

Coercive Diplomacy of NATO in Kosovo

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By

Enver Bytyçi

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Editor:

Dr. Arian Starova

Reviewers:

Prof. Dr. Beqir Meta - Academic

Prof. Dr. Jusuf Bajraktari – Academic

Prof. Dr. Muharrem Dezhgiu – Historian

Prof. Dr. Hamit Kaba – Historian

Proof reader:

Lloyd Barton

Translated from Albanian into English:

Iris Gjymshana

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INTRODUCTION

The study “Coercive Diplomacy of NATO in Kosovo” is a thesis first conceived as a project during my scholarly activities in 2006, when I was exploring the archives of German institutions concerning Albanian issues in general and, more specifically, Albanian issues in Kosovo. I was motivated by the Inter-University Center for Albanological Studies and its Institute of History, urged by their provision of conditions for this work that I should make this theme the object of scientific training, based on the principles, laws, and norms of international rights. At the same time I thank the Scientific Council of the Institute of History for approving it for presentation as a working thesis for my doctoral dissertation, in the field of international relations in modern Albanian history.

The intervention of NATO in the Kosovo Conflict was the historic, climactic moment for Albanians in (and out) of Kosovo, as well as a historic turning point for the future of the world, the era in which we live today. Therefore, I am conscious of the unique responsibility I have undertaken, that, under conditions wherein much information and detail still lie concealed in the NATO secret archives, I should bring to light what happened in Kosovo in the spring of 1999 (and before and after), how it happened, and why. Aiming for so much, I fear it is not possible to exhaust all the endless volumes of literature which has been published about Kosovo and NATO’s role to end its conflict.

Throughout this effort, I have recognized clearly that every theme, especially the theme of my above-mentioned doctorate, has dimensions, perspectives, arguments and counter-arguments which are numerous, differing, and seemingly endless. I hope that I have treated the theme on the basis of my knowledge, always accompanied by the sense of doubt, if I have been able to be clear and precise in my scientific presentations. I know that everything is relative. Absolutes do not exist. Even though one more or less hair on one’s head is insignificant, one hair in a bowl of soup is very significant. With this, I aim to express that the truth and the presentation of it here in this thesis will not agree absolutely, but at the same time I hope and believe that the divergence between them will not seem significant like the hair in a bowl of soup. I also wish to emphasize that the reader and the writer will never have the same mind. The same can be said of scientific thought and scientific criticism.

I hope that the Scientific Commission, the academic world, and the political-social sciences in general will be satisfied with this scientific work. Herewith, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Prof. Dr. Marenglen Verli, who undertook the same theme as a microthesis for the defense of his second-level masters. I desire to express special honor to the academic Beqir Meta, who, as the leader of my doctoral theme, encouraged me with dedication by his counsel, that I might comply as best as possible with scientific forms in the preparation of this theme. His suggestions and criticisms moved me toward a second review and investigation of the details, their refinement, the layout of arguments, and the formation of conclusions attained as scientifically as possible. No less valuable and profitable to me were the encouragement and counsel offered to me by Prof. Dr. Jusuf Bajraktari, Prof. Dr. Muharrem Dezhgiu, Prof. Dr. Hamit Kaba, and Prof. Dr. Ferit Duka, who recommended additional literature for details and arguments. Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to Lloyd Barton for his dedication in proofreading this book in English. Likewise, I am grateful to my son, Blerim Bytyci, for his commitment in graphic designing and appreciate the efforts of my daughter, Elona Bytyci, in the overall involvement and assistance provided for the completion of this title in English. Last but not least, a special thanks is due to my family in general — my wife and children — without whose help I would hardly have been able to have refined in reasonable time the details, facts, and arguments presented here in “NATO’s Role in the Kosovo Conflict.”

CHAPTER I

KOSOVO CRISIS: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1. The roots of the Serbian-Albanian conflict

Kosovo is situated in the central region of the Balkans. It borders Albania to the South and the southwest, Serbia to the North, Montenegro to the west and Macedonia to the Southeast. Kosovo is inhabited mainly by Albanians, who make up about 90 percent of the population, but also by other ethnic minorities: the Serbs, Bosnians, the Romani, a Turkish community, Montenegrins, etc. Its surface area covers some 10,800 sq. km, while its population is estimated to be about 2 million.

Kosovo was declared an independent and sovereign state on February 17, 2008. An armed conflict between the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) and the police forces of Serbia led to a military intervention by the Atlantic Alliance on March 24, 1999, and its victory in June of that year placed Kosovo under international administration. From this time until February 17, 2008, when independence was declared, Kosovo remained under the international civil administration of the UN.

The crisis in former Yugoslavia and Serbia's extermination policy towards Albanians directed the attention of the civilized world to Kosovo. In the interest of avoiding a possible conflict and preventing its expansion, NATO undertook the launch of air-strikes against Yugoslavia (Serbia). Through these attacks, Albanians were protected from imminent destruction. However, in today's debate on the future of Kosovo, many dilemmas have arisen. Discussions have included the legitimacy of NATO's military intervention and as a result, the legitimacy of Kosovo's declaration of independence. This is also due to the fact that there are countries, nations and institutions, which do not yet know what Kosovo represents, what its history is all about, what the ethnic structure of its population is, what the orientation of the Albanians is and what their relationship to the Serbs was like.

Kosovo has historically been inhabited by Albanians, who are recognized as descendants of the Illyrians. Its territories were known in the ancient times by the name of Dardania. Generally, Skopje is known as the capital of this region, but Prizren, Nish, Peja and other ancient cities have also been referred to as important centers. In the Middle Ages, Kosovo was part of the Byzantine Empire; like almost all Balkan territories, for nearly two centuries at the end of the first millennium and early in the second millennium, it was occupied by the Bulgarian Empire and later on by the Serbian Empire. Its territorial organization during the late medieval period is known to be based upon different principalities. This organization was also present during the reign of the Bulgarian Empire and the reign of the Serbian Empire in the 13th and 14th centuries.

In the twelfth century, there was an influx of the Serbian population into Kosovo. Later, the seat of the medieval Serbian state was transferred from Rasha to Prizren, initially, and later to Skopje. Meanwhile the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church was transferred to the Kosovo town of Peja, as its headquarters in central Serbia, near Belgrade, had burned down. Afterwards, there was increased Serbian pressure and influence in this region. The first half of the fourteenth century marked the time of a far greater settlement of Serbian influence in these territories. This is the time when most of the Balkans were occupied by the empire of Stefan Dusan.

