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## SERBIAN PROGRAMS FOR THE EXPULSION OF ALBANIAN KOSOVARs FROM KOSOVO BETWEEN TWO WORLD WARS

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the research paper* is treat of the forced displacement of Albanians from Kosovo to Albania in the years 1918-1941 by the Serbian government through various programs. Serbian programs for the expulsion of Albanians, initiated since the 'Načertanije' ('Draft Plan') of 1844, did not cease throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century. Between the two World Wars, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes – Yugoslavia drew up a large number of programs against the Albanians, where the key point was the displacement of Albanians from their lands and the reversal of the demographic structure to the detriment of the Albanians people, applying various methods and measures of violence.

*The scientific novelty.* Until the 1930s, Serbian circles assessed that these measures had not yielded the desired effects, thus it was necessary to continue with several programs and strategies that would lead to a large-scale ethnic cleansing of Albanians by expelling them from their lands or assimilating them. This paper deals with all the Serbian programs and plans which were applied by means of three main actions such as forced displacement, colonization and agrarian reform.

*Conclusions.* Based on what we have discussed, there is no doubt that the policy of Serbian government's violence against Albanians materialized through these infamous programs. The Serbian authorities had primary intentions of ethnic cleansing and changing the ethnic structure in the regions where Albanians predominated. The expulsion of Albanians occurred according to these programs, as the Serbian government had institutionalized and utilized these various programs to achieve its goals. During this period, Albanians faced all the measures of violence from the state apparatus in Belgrade, their lives deteriorated day by day in all spheres of life, and as a result, an extremely large number of them were forced to be displaced and leave their homelands. The policy of Greater Serbia ideology did not cease, not only in this period but throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords:** Expulsion, Serbian programs, elaborations, colonization of Kosovo

## СЕРБСЬКІ ПРОГРАМИ ВИСЕЛЕННЯ АЛБАНСЬКИХ КОСОВАРИВ З КОСОВА МІЖ ДВОМА СВІТОВИМИ ВІЙНАМИ

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### АНОТАЦІЯ

**Метою** дослідницької роботи є розгляд примусового переміщення албанців із Косова до Албанії у 1918-1941 рр. урядом Сербії за допомогою різних програм. Сербські програми вигнання албанців, започатковані після Плану («Начертанія») 1844 р., не припинялися протягом усього ХХ ст. У період між двома світовими війнами Королівство сербів, хорватів і словенців (Югославія) розробило велику кількість програм проти албанців, де ключовим моментом було витіснення албанців з їхніх земель і зміна демографічної структури на шкоду албанському народу, застосування різноманітних методів і способів насильства.

**Наукова новизна.** До 1930-х років сербські кола оцінювали, що ці заходи не дали бажаного ефекту, тому необхідно було продовжувати кілька програм і стратегій, які призвели б до широкомасштабної етнічної чистки албанців шляхом вигнання їх з їхніх земель або асиміляції. У цьому документі розглядаються всі сербські програми та плани, які були реалізовані за допомогою трьох основних заходів: примусове переміщення, колонізація й аграрна реформа.

**Висновки.** Виходячи з наведеного матеріалу, немає сумніву, що політика насильства уряду Сербії щодо албанців матеріалізувалась через вказані сумнозвісні програми. Сербська влада проводила, насамперед, етнічні чистки та зміну етнічної структури в регіонах, де переважали албанці. Вигнання албанців відбувалося відповідно до цих програм, оскільки сербський уряд інституціоналізував і використовував ці різні програми для досягнення своїх цілей. Протягом досліджуваного періоду албанці зіткнулися з усіма заходами насильства з боку державного апарату в Белграді, їхнє життя погіршувалося з кожним днем у всіх сферах життя, і в результаті надзвичайно велика кількість з них змушена була переселитися та покинути свою батьківщину. Політика великосербської ідеології не припинялася не тільки в цей період, але й протягом усього ХХ ст.

**Ключові слова:** вигнання, сербські програми, розробки, колонізація Косова

### INTRODUCTION

Serbian programs against Albanians have their origins in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where the basis of all subsequent programs is the 'Načertanije' ('Draft Plan') by Ilija Garasanin in 1844. It was a project aimed at occupying Albanian lands, Serbianizing them, and also other Balkan territories. The plan emphasized that: "From this plan arises the foundation of Serbian politics, which should not be limited to its current borders, but should attract all Slavic peoples surrounding it." Such a policy would continue further, especially with the program of Nikola Pasic, which led to the outbreak of the First Balkan War based on

this plan<sup>1</sup>. After the occupation of Kosovo in 1912, the leading circles in Belgrade further pursued the ideas of 'Načertanije' and similar programs for ethnic cleansing and Slavicization of Albanian regions<sup>2</sup>. The occupation of Kosovo by Serbian-Montenegrin armies during the Balkan Wars materialized through large-scale terror, aiming to annihilate and expel Albanians from their settlements<sup>3</sup>.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

During the drafting of this article, we consulted a large number of works by foreign and local authors who dealt with this topic. Looking at all the works of the previous researchers and also examining the archival documents, in the raised hypothesis that: "The forced displacement of Kosovo Albanians was a long-standing Serbian policy for ethnic cleansing and genocide, foreseen in the Serbian programs", during the elaboration of this hypothesis and the review of the literature, we gave a clear reflection and managed to fully agree with this hypothesis, which we prove by means of facts based on archival documents and consulted literature.

