

International Centre for Minority Studies
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The Three Albanian Communities and Their Perspectives – Six Months Later

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I. Research approach and methodology

The second stage of the interdisciplinary survey, dedicated to the fate of Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania after the end of the military operations, was carried out in October-November 1999.¹ This second stage of the fieldwork applied the same interdisciplinary approach but with a reduced number of scholars, i.e. a historian expert in Balkan studies, two young historians experienced in anthropology, a journalist and a mediator-interpreter from Albania. Once again the scholars applied not only the methods and tools of their own science but they used the method of anthropologic discussions and a preliminary drawn questionnaire with semi-standardized sociological interviews.

The aim was within three five-day trips to Macedonia and Albania to take a snapshot of the situation of the Albanian communities in both countries, of their ideas about future prospects, their evaluation of the situation in Kosovo and the future of the Kosovo Albanian community six months after the end of the military operations.

The team was interested in the stereotypes and attitudes of each Albanian community towards the others, since the war and the refugee flows allowed them to take a direct and closer view of each other under the conditions of a critical situation. Another object of this research was to ascertain whether the national unification of the Albanians within one state is a question of present interest.

The social attitudes in Macedonia and Albania on the future status of Kosovo were also studied, as well as the views on the future of Kosovo as a whole, so that they could be compared with the attitudes of six months before.

The particular line of research of studying the ethnic and cultural specific features of the Albanians continued, i.e. generic and family relations, birth rate, restoration of the *Kanun* /the common law/, attitude towards the state and the institutions, division between the North and the South, etc.

The research started in the middle of October and continued till November 5th, 1999 (with some interruptions and splitting the team, thus achieving better efficiency).

The surveys were conducted basically in Skopje, Tetovo, Tirana, Duras and the village of Droc in Albania. The respondents were more than 30 persons aged between 25 and 70, men and women of different social status, i.e. politicians, intellectuals, clergymen, workers, farmers, etc.

II. Retrospective background – memories of the war and the refugees

The presence of NATO in Albania and Macedonia, the acceptance and accommodation of refugees are still very vivid in people's minds.

¹ The first stage of the research was carried out in June 1999. The team consisted of A. Angelov, G. Savov, V. Tepavicharov, D. Mihaylova, K. Stoilov, A. Zhelyazkova, and A. Chaushi. The results were published in the "Kultura" newspaper, issue 40, 8th Oct. 1999. To be published in *Ethnologie Française* (in French).

In the Republic of Macedonia respondents reply reluctantly to the questions because they feel deeply insulted by the international community which has not made any amends for the losses of the country which has given shelter to the refugees. Figures were circulated among people, which, irrespective whether they correspond to reality or not, have turned into a gloomy cliché about the false expectations and the failure of the democratic government. The losses from the Kosovo crisis amount to more than \$600 million and to this very moment the international organizations have reimbursed \$60 million.

Both Albanians and Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia are inclined to discuss the economic crisis and the consequences of the Kosovo war, and to abuse politicians rather than go back to the memory of the tension in the country and the sufferings of the refugees and their own hardships as hosts. Macedonians are faced with the distressing problem of unemployment – employed people in Macedonia now are 313 400 and the unemployed number 341 500. Of course, the Albanians have been included in these statistical data, but there is no poverty or insecurity among them – they hold the gray economy, as well as the monopoly family and clan business. By the end of August one of the Albanian leaders in Macedonia made some startling disclosures about the party of the Albanians that is ruling in coalition with the VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization), accusing them of doing all the smuggling to Kosovo. There is a special term for smuggling in Macedonia, i.e. “*shverts*” and “*shverters*” /coming probably from the German word *schwarz*/. The explanation of the Macedonian journalists is that at present, a redistribution of the shadowy economy is being carried out among the Macedonian Albanians, particularly in view of the new found opportunities after the Serbian rivals have been driven away from Kosovo.