It is in Kosovo that the historic event, known as the Battle of Kosovo Polje took place in June of 1389, having as participating actors a broad Balkan coalition in front of the invading army of the Ottoman Empire. That battle was led by Serbian Prince Lazar, and ended with the defeat of the Balkan armies, where the Serbs, Albanians and Bosnians were participants.

The victory of the Ottoman and defeat of the Balkan coalition placed Kosovo under Ottoman rule, even though the Sultan himself was a victim of the battle. He was killed by an attack by the Albanian prince Milos Kopilic, who was the son-in-law of Serbia's prince, Lazarus. Serbian mythology changed his nationality and last name from Kopiliç to Obiliç. It was in this battle that Prince Lazar, known as "a holy martyr of the Church and the Serbian nation" was killed. Vuk Brankovic, one of Lazarus' sons-in-law, had fled the battle and his move was regarded as "treason" by Serbian mythology. Thus, the event of 1389 created three myths: The myth of resistance, the myth of victimization following betrayal and the myth of Serbian racial superiority. "These myths were revived in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, when the cult of the Medieval Battle of Kosovo was established, as a kind of historical event of

national and spiritual self-determination”, writes British academic, Noel Malcolm. [1]

Knjaz Lazar is considered to this day a symbol of unity, Milos “Obilić” (Kopilić) a symbol of sacrifice and Vuk Brankovic a symbol of betrayal. The year 1389 was perceived in the consciousness and awareness of Serbs as a year of tragedy and a historical turning point for Serbia. Anything occurring afterwards, according to the Serbs, was detrimental to Serbia and they would blame Albanians for this.

However, Noel Malcolm denies such Serbian reasoning. He writes that,

“[T]he history of the Turkish invasion in the Balkans up to this point (until 1389) has been a history of cooperation with Christian rulers.” [2]

However, other political and spiritual leaders, academics, professors and writers later on designed accusations, numerous plans and programs for the extermination of Albanians. Standing out among these plans and programs are the program of Ilia Garasanin in 1843, named as “Nacertanije”; the book by the former Prime Minister of Serbia, Vladan Gjergjević, *Albanians and the Great Powers*, published in 1913; the academic program of Cvijic in the early twentieth century; the political discourse of Prime Minister Nikola Pasic; the Memorandum of March 7, 1936, by the academic Vasa Cubrillović; the platform of the writer Ivo Andric; the Memorandum of 1986 by the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts; the exterminating program of the former Vice-Prime Minister of Yugoslavia (Serbia), Vojislav Shejshel; the Memorandum of the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the year 2003; as well as the other memoranda and anti-Albanian programs of the Serbian Journalists and Writers Association.

The truth is that ever since Kosovo came under Ottoman rule, it remained a separate Vilayet of the empire. Never in five centuries had Kosovo been a part of Serbia until, by a special decree from the Serbian king in September 1913 and by a decision of the Great Powers (1913), Kosovo came under Serbian sovereignty. Today’s overwhelming majority of Kosovo’s residents, Albanians, are descendants of the Illyrians-Dardanians.

““This old Indo-European population has been dwelling in the western Balkans, [a] region of today’s Albania and Kosovo since 1,000 years B.C.,” wrote D. Gashi and I. Steiner in the book *Albanians in Yugoslavia*.” [3]

While Dr. Fee Rauert writes that,

“Kosovo Albanians are constantly called a continuation of residence in Kosovo and therefore viewed as the first people of the Balkans.” [4]

Fee Rauert, considers as very important the thesis of the Illyrian origin of Albanians, particularly Kosovo Albanians. She believes that through this argument, Albanians prove themselves to belong to a higher culture, of the same level as Roman and Greek culture. [5]

Likewise, many experts and scholars adhere to the familiar thesis that Albanians are of Illyrian-Dardanian origin and even of Pelasgian origin. They have studied the history and customs of the Albanians, and have observed Albanian archaeological and ethno-cultural evidence. Among the first of these outstanding researchers, the German scholar, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646-1716), who classified Albanian as an Indo-European language, can be noted. The same thing was also mentioned by major-general Josph Ritter von Xylander (1774-1854) of Bavaria in Germany. He wrote, in 1835, that the “Albanian language is descendant of the oldest European languages”. Twenty years later, the same thesis was defended by linguist Franz Bopp (1791-1867), who removed any doubt as to the fact that the Albanian language is part of the Indo-European family of languages.

However, Peter Bartl pointed out that the claims of linguists still did not answer the question of whether or not Albanians are indigenous to their region. Therefore, Bartl writes, historians were also engaged in these studies. [6] To further clarify the origins of Albanians, historical researches were launched. The first among them, Swedish historian Johann Thumann (1746-1778), in his study published in Leipzig in 1774, writes in detail about Albanians and strongly adheres to his thesis stating,

“I have found no trace of them (the Albanians) that leads to an influx of population from any other region.” He also writes that the Albanian language has given such evidence of the fate of this people, which can be simultaneously linked to their neighbors, the ancient Greeks and Romans. [7]

Scientist and scholar, Johann Georg von Hahn (1811-1869), published in 1854, in the town of Jena, his main work “Albanian Studies” (*Albanische Studie*) and described Albanians as descendants of the Illyrians and even the Pelasgians; hence, as the first inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula. Peter Bartl writes that,

“Hahn declared Albanians as descendants of the first people; he definitely saw them as descendants of Pelasgians.” [8]

These theses were later also held by many other researchers, among whom was the distinguished Georg Stadtmüller (1909-1985). He wrote many books on Albania and Albanians, among them the study "Research in early Albanian history" arguing their Illyrian origin.