The goal of Belgrade's policy to achieve the assimilation of Kosovo and other Albanian regions was not realized as expected. At the same time, the large number of Albanian population in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as a result of high birth rates, continued to increase. Therefore, this was one of the main factors that prompted Belgrade to seek other ways and means to strike and ultimately annihilate the Albanians of Yugoslavia<sup>4</sup>.

This is further emphasized by the researcher Oliver J. Schmit: "Taking into account all the measures taken by Serbian circles during these years, they also emphasized another element that of high fertility among Albanians, as they observed that the methods they had applied to expel Albanians were being compensated by their high birth rate"<sup>5</sup>.

So, all the researchers whom I have consulted during this article, both local and foreign, have established, through the facts, that the Serbian policy for the relocation of Albanians was imposed in a violent manner through various methods and forms, which had the final goal of ethnic cleansing through expulsion or assimilation of the Albanian population.

### THE EXPULSION OF ALBANIANS FROM KOSOVO IN THE YEARS 1918-1929

With the reoccupation of Kosovo by Serbia in 1918, Serbian circles hoped to achieve the nationalization and Slavicization of regions with Albanian populations. Nikola Pasic had declared and predicted that the solution to the Albanian issue should be achieved through their assimilation, as had happened after 1877, within a span of 20-25 years<sup>6</sup>.

One of the actions to implement this policy was the colonization of Albanian territories with Serbian-Montenegrin populations. The colonization of Kosovo continued

<sup>1</sup> Dugolli B. Marrëdhëniet shqiptaro – serbe 1878-1912. Prishtinë: Universiteti i Prishtinës, 2011. P. 328; Surroi F. (trans.). Politika serbomadhe prej Garashaninit deri te Akademia. Prishtinë: Koha, 2019. P. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Verli M. "Naçertania" e Garashaninit – baza e programit të "Serbisë së Madhe". *Studime historike (Tiranë)*. 1998. Nr. 1-4. P. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Koka V. et al. Historia e popullit shqiptar, V. III, (Periudha e Pavarësisë 28 nëntor 1912 – 7 prill 1939). Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, 2007. P. 424-425; Meta B. et al. Historia e shqiptarëve gjatë shekullit XX (1912-1920). Vëllimi I. Tiranë: Akademia e studimeve albanologjike – Instituti i Historisë, 2017. P. 443.

<sup>4</sup> Shtylla Z. Shpërngulja me dhunë të shqiptarëve në vitet 1912-1941, E vërteta mbi Kosovën dhe shqiptarët në Jugosllavi. Tiranë, 1990. P. 268.

<sup>5</sup> Schmitt O.J. Kosovia: histori e shkurtër e një treve qendrore ballkanike. Prishtinë, 2012. P. 157.

<sup>6</sup> Verli M. Shqipëria dhe Kosova – Sfida e një aspirate. Vëllimi I. Tiranë: Botimpex, 2007. P. 49.

throughout the existence of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Kingdom of SCS) and Yugoslavia, from 1918 to 1941. During this time, colonization was divided into two periods: before 1920, until the issuance of the Decree on Colonization, and from 1920 to 1941<sup>7</sup>. The aspect related to colonization was agrarian reform, which, through a series of legal measures, aimed at the dispossession of Albanians, ethnic cleansing, the forced displacement, and the Slavicization of Albanian lands<sup>8</sup>. Starting from February 1919, migration of the population within the borders of Albania in 1913 began from many regions inhabited by Albanians. The reasons behind this migration were the oppression, violence, killings, and massacres experienced by this population under the Serbian regime<sup>9</sup>.

Agrarian Reform, Colonization of Albanian Lands, and the Displacement of the Albanian Population were interrelated and inseparable. The purpose of colonizing Kosovo was to change its ethnic structure, dissolve its compactness and homogeneity, and then establish the Slavic element in it, as it was referred to as the "trustworthy national element"<sup>10</sup>.

In January 1921, the Serbian authorities had decided to increase pressure on Albanians, where in a proclaimed proclamation; they called on all Albanian rebels to surrender. Meanwhile, those who did not surrender "would either be killed or arrested, while their families would be interned,<sup>11</sup>" while villagers would be punished if they hid and helped the rebels. By invading Albanian villages, burning houses, and destroying property, the army and gendarmerie inflicted misery upon the innocent population, killing women, children, and the elderly, and displacing entire villages<sup>12</sup>. This is evidenced by a list compiled by the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which provides the names of 166 individuals killed by the Serbian army in Peja and Gjakova in 1921<sup>13</sup>.

On June 27, 1921, Fan S. Noli, as the head of the Albanian delegation to the League of Nations in Geneva, had sent a Memorandum to Secretary-General Eric Drummond, stating that in the months of July-August, Serbian troops had burned 150 Albanian villages and expelled 40,000 Albanians, who sought refuge in Central Albania, supported by the Albanian government. These refugees were fleeing Serbian persecutions, and their numbers arriving in Free Albania were increasing<sup>14</sup>. It is important to note that from 1920 to 1924, the main institution determining contemporary politics became the Albanian Parliament, where the Kosovo issue was unavoidable<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> *Obradoviq M.* Reforma agare dhe kolonizimi i Kosovës (1918-1941). Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 2005. P. 159.

<sup>8</sup> *Meta B.* et al. Historia e shqiptarëve gjatë shekullit XX (1920-1924). Vëllimi II. Tiranë: Akademia e Studimeve Albanologjike – Instituti i Historisë, 2019. P. 578.

<sup>9</sup> *Culaj L.* Sfida historike. Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik, 2020. P. 85.

<sup>10</sup> *Prifti K.* Gjenocidi dhe komplotet anti shqiptare të serbomëdhenjeve. Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, 2017. P. 175.

