

# *A Series of Details on the Migration of the Albanian Population from Kosovo to Türkiye (1918-1941)*

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This paper aims to address the mass migration of the Albanian population from Kosovo and other Albanian territories within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Migration as a phenomenon was one of the first

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instruments of the foreign policy of this kingdom, which aimed at subverting ethnic relations not only in Kosovo but also in other territories that were included within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Our study is based on archival sources which explain the purpose of the deportation of the Albanian population from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, especially in Kosovo during the period 1918-1941. The migration of the Albanian population was carried out in two ways: first by compulsion and second through the agreements concluded between the Serbian and Turkish governments. Alongside this, we intend to show the attitudes of the interested groups, i.e. the political elite, the population and the Albanian scholars of the time, who continuously opposed the migration of the Albanian population, as well as the attitude of the Turkish authorities in Ankara. Our work is based on archival documents, articles published in the press of the time through which we unfold ideas and argue our position.

**Keywords:** Migration of Albanians, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Türkiye, migration to Türkiye at interwar period.

### ÖZ

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Bu makale, Arnavut nüfusunun Kosova'dan ve Yugoslavya Krallığı içindeki diğer Arnavut topraklarından kitlesel göçünü ele almayı amaçlamaktadır. Bir olgu olarak göç, krallığın dış politikasının ilk politikalarından biriydi ve sadece Kosova'da değil, Yugoslavya Krallığı'na dâhil olan diğer bölgelerde de etnik ilişkileri bozmayı hedefliyordu. Çalışmamız 1918-1941 döneminde Arnavut nüfusun Yugoslavya Krallığı'ndan ve özellikle Kosova'dan sürülmesinin amacını açıklayan arşiv kaynaklarına dayanmaktadır. Arnavut nüfusunun göçü iki şekilde gerçekleştirildi: Birincisi zorla, ikincisi ise Sırp ve Türk hükûmetleri arasında yapılan anlaşmalar yoluyla. Bunun yanı sıra, Arnavut nüfusunun göçüne sürekli karşı çıkan ilgili grupların, yani siyasi elitlerin, halkın ve dönemin Arnavut bilim adamlarının tutumunu ve Türk yetkililerin bu konudaki tutumunu da göstermeyi amaçlıyoruz. Arnavut nüfusunun kitlesel göçüne ilişkin makale, o dönemdeki genel koşullar dikkate alınarak tutarlı bir şekilde ele alınmıştır. Çalışmamız, fikirlerimizi ortaya koyduğumuz ve konumumuzu tartıştığımız arşiv belgelerine, dönemin basınında yayınlanan makalelere dayanmaktadır.

**Keywords:** Arnavut göçü, Yugoslavya Krallığı, Türkiye, İki Savaş Arası Dönemde Türkiye'ye Yapılan Göçler.

## Introduction

Kosovo and other Albanian territories in Macedonia and in Montenegro, were occupied by the Serb-Montenegro armies in October 1912, while they were separated from Albania on 29 July 1913 as a result of the decisions of the Conference of Ambassadors in London.<sup>1</sup>

During the First World War (1914-1918), Kosovo was divided into two zones of occupation: The Austro-Hungarian zone and the Bulgarian zone. In contrast to the Austro-Hungarian area, in the Bulgarian area the position and condition of the Albanians was extremely difficult as a result of the discourse followed by the Bulgarian state.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the war in Kosovo and the western part of Macedonia, the French army penetrated first in coordination with the Serbian army.<sup>3</sup> The 1st Serbian Army penetrated from Nis, while the 2nd Serbian Army, according to the order of the Supreme Headquarters, dated 4 October 1918, penetrated from Skopje in the direction of Pristina and had the task of deployment until 10-14 October 1918 in Kosovo.<sup>4</sup>

After the end of World War I, Serbia, being part of the victorious Entente bloc, made good use of this historical moment. The long-standing ambition of the Serbian monarchs for a unified state of the South Slavs became a reality with the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes on December 1, 1918.<sup>5</sup> Its formation was supported by the victorious Entente states such as France and England, with the exception of Italy. The creation of

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Poincare, *The First and Second Balkan Wars and the London Conference (1912-1913)*, Logo-A, Skopje, 2005, p.17.

<sup>2</sup> Zivko Avramovski, "The Austro-Hungarian-Bulgarian Conflict around Kosovo and the Bulgarian Intentions to reach the Adriatic Sea through Albania (1915-1916)", *Albanological Traces*, No. III/1973; Izber Hoti, "Orientations and Attitudes in Kosovo during the First World War", *Kosovo*, No. 42, 2017, p. 179-182; Marenglen Verli, "Aspects about the Situation in the Albanian Territories under the Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian Occupation (1916-1918)", *Kosovo*, No. 42, 2017, p.195-228.

<sup>3</sup> Liman Rushiti, *Territorial Division and Administrative Regulation of Kosovo 1878-1941*, Institute of History, Pristina, 2004, p. 78- 81.

<sup>4</sup> Skender Lutfiu, *The Issue of Albanians in Yugoslavia in the Background of Albanian-Yugoslav Relations 1918-1939*, Institute of History, Prishtina, 2021, p.30.

<sup>5</sup> Georges Castelan, *History of Balkan*, NGBGSH "Gutenberg", Pristina, 1997, p.442.

the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was also backed by the United States.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Political Discourse of the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom towards the Albanian Population (1918-1941)**

After the World War I, Kosovo was part of the Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. The Albanians in Kosovo in this period faced discriminatory political developments from the official Belgrade in opposition to the interests of the Albanian people, in an effort for assimilation and changes in their cultural identity. The Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom (SKS), from 3 October 1929 took the name of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The traces of the forced expulsion of the Albanian population from their lands can be seen as early as the second half of the century. XIX century. But this phenomenon becomes more visible and in an organized manner after the Russian-Turkish war of the years (1877-1878) and the Congress of Berlin 1878. The objectives were clear: the expansion of Serbia's traditional state borders and the seizure of the land and immovable property of the Albanians, who were unjustly placed within the framework of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (hereinafter referred to as SKS).<sup>7</sup>

Despite the fact that official Belgrade on 10 September 1919, had signed the Treaty of Saint Germaine, adopted by the League of Nations, it not only did not implement it, but violated all points of this treaty.<sup>8</sup> So, the main unified focus of official Belgrade's diplomacy and politics was the ethnic cleansing of the autochthonous Albanian villages as well as the creation of favorable conditions for the settlement of Slavic settlers, perhaps inspired by the experience of the forced displacement of Albanians from Sanjak of Nis in 1878.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bogdan Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslovenske države 1918-1941*, Diplomatsko-istorijski pregled, Zagreb, 1975, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Jahja Drançolli, *Rrënjët e qytetërimit iliro-shqiptar në Kosovë*, Buletini i Fakultetit Filozofik, Nr.XXV-1995, Prishtinë, 1998, p.173-175.