The great scholar and Albanian linguist Eqerem Çabej, analyzing the researches of his predecessors in different periods concludes that, "If we take a look at the history of the Albanian language, two things strike us as opposites in this area: On the one hand, a written language witnessed far too late, on the other hand, an ancient indigenous people in these parts of the Balkans, since the dark prehistoric ages." [9] While researcher Petro Zheji points out that,

"[T]he facts are proving once more that Albanian ... in one form or another has served and continues to serve for many researchers as a clue to help solve a variety of, ethnic, linguistic, European and non-European issues." [10]

The authenticity and antiquity of the Albanian language had also been noticed by the nineteenth-century Arberesh scholar, Jeronim de Rada. He writes that,

"[T]he Albanian language stands out as an original language, unchangeable and not mixed in its roots with such languages as Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and other similar languages." [11]

I mention these sources talking about the origins and autochthony of Albanians, since generally, this important part of history is falsified and distorted by Serbian historiography, using mythology as an alibi to justify the continuing violence and terror against Albanians in Kosovo. Proof of this falsification includes many works by Serbian authors. It is worth mentioning as the most prominent example, the early twentieth century book by former Serbian Prime Minister, Vladan Djordjevic, named *Albanians and the Great Powers*, published in several languages, but not in Serbian. This book follows the whole structure of the political and ethnic conflict between the two nations. Djordjevic totally denies the existence of the Albanian nation, even though in 1878 the British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, had expressed the support of his country for an independent Albania. [12] Other Serbian authors, such as Cvijic and Cosic, have published numerous works against the truth of the origin of Albanians in Kosovo.

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan conflict of 1912-1913, Kosovo was occupied by Serbian military forces and was annexed by Serbia. From that time, Serbia denied the autochthony of

Kosovo Albanians. As it emerges from political discourses and anti-propaganda campaigns, this thesis is used as a pretext for the violence and terror perpetrated by Serbs against Albanians in the former Yugoslavia. In the political, historical and ethnological literature, Serbia has justified its hostility against Albanians through false historical evidence.

They contain the platform for the physical destruction of Albanians and Serbianisation of Kosovo, using as an alibi the historical events of the battles in 1689 and 1735 between the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to the Serbs, in these battles the “Albanians sided with the Ottoman Empire and used violence to displace the Serbs from the region of Kosovo.” Modern historiography has defined the fact that Albanians participated in war on the side of Austro-Hungary. [13] The Serbian manuals talk about hundreds of thousands of displaced Serbs. Meanwhile, to illuminate the truth of these historical events, the British academic Noel Malcolm again comes to aid. He focuses particularly in the analysis of facts related to the recent events of the seventeenth century. In the historiography of Serbia, it is stated that, “... in 1690 a retaliatory raid against the old Serbia (Kosovo) occurred, and from this region were raided 37 thousand families with about 185,200 Serbs”. Malcolm notes that the Serbian priest of that time has testified that the number of people displaced was not 40 thousand households, but instead 40 thousand per capita (individuals). Furthermore, he noted that among the 40 thousand individuals moving to Hungary, there were also Serbs from Rasha. [14]

It is believed that the influence of myths and fiction inspired Serbia's action for the forced displacement of Albanians in the regions of Nis, Prokuplje and Vranje from the years 1876 to 1878, when the Russo-Ottoman war of Crimea had just ended. Albanians realized for the first time that the main threat to the existence of the Albanian nation was not only or mainly the Ottoman Empire; rather, it was the imperial ambitions of its northern neighbor, Serbia. This period is called the phase of the Orient's great crisis, because of the uprisings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Albania and the Albanian League of Prizren. The League of Prizren holds a special place in the history of Eastern Europe. [15] The Albanian League of Prizren adopted the political platform of creating the Albanian state in the borders of four Ottoman vilayets inhabited by Albanians: that of Shkodra, claimed by the Montenegrins; Kosovo (Skopje), claimed by the Serbs; the Monastery, claimed by the Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians; as well as Janina, claimed and later occupied by the Greeks. All four vilayets in the League's program constituted what would be called the next Albanian state, for the simple reason that they were inhabited by an overwhelming majority of Albanians. Despite the

results of the Albanian League of Prizren, this still remains the most complete political platform created by Albanians for the achievement of a new independent state constructed following ethnic boundaries. The League's program explicitly stated:

"We wholeheartedly wish to live in peace with all our neighbors, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria ... We do not want and do not ask anything of them, but we are all determined to protect that which is ours."

[16]

2. Kosovo after Albania's declaration of independence

The political platform of Albanian nationalists determined what the program of the League of Prizren was to provide. Sami Frasheri and Pashko Vasa, two founders of the theoretical thought of Albanian nationalism, put more emphasis on the risk coming from predators and hostile neighbors than from the Ottoman Empire, which they considered weak, rotten and in agony. In the 20th century, the Serbian-Albanian conflicts proved in practice the warnings and recommendations of the renaissance. The conflict was, in its substance, the Albanian resistance against Belgrade's efforts to expand its territories in Kosovo. The conflict followed a certain curve, in accordance with international circumstances and depending on the internal state of the Albanian territories and Serbia. So, for instance, during international times of turbulence and historical turning points, Serbian authorities and structures displayed extreme harshness in the fight for the destruction and expulsion of Albanians. Prof. Holm Sundhaussen writes that the view and mentality of Serbia in their attitude towards Albanians is defined by the racial concept of the right, on "the shed of blood and Serb graves" (in Kosovo – my note), which is also used to justify their "right" to the territory. [17]

The first period of extreme violence which the military, police and Serbian authorities exercised against Albanians occurred during the First and Second Balkan Wars. The First Balkan War started in October 1912, after four of Albania's neighboring countries – Serbia, Greece, Montenegro and Bulgaria – signed a treaty, which was then partially made public. The treaty indicated the position of these countries, which was to fight against the Ottoman Empire; but this was in fact directed against Albanians and the territories they lived in. Under the agreement which was still unpublished at the time, after war, Serbia would benefit from Albanian territories to the north of the Shkumbini River, and Greece to its south. There had been disputes among them concerning the territory of the

Monastir vilayet. Meanwhile Montenegro reached an agreement with Serbia to maintain Shkodra and the western part of Kosovo – Peja, Decani and Gjakova – under its dominion.