<sup>11</sup> *Malcolm N.* Kosova një histori e shkurtër. Prishtinë, 1998. P. 286.

<sup>12</sup> *Obradoviq M.* Reforma agare dhe kolonizimi i Kosovës... P. 177

<sup>13</sup> Arkivi i Ministrisë së Punëve të Jashtme i Republikës së Shqipërisë (Tirana) [Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania] (AMPJ). Year (Y.) 1921. Dossier (D.) 51. Page (P.) 350-355. Raporte të prefekturave dhe korrespondenca me Ministrinë e P.të Jashtme të Shqipërisë rreth barbarizmave serbe ndaj shqiptarëve.

<sup>14</sup> Arkivi Qendror Shtetëror i Republikës së Shqipërisë (Tirana) [Central State Archive of the Republic of Albania] (AQSH). Fund 1510/1 "Ministria e Punëve të Jashtme Britanike". Y. 1921. D. 70. P. 1-7. Memorandum i Fan Nolit para Lidhjes së Kombeve mbi mosmarrëveshjet mes Shqipërisë dhe shteti SKS, Gjenge, 27 Qershor 1921.

<sup>15</sup> *Lalaj A.* Problemi i Kosovës në parlamentin shqiptar (1920-1924). *Studime historike (Tiranë)*. 2000. Nr 1-2. P. 127.

According to official communications from the diplomatic representations of the Albanian state in Athens and Thessaloniki, where the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Albania in Athens was informed about a verbal agreement between Serbia and Turkey regarding facilitating emigration, after discussions with the Consul of Turkey in Athens, it was acknowledged that visas had been issued to Kosovars for Turkey and that the influence of the Serbian Consul General in Athens had a significant impact in Ankara, and they could not stop it as a process of visa issuance. Therefore, visas were given to Kosovars and residents of Manastir (Bitola) for 15 days, but none of them returned. According to the Turkish Consul in Athens, the number of displaced Albanians in Turkey up until now ranges from 20,000 to 40,000<sup>16</sup>.

On July 4, 1925, the Albanian Legation in Belgrade notified the institutions of the Albanian state that a policy against Albanians was being carried out in Belgrade. Every day, the newspapers in Belgrade were filled with various propagandist articles, referring to Albanian Muslims as 'Turks'. The Yugoslav government was systematically acting to force them to emigrate and thus achieve Slavic homogeneity in these territories<sup>17</sup>.

Furthermore, in another letter sent by the Albanian Consul in Belgrade to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Albanian state on September 12, 1925, he informed about the situation of the Albanian minority in Yugoslavia, which was very serious, especially due to the radical organs of power that were pursuing a program of assimilation and ethnic cleansing of Albanians. The Albanian Consul requested that efforts be made to halt this situation and that the new Albanian government appeal to European states to protect the Albanians living in Yugoslavia, as there is great fear that through colonization and forced displacement within a few years, the eradication of Albanians in Kosovo could occur, which would be a great loss for the Albanian nation, as nearly one million Albanians would be lost<sup>18</sup>.

The official responsible for the Albanian Legation in Belgrade, Tahir Shtylla, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Serbian authorities' propaganda for the expulsion of Kosovars from their lands was intensifying, reaching its peak through the implementation of agrarian reform and seizure of land<sup>19</sup>.

### **THE SERBIAN PROGRAMS FOR THE EXPULSION OF ALBANIANS FROM THEIR TERRITORIES IN THE 1930S AND 1940S**

In the second half of the 1930s, at the 'Serbian Club of Culture' in Belgrade, the elite of Serbian science and culture became more active than ever before in the service of the regime to choose the most efficient ways to accelerate the assimilation of Albanian territories. During these years, plans and proposals were drawn up for the expulsion of all Albanians from Yugoslavia at that time, using brutal means<sup>20</sup>. Prior to the signing of the convention with Turkey, the Cultural Club of Serbia in Belgrade paid significant

<sup>16</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1924. D. 561. P. 2-4. Korrespondencë nga përfaqësia shqiptare e Athinës dhe ajo e Selanikut mbi marrëveshjen verbale të qeverisë serbe e turke për shpërnguljen e shqiptarëve nga Kosova në Turqi.

<sup>17</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1925. D. 113. P. 28-29. Korrespondencë e Legatës shqiptare në Beograd njoftonte institucionet shqiptare, rreth veprimeve të organeve të shtetit serb për shpërnguljen e shqiptarëve.

<sup>18</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1925. D. 134. P. 7-10. Raport i Legatës Shqiptare në Beograd dërguar Ministrisë së Punëve të Jashtme, ku Konsulli Gj. Pekmezi njoftonte rreth një programi serb asimulues ndaj shqiptarëve të Kosovës.

<sup>19</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1929. D. 413. P. 29-30. Raporte të Legatës Shqiptare në Beograd me Ministrinë e Jashtme në Tiranë, për intesifikimin e autoriteteve serbe për largimin e shqiptarëve nga trojet e tyre.

<sup>20</sup> Verli M. Kosova sfida shqiptare në historinë e një shekulli. Tiranë: Botimpex, 2007. P. 71; Islami H. Dimensionimi demografik i çështjes së Kosovës. Prishtinë: Enti i teksteve dhe i mjeteve mësimore i Kosovës, 1997. P. 182.

attention to the issue of ethnicity in 'Southern Serbia', specifically the issue of the expulsion of Albanians from Yugoslavia<sup>21</sup>.

