging to other races, language groups and religions.

The stipulations of these Treaties, solemnly agreed to by the Governments, have allayed many fears and, in particular, given rise to many expectations for peoples who are obliged to live under foreign rule. One of the most numerous of these peoples is, without a doubt, the Albanian minority in Yugoslavia. It finds itself in the sad situation of having to realize, more than many other similarly ruled populations, just how deceitful Governments can be, which, on the one hand collaborate in the work of the League of Nations, but on the other hand, do everything they can to avoid applying the conventions concerning them to which they have voluntarily adhered. This is precisely the case of the stipulations concerning minorities contained in the Treaty of Saint Germain-en-Laye, signed by the Serb-Croat-Slovene (SHS) State on 10 September 1919. None of the benefits stipulated in the Treaty has been accorded to the Albanian minority in this country, from the protection of life and property to freedom of movement, as will be demonstrated in the appendices to follow. These stipulations have remained a dead letter, in particular those by which the Treaty, inspired by the loftiest of intentions for peace and humanity, has endeavoured to provide minorities with rights to resist forced denationalization. Eager to avail itself of the property deeds of the inhabitants of these ethnically Albanian regions, the Yugoslav Government makes nothing of the rights which the League of Nations has endeavoured to give our minority, and, what is more, shows no scruples whatsoever in its choice of means to attain its objective.

Excellency,

We come to protest, not out of animosity towards Yugoslav rule or towards any unjust treaties to which we have been forced to submit, but because of persecution deriving precisely from the violation of just treaties. Convinced that the League of Nations will not tolerate the systematic violation of the Treaty, the implementation of which it guarantees, the Albanian population of Yugoslavia, Moslems and Christians together, submit to the League their complaints in the profound conviction that they enjoy its protection.

Convinced that the esteemed League of Nations will willingly take our complaints into consideration, we also venture to draw its attention to measures conducive to alleviating the situation, which is becoming more and more intolerable every day and about which the Albanian minority raises its voice in protest. In our humble estimation, it would be very useful to send a commission of inquiry to check up from time to time on compliance with the Treaty on Minorities. Much more effective for ensuring its application, however, would be the setting up by the League of Nations of a Commission or the seconding of a Permanent Commissioner to reside in one of the towns in the minority region. An uninterrupted control would force the pledges taken to be respected, and would have a twofold advantage. Firstly, its vigilance would put an end to the ambiguous reports prepared by governments which refute the complaints made by the minorities and present a totally different situation to the League of Nations than that really existing. This is the case, for example, in the most recent Yugoslav document about the Albanian minority (No. C. 370 of 26 August 1929) in which it is stated that there are 'schools' in our region and that the Committee charged with investigating the matter is satisfied, believing these to be schools in which Albanian is taught. In reality, eight thousand Albanians do not have a single elementary school, just as they do not occupy a single post of importance in public administration. Secondly, the zeal with which the denationalization campaign is being waged would be moderated by the presence of the said Commissioner, and the various acts of violence and persecution could be eliminated to a large extent. In short, the watchful eye of the League of Nations would lead to an effective implementation of the treaties and to a normalization of relations between the rulers and the ruled.

Please be assured, Mr Secretary General, of our unshakable faith in the mission of the League of Nations and of the high esteem in which we hold Your Excellency.

Geneva, 5 May 1930

Signed:  
Dom Jean Bisak  
Dom Etienne Kurti  
Dom Louis Gashi



## List of Appendices Documentation

In the following appendices, we have endeavoured to demonstrate with precise facts the truth of the claims we have had the honour to include in this memorandum. The events referred to are given as examples only and have been chosen at random from a multitude of similar cases. To be as clear as possible, we have made reference to the provisions of the Treaty on Minorities signed by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and followed them by the facts which prove that these provisions have not been applied with regard to the Albanian minority.

The facts speak for themselves. Their authenticity cannot be denied, even in the knowledge that an official inquiry is impossible.

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## APPENDIX 1 PROTECTION OF LIFE

“The SHS State pledges to accord full and complete protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants irrespective of birth, nationality, language, race or religion.”  
(Treaty on Minorities, Article 2)

### I The beginning of Serb rule

With regard to the protection of the life and liberty of the Albanian population living within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, one could write volumes on end if one were to refer to all the instances in which this protection has been intentionally withheld.

The calvary of our people begins with the arrival of the ‘liberating’ Serb armies in 1912 in regions inhabited by an Albanian majority. The consequences of the conquest of this country were noted as follows in the appalling conclusions reached by the Commission of Inquiry set up by the Carnegie Endowment:

“Houses and villages set on fire, mass murder of an unarmed, innocent population, unspeakable violence, plundering and all sorts of brutality - such are the means which have been and are being used by Serb and Montenegrin troops with the aim of altering the ethnic structure of regions inhabited exclusively by Albanians.”

Nonetheless, it is not our intention to chronicle the events which took place before the signature of the Treaty on Minorities. Those wishing to know more about them may consult the press of the period in question as well as specialized publications in which they will find a record of many of the atrocities committed, including names, dates and places <sup>1</sup>

### II Mass Extermination

#### 1. Localities of grief

Prishtina, Mitrovica, Junik, Shtima / Shtimlje and Vrella / Vrela are names of localities calling to memory bloody events, mass murders committed for no purpose against an innocent population whose only crime was to be of Albanian nationality.

#### 2. The Dubnica massacre

On 10 February 1924, in Dubnica, District of Vuçitërna / Vuçitrn, the village was encircled and then set on fire on the orders of the prefect Lukić and of the commander Petrović so that all the inhabitants would be burnt alive. Their crime had been the following: The gendarmes wanted to capture a bandit called Mehmet Konjuhi but had not succeeded. The bandit having escaped, the authorities laid

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<sup>1</sup> See among others: 1. *Enquête dans les Balkans. Rapport de la Commission d'Enquête de la Dotation Carnegie pour la Paix Internationale*, Paris 1914; 2. *Albaniens Golgotha. Anklageakten gegen die Vernichter des Albanervolkes. Gesammelt und herausgegeben von Leo Freundlich*, Vienna 1913; 3. *Le droits de l'Albanie à ses frontières naturelles. Appel aux nations du monde civilisé*, Vlora 1921. Here is the toll in this work summarizing Serb atrocities committed in Kosovo against the Albanian population: 12,371 killed, 22,110 imprisoned, 6,050 homes destroyed, 10,525 families looted.

the blame not only on the relatives of Mehmet Konjuhi, who were all massacred, but on the entire village. Twenty-five persons, including ten women, eight children under the age of eight, and six men over the age of fifty, died in the fire. No one was punished for this crime.

3. A village wiped out for an offence of which it was innocent

Bandits killed a gendarme in the region of Rugova. Colonel Radovan Radovanović was sent to investigate the case. Not being able to find the culprit, the colonel encircled the village closest to the place where the gendarme had been slain and set it on fire. We do not know how many people died.

III Crimes and offences attributed to the agents of the authorities

The number of crimes committed sporadically by those supposed to protect and guarantee the lives of citizens is much higher than that resulting from the mass murders. In order to convey an idea of the numbers involved, we provide the following table for one subprefecture alone, that of Reka, District of Dibër / Debar, for a period of six months.

| Name and locality of the victims      | Name and office of the perpetrator                                  | Date of the crime | Observations  |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| -                                     | -   | -                 | -   |
| 1. Islam Zhuli of Zhuzhna             | Corp. Čedomir of the Tanush / Tanuš police                          | November 1928     | The victim was summoned on the pretext of a job and was slain on his way          |
| 2. Mexhid Bekiri of Bogda             | Corp. Marković of the police in Jerodović                           | November 1928     |   |
| 3. Veli Boga of Bogda                 | 2nd police Lieut. Rada Terzić                                       | November 1928     | Slain on pretext of cowardice   |
| 4. Ismaili and Lazimi, both of Orguci | Popović and Marković of the Ternić police                           | 10 Dec. 1928      | Slain on their way to market in Gostivar  |
| 5. Musli Bajrami, mayor of Senca      | Corp. Marković of the Ternić police                                 | June 1929         | Slain in front of his house   |
| 6. Jakup Ibrahimimi of Nivishta       | Officer Niko Milanović and a companion of the Tanush / Tanuš police | 5 July 1929       | Slain in the presence of his brother on his way back from Gostivar market         |
| 7. Zeqir Ismaili of Presenica         | Serg. Kaprivić of the Reka  | 15 July 1929      | One-time mayor  |
| 8. Zurap Fazlia of Ničpur             | Serg. Lazović of the Mishrova / Mišrovo police                      | 15 July 1929      | Slain in front of his house   |
| 9. Rakip Muhtari of Grek              | An agent of the subprefecture                                       | 18 July 1929      | Released by the police after two days of arrest and slain near the church in Beka |

#### IV The assassination of the Franciscan Father Gjeçovi

The Franciscan Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi Kryeziu was assassinated on 14 October 1929 under circumstances which leave little doubt as to the motives of the crime.

Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi is unfortunately not the first Albanian Franciscan to have fallen as a martyr for his patriotic sentiments and his faith. The first was Father Luigj Palici who was summoned by soldiers under the command of a bandit dressed as an Orthodox priest and was ordered to renounce his Catholic faith publicly in favour of the Eastern Orthodox faith. He refused energetically and was maimed

with the butt-ends of the soldiers' rifles and then stabbed to death with a bayonet. This took place in Gjakova / Djakovica on 7 March 1913.

Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi, for his part, was slain because of his stance as a good Christian and as a man devoted to justice and knowledge.

Born in 1874 in Janjeva / Janjevo in the District of Prishtina, now part of Yugoslavia, Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi opted for Albanian nationality despite the inconveniences this caused him during his stay on Yugoslav territory. After having finished his studies in philosophy and theology, he carried out his mission in Albania for many years and was held in high esteem by all those who came to know him. Devoted to the study of ethnography, he was the first person to bring to light a very important work on Albanian customary law, the *Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini*. He was much praised for this publication and received the title of doctor honoris causa from the University of Leipzig.

As a great admirer of the chivalrous customs of his people, he had long since begun an in-depth study on Albanian folklore, for which he had travelled widely throughout Albania. He had recently taken up duty, in continuation of his spiritual mission, in the village of Zym amongst the Albanians of Yugoslavia.

Zym, in the District of Prizren, Yugoslavia, is an Albanian village of one hundred twenty houses, of which one hundred houses are inhabited by Catholics and twenty by Moslems. In view of the nationality of the inhabitants, the Government only set up a school in this locality in 1926. One must not suppose, however, that teaching in Albanian, the mother tongue of the inhabitants, was permitted. The Government nominated to the post of teacher a Serb who, being Orthodox, trod on the religious sentiments of the pupils. Father Gjeçovi, of his own will, taught the children the catechism in Albanian and for this reason was not on good speaking terms with the Serb teacher who called him an 'Albanian nationalist'.

What is more, the Serb chauvinists regarded his research in the field of folklore as political propaganda. This was enough to bring about his downfall. Father Gjeçovi had on many occasions sensed the hostility of the Yugoslav authorities and of the members of the chauvinist association *Narodna Odbrana*, which terrorized the Albanian population throughout Yugoslavia quite openly. But he could not imagine that they would go so far as to take his life because of his views. Realizing that no favourable circumstances were at hand to do away with him without causing suspicion, their hired assassins resorted to the following infallible method.

Two gendarmes, probably attached to the police station near the village of Zym, approached Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi on 13 October last to notify him that he had been summoned by the subprefect of Prizren and was to appear before him as soon as possible. Surprised by this order, Father Gjeçovi suspected something was afoot and was unwilling to depart alone. He therefore took with him a school employee and a guard from the municipal hall. On his arrival in Prizren, he first paid a visit to the Bishop, to inform the latter that he had been summoned by the subprefect. He then reported to the subprefect, who expressed his astonishment and declared that he had not issued any order to summon the priest. Father Gjeçovi's original suspicions had now become more concrete. He returned to the Bishop to inform the latter of what had taken place during his talk with the subprefect and set off for home, still accompanied by the two gentlemen. At a point along the road, not far from the village, they noticed two armed men approaching, who, after cursing the Reverend Father, fired on him. Gjeçovi was felled by the first shot. The bandits, to make sure of their deed, then advanced and riddled him with bullets.

It must be noted that on the road, in the immediate vicinity of the crime, there were numerous workers carrying out road-repairs. Also present were the two companions of the victim. The police station was not far off either. Despite all the witnesses, the assassins got away with their crime and departed in no hurry, like individuals who had finished their work and had nothing to fear. And they indeed had nothing to fear. The inquiry produced no results and never will produce any results, because this does not seem to be its purpose. On the contrary, attempts have been made to use the inquiry in order to stain the reputation of the victim and to step up the persecution of the Albanians. Despite all the evidence, they are endeavouring to camouflage the political character of the crime, which is nonetheless conclusive, given the history and circumstances of the crime and the satisfaction the assassination caused in Serbian nationalist circles. One of these people, a police officer, mocking the profound grief which the loss caused

to the authors of this petition, alluded menacingly that Father Gjeçovi had received his just deserts and that the same fate awaited all of us with him.

## APPENDIX 2 PROTECTION OF LIBERTY

(Concluded after the treaty on the protection of minorities had been signed)  
(Treaty on Minorities, Article 2 et seq.)

### I The case of the authors of this memorandum (The priests Gjon Bisaku, Shtjefën Kurti and Luigj Gashi)

#### 1. Chauvinist absurdities

We have been obliged to abandon our country because of ever-growing restrictions to our freedom of speech, of movement and of access to our parishioners, etc. All our movements and all our actions were suspect to the authorities simply because we refused to become Serb ‘patriots’ and serve the goals of the terrorist organization *Narodna Odbrana*, i. e. preaching to our compatriots the absurd idea of the Serb chauvinists that we should consider ourselves Albanized Serbs and consequently should not pray to God in Albanian or teach our children their mother tongue.

Our disobedience, considered a grave menace to the interests of the state, was not to be forgotten or pardoned. No longer able to tolerate the accusations and threats, we abandoned our parishes last December to seek the aid and protection of the central authorities in Belgrade. The Ministry of the Interior gave us the standard formal assurances, but did not regard our complaints as important. On the contrary, it would seem that our complaints, instead of calming relations, made the hostility of the authorities even more acute. As soon as we arrived in Skopje, we were informed that the police were looking for us and wanted to arrest us. We were reminded of the threat of one of the police officers who had told us, “There is no room for Albanians in Yugoslavia. The Gjeçovi affair is only the beginning - your turn will come.” It was at this point that we decided to leave everything behind to save our lives and our honour.

As there was no question of us obtaining passports to get to Rome to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide under whose orders we were working as missionaries, we were forced to leave for the Albanian border, confronting all the dangers inherent in such a crossing, in the hope of saving our lives in exchange for leaving behind everything: our country, our families and our possessions.

#### 2. Letter addressed to H.E. the Apostolic Nuncio in Belgrade before our departure

Most Illustrious and Reverend Excellency,

It is with profound grief that we have abandoned our families and friends and, most of all, our wretched people who enjoyed some small consolation from the fact that we had remained with them and shared their sufferings.

We would like to submit to Your Excellency a summary of the reasons for our departure. Our situation and our stay in the District of Gjakova / Djakovica has become futile and impossible over the last few years. The situation is becoming worse from year to year, and now the worst has happened - the assassination of Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi on 14 October 1929. Why? Who killed him? We leave it to others to judge, since Your Excellency is in possession of precise documents. What worries us most are the rumours and the statements made by police officers, such as the captain of the gendarmes in Prizren, who said, “This is only the beginning.” The commander of the gendarmes in Peja / Peć, Popović said to one of us sneeringly, “Your turn will come!” Another officer, Zarko Andjelković boasted, “We killed Father Gjeçovi and now we are going to kill the priest in Peja / Peć.” The Serbs we know warned us to

be on our guard. Why? What had we done? They even ask us to submit summaries of our sermons at church, etc. One of us was told that he was a member of the Kosovo Committee of Shkodër, and another was accused of having built a church with foreign money, etc. In short, we have become ‘personae non gratae’ and are no longer welcome. The fact that we are ‘personae non gratae’ in the eyes of the government was confirmed Wednesday evening by our bishop at a meeting with the two deaneries of Peja / Peć and Gjakova / Djakovica when, talking to Father Ljubomir Galić, the latter told him it was true, adding that no priests could be found for these parishes.

Under such circumstances, what else could we do?

It would seem futile for us to remain there to be killed, not for our religion but because of base allegations such as those made against the late Father Gjeçovi, all the more so since we put no store in acts of blind heroism. Whether we remained or departed, our parishes would have been deprived of their priests in any case. We informed the bishop as much on several occasions. In order to save our lives, we now find ourselves compelled, against our will, to abandon our diocese, our parishes and our wretched but beloved people, not to mention our possessions.

We beg Your Most Illustrious and Reverend Excellency to contact the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, whose servants we are, to request another mission in which we will be able to carry on with our sacrosanct ministries as priests, and to arrange that we be sent back to the Sacred Congregation to which we shall expose our trials and tribulations and our needs and to which we offer unconditional obedience. We would beg you to do this as quickly as possible since we have lost everything, are in the midst of our journey and are apprehensive that we may be followed and arrested.