It was under these conditions that fighting with the Ottoman army started (a de facto war for the conquest of Albanian territories). German historian, Sundhaussen, writes that the army attacked Kosovo and its residents under the slogan “Revenge for Kosovo”, considering it a sacred place and the fight against Albanians as a “holy war”. [18]

In his book *Albanian Golgotha*, published in Vienna in 1913, Austrian chronicler, Alexander Leo Freundlich, has described quite accurately the Serbian crimes of the time against Kosovo Albanians and Macedonia. He has recorded a figure of 25 thousand Albanians who were massacred and destroyed in this war. [19] German scholar Konrad Clewing, exploring the developments in the Balkan Wars, writes that in fall of 1912, the number of killed Albanians amounted to 20 thousand. [20] Chronicles also record the fact that during that period, it was mostly women, children and elderly people who were destroyed and cruelly massacred, i.e. entirely unarmed and defenseless people, in order to clean Albanians from the territory of Kosovo. Prof. Sundhaussen noted that the Serbs said they came to Kosovo as liberators, while he gives a recognized definition in historiography, according to which a territory cannot be assessed as being free or occupied. Free or occupied and under rule are the people who live in a certain area, and the people living in Kosovo under the Turkish yoke were the Albanians, who constituted the vast majority of the population. Sundhaussen also noted that the annexation of Kosovo was promulgated by the Serbian King Peter Karadjordjevic on September 7, 1913. [21]

Freundlich wrote that,

“In the East of the Adriatic coast, almost a three-day journey away from Vienna, lives an indigenous people, the Albanians, who over the centuries have fought against enemies and invaders of all kinds for their freedom and independence. Indeed, during the great collapse, which occurred at the beginning of the Balkan War it was necessary that the dream of this people for freedom and independence finally became reality. But the Serb occupiers have found a method to destroy the desire for liberty of this people, shortly before its fulfillment – with murder and fire, the Serbian military troops have appeared in Albania.” [22]

Under these circumstances, international diplomatic efforts were made to decide the future of the state. The Conference of Ambassadors in London decided in July 1913 to establish the new Albanian state, which included half the population as well as half of the territories inhabited by

Albanians. Robert Pischler writes that political reactions and Albanian armed rebellions to prevent annexation of the Albanian territories in Serbia, Montenegro and Greece were disregarded by the Great Powers of Europe. According to Dr. Pischler, recognition of the Albanian state by the Conference of Ambassadors in London was the result of a compromise solution, whereby half of the Albanian population and a large portion of their territories were left outside the borders of this state. [23]

The next campaign of Serbian military, paramilitary and police forces was during the last period of the First World War and in the beginning of 1920. During this time, the Serbian Prime Minister was Nikola Pasic. From the start, he had announced his hostile strategy against Albanians. When a reporter asked him in 1917 what would become of the Albanians in Kosovo, he replied:

“We will convert them into Serbians and if not, we will expel them. And if they resist and we are not able to expel them, then we will kill them.” [24]

Albanian affairs researcher, Jens Reuter, writes that the Prime Minister of Serbia (Yugoslavia), Nikola Pasic, had created his conviction that within a period of 20-25 years, Serbia would have reached its goal: to assimilate Kosovo Albanians at a national and cultural level. [25]

The public announcement of Serbia's violent policy and its intentions to exterminate Albanians caused the latter to respond in defense of their physical existence, properties and territories. Thus a new movement began, which is historically known as the Kachak Movement of the 1920s. However, unlike ethnic cleansing campaigns of the early years of World War I, this time, many terrorist organizations in Serbia became active. Terrorist organizations were operating ruthlessly in Kosovo, especially Union or Death, Black Hand, and the Chetnik organization, etc. On June 28, 1914, on St. Vidovdan's day, these organizations conducted the Sarajevo assassination, which killed Austrian prince Franz Ferdinand and his wife. After the First World War, they became active in Kosovo too. The Serbian terrorist organizations were led by senior officers in reserve, such as Dimitrije Aspic or General Jovan Atanaskovic. Professor Peter Bartl writes that during this period around 12,000-25,000 Albanians were entirely destroyed. Because of Serbian terrorism against Albanians in Kosovo, he points out, the proportions of the Serbian population in the region increased from 24 percent in 1919 to 37 percent in 1927. [26] Meanwhile, Christiane von Kohl and Wolfgang Libal in their paper “Kosovo, Gordischer Knoten des Balkans”, published in Vienna and Zurich in 1992, talk about 30 thousand Albanians who were mutilated and exterminated in the period between the two world wars.

The Serbian terror and violence during the years of 1918-1927 was unprecedented; therefore, Albanians ruled out any possibility of co-existence with Serbs. The repeated cycle of violence and terror against Albanians caused panic, fear and insecurity, reviving past animosities between the two nations. For this reason, some Albanians chose to collaborate with Italian Fascists and German Nazis during World War II. Promises from the latter regarding a union between Kosovo and Albania motivated the Albanian faction of nationalists to collaborate with them. In their judgment at that time, they chose to co-exist with the lesser evil when compared to the greater evil of Serbia, which was attempting to physically exterminate Albanians. What this means is that the reasons for Albanian collaboration with fascist occupiers were not a reflection of racist and fascist beliefs and consciousness, but rather a way of escaping the wave of Serbian destructive violence against Albanians, which would explain why Albanians were the only people who defended the Jews from physical destruction by the Nazis.

The Serbs used this situation of war to exercise violence against Albanians. According to them, Albanians were “occupiers” in Kosovo, even more dangerous than the Nazis. The same idea was present among Albanians regarding Serbs. Under these conditions, the two nations went to war against each other. Hence, there were victims on both sides.

At the end of World War II, the Yugoslav (Serbian) Army retaliated by organizing unprecedented cleansing campaigns against Albanians. 30 thousand Albanians were killed and massacred across the country, the vast majority of them women, children, teenagers and elderly people. The wave of violence culminated with the macabre destruction of over 3,000 boys and men in Kosovo, who during March-April 1945 were shot and massacred on the route between Prizren and Shkodra, and ultimately in Bar. The site of the massacre was immediately covered in concrete as the Yugoslav communist regime built the Tivat airport on the mass grave of innocent Albanians.