<sup>8</sup> Srbija i Albanci, *Pregled politick Srbije prema Albancima*, Knjiga II, Časopis za kritiko znanosti, Univerzitetni konferenci Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije Maribor in Ljubljana: 1989, p. 47; Petrit Imami, *Serbs and Albanians through the centuries*, Volume I, "Samizdat B92", Belgrade, 2016, p. 442; Armend Mehmeti, *Diplomacy of Great Britain in Albanian-Yugoslav Relations 1919-1939*, ASA- Institute of History, Tirana, 2020, p. 363.

<sup>9</sup> Sabit Uka, *The expulsion of Albanians from Southern Serbia, in 1877-1878 and their Placement in the Plain of Kosovo*, "Zëri", Prishtina, 1991. p.32.

A new phase with tragic consequences for the Albanian population of Kosovo begins with the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and the dismemberment of Albania by the decisions of the Conference of Ambassadors in London in 1913. Like it is known that based on these decisions, most of the territorial surface as well as most of the cities and villages of Kosovo remained outside the borders of the newly formed Albanian state, falling under Serbian rule. Cities inhabited by Albanians such as Peja, Gjakova, Prizren, Mitrovica, Prishtina, Skopje, Manastir, Ohrid, had fallen under Serbian rule, taking also into account the Albanian lands of the province of Çhameria which remained under the rule of Greece.<sup>10</sup>

The mistreatment of the innocent population throughout the time did not change; the Albanians were the object of brutal violence, which is why the departures of the population were more numerous. As a result, the number of the Albanian population in the province was constantly decreasing. The 30s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the Albanians of Kosovo and other Albanian territories were very serious as the violence exercised by the authorities led to displacement to Türkiye and Albania.

Representatives of the Albanian political scene of Kosovo were involved in political life. Parliament was the arena where, mostly, the Albanian deputies, through discussions and debates, often reacted against the discriminatory policy pursued by the Yugoslav government towards the Albanians.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in order to halt the anti-Albanian policy, they even drafted a memorandum in 1935, in which, among other things, they demanded from his government the cessation of the implementation of the agrarian reform and the confiscation of land.<sup>12</sup>

The deputies of Kosovo in Belgrade opposed the migration of the Albanian population from Kosovo to Türkiye and other territories, in the name of agrarian reform.<sup>13</sup>

In 1938, deputy Ferhat Draga, supported by other activists, submitted a memorandum to the Yugoslav government requesting the cessation of the

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<sup>10</sup> Oliver Jens Schmitt, *The Balkans in the 20th century*, Prishtina, Artini publications, 2021. p.46-73.

<sup>11</sup> Skender Lutfiu, "Education and Albanian culture in Ferizaj (1918-1941)", *Kosovo*, no. 40, Prishtina: Institute of History, 2015, pp.198.

<sup>12</sup> Bajrami, *Social circumstances*, 267-268.

<sup>13</sup> *Archive of the Institute of History in Prishtina* (hereinafter: *AIHP*). Fund (hereinafter: F.) VIII, D.312, p. 1. Action of Kosovo students against agrarian reform and injustices. Prishtina, 1979; Daut Bislimi, *Political-military formations in Kosovo (1941-1945)*, Prishtina, Albanological Institute, 1997, p. 37.

implementation of the Yugoslav–Turkish agreement for the displacement of Albanians from Kosovo. The head of the government, Stojadinovic, "accepted" these requests, and for their implementation he was the "guarantor" along with the Bosnian Representative Dr. Mehmet Spaho. For this reason, Ferhat Draga helped him in the parliamentary elections that took place on 11 December 1938.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the situation of the Albanian population continued to be extremely difficult.

### **Consequences of the Serbian Colonizing Agrarian Reform in Kosovo**

The position of the Albanians was difficult due to the lack of economic development of Kosovo and the Albanian territories within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In fact, not only has no investment been made in the Albanian territories, but the Yugoslav government has always worked with the aim of displacing the Albanian population from their lands and replacing them with the Slavic population.

Analyzing the situation of Albanians within Yugoslavia, we can say that agrarian reform and colonization were two forms that were used alongside each other, to accomplish Belgrade's goal, which aimed to change the ethnic structure, to the detriment of the Albanian population, which in Kosovo constituted the vast majority.<sup>15</sup>

Belgrade's intentions were in continuous commitment to realizing the aspirations of the Serbs on the horizon where many elements were observed that clearly prove that the Serbian policy did not stop at establishing settlements in Kosovo and in other Albanian areas within Yugoslavia. Until January 1939, 10,714 settler families settled in Kosovo on 91,435,30 ha of land.<sup>16</sup>

Based on the data of Albanian historiography, until the end of 1940, of the 381,245 hectares in the territory of Kosovo, as a result of colonization, 222,080 hectares were expropriated,<sup>17</sup> According to Albanian researchers, 15,943 houses

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<sup>14</sup> Bajrami, *Social circumstances*, p. 267-268.

<sup>15</sup> *AIHP* F. 44, p. 28-29. Various documents – Ali Hadri, National oppression of Albanians; Ramiz Abdyl, "The factors that influenced the change of the socialist structure in the villages of Kosovo (1918-1941)", *Kosova*, No 15, Institute of History, Prishtina, 1986, p.163; See more in: Milovan Obranović, *Agrarian Reform and Colonization in Kosovo (1918-1941)*, Institute of History, Prishtina, 2005; Marenglen Verli, *Colonizing Agrarian Reform in Kosovo (1918-1941)*, The Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania, Tirana, 1992.

<sup>16</sup> For more details on agrarian reform and colonization, see: *AIHT*, F.A-V, D.15, p. 21. Agrarian Reform; Osmani, *Colonization, Agrarian Reform*, I. pp. 99-100; *History of Albanians during the 20th century*, Vol. III, 2020. p. 565.

<sup>17</sup> Bajrami, *ibid*, p. 96.

were built for the colonists in the southern villages.<sup>18</sup> So, comparing the population decline according to the data proves that at the time of the Declaration of Independence of Albania, the Albanian population in the territories outside of the halved Albania, constituted over 90%, while in 1941 this percentage decreased to about 70%.<sup>19</sup>

This data clearly testifies to the intensive work carried out by the SKS government in Belgrade for the realization of their political aspirations.

There are endless arguments that testify to the policy pursued by Belgrade towards the Albanian population within Yugoslavia. Therefore, it can be rightly said that;

“as a result of the agrarian reform, colonization and migration of Albanians, measures taken by the central level institutions of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Albanians were caused incalculable economic and political damages, which not infrequently were affordable. For this reason, a large part of them were forced to leave their homes and move to other countries, such as Türkiye and Albania.”<sup>20</sup>

### **The Expulsion of the Albanian Population from Kosovo towards Türkiye**

Mass expulsion of the Albanian population from their ethnic lands was one of official Belgrade's primary policies, who aimed to subvert ethnic relations in Kosovo and in other territories included within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. To achieve the goal of moving the Albanian population from Kosovo, Yugoslavian politics has used it employed all means.