In the hope that Your Excellency will have the kindness to take the above into consideration and to come to our assistance, we remain your very humble and devoted sons,

signed,

Dom Gjon Bisaku, Dom Luigj Gashi, Dom Shtjefën Kurti

Belgrade, 14 December 1929

## II Forced emigration

### 1. Emigration is due to persecution

Before the Serbian occupation, emigration was unknown among the Albanian population living in the regions now under Yugoslav rule. It is true that workers went abroad temporarily to neighbouring countries, but never with their families.

The mass emigration which has occurred since 1912 is due without a doubt to the various kinds of persecution which make life impossible for the poor people and force them to abandon their homes.

### 2. The means used to encourage emigration

The means used by the Yugoslav authorities to force the Albanian population to leave the country are numerous. Death threats, restrictions on their freedoms in all areas of life, expropriation without compensation, house searches and frequent raids and arrests for no plausible reason, as well as a ban on teaching their national language and on expressing patriotic sentiments other than those desired by Serb nationalists. These means are utilized on a daily basis. These oppressive measures are carried out in good part by chauvinist associations such as the *Narodna Odbrana*.

### 3. Emigration to Albania

At the present, there are about ten thousand refugees pretty well throughout Albania and they are in a miserable state. The Albanian Government seems to have made a laudable effort to shelter these



refugees, but there can be no doubt that its good will alone will not be enough to receive and take care of all those still wishing to come. Consequently, it has been obliged to refuse entry visas for most of them. They have therefore taken refuge further afield, principally in Turkey.

#### 4. Emigration to Turkey

The number of emigrants in Turkey surpasses the figure of 130,000. The Turkish Government has taken advantage of these people to populate regions in Anatolia which are more or less deserted, but where a good number of them have perished because of the climate and deprivation. This exodus does not seem likely to end unless the persecution which has given rise to it is brought to an end. Two hundred Albanian families have recently left for Turkey. But the matter does not stop here. In its desire to get rid of the Albanians, the Government in Belgrade has initiated talks with the Government in Ankara on the transfer to Turkey of three to four hundred thousand Albanian Moslems from Kosovo. If nothing has yet come of the project, it is no doubt due to the influence of the League of Nations and to world public opinion which would have raised an outcry.

#### 5. Plundering of the emigrants

To encourage emigration to Turkey, the Yugoslav authorities provide certain favourable conditions such as the following. A young man of Albanian origin doing his military service is discharged early so as to be able to accompany his parents forced into emigration.

Emigration to Albania is not well looked upon. The Yugoslav Government has every interest in ensuring that these persecuted and dispossessed refugees settle farther away from its borders. As such, a thousand obstacles are put in the way of the wretched individuals wanting to be reunited with their families in Albania. A host of public employees and lawyers are only waiting for a chance to put the final touches on the misery of these poor people. To obtain passports, they are harassed and plagued until they agree to pay exorbitant sums, four or five thousand dinars, which often amount to their total savings.

The following are the most recent cases of inhuman exploitation we learned about before our departure:

- a) A Moslem Albanian peasant from the village of Leshan / Lešane in the District of Peja / Peć was forced to pay 6,000 dinars to the Serb lawyer Zonić in Peja / Peć as a passport tax.
- b) The Serb lawyer Ljuba Vuksanović of Peja / Peć demanded 8,000 dinars of another Albanian peasant to obtain a passport for him because the "procedure was extremely difficult."
- c) A Catholic Albanian from Skopje by the name of Geg Mata who had emigrated to Albania could only obtain a passport for his wife and son after five months of harassment and the payment of 2,000 dinars in bribes.

It must be noted in this connection that the normal passport tax is no more than fifty dinars.

#### 6. Albanians are forced to emigrate in order that Montenegrins and Bosnians can settle their land

Montenegrins and Bosnians from Srema and the Banat are invited to settle in the villages and live in the expropriated and confiscated homes of the Albanian refugees with the obvious purpose of changing the ethnic structure of the region. Such resettlements of people have occurred pretty well everywhere and the campaign is continuing with an ever-increasing intensity. We refer, as examples, to the following localities:

- a) In the District of Gjakova / Djakovica: the villages of Lugbunari, Piskota, Dubrava, Mali i Ereçit, Dashinoci, Mali i Vogël, Fusha Tyrbes, Beteshet e Marmullit, Neci etc., etc.
- b) In the District of Peja / Peç: Fusha e Isniqit / Istinić, Turjaka, Fusha e Krushecit, Malet e Leshanit, Krusheva, Vitomirica, etc., etc.
- c) In the District of Prizren: Fshaja, Gradisha, Xërxa / Zrze, Lapova / Lapovo etc., etc.

It has also happened that inhabitants of Albanian origin who left their homes temporarily returned to find Serbs living in them who had been granted absolute title to them by the authorities.

### III Various restrictions on personal freedom

#### 1. Imprisonment, searches, requisitions

Reference must be made first and foremost to the arrests and imprisonments which, in addition to house searches and various requisitions, constitute the most effective means utilized by the government authorities to harass the Albanian population. Any charge made against an Albanian leads to his immediate arrest, whether or not the accusation is true and the source is reliable. Charges usually arise from quarrels between individuals. They are often instigated by provocateurs and sometimes invented by government officials. An innocent allegation is often sufficient to turn the general climate of suspicion against the Albanian population into one of certainty that crimes have been committed, thus setting off a series of harsh measures against innocent individuals. There are numerous cases. They happen almost every day. Let us confine ourselves to a few recent examples:

- a) Hafëz Hilmi and Shukri Dogani, who until recently were mayors of localities in the Kaçanik / Kačanik area of the District of Skopje, were not on good speaking terms with the local authorities and were accused of collaboration in a 'Kosovo Committee' which exists only in the troubled imagination of Serb chauvinists. The above-mentioned men were imprisoned on the basis of this supposition.
- b) The merchant Mulla Rifati, born in the same region, was arrested on a similar charge.
- c) Sherif Gjinovci, a person well-known to the Albanian community in Yugoslavia, was arrested six months ago and accused of intervening in a feud between two feuding Albanian families.

#### 2. Clothing

In its violent actions aimed at the 'ethnic unification' of the state, the Belgrade Government also does its utmost to eliminate differences in clothing that give an indication of nationality in this part of the kingdom. In some places, such as Reka, where Orthodox Albanians live together with Slavs of the same religion and with Moslem Albanians, the differences are limited to various types of headgear. The Albanians wear the *kësula* whereas the Serbs wear the *čajkač*. To do away with this shocking distinction, Mr Sokolović, the subprefect, issued an order to all police stations in his region last May forbidding Albanian peasants from wearing the *kësula*. They are now forced to don the Serb cap. The police were only waiting for a pretext to tear up the Albanian caps.

#### 3. Freedom of movement

Another form of persecution is limiting freedom of movement. In many regions, the Albanians are not allowed to leave their villages without notifying the authorities beforehand. In order to visit a relative from another village, to go to a fair to sell produce or to travel to market to go shopping, i.e. any circumstances involving a departure from one's native village, one must notify the chief of police. This form of persecution increased substantially last year in the District of Dibër / Debar.

It goes without saying that the authorities do not provide any prompt or satisfactory services unless the peasant accompanies his request with a bribe.

#### 4. Forced labour

Serbs and Albanians of the region in question are employed in the construction and repair of national and local roads and in other public works. As to their treatment, a distinction is made. The Serbs are regularly paid as labourers whereas the Albanians are quite often not paid at all, or receive very little. In addition, they are obliged to provide their own tools and workhorses or oxen without recompense.

### APPENDIX 3 THE RIGHT TO PROPERTY

“Persons having chosen another nationality will be at liberty to keep their immovables in the territory of the SHS State. They will be free to bring their goods and chattels of all kind with them”

(Treaty on Minorities, Article 3)

It is true that this article is more specifically aimed at those who choose Austrian, Hungarian or Bulgarian nationality, but in view of the general character of the treaty which is designed to protect all minorities, one can conclude that the regulations regarding the right to property, which conform by the way to common law existing in most countries, are also applicable to Albanians who have become nationals of the State of Albania, of another country or who have remained Yugoslav subjects.

#### 1. Forms of seizures

In reality, quite different measures are applied to the Albanians. Pure and simple expropriation without any compensation is one of the most common and efficient means of forcing the Albanians into exile. Confiscation of property is practised against our people on a vast scale. In addition to this is the agrarian reform, a package of government measures which was never passed by parliament, but which the authorities nonetheless utilize in their own fashion, depending on the persons in question.

#### 2. Confiscations and expropriations

The confiscation of property is carried out against persons who are absent and against all Albanians inhabitants whose Serbian patriotism is considered doubtful. As to formal charges, there is no need for them whatsoever. Any accusation by a Serb against an Albanian is tantamount to condemnation. Should there be need of further witnesses, members of the *Narodna Odbrana* and the *Bela Ruka* (White Hand) are always ready to serve the nation.

It would be impossible here to list all the cases of unjust confiscations we are aware of. We do wish, however, to cite a few examples in one specific region.

- a) The following persons from the District of Peja / Peć had their property confiscated without explanation: Jusuf Arifi of the village of Bec, Grosh Halili of the village of

Turjaka, Tahir Bala of the village of Papiq, Bajram Sula of the village of Krestovec, and Memdu Bey, whose property was estimated at over 2,000 hectares.

- b) Most rich Albanian families have had their property confiscated to demoralize them, deprive them of political influence and oblige them to submit to the Yugoslav yoke without protesting. Here are a few examples from the District of Gjakova / Djakovica alone: Asllan and Kurt Bey Berisha, Ibrahim Bey, Ismet Bey Kryeziu, Ahmet Bey Berisha, Poloska, Halit Bakalli, Muhamet Pula, Prenk Gjoka, Mark Nikoll Biba of Brekoc, Muftar Dema of Zhub / Žub, Bek Hyseni of Zhub / Žub, Gjon Marku of Guska, Gjon Doda of Pllangçora.

### 3. Confiscation of public property

Confiscations and expropriations have affected not only individuals but also collective groups. Albanian villages have been dispossessed of their farm and pasture land pretty well everywhere. Here are a few examples:

- a) In the District of Gjakova / Djakovica: Marmull, Rezina, Brodesana, Doblubarja, Meçeja, Cërmjan / Crmljan, Kryelan, Bardhaniq, Dashinoc, Lumëbardha, Lluga, Qerim, Lugbunar, Trakaniq, Novosella / Novoselo, Bec, Palabardh, Gergoc, Dobrigja, Firaja, Gramoçel, Fusha e Kronit të Plakës (Piskota), Babajt e Lloçit, Deçan / Dečani, Lloçan, Voksh, Kallavaja e Junikut, Batusha, Rracaj, Pacaj, Pllangçora, Dujaka, Hereç, Ponashec, Brovina, Nec, Babajt e Bokës, Koronica, Mejeja, Guska, Fusha e Tyrbes, Brekoc, Vogova, Zhub / Žub, Firza, Moglica, Rraç, Pjetërshan, Kusar, Dol, Kushavec.
- b) Other examples from the District of Peja / Peć: Isniq / Istinić, Strelc / Streoc, Fusha, Pishtan, Baran / Barane, Leshan / Lešane and all the pasture land down to the Drin river and from there to Gjurakovc / Djurakovac, Rakosh / Rakoš, Ujmirë / Dobra Voda, and Rudnik.

The situation is similar in other regions inhabited by Albanians.

### 4. The agrarian reform

Far more numerous are the victims of the so-called agrarian reform, which was applied with extreme rigour to the Albanian population. Under the reform, citizens having completed their military service are entitled to 5 hectares of arable land per person. Albanian families, which still maintain a patriarchal structure and include six to ten adult males, would accordingly have the right to thirty to fifty hectares of land. At the present moment, there is not a single farming family in all of Yugoslavia owning such a spread of land. Even properties of one hectare have been expropriated.

Here are a few examples which prove that the agrarian reform is nothing more than a pretext for plundering and inhumanity:

- a) Mark Vorfi, from the village of Fshaj in the District of Prizren, and his four brothers together owned ten hectares of land. The expropriation took everything away from them.
- b) Aleksandër Shaupi of the same village owned fifteen hectares of land. He has five brothers and, according to the law, would normally have a right to at least thirty hectares. At the present moment, they do not have a single hectare left.
- c) Jup Pozhegu of Gjakova / Djakovica owned eight hectares of land in the village of Bishtazhin (District of Prizren). All he has left at the moment is one square meter.

- d) In the autumn of 1929, twenty-six Albanian families from Rugova, District of Peja / Peć, were expelled from their homes and deprived of their possessions, and were forced to seek refuge with friends. They were forced to go begging in order to survive.
5. Compensation

For two years, a compensation of 5% of the value of the property expropriated was offered in some regions to the dispossessed, but only to those persons well regarded by the authorities. Aside from this initial compensation, expropriated Albanian landowners have received nothing at all.

## APPENDIX 4 CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

“Complete equality (for all minorities) to enjoy civil and political rights, notably to accept public office, functions and honours”.  
(Treaty on Minorities, Article 7)

1. Being of Albanian origin is an impediment

This stipulation in the Treaty has not been applied at all with regard to the Albanian population in Yugoslavia. Albanians, in particular those who have studied at universities abroad, no longer even try to obtain functions or jobs in the public service since they are aware from the start that the main condition for employment is not the qualification of the applicant, but rather nationality. This condition is of course not legally binding, but is strictly respected by those who are authorized to apply it. This explains the startling fact that a population of eight hundred thousand people is not represented in the public service by one single official of any importance, i. e. a prefect or subprefect. If some minor employees have been given jobs, they got them most certainly by being servile or sycophantic, whether because of their abject poverty or because they were lacking in morals.

2. The Albanians have been excluded from municipal functions

The same condition exists for employment in the municipal administration, even though the local authorities were elected by the public. The Albanians are excluded from public office. Mayors who were formerly elected are now appointed directly by the Government. Municipal offices are organized in such a way as to keep representatives of the Albanian majority out of the administration. In more populated localities which have a municipal administration of their own and in which a Serb population also exists, albeit as a minority, municipal councils are still composed for the most part of Serbs. In grouping together small villages to form a municipality, great care is taken to include one Serb village with the four or five Albanian villages, with the sole purpose of keeping the Albanians out of the administration. Where such measures cannot be implemented, a Serb adviser is appointed to work with the mayor in question and, in actual fact, becomes head of the municipality himself.

Here are a few examples of the foregoing:

- a) In Peja / Peć, where the vast majority of the population is Albanian, the former mayor Nexhi Basha, an Albanian, was replaced by a Montenegrin called Maja who is hardly known at all to the population.
- b) The former mayor of Gjakova / Djakovica, Qazim Curri, who is of Albanian origin, found himself with a Serbian office administrator who took over all the decision-making.

- c) In Prizren, where there is also a large Albanian majority, there has not been one single Albanian mayor of a town or municipality since the Serb occupation of the country began.
- d) In Vogova, District of Gjakova / Djakovica, the mayor was an Albanian called Marc Ndou. He was replaced by a Montenegrin, Milan Popović, a bandit and thief who was subsequently convicted for his crimes. In subsequent elections, Ndre Bib Doda was voted in as mayor, but was nonetheless ousted and replaced by Radovan Popović, cousin of the above Milan Popović, who was no less notorious than his cousin as an implacable enemy of the Albanian population.

The same can be said of the municipalities of Ponashec, Deçan / Deçani, and Irziniq etc., all in the riding of Gjakova. The situation is no different in other regions.

### 3. Justice is not impartial

As to justice, the Albanian population is poorly served since it has no legal recourse against a Serb.

Thousands of examples have proven to the Albanians that they have no chance whatsoever of winning a case in court. They can only repeat the popular wisdom that laws made and applied by a ruler are not to the advantage of his subjects. With this in mind, Albanians in Yugoslavia rarely go to court, not wishing to add more financial loss to the injustice they have incurred.

Here are a few examples:

- a) Myftar Dema, of the village of Vogova in the District of Gjakova / Djakovica, accused the mayor, Milan Popović, of embezzling 20,000 dinars belonging to the municipal authorities. The latter was indeed tried and imprisoned. But after one month in prison, he was released and given free rein to torment his accuser.
- b) A Serb called Krstić, together with his accomplices, killed sixty Moslem Albanians from Jabllanica / Jablanica (District of Gjakova / Djakovica) in one day, among whom was the influential Osman Aga Rashkovi. The family of the latter had the culprit brought to trial. In order to save him, despite the overwhelming evidence of his guilt, the authorities declared him to be deceased, even though Krstić is still alive and well and now living in Istog / Istok in the District of Peja / Peć.
- c) In the midst of an interrogation in the subprefecture of Gjakova / Djakovica, an Albanian, Lazër Dreni, was struck down with the butt of a fire arm by an employee of the subprefecture, Jovan Milić, in the presence of the secretary Djulaković. Milić was imprisoned for several hours for form's sake and then released.

### 4. Arbitrary taxation

Arbitrary taxation measures are quite often applied to the Albanians. The taxpayer is not in a position to know exactly how much he will have to pay in taxes in a given year. He is normally at the mercy of tax officials who make him pay double or triple of what he is legally bound to pay.

Before the beginning of the dictatorship, over half the seats on the thirty-six-member tax commissions in Kosovo were occupied by Albanians. At present, their representation has been reduced to two. The other thirty-four members are Serbs.