The victims of this extermination policy against Albanians in Serbia traveled from Prizren to Kukes, Puka and Shkodra, to arrive in the execution square of Bar. Albanian historian, Uran Butka, writes:

“The Bar massacre and accountability of the Albanian state” proves with facts that the Albanian authorities of Tirana were well aware of what was going on with these thousands of Albanians, but did not respond, and much less help prevent this massacre, on the contrary. Besides the Army of Yugoslav Communists, during this anti-Albanian campaign many Chetnik organizations were mobilized. We can only mention one fact, the call issued by one of the main leaders of the Serbian Chetniks organization,

Stefan Miljevic. On June 30, 1941 he wrote a memorandum, summoning a collective vengeance of the Serbs against Albanians, and pointing out that "Revenge is a matter of honor for the Serbs." [27]

The period of development after World War II also remained tense. Albanians, based on the bad experience of the past, met on December 28, 1943–January 2, 1944 in the Bujane area of Tropoja for a conference, where they made two important decisions: Firstly, mobilization in the fight against the Nazi-Fascist occupation; and secondly, unification of Kosovo with Albania. The decisions of this conference are of significant importance in terms of the right to self-determination in Kosovo, but they were rejected by the federal and republican authorities in Belgrade. Furthermore, to avoid Albanians' chance for response, the Belgrade regime further instituted a policy of deportation and extermination, similar to that of the Serbian Kingdom's times. Aleksandar Rankovic, the number one of Serbia and also Yugoslavia's Minister of Internal Affairs, remained at the head of the anti-Albanian campaign. From 1946 until 1966, when Rankovic was dismissed from the Brioni Plenum, the campaign of violence and terror against Albanians proceeded ceaselessly. Pretenses were varied; however, the most dramatic was the movement to "collect weapons", during which Albanians were beaten, killed, imprisoned, tortured, massacred and expelled. According to Prof. Bartl, although the constitution guaranteed some rights in Kosovo, in practice, nothing had changed for Albanians. A terror regime reigned in the region, exerted by Rankovic's secret service and Albanians were second-class citizens. [28] The historian Michael Weithmann finds that from 1948 to 1966, Albanians were persecuted by a government policy of Serbianisation and denationalization, despite the fact that the 1945 Yugoslav Constitution gave Kosovo some kind of autonomy. He notes that the secret police, Serbian state terrorism, and the deliberate impoverishment policy were intended to integrate and assimilate Albanians into Serbian society. When this did not turn out to be possible, Serbia reinforced its violent measures to expel Albanians to Turkey. From 1950 to 1957, writes Weithmann, 260,000 Albanians were expelled to Turkey, without the right to return to their homeland. [29]

To conclude describing such events, it can be said that the history of Serbian-Albanian relations in the twentieth century has generally been a history of conflict, a history of Serbian violence and terror against Albanians, and in special cases, also the history of a violent response from the latter against the Serbs' attempts at the destruction, assimilation, deportation and colonization of Kosovo. Albanian violence against Serbs never had any political and ideological platform. Albanians responded

either in defense or in retaliation to many more violent acts from Serbia in Kosovo. However, Serbia and the Serbs were able to augment and blow the Albanian violence against Serbs out of proportion, as well as to present this violence as “unprecedented” and even as “a genocide by Albanians against Serbs”.

The essence of the conflict between Albanians and Serbs was and still remains the Serbian attempt at Serbianisation and the destruction of the Albanian nation in Kosovo, on the one hand, and Albanians’ fight to defend their existence on the other. This inter-ethnic conflict was often influenced by favorable international circumstances and particularly the situation in Albania. Kosovo Albanians perceived Albania as the main factor in their defense, although unfortunately in most cases that did not reflect the reality. During certain periods, Albania did not show enough will or wasn’t able to undertake anything significant in defense of Kosovo Albanians, although they were experiencing violence and a ferocious state of terror. Especially during Communist rule, and in particular during the time of “brotherly” fellowship between Albanian communists and Yugoslav (Serbian) communists in 1945-1948, the Albanian state in most cases not only agreed, but also collaborated in various forms with the Serbs and their crimes in Kosovo. Until 1981, communist Albania worked against the expansion of Albanian rights, on the status of a federal republic, due to a fear of losing power in the regime.

3. Reaping the benefits of freedom in autonomy

In the late 1960s, Yugoslavia won an admirable international authority on the world stage. Meanwhile, international relations of this time are known for taking a new approach to human rights. There was also an increased pressure on the Eastern countries from the Soviet Union. The Warsaw Pact, through the hostility of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, demonstrated the increased aggressiveness of the Soviet Union. Hence, Yugoslavia needed to improve relationships with its neighbors. Under these conditions, Belgrade was interested in improving its relations with Albania and avoiding a climate of distrust.

However, this also dictated internal changes, the elimination of Serbian nationalist and conservative obstacles. Therefore the Communist leader of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, decided to gather the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CYP in Brioni, where he announced significant changes to the political course related to Albanians. In this plenum, he discharged Interior Minister Aleksandar Rankovic of all functions, holding him as the only person accountable for the violence in Kosovo.

After the plenum, Tito paid a visit to the region, during which he publicly declared that in the case of Kosovo, “equal rights are out of the question”, and acknowledged that,

“Serbs have priority everywhere in factories ... while Albanians get rejected although they are equally or even more qualified.” [30]

Afterward, Albanians rose up in protests. The protests of 1968 began with the first student rally on November 27. Their main demand was “Kosovo as a Republic”, meaning the establishment of the equal status of Albanians with other people of the former Yugoslavia. Under the pressure of Albanian protesters, international circumstances, and in order to escape any possible set up by the Soviet Union in conjunction with Rankovic, Tito started a new era in his policy towards Albanians. In 1968, he made constitutional changes which declared Kosovo an equal federal unit, in relation to the federation as well as to Serbia. Those changes abolished the use of the religious-nationalist Serb name “Kosovo and Metohija”.

Such an insulting and denigrating label for Albanians became a part of political, religious and daily discourse in Serbia after Slobodan Milosevic came into power. It is unfortunate that such a discourse carries on even after Milosevic.

Tito prohibited by law the insulting use of the label “shiftari” for Albanians, which would be used again in the time of Milosevic. The new constitution allowed Albanians the use of national symbols and paved the way for important developments in terms of culture and education, changes which led to the opening of the University of Pristina in 1970.

However, all of this was not sufficient. A debate was launched on the special status of Albanians in Kosovo. During the debate, two options emerged: the option of a republic and that of an autonomous region. Finally, they settled on the solution of avoiding the name *federal republic*, and instead used the name *autonomous region*. The changes were brought about by the constitution of February 1974. According to the constitution, Kosovo and Vojvodina were, from a constitutive perspective, equal to the Republics. Kosovo had its own government, parliament, and Supreme Court. Self-governance had the same attributes as did the Republics. Representation in the Federation was essentially the same.

