
PROF.DR. HIVZI ISLAMI (Prishtina)

DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS OF KOSOVA AND OTHER ETHNIC ALBANIAN TERRITORIES

It was in the interests of all the foreign regimes and statepowers to keep the Albanian people, with a compact territorial extension, divided into various territorial-political units and disintegrated in all planes. After the truncation of the Albanian ethnic entity into two parts based on the decisions of the international conferences (London 1913, Versailles, 1919, Paris, 1946), the Albanians' administrative-territorial division within the area of former Yugoslavia became even more tragic. Without being questioned, the Albanians' ethnic compact territory was partitioned into four territorial-political and state units. Kosova, which was given a restricted autonomy within Serbia (from the juridical-political point of view, till 1963, much below the status of Vojvodina), and which accounted for 68 % of the Albanians (at present nearly 2 million), while about 32 % remained outside it; Macedonia accounting for about 27 % (currently less than 800 000 Albanians or about 30 % of the overall number of Macedonia's population); three communes of Southern Serbia (Presheva, Bujanovc and Medvegje) accounting for 4 % of the Albanians (at present about 100 000 people), and Montenegro about 2 % (at present nearly 50 000 people).

Till late after World War Two, Kosova and the other Albanian territories were recognized as rural-agrarian, autarchic territories from the economic and demographic point of view and with numerous remnants of semi-feudal structures.

The neglect of Kosova and of the Albanians in the policy of development, proceeding from the one-sided and inconvenient policy of investments, the low-rate employment, particularly among women, down to the slow and delayed changes in the sphere of education, culture, public health, infrastructure and low living standards in general, constituted a premeditated and well conceived strategy. In the economic plane, Kosova as always had the position of a colony, whereas nowadays it is the most typical example of a classic colony.

The current high natality rate (about 28 per thousand) among the Albanians, the very young structure of the Albanian population (52-53 % of the population up to 19 years old and the average life span about 24 years), which constituted a rare phenomenon in the international demography as well as the stability of married communities and families, speak of a vital population, of rapid demographic growth. It is precisely this demographic perspective that by the beginning of the 80's became a very embarrassing factor among the political, state and scientific circles of former Yugoslavia and Serbia above all. In the framework of the vast anti-Albanian campaign, discourse on their demographic problems was not disregarded. Albaniaphobia gained momentum and the Albanians started being counted; what their would number be after 30 and 100 years. They were accused of dominating the Serbian-Yugoslav territory and of putting at risk the demographic, political, economic and national prosperity of the Slavs of the South and through the demographic factor and "secessionist" movement of creating "Great Albania". Serbia wanted to use Macedonia as a testing ground not

only to restrict the Albanians' demographic growth, but also to reduce the Albanian education at all levels and the general perspective of the Albanians in Kosova. The Macedonian state power, both in the Republican and communal level (communes dominated by Albanians), issued certain laws to exert pressure on the natality sphere.

The hitherto demographic inquiries go to show that natality is neither ethnically or confessionally determined, nor related to atavistic peculiarities or to nationalistic ideology, as the Serb-Yugoslav system attributed to the Albanians but mainly a socioclass issue. With regard to the Kosovar population, based on the data of the 1981 census, demographic researches testified: a Kosova female (45-49 years old), active in the economic life gave birth to 3,07 children, whereas a housewife had 5,49 children; the housewife in rural areas gave birth to 6,74 children, whereas the active female in non-agricultural professions had 2,74 children; the illiterate female gave birth to 7,04 children, the one who had finished middle school 2,24 and high school 2,18 children¹. Distinctions are evident also among members of the same nationality and confession, but in territories of different degree of development. The Serbs have always had the highest natality rate in Kosova and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Montenegrins in Montenegro and Kosova, the Moslems in the Sandjak region, the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Kosova and the Albanians in all the regions of former Yugoslavia, with slight distinctions². In 1981, the Albanian females who had completed the reproduction period in Kosova had 6,66 % children, in Macedonia 5,60, in Serbia 5,75 and in Montenegro (due to the intensive migrations of youngsters) 4,43 children, whereas in Slovenia our females had given birth to 3,07 children, in Croatia 3,56, and in Bosnia-Herzegovina 4,29 children. The Serbian females had concluded the period of their biological regeneration by giving birth to the following number of children: in Kosova 3,42, in Bosnia-Herzegovina 2,81, in Croatia 2,02, in Vojvodina 1,87, in Serbia 1,85 and in Slovenia 1,98 children³.