### 5. Political rights are non-existent

As is evident from the above, the political rights of citizens of Albanian origin simply do not exist. The Albanians hoped for one moment in 1925-1926 that they would be as free as the other citizens of Yugoslavia to occupy political positions in the country. They were soon disappointed, however. The political party formed under the leadership of Mr Ferhat Bey Draga was to take part in the elections with a list of fourteen candidates for the Chamber. But on the day of the elections, the candidates were prevented by various means from taking part in the elections. Some were placed under house arrest in their own homes. When they protested, the authorities replied that the measure had been taken in their own interests, since otherwise their lives would have been in danger.

The attempt was not without consequences for these courageous individuals. Most of them were sentenced to jail, under various pretexts. The party chairman Ferhat Bey Draga was sentenced to four years in prison. Nazim Gafuri was wounded and subsequently slain in front of a police station in Prishtina. Ramadan Fejzullahu was convicted and several candidates had their possessions confiscated. All of them suffered.

Under such conditions, it is evident that the Albanians could no longer even think of entering the political ring, even as a national minority.

## APPENDIX 5 USE OF THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE

“There shall be no restrictions on the use of the national language in the field of religion, in the press or in publications of any kind.”  
(Treaty on Minorities, Article 7)

### 1. The Albanian language has been persecuted more than any other in the Balkans

Rightfully considered the fundamental characteristic of nationality in the Balkans, language has always been the main object of contention between the conservative spirit of peoples and the efforts of governments to enforce national unity in the country by more or less forcible means.

In this respect, the Albanian people have suffered more than all the other Balkan peoples. Under Ottoman rule, the Albanians were not allowed to use their language freely. Education, press and publications in Albanian were luxuries enjoyed only by Albanians living in foreign countries. Even correspondence in Albanian addressed to friends or relatives abroad could result in the imprisonment of the author. The Turks used these methods to combat the national awakening of the Albanians, whereas Greek and Slav propaganda, acting as the due heir to the Ottoman Empire, did its utmost to denationalize the Albanian Orthodox population through church and schools.

### 2. Restrictions continue for Albanians in Yugoslavia

This situation continues for the half of the Albanian people living under foreign rule. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the truth of this assertion.

- a) In the Albanian regions of Yugoslavia, there are signs on the town halls saying that the usage of any language other than Serbian is forbidden.
- b) No newspaper, magazine or other publication in Albanian exists for the eight hundred thousand Albanians in Yugoslavia. The Belgrade Government may claim that intellectual activity is not prohibited under the law, but those who implement the law, the police and their officers, do their utmost to impede any such activity. If an Albanian were to venture to apply for authorization to publish a newspaper in Albanian, to hold an innocent public lecture in Albanian or to open a school to teach Albanian, he would not of course be

punished for such an application, but would immediately be hounded by the police and the gendarmes on all sorts of charges, arrested and, in many cases, imprisoned or dispossessed.

- c) One of the undersigned, Dom Shtjefën Kurti, until recently priest in the parish of Novosella / Novoselo, District of Gjakova / Djakovica, was forbidden by the principal of the Serbian school, Radovan Milutinović, from using the Albanian language to teach village children the catechism.
- d) When Albanian children from the village of Skivjan, District of Gjakova / Djakovica, brought Albanian spellers to the Serbian school they attended, the Serb principal, Mr Zonić, confiscated the books immediately and punished the children for “daring to learn a language other than that of the state.”
- e) Albanians are often reprimanded by telephone operators who order them to speak Serbian. If they do not comply, their calls are cut off.

## APPENDIX 6 SCHOOLS AND PRIVATE CHARITIES

“They (the minority) shall have, in addition, the right to found, manage and control at their own expense charitable, religious and social institutions, as well as schools and other educational facilities, with the right to make free use of their own language and to exercise their religion freely.”  
(Treaty on Minorities, Article 8)

### 1. The Yugoslav Government has banned Albanian private schools

We have already seen what Albanian-language education was like under Ottoman rule. It may be noted in this connection that at the end of this rule, before the Balkan War, it was the Kosovo Albanians who rose in revolt against the Turkish regime to obtain freedom for national education. The policies of the Turkish administration in this field were continued under the Serb occupation. As the ban was not effectively enforced during the Great War, the Albanians in Yugoslavia hastened to open private schools for the teaching of their mother tongue (see below the list of such schools).

Once the Yugoslav Government was freed from the burdens of the war in 1919, one of its first actions was to close down Albanian schools. The school in Skopje was not closed until 1929, probably as a consequence of an Albanian complaint to the League of Nations about Yugoslav oppression.

### 2. Albanians are permitted no intellectual activity

At the same time as private schools, the Yugoslav authorities banned all social activity of an Albanian character. Intellectual, cultural and musical societies have been dissolved in Gjakova / Djakovica, Peja / Peć, Prizren, Skopje and other important towns.

### 3. Even religion may not be taught in Albanian

There can be no question of the free use of the Albanian language in the teaching of religion either. Orthodox Albanians from the Reka region, where they are in the majority, have been banned from using their language in church. Catholic Albanian priests from the regions of Gjakova / Djakovica, Prizren and Skopje etc. are considered agents of political propaganda if they so much as teach the



catechism in Albanian. As to Moslem Albanians, they have no *medresa* where their religion can be taught in Albanian.

Schools have also been closed which had operated in the following towns: Plava with 50 pupils, Gucia / Gusinje with 60, Bec 45, Brodosana 50, Brovina 40, Lloçan 46, Irziniq 40, Novosella / Novoselo 48, Junik 40, Ponashec 45, Cërmjan / Crmljan 50, Zhub / Žub 48, Budisalk 70, Rakosh / Rakoš 80, Prizren 40, Skopje 73, etc.

The number of these schools and the number of pupils is not large. These are schools which were opened spontaneously in localities where an initial community organization already existed or in which the municipal administration, on top of its various obligations from the war, was able to maintain an Albanian-language school. If the regulations of the Treaty on Minorities were fully applied, the number of Albanian pupils in Yugoslavia would be no less than in Albania, given that half the Albanian population lives in Yugoslavia.

4. Table of Albanian private schools closed down by order of the Yugoslav Government

| Locality                  | Instructors   | No. of pupils                  |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Ferizaj / Uroševac        | Catholic priest   | 50                             |
| Zym                       | Pal Lumezi  | 40                             |
| Gjakova /<br>Djakovica    | Jusuf Puka, Sali<br>Morina, Niman<br>Ferizi, Ferid Imani,<br>Ibrahim Kolçiu,<br>Ibrahim Felmi, Lush<br>Ndoca<br>Catholic priest | 840<br><br><br><br><br><br>160 |
| Mitrovica                 |   | 90                             |
| Prishtina                 | Haxhi Tafili  | 60                             |
| Vuçitërna / Vuçitrn       | Murat Jakova,   | 256                            |
| Peja / Peć                | Hajdar Sheh Dula,<br>Abdurrahman<br>Çavolli, Mulla Resh<br>Meta<br>Halit Kastrati,  | <br><br><br><br><br>125        |
| Peja / Peć                | Shaqir Çavolli, Sadi<br>Pejani<br>Shaban Kelmendi,  | <br><br>232                    |
| Peja / Peć                | Pal Lumezi etc.<br>Zef Maroviqi, Pal  | <br>257                        |
| Peja / Peć                | Lumezi etc.<br>Mr Plakçori  | <br>221                        |
| Gjurakovc /<br>Djurakovac | Xhevet Kelmendi   | 176                            |
| Baran / Barane            | Ndue Vorfi  | 186                            |
| Zlokuçan /<br>Zlokuçane   | Adem Nexhipi  | 175                            |
| Strelc / Streoc           | Osman Tarku   | 285                            |
| Istog / Istok             | Lazër Lumezi  | 76                             |
| Prizren                   |   |                                |

## APPENDIX 7

### PUBLIC EDUCATION

“For localities in which considerable numbers of a minority population live, the Government shall accord appropriate facilities to ensure that in elementary schools, instruction is given to the children of the minority in their own language.”  
(Treaty on Minorities, Article 9)

1. The view of the committee set up by the League of Nations to examine the issue of minority education

In pursuing its policies of denationalization, the Yugoslav Government, having closed down the Albanian schools, replaced them with Serbian schools. In its most recent document addressed to the League of Nations, the Government stated that there were 1,401 schools in the regions inhabited by Albanians, out of which 261 schools with 545 classes were attended especially by Albanian pupils. The committee set up under a council resolution dated 25 October 1920 to examine the issue, “believed it was in a position to interpret the phrasing in the Yugoslav document as meaning that the schools in question were schools for the minority per se, in which teaching was carried out in the Albanian language, or were schools having classes fulfilling this condition. Based on this interpretation, the Committee considered the information provided in the report by the Yugoslav Government to be satisfactory.”

The Committee was either misled by an ambiguous phrase or had learnt the truth and preferred to issue a warning in this form. Whatever the case may be, we must insist that there is not a single school or a single class among the 545 referred to by the Yugoslav Government in which teaching is conducted in Albanian, just as not one of the 7,565 Albanian pupils attending school is being taught in his own language.

2. The Albanians are not oblivious to the benefits of schooling

The number of these pupils, notes the Yugoslav Government, is very low due to the particular living conditions of the Albanians who inhabit small settlements in isolated mountain regions and show no understanding of the benefits of schooling. We have no intention of arguing with the Yugoslav Government, but cannot pass over such an accusation without demonstrating how baseless it is. Not even one third of the Albanians in Yugoslavia live in ‘isolated’ mountain regions. This might be stated more reasonably of the Albanians in the Kingdom of Albania. Despite communications difficulties and the smaller amount of funds earmarked for public education in Albania, the percentage of pupils is not less there than it is in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This goes to show that the Albanians are by no means oblivious to the benefits of schooling, but only, of course, in places where schools provide real educational benefits and do not simply promulgate hatred towards the nationality and the mother tongue of the pupils. The schools in question are more like workshops for denationalization. This is why the Albanians are leery of sending their children to attend them.

3. Teaching staff

As to the teaching staff, it must be mentioned that teachers of Albanian nationality are extremely rare. Those who do exist are not employed to teach Albanian or to teach in Albanian. Even hodjas teaching religion to Moslem pupils are obliged to teach in Serbian.

## APPENDIX 8 PRIVATE PIOUS FOUNDATIONS

“The Yugoslav State pledges to provide full protection to Moslem mosques. All assistance and authorizations will be accorded to pious foundations (*vakufs*) and to existing Moslem religious and charitable institutions, and the SHS Government shall accord all necessary assistance for the creation of new religious or charitable institutions such as is guaranteed to other private institutions of this nature.”  
(Treaty on Minorities, Article 10)

### 1. The Yugoslav Government confiscates property of pious and charitable foundations

Not only has the Yugoslav Government not assisted in the creation of new Moslem pious institutions, it has even confiscated the property of many existing charitable institutions (*vakufs*). Let us refer to a number of cases:

- a) The Grand Mosque of Burmalli in the city of Skopje was expropriated without the consent of the community and without compensation. An officers' club was built on the site. It is possible that consent was obtained subsequently by threats from General Terzić who had already made his opinion known: either a million dinar or two bombs to blow up the mosque.
- b) The Mosque of Gazi Mustafa Pasha in the city of Skopje maintained a first-rate charitable institution. It held full title to thirteen villages, among them Kreshova, Bullaçana, Rashtak and Novosella / Novoselo. The executor of this property, Shevket Bey, son of Haxhi Mustafa Bey, had all this property confiscated by the Government. This foundation used to distribute 200 loaves of bread to the poor of the city every day.
- c) The Fevri Mosque in the town of Tetova / Tetovo was set on fire in broad daylight and surrounded by the police so that people who had arrived on the scene could not put the fire out. It was the fifth time it had been set on fire. The mosque had been saved four times by the swift reaction of the population.
- d) In Tetova / Tetovo again, the foundation or *vakuf* of the Harabati *teke* (Moslem order), had its property, consisting of about one thousand hectares of farmland, confiscated. Montenegrins were then settled on this land. Deprived of its revenues, the monastery was itself dissolved.

### 2. The pious foundations of Albanian Christians have been plundered, too

Such torment is not confined to the religious institutions of Moslem Albanians. It also affects the foundations of Christian Albanians. For example:

- a) In Gjakova / Djakovica the property of the Catholic church was confiscated and, despite protests from priests and followers, Orthodox Montenegrins were brought in to settle the land.
- b) In the village of Novosella / Novoselo, inhabited exclusively by Catholic Albanians, the church was in possession of a *çiflik* (property) called 'Mali i Vogël'. It was dispossessed of this property which was settled by Montenegrins brought in expressly for this purpose.

### 3. Not even cemeteries have been exempted

Such unjust measures have also been taken against Christian and Moslem Albanian cemeteries. Here are a few examples:

- a) The old Catholic cemetery of Peja / Peć was confiscated and the land was given to a Montenegrin who turned it into a vineyard. The Albanian priest won his case, but the new owner was not expelled, probably for 'political reasons', and continues to grow grapes on the land.
- b) The Moslem cemetery in Tetova / Tetovo, which also belonged to a *vakuf*, suffered the same fate. Part of the land was given to the authorities to serve as a nursery. The rest was distributed free of charge to Orthodox Serbs from the region, and not to the Moslem community (it being Albanian). The tombstones, many of which were of great value due to their artistry, were not handed over to the Moslem community, but were used as construction material for the railway station. Even today, one can see inscriptions from tombstones on the facade of the said building.

#### 4. Difficulties involving burials

The saddest thing of all in this matter is that the authorities, simply to create a nuisance, have long been postponing the decision as to a new site for a cemetery. In the meantime, the poor people do not know where to bury their dead because the authorities send them from one place to another. Their intentions are obvious: to make the population so desperate, finding justice nowhere, that they will be willing to emigrate. This is but one element.

The same has occurred in many other localities, for example in Peja / Peć, Gjakova / Djakovica and Skopje where the *vakufs* were deprived of their cemeteries without any compensation.

\* \* \*

In conclusion, we have the honour to stress that these are but a few examples among thousands of others.

[Taken from *La Situation de la minorité albanaise en Yougoslavie* (Geneva 1930). Translated from the French original by Robert Elsie]

# The Expulsion of the Albanians

Memorandum presented in Belgrade  
on 7 March 1937

Vaso Čubrilović

## The expulsion of the Albanians

The problem of the Albanians in the life of our country and people did not arise yesterday. It played a major role in our life in the Middle Ages, but its importance only became decisive towards the end of the seventeenth century, at a time when the masses of the Serbian people were displaced northwards out of their former ancestral territory of Rashka / Raška, supplanted by Albanian highlanders. Gradually, the latter came down from their mountains to the fertile plains of Metohija and Kosovo. Spreading northwards, they continued in the direction of southern and western Morava and, crossing the Shar mountains, descended into Polog and, from there, towards the Vardar. Thus, by the nineteenth century was formed the Albanian triangle, a wedge which, with its Debar-Rogozna axis in the rear, penetrated as far into our territories as Nish / Niš and separated our ancient land of Rashka from Macedonia and the Vardar Valley.

In the nineteenth century, this wedge, inhabited by wild Albanian elements, prevented the maintenance of any strong cultural, educational and economic links between our northern and southern territories. This was also the main reason why, until 1878, Serbia was unable to establish and maintain continuous links with Macedonia through Vranja and the Black Mountain of Skopje and thus to exercise its cultural and political influence on the Vardar Valley, to the extent that one would have expected in view of conducive geographical factors and historical traditions in these regions. Although the Bulgarians began their life as a nation later than the Serbs, they had greater success initially. This explains why there are permanent settlements of southern Slavs from Vidin in the north to Ohrid in the south. Serbia began to slice off pieces of this Albanian wedge as early as the first uprising, by expelling the northernmost Albanian settlers from Jagodina.

Thanks to the wide-ranging national plans of Jovan Ristić, Serbia sliced off another piece of this wedge with the annexation of Toplica and Kosanica. At that time, the regions between Jastrebac and southern Morava were radically cleared of Albanians.

From 1918 onwards, it was the task of our present state to suppress what remained of the Albanian triangle, but it did not succeed. Though there are a number of reasons for this, we shall examine only the most important of them.

1. The fundamental mistake made by the authorities in charge at that time was that, forgetting where they were, they wanted to solve all the major ethnic problems of the troubled and bloody Balkans

by Western methods. Turkey brought to the Balkans the customs of the Sheriat, according to which victory in war and the occupation of a country conferred the right on the victor to dispose of the lives and property of the subjected inhabitants. Even the Balkan Christians learned from the Turks that not only state power and domination, but also home and property could be won and lost by the sword. This concept of land ownership in the Balkans was to be softened somewhat by laws, ordinances and international agreements brought about under pressure from Europe, but it has, to a good extent, remained a primary instrument of leverage for Turkey and the Balkan states up to this very day. We need not evoke the distant past. It is sufficient to refer to a few cases which have taken place in recent times: the transfer of Greeks from Asia Minor to Greece and of Turks from Greece to Asia Minor, or the recent expulsion of Turks from Bulgaria and Romania to Turkey. While all the Balkan states, since 1912, have solved or are on the point of solving their problems with national minorities through mass population transfers, we have stuck to the slow and cumbersome strategy of gradual colonization. The result has been negative, as evident from the statistics of the eighteen districts which make up the Albanian triangle. These figures show that the natural growth of the Albanian population in these regions is still greater than the total increase in our population from both natural growth and new settlers (from 1921 to 1931, the Albanian population increased by 68,060, while the Serbs showed an increase of 58,745, i.e. a difference of 9,315 in favour of the Albanians). Taking into account the intractable character of the Albanians, the pronounced increase in their numbers and the ever-increasing difficulties of colonization will eventually put in question even those few successes we have achieved in our colonization from 1918 onwards.