The Federal Constitution, in articles 5, 398 and 402, stated that the Constitution of Kosovo could not be changed unless the parliaments of Kosovo, Serbia and the Federation of Yugoslavia were in agreement. [31] This guarantee was the essence of Albanian autonomy and had also been given to the republics, but only in the dualistic relationship of Republic–Federation. According to foreign scholars, the Constitution of the Socialist

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia only had theoretical and structural differences in how it handled the republics on the one hand and the regions on the other. These differences have been regarded merely as an impact of communist ideology in the East, even though Yugoslavia was its most liberal country. British historian, Malcolm, writes that,

“Although the constitution of 1974 continued to assert that Kosovo and Vojvodina were part of Serbia, based on most constitutional law criteria they were both organizations with full federal rights.” [32]

National and constitutional freedom, although limited in practice, led Kosovo to develop rapidly in all areas. In addition to Albanian universities, schools of all levels were opened for all Albanians. The University of Pristina was recently operating with about 30 thousand students. The need for a faculty body created, to a large extent, the conditions for professors to gain qualification. Within a few years, this led to the formation of the Academy of Science and Arts of Kosovo, as well as several institutes, such as the Institute of Albanology and the Kosovo Institute of History. Educational development increased the desire and interest in the development of Albanian national culture. Albanian newspapers, television channels and a radio station were operating during this time. A powerful publishing house, known as “Rilindja”, was created which earned a visible space in the emergence of influential intellectual public opinion.

The relationship between Kosovo and Albania in the fields of education, culture and science marked a significant progress. Within a short time span, the constitution, the status of broad autonomy, universities, academies of science, and publications in Albanian emancipated the Albanian population in Kosovo. The parliament, government and courts of Kosovo operated independently, as provided by the constitution, which increased Albanians’ ability for self-governance and statehood.

Constitutional changes and the status of broad autonomy for Kosovo revealed the fact that Albanians had an unprecedented energy and commitment to use their freedom in favor of development and comprehensive progress, including progress in the area of economy. This explosion of energy and rapid emancipation in Kosovo captured the attention of Belgrade and eventually led to a restriction of this development by the Serbian government. To achieve the aforementioned purpose, Serbia used the events of 1981, when on 26 March and 1-2 April of that year, students erupted into powerful demonstrations, initially with economic and social demands and later on with the demand, “Kosovo as a Republic”. The Serbs’ new anti-Albanian hysteria was favored by the fact

that communist leader Tito was no longer alive and following his death the Yugoslav federation seemed to have gotten weaker.

Events in Pristina and throughout all Kosovo served as an alibi for Serbia to declare a state of emergency and to establish a curfew in the region, as well as to begin a campaign of federal centralization. Meanwhile, Serbia saw the revival of the fear syndrome that Albanians might break away from Yugoslavia and Serbia. So Belgrade returned to the practices of violence, terror, ethnic cleansing, deportation and murder of Albanians. During the events of 1981, detentions and killings returned to the operational system of the Serbian police. Prof. Michael Weithmann writes that after 1985,

“In Serbia emerged mass nationalist chauvinist forces, which sought a mixture of centralized communist orientation with the formation of a Greater Serbia. An exponent of this orientation of Greater Serbia and at the same time of the old communist line is Slobodan Milosevic, who from head of the Serbian Communist Party in 1986, rose to the post of President of the Republic of Serbia after 1987.” [33]

However, it can be said that the substantial autonomy which Albanians gained in the 1970s served as a model of untapped opportunities. This period proved that Albanians, if in freedom, could build state institutions and develop the economy, culture, identity and prosperity of their own country as well as that of their neighbors. 1970s Kosovo proved that it was able to be represented in the multinational Yugoslav Federation with the same dignity as other nations. That period of self-rule and self-governance has been and remains one of the best experiences to support Albanian demands for independence and democracy in the later period and to prove that they are capable of statehood and state-building. The experience of autonomy in the '70s remains not only a test but also an irrefutable argument in the belief that Kosovo's independence is not merely a right based on international laws, but also serves the purpose of building a much better future for Kosovo itself as well as for the entire region of Southeastern Europe.

4. Removal of autonomy in 1989

The year 1986 saw the rise of Milosevic into the position of head of the League of Communists of Serbia, while 1987 marked his getting a grip on the state of Serbia. Milosevic's rise and the elimination of the other political leaders of Tito's era left no doubt that the new head of the Serbian state would completely change the previous policy regarding Kosovo's

autonomy, and even the fate of Yugoslavia. Milosevic accused Tito's regime of anti-Serbian attitudes. According to him, "Tito had divided Serbia into three parts" (Serbia, Kosovo and Vojvodina). This critical perception amounting to a hatred of the past, along with the created perception of the so-called "Albanian genocide against Serbs in Kosovo", led to a radical change of policy towards Albanians in Belgrade in the former Yugoslavia. With his coming to power, Milosevic swore to restore the rule and sovereignty of Serbia in Kosovo. On a visit to Kosovo in 1987, after obtaining the lead in the League of Communists and the state of Serbia, he said:

"No one will dare to strike you any longer," patronizing the Kosovo Serbs, who had been allegedly complaining to him about "enduring the persecution of Albanians." He further added "Yugoslavia could not exist without Kosovo. Yugoslavia and Serbia will not give Kosovo away." [34]

This was the most serious warning of the new national communist leader of Serbia, who was the cause of successive tragedies in former Yugoslavia.

From this time on, Serbia was regarded as an invader in the territory of Kosovo. Jens Reuters writes that, "Between 1990 and 1998 the Serbian security forces in Kosovo exerted the de facto function of the invading troops." [35] The Serbs were manipulated with the problem of Kosovo; people were put under the pressure and influence of state propaganda, according to which there was a great injustice done to them. Most Serbs believed, and many of them still do, that Kosovo is the cradle of the Serbian state and church and therefore it is, and should remain at all costs, part of Serbia.

This perception was also influenced by a memorandum from the Serbian Academy of Science for alleging the inhumanity of Albanians and their genocide against Serbs in Kosovo. Theses about the memorandum became the ideological basis of the legitimization of mass violence against Albanians in Kosovo. According to Serbian academics,

"Serbia was economically discriminated against because of Slovenia and Croatia, while the Serbs in Kosovo were exposed to genocide of Albanians there."

The document was called "Enough with discrimination of the Serbian people".

