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ALBANIAN EDUCATIONAL POSITION AND STATUS IN KOSOVO (1941-1958)

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In the period of 1919-1941 the educational status in Kosovo was closely linked to the political circumstances. The legacy of many centuries' non-development from the past as well as the discrimination of the former Yugoslav government towards Albanians contributed to it. The industrial underdevelopment, the primitive agriculture - where 90 percent of the population dealt with -, and the insufficient development of other economic branches did not encourage other regions of the Yugoslav bourgeois to have an influence on improving the situation of these circumstances.¹

Only the wealthy and high society were allowed to attend schools, and other cultural and educational institutions; the poor ones were left aside. Kosovo Albanians participated only symbolically in these institutions, and those who enjoyed this right were not allowed to attend classes in their native language. The Serbian politics did this intentionally with the sole purpose of assimilating Albanians, and leaving them no choice but to remain in the darkness of ignorance, i.e., illiteracy.²

The four grades only primary schools in the former Yugoslavia for Albanian students lasted five years since they were forced to learn Serbian language for one whole year, then mathematics, and a religious subject. Such a class was passed by 30-40 percent of first grade

² Ibid, p. 14.

¹ Sulltane Kojçini-Ukaj, Zhvillimi i arsimit në Kosovë 1945-1952, Prishtinë, 2006, p. 13.



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students. They were gradually dispersed and eliminated which resulted in abandoning the school. Albanian students were very few in number.³

For Albanians and Turks who belonged to Islam religion, the Yugoslav government substituted public schools with religious ones called "mejteps and madrassas". These schools were private houses and were located near mosques. In these schools, students could learn only the Arabic alphabet, and the Quran. Albanian students were able to learn only Islamic education. The mejteps became carriers of education for the majority of Kosovo Albanians. Yugoslav government often demanded the closing of the madrassas and mejteps, so that Albanian children get involved into Serbian schools. This tendency is seen in the report of the Ministry of Religion sent to the main Elders of Education, emphasizing that in the southern Serbia there were 50 muftis and 600 imams, none of whom could not or did not want to hear about Serbian language. They were called the Albanian nationalist, and the opening of mejteps and madrassas were seen as a threat to the state and the national interests of Yugoslavia. The report said, "... establish a madrassa in Skopje as soon as possible; a madrassa which will be under the supervision of the state, and the Albanians will be educated in national and religious spirit in the interests of our state."

The madrassas operated since the Ottoman period. The forth mentioned subjects were lectured in these madrassas, and after completing them the attendees received religious titles "Mualim" or "Imam", and were able to continue their studies in the High Madrassa School in Skopje⁶ since it was ranked of the same level of high schools. Eight madrassas operated in Kosovo. Prizren and Prishtina had two madrassas each; one was in Vushtrri, one in Peja, one in Gjilan, one in Gjakova, one in Mitrovica, and one in Ferizaj. Besides education in the madrassas

³ Ibid, p.15. Arkivi i Kosovës, regjistrat e nxënsve prej vitit 1927-1941.

⁴ Izber Hoti, Jeta kulturore dhe arsimore në Prishtinë dhe në rrethinë ndërmjet dy luftrave botërore, "Horizontet e Historisë", no. 5-6, Prishtinë; S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 16.

⁵ Hakif Bajrami, Qëndrimi i Jugosllavisë monarkiste ndaj arsimit dhe kulturës së shqiptarëve në Kosovë 1918-1941, "Kosova", no.12, Prishtinë, 1983, p. 203; S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, pp. 16, 17.

⁶ The Madrassa of Skopje was established with the decree of King Alexander the Great on 28 April, 1924. It operated until 1941.

⁷ Haki Kasumi, Shkolla Fetare Islame në Kosovë ndërmjet dy luftrave botërore, "Gjurmime albanologjike", Prishtinë, 1980, p. 164.



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and mejteps, the Catholic Church played also an important role in the spread of literacy. The church, though illegally, taught Catholic Albanian children in their native language.⁸

The policy of Yugoslav Kingdom towards the discrimination of Albanians' education in Kosovo did not only hinder their education within the country, but also the education outside the state borders. It prevented Kosovo Albanians' attempt to get an education in Albanian, because according to them, Albanians posed a great danger to the bourgeois Yugoslavia since there would be a constellation of Kosovo Albanian intellectuals who would seek and protect the rights of their nation. Besides primary and religious education in Kosovo, the secular gymnasiums were also established. In this period of time, there was a gymnasium in Prishtina which was reopened after the First World War. Students from Ferizaj, Gjilan, Mitrovica, Prizren, and Novi Pazar attended it, although Albanian students very few in number. By the end of 1940, only 20 Albanian students completed their Matura. Besides the gymnasium of Pristina there were also pro-gymnasiums in other centers of Kosovo, trade and craft schools, and popular universities. 11