Belgrade intended to create unbearable conditions for the Albanians and impose migration<sup>21</sup> on them. The Albanian population was denied the right to have schools and administration in their language. Their expulsion of Albanians from their lands was carried out to the greatest extent in the agreements reached between the Yugoslav and Turkish governments, during 1920's and 1930's.

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<sup>18</sup> Hadri, *ibid*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>19</sup> Bislimi, *ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Haxhi Ademi, *Kosova during the Second World War, 1941-1945*, Institute of History, Prishtina, 2021, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> Marenglen Verli, *Colonizing agrarian reform in Kosovo in the years 1918-1941*, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania, Institute of History, Iliria, Tirana, 1992, pp. 99-128.

So, in the time period from 1918 to 1941, Albanians in Kosovo experienced fundamental changes in the political and social context. Until 1933, the number of displaced people reached over 100 thousand Albanians who mainly had Türkiye as their destination.<sup>22</sup> However, there is a possibility that the number could be even greater, if the Turkish and Albanian authorities did not refuse to issue visas in the passports of Albanians.

According to data from Turkish historiography, between 1919 and 1926, a significant number of emigrants, around 131,000 people, were transferred from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes to the territory of Türkiye, when migration reached its peak. This period marked one of the most important phases of immigration, where two different waves of migration occurred as a result of various policies and reforms implemented by the Yugoslav state.

The first migrations began as a consequence of the Agrarian Reform implemented by the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes on February 25, 1919, which aimed at land redistribution and strengthening ties with newly colonized areas.<sup>23</sup>

The second migration took place a few years later and was prompted by another reform — the Colonization Law enacted by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1931 — aimed at strengthening ties with the newly acquired territories and repopulating areas abandoned due to wars and previous emigration.<sup>24</sup>

According to official figures from the period, under these policies, land was allocated to 10,000 Serbian families and 4,000 Albanian families.<sup>25</sup>

At the beginning of 30-ies of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Turkish government refused to grant entry visas to the population of Yugoslavia because it intended to avoid the negative consequences of unorganized and unplanned immigration for the new population. The Turkish government requested that the further

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<sup>22</sup> ASHAK, Collection of Hakif Bajrami, "The situation of Albanian national minorities in Yugoslavia", p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Nurcan Özgür Baklacioğlu, "Yugoslavya'dan Türkiye'ye Göçlerde Sayılar, Koşullar ve Tartışmalar", *Türkiye'nin Göç Tarihi 14. Yüzyıldan 21. Yüzyıla Türkiye'ye Göçler*, Der. M. Murat Erdoğan- Ayhan Kaya, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2015, p. 205.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Kosova: a short story*, Transl. Arjan Karjagdiu, Koha dhe Shtepia e Librit, Prishtine, 2001, p. 360.



migration of “Muslims” from Yugoslavia be regulated by a separate agreement.<sup>26</sup>

The process of the displacement of the Albanian population from their lands and the Slavization of the Albanian lands within Yugoslavia, entered a new phase from 1933 and reached the highest point with the signing of *Yugoslav-Turkish Convention*, which was drawn up in June 1938 in Istanbul, where over 200 thousand Albanians would be expelled from Kosovo. The convention would begin to be implemented as of 1 July 1939 and would last until 1944.

The government in Tiranë followed with great concern Türkiye's rapprochement with Yugoslavia. A possible cooperation between these two states was against the interests of the Albanian nation.<sup>27</sup>

### **Albania–Türkiye Relations and the Position of Albanians in Kosovo in the 1930s**

During the period between the two world wars, Albania found itself in a complex situation, facing various pressures. Balkan states, including Türkiye, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Italy, had significant influence on the policies and developments affecting Albania and Albanians outside its borders, especially in Kosovo.

The relations between Albania and Türkiye and the position of Albanians in Kosovo during the 1930s saw the Kingdom of Albania, under the leadership of King Zog, aiming to strengthen its ties with Türkiye as a way to balance the influence of the Italian state in the region.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Balkan states began efforts to create a pact of friendship among them, excluding Albania against its will. After the failure of the Greco-Turkish-Bulgarian pact initiated by Türkiye, Yugoslavia, and Romania took the initiative to approach Bulgaria for another regional pact, which also failed.

However, on November 27, 1933, in Belgrade, the Yugoslav-Turkish Pact of Friendship and Arbitration was signed. Later, on February 9, 1934, in Athens, the Balkan Pact was signed between Yugoslavia, Türkiye, Greece, and Romania. This pact consisted of three articles and a secret protocol, while on November 2, 1934, the Permanent Council of the Balkan Agreement and the

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<sup>26</sup> AIHP, F.A-V, D.15, P. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Hasan Bello, *Albanian-Turkish relations 1912-1939*, Center of Albanological Studies, Institute of History, Tiranë, 2015, p. 392.

Economic Council were established to advance the shared economic interests of the signatory states.<sup>28</sup>

Albania, however, was not invited to participate, in the Balkan Pact. According to the British deputy minister, Albania was not invited due to its specific relations with Italy and the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors in 1921, which limited its sovereignty. He added that Albania's position carried little weight in the diplomatic combinations of the time.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, Yugoslavia benefited from the Balkan Pact as a safeguard against Italian dominance in the Balkans. As the British ambassador in Belgrade, Nevil Henderson, noted: "*The pact was a blow to Italian policy in the Balkans*". In 1932, during a conversation with the Italian ambassador Gallin, King Alexander expressed interest in the state of Italo-Yugoslav relations and Albania's position within this context.<sup>30</sup>

Although maintaining Albania's independence was in the interest of official Belgrade due to fears of expanding Italian influence, the issue of Kosovo remained denied.

Almost at every moment, the issue of Kosovo—or the broader issue of Albanians in Yugoslavia—became the primary cause of rapprochement or tension in relations between Albania and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This was because Albania made efforts to defend the rights of Albanians in Kosovo and other areas within Yugoslavia, because violence was being exercised against them by Yugoslav state organs. On the other hand, Belgrade accused Tirana of interfering in Yugoslavia's internal affairs. Consequently, there were frequent clashes involving accusations and counter-accusations between Tirana and Belgrade.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, a key principle of the Turkish government's foreign policy remained the building of friendly relations with all neighboring states, especially Balkan countries, where it aimed to play an active role.<sup>32</sup> The new

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<sup>28</sup> ASHAK, F. P. Millovanović, D. 30, Nr. Inventarit.132, Kutia. 4, p. 39-41. Pakti Ballkanik.

<sup>29</sup> ASHAK, F. P. Millovanović, D. 28, Nr. Inventarit 132, Kutia 4, p. 59. Qëndrimi i shtypit britanik ndaj Paktit Ballkanik.

<sup>30</sup> Bogdan Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslovenske države 1918-1941*, Diplomatsko-istorijski pregled, Zagreb: 1975, p.57-60.