This gebelsian call became the source of all anti-human trends of the Serbian government and other non-governmental institutions against

Albanians in Kosovo. Dobrica Cosic wrote the ultra-nationalist statement that:

“The fate of Kosovo is a matter of life or death for the entire Serbian nation,” adding that, “physical, political genocide in the area of civil rights and culture of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija was one of the most difficult dramas since the years of [the] Serbian wars for freedom in 1805-1841.” [36]

Commenting on the memorandum of the Academy of Science and Arts of Serbia for Kosovo, German scholar and historian, Holm Sundhaussen, writes that this paper brings to the public unproven facts and allegations as true, half true or false. “No word on the neglect and mistakes of the Serbian policy in Kosovo from 1913 onwards, no question about the topic of ‘historical rights’, no word about the rights of other nations in Yugoslavia” was written in the memo of an academy, which also claimed to be the academy of Yugoslavia as a multinational state. Later, Prof. Sundhaussen writes that the paper talks about a “genocide” and “total war” against the Serbs by Albanians in Kosovo, urging politicians to work to “restore the rights of Serbs in Kosovo and Serbia”. [37]

The author of the 1985 memorandum was president of the Academy of Science and Arts, Dobrica Cosic, on whom the American author Chris Hedges writes:

“Among Serbs, Dobrica Cosic, who wrote the sentimental novel on Serbian heroism during World War I, had many proponents, including Slobodan Milosevic. This novel was able to replace the real history with that of the Serbian nationalist myth, which was used to add fuel to the ongoing war.” [38]

Following these developments in Serbia, numerous protests and rallies were held in which the Serbs, under the protection and guidance of Milosevic, issued callings such as “Death to Albanians”, “Give us guns”, “We want to go to Kosovo”, and “We give up our life but won’t give up Kosovo”. Meanwhile the League of Writers and the Serbian Orthodox Church were placed in the vanguard of Serbian-Albanian conflict promotion. The Writers League of Belgrade announced fascist-oriented recommendations for Serbian politics. It raised to a nationalist cult the number of births among Albanians. The Serbian League of Writers threatened that,

“[I]n Kosovo had been shed so much Serbian blood that would make Kosovo remain a part of Serbia forever, even if no Serbs ... dwelt in the region.” [39]

All of the aforementioned documents, memos, rallies, speeches, publications had a purpose: The removal of Kosovo's autonomy gained through the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974. For this reason, Serbia imposed the federation's violent measures against Albanians. However, the illegal and violent restrictions occurred in 1989. At that time, Belgrade's government established a full police and military regime in Kosovo. In terms of an extraordinary situation, constitutional changes were prompted in order to remove the autonomy and rights of Albanians. After severe responses from Albanians against changes to the constitution, Serbian authorities forcibly gathered the members of the regional parliament and on March 23, 1989, amended the constitution of Kosovo. Belgrade's government surrounded the parliament building with tanks and introduced security forces into the hall as well as imposing and falsifying voting for the amendment of Kosovo's Constitution. A report in March 1990 by Helsinki Watch testified that the delegates of Kosovo's parliament who opposed constitutional changes were threatened with job loss, arrests and loss of income. Balkan affairs experts, Christine von Kohl and Wolfgang Libal, wrote that associates of the state police were in attendance at the Assembly meeting, while Albanian MPs were provoked, and forced to make a choice: Either vote for constitutional amendments, or a military regime would be deployed in Kosovo. [40] Jens Reuter reports that Albanian deputies were called in by the Serbian police and threatened if they voted against the amendments; that they would be declared counter-revolutionaries and would be prosecuted along with members of their families. [41] On March 28, Milosevic stated that “Serbia has restored its government and constitutional sovereignty” in Kosovo. [42]

Constitutional amendments were considered illegitimate by the International Helsinki Federation, while international expertise considered them a violation of constitutional norms of the Yugoslav state itself, since the Yugoslav parliament didn't vote for them. Legal judicial power could only take effect after these amendments were approved by the three parliamentary levels. However, in the Federation Assembly this was not the case due to lack of a quorum of federal MPs. This means that Serbia's violent measures to limit the autonomy of Albanians were in violation of the constitutional principle of Yugoslavia as well as Serbia and Kosovo, because both constitutions had sanctioned that any amendments would only have legal value after receiving approval by all three parliaments: the regional, republican and the federal ones.

However, constitutional amendments occurred in the wake of a massive opposition by youths: students, miners, metallurgists and all Albanians in Kosovo. Over half a million Albanians marched toward Pristina at the time, in protest against the removal of autonomy in 1974. In the ore mines of Mitrovica, Sari Terg and elsewhere, miners and metallurgists held hunger strikes for many days, going towards self-sacrifice and raising awareness of the situation in world opinion.

The consequences of these constitutional changes were dramatic for the overwhelming majority of Kosovo inhabitants, Albanians. Serbia immediately launched drastic revenge measures against Albanians, under the principle of violence and terror. Fabian Schmidt writes that, "The Serbian police did and was allowed to do as they pleased in Kosovo." The events of 1990 hinted at what Serbia intended to do with Albanians, specifically its intention of physical destruction, expulsion and the Serbianisation of Kosovo. The first message announcing these plans was given in March of that year, when the Serbian regime in Belgrade poisoned 7,000 children, students of primary and secondary schools. This incident drew the attention of the democratic world order, while the founder of the association Doctors Without Borders, Bernard Kouchner, went to Pristina himself to confirm the events taking place there. UN experts came to the conclusion that the poisonous substance was of a sarin type, which was only possessed by the Yugoslav army. [43]

After these events, Kosovo Albanians faced another difficulty: backlash against the Albanians who had performed military service in the Yugoslav army. Such murders were numerous and all were accompanied by the same evaluation on the forensic document: "Committed suicide." Security forces did not allow the examination of bodies and refused to allow family members to see the lifeless bodies locked in coffins. Albanians, confronted with a tragic situation and threatened with physical extermination, launched a massive campaign to reconcile differences, led by the prominent professors Anton Ceta and Zekeria Cane. The reconciliation assemblies were attended by tens of thousands people. This was a visible demonstration of the interconnectedness and resistance of Albanians, and also a demonstration of the power of union in front of the violence and terror of Serbia.

From 1990, Albanians did not enjoy any rights: They lost their right to self-governance. Instead, the Belgrade government appointed its own governor. The legitimate parliament of Kosovo was dissolved and its members were persecuted, forced to leave the country and emigrate abroad. Within a short time span, all state administration and Albanian government workers were suspended and replaced by Serbian counterparts

living in Kosovo, or coming from Serbia. The Serbian state took control of the University of Pristina and forbade teaching in the Albanian language, which elicited reactions from students, professors and Albanian teachers.