2. Even the strategy of gradual colonization was not properly applied. Worse still in a matter of such importance, there was no specific state plan for every government and regime to adhere to and implement. Work was intermittent, in fits and starts, with each new minister undoing what his predecessor had done and himself creating nothing solid. Laws and regulations were amended but, weak as they were, were never implemented. Some individuals, especially deputies from other regions, who could not manage to secure a mandate at home, would go down south and butter up the non-national elements to gain a mandate there, thus sacrificing major national and state interests. The colonization apparatus was extremely costly, inflated and loaded with people who were not only incompetent, but were also frequently without scruples. Their activities are indeed a topic in itself. Finally, one need only total up the huge sums this state has invested in colonization and divide them by the number of families settled to prove how costly every new household established since the war has been, regardless of whether or not this expenditure was met by the settlers themselves or by the state. Likewise, it would be interesting to compare the amounts paid out for personal expenditures and those for materials needed for colonization. In the past, Serbia went about this matter quite differently. Karageorge, during the first uprising, as well as Miloš, Mihajlo and Jovan Ristić had no special ministry of land reform, no general land inspectors, or costly apparatus, and still, they managed to purge Serbia of foreign elements and populate it with our own people who felled the endless forests of Shumadia (Šumadija), transforming them from the wild state they were once in to the fertile Shumadia we know today.
3. Even those few thousand families who were settled after the war did not remain where they were originally located. There was more success in Kosovo, especially in the Lab / Llap valley, where the Toplicans penetrated of their own accord from north to south. Our oldest and most stable settlements there were established with elements from various Serbian regions. In Drenica and Metohija we had no success at all. Colonization should never be carried out with Montenegrins alone. We do not think that they are suitable as colonists because of their pastoral indolence. This applies to the first generation only. The second generation is quite different, more active and more practical. The village of Petrovo in Miroć north of the Danube, the most advanced village in Krajina, is inhabited exclusively by Montenegrins. In Serbia today, there are thousands of other flourishing towns, especially in Toplica and Kosanica, which were established by

Montenegrins of the first generation who mixed with more advanced elements. The foregoing consideration, nonetheless, still applies in Metohija where, since the settlers are on their own ancestral lands, old customs still abound. A visit to any coffee-house in Peja / Peć is sufficient proof. This is why our colonization has had so little success throughout Metohija. It must be admitted, on the other hand, that these colonies were poorly situated on barren, scrub-covered land, and were almost totally lacking in basic agricultural equipment. These people should have been given more assistance than other colonists because they were among the poorest Montenegrin elements.

4. Without doubt, the main cause for the lack of success in our colonization of these regions was that the best land remained in the hands of the Albanians. The only possible means for our mass colonization of these regions to succeed is for us to take the land away from them. This could have been achieved easily during the rebellion after the war, when the insurgents were active, by expelling part of the Albanian population to Albania, by refusing to legalize their usurpations and by buying up their pasture land. Here, we must refer once again to the gross error committed in our post-war strategy, that of the right to own land. Instead of taking advantage of the strategy used by the Albanians themselves for ownership of the land they usurped (scarcely any of them had deeds issued by the Turks, and those who did, got them only for land purchased), we not only legalized all these usurpations to the detriment of our state and nation, but worse still, we accustomed the Albanians to western European attitudes to private property. Prior to that, they could never have understood such concepts. In this way, we ourselves handed them a weapon with which to defend themselves, keeping the best land for themselves and rendering impossible the nationalization of a region of supreme importance to us.

It is apparent from the above that our colonization strategy in the south has not yielded the results which ought to have been achieved and which now impose themselves upon us as a major necessity of state. We are not criticizing this strategy merely for the sake of criticism, but so that, on the basis of our past experience, we can find the right way to solve this problem.

## The problem of colonization of the southern regions

Reading the first part of this paper and comprehending the problem of colonization of the south, one realizes immediately that the primary issue at stake are the regions north and south of the Shar mountains. This is no coincidence. The wedge of Albanians on both sides of the Shar range is of great national and strategic significance to our state. We have already mentioned the way the population structure came into existence there and the importance of these regions for links to the lands of the Vardar Valley, which are firmly within the limits of our ancient territories. The strength of Serbian expansion ever since the foundation of the first Serbian state in the ninth century has lain in the continuity both of this expansion and of the expansion of ancient Rashka / Raška in all directions, including southwards. But this continuity has been interrupted by the Albanians, and until the ancient link between Serbia and Montenegro on the one hand, and Macedonia on the other, is re-established along the whole line from the River Drin to southern Morava, we will not be secure in the possession of our territories. From an ethnic point of view, the Macedonians will only unite with us, if they receive true ethnic support from their Serbian motherland, something which they have lacked to this day. This can only be achieved through the destruction of the Albanian wedge.

From a military and strategic point of view, the Albanian wedge occupies one of the most vital points in our country, the starting point from which major Balkan rivers flow to the Adriatic Sea, to the Black Sea and to the Aegean. Possession of this strategic point determines, to a large degree, the fate of the central Balkans, and in particular, the fate of the main line of Balkan communications from the



Morava to the Vardar. It is no coincidence that many battles of decisive importance to the destiny of the Balkans were fought here (Nemanja against the Greeks, the Serbs against the Turks in 1389, Hunyadi against the Turks in 1446). In the twentieth century, only a country inhabited by its own people can be confident of its security. It is therefore imperative that we not allow such points of strategic importance to be held by hostile and alien elements. This is all the more true in this case in that the element in question has the support of a nation state of the same race. Today this state is powerless, but even as such, it has become a base for Italian imperialism which aims to use the country as a means of penetrating into the heart of our nation. Our people, who are willing and able to defend their land and country, are the most reliable element in the fight against such penetration.

With the exception of this block of eighteen districts, the Albanians and other national minorities in other parts of the south are scattered and, therefore, constitute less of a threat to the life of our nation and state. Nationalizing the regions around the Shar mountains would mean that we can stifle irredentism once and for all, and ensure our control over these territories forever.

Colonization from the north should be kept to a minimum in the regions inhabited by the Macedonians. Here land is scarce and for this reason, the Macedonians would resist an influx of settlers from the north, all the more so because they would regard this influx as a sign of mistrust on our part. As such, even such a minimal colonization would do us more harm than good. If we do send people down there, to the region south of the Black Mountain of Skopje, they should be people from Vranje and Leskovac, who are closer in mentality and culture to the Macedonians. By no means should we send people from the Dinaric region because their irritable and uncontrolled temperaments would only arouse the hostility of the local population. We repeat that this problem will only be solved when our colonies advancing from the north through Kosovo and Metohija in the direction of the Shar mountains and Polog have reached Macedonian settlements.

The problem of the Sandjak of Novi Pazar is solving itself and no longer plays the role it did in the life of our country before 1912. Let it suffice to mention that with the elimination of the Albanians, the last link between our Moslems in Bosnia and Novi Pazar and the rest of the Moslem world will have been cut. They are becoming a religious minority, the only Moslem minority in the Balkans, and this fact will accelerate their assimilation.

Montenegro has become a serious problem recently. This barren land cannot sustain the population which, despite resettlement, increased by 16% from 1912 to 1931. This impulsive, pastoral people has contributed many essential characteristics to our race over the centuries. Channelled in the right direction, their energy will not be destructive, and could, if directed towards the southeast, be employed for the common good of the country.

Summing up:

The Albanians cannot be dispelled by means of gradual colonization alone. They are the only people who, over the last millennium, managed not only to resist the nucleus of our state, Rashka and Zeta, but also to harm us by pushing our ethnic borders northwards and eastwards. When in the last millennium our ethnic borders were shifted up to Subotica in the north and to the Kupa River in the northwest, the Albanians drove us out of the Shkodër (Scutari) region, out of the former capital of Bodin, and out of Metohija and Kosovo. The only way and only means to cope with them is through the brute force of an organized state, in which we have always been superior to them. If since 1912 we have had no success in the struggle against them, we have only ourselves to blame since we have not used this force as we should have. There is no possibility for us to assimilate the Albanians. On the contrary, because their roots are in Albania, their national awareness has been awakened, and if we do not settle the score with them once and for all, within 20-30 years we shall have to cope with a terrible irredentism, the signs of which are already apparent and will inevitably put all our southern territories in jeopardy.

The international problems of colonization

If we proceed on the assumption that the gradual displacement of the Albanians by means of gradual colonization is ineffective, we are then left with only one course - that of mass resettlement. In this connection, we must consider two countries: Albania and Turkey.

With its sparse population, its many undrained swamps and uncultivated valleys, Albania would have no difficulty admitting some hundred thousand Albanians from our country. With its vast and uninhabited frontiers in Asia Minor and Kurdistan, modern Turkey, for its part, offers seemingly unlimited opportunities for internal colonization. Despite efforts on the part of Kemal Atatürk, the Turks have not yet been able to fill the vacuum created by the evacuation of the Greeks from Asia Minor to Greece and of some of the Kurds to Persia. Hence, the greatest possibilities lie in sending the bulk of our displaced Albanians there.

Firstly, I stress that we must not limit ourselves to diplomatic *démarches* with the Ankara government, but must employ all means available to convince Tirana to accept some of our displaced people, too. I believe that we will come up against difficulties in Tirana because Italy will try to hinder the process. Be this as it may, money plays an important role in Tirana. In negotiations on the issue, the Albanian government should be informed that we will stop at nothing to achieve the final solution to this question. At the same time, we should tell them about colonization subsidies available, stressing that no controls will be exercised over them. Eventually, notables in Tirana will see the material gains involved and be persuaded through secret channels not to raise any objections to the whole business.

We have heard that Turkey has agreed, initially, to accept about 200,000 of our displaced persons on condition that they are Albanians, something which is most advantageous to us. We must comply with Turkey's wish immediately and sign a convention for the resettlement of the Albanian population as soon as possible. Concerning the resettlement of this Albanian population, we must study conventions which Turkey signed recently with Greece, Romania and Bulgaria, paying particular attention to two aspects: Turkey should accept the largest possible contingent and should be given maximum assistance from a financial point of view, in particular for the swift organization of transportation facilities. As is inevitable in such cases, this problem will no doubt give rise to some international concern. Over the last hundred years, whenever such actions have been carried out in the Balkans, there has always been some power which has protested because the action did not conform to its interests. In the present case, Albania and Italy may make some protest. We have already pointed out that attempts should be made to conclude an agreement with Albania on this matter and, failing this, we should at least secure its silence on the evacuation of the Albanians to Turkey. We repeat that skilful action and money properly used in Tirana may be decisive in this matter. World opinion, especially that financed by Italy, will be upset a little. Nevertheless, the world today has grown used to things much worse than this and is so preoccupied with its day-to-day problems that this issue should not be a cause for concern. At a time when Germany can expel tens of thousands of Jews and Russia can shift millions of people from one part of the continent to another, the evacuation of a few hundred thousand Albanians will not set off a world war. Be this as it may, decision-makers should know ahead of time what they want and unfalteringly pursue those goals, regardless of possible international repercussions.

Italy, no doubt, will raise more difficulties, but at present the country is extremely preoccupied by problems of its own in Abyssinia. Austria, for its part, will not dare to go very far in its opposition. To tell the truth, the greatest danger lies in the possibility that our great allies, France and Britain, may interfere. These two countries must be given the calm and resolute reply that the security of the Morava-Vardar line is in their interests. That this is so was confirmed during the last great war and that line can only be made more secure, for them and for us, if in ethnic terms, we completely dominate the region around the Shar mountains and Kosovo.

## The mode of evacuation

As we have already stressed, the mass evacuation of the Albanians from their triangle is the only effective course we can take. In order to relocate a whole people, the first prerequisite is the creation of a suitable psychosis. This can be done in various ways.

It is well known that the Moslem masses are generally readily influenced by religion and are prone to superstition and fanaticism. Therefore, we must first of all win over the clergy and men of influence through money and threats in order for them to give their support to the evacuation of the Albanians. Agitators, especially from Turkey, must be found as quickly as possible to promote the evacuation, if Turkey will provide them for us. They must laud the beauties of the new territories in Turkey and the easy and pleasant life to be had there, and must kindle religious fanaticism among the masses and awaken pride in the Turkish state. Our press can be of colossal assistance by describing how gently the evacuation of the Turks from Dobruja took place and how easily they settled in their new regions. Such information would create the requisite predisposition for the masses of Albanians to be willing to leave.

Another means would be coercion by the state apparatus. The law must be enforced to the letter so as to make staying intolerable for the Albanians: fines, imprisonment, the ruthless application of all police regulations, such as the prohibition of smuggling, cutting forests, damaging agriculture, leaving dogs unchained, compulsory labour and any other measure that an experienced police force can contrive. From the economic aspect, this should include the refusal to recognize old land deeds. The work of the land registry should be accompanied from the start by the ruthless collection of taxes and the payment of all private and public debts, the requisitioning of all public and municipal pasture land, the cancellation of concessions, the withdrawal of permits to exercise an occupation, dismissal from government, private and municipal offices etc., all of which will speed up the process of evacuation. Health measures should include the harsh application of all regulations, even within homes, the pulling down of encircling walls and high hedges around private houses, and the rigorous implementation of veterinary measures which will result in a ban on selling livestock on the market, etc. All these measures can be applied in a practical and effective way. The Albanians are very touchy when it comes to religion. They must therefore be harassed on this score, too. This can be achieved through the ill-treatment of their clergy, the demolition of their cemeteries, the prohibition of polygamy, and especially the inflexible application of the regulation compelling girls to attend elementary school, wherever they are.

Private initiative, too, can assist greatly in this direction. We should distribute weapons to our colonists, as need be. The old form of Chetnik action should be organized and secretly assisted. In particular, a mass migration of Montenegrins should be launched from the mountain pastures in order to create a large-scale conflict with the Albanians in Metohija. This conflict should be prepared and encouraged by people we can trust. This can be easily achieved since the Albanians have, indeed, revolted. The whole affair can be presented as a conflict between clans and, if need be, can be ascribed to economic reasons. Finally, local riots can be incited. These will be bloodily suppressed by the most effective means, though by colonists from the Montenegrin clans and the Chetniks, rather than by means of the army.

There remains one more method Serbia employed with great practical effect after 1878, that is, secretly razing Albanian villages and urban settlements to the ground.

## The organization of the evacuation

From the attached map<sup>2</sup>, it is apparent what regions must be cleared. They are: Upper Dibër / Debar, Lower Polog, Upper Polog, the Shar mountains, Drenica, Peja / Peć, Istog / Istok, Vuçitërna /

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<sup>2</sup> The author of the memorandum attaches to the document a detailed map of the region to be cleared [editor's note].

Vučitrn, Stavica, Llap / Lab, Gračanica / Gračanica, Nerodimja / Nerodimje, Gjakova / Djakovica, Podgor, Gora (Dragash), Lugu i Drinit / Podrimje, Gjilan / Gnjilane and Kačanik / Kačanik. Of these regions, which together form the Albanian wedge, the most important for us at the moment are: Peja / Peć, Gjakova / Djakovica, Lugu i Drinit / Podrimje, Gora (Dragash), Podgor, Shar, Istog / Istok and Drenica, all to the north of the Shar mountains, Upper Dibër / Debar and the two Pologs to the south, and the Shar mountains themselves. These are border regions that must be cleared of Albanians at any cost. The internal regions such as Kačanik / Kačanik, Gjilan / Gnjilane, Nerodimja / Nerodimje, Gračanica / Gračanica, Llap / Lab, and Vuçitërna / Vuçitrn etc. must be weakened if possible, particularly Kačanik / Kačanik and Llap / Lab, while the others should be gradually and systematically colonized over a period of decades.

The above-mentioned methods should be used primarily in the border regions, if we wish to clear them of Albanians.

During resettlement, the following must be kept in mind:

In the first place, resettlement should begin in the villages and then move to the towns. The villages are the more dangerous, being more compact. Then, the mistake of removing only the poor should be avoided. The middle and wealthy classes make up the backbone of every nation. They, too, must therefore be persecuted and driven out. Lacking the support which their economically independent compatriots have, the poor will then submit more quickly. This question is of great importance, and I emphasize this, because one of the main causes for the failure of our colonization in the south has been that the poor were expelled while the rich remained. We were, thus, no better off because we gained very little land for the settlement of our colonists. To create a proper psychosis for resettlement, everything possible must be done to evacuate whole villages, or at least whole families. It must be prevented at all costs that part of a family is transferred while other members remain behind. Our state is willing to spend millions not to make life easier for the Albanians, but to get rid of as many of them as possible. For this reason, those who remain behind must be barred absolutely from purchasing property from those evacuated. This should be taken into consideration in the evacuation of individuals and of whole villages if we want to make things as easy as possible for them during the process of relocation.

Once they agree to move, they should be given all the assistance they require. Administrative formalities should be simplified, their property paid for on the spot, travel documents issued without the least formality, and they should be assisted in getting to the nearest railway station. Trains should be made available for them as far as Salonika, and from there, they should be transported immediately by ship to Asia. It is very important that the journey be easy, comfortable and cheap. Train travel should perhaps be made free of charge and displaced persons should be assisted with food because, whether or not large masses of people can be evacuated or not depends largely on conditions of transport. Fear of difficulties en route is a major factor in keeping people from departing. This fear must be overcome by solving all the problems connected with the journey quickly and energetically. Particular care must therefore be taken to ensure that these people have the fewest possible difficulties en route. Simple people often have trouble finding their way, so it would be advisable to have major travel enterprises study transportation systems and adapt them accordingly. The displaced person must pass from hand to hand without feeling that his movement is a burden. Only in this way will it be possible to create a proper flow of Albanian evacuees and empty the south of them.