<sup>31</sup> Lutfiu, *The issue of Albanians* p.8.

<sup>32</sup> Sevim Ünal, "Atatürk'ün Balkanlar'daki Barışçıl Politikası", *IX. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Cilt III*, TTK Basımevi, Ankara, 1989, s.1993.

Turkish government of Mustafa Kemal had reached the conclusion that Turkish geopolitics had changed.

The motto of Türkiye's foreign policy in the 1930s was based on a perspective aimed at establishing and maintaining a peaceful environment, not only within the country but also beyond its borders,<sup>33</sup> particularly in the Balkan region. This policy was reflected in the slogan “*Peace at home, peace in the world*,” a principle that included a framework of security, equality, and cooperation among Balkan countries.

As an initiator of a Balkan Pact, Türkiye had long sought to bring Balkan states closer to a tighter collaboration. The aim was not only to create a group of states in harmony with their Balkan neighbors during peacetime but also to protect common interests in times of need, turning the Balkans into a region of peace and cooperation. Mustafa Kemal viewed the Balkan Pact as a *medium of balance* in relation to European countries.<sup>34</sup>

In this context, the improvement of Turkish-Greek relations, the strengthening of Turkish-Yugoslav relations and the rapprochement between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria should be noted.

On September 28, 1933, the Albanian consulate in Istanbul informed the Foreign Ministry that King Alexander of Yugoslavia would soon pay an official visit to Türkiye. He would be a personal friend of Mustafa Kemal.<sup>35</sup> His visit to Türkiye would have great political importance, so the Foreign Ministry instructed the Albanian consulate to take care to find out every detail about the purpose of this visit.<sup>36</sup>

Even King Ahmet Zog would personally intervene to Atatürk to prevent the emigration of Kosovar Albanians to Türkiye. In 1933, he sent him a letter, where he openly asked the Turkish government not to accept any Kosovar in its territory.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ilirjana Kaceli (Demirlika), *Albania and Türkiye: 1912-1939, From Separation to Friendship*, M&B Publications, Tirana, 2022, p.323.

<sup>34</sup> *Atatürk'ün Milli Dış Politikası, (Millî Mücadele Dönemine ait 100 belge, 1919-1923)*, T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Atatürk Dizisi, Cilt 1, Ankara, 1994, s. 324.

<sup>35</sup> AMEPJ, Y. 1933, D. 243, p. 56, Report of the Albanian consulate in Istanbul for the MFA, 28.09.1933.

<sup>36</sup> AMEPJ, Y.1933, D. 185, p. 34, Telegram of the MFA addressed to the consulate in Istanbul 29.09.1933.

<sup>37</sup> AMEPJ, Y. 1934, D. 142, Pp. 230-231. Letter written by King Zog (Osman), to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

As a result of the expropriations and violence exercised by the Yugoslav authorities, during 1935, hundreds of Albanian families continued to emigrate to Türkiye.

The Albanian Minister in Belgrade, Rauf Fico, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania that the Albanians of Kosovo, facing a difficult economic situation, sought to relocate to Albania. However, since the Albanian government did not accept these emigrants, they felt compelled to head toward Türkiye. Despite the Turkish government's declaration that it would not accept Albanian emigrants, some Kosovars who spoke Turkish, mainly from Prizren, Priştina, and Gilan, presented themselves at Turkish consulates claiming to be Turks to obtain visas.

What made the situation more alarming was a speech by the Turkish Minister of Internal Affairs, Şükrü Kaya, in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye. He stated that 800,000 "Turkish" emigrants would be relocated from Yugoslavia. This statement heightened the suspicions of the Albanian authorities regarding the intentions of the Turkish government. According to Rauf Fico, this speech was enough to demonstrate the limits and reliability of Ankara's "promises".<sup>38</sup>

Faced with this situation, the Albanian government took emergency measures and established the Directorate of Agrarian Reform, which aimed to settle Kosovar emigrants within Albanian territory.<sup>39</sup> Within this framework, on May 17, 1935, the Albanian government informed the Royal Consulate in Skopje of the measures to be taken to prevent the emigration of Kosovars to Türkiye. For this purpose, the Consulate was allocated 10,000 gold francs, while Ferhat Bey Draga was assigned 4,000 gold francs.<sup>40</sup>

In 1935, with the coming into power of the Stojadinovic government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia began intensive consultations regarding the migration of Albanians to Türkiye. That same year, Yugoslav diplomacy increased its actions towards an agreement with Türkiye. Thus, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, intense talks began regarding the migration of Albanians to Türkiye. For this reason, the

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<sup>38</sup> *AMEPJ*, V. 1935, D.185, fl.84, Raport i Ministrit shqiptar në Beograd Rauf Fico, për Ministrinë e Punëve të Jashtme, 5.4.1935,

<sup>39</sup> *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vëll III, Akademia e Shkencave të Shqipërisë, Instituti I Historisë Toena, Tiranë, 2007, p. 299.

<sup>40</sup> *AMEPJ*, V.1935, D.185, fl.167, Letër e Drejtorisë së Reformës Agrare për kryekonsullatën Mbretërore në Shkup, 17.05.1935.

inter-ministerial committee was created, which included officials from various ministers<sup>41</sup>

The inter-ministerial conference held its work on 1 October 1935 in Belgrade, while it was chaired by the representative of the Foreign Minister, Ilija Milikic. At the end of this conference, a 5-point program was drawn up, in which it was emphasized that the issue of the relocation of Albanians should be regulated in two ways; 1: The mass exodus in Türkiye had to be done on the basis of an interstate convention. 2: The remaining part was expected to move within the country (Kingdom of Yugoslavia), and based on the domination by the Slavic element.<sup>42</sup>

At the inter-ministerial meeting held in Belgrade, it was emphasized, among other things, that some time ago in Skopje, Yaşar Nabi, a senior expert in information and propaganda from the Turkish Ministry of Interior, had stayed as a correspondent journalist. He had been tasked with preparing a detailed report on the condition of the Turkish population in the Balkans and presenting it to his government. Upon completing this assignment and returning to Türkiye, he submitted a comprehensive study on the political, social, and economic conditions of the Muslim (Turkish-Albanian) population in Yugoslavia. This study, in addition to providing an overview of the state of this population, aimed to influence the creation of new policies by the Turkish government regarding migration and ethnic connections with this population.<sup>43</sup>

According to Nabi's report, the total number of this population in Yugoslavia was estimated to be up to 500,000 inhabitants. Among them, more than half, although racially and linguistically Albanian, identified culturally with Türkiye. According to him, these individuals wished to be part of the Turkish Republic and expressed interest in emigrating to Anatolia in the near future. This report reflected Türkiye's efforts to attract ethnically and culturally close populations as part of a consistent national and demographic policy.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Hakif Bajrami, "Yugoslav-Turkish Convention of 1938 for Albanians", *Albanological Traces - Historical Sciences Series*, No XII, 1982, Albanological Institute of Prishtina, Prishtina, 1983, pp. 245-246.