Xhemjet's political party headed by Ferat Draga in the meeting with the Prime Minister of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (SCS)¹² Nikolla Pashiç, in 1920 asked for the reopening of Albanian language schools in all Albanian territories. To this, Pashiç answered: "If we open your schools, we will also assign the boarders."¹³

In the petitions submitted to the League of Nations in 1927, 1929, and 1931, Hasan Prishtina stated: "... nearly one million Albanians living in Kosovo and Macedonia have no schools in their mother tongue. They are even forbidden to open their schools with private finances." The SCS Kingdom's attitude to the issue of Kosovo Albanians' education was categorical. It never allowed the opening of schools in Albanian language; though it did in

⁸ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, pp. 16-18.

⁹ Ibid, p. 18.

¹⁰ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, pp. 20-21.

¹¹ Izber Hoti, Prishtina dhe rrethina ndërmjet dy luftave botërore (Punim i Magjistraturës); S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 26.

¹² The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established in 1918, and it was called by this name until 1929. Only after this year it was called Yugoslav Kingdom.

¹³ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 29.

¹⁴ Hakif Bajrami, Dëbimi dhe shpërngulja e shqiptarëve në Turqi (Dokumente), Prishtinë, 1996, pp. 93-94.



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Serbian. Even the very few religious schools they had allowed to operate, they shut them down violently for the sole reason that Albanians attended them.¹⁵ This situation in Kosovo's education system continued until 1941 when Kosovo was occupied by Nazi Block.

World War II began in 1939 with Germany's attack on Poland. On the other hand Albania was occupied by fascist Italy which at the same time was the first victim of fascism in Europe; the same did not happen with Kosovo. On April 6, 1941 after Nazi-fascists troops had occupied a part of Europe, undertook an aggression against Yugoslavia. With its division the goals and interests of the Fascist Block would be fulfilled. The same happened with Albanian territories that were under the Yugoslav Kingdom. 16 During April's war, Kosovo Albanians faced many difficulties and barriers. They were a target of mass expulsion because Serbs and Montenegrins, especially settlers in Kosovo considered the beginning of World War II as a good chance to fulfill their chauvinistic plans and reject every rapprochement with the Albanians. They regarded Albanians as a national element, Nazi-fascism collaborators, and as a threat to Yugoslavia. Under these circumstances, Albanians left every interaction against any invaders and got ready to resist the extermination that was about to happen.¹⁷ During this period of outbreak in Kosovo, the Serbs and the Yugoslav army spread violence, murdered innocent people in cities and villages, burned and destroyed their homes, etc. The Yugoslav army even crossed the border and marched toward Kukës and Shkodra with the expansionary goals, but with its capitulation, its army capitulated too.¹⁸

Italians did not only formally united Kosovo and other Albanian territories with Albania, but also made the development of school education in Albanian possible, and created a spiritual connection between large parts of ethnic Albanian areas. A great contribution in the recovery of the education system (in the lands occupied by the Italians) was made by the Ministry of Education. This ministry established and launched the extraordinary mission to Prizren led by Ali Harshova, to study the situation and the urgent needs of schools and Albanian education. It

¹⁵ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 30.

¹⁶ Historia e popullit shqiptar, v. IV, Tirana, 2008, p. 129.

¹⁷ Daut Bislimi, Formacionet politiko-ushtarake në Kosovë 1941-1945, Prishtinë, 1997, pp. 41-42.

¹⁸ D.Bislimi, already mentioned, pp. 43-44.



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established inspectorates of education, teaching departments, issued decrees, decisions for the regulation of educational work, provided Albanian textbooks, sent teachers, opened schools where Albanian language was taught, funded education, etc.¹⁹

With vicegerent's decree no. 340 issued on 20 November, 1941 the method of education and educational institutions were set. A few primary and infant schools were opened and operated from the school year 1941/42. It was also envisaged the opening of day and night courses for the illiterate and those who attended Yugoslav schools in Serbo-Croatian language. ²¹

During 1941-1944, the education in Kosovo operated under the laws and regulations of the Ministry of Education of Albania, and was led by Ernes Koliçi. It defined the duties of the Minister of Department of Education, educational inspectorates, didactic departments, school boards, and school commissionaires. It drafted curricula, textbooks, and other documents pertaining to the field of education. 173 primary schools, and a few gymnasiums, one in Prishtina, and one in Prizren operated in the entire territory of Kosovo. The Commercial-Agrarian Institute in Peja, the Normal trade school in Gjakova, and some other gymnasiums with 264 teachers and 13665 students of whom 4,000 were from German occupied area were also opened.²²

Under the fascist occupation, Albanians in general, and the ones living in Kosovo in particular benefited some of the rights they had been deprived by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; they did not have the rights to use national symbols, and Albanian language in administrations was banned.²³ But, through schools, the fascist occupier utilized their opening in order to spread the Italian culture and language.