## Depopulating and repopulating regions

The problem of the establishment of colonies in the depopulated regions is no less important than the expulsion of the Albanians.

The first question to arise is: Who is to be settled here? The most natural thing would be to populate these regions with elements of our people from destitute areas: Montenegrins in the first place, but also Hercegovinians, Ličanas and Krajšniks. The Montenegrins are the most appropriate for several

reasons, and Metohija, Drenica and Kosovo are the most natural places for them to descend into from their impoverished mountain homelands. The increase of population in Montenegro has caused much poverty there which, in recent times, has given rise to continual social and political unrest. This is unfavourable for our control of the country and is very dangerous for the maintenance of law and order in the future. Giving them maize and pensions is useless. The only solution is to send them down into the fertile regions of Metohija, Drenica and Kosovo. The Montenegrins will prove to be excellent instruments to overcome the Albanians since they are akin to them in mentality and temperament. They must be settled initially in the regions north of the Shar mountains. Along with them, however, people from Ličan, Krajšnica, Serbia, Čačak, Užice and Toplica should be brought in as colonists as well. This is necessary in order to create improved working habits and organization among the Montenegrins, and to break down the nomadic group mentality, the spirit of collectivity which characterizes the highlanders, by mixing and by intermarriage with people from various Dinaric regions. In this way, a new type of Montenegrin can be created with a less local and more broad-minded, Serbian outlook.

Suitable conditions should be created for southern Serbian emigrants living in the regions south of the Shar mountains so that they can take possession of the fertile lands. They are honest, hardworking people who would be grateful to the state all their lives if better living conditions could be created for them in rural areas. The rural southern Serbs have a right to expect more care and attention than we are giving them today. Settling these poor people in Polog (Upper and Lower) and Dibër / Debar and allocating pasture land to them instead of to the Albanians will give them a sense of belonging to the state and they will be more willing, accordingly, to defend its borders.

Colonization south of the Shar mountains and the Black Mountain of Skopje can also be achieved with Serbs from Vranje, Leskovac, Pirot and Vlasenica, especially those from destitute mountain villages. We repeat that the Dinarics should not be allowed to expand south of the line formed by the Black Mountain of Skopje and the Shar mountain range.

It is essential to avoid bureaucracy and petty formalities in the settlement of villages cleared of Albanians. The first and immediate step is to give the colonists deeds to the land they are settling. One of the main reasons for the failure of our colonization so far has been that settlers did not feel secure on their land because they did not receive a title to it and were thus left to the mercy of unscrupulous petty officials and local politicians. The peasant only feels secure if he knows that no one can take his land away from him. Such a guarantee should therefore be provided from the start. On the other hand, it is dangerous to give colonists the full and unrestricted ownership to land. In principle, homesteaders are carrying out a mission on behalf of the state and the nation, and must carry through with their mission if they are to keep their homesteads. They should not, therefore, have full and unrestricted ownership of the property in question. Because there are so many different types of people among them, from village workers who have lost their inner attachment to land to herdsmen who will have to adapt themselves to agriculture, their attachment to the land must have force of law. This will ensure that they begin to love their new home and region, and if they do not succeed in this, their children at least will. For this reason, colonists should be prevented by law from obtaining full ownership of the land for any period of less than thirty years, even though the deeds are handed out at the start. According to the laws of our country, women do not enjoy the right to inherit property. In order to avoid fragmentation of property into tiny parcels, women must be excluded from inheriting such homesteads except in cases where the colonist has no male descendant and plans to bring a bridegroom into the household. The properties which have been given to the colonists up to now have been small. Bearing in mind intensive farming methods here, the fall in prices for farm products, and the large size of families among the colonists, 5-10 hectares of land is insufficient to ensure the economic survival of the settlers.

It is better to settle a region with a smaller number of colonists, giving them better conditions for development, than with a large number of rural semi-proletarians. This is another cause of failure in our colonization of the south and of the north up to now.

Individuals suitable for settling land under very difficult conditions are rare among other nations. Those few successes we have achieved in our colonization strategy have been the result of the aptitude of our race for colonization. It is only our peasants who are able to survive when shifted from one environment to another and put up against scrubland which has never been used for agriculture. Think

of how they would flourish if the state were to carry out its duties and provide them with everything they needed.

On 10 February 1865, the government of Prince Mihajlo passed a law on the 'Settlement of Foreigners in Serbia'. Under this law, the Serbian government granted poor colonists from neighbouring regions 1.8 hectares of arable land, 1.8 hectares of non-arable land, a house, a yoke of oxen, a cart, two goats or sheep, a sow, necessary tools and 120 grosh in cash. In addition to this, they were of course given maize for food to last them until the first harvest. One plough was provided for every two families. These fixed and movable assets were granted to the settlers for a term of fifteen years, without the right to sell them. At the end of this period, the assets became their property. For the first five years, the settlers were exempt from all kinds of government taxes. For ten years they were also exempt from universal compulsory service in the regular army and for five years from service in the people's militia. The response from all sides was such that within a few months all homesteads were taken and we were immediately able to colonize more land than we have been able to do for several years since the war. Had the government granted such favourable conditions for settlers after 1918, our situation in the Vojvodina and in southern Serbia would be much different. This is how we must act in the future, if we want to achieve success.

There are also lessons to be learned from the colonization of Toplica and Kosanica after 1878 when the Albanians were expelled from this region. The method of colonization here was laid down in the law of 3 January 1880. On 3 February of the same year, the People's Council approved an amendment to the law on agrarian relations under the motto "land for the peasants." Without hesitation, Serbia applied for its first foreign loan in order to pay Turkey for the lands taken. It did not set up any ministry of agrarian reform or costly apparatus to deal with the problem of colonization. Everything was managed in a simple and practical manner. The police distributed land to all those who were willing to work it. People came from Montenegro, Sjenica, Vranje, Kosovo, Peja / Peć etc. and, in a matter of thirty years, Toplica and Kosanica, once Albanian regions of ill-repute, gave Serbia the finest regiment of the 1912-1918 wars, the Second Iron Regiment. During that period, Toplica and Kosanica paid and repaid, with the blood of their sons, for the millions of dinars which Serbia had spent to settle these regions.

It is only by following this example and understanding what is required, sparing neither money nor blood, that our nation can create a new Toplica out of Kosovo and Metohija.

Hence, if we want the colonists to remain where they are, we must assure them of all necessary means of livelihood within the first few years and severely prohibit any speculation with the houses and property of the displaced Albanians. The government must reserve itself the unlimited right to dispose of the fixed and movable assets of the Albanians and must settle its own colonists there as soon as the Albanians have departed. This is important because it rarely happens that a whole village departs at once. The first to be settled in these villages should be the Montenegrins who, with their arrogant, irascible and merciless behaviour, will drive the remaining Albanians away. Then colonists from other regions can be brought in.

This paper deals with the colonization of southern Serbia only. The problem of the Vojvodina, in particular with the Hungarian triangle in Bačka, i.e. Senta - Kula - Bačka Topola, is however no less important to us. Destroying this triangle in the Vojvodina is indeed just as essential as eradicating the Albanian wedge around the Shar mountains. Tens of thousands of Hungarian farmhands have been left behind since the break-up of the big estates in the Vojvodina and constitute a great burden for the Serbian and German farm owners in the region. Some of these Hungarian and even German farm labourers and small proprietors could be sent to the south because in Bačka, on the border with Hungary, they constitute a real threat, all the more so since the Serbs in Bačka represent only 25% of the population. In southern Serbia, they would become good citizens by defending their property against Albania and would integrate well into our people. What is more important, since they are more progressive and of a higher cultural level than our peasants, they would provide a good example of advanced farming methods. We stress, however, that Serbs from the Vojvodina should not be sent to the south for colonization. There is still much land to be colonized in the Vojvodina so that they should be given homesteads there instead. It must be noted that in the 1928-1929 period, there was a widespread movement among Hungarians and Germans from the Vojvodina to move to southern Serbia. Not understanding the problem, our authorities

were against such a movement and nipped it in the bud. Any such reaction on the part of the government today must be countered, and the public must be instructed to encourage the movement of Hungarians and Germans from the Vojvodina, especially those from Bačka, to the south.

## The colonization apparatus

Of particular importance for the solution of the question under discussion is the existence of a proper apparatus to direct the whole business. The poor work done by the apparatus implementing our colonization strategy in the past was in good part responsible for its failures. To avoid the same mistakes in the future, we must carry out a reorganization.

No other question demands such continuity of implementation as our colonization strategy. We have pointed out that one of the main reasons for the failure of our colonies both in the north and in the south has been the inconsistent work and the vacillations on policy implemented after each change of government. If this is to be avoided in the future, our colonization strategy must be entrusted to the General Staff of the army. Why? Simply for reasons of defence. Our army is intent on settling our people along the borders, especially in the most delicate sectors. To this end, it will do its utmost to secure these borders with the firmest possible settlements. The General Staff, as the prime institution for the defence of our national interests, can contribute a great deal to our colonization strategy as a whole. It will know very well how to protect the colonization strategy from the private interference of those who want to use it for their own personal interests, and from external influence. Another important fact is that it would be easier for the General Staff to convince the responsible bodies of the importance of the issue and to force them to take effective action. The People's Council would have more faith in it and would grant the necessary credits to it more readily than to others.

The General Staff would guide all the work via a government Commission for Colonization. This Commission would be quite independent, though under the direct supervision of the Chief of General Staff, and would have under its control all bodies involved in our colonization strategy. Representatives of various interested ministries, national associations, technical organizations and scholarly institutions would also be made to take part in this Commission.

The greatest mistake of our colonization strategy in the past lay in the fact that the untrained and incompetent bureaucrats had the main say, and dealt with problems only superficially and in a piecemeal manner. We need only recall the settlement campaign carried out by volunteers from Hungary in Ovce Polje and Kadričikovo, or the emigrants from Istria and Gorica who settled around Demir Kapija. The matter requires close collaboration between the government, private initiative and scholarly institutions. Private initiative can operate in many directions. The People's Defence, the Sokolašas, the Chetnik Associations etc. could take action against the Albanians which would be inappropriate for the state. Associations of agronomists, doctors, engineers and cooperatives etc. could provide valuable assistance with their technical advisors in solving the many problems which will arise during the colonization campaign. Cultural associations, such as Prosveta in Sarajevo, Matica Srbska in Novi Sad, the St. Sava Associations in Belgrade etc. have their role to play, too.

Undoubtedly, our institutions of higher learning have begun to lose the prestige they once had. The main reason for this is that the university and the Academy of Sciences are becoming increasingly estranged from real life and are neglecting their main duty in a relatively backward country such as ours: i. e. paving the way for the application of the scientific achievements of the twentieth century. Many billions would have been saved in this country, many mistakes would have been avoided in our government policy, including our colonization policy, had the problems been studied seriously and objectively in advance by competent scholars before they were taken up for solution. Our policy of colonization, likewise, would have acquired a more serious approach, greater continuity and effective application, had the opinions of experts and scholars been sought in advance. To start with, the Royal Serbian Academy of Sciences and the University of Belgrade ought to take the initiative to organize

scientific studies of the whole problem of colonization in our country. This would be feasible for many reasons. At the university we have experts on every aspect of colonization. Teachers and academicians at the university are independent scholars, less subject to external political influence. They already have good experience in such fields and their scholarly work is a guarantee of objectivity. They should, therefore, take the initiative of setting up a colonization institute, the task of which would be to pursue colonization studies. The government, for its part, should detach from the ministries all the institutions which have been engaged with this problem so far, and create a special institution, "The Colonization Inspection Office"

The Colonization Inspection Office would be headed by an Inspector General, appointed by decree on the recommendation of the Minister of War, the Chief of General Staff and the Prime Minister. All the work in the colonization institute and in the Colonization Inspection Office would be carried out on orders from and under the supervision of the government Commission for Colonization, while the Inspector General would be answerable to the Chief of General Staff.

The colonization institute would be divided into the following sections: 1) organization, 2) education and culture, 3) finance, 4) agriculture, 5) construction, 6) hygiene, etc. In agreement with scientific, cultural and educational associations and institutions, and with national associations, the various sections would study problems of colonization and prepare directives, thus supplying our colonization policy with solid, scientifically elaborated material on the basis of which decisions could be taken. Managing this institute would be people from the Commission for Colonization, including representatives of the above-mentioned ministries, the university, the Academy of Sciences and private, national, education and cultural organizations who would be elected or appointed to this body. In this case, care must be taken not to bring in people just for honour's sake, but only men who love and are dedicated to this great work.

The heads and employees of the institute should be selected by competition. The institute would then supply the Colonization Inspection Office with scientifically elaborated material for the implementation of our colonization strategy. Should differences of opinion arise between the Colonization Inspection Office and the institute over some fundamental question, the Chief of General Staff would have the final say.

The Colonization Inspection Office must have its executive headquarters in the territory and be made up of people selected for their enthusiasm and readiness for this work, whether or not they are employed by the government. They should, if possible, be selected by means of competition and should be appointed upon the proposal of the Chief of General Staff. Compromised or incompetent cadres must be dismissed. During its work, the Colonization Inspection Office and its organs must avoid bureaucracy as much as possible, while keeping in mind one thing only - the expulsion of the Albanians as quickly as possible and resettlement by our colonists.

The police apparatus will play a very important role in this action. It is, therefore, essential to select and second the most energetic and honest officers. Their transfer should be made with the approval of the Chief of General Staff, and for such a difficult job they should be paid from secret loans. Stern measures must be taken against anyone who commits the slightest infraction. A special commissar, who would execute the orders of the state colonization inspector, must be appointed for the whole of the eighteen districts mentioned. The prefects of the districts must be given special, wide-ranging powers for their work, as well as appropriate instructions. Our political parties should be told curtly that rivalry among them during elections in these districts is strictly prohibited, and that any interference by deputies in favour of the Albanians is categorically forbidden.

The government institute and the Colonization Inspection Office would elaborate the technical details for organizing the evacuation of the Albanians and the relocation of our settlers. It would not be bad, perhaps, if another private organization were to be created, in addition to these two official institutions. This private organization would be created out of existing associations and have the task of assisting in the implementation of our colonization strategy through private initiative. It would be best if the federation of our cultural and education associations could take over this job. Its main task would be to coordinate and assist in the promotion of links between them and the colonization institute.



## Funding

Whenever our colonization strategy has been criticized for its lack of success, its defenders have always excused themselves with the inadequacy of funds the government has allocated to this work. We do not deny that this has been the case up to a point. It must be said, however, that more has been spent in our country on the maintenance of this apparatus and its irrational activities than on the work of colonization itself. Nevertheless, even though the government has not provided as much as it should have, it must be understood that every country has its own primary and secondary interests to look after. Among a country's primary interests, without doubt, is the maintenance of its rule in regions of national insecurity by colonizing such regions with its own people. All other commitments are of an importance secondary to this. Funds can and must be found to deal with this problem. We have already mentioned the colonization of Toplica and Kosanica and the benefits derived from this. Given that the small Kingdom of Serbia did not hesitate to make great financial sacrifices, indeed did not even hesitate as a free and independent kingdom to seek its first loan for colonization, is it possible that our present-day Yugoslavia would be unable to do the same? It can and must. That it lacks the means to do so, is simply not true.

Let us calculate approximately how much it would cost our country to expel 200,000 Albanians and settle the region with as great a number of our people.

The resettlement of 40,000 Albanian families, taking an average family as having five members and an average of 15,000 dinars for each family, would cost a total of 600 million dinars. The colonization apparatus for the settling of 40,000 Serbian families might reach a total of 200 million dinars. In any case, the whole operation would not cost more than 800 million dinars. This is because:

1. The evacuated Albanians would leave behind not only land, but also their houses and implements. Thus, not only would the overwhelming majority of our colonists be settled in the homes of the Albanians but, with a little assistance in food and livestock, they would soon recover economically and become independent. We stress in this connection that absolutely no private speculation with the possessions left behind by the Albanians would be tolerated. The government must be the one to take control of these possessions and distribute them to the settlers.
2. Military forces should be employed, where required, during the setting up of new colonies, as was the case with the construction of Sremska Rača and the reconstruction of the villages destroyed by the 1931 earthquake. To this end, the army should be given the right and possibility to set up a kind of compulsory labour service for public projects, just as Stambolisky created the *Trudova pronist* in Bulgaria and Hitler the *Arbeitsdienst* in Germany, that is, by calling up reservists or extending the term of military service. It would be an especially good idea for our young people, after finishing their training and after graduating from university, to be entrusted with such work. Were this to be the case, many of them, by taking part in constructive activities in the public interest, would become more conscious and look at things from a more realistic perspective. Such a scheme could be carried out easily by giving priority in public service employment to those young people who have spent a specific period of time working on behalf of our colonization strategy. This would also help reduce unemployment among our young intelligentsia, which is an increasingly acute social problem in our country.
3. In collaboration with specialized organizations and associations, we must find the cheapest means of clearing the land of scrub, of irrigating farms, of draining swamps, etc. as well as of constructing homes. Private companies should be informed that, since the government assists them with reduced customs and railway tariffs, loans and other means for the procurement of supplies and material necessary for their work, it also has the right, considering the importance of this action, to insist that such supplies and material be made available at the lowest possible

price. Supplies and material should be procured by means of cartels, in agreement with which, the government would specify the quantity, quality and price of the material in question without fictitious deals being involved. Government enterprises, the railways and, in particular, forestry enterprises such as Šipad etc. should be placed at the unrestricted disposal of the government Commission for Colonization.