The evidence of the Albanians in Albania is different. Against the background of the much more disastrous situation of the state and the country’s economy, they prefer to speak about their immediate involvement in giving shelter to the refugees. All respondents speak emotionally and enthusiastically of this. The persons interviewed emphasized on the exceptional hospitality of the Albanians when receiving their compatriots from Kosovo. They are proud that they have upheld one of the oldest and most typical Albanian tradition, i.e. hospitality.

The mass media had a great impact during the war and at the time of the refugees’ arrival. Reports and announcements about the refugees’ fate and the search for divided families are constantly broadcast. Many people offered parts of their homes to accommodate the refugees. They received relatives but quite frequently it was completely unknown families who were invited. The refugees insisted on living together because of the stress and fear of a possible parting, thus big families of 10-15 persons were often accommodated in one room.

The local population took care of the refugees in the camps providing them with food, blankets and inviting the refugees to visit them at their homes.

Actually, through the massive influx of refugees to Albania and Macedonia, the three Albanian communities were offered unique opportunities for mutual acquaintance and rapprochement in some spheres and estrangement in others.

There is a general feeling that the Albanians in Albania are still emotionally shocked by the stories of the refugees, by the crimes of the Serbs, and the sufferings of women and children; they wanted to retell these dramatic stories and events over and over again. It was difficult to stop the Albanian respondents if a conversation started on this issue because they wanted to speak, and to show the scenes of the tragic events.

Albanians in Macedonia referred coolly and tacitly to this issue, they were not willing to discuss their feelings and it was difficult to understand whether they felt any sympathy for the

Kosovars during the war: “We gave them shelter because we had to, that’s all”, “We managed, once they are at my place, there is food for all”. They did not say that they relied on the humanitarian organizations.

People in Albania value the support of the international humanitarian organizations. They highly appreciate the fact that medical care was provided free of charge and it was used by all, both refugees and local Albanians. UNICEF funded the publication of textbooks for the refugee children and at the same time it repaired and renewed the schools and provided the local children with school facilities as well.

School hours were organized for the Kosovo children during their stay in Albania. On 6th June school holidays started for the Albanian children and on 7th June studies started for the Kosovo children. The children were brought together on 1st June alone, i.e., on Children’s Day - to entertain the children in the camps and to give them presents.

Besides the local teachers, Kosovar teachers from the camps were involved as well. The opinion of the interviewed respondent-teachers is that the Albanian children are more advanced and better educated than the Kosovo children. To the question whether this was not the result of the fact that the Kosovo children had attended underground schools, probably without any planned curriculum, the respondents’ answer was that this was only part of the problem. According to a respondent headmaster, some marked differences in the mentality, mainly of the younger generations, have accumulated because of the different cultural and historical development: Albanian children are modern and worldly, while the Kosovar children are patriarchal and religious. The same respondent maintained that when they gathered for friendly dinners and talks with their colleagues-refugees from Kosovo, they used to conclude: “You are much richer, but we are more intelligent and educated”. The Kosovars did not dispute this assertion but they were definitely irritated.

According to the school respondents the aim of the Kosovars was to have at each school a representative of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) who, along with his subject – mathematics, chemistry, or literature, prepared the children and the adolescents for their return to Kosovo and for their duty to the KLA and to an independent Kosovo. Conversations on this issue were difficult because this kind of political and ideological interference at school reminded the Albanians of the recent past and this definitely embarrassed them. Respondents usually stopped this theme with the conclusion: “There were KLA representatives everywhere in the country, in the camps too, and they did their job”.

III. The Perception of the “other” Albanian or the three Albanian identities

It is very difficult for the external observer to define what is common for and what is specific to the three Albanian communities. Still more interesting is the fact that when starting this theme the Albanians themselves firmly rejected the idea that there were any differences among them. The first reaction of the Kosovars, the Macedonian Albanians and the Albanians from Albania was identical: “We are of the same flesh and blood”, “There are no differences - we are brothers, aren’t we?”, “We are one and the same ethnos, though separated”, “Our customs and traditions – they all are the same”.