A dominant factor in bringing about changes in biological reproduction has been played by woman's inclusion in all walks of material and social life, the improvement of the overall position in the family and society, the health care of mothers and children, the reduction of the infant mortality rate, etc. It is known that the socio-economic, cultural and governing position of the Albanian woman in Kosova and former Yugoslavia is not a good one. In 1981 her employment rate in the public sector in Kosova was only 15 % of the total number of employed Albanians, and in other territories half of that. She is still dependent economically (in 1981 only 7,4 % of the women took an active part in economic life, and in the countryside 3,9 %). She does not have sufficient education (in 1981 the illiterate women in Kosova accounted for 26,3 %; in the countryside 29,2 per cent whereas in the generations above 35 years of age illiteracy makes up 60 % of the women)⁴. Till 1990, more than 1/3 of births by the Albanian women of Kosova took place outside health institutions and without professional assistance, and the infant mortality rate was at about 55 per thousand dominated by exogenous death causes.

Speculations about the ethnic composition of Kosova for the 20th century are persistently going on nowadays, too, by the fascist parties and current Serbian governmental circles for the same purposes. But on the basis of statistical data of all state powers, it follows that during the 20th century, Kosova has been dominated by Albanians⁵.

The two censuses held between the two world wars (1921 and 1931) apart from defects of a methodological nature, are permeated by numerous speculations about the number of the non-Slav population, the Albanian one in particular. Nevertheless, even following the results of these censuses, the Albanians dominated the ethnic structure of Kosova. According to the 1921 census, based on the Albanian mother tongue (Arnautski, as they used to call it), out of 436 929 inhabitants registered in Kosova, 280 440 or 64,1 % were Albanians, 112 232 were Serbs based on the mother tongue criterion, and the remaining belongs to the others. Again applying the same criterion, that of the mother tongue, in the Yugoslavia, there were registered 441 740 Albanians altogether. According to confessional belonging, out of the total religion, 25,7 % to the Orthodox Church and 1,5 % to the Catholic Church⁶.

But the true number of Albanians was much greater in Kosova and Yugoslavia in 1918. Of the underestimation of the Albanians' number speak the evaluations of the Albanian scholars of that time. J. Milaj (1944) estimated the number of Albanians in the Yugoslavia of the 30s, as oscillating from 700 000 - 900 000 people⁷, F.S. Noli (1930) about one million⁸, whereas the Albanian persons Don Bisaku, Don Kurti and Don Gashi (1930) oscillate between 800 000 and one million⁹. To the weaknesses in providing evidence of the number of Albanian in the above-mentioned censuses and to the low evaluation of the Albanians' demographic basis for the first half of this century testify also the results of the 1948 census, when despite the deportations en masse to Turkey and Albania in the period between the two world wars and the direct consequences (war victims) and indirect ones (postponement of marriages) of World War Two, applying the principle of nationality, the Albanians accounted for 498 242 people (68,5 % of the total number of the population), whereas in the whole ex-Yugoslavia there were 750 431 Albanians. According to Serb-Yugoslav official statistic data, the population census, despite the manipulations and speculation till the year 1971, the absolute and relative number of Albanians in Kosova has kept continuously increasing, mainly owing to natural augmentation. Henceforth, nowadays, their number is about two million or 90 % of the overall population, while actually, in the former Yugoslavia, there live approximately three million Albanians.

Following 1981, the Serbian reactionary circles and Serbian-Yugoslav political institutions introduced another even more absurd thesis, which was continuously repeated in the Serbian populist and chauvinist rallies; that a great number of Albanians, 300 000 to 400 000 had come from Albania to Kosova after 1941 and that allegedly, thanks to this immigration, the Albanians have obtained superiority in the ethnic structure of Kosova. Facts indicate quite a different thing: according to the 1981 census, 3 331 persons came to Kosova from abroad. Out of those, 1 543 people came from Albania, out of whom, according to police records, 704 people altogether live in Kosova. Therefore, the thesis on the massive immigration of the Albanians from Albania is in reality part of the Serbian hegemonic strategy on Kosova's ethnic cleansing, the driving out not only of 300 000 -400 000 Albanians, but also of their predecessors. This means practically all the Albanians of Kosova. This is an old dream of all the Serbian regimes, which will undoubtedly remain only a hegemonic aspiration.