¹⁹ Hajrullah Koliqi, Historia e arsimit dhe mendimit pedagogjik shqiptar, second edition, Prishtinë 2012, pp. 423-424.

²⁰ Sulltane Kojçini-Ukaj, Zhvillimi i arsimit në Kosovë 1945-1952, Prishtinë, 2006, p. 32;"Gazeta Zyrtare" Tiranë, 20 December, 1941, no. 193, pp. 1-3.

²¹ S. Kojcini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 32.

²² Ibid, p. 33.

²³ Ibid, p. 35.



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During the invaders stay in Kosovo in the Second World War, the development circumstances of education changed according to occupiers' areas. Educational system was controlled and supervised by Italian, German, and Bulgarian occupiers. During Bulgarian regime, schools were not even allowed to operate in Albanian language, but only in the official Bulgarian language. The Bulgarian policy was a repetition of its policy during the First World War, where all employees came from Bulgaria. The Bulgarian language replaced Serbo-Croatian language, and it became the official language in various activities and education system. At the same time, the Bulgarian regime threatened the local population with death in case they spread propaganda against Bulgarian state. In the occupied region of Mitrovica by Germans, there operated two Albanian schools, the primary school "Skanderbeg" in Mitrovica, and the other one "Naim Frashëri" in Novi Pazar.

Circumstances that were created during this period were very well used by Albanians toward the development of school education in Kosovo, and in other parts of Montenegro and Macedonia. The researcher of this field Sullatne Kojçini-Ukaj concludes that, "schools that operated during World War II laid the first foundations of national and institutional education in Kosovo".²⁷

Teachers and other activists from Albania and Kosovo who worked for the educational system in Albanian territories outside the territory of Albania, in the years 1941-1944 were real Revivalists and missionaries of knowledge, language, and national culture. Among them were: Bedri Gjinaj, Vasil Andoni, Haki Taha, Rexhep Krasniqi²⁸, and many other teachers. Despite the difficulties as the consequence of the Italian and German occupation, war, financial shortfalls, and students' disinterest in learning, etc., the period of the Second World War 1941-1944 was a very important period for Albanian education in freed lands. For the first time, there was a large

²⁴ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 42.

²⁵ N. Malcom, already mentioned, p. 303.

²⁶ H. Koliqi, already mentioned, p.425.

²⁷ S. Kojcini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 44.

²⁸ Shih më gjërsishtë, H. Koliqi, already mentioned, pp. 426-428.



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number of Albanian schools in the national spirit. The unique national and educational system was recovered by the Ministry of Education of Tirana whose Minister was Ernes Koliçi.²⁹

The educational development as the overall development of Kosovo in the period after World War II was accompanied by specific conditions in comparison to other regions of the former Yugoslavia. Disinterest in educational and cultural system had been inherited from the past as a result of a discriminating policy of Serbs. The lack of qualified teachers, the destroyed school infrastructure, and many other economic and political factors blocked the development of Albanian education in Kosovo. Education in Kosovo was developed under Yugoslav educational system which aimed to educate the young generation in the spirit of "Yugoslav Socialist Patriotism." The development of education in Kosovo from 1944-1991 according to Prof. Hajrullah Koliçi, is divided into three main stages. The first stage covers the period from 1944-1966, when education in Kosovo and other Albanian territories in Yugoslavia experienced a revolutionary development.

The second stage deals with the political and social developments in Yugoslavia after the plenum of Birions³² from 1966-1980 which reflected positively on the development of the educational sector. The third stage began with spring demonstrations of 1981 and ended with the collapse of the education system in Kosovo in 1991. This was the period of Serbian violence against Albanian schools, and the denial of their right for education. Albanian schools were accused of "indoctrination in nationalism and separatism".³³

The period after war until 1948 is considered the first stage of efforts for educational development, mainly on voluntary basis of Albanians, by understanding the role and importance of their education in their native language. Intellectuals did not spare their intellectual and material efforts to spread knowledge in their mother tongue.³⁴ The events that occurred in 1948

²⁹ Ibid, p. 431.

³⁰ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 47.

³¹ H. Koliqi, already mentioned, p. 486.

³² The Brion's Plenum is the 4th Meeting of Central Committee of Yugoslavia, which was held on 1 July, 1966.

