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Mile Bjelajac

Migrations of Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo 1938–1950

The Kosovo crisis and the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia provoked the scholarly community to respond in many and varied ways. Unfortunately, this quantity of contributions cannot be readily equated with quality. Some scholars and analysts tried their best to cope with an issue surrounded by so many controversies, conflicting opinions and claims. But, as the British historian Mark Wheeler has warned, even a work of scrupulous scholarship and high erudition can be infused with “special pleading, based on national self images and stereotypes in East European studies”.¹ This paper seeks to show how difficult it was for many to “navigate” between the “rocks” of hard fact and pure propaganda, and in what ways that open-ended situation echoes in the present. A more important goal, however, would be to present some of my findings concerning the character of the Yugoslav census carried out in 1931. In brief, I believe that they may shed clarifying light on the vastly discrepant demographic figures that are currently in use. Perhaps they might be a useful clue in weighing up the many conflicting claims.

Research on ethnic migrations in the region of Kosovo round the middle of the twentieth century raises several questions that need to be taken into account in every scholarly-founded approach:

1. Access to relevant data and the reliability of official statistics in Yugoslavia (Serbia).
2. Ethnic migration trends in a particular region that could lead to a shift in ethnic proportions or balance.
3. Intentions of Yugoslav authorities as regards the minority question in the region.

¹ D. Djordjevich, “Clio amid the Ruins”, in *Yugoslavia and its Historians. Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, eds. N. Naimark and H. Case (Stanford University Press, 2003), 4.

4. How historians and other scholars cope with a problem that is highly sensitive politically in order to avoid possible propaganda traps.

5. Yugoslav (Serbian) and Albanian results in the field and their reception by the international scholarly community.

Rather than going so far as to address or answer all of these questions, I shall take this opportunity to highlight some of them. In the first place, I would like to put forward some of my findings of relevance in assessing the reliability of Yugoslav interwar statistics. In addition, I shall look at various and opposed claims and approximations which were made at the time and used in political discourse, and at how they are reflected in recent scholarly, and purportedly scholarly, work on the Kosovo issue. The paper will offer an overview of the work dealing with the impact of the Second World War and the Tito-Stalin split of 1948 on migration in the region of Kosovo and, consequently, on the shifting proportions of different ethnic groups.

How reliable is the 1931 Yugoslav census as regards non-Slav minorities?

While doing research in the Military Archive in Belgrade some years ago, I was surprised to discover a dossier containing the correspondence between General Dušan Simović, Chief of the General Staff, and the Director of the National Statistics Bureau (*Državna statistika*). I learned that certain data, such as the distribution of population according to language, had been kept secret from the public, remaining accessible only to some government institutions, and at special request, until the outbreak of the Second World War. This leads to the conclusion that the government and its institutions took them as trustworthy. The figures contained in the classified sources were not intended to be used for supporting any claims in public or for creating any false impression. They were intended for internal government use. So, when in late August 1938 Chief of the General Staff, General Simović, requested these data from the Statistics Bureau, the Bureau Director replied that the requested material should be considered highly classified and returned by courier after use.² In other words, it does not seem reasonable to assume that the Yugoslav government based its policies on self-deception. Therefore, my answer to the question of reliability of the 1931 census is: as high as possible, taking into account the skills of the administration and the actual possibility of obtaining the required data. The census figures later became publicly available and today are well known, but some scholars, even histo-

² M. Bjelajac, "Dva vidjenja rješavanja pitanja nacionalnih manjina u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji pred izbijanje Drugog svjetskog rata", *Tokovi* 1 (1989), 80–95. There is evidence that the identical figures to those contained in the classified documents somehow leaked from the Statistics Bureau.

rians, tend to question their reliability. They usually believe that the figures were considerably downplayed.