4. During colonization, the government may grant settlers property on credit or for cash. Many of the settlers will purchase land in the new regions by selling their original property in their place of birth. This will enable the government to recuperate a good portion of the money it has laid out. However, we stress that land must only be sold to persons who give proof that they will settle on it permanently and work it. Land given on credit must not be too expensive. The interest rate must be minimal and repayment should be deferred for several years to give the settlers time to get established, i. e. repayment should only begin when the settlers have sufficient economic strength.

Taking this as a basis, the government, which must cover all administrative expenses for these activities from its normal revenues, can procure funds from two sources. One would be the pruning of unnecessary expenditures and expenditures earmarked for other less urgent sectors. The other possible source of funds would be loans, which would be provided by state banks, alone or with private capital on the basis of a compulsory domestic credit line. This would be backed up by securities issued by the government as well as by contributions from the settlers themselves when they become independent.

It might not be a bad idea if the financing and purchasing of land were to be arranged by agricultural banks working in collaboration with co-operatives under the direct supervision and direction of the government Commission for Colonization. However, it is still too early to make any definitive pronouncement on this matter because the conditions under which Turkey will accept the population displaced from our territories are not yet known.

Taken altogether, the sum of a few hundred million dinars is no great expense for the government when compared to the real benefits gained from such an action. By securing the most sensitive regions in the south of our country for our own people, we could save the lives of several divisions in case of war. Giving land to several tens of thousands of families from economically weaker regions, Montenegro in particular, would, on the one hand, help ease the appalling economic suffering of such regions and, on the other hand, create many new jobs during the process of colonization. It would be possible to find employment for 10,000 workers, thus giving a boost to our sluggish economy.

In view of the supreme national, military, strategic and economic significance of this action, it is clearly the duty of the government to sacrifice a few hundred million dinars. At a time when the government can spend one billion dinars on the construction of an international highway from Subotica to Čaribrod, the possible benefits of which we shall only enjoy at some time in the distant future, it can and must be in a position to come up with a few hundred million dinars to give us back possession of the cradle of our nation.

## Conclusions

In view of all that has been said, it is no coincidence that in our examination of colonization in the south, we hold the view that the only effective means of solving this problem is the mass expulsion of the Albanians. Gradual colonization has had no success in our country, nor in other countries for that matter. If the state wishes to intervene in favour of its own people in the struggle for land, it can only be successful by acting brutally. Otherwise, the native, who has his roots in his place of birth and is at home there, will always be stronger than the colonist. In our case, we must keep this fact very much in mind, because we have to do with a hardy, resistant and prolific race which the late Cvijić described as being

the most expansive in the Balkans. From 1870 to 1914, Germany spent billions of marks on the gradual colonization of its eastern territories by purchasing land from the Poles, but the fecundity of Polish women defeated German organization and money. Thus, Poland regained its Poznań in 1918. Our above-mentioned statistics of the 1921-1931 period show that it was the fecundity of Albanian women which defeated our colonization policy, too. We must draw our conclusions from this, and we must do so quickly while there is still time to correct matters.

All of Europe is in a state of turmoil. We do not know what each new day and night will bring. Albanian nationalism is on the rise in our territories, too. Should a global conflict or social revolution occur, both of which are possible in the near future, leaving the situation as it is would jeopardize all our territories in the south. The purpose of this paper is to avert such an occurrence.

Dr Vaso Čubrilović  
(signed)

[Taken from *I seljavanje Arnauta*. Retranslated from the Serbo-Croatian by Robert Elsie, on the basis of an existing English version]

# Draft on Albania

(1939)

Ivo Andrić

## I. The Balkan war and Albania

### Access to the Adriatic for the Serbian army

According to a secret appendix to the treaty of alliance between Bulgaria and Serbia, dated 29 February 1912, Serbia was granted a right to the territories to the north and west of the Shar mountains previously held by Turkey. In connection with this provision, Serbian troops, in order to provide their country with an access to the sea, advanced on Lezha on 15 November 1912 and gradually took possession of the whole of northern Albania right down to Tirana and Durrës. On 25 November 1912, Pašić published a statement in the London Times indicating that Serbia claimed Durrës with a considerable hinterland.

### The establishment of an autonomous Albania

On 20 December 1912, however, the Conference of Ambassadors in London resolved to set up an autonomous Albania, giving Serbia only the right to a trading outlet on the Adriatic Sea. On 20 March 1913, the same conference resolved to cede Shkodër to Albania. Montenegro refused to accept the decision of the Great Powers and was supported in this regard by Serbia, which sent troops to reinforce the siege of Shkodër. The Great Powers countered (on 21 March) with a naval demonstration, only Russia abstaining. Austro-Hungarian, English, French, German and Italian destroyers gathered in the vicinity of Bari and forced Serbian troops to retreat from their positions in the Shkodër region.

### The blockade of the Montenegrin coast

On 12 April, the Great Powers announced a blockade of the Montenegrin coastline. The Montenegrin government, however, persisted in its siege of Shkodër, which finally capitulated on 20 April. King Nikolla of Montenegro was, nonetheless, forced to yield, and on 4 May, in a telegramme sent to Sir Edward Grey, he ceded Shkodër to the Great Powers. The international occupation of Shkodër was to last from 5 May 1913 to the beginning of the World War.

## II. Serbia and Greece divide their spheres of influence in Albania

Though under pressure from the Great Powers, primarily from Austria, Serbia did not give up hope, despite the fact that it had been forced to retreat from the Adriatic and northern Albania.

The spheres of influence of Greece and Serbia in the newly established autonomous Albania were laid down in a declaration which formed a secret appendix to the treaty of alliance, dated 19 May 1913, between Greece and Serbia. The territory north of the Seman river from the sea up to the mouth of the Devoll river, and north of the Devoll river up to Mount Komjan was to be within the Serbian sphere of influence. The regions of Albania south of this line were to belong to the Greek sphere of influence. In case of riots in Albania, the two countries were to reach an agreement on the position they would adopt. These are the maximum demands which we presented to Albania in a written document.

## III. The London Agreement and Albania

The London Agreement, signed on 26 April 1915 between France, Great Britain, Russia and Italy, contained the following provisions with regard to Albania:

1. The note to Article 5 states: "The following Adriatic territory shall be assigned by the four Allied Powers to Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro:... And, in the Lower Adriatic (in the region interesting Serbia and Montenegro) the whole coast from Cape Planka as far as the River Drin, with the important harbours of Spalato, Ragusa, Cattaro, Antivari, Dulcigno and St. Jean de Medua... The port of Durazzo to be assigned to the independent Moslem State of Albania."
2. Article 6 reads as follows: "Italy shall receive full sovereignty over Valona, the island of Saseno and surrounding territory of sufficient extent to assure defence of these points (from the Voïussa to the north and east, approximately to the northern boundary of the district of Chimara on the south)."
3. Article 7 reads as follows:... "and if the central portion of Albania is reserved for the establishment of a small autonomous neutralised State, Italy shall not oppose the division of Northern and Southern Albania between Montenegro, Serbia and Greece, should France, Great Britain and Russia so desire... Italy shall be charged with the representation of the State of Albania in its relations with foreign Powers."

As early as 1915, therefore, the Great Powers had adopted the principle of a partition of Albania and conceded that Italy, Serbia and Greece had vested interests in Albania. The two Balkan countries were granted the right to revise borders, whereas Italy was granted Vlora as well as a protectorate over rump Albania.

## IV. Albania at the peace conference

### The standpoint of the Great Powers

At the peace conference, allied forces (France, Great Britain and the United States of America) initially proposed for Albania the southern and eastern borders which had been established at the London

Conference of 1913. The allied forces recognized Italy's full sovereignty over Vlorë and the requisite hinterland, giving Italy, in addition, a mandate to administer the independent state of Albania under the control of the League of Nations (Memorandum of 9 December 1919).

## Our standpoint

(Against the mandate of Italy. In favour of an independent Albania. Arguments for the revision of borders and for our acquisition of Shkodër and northern Albania).

In our reply of 8 January 1920, we rejected the proposal for giving Italy a mandate over Albania, pointing out that this would be a repeat of the Bosnia-Herzegovina issue. "This resolution," we said in our reply, "would create an offensive border in Italy's favour against our country which, for its part, would be deprived of protection. This would mean an offensive advantage to one side and a strategic disadvantage to the other."

For economic and strategic reasons, we asked for a revision of the border in our favour (the middle of the Drin and Buna rivers, as well as Kelmendi and Kastrati), as foreseen at the London Conference of 1913. In addition to this revision, our delegation declared that the best solution for Albania would be the establishment of an independent state within the borders of 1913 and of an autonomous administration.

If this solution were not to be adopted, or if the southern part of Albania were to belong to other countries, our delegation would have asked for the northern part of Albania down to the Drin river. "Our country has ancient claims on these areas, as our memorandum states. Shkodër is the one-time capital of Serbian rulers. Our nation has shed much blood for Shkodër, in particular during the 1913 war which cost Serbia the lives of several thousand soldiers and cost Montenegro one-third of its army. In order to comply with the wish of the Great Powers, Serbian and Montenegrin troops withdrew from Shkodër and the northern part of Albania in 1913. Austria had mobilized its forces and threatened war. Shkodër could have belonged to Montenegro, had Montenegro agreed to cede Lovcen to Austria or have it neutralized. But, Montenegro refused to cede this position of strategic importance to Austria."

"The Drin valley, together with Shkodër, forms a geographical and economic entity with Montenegro and borderland areas of Serbia. For central Serbia and for Montenegro, the Drin valley is the only direct and indeed the shortest natural outlet to the Adriatic. The vital Danube-Adriatic railway should pass through the Drin valley. The Conference of Ambassadors, held in London in 1913, recognized Serbia's right of access to the sea."

"Shkodër is also intimately linked to the Buna river which provides Montenegrin trade with a natural outlet to the sea. From as early as the Treaty of Berlin, Montenegro has enjoyed the right of free navigation down the Buna river. Most of Lake Shkodër belongs to Montenegro. Due to Turkish negligence, the best Montenegrin lands are still flooded by the waters of Lake Shkodër. Our country is, therefore, most interested in regulating the Buna and Drin rivers, not only for navigation down the Buna, but also because 12,000 to 20,000 hectares of very fertile land could thereby be drained and an equal area could be ameliorated. Two-thirds of this land belongs to Montenegro."

## The Italian standpoint

(According to the memorandum of 10 January 1920)

1. Italy requests of the League of Nations a mandate to administer the independent state of Albania.
2. The northern and eastern borders of Albania will be those drawn at the Conference of London. The southern border will be a matter of further examination.

3. Italy will be granted sovereignty over the city of Vlora, with enough hinterland for its protection and economic development.

## The Allies agree that Shkodër and northern Albania be annexed by Yugoslavia

Proposing a comprehensive solution to the Adriatic question, Clemenceau, who was chairing the Peace Conference, said to Pašić and Trumbić on 13 January 1920, with regard to the cession of Rijeka to Italy: "The SHS state (i. e. the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) will thus ascend to the zenith of its power, even without the acquisition of Shkodër, the Drin and San Giovanni di Medua (Shëngjin)."

We did not agree to this, in view of the fact that Italy retained Vlora and got its mandate over Albania.

## Our final reply at the Peace Conference

In our final reply at the Peace Conference, on 14 January 1920, we stated that we still held the view that the best solution would be that the administration of Albania, within the borders drawn in 1913, be conferred to a local, autonomous government with no authority being held over it by any foreign power. If this solution, however, was not accepted and parts of Albanian territory were to be ceded to other countries, our delegation would then lay claim to part of northern Albania (a map with delineated borders was submitted), for which it promised an autonomous regime.

## The standpoint of the late Pašić

When it seemed certain that the Allies would allow Italy to consolidate its hold over central Albania, the chairman of our delegation, Pašić, informed the government in Belgrade at the end of 1919 that the moment had come for us, "compelled by circumstance, to change our policy towards Albania." This letter reads as follows:

"Given that, because of Italian encroachment and of the support which Italy receives from the Powers, we cannot return to the situation which existed in Albania prior to the evacuation of our army and prior to the regime of Esad Pasha, and given that the Albania we favour will not come to be because the Allies have agreed to cede Vlora and its hinterland to Italy and to give Italy a protectorate over certain parts of Albania, we must, under such circumstances, stake our claims to different and better borders with the part of Albanian territory to come under the Italian protectorate."

"The 'minimum' we will accept from the Allies is: the border along the Black Drin river down to the confluence of the White Drin river and from there along the Great Drin river down to the sea."

"We should also claim a 'maximum', so that Italy receives as little territory as possible. The maximum of our claims should be: the Mat river to its source, and hence directly eastwards to the Black Drin river. The Mat and Drin rivers would thus constitute our borders with the Italian protectorate."

## V. The Italian occupation of Albania in the aftermath of war and its definitive withdrawal after failure in Vlora

Once the war was over, Italian troops, on the basis of an Allied military resolution, occupied the entire territory of Albania including the northern part which had been accorded to us under the London Agreement. Shkodër alone was under the joint occupation of French and Italian troops.

In view of the hostile attitude taken by Italy towards the SHS state (the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) at the time, we considered Italy's military occupation of Albania a grave threat to our existence. A bitter struggle was waged between the Italians and us on Albanian territory. The Italians hence raised the issues of Montenegro and Macedonia, as well as the idea of a Greater Albania extending right to Kaçaniku / Kačaniku. We took action against them, at times secretly and at times overtly, by bribing Albanian leaders and by countering with the idea of an 'independent Albania' and of the 'Balkans for the Balkan peoples'.

The dissatisfaction of the Albanian population, which we supported, compelled the Italians to pull their troops out of inland Albania at the beginning of 1920 and to concentrate them in the vicinity of Valona (Vlora), from which region they were forced to withdraw in June of that year after an accord had been reached with the Tirana government for the evacuation of all Albanian territory, including the island of Sazan.

The evacuation of Albania was accomplished as a result of organized resistance on the part of the Albanians, though one should not forget the fact that Italy was politically and militarily very weak at the time. Even at the present day, there are Albanians who think they could drive the Italians out of Albania whenever they liked. This self-confidence will prove fatal to them because they do not realize that the fascist regime in Italy is not the same as the Italy of 1920 under the parliamentary governments of Nitti, Giolitti and Facto.

## VI. Albania before the Conference of Ambassadors

As the evacuation of Italian troops from Albania clarified the situation on the ground, the Conference of Ambassadors was in a position by November 1921 to take a decision on the recognition of Albania as an independent and sovereign state. In contrast to earlier promises, i. e. for Vlora and for a mandate over Albania, the Great Powers recognized only Italy's special interest in the maintenance of Albanian independence. Albania became a member of the League of Nations, hoping that this would help ensure and sustain its independence.

Before the Conference of Ambassadors met, we endeavoured once again, though in vain, to have the borders revised and moved down towards Shkodër and the Drin river, citing historical reasons for Shkodër and economic and communications reasons for the Drin. The French expert at the Conference, Laroche, consoled us with these words: "The royal government made a mistake by not adopting the French proposal at the time for the partition of Albania. Pašić had agreed to the idea, but the government in Belgrade rejected it." In order to get the Italians out of Vlora, we had to abandon Shkodër and the border extending down to the Drin river.

Since we had permanently endorsed the indivisibility of Albanian territory, as set forth in 1913, and Albanian independence, it could be assumed that the solution proposed by the Conference of Ambassadors was satisfactory to us. This has not been the case, however. We have been running into difficulties in our relations with Albania and in our relations with Italy over Albania, even though Albania has been proclaimed an independent country and has been granted membership in the League of Nations.

### The Republic of Mirdita

Since the Conference of Ambassadors had taken a decision on the borders of Albania and on the conditions for its independence, we signed a co-operation agreement with the leaders of Mirdita in the middle of 1921. This agreement envisaged the setting up of an independent Mirdita republic which would be protected by the armed forces of the SHS state (the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) and whose interests abroad would be represented by the Belgrade government. The Tirana government suppressed this movement and we were subsequently accused and condemned before the League of Nations.



## VII. The Rome pact, Pašić, Mussolini and Albania

In spirit, the Rome pact of January 1924 stipulated that both Rome and Belgrade respect the independence of Albania and the principle of non-interference in the country's internal affairs, and that they exchange information about developments in Albania. This did not, however, hinder the Italian government from backing Fan Noli in June 1924 in his rebellion against Ahmet Zogu, nor did it hinder our government from making it possible for Ahmet Zogu to launch an attack on Albania in December of the same year from our territory, and to seize power. Neither Rome nor Belgrade could resist intrigues and appeals from their Albanian 'friends' who requested support to exercise or assume power, promising loyalty and co-operation in return, and who then changed their minds at the first opportunity.

## VIII. The Tirana pact and its implications

Giving instructions to our representatives in Albania, the late Pašić used to say to them: "We want an independent, but a weak and unstable Albania." Time has shown that such a wish was impossible. A weak and unstable Albania had to ask for support and protection wherever it could find it. A regime which was threatened by Italy would turn to us, whereas a regime which we wanted to overthrow would turn to Italy for protection.

