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## THE ALBANIANS' POSITION IN MONTENEGRO AND THE MEMORANDUM ADDRESSED TO THE CONFERENCE OF GENEVA\*

Montenegro has a territory of 13 812 square km. Its surface has been much smaller, but it was extended on the decisions of the Berlin Congress in 1878 and the London Conference of 1913. It was enlarged mainly with regions inhabited by Albanians, which did not belong to Montenegro either historically or ethnically. The Montenegrin monarchy, particularly Prince Nicola demanded in 1878 the further extension of Montenegro to the detriment of the Albanian territories.

The Great Powers that signed the Berlin Treaty were aware of the Albanians' opposition to the truncation and annexation of their territories. Speaking at that time of the question of the East, Lord Beaconsfield underscored that the most difficult part of the BERLIN Treaty was the arrangement of the Montenegrin borders. It is known that the struggle for occupying the Albanian territories continued from 1878 till November 1880. Since that time problems arose for the Albanians who have been trying to resolve them for more than a century. Characteristic of Montenegro is the diversified national composition. According to Yugoslavia's official census of 1991, the Republic of Montenegro is composed of Montenegrins accounting for 380 484 (61,84%), Moslems accounting for 89 932 (14,62%), Serbs for 57 176 (9,29%), Albanians 40 880 (6,64%), and Yugoslavs 25 854 (4,20%)<sup>1</sup>.

Following is the number of Albanians in the territories annexed to Montenegro chronologically: in 1703, 12 307 inhabitants lived there<sup>2</sup>, in 1878 14 000<sup>3</sup>, in 1921 25 535<sup>4</sup>, in 1939 35 779<sup>5</sup>, in 1948 19 425<sup>6</sup>, in 1953 23 460, in 1961 25 803, in 1971 35 671, in 1981 37 735 and in 1991 40 880<sup>7</sup>.

In order to give a clearer picture of the position of the Albanians in Montenegro, we deem it reasonable to divide it in to four periods.

The first period begins with the annexation of these territories by Montenegro. The decisions of the Berlin Congress (1878) foresaw the recognition of certain rights to the Albanians. But these decisions were disregarded by the Montenegrin monarchy. Due to maltreatment the Albanians were forced to abandon motherland hearths. In articles published by the press, in 1881, it was said that "according to news coming in from Ragusa, the majority of the Albanians that have remained under Montenegro's rule have abandoned their hearths and have emigrated to Shkodra in order to escape from the violence of the Montenegrin power. The Montenegrin government called on the Albanians to carry out military service and implemented on them laws which run counter to their customs and traditions, measures which according to the agreement have been foreseen to be applied after a long time has passed"<sup>8</sup>. In order to protest against the policy of violence of the Montenegrin circles the Albanians addressed the consuls and government of the great powers. In general this period was characterized by a complete lack of civil and human rights. With the formation of the Serb-Croat-

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Slovene state, which later was called the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as well as during all the period between the two world wars, the national question in Yugoslavia constituted one of the key problems did not enjoy the most elementary national and democratic rights; the right to use their language, to schooling in their mother tongue, to develop their national culture, etc. During that period the Albanians were treated as aliens, harmful and dangerous for the state of the Southern Slavs. Such a policy aimed at justifying, in the eyes of the public opinion, the measures for assimilation, denationalization and expulsion of the Albanians. The leading political circles stirred hatred and chauvinism, among the people. Whereas the miserable situation of the Albanian population served as a motive for its discontent towards the Yugoslav monarchy. It was anxious for the Yugoslav repressive regime to change.

In the years of the Second World War the Albanians in Montenegro hoped that by making their contribution to the struggle against the common enemy, they would realize the goals of national and human rights. For this reason they took an active part in the war, assisted it materially, participated in the fighting operations for the liberation of their territories and for those of the other peoples of Yugoslavia.