<sup>42</sup> Ali Hadri, "Position and condition of Kosovo in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941)", *Albanological traces-series of historical sciences*, No.2, Albanological Institute of Prishtina, Prishtina, 1962, pp. 243 – 260.

<sup>43</sup> Yaşar Nabi, *Balkanlar ve Türklük*, Ulus Basımevi, 1936, Ankara, p.191.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 191.

On November 4, 1936, Sermedi Xhaxhuli, Albania's *chargé d'affaires* in Belgrade, informed the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana that Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović was planning an official visit to Ankara. From reliable sources, Xhaxhuli had learned that the main purpose of this visit, besides signing a trade and maritime transport agreement between Türkiye and Yugoslavia, was the signing of a migration convention for the resettlement of the Turkish population (and Albanians identified as such) from Kosovo. This was a strategic move by both sides, aiming not only at the ethnic cleansing of the region but also at addressing Türkiye's internal demographic issues.<sup>45</sup>

Following the conclusion of the visit, additional information reached the Albanian government confirming that a secret agreement had been signed in Ankara between Türkiye and Yugoslavia for the mass resettlement of Kosovars. This information was verified by a detailed report from Albania's consul general in Istanbul, Asaf Xhaxhuli, who closely followed the diplomatic developments. In his report, Xhaxhuli stated that a senior official of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had admitted the existence of the agreement and that both sides were discussing ways to compensate for land and cover the costs of relocating and settling Kosovars in Türkiye. In another significant step, the secret office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana distributed a copy of this letter to several Albanian representatives accredited abroad, instructing them to intervene with their respective governments to prevent the implementation of this agreement. This effort was part of a diplomatic strategy to protect the rights and interests of the Albanian population in Yugoslavia.<sup>46</sup>

In Rome, the Albanian representative approached Count Ciano, requesting his mediation with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Tevfik Rüşti Aras, to halt the implementation of the agreement. Count Ciano listened attentively and promised not only to discuss the matter with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also to instruct the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade to address the issue with Stojadinović.<sup>47</sup> This diplomatic maneuver highlighted Albania's ongoing efforts to preserve the national integrity of Albanians beyond its borders.

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<sup>45</sup> AMEPJ, V.1936, D.165, fl.232. Letër e kryekonsullit shqiptar në Stamboll, Asaf Xhaxhuli, për Ministrin e Punëve të Jashtme.15.11.1936.

<sup>46</sup> AMEPJ, V. 1936, D.146, fl.280. Letër e kryekonsullit shqiptar në Stamboll, Asaf Xhaxhuli, për Ministrin e Punëve të Jashtme.24.12.1936.

<sup>47</sup> AMEPJ, Viti 1937, D.126, fl.25. Letër e përfaqësuesit shqiptar në Romw, për Ministrin e Punëve të Jashtme Ekrem Libohova, 22.1937.

It should be noted that until 1936 in Türkiye 600,000 residents were settled, of which 400,000 were as a result of the exchange of residents, which Türkiye had made in the preliminary agreement with countries such as Greece, Romania, etc., while the rest of 200 thousand according to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Türkiye, Şükrü Kaya came of their own accord<sup>48</sup>.

On the other hand, Yugoslav documents provide data on the number of Albanians living in "Southern Serbia" and the reasons for the impossibility of their assimilation. On this matter, the Yugoslav ambassador in Ankara, Branko Lazarevic, in a telegram sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade, on 18 October 1935, informed the minister, saying that:<sup>49</sup>

“...besides our population, there are also dense settlements of the non-Slavic element: Turks and Arnauts (Albanians). They are more....it is important to note that they are very compact in the districts near the border, in the direction towards Albania (Arbania). Attempts to nationalize this non-Slavic element have not given... desirable results, because the Orthodox population in these territories is proportionally small in number... the implementation of nationalism”.

The ground for the relocation of Albanians was prepared by the organizations “Bela Ruka” and “Narodna Odbrana”.<sup>50</sup> The “Serbian Cultural Club” also played an important role, using different methods, to achieve the goal of expelling Albanians from their homes. Albanian political representatives in Belgrade indeed openly reacted against the relocation of Albanians. In particular, we should mention MPs like Ferhat Draga, Sherif Voca, Rame Bllaca etc. Sherif Voca, the Albanian MP in the parliament of Yugoslavia, started the discussion with the slogan “*Don't move us!*”<sup>51</sup>

Almost the same discussion was held by Ramë Bllaca, in July 1937, when in the parliament of Yugoslavia, he spoke openly against the migration of

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<sup>48</sup> *Arhiv Jugoslavije-Belgrade (AJ)* F. Dvor (Royal Court), Letter of the Royal Embassy sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Political Sector. Belgrade, 19 November 1935. History of Diplomacy, III, Editor Vladimir Petrovic Potemkin, Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1951, Pp. 505-507.

<sup>49</sup> *AJ*, F. Dvor (Royal Court). Telegram of the Royal Ambassador in Ankara, Branko Lazarevic sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Belgrade, 18 October 1935.

<sup>50</sup> Bajrami, *ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>51</sup> Vuk Vinaver, “The issue of Albanians under the PKJ oppression, 1920-1939”, *Albanological traces - series of historical sciences*, No. I, 1971-1972. Albanological Institute of Prishtina, Prishtina, 1973, pp. 89 - 90.

Albanians to Türkiye.<sup>52</sup> Even in Skopje the Muslim Committee was created, which was against the migration of the Albanian population.<sup>53</sup>

At the beginning of 1938, the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* published a report stating that the Yugoslav government had undertaken a diplomatic initiative with the Turkish government in Ankara to facilitate the relocation to Türkiye of 200,000 individuals identified as "Turks" living within Yugoslav territories.<sup>54</sup> This news was followed by a report from the Italian news agency *Stefani*, which stated that an agreement between Türkiye and Yugoslavia on this matter was expected to be signed soon. According to diplomatic sources, this agreement aimed to regulate the mass emigration of these populations to Türkiye.<sup>55</sup>

Although Yugoslav and Turkish political circles initially denied the existence of such a plan, Albanian diplomats reported that this issue was under discussion at a high level. They emphasized that discussions about mass emigration would take place during the Balkan Conference, held in Ankara at the end of February 1938. This conference was attended by foreign ministers of the Balkan Entente countries, including Türkiye and Yugoslavia, who discussed the details and possibilities for implementing such a policy.<sup>56</sup>

The drafting of the 1938 Emigration Convention was completed during this conference and was formalized on July 11 of that year with its signing by representatives of the two countries. The Convention outlined the conditions and criteria for emigration, focusing primarily on the relocation of individuals and families of Turkish origin. Turkish Foreign Minister T. R. Aras proposed the creation of a joint commission that would review the details of this process, not only for Yugoslavia but also for other Balkan countries involved in the regional emigration policy. This commission was tasked with analyzing data on emigration and providing recommendations for the implementation of the agreement.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Rushiti, *ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>53</sup> *AIDSSH*, Pp. 6, Y. 1951, Pp. 45. The so-called Agrarian Reform of the Karadjordjevs.