In 1926, a weak and unstable Albania requested the protection and support of Italy. Having received initial guarantees for his regime, Ahmet Zogu later, in 1927, consented to the conclusion of a twenty-year military alliance and received hundreds of millions of lire for public works. Both economically and financially, he thoroughly subordinated Albania to Italy and took on many Italian advisors. A situation was thus created which much resembled the kind of protectorate we had opposed at the Peace Conference.

The greatest threat to us from Albania in recent years has been the military buildup, as well as fortifications and irredentist activities. We saw a threat in all Italian activities and in the 'offensive border' which we had opposed in Paris when the Allies proposed that Italy be granted a mandate over Albania.

It is of interest to note here that we protested and opposed the Italian penetration of Albania and the Balkans, but none of the other Balkan countries supported us on this issue. The two Mediterranean naval powers, France and England, did not oppose the blockade of the Adriatic Sea. Indeed, Sir Austen Chamberlain consented to the Tirana pact at his meeting with Mussolini in Leghorn (Livorno) in 1926. French representatives in Tirana constantly advised King Zogu to avoid conflict with the Italians.

## IX. The Italian-Yugoslav friendship pact of 25 March 1937

As long as they maintain friendly relations towards one another, Italy and Yugoslavia can agree on Albania, based on the following: Italy has a vested interest in Vlora and we should not threaten this part of the Albanian coast. We should acknowledge and respect Italy's interest. It is in Yugoslavia's vital interest that we not be threatened on our own borders in southern Serbia, both in Kosovo (inhabited by Albanians) and in the Shkodër / Montenegro region. This was no doubt taken into consideration in the secret protocol supplementing the friendship pact, which also envisaged a stop to further fortifications in the Librazhd and Milot regions. As far as financial and economic interests in Albania are concerned, we do not have, nor do we intend to invest any considerable funds there. Our side thus offers no competition or objections to the Italians, provided of course that they comply with the second secret obligation towards us which they undertook two years ago, i. e. that they seek no special privileges in their political, economic and financial activities which would directly or indirectly compromise the independence of the Albanian state.

The friendship pact of 25 March 1937 has thus created a tolerable 'modus vivendi' for us and for Italy on Albanian soil, where in the past we have so often been involved in conflicts and mutual suspicions.

A quite different question is whether this truce in Albania will pass the test of time in view of the much more tense and complex situation in the Mediterranean and in the Balkans.

## X. Maintaining or changing the status quo

### The independence of Albania has been weakened but not destroyed

The independence of a country is a concept which constantly changes in meaning for its neighbours. This independence can be either complete or reduced, depending on circumstances. As to present-day Albania, one cannot say that its domestic and foreign policies are independent of Italy. Yet, Albania is considered an independent state by the international community. According to international law, the Albanian coastline is not Italian, but rather under the sovereignty of that Balkan country. Italy has not yet encroached upon the Balkans. Italy possesses sovereign territory in Zadar, but this does not offer any possibility for further expansion. Italy also exerts influence in Albania, but it has no freedom of action there compared to that in its own country. The Albanians are still showing opposition to Italian penetration by putting obstacles in its way and slowing it down.

### 'The Balkans for the Balkan peoples'

The traditional policy of Serbia has been 'The Balkans for the Balkan peoples'. This principle was applied earlier in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire and against the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Yugoslavia made efficient use of it in its struggle against the provisions of the London Agreement which allowed Italy to advance into Dalmatia and Albania. This principle, in our view, has always constituted the best guarantee for peace in the Balkans, for co-operation between the Balkan nations and for their unimpeded development. The presence of any of the Great Powers in the Balkans means opening the floodgates to intrigue and invasion.

### Italian expansion

Is it conceivable that Italy, having made itself lord of southern and central Albania, will confine itself to that narrow strip of coastline? We did not believe this would be the case twenty years ago when the Great Powers offered Vlora and its hinterland to Italy. It is even harder to believe it now that Italy is showing much more swagger and bravado in its foreign policy.

### A dangerous precedent

When a non-Balkan Great Power seizes a part of Balkan territory on which it has no ethnic claims whatsoever, this constitutes a dangerous precedent for us and for all the peoples of the Balkans. Other Great Powers could come up with similar claims from other directions. The case of Italy in Albania is a particular threat to us because the London Agreement first recognized not only Italy's claims to southern Albania, but also to Dalmatia. The revival of the provisions of the London Agreement in one part of the Balkans creates a dangerous precedent for the revival of other provisions, too.

## The partition of Albania

In dealing with this issue in a comprehensive manner, it should be stressed that we must avoid an open or covert conflict with Italy at all costs. We must also avoid allowing Italy to occupy all of Albania, which would pose a threat to us in sensitive areas such as the Bay of Kotor and Kosovo.

Taking the above into consideration, we regard the partition of Albania as a necessary and inevitable evil and as a great disadvantage to us, but one from which we must nonetheless endeavour to derive as much benefit as possible, i. e. we must take advantage of the lesser of two evils.

## Our compensations

These compensations are registered in documents which were prepared twenty years ago when the question of a partition of Albania was being discussed.

The maximum we set and asked for at that time was the border along the Mat and Black Drin rivers to ensure the strategic security of Montenegro and Kosovo. We would also have to ensure the basins of Lakes Ohrid and Prespa by annexing Pogradec as well as the Slav villages of Mali i Thatë / Golo Brdo and those between Prespa and Korça.

Taking possession of Shkodër could, in this case, be of great moral and economic significance. It would enable us to carry out major waterworks activities and to recuperate fertile land needed to feed Montenegro. The presence of northern Albania within the framework of Yugoslavia would facilitate the existence of new communications links between northern and southern Serbia and the Adriatic.

After the partition of Albania, Kosovo would lose its attraction as a centre for the Albanian minority which, under the new situation, could be more easily assimilated. We would eventually gain 200,000 to 300,000 Albanians, but these are mostly Catholics whose relations with the Moslem Albanians have never been good. The deportation of Moslem Albanians to Turkey could then be carried out since, under the new circumstances, there would be no major impediment to such a move.

[Taken from *Elaborat dra Ive Andrića o Albaniji iz 1939. godine*. ed. Bogdan Krizman. in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Zagreb, 9 (1977), 2, p. 77-89. Retranslated from the Serbo-Croatian by Robert Elsie, on the basis of an existing English version]

# The minority problem in the new Yugoslavia

Memorandum of 3 November 1944

Vaso Čubrilović

## Reasons why the minority problem in Yugoslavia must be solved

Quite aside from the disloyalty of the minorities, there are other important interests of state which compel us to take advantage of the current war to solve the problem of minorities by expelling them. Our minorities, as we have previously stressed, do not constitute a danger to us because of their numbers but rather because of their geopolitical position and the ties which they maintain with the neighbouring peoples to whom they are related. It is because of such ties that the neighbouring peoples have been able to use them to wage war against us. At present, the minorities are nothing more than stumbling-blocks in our relations with these neighbouring states. The democratic federation of Yugoslavia will only achieve peace and ensure its development if it can be made ethnically pure and if, by solving its minority problems, it can remove the causes of friction with neighbouring states once and for all.

Taking a look at the relevant charts and maps, it can be seen that our minorities occupy very important positions in our country, both from an economic and from a strategical point of view. The Vojvodina on the banks of the Danube, for instance, is Central Europe's gateway to the Balkans. In geopolitical terms, it is the strategic key to the peninsula. Without it, the nations of Yugoslavia, i. e. Serbia and Croatia, would lose their control over the Drava, Sava, Danube and Morava rivers and would once again become the backwater of a new Austria or of a new Turkey. The Vojvodina is the breadbasket of all of Yugoslavia and, even if not a single Serb or Croat lived there, we would still have to fight to keep it in order to feed millions of our citizens in the poorer regions to the south of the Sava and Danube. Devising a plan for the economic future of Yugoslavia would be senseless without the Vojvodina and its grain reserves. The regions to the south of the Sava and Danube with their mineral resources, forest reserves and hydroelectric potential provide all the prerequisites for modern industry, but this industry can only be set up if the plains of the Vojvodina provide the working masses in these new industries with food. We Serbs and Croats, however, make up only a relative majority of the population in the Vojvodina. It could happen, as a result of the war, that the Hungarians take over Bačka and the Germans, with their people in the Banat, set up a miniature Reich there.

The situation is similar in the area around the Shar mountains, inhabited now by an overwhelming majority of Albanians. This region is the watershed of major Balkan rivers which flow into three seas. Because of this, Kosovo and Metohija have always been considered a strategic area in the Balkans. By occupying the central part of the Balkans, Kosovo and Metohija separate Serbia from Montenegro and these two, in turn, from Macedonia. The countries of the Yugoslav federation will never be strongly

attached to one another so long as they have no direct ethnic border with one another. This matter is of particular concern for Macedonia. The upper reaches of the Vardar river are held by the Albanians whereas the lower reaches of the river are in the hands of the Greeks. We southern Slavs hold only the middle portion. Our position is too weak not to be challenged, as Italy did when it ceded to Albania not only Kosovo and Metohija but also Dibër / Debar, Kërçova / Kičevo, Gostivar and Tetova / Tetovo. We must have no illusions about what the future of Europe may bring. This horrendous war will certainly not be the last. We will find ourselves at the crossroads again and will once more be exposed to attack in some new war. It is therefore the duty of those who hold the destiny of this country in their hands to be prepared for all eventualities and to ensure that events we have lived through in this war never occur again. The statesmen of the old Yugoslavia never considered this in 1918 when they agreed to incorporate the national minorities within the borders of the newly-created state. For political reasons, they even gave their support to the minorities, and we are the ones who have had to pay the price, sacrificing tens of thousands of lives. Such a calamity must never be repeated. The fertile valleys of Polog, Kosovo and Metohija are important in economic terms. Surrounding them are our wretched lands: Montenegro, the Sandjak of Novi Pazar, the areas to the north of the Shar mountains and the destitute Macedonian settlements to the south of the Shar. These people rightfully demand that the lands from which they have been driven by the Albanians over the last 150 years be returned to them.

I have given deliberate priority to the Vojvodina and to Old Serbia (Kosovo), considering that these two regions represent the crux of our minority problem. In endeavouring to solve this problem, we must not, however, be guided by a desire to avenge the violence perpetrated against our peoples. Our policy on this issue must be guided simply by reasons of state. There are minorities scattered in other regions of the country, too. In view of the atrocious crimes committed by the German Reich on Slavic lands with the help of local ethnic Germans, we have every right to demand that these regions be cleansed of this group. The new political border between our country and Austria must also constitute the ethnic border between Slavs and Germans. The problem of these tens of thousands of Germans does remain, but it can be dealt with by the Slavs themselves without major complications. The German and Hungarian minorities in Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia and Hercegovina are but scattered islands in an ethnic sea of southern Slavic peoples and can either be expelled or assimilated without great resistance. The biggest problem we are facing is how to break up the blocks of minorities inhabiting strategic geopolitical positions. The federal government must bring all the power of the state to bear in solving this problem.

After examining why the cleansing of minorities is necessary, let us now see what options are available for carrying out the task. In actual fact, conditions for implementation are quite favourable. In 1918, Europe held the view that the minority problem could be solved by giving privileges to such groups. The experience of this war has proven to all of Europe that this approach was wrong. The unscrupulous exploitation of German minorities by the Third Reich has made it obvious that the only just solution to the problem is the deportation of the minorities. The Third Reich itself has carried out a brutal policy of colonization, transferring millions of people from one corner of Europe to the other. At the same time, it had plans for the expulsion of entire nations, endeavouring to maintain its rule in eastern and southeastern Europe by means of an elaborate settlement policy. Had it won the war, we southern Slavs, the Serbs in particular, would have been wiped off the face of the earth. Germany's allies, Italy and Hungary, took the same approach to solving the minority problem. It is therefore understandable that our Allies have taken the stand during this war that the minority problem ought be solved through evacuation and resettlement. The fraternal Soviet Union took advantage of this method even before the war. It long ago resettled the Karelians from the Finnish border. Koreans and Chinese were transferred from coastal regions in the Far East to as far as Turkistan. When the Soviet Union occupied Bessarabia in 1940, it expelled 150,000 Bessarabian Germans from the region. An entire camp of barracks was constructed that year by the Germans on the plain of Zemun, at the point where the Sava flows into the Danube. We, the inhabitants of Belgrade, had an opportunity to watch the Germans at the time being transported to the camp, before they were transferred back to the Reich. Even at the present time, the Soviet Union has resumed the population transfers it initiated before the war, resettling Poles from the Ukraine and Byelorussia to the other side of the Polish-Soviet border, and at the same time, bringing Ukrainians and

Byelorussians back to the Soviet Union. With these examples in mind, we, too, have a right to demand of our Allies that our problem with minorities be solved in the same manner, i. e. by expulsion.

We should have more right than any other country in Europe to demand of our Allies that they approve the evacuation of our minorities. No country on this continent has suffered so much as we have at the hands of nations ethnically related to our minorities. Over one million people, including women and children, have perished here in this appalling war, three times as many as were slain on the front with rifle in hand. Much responsibility for these killings can be laid at the door of the minorities in our country. This we have told to our Allies and have proven it to them. I am deeply convinced that they will appreciate the problem and support our intentions. I have faith in the fraternal Soviet Union, in particular. We were the only nation overrun by the Germans to rise in arms from behind the lines in the summer of 1941 when Hitler was leading his Nazi hordes onwards to Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad. For three years, we fought against all odds in our national liberation movements. We have a right to hope, therefore, that the fraternal Soviet Union will help us solve our minority problem here, as they have solved theirs there.

It is easiest to resolve the minority question through expulsions in times of war such as this. The countries concerned have been our adversaries in the present war. They attacked us, we did not attack them. They laid waste to our land and selfishly exploited their minorities here to wage war against us. We have no territorial claims against them, with the exception of our claims against Italy to Istria, Gorica (Gorizia) and Gradiska (Gradisca). Therefore, with all the more right as victors, we are justified in asking them to take their minorities back.

With its mass displacement of persons, this war has created a climate for resettlement. Our minorities are aware of their deeds and will therefore not put up much resistance when expelled. All in all, considering the above-mentioned factors, there has never been a more favourable moment than the present for the solution of the minority question. A just resolution of the problem, however, depends on the attitude, level of awareness and energy of the people to decide on the fate of the ethnic groups in this country. I am deeply convinced that the people appreciate the importance of the issue and will know how to proceed. It is for this reason that I am writing these lines.

## How to solve the minority problem in the new Yugoslavia

If we take the stand, as we do, that the only just solution to the minority problem is expulsion, we are faced with a number of issues which have to be dealt with. Should all minorities be expelled or only certain ethnic groups? From which regions should ethnic minorities be expelled first? And what is more important, how are we to resettle the deserted towns and villages? I have a few suggestions to make in this connection.

As to priorities for expulsion, I hold the opinion that we should consider the following order: the Germans, the Hungarians, the Albanians, the Italians and the Romanians. We have already referred to the actions of the Germans, Hungarians and Albanians during the war here. In principle, they all deserve to lose their right of citizenship in this country. In view of the atrocities committed by the Germans, both in our country and throughout Europe, they have lost all rights and must be persecuted ruthlessly. The Hungarians here and in Hungary still deserve some consideration, despite the Bačka massacre and their service under the Germans as militiamen in Russia. Not all the measures to be carried out against the Germans should be applied to them. The same goes for the Albanians in Old Serbia (Kosovo) and Macedonia. Nonetheless, if we wish to solve the minority problem, we will have to take over Bačka, Kosovo and Metohija in ethnic terms and drive out hundreds of thousands of Hungarians and Albanians. The fascist regime in Italy treated our people in Istria, Gorica (Gorizia) and Gradiska (Gradisca) dreadfully. When we regain these territories, we will have to reoccupy them ethnically by moving out all the Italians who settled there after 1 December 1918. Only with the Romanians will matters be easier. Several hundred thousand Romanians live on our side of the Banat, while a smaller number of our people

live on the Romanian side. We should have no difficulty in bringing about an exchange of population on the basis of a political agreement with the government in Bucharest.

The second important question to be answered is which regions should be cleansed of minorities first. I have already stressed that our main consideration is not how many people we expel, but which regions to expel them from. Minorities scattered about as individual families and small communities pose no danger to us. The greatest threat is from large blocks of minorities in border regions of strategic and economic importance. These ethnic groups pose a particular danger if living on the border across from a country of the same nationality. Accordingly, it is essential for us to cleanse the Germans and Hungarians from the Vojvodina and the Albanians from Old Serbia (Kosovo) and Macedonia. Germans should also be expelled from Kočevje, Maribor and other border regions in Slovenia. We shall return to this problem later.

Let us begin with the Vojvodina. If we take a look at the ethnic map of this country of ours, we see a colourful mosaic, much like a beautiful carpet from Pirot. The careful observer will soon be able to distinguish certain ethnic blocks that make up the major patches on the carpet. He will notice, for instance, the mass of Hungarian settlements situated in northeastern and central Bačka. Here is the main block of ethnic Hungarians in our country, from Horgoš in the north, through to Senta, Bačka Topola, Kula and Odžaci. Of the approximately half a million Hungarians living in Yugoslavia in 1941, almost 300,000 lived in Bačka. The remaining 200,000 are scattered about in the Banat, in Syrmia (Srem), Croatia and Slavonia where significant groups are to be found. Driving 200,000 Hungarians out of Bačka would bring about a solution to the Hungarian problem in our country.