After Kosova's occupation by Serbia in 1913, the Serbian power started to settle Serbs in Kosova and expel the Albanians to Turkey and Albania. In the period

between the two world wars, according to Serbian sources, Kosova's colonisation was realized by bringing in and settling on these territories more than 11 000 Serbian families with about 54 000 members and about 12 000 other rank and file colonists¹⁰. More colonists were brought in along the borderline with Albania and into the homogenous Albanian regions. Estimations go to show that in the period between the two world wars, about 250 000 Albanians were forcibly expelled to Turkey and about 50 000 others to Albania¹¹.

In the second half of the thirties, there were plans and elaborate schemes on the expulsion of all Albanians from the then Yugoslavia through brutal means including the burning down of Albanian villages, and city quarters where they lived. Standard bearers of such undertakings, characterized by genocide, were the Serbian cultural and military institutions and renowned individuals of the Serbian chauvinistic science, culture and policy, such as V.Cubrilovic (1898-1990)¹², the nobelist I.Andric (1892-1975)¹³, D.Mihajlovic (1893-1946)¹⁴, S.Molevic¹⁵, etc. It was foreseen that the deportation waves of the Albanians take place in stages during 1939-1944. But the events that followed and particularly the outbreak of World War Two hampered the Albanians' total and planned deportation.

Following World War Two, Serbia's and Yugoslavia's main preoccupation was to resolve the Albanians' issue again by driving them out to Turkey and by assimilation. Right after Belgrade's liberation (03.11.1944), V.Cubrilovic, minister of several sectors in J.B.Tito's government (1892-1980) presented the second elaborate scheme on the expulsion of all the Albanians by applying military force, not only to them, but also to the other non-Slav communities (the Germans, Hungarians, Rumanians, Italians, Turks) in hopes of creating an ethnically pure state of Southern Slavs¹⁶. In the Albanians' case, this plan did not find immediate application because the circumstances were such; first of all, the good relations existing between Yugoslavia and Albania. But, after these relations with Albania were severed (1948), on the basis of a secret renewed Yugoslav-Turkish agreement, the Albanians forced deportation to Turkey resumed immediately.

Till the end of the 60's, when the deportations to Turkey were suspended due to change of political climate and ratio of forces in former Yugoslavia, it is estimated that about 250 000 people were driven out of Kosova and other Albanian territories to Turkey.

While the Albanians' deportation to Turkey was going on, the second powerful colonisation wave was witnessed in Kosova: many Serbs and Montenegrins from Serbia and Montenegro came in as low and medium qualified cadres, some of them could hardly read and write. They moved in together with their families. The number of Serb-Montenegrin migrants settled in this area amounted to about 50 000 people.

By the end of the 60's, mainly due to the narrowing of living perspective, the Albanian workers started to emigrate to the developed European countries, but a considerable number of these workers had emigrated, prior and after this period, to many cities in former Yugoslavia, as physical labourers, but a good part of them as emigrant handicraftsmen as well.

After 1966, even the Serbs began to abandon Kosova, while Albanians from Macedonia, Montenegro and Southern Serbia, and also Moslems from Sandjak started coming to Kosova. When Kosova retained a certain autonomy (1968), the University

(1970), and many middle schools were opened and the Albanians from the aforesaid regions used to come to Kosova, particularly to Prishtina and other cities to get schooling. The opening of Prishtina University intensified the inter-Albanian migrations, and marriages led to an integration of the Albanian territories in many walks of life. Even after 1981, when a curfew was imposed on Kosova, the situation in Macedonia and other Albanian territories became even graver. Therefore many families and individuals found shelter in Kosova till the ruining of Kosova's autonomy (1989). Estimations go to show that about 45 000 Albanians have moved to Kosova from Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia from 1966 to the present.