Serbia took various drastic measures to expel Albanians from their ethnic lands and to colonize them with Serbian and Montenegrin settlers. The pretext for this terror was the uprisings that Albanians were supposedly preparing against the state<sup>22</sup>. At the core of these programs or perspectives, there was no difference. They considered the assimilation of Albanian territories to be normal, even necessary. At the same time, they viewed colonization as an important tool to suppress the Albanian National Movement. The difference in perspectives lay only in the tactics to be followed or the means to be used to achieve the strategic goal of perspective faster, easier, and more securely<sup>23</sup>.

From all the projects and discussions organized at the Serbian Cultural Club in Belgrade, the generalization emerges that the expulsion of all Albanians to Turkey and Albania or their assimilation is the "only solution to the final resolution of the Albanian issue" and their elimination from compact Albanian territories<sup>24</sup>.

According to Serbian calculations for the removal of Albanians, it could be achieved through an agreement with the Turkish government to relocate the so-called Muslim element to Turkey, similar to what this state had done with Greece and Romania. Therefore, the Serbian authorities pursued a special and accommodating policy towards this state. Yugoslavia had only two embassies, one in Romania as Queen Maria's homeland, and the other, of course, in Turkey<sup>25</sup>.

A significant portion of the Serbian press supported the platform of the government circles for the expulsion of Albanians, demanding the removal of Albanians from their regions at all costs, propagating that all Muslim Albanians are Turks. The Serbian press not only advocated for their expulsion but also justified the use of any means and methods that served this purpose<sup>26</sup>.

The carriers of these genocide-like enterprises were also Serbian cultural and military institutions, headed by well-known individuals in the fields of science, culture, and Serbian chauvinistic politics<sup>27</sup>, such as Borivoje Panjevac, Gjoko Perina, Orestije Kërstiq, Atanasie Urosheviq, Vasa Çubriloqi, Ivo Andriq, and others<sup>28</sup>.

Borivoje Panjevac, who was also the Secretary of the State General Statistics, declared the supposed danger that the Serbian element was facing from Albanians. He emphasized that the homogeneous Albanian population was not assimilating as intended, and instead of decreasing, Albanians were increasing due to their high birth rate<sup>29</sup>.

During the discussions at the 'Serbian Cultural Club' in 1937, Gjoko Perina emphasized that the elimination of Albanians could only be achieved by relocating 300,000 Albanians and replacing them with 470,000 colonists. Among other things, he stated: "These Arnauts, as a foreign element, constitute a national and political threat today. They are

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<sup>21</sup> Hadri A. Rrethanat ekonomike, shoqërore, politike, nacionale dhe kulturore në Kosovë – Metohi në kohën e Jugosllavisë së vjetër. *Përparimi (Prishtinë)*. 1965. Nr. 1-2. P. 173.

<sup>22</sup> Krasniqi M. Argumentet dhe metodat e politikës ekspansioniste serbe për të sunduar Kosovën. *Në Studime (Prishtinë)*. 2008. Nr. 15. P. 24.

<sup>23</sup> Verli M. Reforma agrare kolonizuese në Kosovë. Tirana: Iliria, 1991. P. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Stavilevci M., Nushi P. Të vërteta për Kosovën. Prishtinë: Lidhja shqiptare në botë, 2000. P. 75.

<sup>25</sup> Arifi-Bakalli E. Përballja e Shqipërisë me pozitën e shqiptarëve në jugosllavi (1935). *Studime Historike (Tiranë)*. 2021. Nr. 1-2. P. 139.

<sup>26</sup> Meta B. et al. Historia e shqiptarëve gjatë shekullit XX (1920-1924). Vëllimi II... P. 595.

<sup>27</sup> Islami H. Dimensionimi demografik i çështjes së Kosovës... P. 182.

<sup>28</sup> Hoxha H. Afirmimi i kombësisë shqiptare në Jugosllavi. Prishtinë: Rilindja, 1983. P. 45.

<sup>29</sup> Bajrami H. Kosova 1918-1941. Prishtinë, 2017. P. 161-162.

numerous, powerful, and compact, they have occupied a central position, and have interrupted our continuity as well as the crucial communication links that we need to pass through those regions”<sup>30</sup>. He argued that a necessary majority of 67.5% Serbs should be formed in Southern Serbia, therefore proposing the colonization of Kosovo with 470,000 colonists and the expulsion of 300,000 Albanians from Kosovo<sup>31</sup>. He also stated that the successful resolution of the complete annihilation of Albanians in Yugoslavia would be an “immortal act for the Serbian people”. Similar proposals were made by another chauvinist, Anastasie Urosheviq<sup>32</sup>.

The Serbian authorities engaged several institutions and individuals, among which the Serbian Cultural Club (1937) and Vasa Çubriloiviq<sup>33</sup>, played significant roles. In 1937, Vasa Çubriloiviq presented the elaboration ‘Iseljavanje Arnauta’ (Expulsion of Albanians) before the aforementioned club, which served as the basis for preparing the agreement for the Convention between the Yugoslav and Turkish governments regarding the expulsion of all Albanians from Yugoslavia. In his lecture “On the Expulsion of Albanians”, he highlighted the ‘danger’ posed by the Albanian element in the territories of ‘Old Serbia’, as well as the measures that should be taken to expel them from Kosovo<sup>34</sup>.

The ideas and proposals presented by Çubriloiviq became the platform supported by the ruling circles in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia until 1941, where they were also enforced through continuous violence against the Albanian people<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, his elaboration symbolizes the politics of forceful Serbianization through oppressive and discriminatory methods, promoting a state and hegemonic policy towards Albanians, where violence was to be combined with diplomatic and political methods to make the expulsion as efficient as possible<sup>36</sup>.