<sup>54</sup> "Yugoslavya'daki Türkler", *Cumhuriyet*, 25 January 1938, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> *AMEPJ*, Viti 1938, D.107, fl.7. Letër e Ministrit e Punëve të Jashtme Ekrem Libohova, për legatën shqiptare në Beograd, 29.01.1938.

<sup>56</sup> *AMEPJ*, Viti 1938, D.107, fl.30. Letër e prfaqësuesit të Shqipërisë në Beograd, Tahir Shtylla, për Ministrin e Punëve të Jashtme, 9.02.1938.

<sup>57</sup> Nurcan Özgür Baklacioğlu, *Devletlerin Dış Politikası Açısından Göç Olgusu: Balkanlar'dan Türkiye'ye Arnavut Göçleri (1920-1990)*, Doktora Tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Uluslararası Anabilim İlişkiler Anabilim Dalı, Cilt I, İstanbul, 2003, p.200.



From that point onwards, Yugoslav authorities began implementing a policy previously approved at the Fifth Interministerial Conference, linking emigration with the plan for the colonization of occupied lands. This plan, known as *colonizacija*, aimed to clear territories for other populations and to displace rural inhabitants of Turkish origin, including a significant number of Muslim Albanians. To achieve this goal, it was decided that the number of families willing to emigrate and settle in Türkiye would first be determined. In this process, the authorities stipulated that each emigrant would receive financial compensation ranging from 2,000 to 3,000 dinars, or approximately 20,000 dinars per family (equivalent to 500 Turkish lira). A portion of this amount, around 20%, had to be paid in advance, while the remainder would be provided in material form.

The funds collected for this purpose were to be deposited in the name of the Turkish government at *Halk Bankası*, making this agreement an important economic tool for financing colonization and relocation. In practice, this process profoundly impacted the lives of Albanian and Turkish communities in the region, causing severe social and economic consequences, such as the loss of property and the disintegration of local communities. For Albanians, this agreement represents one of the most painful episodes of the discriminatory policies of the time, disguised under the terminology of voluntary emigration.

According to this convention, the “repatriation” of 250,000 so-called Turkish people was foreseen.<sup>58</sup> But, for the realization of this convention, Istanbul required financial assistance from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, because it was about 200 thousand immigrants, who would not settle in Thrace, but in Anatolia, where the costs were higher. This assistance was necessary if the Yugoslavs wanted to complete the conclusion of the convention.<sup>59</sup>

It is important to mention the conference that took place from 9 June to 13 July 1938 in Istanbul, between the Government of the Turkish Republic and the Government of the King of Yugoslavia. Delegates from Romania and Greece participated as observers.

In this conference, eight (8) meetings were organized and a text/draft of a convention known as “*Regulations of emigration of the Turkish population from the*

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<sup>58</sup> AMEPJ, D.530/2 (B VII -2), Y. 1960, Pp. 17. Relation: Emigration of Albanians outside and inside Yugoslavia.

<sup>59</sup> ASHAK, Archives in France, National Archives in Paris, F. MFA-Paris, No. Inv. 562/2, Y. 1900-1912, Pp. 110/1-6. Minutes of the meetings of the committee for emigration.

*region of South Serbia in Yugoslavia*” was drawn up, which consisted of 9 points.<sup>60</sup> In the first point, it was said that, from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to Türkiye, 40 thousand Muslim families of Southern Serbia (Kosovo and Macedonian H.A& I.K.) would be relocated while in the second point, it was said that the migration would be carried out within 6 years (1939-1944), with the possibility of being extended for an additional year. While in the ninth point, it was said that the convention provided for the schedule of payments and relocations.

The Immigration Commission, tasked with addressing migration issues between Yugoslavia and Türkiye, was led by the Turkish delegate Hasan Saka. This commission began its negotiations on June 9, 1938, and concluded them on July 11, 1938. These discussions involved prominent figures, including Cevdet Atasagun, Director General for the Settlement of Immigrants at the Turkish Ministry of Hygiene and Social Assistance, and Milan A. Ristić, Head of the Balkan Section at the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, the commission included Voislav V. Magojević, an inspector at the Yugoslav Ministry of Agriculture, as well as other observers, among them Telemaku, the Greek Minister to Türkiye, and M. R. Rafael, the Romanian Minister to Türkiye. This commission played a significant role in addressing migration issues, aiming to coordinate actions between the respective states.<sup>61</sup>

The discussions between them were primarily technical in nature and were concluded on July 11, 1938, with the signing of the Yugoslav-Turkish Convention “on the Rules of Emigration of the Turkish Population from the Southern Serbia Region in Yugoslavia.” This agreement, consisting of 21 articles, outlined the conditions for the relocation of the Turkish-origin population, including Muslim Albanians, to Türkiye. Its enforcement depended on ratification by the parliaments of both countries.

This convention, disguised as a demographic agreement, aimed at the forced displacement of ethnic groups, significantly affecting Albanians in the region.<sup>62</sup> The situation is shown as follows:<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Hakif Bajrami, “Yugoslav-Turkish Convention of 1938 for the migration of Albanians”, *Albanological Traces*, XII/1982, p. 244.

<sup>61</sup> Hakif Bajrami, *Rreth përgaditjes së Konventës Jugosllavo-Turke për shpërnguljen e Shqiptarëve në Turqi (1938)*, *Gjurmime Albanologjike*, , art I cit, Instituti Albanologjik, Prishtinë, 2011, pp.223-237.

<sup>62</sup> Ahmet Özgüray, “Türkiye –Yugoslaviya ilişkileri (1920-1938)”, *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, Sayı 4, 1999, s.22.

<sup>63</sup> *ASHAK*, Belgrade Diplomatic Archive, F. MFA, Organic Unit: Embassy in Türkiye, K.3, F.5, D.II, Y.1939, Pp. 65-66. Draft of the Yugoslav-Turkish convention, drawn up in June 1938 in Istanbul, 5 April 1939, in Belgrade.

Year	Number of families for relocation	Payment in Turkish lira
1939	4,000	2,000,000
1940	6,000	3,000,000
1941	7,000	3,500,000
1942	7,000	5,500,000
1943	8,000	4,000,000
1944	8,000	4,000,000
<b>Total</b>	40,000	20,000,000

*Table 1* - Draft of the Yugoslav-Turkish convention, drawn up in June 1938 in Istanbul.

Official Tirana not only did not act, but was relieved after the reassuring statements that came from Belgrade and Ankara that this Convention was only about the Turkish population.<sup>64</sup> But in November 1938, after the appointment of Asaf Xhaxhuli and the resumption of diplomatic relations again, it began to lobby against this convention. As a career diplomat, the Albanian minister was well aware of the political situation in Türkiye, he had managed to establish friendships and get to know personalities with strong influence in the Turkish political and social circles.<sup>65</sup> He also had data on the situation of his compatriots in Yugoslavia, as his brother Sermet Xhaxhuli had been the consul of Albania in Skopje.