A patient anthropological approach is needed as well as profound pre-historical and ethnographic knowledge, in order to understand the surprise of each one of the Albanian communities when the Kosovo events made it possible for them to get closer to each other. This is the fact that they differ substantially; still more shocking for the Albanians was the finding that they did not like

each other contrary to their inherent attitudes and initial expectations. Their knowledge about each other was, to a great extent, mythological and imaginary.

One should not create the wrong impression that they did not communicate and did not know each other prior to the Kosovo crisis. These, however, were incidental contacts, they referred to a very close circle of people and until the arrival of the refugees the social instinct had been unprepared to draw its concrete conclusions. Now, they have already been drawn.

Albanians from Albania about themselves

During Enver Hoxha's regime in Albania, the cultural, ethnographic, linguistic and economic differences between the North and the South were muted and suppressed with a policy of repression. According to the respondents "during the communist time everything was mixed up, the communists made a Russian salad, it had become difficult to speak about Ghegs and Tosks as something different."

Nevertheless, there exist stable stereotypes, which characterize the two basic ethnographic groups. What is more interesting in this case is that these ethnographic differences, "dialectal – we understand each other but you always know that you are speaking to a southerner or a northerner", "the literary language /the Tosk/ erased these differences", "in the south they sing without instrumental accompaniment while in the north they always sing to the accompany of *chifteli*", "in the north people are taller, in the south they are shorter, i.e. a Mediterranean type", etc., have turned into fundamental social differences. According to respondents the Tosks from Southern Albania are better educated and highly cultured. They migrated to the lowlands and now they live in compact settlements maintaining close relations with the emigrants in Italy. This makes them more open to the world.

Northern Albania is inhabited by the Ghegs, but another ethnographic group called *maltso* or *maltsori-s* inhabits the northernmost highlands. They live in small, scattered mountainous villages or in separate and hamlets isolated in terms of their kinship ties. The population is identified as more conservative, backward and reticent. The conclusion of some respondents, made to facilitate our understanding of the differences, is a typical social evaluation: "The Tosks from the South are the intellectuals, the real politicians and creators, while the Ghegs have always been military men, the class of soldiers and the police and they have remained the same. It had always been like this – both under the Ottomans and under Enver Hoxha".

The relations between the two basic groups of Ghegs and Tosks represent a constant rivalry for superiority, which very often oversteps the laws in force. There is a rich folklore as well, mainly jokes, that emphasizes the advantages and the shortcomings of the ones or the others depending on the narrators and their identity. Quite interesting is the argument about the *Kanun* of Leka Dukagjin.² One of the strongest trumps of the northerners is that the *Kanun* was compiled in the North, to which the more educated southerners reply that both the *Kanun* and the *Testament* of George Castriota Scanderbeg were valid in the past and are valid at present too and they have been observed by all Albanians, both in the South and in the North.

This rivalry has reached the most acute and destructive forms in political antagonism. Southerners respondents told us how during the time of Sali Berisha they were ousted from key state positions and then Tirana was flooded by highlanders from the North. They said that the entire state machine was changed, following the clan principle first, and then – the regional one.

² Albanian common law, the Albanian code of moral, social and life rules, compiled by a representative of the big Dukagjin clan, in force since the Fifteenth Century.

In 1997, after the collapse of the pyramid schemes the South rose against Berisha's government and Southern Albania was entirely cut from governmental control. In order to get the situation under control there were appeals to the highlanders from the North to support the government and to advance armed and well equipped on the town of Vlorë. Albania was faced with the real danger of civil war, which would have increased not only the tension between the North and the South but could have split the country.

The assertion that the change of the political leaders, though through elections, is actually a victory of either the South or the North, and that this leads to the corresponding change of some *fis* members with other *fis* members, is not a subject of discussion for the respondents. People in Albania are quite aware of the fact that in this way they move in a vicious circle and they hope that this circle could be broken off if Sali Berisha (the North) and Fatos Nano (the South) were removed from political life. Since the Albanians are outstanding optimists, they summarize: "When these two guys go away and leave the government in the hands of the young people, then everything will be all right and we shall enter the EU". This unflagging optimism in everything is probably due to the youth of the Albanian nation (the average age is 26).