Vasa Çubriloiviq, in his elaboration, proposed several different measures, such as using threats, the power of force, economic pressures through taxes, as well as targeting religious sentiments and violating the dignity of the majority population in Kosovo<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, another method he proposed was propaganda against Albanians, where in all the discussions he held, Çubriloiviq stated that the media and other forms of communication should depict the supposed beauty of the regions where Albanians would be expelled to and glorify the good life there. Additionally, he emphasized the need for an intensified commitment towards Turkey and Albania, which should be accompanied by strong political and state pressure: “with or without laws, their lives among us should be

<sup>30</sup> *Prifti K.* Gjenocidi dhe komplotet anti shqiptare të serbomëdhenjeve... P. 177-178.

<sup>31</sup> *Malcolm N.* Kosova një histori e shkurtër... P. 295.

<sup>32</sup> *Meta B. et al.*, Historia e shqiptarëve gjatë shekullit XX (1925-1939). Vëllimi III. Tiranë: Akademia e Studimeve Albanologjike – Instituti i Historisë, 2020. P. 591.

<sup>33</sup> Vasa Çubriloivić was a Serb-Bosnian scholar and Yugoslav politician. As a teenager, he joined the South Slavic Student Movement known as ‘Mlada Bosna’ and was involved in the conspiracy for assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria on June 28, 1914. Čubriloivić was sentenced to 16 years in prison for treason by the Austro-Hungarian authorities. In 1937, he presented a lecture before the Serbian Cultural Club where he advocated the “Expulsion of Albanians from Yugoslavia”. – *Surroi F.* (trans.). Politika serbomadhe prej Garashaninit deri te Akademia... P. 35-36.

<sup>34</sup> *Islami H.* Kosova dhe shqiptarët çështje demografike. Prishtinë, 1999. P. 162; *Lipa S.* Kosova në periudhën e rindërtimit. Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 1982. P. 15.

<sup>35</sup> *Shtylla Z.* Shpërngulja me dhunë të shqiptarëve në vitet 1912-1941... P. 270.

<sup>36</sup> *Gremk M., Gjidara M., Šimac N.* Spastrimi etnik (Dokumente historike mbi një ideologji serbe) / Beqir Ajazi (trans.). Tiranë, 2010. P. 51.

<sup>37</sup> *Schmitt O.J.* Kosovia: histori e shkurtër e një treve qendrore ballkanike... P. 162.

poisoned as much as possible". Especially during the years 1937-1938, there was extraordinary pressure for the expulsion of Albanians towards Turkey and Albania<sup>38</sup>.

During the meeting held on February 25-27, 1938, in Ankara, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs raised the issue of populating Turkey with Muslim populations from Balkan countries, proposing the formation of commissions with two members from each state. The Yugoslav government willingly accepted this proposal and immediately took measures to prepare and swiftly resolve the problem of the expulsion of Muslims, primarily Albanians from Kosovo, Macedonia, and Sanjak<sup>39</sup>.

In the pursuit of reaching an agreement, five inter-ministerial conferences were held, during which proposals regarding the expulsion were formulated. Alongside the increase in violence and terror inflicted upon Albanians, in 1938, a Yugoslav-Turkish state agreement was reached, which envisioned the mass expulsion of 40,000 Albanian families or around 250,000 individuals<sup>40</sup>. It was signed in Istanbul on July 11-13 by Hasan Saka (Chairman of the Turkish Section of the Balkan Economic Council), Xhevdet Atasgon (Director General for Displaced Population at the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance for Turkey), as well as Milan Ristić (Head of the Balkan Section in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and Vojislav Magovčević (Inspector at the Ministry of Agriculture for Yugoslavia)<sup>41</sup>.

Article 2 stipulated the cleansing of the following Albanian regions: "1. Districts of the Vardar Banovina: Sharr Mountains (Prizren), Gora (Dragash), Podgora (Suva Reka), Nerodimlje (Ferizaj), Lower Polog (Tetovo), Upper Polog (Gostivar), Galichica (Rostusa), Dibra, Struga, Gračanica (Pristina), Kačanik, Gjilan, Presevo, Prespa (Resen), Ohrid, Kërçova, Poreč (Juzhni Brod), Prilep, Morihovo, Bitola (Manastir), Kavadarci, Negotino in Vardar, Skopje, Kumanovo, Veles, Ovče Pole (Sveti Nikole), Štip, Kočani, Radoviš, Strumica, Dojran (Valandovo), Gevgelija, Kriva Palanka, Kratovo, Carevo Selo, Malesh (Berovo); 2. Districts of the Zeta Banovina: Peja, Istog, Mitrovica in Kosovo, Gjakova, Drini i Bardhë/Podrima (Rahovec); 3. Districts of the Morava Banovina: Llap (Podujevo), Vushtrri, Drenica (Skenderaj)"<sup>42</sup>.

The number of emigrants who were supposed to go to Turkey would be 250,000, and the transportation of emigrants was intended to begin at the end of the year or at the beginning of 1939<sup>43</sup>. According to the convention, Article 4 planned for the migration to take place between 1939-1944, with a fast pace reflected in the following estimated number of families to be expelled each year:

- a. In 1939: 4,000 families;
- b. In 1940: 6,000 families;
- c. In 1941: 7,000 families;
- d. In 1942: 7,000 families;
- e. In 1943: 8,000 families;
- f. In 1944: 8,000 families;

<sup>38</sup> *Qosja R.* Shpërngulja e shqiptarëve sipas programeve kombëtare serbe. Tiranë: Toena, 2005. P. 11.