The second period of the Albanians' situation and position in Montenegro begins following World War Two. The 1946, Yugoslav Constitution guaranteed the Albanians the right to develop their culture, to use the mother tongue and to get schooling in the Albanian language. It is an undeniable fact that following World War Two, a turn for the better was witnessed in the education of the Albanian people. Elementary schools were opened in every town and in many villages, where teaching was conducted in the mother tongue, whereas secondary and higher education in the Albanian language was concentrated in Kosova. The spread of education in these territories played an important role in the enhancement of the political awareness and national consciousness of the Albanian population.

During this period in 1965 in Ulqin, in 1970 in Tuz and in 1979 in Plava, secondary schools were opened, but the issuance of the "Koha" (Time) Review constitutes the most important step in the publishing activity. In 1965, Radio-Titograd started broadcasting in the Albanian language; at the beginning 60 minutes a week to come to 30 minutes a day at present. Since 1970, the teaching programs have also included teaching units from Albanian national history and literature. These results were attained by struggling against the attempts of certain chauvinistic circles of Montenegro, which, aimed at closing down these schools, particularly during the years 1956-1966. They justified this activity on unfounded claims, propagating that allegedly, the Albanian language had no perspective and that it was the population itself that claimed the closing of these schools. Under such circumstances, schools in the Albanian language were closed in some environments of the Ulqin commune.

The third and one of the hardest times for the Albanians of Montenegro covers the years 1981-1989. During this period the Albanians witnessed the restriction of the rights that the 1974 Constitution guarantees to them. The 1981 events in Kosova were exploited also by the chauvinistic circles in Montenegro. The Communist League of Yugoslavia was at the forefront of the Politically differentiating the teachers, irrespective of whether they were or were not party members. According to evaluation by "professional" witnesses, they were declared not fit for the education of the younger generation. The "Vëllazërim-bashkim" (fraternity-union) Schooling Centre in Ulqin

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became the target of attacks. Five professors were dismissed from this centre and four teachers from the "Bedri Elezaga" elementary school situated at the foot of the mountain. This action was accompanied by staged judicial and political processes, as well as by the imprisonment of Albanian teachers and intelligentsia.

The didactic plan-programs immediately witnessed changes, divesting from the Albanian national contents. Henceforth, the topics from Albanian national history were removed from the teaching program of the elementary school, which lasts 8 years and provides the basic national knowledge, while Little knowledge on the Albanians is given in the framework of the general history. Likewise, the program of the Albanian language was deprived of the national history, symbolically represented in it.

Severe measures were adopted in the state and school administration. The attack was aimed also against those who had changed surnames, removing the suffixes "ic" or "vic", imposed by the pro-war Yugoslav monarchy. The ideo-political differentiation divided the Albanians into "honest", whereas those who thought differently belonged to the group of "dishonest" people. The use of national symbols was banned by special decrees, and those who disobeyed underwent grave punishments.

The grave political and economic situation forced many Albanians to emigrate to various countries of the world. 5 445 people moved out from the Ulqin commune alone in the years 1950-1992, whereas the number of migrants from all the Albanian territories in Montenegro is approximately 25 000 people. The calvary of deportations from these territories continues even at present.

The fourth period in the history of the Albanians in Montenegro comprises the years 1989 onwards to the present day. This period is characterized by the establishment of the multi-party system and political pluralism. After the multi-party elections in 1990, the party in power pursued the former policy, centralizing power and amputating communal governing. The 1992 Constitution sanctions certain rights that have to do with national equality, but these rights have remained only on paper.

Today, Radio Montenegro broadcasts only an informative-musical program of 30 minutes a day, while the television again suspended broadcasts in the Albanian language. Meanwhile, Ulqin local radio, which is tuned in the territory of this commune, but not in all the Albanian regions of the Republic of Montenegro, broadcasts 50 per cent of its emissions in the Albanian language. No newspaper or review whatsoever is published in this language; the Albanians can read nothing, listen to or watch no broadcasts over the radio or television. There does not exist proportional employment according to national composition of the inhabitants either in social organisations or communal state organs. Public administration is wholly not in the mother tongue.

Under such a grave situation, through their deputies in the Republican parliament and other forums, the Albanians of these territories, have protested against the injustices and have demanded national parity. But the party in power has not approved of the Albanians demands.