³³ H. Koliqi, already mentioned, p. 500.

³⁴ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 48.



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after the submission of the Information Bureau and disrupting good relationships between Yugoslavia and Albania, marked a major turning point in negative terms for the educational sector in Kosovo. The Yugoslav authorities revealed their true face and anti-secret plans, and after this year, they forbade Albanian's symbols from the national curriculum, thus denying the origin of Albanian people.³⁵ One of the steps taken in Kosovo after World War II was the organization and fighting of illiteracy eradication, which was seen as an urgently and necessary need in the new socialist society. On its resolving depended the pace of social and economic development in Kosovo, where after the war 85 percent of people were illiterate. This was inherited from the time between the two World Wars of Yugoslav Kingdom.³⁶

The former Yugoslav-Serb regime took actions against the education development and teachers by compiling lists of "convenient" and "inconvenient" teachers. They arrested, imprisoned, dismissed, and deported teachers who had come from Albania during World War II to open Albanian schools.³⁷ To prevent the opening of Albanian schools, the Yugoslav government opened schools in Turkish. To this, Belgrade urged Kosovo Provincial People's Council to approve the official recognition of Turkish nationality and established Turkish language schools in the territory of KAKM.³⁸ This was done due to the policy it pursued towards the declaration of Albanians as Turks, and as a consequence their children were forced to attended schools in Turkish. Due to these circumstances in Kosovo, a significant segment of education took place, thus establishing "infant" schools. The majority of attendees were orphans whose parents were killed in war, and the children whose parents worked in state institutions. In 1944/45 some educational centers were opened in Mitrovica, Ferizaj, Gjilan, Peja, Prizren.³⁹ In 1949 a decision was taken to open educational institutions for children called "kindergarten" in five centers: Prishtina, Peja, Mitrovica, Zveçan, and Gjilan, which means that during this period

³⁵ Sulltane Kojçini-Ukaj, Kuadri arsimor shqiptar në Kosovë në shënjestrën e Sigurimit Shtetror 1945-1952, Prishtinë, 1997, p. 22.

³⁶ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 61.

³⁷ Sulltane Kojçini-Ukaj, Kuadri arsimor shqiptar në Kosovë në shënjestrën e Sigurimit Shtetror 1945-1952, Prishtinë, 1997, p. 22.

³⁸ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 51.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 88.



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there were no kindergartens or other preschool institutions in Kosovo. The main reason was that in Kosovo there was not a dynamic social and economic development as in other provinces of Yugoslavia. While in Yugoslavia from 100 children, 6.8 of them were in pre-school institutions, in Kosovo out of 100 children, only three attended these institutions, namely Serbs. The development of these institutions could not be fulfilled due to low economic factors, disinterest to solve this problem, and the very small number of employees in the social sector, particularly women. This influenced the development of education in Kosovo during this period.⁴⁰ Shortly after the war, despite the need for "infant and kindergarten" schools, there still existed a great need for primary education in four grades where children aged 7-11 could learn the language. On December 6, 1945 a general law for compulsory seven grades education was issued. According to it, primary education was four grades only, and pre-gymnasium was three grades only. 41 The Constitution of 1946 defined the right of education as a constitutional right, thus emphasizing that primary education was mandatory and free of charge. Schools and other educational and cultural institutions were for all society classes with the sole purpose of arousing the general culture and separating school from religion. Yet again there were many difficulties such as, the lack of educational staff, the lack of school buildings as a consequence of war, the lack of textbooks and teaching aids, and many other elements for a normal educational work.⁴²

In the first school year 1944/45, there were marked the first results of the opening of primary schools. They first opened in places where mejteps operated during the Ottoman Empire, and primary schools in the former Yugoslavia, due to better teaching conditions. During this school year, there were 278 elementary four grades schools, 135 in Albanian and 143 in the Serb-Croatian language with 27,000 students, of whom 15427 were Serbs and 11573 were Albanians. There were 460 teachers of whom 202 in Albanian and 258 in the Serb-Croatian.

In the first years after World War II, a great contribution was made by Albania's new government with teachers, textbooks, and technical means, etc. Under the Convention of 15

⁴⁰ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 93.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 93.

⁴² Ibid, p. 94.

⁴³ H. Koliqi, already mentioned, pp. 486-487.