Sometimes there are quite negative assessments about the *maltso* from the remote North, expressed by some Ghegs even from North Albania: "If they ask us, let the Serbs take the northernmost parts of Albania, where the *maltso* live. They are not like us, they are savage and uncultured."

At present one of the great Albanian problems /as seen by an external observer/ is the presence of a great amount of firearms among the population. According to unofficial data only 10-12 % of the weapons that were plundered from the barracks in 1997 have been given back. The Albanian authorities assume that arms among the population amount to about 600 000 units. Even the enticing proposals for buying them up at their double and triple price compared to the price on the black market, led nowhere. "No Albanian would sell his weapon", the respondents said, "of course, when you have plenty you could sell some of them for the family welfare, but there should always be enough in the family". Most Albanian families possess one or several sub-machine-guns and the smaller weapons and ammunitions are not counted at all. Arms possession is in the Albanian tradition. Men respondents speak about the past with pleasure, when the gun was placed in a prominent position above the fireplace and symbolized the independence of the owner. Now, weapons are kept in a secret place. They speak freely about weapons, they laugh, they feel proud and declare that they would not part with them: "I cannot imagine my family life without the pistol under my pillow", a respondent said.

Albanians are indifferent to religions and they declare their atheism without any embarrassment. Religion ranks far behind in their value system. Thus intermarriages between Orthodox and Muslims, Catholics and Muslims, etc. do not cause any internal problems. Some of the children are baptized, others are circumcised, i.e. they observe the ritual systems of the three religions without putting any religious feeling in it. More interesting is the role of *bektashism*³ in the Albanians' value system. They call the *Bektashi(s)* order "the fourth religion in Albania". Islam spread in Albania during the Ottoman rule namely through the order of *Hadji Bektash*, but this "fourth Albanian religion" had no religious meaning for the Albanians. There is not a single Albanian, particularly from among the middle and young generation who knows the specific characteristics and the philosophy of this order, but it is considered a great advantage to be a *bektashi* – this means that you belong to some spiritual and intellectual élité. All Muslim-

³ A Sufi mystic order related to the semi-legendary personality of Hadji Bektash (?-1337), who had been elected patron of the janissary corps. Bektashism consists of different elements adopted by Paganism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. This sect has played a very important role for the spread of Islam among the Christians in Albania, Macedonia, and Bulgaria.

southerners ascertain that their families are *bektashi(s)*. The respondents-Tosks rejected the possibility that there were *bektashi(s)* in the North but the northerners claimed the reverse. In Kosovo and Macedonia where Albanians come from Northern Albania there is also a *bektashi* order and the corresponding religious institutions, i.e. *tekkes* (in Đakovica and in Tetovo) but they are not popular among the local population. Actually, Tirana is the headquarters of all *bektashi(s)* orders in the Balkans.

Albanian pragmatism outweighs all forms of nationalism. It was surprising to hear from a great number of respondents answering the question about their geopolitical attitudes, that they did not show keen interest in Albania's sovereignty. All Albanians strive to be under the protection of some strong and rich country or union, or else - to leave Albania and emigrate to the West.

During a field work in 1993, when the land had just been distributed⁴, the new owners' dream was for rich farmers to come from the USA, to buy their land and leave them cultivate it, collecting all profits and giving them what was needed for their survival. This was a naiveté, which we witnessed six years ago in all Albanian villages.

Now the most frequently given answer was that the good prospects for Albania were for her to become an Italian district. A countless number of historical memories and concrete facts were brought to the fore, which proved the closeness of Albania and Italy: "We are one and the same with Italy, sooner or later we must unite." When we reminded them of the Second World War and the occupation, the Albanians responded, "Look at the center of Tirana, they made a town out of a village during the occupation. They never kept aside from us, as the Germans did. They treated us as equals. When the Wehrmacht soldiers came and began persecuting the Italians, we gave them shelter in our homes." You can rarely find a family which has no memories of having harboured Italian soldiers.