The Serbs' moving out of Kosova after 1966 was not due to the Albanians' pressure on them, as the Serb-Yugoslav communist regime and Kosova's leadership claim, but due to the lack of privileges they enjoyed so far, to the intolerance of equality with the Albanians, to the insecurity of those Serbs pertaining to the state and police apparatus and who had acted to the detriment of the Albanians, to reasons related to the much better economic situation in Serbia and the enormous profits from the sale of immovables in Kosova, as well as to family and individual reasons, because the majority had come to Kosova in the framework of the first and second colonization waves and in other ways. It is estimated that owing to the aforesaid reasons, about 52 000 people moved out of Kosova during the 1966-1981 period, whereas during 1981-1988 period about 20 000 Serbs, the overwhelming majority, was settled in Serbia, mainly in the Belgrade's urban zone (about 40 %) and other cities¹⁷. After the ruining of Kosova's autonomy in 1989 the Serbs' migration continued with an obvious intensity.

After 1981, when all of Yugoslavia rose against the Albanians and their just demands for equality and independence, a considerable wave of Albanian migration followed. They were mainly youngsters who left due to the pressure exerted by the police and communist single party state. They mainly constitute the political refugees. Whereas after the forced dismissal from their jobs of about 120 000 Albanian workers, beginning in 1990, emigration for existential motives intensified considerably. After the outbreak of war in Slovenia and Croatia (1991) and Bosnia Herzegovina (1992), not wishing to fight in the ranks of the aggressor's army, the Albanian soldiers abandoned this army and fled mainly to Western countries. Nowadays, a considerable number of Albanians is demanding political asylum in these countries. The phenomenon of the Albanians' migration to overseas countries is gradually being transformed into an emigration without return.

It is estimated that at present more than 400 000 Albanians from the territories of former Yugoslavia and Kosova work and stay, on different statuses, in Germany (about 120 000), Switzerland (about 95 000), Sweden (about 35 000), Austria (about 23 000), Belgium (about 8 000), France (about 5 000), Denmark (about 5 000), Italy (about 4 000), Norway (about 3 500), Britain (about 2 500), the Netherlands (about 2 000), Finland (about 600), Luxemburg (about 200), then in Croatia (about 40 000), Slovenia (about 15 000), Albania (about 25 000), whereas in Bosnia Herzegovina, where prior to the war the Albanians were about 30 000, on various staying status, now it is not known what their number might be. During the recent years, due to the aforesaid reasons, many Albanians emigrated to the USA, where they joined the earlier settled diaspora, going upwards to Alaska, then to Canada, to Australia and New

Zealand. Estimations indicate that there are about one million Albanians in the Western countries. Half of them emigrated only during the recent two decades.

After 1981, through the so-called Yugoslav Program on Kosova, the third colonization wave of Kosova began. In March 1990, the Serbian state policy came into open with hegemonic programs and projects. The main destination of these projects and programs has been and remains the changing of Kosova's ethnic structure through Serbian colonisation and ethnic cleansing of the Albanians¹⁸. Kosova has never had conditions for additional population, because it has always been the most densely populated region of Europe.

Even after the dissolution of the former Yugoslav Federation, Serbia's primary goal remained the big-state aspirations and Kosova's Serbianization. To these ends, alongside the Albanians persecution; Serbia is bringing in colonists, refugees from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as Serb-Montenegrins from Albania. In the beginning, Serbia's program was indirectly aided also by the UN Higher Commissariat for Refugees, centred in Prishtine. The Serbian power is settling these refugees in various parts of Kosova, mainly on the Dukagjin Plateau, mostly in educational recreative objects for pupils and students, in touristic and hotelier objects. According to Serbian sources, the number of the refugees is estimated at being about 10 000 people, but they are the most militant part and mainly war criminals, whom the Serbian power urges against the Albanians. All this is done in the spirit of Cubrilovic's instructions (1937) on ethnic cleansing. The Serbian police and military state power is currently exerting systematic terror on the Albanians, particularly on the youngsters aiming at making them abandon and empty Kosova. The greatest pressure is being exerted on borderline regions with Albania, on the communes of Peja, Gjakova and Decan, then those of Istog and Klina, using as a pretext the disarmament undertaking, arms which the Albanians do not possess. This is a continuation of the scenario of arms-gathering in the 50's, as well as pursuit of Albanian recruits, whose number is estimated from 18 000 to 20 000 annually. Aiming at tranquil ethnic cleansing, provocations, violence and terror have swept the whole annexed and occupied Kosova.