<sup>39</sup> *Islami H.* Spastrimet etnike (Politika gjenocidale serbe ndaj shqiptarëve, shqyrtime, komente, elaborate, dokumente). Pejë: Dukagjini, 2003. P. 183.

<sup>40</sup> *Kokalari K.* Kosova djep i shqiptarizmit. Tiranë: Mesagjeritë shqiptare, 1943. P. 34.

<sup>41</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1938. D. 105. P. 206. Përkthim i fletores "TAN", nr. 1150 i datës 12 korrik 1938; *Meta B. et al.* Historia e shqiptarëve gjatë shekullit XX. Vëllimi III... P. 594-595.

<sup>42</sup> *Surroi F.* (trans.). Politika serbomadhe prej Garashaninit deri te Akademia... P. 82-83.

<sup>43</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1938. D. 105. P. 207. Përkthim i fletores "TAN", nr. 1151 i datës 13 korrik 1938.



Total: 40,000 families<sup>44</sup>.

However, the convention was not approved in the Turkish Parliament due to the death of the President of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, on November 10, 1938. This paralyzed the international political activities of the Turkish state, and most importantly, the financial problems it was facing at that time. The circumstances of the war in the world influenced Turkey's decision not to accept the refugees from Yugoslavia<sup>45</sup>.

The Albanian institutions were informed about the agreement through its Embassy in Istanbul, where it acknowledged that the agreement had been reached and also provided the details of this agreement<sup>46</sup>. The newspapers "Vatan" on July 12 and "Son Telegraf" in Istanbul on July 13, 1938, also wrote about the method and number of Albanian immigrants who would come to Turkey<sup>47</sup>.

The news about the preparation of the Yugoslav-Turkish Convention caused alarm within the Albanian government, which conducted political and diplomatic actions regarding the Kosovo issue at the end of 1938<sup>48</sup>. According to British sources, the Albanian government was extremely concerned about the diplomatic activities related to this agreement, as it understood that if this agreement were to be implemented, an extraordinarily large number of Albanians from Kosovo would be displaced, leading to a difficult situation. Despite declarations that included the Turkish population, the Albanian government was well aware that this would primarily affect the Albanians of Kosovo. Therefore, the Albanian government made efforts to stop this agreement and, through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ekrem Libohova, protested in Belgrade and Ankara against the implementation of the Convention<sup>49</sup>.

It is not surprising that the commander of the Army's Zone III proposed to the Serbian government in Belgrade that in areas where Albanians are the overwhelming majority, up to 90% of the population, new military garrisons should be established and increased. These garrisons would implement the plan of expulsion of Albanians and the colonization of Serbs and Montenegrins. The commander declared, "We should strive to destroy the strong and compact masses of Albanians as quickly as possible, by incorporating at least 50% of our population among them. Without this, it cannot be considered that the expulsion has been carried out efficiently"<sup>50</sup>.

According to the Croatian magazine "Obzor" on March 7, 1938, and several other Croatian and Bosniak newspapers, Muslim communities in Yugoslavia were urged not to leave their lands. In response to these articles, the newspaper "Samouprava", issue no. 621, dated March 11, 1938, which was the organ of the ruling party, stated that this only applied to Turkish and Albanian Muslims residing in Yugoslavia<sup>51</sup>.

The progressive revolutionary youth of Kosovo and beyond, representing youth of all nationalities, primarily stood against the Yugoslav-Turkish Convention. They addressed

<sup>44</sup> *Surroi F.* (trans.). *Politika serbomadhe prej Garashaninit deri te Akademia...* P. 83.

<sup>45</sup> *Imami P.* *Serbët dhe shqiptarët ndër shekuj. Vëllimi I.* Beograd: Samizdat, 2016. P. 499.

<sup>46</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1938. D. 107/2. P. 732-733. Korrespondencë e Ambasadës shqiptare në Stamboll me Ministrinë e Jashtme, rreth arritjes së marrëveshjes jugosllavo-turke.

<sup>47</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1938. D. 107/1. P. 244. Njoftim për Ministrinë e Jashtme Tiranë, Legaten në Beograd dhe Kryekonsullatën në Shkup, nga Konsullata shqiptare në Manastir, Manastir, 17 korrik 1938.

<sup>48</sup> *Meta B.* et al., *Historia e shqiptarëve gjatë shekullit XX (1925-1939).* Vëllimi III... P. 613-614.

<sup>49</sup> *Mehmeti A.* *Diplomacia e Britanisë së Madhe në marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-jugosllave 1919-1939.* Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë, 2020. P. 386-388.

<sup>50</sup> *Qosja R.* *Shpërngulja e shqiptarëve sipas programeve kombëtare serbe...* P. 14.

<sup>51</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1938. D. 105. P. 208. Përkthim i fletores "Obzor" dhe "Samouprava" të datës 7 dhe 11 mars 1938.

the Albanian people with a proclamation in both Albanian and Serbo-Croatian languages, urging them not to be displaced from their homelands. The progressive youth continued their struggle for equal relations among the peoples of Kosovo. They fought against the national oppression of Albanians and for the recognition of their national rights<sup>52</sup>. Likewise, the irreverent youth from Kosovo wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana regarding the continuation of land acquisition by Albanians and their displacement to Anatolia. They appealed to the government to do everything possible to prevent the people of Kosovo from leaving their ancestral land for the deserts of Anatolia. They issued proclamations repeatedly, calling on the people to “not abandon their land, their homes, and the bones of their ancestors”<sup>53</sup>.