Getting into closer relations with Italy is the most promising thing, which places relations with the EU and the USA far behind in Albanians' dreams. "America, of course, is a super power and this is a good thing and we should take this into consideration, but neighbors are more important. We, Albanians, have always respected the great states and nations – the Soviet Union, China, and now the USA. However, while waiting for the ship with flour to arrive from America, people will have already died, that is why we look to our neighbors, especially to Italy and Greece. The USA are far away, they are just like a mirage!"

Albanians have an amazingly high opinion of Bulgaria and, in a sense, they feel a piety towards the Bulgarians. During the 50s and the 60s the best Bulgarian specialists - agronomists, selectionists of grain and tobacco, were sent on a mission to Albania for a few months, some of them for years and they introduced high quality agriculture among the Albanians. Respondents invited our team to visit a wonderful tangerine garden where we rejoiced like children to see a culture, which does not grow in Bulgaria. The hosts-respondents, aged 30-32 said, "We know from our fathers, and they know from their fathers that we wouldn't have had this wealth from our land if the Bulgarians hadn't taught us. Each of us has taken a vow to pass on to his sons and they to their sons, this high agricultural culture that you have brought us. You have taught us how to grow tangerines as well. You've taught us everything."

In the bigger towns there are Albanian-Bulgarian friendship societies, established by Albanians who graduated from Bulgarian higher institutions during the 50s, i.e. mainly agronomy,

⁴ In Albania the arable land belonged to one or two dozens of local families-owners and after Enver Hoxha came to power it was nationalized. This made it possible to avoid the process of "restitution" in Albania but to distribute the land equally among the families in each settlement.

navigation, etc. In the town of Duras alone there is a society with about 40 members. They are many more in Tirana. Bulgaria's decision not to accept refugees from Kosovo during the war in Yugoslavia did not meet with a negative response in Albania. According to respondents the Kosovar Albanians themselves did not want to be directed to Bulgaria. Their close aim was Turkey where they had relatives and they relied on better conditions. "We were more offended when the Bulgarians protested against the war, when NATO killed the Serbs, but they did not object to Albanians being killed. There were no voices in defense of the Kosovars. However, you have done a lot for us and we have no right to judge you".

Since the 50s and the 60s, when there was obviously a great mobility of students and specialists between the two countries, wonderful memories have accumulated, and mixed marriages have been contracted which have gone through the severe trials of the repressive Albanian machine. The good feelings are lasting and the respondents fear that the Mafia, as well as the weapon and drug traffickers, discredit the Albanians with the Bulgarians.

As a whole, the Albanians in Albania feel free and optimistic. For all of them the changes that occurred after the fall of the communist regime are positive. They enjoy the possibility to speak freely, to travel, and to work abroad. Respondents said that regardless of the deep economic crisis and chaos, the living standard had risen for many of them and for some it had leapt up. Quite impressive is the large scale and chaotic construction. Albanians are trying to invest all illegally acquired funds in constructions – they build everywhere, hastily and uneconomically, huge quantities of concrete are cast, thus devastating the wonderful nature. Buildings have already bitten into the wonderful 25 km long beach strip along the Adriatic shore, the wide belt with tropic verdure was swept away long ago for building private hotels and villas. Everyone in Albania knows that it is the local, as well as the Kosovar weapon and drugs traffickers, who erect buildings in Duras and along the seacoast. Respondents think that sooner or later the Duras coast will turn into a sort of Las Vegas where one could profit by gambling and prostitution and where the Albanian Mafia will meet. When the infrastructure improves, Mafia structures from other countries will probably join as well.