1. G.Todorovic, *Dejstvo aktivnosti i Obrazovanja zene na njeno radanje i stav o njemu na podrucju SR Srbija*, in: "Stanovnistvo", no.1, Centar za demografska istrazivanja (CDI), Institut drustvenih nauka (IDN), Beograd, 1984/1985, p.85.

2. *Demografska kretanja i karakteristike stanovnistva Jugoslavije prema nacionalnoj pripadnosti*, CDI, IDN, Beograd, 1978, pp.27-31; *Saopstanje Saveznog zavoda za statistiku*, no.178, Beograd, 1983.

3. *Demografski razvoj i populaciona politika SAP Kosovo* (studim) (intern) CDI, IDN, Beograd, 1988, p.62.

4. H.Islami, *Fshati i Kosovës, kontribut për studimin sociologjik-demografik të evolucionit rural*, in: "Rilindja", Prishtinë, 1985, pp.158-175.

5. *Shqipnia përpara Konferencës së Paqes*, Blë e Parë (Official documents presented by the Albanian delegation, since

February 12 to June 5, 1919, and published by the Provisional Government), Romë, 1919, pp.35-36.

6. *Popis stanovništva u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1931*, in: "Državna stamparija", Sarajevo, 1934.

7. J.Milaj, *Raca shqiptare*, Tiranë, 1944, p.107.

8. F.S. Noli, *Një tragjedi në tri akte: çpasurim, çpërngulje, çfarosje*, in: "Liria Kombëtare", no.110, Avril 10, 1929, Gjenevë; F.S. Noli, *Veptra 3*, in: "Rilindja", Prishtinë, 1988, pp. 177-178.

9. *La situation de la minorité en Yougoslavie* (Mémoire présenté à la Société des Nations par Dom Bisaku, Don Etienne Kurti, et Don Louis Gashi), Genève, le 5 Mai 1930: The document has 8 annexes as proofs of the forced deportation and denationalization of Albanians by the Serbian power of that time and is made known to the public opinion in the newspaper "Rilindja", dt. 31.07.1990, translated and prepared for publication by Dr.Rexhep Ismajli.

10. M.Obradovic, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija na Kosovu (1918-1941)*, Prishtinë, 1981, pp.221-222.

11. H.Bajrami, *Rrethanat shoqërore dhe politike në Kosovë më 1918-1941*, Instituti i Historisë, Prishtinë, 1981, p.177; H.Bajrami, *Shpërngulja e shqiptarëve gjatë viteve 1875-1966*, in: "Rilindja", dt.28.05.1990.

12. See: V.Cubrilovic, *Iseljavanje Arnauta*, (Predavanje održano u Srpskom kulturnom klubu od dr.Vase Cubrilovica, 7 marta 1937 godine, Vojno-istorijski institut, Arhiv bivsejugoslovenske vojske, br.2, Fasc.4, box 69; the text is written in cyrillic alphabet and consists of 19 typed pages, a map in an appendix, two tables, two graphics (the originals in hand writing).

13. See: B.Krizman, *Elaborat dra Ive Andrica o Albaniji iz 1939 godine*, in: "Casopis za suvremenu povijest", II, Zagreb, 1977.

14. See the Cetniks' document signed by Draza Mihajlovic himself: *Dokument br.37* od 20.12.1941 godine, Arhiv Vojno istorijskog instituta, Beograd, the cetniks had worked out such projects prior and after 1941.

15. Stevan Molevic was one of the main ideologists in the Serbian Cultural Club to form Great Serbia and to exterminate the non-Slav peoples. He has compiled several projects.

16. V.Cubrilovic, *Manjinski problem u novoj Jugoslaviji*, 03.11. 1944, Beograd, the elaborate consists of 11 typed pages in cyrillic alphabet, the appendix has two tables and a map and the original is signed by hand (the photocopy of the text is to be found at the author of this work).

17. See for more details: H.Islami, *Demografski problemi Kosova i njihovo tumacenje*, in the book: "Kosovo-Serbija-Jugoslavija", Ljubljana, 1989, pp.46-66.

18. See the program bearing the cynical title: "Program za realizaciju mira, slobode, ravnopravnosti, demokratije i prosperiteta u SAP Kosovo", *Sluzbeni list SR Srbije*, br.15, 30 mart 1990, Beograd.