The unofficial source that Ferhat Draga was given by his friend Hasan Rizaj, shows that Atatürk himself, after being explained the problem of the Albanians, had promised his assistance. According to Yugoslav archival sources, Vuk Vinaver would point out; the actions to prevent and ratify this Convention in Türkiye were also conditioned by the strong opposing activity undertaken by politicians of Albanian origin in Turkish political circles. These politicians increased their influence in opposition to this convention in

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<sup>64</sup> *AIHP*, Catalog dealing with Albania from the Foreign Office correspondence indexes in the years 1920-1939, Annual report in 1938 of those in charge of work in Tirana, Rajan.

<sup>65</sup> Kaceli Demirlika, *ibid.*, p.359.

Türkiye. Despite the denationalization policy of the government of Yugoslavia, the president of Türkiye Mustafa Kemal ordered; "*Strictness especially for the Turks of Yugoslavia not to mix with the Albanians, that is, not to accept them in Türkiye as Turks, as their deporters wanted*".

The researcher Bilal N. Şimşir saw the arrival of displaced persons from Kosovo as a heavy burden for the government of Türkiye, because the Yugoslav monarchy, regardless of the policy it followed, was never willing to compensate the real estates of Kosovars, which had been occupied by Serbian and Montenegrin settlers who were moving to Kosovo.<sup>66</sup>

However, it should be noted that the Turkish government itself played a role in slowing down the process of strengthening this convention. Its representatives would announce that its signature would not take place before January 1939. The convention would begin to be implemented as of 1 July 1939 and would last until 1944.<sup>67</sup> The implementation of this convention for the Albanians would be fatal, however, fortunately this convention was not ratified due to some reasons of the time, such as due to the outbreak of the Second World War, the serious illness of Mustafa Kemal and a little later, the death of the Turkish president (on 10 November 1938). The other reason would be the change of direction in the Turkish government and the political flow of tense events, not only in the Balkans, but also in Europe.

İsmet İnönü, being elected as the new president of the Turkish state, did not see it reasonable and did not allow the Turkish government to prepare for the implementation of this Convention. The justification for this decision would be the lack of financial means, a pretext that appeared later on, at the time when Belgrade would show readiness to take over the part covered by the Turkish government with the relocation expenses.<sup>68</sup> Besides this, another reason was the fall of Stojadinovic's cabinet, which led to the decrease and fading of the insistence from the Yugoslav side for the signing of this convention in the summer of 1939.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> This problem remained unsolved despite being the subject of discussion between Atatürk and King Alexander of Yugoslavia in 1933. Bilal N. Şimşir, "Atatürk'ün Yabancı Devlet Adamlarıyla Görüşmeleri - Yedi Belge (1930-1937)", *Belleten*, Volume XLV, No. 177, January 1981, p. 178.

<sup>67</sup> *ASHAK*, Belgrade Diplomatic Archive, F. MFA, Organic Unit: Embassy in Türkiye, K.3, F.5, D. II, Y. 1939, pp. 65-66; Hajredin Hoxha, "Policy of eliminating Albanians from the territory of the old Yugoslavia", *Perparimi*, no. 5/1970, pp. 346-347.

<sup>68</sup> Vinaver, *ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

In fact, regarding the ratification of the Yugoslav-Turkish Convention, the fact should be added that on 25 April 1939, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, through a letter, authorized its delegate in Ankara, Adjemovic, to discuss with the Turkish government authorities the date of signing that document, as well as its ratification by the two parliaments.<sup>70</sup>

A few days later, namely, on 4 May 1939, from the Yugoslav delegate in Ankara, Adjemovic, who telegraphed the Foreign Minister, C. Markovic, as the head of the Balkan sector, at the MFA of Türkiye, has communicated the following; *"The government of Türkiye is ready to sign the Convention, but in the current situation it is obliged to stop any activity that is not in line with national defense."*<sup>71</sup>

### **The Displacement of Kosovo Albanians at the beginning of the Second World War**

Based on contemporary documents, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, sent a letter during July 1939 to the Yugoslav legate in Ankara, through which the Turkish authorities propose an amendment to the Convention, in the part where the time limit of the migration was determined. The Turks, for their part, proposed that the "period of total migration" should be divided into two parts, not six, as envisaged by the Convention, and that *"the total expenses necessary for the first part must be fully provided by the Yugoslav government"*, however, the Turkish government, for its part, *"commits itself to fully cover the expenses related to the transportation and settlement of the other half of the displaced"*.<sup>72</sup> Such a request was rejected by Belgrade, which ultimately failed the plans that provided for the expulsion, namely the violent displacement of the Albanian population from Kosovo and other Albanian countries.<sup>73</sup>

According to a letter dated 5 August 1939, a group of Albanian deputies of the Yugoslav parliament, composed of Asim Murteza Luzha representative of Drenica, Adem Marmullaku from Burim and Zenel Ibrahimî from Kaçanik had visited Gjakova. They met Sulejman Kryeziu, Mayor of the Municipality and Ramiz Riza, member of the Municipal Directorate in Gjakova. *"The purpose of*

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<sup>70</sup> AJ. 370. 9/ 890 Subject: Documents for the Convention on the relocation of the Muslim population from Southern Serbia, 6 appendices Proc. No. 7977, Belgrade, 25 April 1939. Cited according to *Displacement of Albanians in the Republic of Türkiye 1922-1941*, Collection of documents, selection, translation, editing and introduction, Qerim Lita, Prishtina, p. 360.

<sup>71</sup> AJ. 370. 9/892, Proc. No. 266, Ankara, 4 May 1939, cited by: Lita, *The expulsion of the Albanians*, p. 359.

<sup>72</sup> AJ. 370. 9/925-926 Memorandum of the MFA of the Republic of Türkiye, sent to the Yugoslav Legation in Ankara, Ankara, in July 1939, quoted according to: Lita, *The expulsion of the Albanians*, p. 406-407.

<sup>73</sup> Lita, *ibid.*, p. 17.

*their arrival is to raise national awareness among the Muslim population and collect data about the activities of the agrarian governors in Metohija.*"<sup>74</sup> So the group of MPs who visited Gjakova have declared that they would act on the authorities in Yugoslavia, that all Albanians receive cash compensation for the confiscated land, and that in this regard they have only received promises from the relevant factors.