Albanians about their brothers from Kosovo and Macedonia

In the Albanians' consciousness Kosovo is a province which has greater opportunities for economic development and prosperity. In the beginning and the middle of the 90s, even in the beginning of the Kosovo conflict, the prevailing opinion in Albania was: "What do the Kosovars need, they live well, much better than the Albanians themselves, why should they bring ruin upon themselves?" Respondents from Albania spoke in details about the vast prospects that the Albanians had in former Yugoslavia /Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro/. They stressed on the great number of family representatives who worked in Western Europe, which made them not only richer but more different as well. To the question, "How did it happen that the Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia grew even richer than the Serbs and the Macedonians", they gave the following answer: "The local ethnoses and the authorities kept them away from all state institutions and jobs, they dismissed the Albanians from any state positions, they were not given access to the administration, the army and the police. The only way to survive and provide for the family was to work to the utmost in the private sector, i.e. trade, crafts, agriculture, and as hired laborers abroad. One should not forget the illegal traffic, of course. That's how they grew richer". "The Serbian and Macedonian authorities forcibly directed the Albanians where they could profit better and now they should not be angry that they are poorer. Because, it seems that here, in the Balkans, all are clever but all are naïve too". And they added, "Kosovars are very industrious. They are the most industrious people of all Albanians, of us and of the Macedonians." Jokes about the proverbial laziness of the local Albanians circulate in Albania. When NATO officers saw the

wretched state of the roads they allotted funds to patch up the holes. The Kosovar refugees asked straight away to take up the road patching, because they felt rotten when they had nothing to do. The local respondents told us that in Albania one could often see the following picture: NATO soldiers and Kosovars working and a big group of local Albanians-idlers standing round them commenting, laughing and smoking for hours. When those working felt quite exhausted, the idlers around shouted “*go ahead, go ahead*”, but they will not even budge to help them. “That’s how it was during the Great War,” some of the adults remembered, “the Italian soldiers built up many things and we were watching them”. This is a self-evaluation, which they pronounce good-naturedly and with sense of humor.

According to the opinion of the interviewed people, who had communicated all the time with the refugees, the Kosovars are colder and inhospitable. Drivers who provided the camps with foodstuffs and after the end of the war drove the refugees to their native places, and conveyed goods to Kosovo, spoke with outrage: “In spite of the hospitality that we showed them here, they refused to be our hosts in Kosovo. We spent a month in Pristina, in Đakovica, in Pe’c, but they did not invite us to take a cup of coffee with them, they pretended they did not know us. And we worked non-stop for them, as for brothers. They even stopped our truck, which conveyed goods and they sacked it. They jeered at us saying that if this misfortune had befallen us /the Albanians from Albania/, we /the Kosovars/ would not have accepted you.” Quite surprising for most respondents was the fact that one of the most important and traditional values of the Albanian ethnos was neglected, i.e. hospitality and gratitude towards those who had helped them in hard times. They made the following comparison: “Even the Macedonian Albanians who are more backward and less educated than the Kosovars are more hospitable people and they observe the tradition as it is according to the ancient rules”. “Kosovars are arrogant and they like nobody but themselves, they think that their wealth gives them the right to that. Our Macedonian brothers, however, are no less rich, but they are not haughty to us – they feel for our poverty and they respect our erudition and intelligence”.

Albanians worry that the events in Kosovo and the future status of the province could have influence, to some extent, on the reactions of the Albanian population in Macedonia. The dominating attitude among the Albanian society is that the Albanians in Macedonia should not have separatist claims. “Macedonia is a wonderful country and our brothers live there freely. They need not separate and destroy Macedonia. What is important for us is that the Albanians had their own place in policy there, as it is now”.

Albanians as whole – a look from outside and historical-psychological comments

During the past 10-15 years Albanians from the three communities were passing through a period of national identification, self-discovery and national maturity. At present, the Albanians are determined to win recognition as a nation, and are managing to overcome the centrifugal forces of the clan and territorial division. As a Macedonian political scientist said, “the Albanian society is experiencing now what the Macedonians experienced 50 years ago, and the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Greeks during the Nineteenth Century”. Albanians can be called by the term “the teenagers” in the Balkans, a term conventional for our team. This term encodes all the intricacies of the complex transition to maturity. “If Macedonians have no other option except Europe’, the same scientist says, ‘Albanians do have, i.e. their reunification, winning recognition as a nation and then integrating with Europe. They have an intermediate phase, which they would like probably to achieve before joining Europe.”