Furthermore, the Albanian student youth, especially, were engaged in a broader plan to prevent the displacement of the Albanian population. In connection with this, a meeting was held on August 17-18, 1938, at the home of Veli Domi, an employee of the Albanian representation in Belgrade. The discussion revolved around opposing land acquisition from Albanians and their displacement. In relation to this rise in Albanian national consciousness, Naim Bey Starova, who had connections with the “Committee of Kosovo”, was openly propagating during November and December 1938. Ismet Shaqiri, a teacher from Shkodra, Munish Tahiri, Ramiz Riza, Huvni Hima, and Sokol Dobrosi from Gjakova were among the participants in this meeting<sup>54</sup>.

In a lengthy report on the Yugoslav-Turkish agreement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana was informed by the Albanian minister in Belgrade, Tahir Shtylla, who continuously made efforts to influence the non-renewal of this agreement alongside Ferat Draga. There were numerous diplomatic meetings, including with Prime Minister Stojadinović, who promised that the agreement did not affect Albanians but only the Turks residing in Yugoslavia. However, the reality was that there were no more than 50-60 thousand residents of Turkish ethnicity in Yugoslavia, and the requests made to the Turkish government to receive up to 250,000 Muslim residents undoubtedly included Albanians. Furthermore, the Albanian Minister of Foreign Affairs was informed that there would be no displacement in 1938 according to the agreement, as Turkey had planned to receive 12,000 Turks from Bulgaria and 17,000 from Romania. Therefore, there was time for preparations to save the people of Kosovo<sup>55</sup>.

Çubrilović detailed a scheme outlining the unsuccessful eradication of Albanians and emphasized that the authorities should be ashamed of these weak results. Hence, measures of violence should continue in a more insidious and hostile manner<sup>56</sup>. The Belgrade Cultural Club, in its report on May 16, 1938, highlighted that the previous efforts

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<sup>52</sup> *Obradović M.* Reforma agrare dhe kolonizimi i Kosovës (1918-1941)... P. 104-105; *Osmani J.* Lënda arkivore për kolonizimin dhe reformën agrare në Kosovë 1918-1941. Prishtinë: Etruria, 1996. P. 65; *Rexhepi F.* Gjilani me rrethinë gjatë Luftës së Dytë Botërore (1941-1945). Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 1998. P. 46.

<sup>53</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1938. D. 107/1. P. 325. Letër nga djelmënia irridente kosovare dërguar Ministrisë së Jashtme të Shqipërisë, 7 tetor 1938.

<sup>54</sup> *Osmani J.* Kolonizimi, reforma agrare, shpërngulja e shqiptarëve nga Kosova 1918-1941 (Dokumente: Shpërngulja: 3). Prishtinë, 2016. P. 411.

<sup>55</sup> AMPJ. Y. 1938. D. 107/1. P. 456-461. Njoftim nga Konsullata shqiptare në Beograd, drejtuar ministrit të Punëve të Jashtme, rreth marrëveshjes jugosllavo turke për shpërngulje, Beograd, 01 prill 1938.

<sup>56</sup> *Bajrami H.* Shtypja dhe rezistenca e shqiptarëve në Kosovë (1929-1941). *Gjurmime Albanologjike – Seria e shkencave historike* (Prishtinë). 1980. Nr. 9. P. 201-202.

for the colonization of 'South Serbia' to eliminate the Albanian element had not yielded the desired results<sup>57</sup>.

A fragment from the correspondence of Mehmet Spaho in 1938, one of the key political figures in Bosnia and all of Yugoslavia, in a letter addressed to the Yugoslav Minister of Agriculture, S. Stanković, stated that the 'agrarian power' in 'South Serbia' was acting contrary to legal provisions. Spaho pointed out that "thousands of families from the local population had their immovable properties taken away, leaving them without a plan or shelter"<sup>58</sup>.

The Serbian authorities attempted to forcibly relocate Albanian villagers to Turkey by signing the convention with the Turkish government. Through agricultural authorities, gendarmerie, and local and regional bodies, the government implemented its own chauvinistic policy towards Albanians, committing injustices in all spheres of social, economic, and political life at that time<sup>59</sup>.

The conclusions that were reached in the 'Serbian Culture Club' served as a platform for the regime's further activity against the Albanian population. This platform was implemented by all departments. At its center was the expropriation of the Albanians by any means, forced displacement in mass and the strengthening of Slavic colonization, therefore different organs of power as gears of the same mechanism were put into action<sup>60</sup>.

In a report prepared by the commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army in Skopje, which he sent to the Minister of Army and Navy, as well as the Chief of the Information Department at the General Staff in Belgrade, discussing the ideological policy of the regime regarding the colonization of Albanian lands under Yugoslav occupation, among other things, it stated: "To avoid the risk resulting from the dense settlement of non-Slavic elements, the following actions should be taken:

- a. The Albanian element should be expelled first and foremost from border areas and from regions where they are concentrated, while only as much of the Turkish element as necessary to expel the Albanians should be removed;
- b. The colonization of our population should be implemented, especially in border areas;
- c. All political emigrants should be removed;
- d. More settlements should be established from a cultural and agricultural perspective, especially in border areas;
- e. In clean Albanian areas, there should be no requirement for children to attend school, thus preventing their education"<sup>61</sup>.