The Albanians of Montenegro draw these conclusions: their interests are being ignored, and the political status in certain aspects keeps deteriorating; they are autochthonous and compact people in the surroundings inhabited by them, irrespective of this they are not on an equal footing with the Montenegrins in political, economic,

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informative and cultural fields; the Albanians are not represented proportionally in the local and republican organs; they are not allowed to use the mother tongue in administration and public life, they have been deprived of the right to create institutions and associations for the development of culture and preservation of national identity; expulsion from these territories is going on for political, economic and psychological reasons; the Albanians have been ready for constructive dialogue and accord with the power representatives of Montenegro for acceptable solutions of their status; peace and stability may be attained by correctly resolving their question; the status of every people, every national community and ethnic group has been determined in all the democratic countries, whereas in Montenegro neither in the past nor at present has anything been done in this respect.

Based on all these factors, on the various international acts, on the fact that Montenegro is a multi-national community, and that for resolving their question they should have their political platform, the Albanian political forces in this republic adopted the document entitled: "The Memorandum of the Democratic Forum of the Albanians in Montenegro on the special status of the Albanians in Montenegro" on September 12, 1992.

The request for special status as the most optimal solution at this time is based on these arguments:

a) The Albanians are of the opinion that the special status, as a form of contemporary autonomy is in favour of national and civic party in this republic. It constitutes a sound basis for the precise definition of relations among the Albanians, Montenegrins, Moslems etc.

b) National parity in all walks of life should be determined by constitution and other legal acts, it should be realized by means of a consensus through the mechanism of defence from the illuse of majority and minority, under the control of international organizations.

c) Radical changes should be made in the Constitution of Montenegro, and the special status should be precisely determined as a form of social organization in Montenegro, in harmony with the documents of the international Conference on Yugoslavia.

d) The special status, accordingly modern autonomy, presents the minimum of the Albanians' demands in Montenegro. Talks in regard to this question should be conducted with the intermediation of international mediators.

In this document the Albanians underscored that autonomy or special status are not addressed against the interests of Montenegro and that their position in this republic should be examined in the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia.

The Albanians in Montenegro are convinced that the Albanian issues in former Yugoslavia cannot be treated partially, but in a unique way, from the aspect of the ideals of each nation to be united. But, at present the borders of the republics in ex-Yugoslavia are accepted as international borders and this obliges the Albanians in Montenegro act in conformity with the international factor. This implies that at present the Albanians on these territories should strive for what might be realized and tomorrow what they wish for.

The Albanians are aware that carrying this document into effect is very difficult, although it implies the natural human right of self-defence, and self-defence is an historic national right.

\* The Memorandum was addressed to the Conference of Geneva, the chairman of the Peace Conference on former Yugoslavia, Lord Carrington, the chairman of Arbitrage Commission, Mr. Robert Badinter; the UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali; the President of the Republic of Albania, Mr. Sali Berisha; the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Mr. Ibrahim Rugova; the chairman of the Republic of Montenegro Mr. Momir Bulatovic; the speaker of the Montenegrin Assembly, Mr. Risto Vukcevic; various embassies of Western Europe and the delegates of human rights defending institutions and other institutions with whom we had contacts and talks during this period.

- 1 *Stanovništvo SR Crne Gore po popisima prema nacionalnoj pripadnosti, Republički Zavod za statistiku, Titograd, 1991, table 1.*
- 2 J. Tomic, *Gradja za istoriju gornje Albanije*, Spomenik 1, I, Beograd, 1905.
- 3 N. Dobrecic, Budva, 1991.
- 4 *Popis stanovništva u Kraljevini SHS*, Sarajevo, 1924.
- 5 *Opci Sematizam Katolicke Crkve u Jugoslaviji*, Sarajevo, 1939.
- 6 *Stanovništvo SR Crne Gore...*, table 1.
- 7 *Ibidem*.
- 8 Q. Morina, *Dituria Islame*, no.33, Prishtinë, 1922, p.44.