These all-Albanian strivings are complicated by the differences among the three communities. An Albanian intellectual summarized, “Albanians from Albania have already got a perception of the Kosovars as scoundrels, liars and Mafiosi who are haughty and inhospitable, but still,

these are rich Albanians. Kosovars, on their part, perceive the Albanians from Albania as wild and uncontrollable gangsters, who have been reduced to beggary”. Both communities accept the Macedonian Albanians as fanatically religious, illiterate and conservative. The inconsistency between the lack of xenophobia among the Albanians in Albania, the Kosovars’ fierce xenophobia and the complete ethno-capsulation of the Albanians in Macedonia was really surprising. Three different directions and three different levels of relations with the “others”.

The vendetta has been revived and it is waged by Albanians against Albanians in Albania. When we put questions to the respondents, we made great efforts to get an answer. One of the respondents, an educated person, scolded our interpreter-mediator and said, “You should not translate everything, each home has its own secrets and you have to keep the secrets of our home”. The explanation of most respondents is that the *Kanun* and the vendetta as part of the common law have been inevitably revived, due to the fact that the state is weak and the institutions do not function. What worries the educated respondents is that the *Kanun* has been revived in a distorted form in Albania.

Enver Hoxha solved the problem of the common law in a drastic way, similarly to the complete banning of religion. He killed or removed the clan Elders who knew the principles and applied the *Kanun*. Fifty years later there really exist blanks in the historical memory of the Albanians. They try to restore the customary traditions but they do that by changing or supplementing the Code due to lack of continuity. Old people-respondents said horrified that there were gross violations in the today’s enforcement of the *Kanun*, especially in its blood feud part.

In Kosovo the vendetta has been revived by the extreme political situation and it is applied in everyday practice without any hesitation or attempts to restore the requirements of tradition. For example, according to deep seated tradition women cannot be killed, or if a woman covers up a man or a male child with her body they should be reprieved. Now this practice has been forgotten.

In Macedonia blood feud is not applied, but this issue requires some additional research. For the time being, the team’s conclusion is that this conservative and close community has its leaders who usually settle disputes and impose punishments.

For the researcher, who observes the revival and observance of the *Kanun* from outside, this is an obvious tendency to some *primitive form of an alternative state and of parallel social and legal institutions*.

How could they carry out the national formation and the national unification with these significant differences and with the feeling of mutual mistrust and sense of superiority? This simply cannot happen unless it is a common decision and a platform of the political elites of the three communities, imposed aggressively and, of course, supported by external factors. Consequences are unforeseen.

IV. Kosovo – a look from outside

Albania encourages anything that happens in Kosovo. Each achievement of the Kosovars has been acclaimed and approved. The fact that the Kosovars are cleansing the territory from Serbs and Roma, that they keep in fear and tension the Gorantsi(s) and the Turks – all this has been explained by the consequences of the suffering endured. No one is inclined to comment the fact that the aggression turns against their own people, against the intellectuals, former ideologists of

the resistance against the Serbs, who fear now the Kosovar xenophobia and the vague prospects for the development of Kosovo.

The prevailing answer of the respondents from Albania is: "Kosovo must be independent, and after plenty of time, if need be, we could unite." Albanians know one and only one truth from their history textbooks, namely that Kosovo is a long-standing Albanian territory, which was treacherously raided by the Serbs in 1912 and was cut off from the motherland along with its population.

A great disappointment reigns among the Albanian community in Macedonia six months after the end of the war. Contacts are kept only by businessmen and the Mafia structures, which redistribute the gray economy. Ordinary people, who gave shelter to refugees, have no contacts with their new friends from Kosovo, they do not know their fate, nor can they exchange any information with them.