Official Belgrade Politics has reported on every speech and discussion of the Albanian political representatives of the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Thus, according to a letter from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, regarding the activity of Ferat Bey Draga, in Kosovo, among other things, it is said *"At the beginning of September of this year, Ferat Bey Draga, held a meeting in Kosovo with the Albanian leadership and on this occasion, among others, he declared that Albania will unite all lands up to Nish"*.<sup>75</sup>

According to the report of the General Staff, to the Minister of the Army and Navy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the commander of the III Army and the commander of the border troops, related to the political activity of the Albanian leadership in Kosovo *"On 4 August of this year, in Prizren, the deputies<sup>76</sup> of the people visited: In addition to the district of Prizren, they also visited the largest number of districts in Kosovo"*.<sup>77</sup>

From the discussions and speeches given after the invasion of Albania, the leaders of the Albanian political scene intended to stop the migration of the Albanian population to Türkiye in the first place. According to Belgrade's official policy it is emphasized that propaganda about the future of the Albanian people had begun to spread to a large extent and this was developed in particular through religious representatives: *"Some time ago, the chairman of the*

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<sup>74</sup> State Archives of the Republic of North Macedonia – DARM Fond VII, File 346, Act no. Pov.11570/39, "Report of the General Staff to the Minister of the Army and Navy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Commander of the III Army, and the Commander of the Border Troops regarding the political activity of the Albanian elite in Kosovo," Belgrade, August 1939, quoted by: Lita, The expulsion of the Albanians, p. 408-410.

<sup>75</sup> DARM. F. VII. M.346.Pov.13501/39, Regarding the activity of Ferat bey Draga, in Kosovo. Cited by: Lita, The expulsion of Albanians, p. 410.

<sup>76</sup> Kadri Saliu from Gostivar, Ilaz Agushi from Nerodime, Asim Murteza Luzha from Drenica, Mustafa Dërguti from Podrime and Zenel bey Strazimiri from Kaçanik district.

<sup>77</sup> DARM. F. VII. M.346.Pov.11570/39 Report of ShP-Belgrade on the activity of Albanian political representatives, quoted according to: Lita, The expulsion of Albanians, p. 409.

*Ulema Majlis stayed in Bitola in Skopje, Sherif Osmani, for a control of imams and on this occasion he agitated among the Albanian population, not to move to Türkiye.”<sup>78</sup>*

After 1939, the Italian Military Intelligence Service, based in Shkodra, Elbasan, and Kukës, intended to infiltrate Kosovo as well. There were even open and concrete plans and statements during the visit of Italian politicians to Albania.<sup>79</sup>

Although earlier it was only talked about as propaganda, from 7 April 1939, this idea of the union of Kosovo with Albania began to be implemented. Thus, Count Ciano, on 21 April 1939, had emphasized that Italian politics will actively deal with the issue of Kosovo, since the problem of irredentism will arise there.<sup>80</sup>

Count Ciano was notified by Tahir Shtylla about the problems of Albanians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Shtylla, among other things, argued that the Albanians of Albania, who were an integral part of the Italian Kingdom were persistently seeking the union with the Albanian lands in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, because their compatriots were oppressed [...].<sup>81</sup>

According to information from Belgrade, also in other parts of the Albanian space, information about the future status of Albanians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia is being spread:

“in the Zeta settlement, and especially in the districts: Peja, Gjakova and Ulcinj, a living propaganda is being made through Italian sympathizers, and mostly by Albanian Catholics and their clergy. All of these herald the imminent arrival of Italy... propagandize about the necessity of uprising against our government due to the unjust taking of property.”<sup>82</sup>

Well informed of the situation created, the Fascist Party of Albania, formed in June 1939 in Tirana, would aim to spread the idea of creating the union of

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<sup>78</sup> DARM. F.VII.M.346. Pov.Br.13228/39 From the visit of the chairman of Ulema Majlis of Skopje, and the consul of Turkey in Bitola, quoted according to: Lita, *The expulsion of Albanians*, p. 413.

<sup>79</sup> Izber Hoti, *Armed Forces in Kosovo during World War II*, Institute of History, Prishtina, 1998, p. 22.

<sup>80</sup> Hadri, *ibid.*, 99.

<sup>81</sup> TV, ABC-Story, *The Great Albania that the Fascists Made* (Part 1) Minutes 4-5.

<sup>82</sup> DARM. F.VII.M.346.Pov.Br.13234/39, Information of ShP-Belgrade, sent to the Minister of PJ of Yugoslavia, regarding the propaganda of Albanian Catholic and Muslim clerics. cited by: Lita, *The expulsion of Albanians*, p. 413.

Albanians in a single state.<sup>83</sup> In Yugoslav diplomatic documents, among other things, it is stated: “... *when the question is the land, the school, the press, for which they, in the event that these territories were to join Albania... then they would agree to live under the Italian government.*”<sup>84</sup>

Such a turn in the beliefs among the broad classes of our Albanian population have come because of the Italian propaganda for the union of Kosovo with Albania. The Italians saw Albanian irredentism in Yugoslavia, as “light at the end of the tunnel”. They, immediately after the invasion of Albania, started installing their propaganda apparatus, where, as we mentioned above, several tens of books and hundreds of articles were published in which the connection between Italy and Albania was promoted.<sup>85</sup> This material also circulated throughout Kosovo.

Within the years 1939-1941 from Italy and by the Albanian government that was under the influence of Italy, various actions were organized, and even an uprising was planned. But as is known, this did not happen. Kosovo was occupied as part of the occupation of Yugoslavia.<sup>86</sup>

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the paper is focused on explaining the reasons and ways of expelling the Albanian population from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, especially in Kosovo, in the period 1918-1941. The paper is based on archival sources but also on the results of Albanian historiography, so we have come to the conclusion that: As a result of Belgrade's policy only in the time frame above, from Kosovo 100,000 to 150,000 Albanians moved, who have settled mainly in Türkiye and in Albania. Overall, 240,000 Albanians have moved from all Albanian lands in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the above-mentioned period, but this number may be even greater, as the statistics are not realistic in presenting the total number of the displaced.

The government in Belgrade forced the Albanian population to move from Kosovo, as well as from other Albanian territories in Yugoslavia using different ways, the most difficult of which was the expulsion of the population through the obligations imposed by the Yugoslav authorities. This made it possible to engage in discriminatory policies against Albanians, usurping their land and

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<sup>83</sup> Shatri, *ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>84</sup> DARM.F.VII.Pov.Dž.Ob.Br.3633, 19 September 193, Skopje, Analiz K. Army III-Skopje, sent to the General Staff in Belgrade, quoted according to: Lita, The expulsion of Albanians, p. 415.

<sup>85</sup> Hadri, *ibid.*, p. 687.

<sup>86</sup> Hoti, *ibid.*, pp. 23-34.



establishing Serbian and Montenegrin colonies. Besides this, another way of migration was the conclusion of various agreements between the Serbian and Turkish governments. These agreements may have included territorial exchanges, special rights for ethnic communities, or some form of cooperation that has affected the displacement of the Albanian population. So, in the end we can say that our study on the expulsion of the Albanian population from Yugoslavia, with special emphasis on Kosovo in the period 1918-1941, is a very complex and important topic in the history of Kosovo, the Albanian-speaking territories, as well as regionally to better understand the context and reasons for the expulsion of the Albanian population in the specified period.

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