The government authorities were not at all satisfied with the number of Albanians who had been expelled, while the Command of the Army's Third Zone proposed the formation of new garrisons in Rahovec, Suharekë, Podujevo, Vučitrn, Gjilan, and Kaçanik. In addition to continuing the expulsions, measures were simultaneously taken to disarm the Albanians, and massive beatings of the defenseless population also began<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> Hadri A. Pozita dhe gjendja e Kosovës në Mbretërinë e Jugosllavisë (1918-1941). *Gjurmime Albanologjike (Prishtinë)*. 1968. Nr. 2. P. 178.

<sup>58</sup> Verli M. Kosova në fokusin e historisë (studime, analiza, dokumente dhe 231 ilustrime), Vëllimi i dytë. Tiranë: Botimpex, 2003. P. 293.

<sup>59</sup> Obradović M. Reforma agrare dhe kolonizimi i Kosovës (1918-1941)... P. 273.

<sup>60</sup> Verli M. Reforma agrare kolonizuese në Kosovë... P. 60.

<sup>61</sup> Lita Q. Politika e Mbretërisë Jugosllave ndaj shqiptarëve dhe Shqipërisë 1929-1941. Shkup-Prishtinë: Arkivi Shtetëror i Republikës së Maqedonisë, Agjencia Shtetërore e Arkivave të Kosovës, 2012. P. 189.

<sup>62</sup> Hadri A. Rrethanat ekonomike, shoqërore, politike, nacionale dhe kulturore në Kosovë... P. 174; Bajrami H. Kosova 1918-1941... P. 140.

In 1939, Ivo Andrić also presented his own elaboration called 'The Project for Albania' in which he outlined his plan for the Balkans. At that time, he served as Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and he developed this elaboration at the request of Milan Stojadinović. In this elaboration, he advocated for the resolution of the Albanian issue in the Balkans through the fragmentation of the Albanian state, the forced relocation of the majority of Albanians in Yugoslavia to Turkey, and the assimilation of the remaining portion<sup>63</sup>. His project for the occupation of Albania aimed to alter the ethnic relations by intensifying the expulsion of Albanians, and every segment of the Yugoslav military and civil administration was tasked with implementing it. The goal was to eliminate attractive centers for the Albanian minority in Kosovo through the division of Albania, making their assimilation easier in the new situation, and it was believed that no one would hinder their relocation to Turkey<sup>64</sup>.

All these plans, elaborations, and agreements prove that the official and unofficial aim of Belgrade has always been the destruction of Albanians in Kosovo and beyond<sup>65</sup>. The first program for the elimination of Albanians during World War II was written by Kosta Peçani on June 6, 1941, titled "Penetration into Kosovo". The program states: "When we embark on this fortunate path, I know what you think and what plans you weave for our south. I believe that in Sanjak, in Dukagjin, and in Kosovo Field, not a single plis<sup>66</sup> (Albanian white hat) will remain"<sup>67</sup>.

The chairman of the Cultural Club, Stevan Moljević, one of the ideologists of Draža Mihailović's Chetnik movement, on June 30, 1941, drafted a plan titled 'Homogeneous Serbia' as a programmatic document of this movement, which envisaged the creation of Greater Serbia and Serbian domination in the Balkans. Stevan Moljević, an attorney and president of the Serbian cultural club in Banja Luka, stated in this project: "Serbs must have hegemony in the Balkans without fail, and in order to have hegemony in the Balkans, they must first have hegemony in Yugoslavia"<sup>68</sup>.

Draža Mihailović's program was prepared on December 20, 1941, and was an operational program for the destruction of all 'Muslims from the Balkans', with Albanians being the primary target<sup>69</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on what we have discussed, there is no doubt that the policy of Serbian government's violence against Albanians materialized through these infamous programs. The Serbian authorities had primary intentions of ethnic cleansing and changing the ethnic structure in the regions where Albanians predominated. The expulsion of

<sup>63</sup> *Islami H.* Kosova dhe shqiptarët çështje demografike... P. 162; *Surroi F.* (trans.). Politika serbomadhe prej Garashaninit deri te Akademia... P. 95.

<sup>64</sup> *Culaj L.* Shqiptarët në gjysmën e parë të shekullit XX. Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik, 2005. P. 50.

<sup>65</sup> *Verli M.* Kosova në fokusin e historisë... P. 277.

<sup>66</sup> People with plisa is dedicated to the Albanians because in the tradition of clothing of that time Albanians wore white plisa on their heads. A hat made of this cloth, the top of which is usually round like a cup; cell. White plis. - *Authors.*

<sup>67</sup> *Bajrami H.* Programet serbe për likuidimin e shqiptarëve 1941-1945. *Shqiptarët gjatë Luftës së Dytë Botërore (Përmbledhje studimesh)*. Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 2014. P. 34.

<sup>68</sup> *Islami H.* Kosova përballë hegjemonizmit serb. *Studime shoqërore (Prishtinë)*. 2020. Nr. 7. P. 11; *Gremk M., Gjidara M., Šimac N.* Spastrimi etnik... P. 158; *Qosja R.* Shpërngulja e shqiptarëve sipas programeve kombëtare serbe... P. 152.

<sup>69</sup> *Bajrami H.* Programet serbe për likuidimin e shqiptarëve 1941-1945... P. 35.

Albanians occurred according to these programs, as the Serbian government had institutionalized and utilized these various programs to achieve its goals. During this period, Albanians faced all the measures of violence from the state apparatus in Belgrade, their lives deteriorated day by day in all spheres of life, and as a result, an extremely large number of them were forced to be displaced and leave their homelands. The policy of Greater Serbia ideology did not cease, not only in this period but throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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