On March 30, 1990, the “Program for peace, freedom, equality, democracy and prosperity in the autonomous region of Kosovo” began to operate. This law gave employers the right to lay off workers, who went on strikes. On July 26 of that year, the Serbian parliament passed another law, “The law regulating work in conditions in a state of emergency”, laying off all those whose political opinions were contrary to the League of Communists, meaning all Albanians. Through these laws, the state administration was cleansed of workers in public enterprises, as well as all teachers, doctors, professors, and almost all Albanian employees in Kosovo. A total of 115 thousand of them were laid off. Meanwhile, Serbia’s government banned the only television program in Albanian and the publishing house, Rilindja. The removal of Kosovo’s autonomy on March 23, 1989 was an anti-democratic, anti-human and unconstitutional act. The Republic of Serbia and its government indicated through this act that nothing would stand in the way of making their dream of ethnic cleansing and the Serbianisation of Kosovo come true. Abolition of Kosovo’s autonomy served as an alarm signal for all the nations of Yugoslavia, warning a revenge of racial philosophy and violence by Milosevic’s Serbia. Milosevic took the opportunity to use Kosovo to warn rebel republics, such as Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, so that they would obey Serbian dictate and accept a Federal Yugoslavia centralized in his hands. Kosovo also served to strengthen the position of the ruling dictator of Belgrade.

However, the act of removing Kosovo’s autonomy also raised awareness in the democratic world. From this moment, the international community became aware of the fact they would be facing an ultra-nationalist regime in Serbia, which needed to be brought down to its knees. Kosovo had served as the first trial by fire in Yugoslavia. The act of forcibly removing autonomy was simply an act of conquest – the annexation and colonization of Kosovo all over again – which would from this moment fall under the apartheid regime. Milosevic initiated the Yugoslav crisis in Kosovo and ended his career by eventually losing the territory of Kosovo, simply due to his obsession with the physical destruction of about 2 million Albanians.

5. Establishment and operation of self-governing institutions

Under these conditions, Albanians in the region took all necessary measures of self-organization in a political, administrative, educational, health, social and economic self-administering system which ran parallel with the Serbian apartheid system set in the country. In December 1989, the first alternative political party in Yugoslavia was founded: the Democratic League of Kosovo (DLK). The establishment of this political party was a response to the policy of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, namely that of Serbia, which led the violent measures in Kosovo. In this sense, DLK was seen as the only alternative for a chance for Albanians to lead the new government in Kosovo. At the top of the Democratic League of Kosovo, the Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova was elected, and he quickly earned the trust of Albanian citizens in this country. Ibrahim Rugova was a prominent intellectual amongst Kosovo Albanians. He was born in Istog, near Peja, from a family with a tragic history. His grandfather and father were killed by Serbs because of nationalist activity. For this reason, he was raised under the care of his mother, grandmother and uncle, he received an education, distinguishing himself as a pupil, student and creator of the new modern design. [44] Rugova chose a new, original and unrepeatable path in the history of the Balkans for the region's liberation from violence, terror and the rule of Belgrade. This path adhered to the political and national philosophy of self-restraint, and civil resistance with irreversible radical purposes and objectives for the independence of Kosovo, or its union with Albania. [45]

This political philosophy drew the attention of the democratic world to such an extent that it could be compared with the effects of all Albanian uprisings and protests in the 100 years of Serbian occupation and annexation of Kosovo. It was on the basis of this philosophy that all self-governing institutions in Kosovo were created and enacted. Through this, Albanians in the country proved that they were participating in an independent state, spiritually, politically and with sensitivity. Throughout the 1990s the political, legal and administrative system of Serbia was rejected, with Albanians claiming the independent political system of Kosovo. Albanians passively supported Rugova's political philosophy and *believed* in this philosophy. [46]

Rugova was elected president of the Republic of Kosovo on May 24, 1992 by direct elections. He was also voted president of the country in the second direct elections, held in March 1998, when the war in Kosovo had already started. After the war, when Kosovo was administered as a UN

protectorate, he was again assigned by the new parliament as president of the Republic of Kosovo, a function he held until he passed away on January 21, 2006. Ibrahim Rugova was the founder of the independent state of Kosovo. His movement in Europe is widely known as a Gandhi-like movement, while the public image of Rugova both internally and externally was compared to that of Mahatma Gandhi of India. Rugova was called the Gandhi of the Balkans and on other occasions, the Gandhi of Pristina. [47]

Shortly after its creation, the Democratic League counted over 700 thousand members among its ranks, which made it the largest party in former Yugoslavia. On July 2, 1990, the league and their leader urged Albanian members of Kosovo's parliament to announce Kosovo's constitutional declaration, by which Kosovo would be made independent if the Yugoslav Federation didn't exist, or an equal Republic to other federal (confederal) entities if Federal Yugoslavia existed. Afterwards, Serbia dissolved the parliament of Kosovo. The International Federation of Helsinki defined it as a violation of the constitution of Yugoslavia. [48]

However, the Assembly of Kosovo was convened on September 7, 1990 in Kacanik, near the border with Macedonia, and approved the new constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. This has gone down in history as the Kacaniku Constitution. After this act, the deputies were declared as "wanted" since, according to Serbia, they had committed a criminal offense by approving the new democratic constitution. We must emphasize the fact that a total of 114 Albanian deputies, as they were at the time, met the necessary conditions of a quorum for constitutional changes. Due to persecution, the legitimate parliament of Kosovo convened later in Macedonia.

Based on the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of Kacaniku, Ibrahim Rugova's Democratic League held a referendum from September, 26-30, 1991, in which many Albanians and minorities in Kosovo affirmed Kosovo's independence. Despite the repressive measures of the Serbian military machine as well as extraordinary curfew measures, 87 percent of the population who were of voting age took part in the referendum, of which 99.8 percent voted pro-independence. This result marked a record in terms of referendum results held in the republics of former Yugoslavia for this purpose. No other country in former Yugoslavia achieved these results in expressing as much of a will for independence as the Kosovo Albanians.

Based on the results of the referendum as well as the Constitution of Kacaniku, on October 19, 1991, the parliament declared Kosovo an independent and sovereign state [49] while in a meeting dated May 2,