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December, 1945 between Albania and Yugoslavia, around 80 teachers arrived in Kosovo. Most of them worked in Kosovo until 1948 when they were forced to return to Albania.⁴⁴ The number of schools and students from year to year grew, especially in Albania where in 1949/50, 479 schools operated in Kosovo with 64,812 students, and 765 teachers, while 311 schools were in Serb-Croatian with 32,360 students, and 513 teachers.⁴⁵ Thus, since 1945-1950, more than 206000 people learnt to read and write, of whom 115000 were Albanians.⁴⁶

Albanian schools despite their increase in number faced many problems, especially in infrastructure and environment, teaching aids, teaching staff, and many other issues related to the functioning of a school. It is worth mentioning that these schools were characterized by the absence of students and poor success. During this period, the educational activities in Kosovo were closely overseen by the State Security Administration known as (UDBA). The teaching staff and students activities were also closely overseen by them. On the other hand, UDBA organs offered people all sorts of privileges such as scholarships, weapons, jobs, positions in the party, etc. A special attention was given to the students whom UDB financed, promised the rights of education, and threatened to cooperate. The Albanian intelligentsia was also a target of UDBA. An elaborate was prepared for the Albanian Institute by UDBA with the justification that this institution was allegedly subjected to hostile elements against Yugoslavia. Yugoslavis UDBA put under target many other institutions in Kosovo including "Rilindja" as the only Albanian newspaper, the magazine "Jeta e Re", the Provincial Writers Association, and the Department of the Republic Institute for publishing textbooks in Prishtina, etc. These institutions were considered as hostile places to work in.

⁴⁴ Tahir Z. Berisha, Emra që nuk harrohen I, Prishtinë, 1994, pp. 32-33; cituar sipas Hajrullah Koliqit, already mentioned, p. 488.

⁴⁵ S. Kojcini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 100.

⁴⁶ Xheladin Topçiu, Zhvillimi i arsimit në Kosovë-Metohi në periudhën e ndërtimit të socializmit, "Përparimi" no. 2, Prishtinë, 1967; Cituar sipas Hajrullah Koliqi, already mentioned, p. 487.

⁴⁷ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, p. 102.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 103.

⁴⁹ Historia e popullit shqiptar, vol. IV, p. 347.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 347.



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Besides primary education in the territory of Kosovo, for the first time in 1946/47, there were established pre-gymnasium schools. Fifteen pre-gymnasiums, of which eight were in Albanian and seven in Serbo-Croatian operated in Kosovo. 384 Albanian students, and 386 Serbian and Montenegrin attended these schools.⁵¹ The conditions and circumstances in which these pre-gymnasium schools operated were not good at all. They did not meet the needs and requirements of a normal school. These three grades only pro-gymnasiums operated until 1952, when seven grades schools were converted into eight grades ones, whilst pre-gymnasiums remained as primary education schools. Prishtina Normal School⁵² in 1958 was named "Miladin Popovic" and in 1974 it was converted into Pedagogical Academy. Besides general education subjects, like natural and social sciences, and languages, the curricula also implied professional courses in pedagogy, psychology, methodology, etc. 53 Besides Normal School in Prishtina, there were also other Normal schools; one was in Prizren, one in Gjakova, one in Ferizaj, one in Gjilan, one in Mitrovica, and one in Peja.⁵⁴ The Normal school in Skopje played also a significant role.⁵⁵ In the 1950s, Kosovo faced the wildest campaign ever recognized by the human history, of mass expulsion from their motherlands. Every organized thing had a sole purpose of ethnic cleansing of Albanians from Kosovo. With the agreement of Yugoslavian-Turkish Gentlemen in 1953, this expulsion was organized. The surpluses collection, weapon collection - in 1955/56 - , and many other forms of pressure and violence took place. All these measures of Serbian-Yugoslav conqueror failed to stop Kosovo's development in various spheres of life.⁵⁶

⁵¹ S. Kojçini-Ukaj, already mentioned, f. 127.

⁵² Normal School of Pristina was the center of the most powerful educational and intellectual school in Kosovo. Well-known Albanian professor who lectured there, were: Zekeria Rexha, Beqir Kastrati, Shefqet Veliu, Jashar Rexhepagiq, Abdulla Zajmi, Drita Dobroshi, Rexhep Hoxha, Pajazit Nushi, Sali Nushi, etc.

⁵³ H. Koliqi, already mentioned, pp. 488-489.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 490.

⁵⁵ Skopje Normal school began in 1947/48, next to "Nikola Karev" school. Its principal was Rexhep Bajrami. In 1952 it removed to Skopje and become an important center for the preparation of teachers for Albanian elementary schools not only for Macedonia but also beyond borders, especially for the Albanians of Preshevo, Bujanovac, and Medvexha, southeast Kosovo. Until 1972 it was named "Liria" and later it was renamed "Zef Lush Marku".

⁵⁶ Historia e popullit shqiptar, vol. IV, p. 348.



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