We put a question to a famous Albanian intellectual and political leader, who was familiar with the first part of our research: "Well, what is going in Kosovo now; is our conclusion that Kosovo will turn into a center of attraction, into a Mecca or a Piemonte, for all the Albanians in the world, still valid?" He answered with bitterness, "Kosovo will never be anything else but one big Aviano, or in simpler words, a big American base". Question: "Are the Kosovars aware of what has happened to them for six months now?" Answer: "The only Albanians in the world who do not understand what is happening to them are the Kosovar Albanians". Another respondent from the Macedonian Albanian community added accordingly: "Actually, they cannot get out of the euphoria of victory and revenge or rather, this euphoria gradually and imperceptibly turns into a lasting fanaticism, admixed with criminality and impunity". Another respondent: "They are isolated from the outer world, that is the reason why no one of us can warn them that they are enclosed in a ghetto which is the breeding ground of hatred only. It is only the Mafiosi and the traffickers who travel everywhere and meet whoever they want".

In Bulgaria, from where a lot of drivers transport building materials from the Ukraine and other parts of the region, there is already an ironic catchword about the new Kosovo racism: "In Kosovo the best thing is to be a black person". A Bulgarian official from the UN mission was killed because of his Slav origin, two of the Bulgarian drivers were also killed. According to the Bulgarian drivers KFOR and the international police troops are not in a position to gain command of the crime rate: "They attack and maraud. When a KFOR soldier appears, they have already disappeared, when the soldier goes away, they come again to finish off what they have started. Our work is like a Russian roulette."

The Bulgarian policemen from the international contingent, who have gained a long experience in Cambodia and Bosnia, say that their mission there is the most difficult one. They explained that both in Cambodia and in Bosnia, or wherever they had worked, they had always relied on the empathy and assistance of the local people, but this was not the case in Kosovo: "Police work is entirely based on contacts with the local people, and everywhere this has worked – in Bosnia we even made good friends. We are facing a wall here, no one is willing to ask for our help or to assist us. In fact, nobody wants us to stay there". Another Bulgarian policeman: "I have long experience and I know that nothing is black-and-white in life and that namely the nuances are the place where we lay the principles of our work. Here in Kosovo, we met for the first time an absolute elementary black-and-white situation which made us feel helpless and our efforts - useless."

V. Conclusions

This research contains various information and a number of conclusions could be drawn. We shall offer only one, which is related most directly to the Kosovo future:

In the course of their history Albanians have almost never existed independently or in a state of continuous unification - going back to ancient times and the early Middle Ages. They had been for shorter or longer periods of time under the domination of Rome, Byzantium, Bulgaria, Sicily, Serbia, the Ottoman Empire, etc., until 1912. Thus, in the course of history a perfect system for alternative existence has been built, i.e. a crypto-doubling of the social relations, institutions and functions needed by an independent state.

During the Ottoman Empire the Albanian crypto-society was quite typical since it functioned for long during the historical times of the Balkans. The Ottoman power nominally existed with the assistance of representatives of the Albanian clans and the territorial communities. The Elders represented their family or town/village community before the authorities, and they fulfilled all obligations – taxes, military service, etc. De jure, for centuries Albania had been ruled by the Sublime Porte and Islam ruled over the country, but de facto – there was an alternative local administration and Crypto-Christianity. Under the obvious observance of the stringent norms of the Ottoman-Islam *shariat*, it is the *Kanun*, the common law, that was really in power.

This is a system of mechanisms of independent existence, under the ostensible form of the subjection, a system of adopting or reconciling with the alien government, even of demonstrated loyalty, perfectly functioning and tested during the centuries.

Such was the existence of the Albanians within the boundaries of the Yugoslav federation especially after the Albanians in the Kosovo province were deprived of autonomy. It is then that the set principles of parallel existence in all spheres of social, political and economic life got unlocked.

Such is the future of Kosovo under the ostensible form of an international protectorate. The Elders will give power to some individuals (at present these are former KLA commanders), who wear European clothes and have European behavior and who will demonstrate before the media and the international observers Kosovo society's absolute loyalty and affiliation to the European values and world civilization. This will be illusory – against the background of this inevitable and internationally supported scenery of an official administration and observance of legality, all parameters of an alternative, close and undemocratic system will develop, where no one will be able to penetrate in order to study it, unless he becomes part of it or risks his life for the scholarly interest displayed.

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