The German problem is not so simple. Germans are spread around the entire country, though most of them live on the fertile plains of Bačka, in the Banat and in Syrmia (Srem). They are present not only in central and northeastern Bačka, but also in the southwest, in the regions of Apatin, Novi Vrbas, Odžaci, Stara Palanka, and, to a considerable extent, in Novi Sad and Sombor. If we want to create an absolute majority for our people in Bačka, we must clean out the Germans. Bačka is also the key to our hold over the Vojvodina. The half a million or so Hungarians and Germans there compare to a little over 300,000 Slavs (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes taken together). Therefore, particular attention must be focussed on this region in solving the minority problem.

The situation in the Banat is much better. This region was not depopulated in the war to the extent Bačka was. Here we have an absolute majority and the only minority of any great significance are the Germans. They are settled in the following areas: Pančevo, Bela Crkva, Vršac and Beckerek, and should be expelled from this region. In Syrmia (Srem), the Germans are settled in: Zemun, Stara Pazova, Ruma and Šid. Here they possess the best land and must be evacuated, too. In Slovenia, the areas around Kočevje and Maribor must be freed of Germans. If possible, we should destroy and eradicate German and Hungarian settlements in the rest of the provinces, too, in order to ensure their complete disappearance from the region. If we were successful in expelling five to six hundred thousand Germans and Hungarians from Bačka, the Banat and Syrmia and in settling our people there instead, the Vojvodina would be ours forever.

We must be more straightforward and practical in dealing with the Albanians in Old Serbia (Kosovo) and Macedonia in order to conquer Kosovo and Metohija ethnically and, at the same time, avoid a conflict with the neighbouring people in Albania. We must also take great care in considering the areas from which Albanians should be expelled and resettled so as not to affect a single Albanian village, indeed a single Albanian home more than necessary. If we are to reach our goal of linking Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia, we must bring about a complete change in the ethnic structure of Kosovo and Metohija. Most important of all, we must cleanse Metohija. As the border region to neighbouring Montenegro, it will be most suitable for Montenegrin colonization. After all, the Metohija and Drenica Albanians are at present the most loyal servants of the Germans, as they were a few years ago of the Italians. Dreadful atrocities were committed by the Albanians in the Macedonian villages of the upper Vardar valley. The Macedonians, therefore, rightfully demand their expulsion. A detailed plan must be elaborated to specify with accuracy which villages and areas of Old Serbia (Kosovo) and Macedonia are to be cleansed, and the plan must be implemented accordingly.

In principle, we would have nothing against the evacuation of all minorities from our country. This is something we can still consider. The above-mentioned points in the Vojvodina, Slovenia, Old Serbia (Kosovo) and Macedonia constitute simply a minimum if we want to ensure future possession of these regions.

If we agree in principle that the minority problem can only be solved through expulsion, and that expulsions should be carried out as proposed above, we are then faced with the problem of how this is to be accomplished.

The first thing I would like to mention in this connection is that wars are most suitable for solving such problems. Like storms, they blow through countries, uprooting and blotting out peoples. What takes decades and centuries to accomplish in peaceful times, can be accomplished within a matter of months and years in a war. Let us not delude ourselves. If we wish to solve this problem, we will only be able to do so during the war. The leaders of old Yugoslavia thought after 1918 that they could break down the major ethnic blocks in the country by colonization. We have wasted billions of dinars on settling volunteers and other colonists throughout the Vojvodina, Kosovo and Metohija. In the Vojvodina over a twenty year period, we managed to change the ethnic balance in our favour by a few percentage points, but the German and Hungarian minorities still remain in Bačka. From 1918 to 1938, the Albanians increased their numbers in Kosovo and Metohija more by natural growth than we were able to do by bringing in settlers. Driving our colonists out of Bačka, Kosovo and Metohija, the Hungarians and Albanians were thus able to cancel out the few results we obtained. In order to prevent this from happening again, the army must be brought in, even during the war, to cleanse the regions we wish to settle with our own people, doing so in a well-planned but ruthless manner. I do not yet wish to discuss details as to how this should be accomplished but, should this project be approved in principle, I would be more than willing to make my knowledge and experience available to the Supreme Command, to the National Liberation Army and to the partisan units in order to work out a more detailed plan. For the moment, I wish only to stress that the Germans and Hungarians must be expelled unconditionally from their lands in the Vojvodina, and the Albanians must be driven out of Metohija, Kosovo and Polog.

Aside from ethnic cleansing during military operations, other methods must be applied to force the national minorities out. In view of their behaviour during the war, they must be stripped of all minority rights. All members of national minorities who were in any way of service to the occupants should be brought before military tribunals and shown no mercy. Concentration camps should be set up for them, their property confiscated, their families placed likewise in concentrations camps and, at the first opportunity, they should be expelled to their national states. The fraternal Soviet Army could be of enormous assistance in this question in dealing with the Hungarians and Germans. In expelling minorities, particular attention should be devoted to the intelligentsia and to the wealthiest strata of society. These are the people who behaved the worst towards us, serving the occupants loyally, and these are the elements who will be the most dangerous if they are allowed to remain in their native regions. The poor workers and peasants were not particularly sympathetic to German and Hungarian fascism and should not be persecuted. The same applies to Albanian beys and the Albanian bourgeoisie. Those same people who served the regimes loyally in old Yugoslavia and made money by doing the dirty work are the ones who committed the most murders after 1941.

If the expulsion of minorities is agreed upon, there are other questions which will have to be dealt with, but we will come to them later.

## Colonizing abandoned lands

Resettling abandoned towns and villages with our people is of paramount importance for the following reason. Interests of state require that lands abandoned by minorities be settled as quickly as possible so that the minorities and all of Europe can be confronted with a *fait accompli*. Economic interests dictate that this population transfer be accomplished with the least possible damage to the



economic life of the country. Abandoned land must therefore not be left uncultivated, factories must go on working and the workshops of craftsmen must not be closed down. This is not as easy to accomplish as one might think. No matter how much thought and preparation go into the organization and implementation of expelling minorities, we cannot avoid temporary setbacks in the economy. We must not let this discourage us from our main objective and must ensure that such setbacks are kept to an absolute minimum. The matter is all the more pressing because the national minorities are presently settled on the most fertile land in the Vojvodina, Slavonia, Old Serbia (Kosovo) and Macedonia. The Germans are in control of crops used for manufacturing. If we want to hold on to our sugar and linen industries, we will have to find quick replacements for the expelled German farmers. The same goes for craftsmen and manufacturers. Over 80% of all craftsmen in the Vojvodina are Germans, as are a substantial, though lower percentage in Croatia and Slovenia. Germans run the mills, the breweries and the linen industry in the Vojvodina and the Hungarians control the sugar industry. These facts must be taken into consideration and a strategy must be worked out accordingly so that all these sectors can be taken over and can continue to function after the departure of the Germans and Hungarians.

We must settle our people at once on the land vacated by the minorities. After 1918, volunteers and native settlers were at the forefront of the colonization campaign. They were given five hectares of land each, some tools, and houses on occasion. The colonies progressed slowly though, because the plots were too small, the tools insufficient and the cattle lacking. Problems were also compounded by the fact that, in many cases, highlanders from Montenegro, the Krajina and Lika were the ones settled on the plains of the Vojvodina, and they had great difficulty adapting to the new climate and way of life there. Many of them therefore began selling their property and, up to 1941, the government was forced to intervene and purchase much land to stop it from falling back into the hands of the ethnic minorities. This time, colonization activities must be carried out with much more foresight and seriousness of purpose, and must be run along more scientific lines.

The national liberation movement will have the same duty in colonization which the government of old Yugoslavia did after 1918. The best fighters in the movement have been recruited from the destitute regions south of the Sava and Danube, as well as from poor families north of these rivers. Thousands of peasant families will be demanding compensation for their destroyed property in villages razed to the ground in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro, Dalmatia, Lika, Banja, Croatia and Serbia and they will have to be compensated. The best possible reward for them would be land abandoned by the Germans, Hungarians and Albanians. But the mistakes which were made after 1918 must not be allowed to occur again. Property left behind by ethnic minorities must, first and foremost, be given to partisan fighters and to members of the national liberation movement in general. In this connection, we should adhere to the maxim that land be given only to those willing to work it. Land is, after all, a commodity and should not be speculated with. There is no room in the new Yugoslavia for *spahi*-type landowners. In old Yugoslavia, it often happened that volunteers would rent out their land instead of working it themselves.

In settling the Vojvodina, Kosovo and Metohija, we must adhere to a certain premise. The problem of the rural proletariat in Yugoslavia cannot be solved by giving everyone tiny plots of land. What we need more is rapid industrialization. The plains of the Vojvodina must not serve simply as the settling grounds for hundreds of thousands of hungry Montenegrin, Hercegovinian and Krajšnik peasants, but rather as an agricultural base for feeding the entire nation and for its industrialization. With this in mind, there are two approaches we could take in order to create a food surplus for the rest of the country: 1) We could set up larger entities in colonized villages, comprising 5 hectares. A good portion of their production could then be brought to market. 2) The government could retain for itself a considerable part of the land abandoned by the minorities and use it according to its own needs. The best would be a combination of these two approaches. I cannot underscore the importance of this issue enough. Lack of space prevents me from going into further detail.

Manufacturing and trades are just as important as agriculture, but they are problems which are much easier to solve. Manufacturing in the agricultural sector in the Vojvodina must be nationalized, as must all large companies which are hostile to the state. With trades, the situation is somewhat more difficult, but they must be nationalized too. Support can be given to native craftsmen and apprentices by allowing them to take over abandoned workshops.

Of paramount importance is that the colonization of land abandoned by national minorities be carried out in conformity with all international regulations and practices. We should therefore seek the approval of our Allies and endeavour right away to obtain a legal right to confiscate the property of hostile minorities. The government Commission on War Criminals should publicize material showing to the outside world and to our Allies what crimes the national minorities committed throughout our country. I made this proposal previously, but omitted it, and am introducing it again.

## Organization of activities

We have already stressed the importance of the ethnic cleansing of minorities in times of war. Accordingly, the role of the army takes on major significance in such activities. It is the armed forces who have the duty to expel minorities from our country. It is therefore essential that military commanders in the regions inhabited by the Hungarians receive precise instructions as to what is to be done and how it is to be done. It would be desirable for the Supreme Command of the National Liberation Army and partisan units to create a special department within their ranks whose duty it would be to carry out ethnic cleansing during wartime. This department should assemble a small number of experts and specialists in minority affairs from various regions. These people would provide the Supreme Command with requisite know-how and would prepare detailed proposals for dealing with the various minorities in our country during the war. After expelling the minorities, the armed forces would then have to guard abandoned facilities before the installment of a civilian authority. They could also ensure that the land be cultivated. This can only be accomplished if a special department is created, through which the work can be implemented. This department should remain within the purview of the armed forces even when the duties are later transferred to a ministry or given into trusteeship.

The complexity of activities involved in the expulsion of several million people and the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of our people in abandoned towns and villages requires the setting up of one further institution to supervise the whole campaign, and such an institution, ministry or commission, should be set up as soon as possible. After 1918, we had a ministry of agrarian reform whose duty it was to carry out reforms and thereby quench the thirst of our peasants for land. All in all, the ministry was not too badly organized. That it did not manage to fulfil its duties was due to the fact that too much bureaucracy was involved and that our nationally-minded political leaders were incompetent. I have had the opportunity since 1919 to follow up on the work accomplished by the staff of that ministry. They soon became corrupt and bureaucratic. The ministry continued to exist for years, but not to assist the colonists. It was simply there to sustain its employees. Experts have estimated that of the one billion dinars which old Yugoslavia earmarked for agrarian reform, only two hundred million were ever spent on the colonists. Eight hundred million dinars were swallowed up by government salaries. This waste must be avoided if we set up a new ministry for colonization. The job must not be entrusted to the current officials of the department for agrarian reform in the ministry of agriculture. New people must be hired who understand what is at stake and who will be ready and willing to devote all their time and energy to this enormous task. Once the ministry has been set up, and it will be a temporary institution by the way, officials from public offices and private companies should be appointed by means of special order. They should be given good salaries and promoted accordingly. No mercy should be shown to anyone involved in corruption. The risk of corruption has always been present and will continue to be present in affairs of this nature, especially where property belonging to millions of people is involved.

A thorough presentation of the organization of this ministry would take us beyond the scope of this report. For the time being, I only wish to stress that public employees should be selected with great care and national liberation committees should supervise the ministry's work closely. These committees could be of great assistance in determining how the national minorities can best be expelled and how colonists can best be brought in. In any case, the federal government will have to transfer a great part of its work in certain regions to the national liberation committees. We should take this fact into

consideration now, at a time when we are just beginning to elaborate our colonization policy. The scope of each institution's activities must be fixed in advance. Continuation of this work is easily hindered by infighting over jurisdiction. For the moment, the most important institution on site, aside from the army, will be the national liberation committees. The enormous bitterness felt towards the national minorities by our people because of the atrocities they committed against us is being expressed throughout the country by an uncontrollable rage towards them. This hostility and the irrevocable wish of the masses of our people for the minorities to disappear must be utilized in a constructive manner. We must not let ourselves slip into anarchy and plundering. This rage must serve the goals of our nation, as presented above. Precise instructions must therefore be transmitted to all national liberation committees as soon as possible to tell them what to do and how they should go about it. These committees will be responsible for organizing the expulsions, but they must also take care that farm land continue to be cultivated and that abandoned properties, workshops and factories not be left unguarded. It would perhaps be a good idea for specialized units, from the village to the national level, to be created within such committees. Our people should be taught from the start to know their rights and their duties. So important is this issue, that it would be advisable for Marshal Tito, as Supreme Commander of the National Liberation Army, to issue instructions of his own to the army and to the national liberation committees in this respect. The matter is urgent, and the setting up of appropriate institutions takes time.

The national liberation committees could be just as useful in settling colonists in the abandoned villages as they are in cleansing the countryside of minorities. I have already stressed that one of the reasons for the failure of our colonization strategy from 1918 to 1941 was that land was given to people who had no interest in working it themselves. Such a mistake must not be repeated. We must come up with ways and means of finding the right peasants and homesteaders for colonization. Such people are not particularly mobile, but when they do move to a new locality, they become rooted there very quickly. The national liberation committees in the areas where potential colonists come from must find the right type of settlers for the new colonies. They must also take care to replace the shortages in skilled workers and craftsmen left in the Vojvodina by the expulsion of the Germans. They should be assisted in their work by experts, social groups, professional groups, co-operatives and trade unions. With the help of the latter, the job of expelling the whole population of a town becomes much easier.

I have set down here only the broad outlines of a strategy for the expulsion of national minorities and for the resettlement of the regions in question. There are a good number of other aspects which must be considered, too, but this would involve too much detail for the time being and can be left to a later date. For the moment, I would like to restrict myself to a number of immediate issues. War is still raging over our country as we discuss whether or not to expel the minorities and how to resettle the land. Reports are coming in from those parts of the country where military operations are still underway that our people are ruthlessly advancing upon the national minorities who were against us during the war. The rage of our people must be channelled without delay. What is most urgent for the moment are: 1) sending instructions to the army and to national liberation committees on what to do, 2) taking measures, with the assistance of the fraternal Soviet Army, to get support for the cleansing of the Germans and Hungarians, 3) taking measures to ensure that abandoned land be cultivated as autumn approaches and that factories and workshops be guarded, and 4) beginning at once with the resettlement of the abandoned towns and villages by our people. All plundering and manipulation of the property of such minorities must be subject to the threat of capital punishment.

These are measures which must be taken immediately. The rest of the work should begin as quickly as possible, too. I omitted to mention that it is essential for the property earmarked for colonists in towns and villages to be transferred into their names. Dirty tricks were played on the poor colonists under the old agrarian reform by unscrupulous officials and political opportunists. First, the land was distributed to the colonists and then it was taken away from them. Such things must be avoided at all costs. Property given to the peasants should be transferred into their names, as should houses and workshops. Whether or not the peasants join together and form co-operatives for collective farming is an entirely different matter. In my opinion, this would indeed be the best way to work the land with the help of modern farm machinery. Because of its importance, this issue merits further discussion. I wish only to stress that collective farming is easier to introduce in regions to be colonized.

## Conclusion

This memorandum on the minority problem may have turned out a bit long, but the issue is of such importance to the future of our country that I was, more than anything, concerned about having omitted something. We may never again have such an opportunity to make our country ethnically pure. All other problems our country is currently facing, be they of a national, political, social or economic nature, fade in comparison. If we do not solve the minority problem now, we will never solve it. It is my hope that the leaders of the national liberation movement will assess this issue as I have, and will approach the problem with the same energy and self-sacrifice they exhibited when, in 1941, they plunged into the terrible war of liberation for the creation of a new, democratic and federal Yugoslavia. If this report can contribute even modestly to this lofty objective, its aim will have been fulfilled.

Belgrade  
3 November 1944

Vaso Čubrilović  
[signed]  
University Professor

[Taken from *Manjinski problem u novoj Jugoslaviji*. Retranslated from the Serbo-Croatian by Robert Elsie, on the basis of an existing English version.]

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[First published as: *Gathering Clouds: the Roots of Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo and Macedonia. Early Twentieth-century Documents.* Compiled, translated and edited by Robert Elsie. Dukagjini Balkan Books. ISBN 9951-05-016-6. (Dukagjini, Peja 2002) 172 pp.]