However, the Yugoslav military authorities at the time had knowledge that in 1921 the Albanian-speakers had accounted for 3.67% (or 439,657) of the total population of Yugoslavia, and ten years later, 3.62% (or 505,259). In 1931 the Turkish minority showed a decline compared with the census of 1921. They decreased from 150,322 to 132,924 (or from 1.26 to 0.96%). The distribution by district (*banovina*) was as follows:

a) <i>Albanian minority:</i>			
Zetska banovina	150,062	or	16.00%
Moravska banovina	48,300	or	3.36%
Vardarska banovina	302,901	or	19.24%
b) <i>Turkish minority:</i>			
Vardarska banovina	124,599	or	7.91%

In military terms, two military districts (Kosovo and Vardar) had 67,822 conscripts and reservists of non-Slav origin registered, mainly Albanians and Turks.

It is hard if not impossible to put together a documented account of what had happened during the First World War, especially between December 1915 and the Armistice in 1918, and why the Christian Orthodox Slav population, estimated at about 200,000 in 1911, dropped to 92,490 or 21.1% in 1921.³ On the other hand, it is debatable how many ethnic Albanians and Turks permanently emigrated or went in exile in 1918–1921, or even died or were killed in the conflicts of the time. However, we do not have the exact number of those who died as conscript soldiers in the Serbian army.

Milan Vučković and Goran Nikolić relied on the official statistical data of interwar Yugoslavia for their *Population of Kosovo 1918–1991* published in 1996. They sought to calculate the ethnic distribution of the population within the actual administrative boundaries of Kosovo, which had not existed as such in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. At the time, the Kingdom was organized into several districts known as *oblast*, and from 1929 as *banovina*. The Albanian minority inhabited three *banovinas* out of nine, as shown above. Vučković and Nikolić based their calculations upon the data for the municipalities included in the present-day Autonomous Province of Kosovo after the Second World War. According to their calculations for 1921, 1931 and 1939, there was a trend of increase for Serbs and Montenegrins, both in percentage and in absolute terms (in 1921: 92,490 or 21.1%; in 1931: 148,809 or 26.9%; in 1939: 213,746 or 33.1%); an increase

³ D. T. Bataković, *The Kosovo Chronicles* (Belgrade 1992), 136–137.

of the Albanian population in absolute terms and a decrease in terms of proportion (288,900 or 65.8%; 331,549 or 60.1%; 350,460 or 54.4%); while the Turkish population decreased in both terms (27,920 or 6.3%; 23,698 or 4.3%; 24,946 or 3.8%).⁴ The growth of the Serbian and Montenegrin population was primarily the result of an inflow of settlers (about 60,000–65,000) as well as of officials and various professionals dispatched by the state (about 5,000).⁵ In that way the population losses suffered in the war were compensated for.

As for the emigration of ethnic minorities, the National Statistics Bureau of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia announced that 19,279 persons had emigrated to Turkey and 4,322 to Albania from 1927 to 1939 inclusive. According to the same source, these persons emigrated from Croatia, Bosnia, Sandžak, Kosovo-Metohija and Macedonia, but their ethnic origin was not specified. Other official sources (for internal use) registered 849 persons who left for Albania in 1924–26, and another 8,571 in 1927–34. Frequent reports filed with the ministries of Defence, Interior and Foreign Affairs contained remarks that ethnic Albanians practised temporary migration and hardly ever decided to emigrate permanently. Police reports also noted that Albanians from Albania entered Yugoslavia legally as job seekers, but tended to stay even after their visas expired.⁶

The Yugoslav government made repeated attempts to initiate talks with Turkey and Albania about their admission of some of Yugoslavia's Muslim population, mainly Turks and Albanians, and showed readiness to conclude such arrangements and to cover the costs and compensations. In reality, however, most plans failed due to lack of finance. Turkey had her own interests as regards such arrangements. A plan from the mid 1930s for resettling 200,000 Muslim Turks from Yugoslavia to Turkey had never been carried out. The agreement was drafted by experts (plenipotentiaries) in Ankara in July 1938, but in mid April 1939 neither government was willing

⁴J. A. Mertus, *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 315, Appendix, Table 7 (after: Statistički godišnjak Kraljevine Jugoslavije za 1938/39 (Opšta državna statistika, 1939); M. Vučković and G. Nikolić, *Stanovništvo Kosova u razdoblju 1918–1991. godine* (Munich: Slavica Verlag, 1996), 80.

⁵Dj. Borozan, "Kosovo i Metohija u granicama protektorata Velika Albanija", in *Kosovo i Metohija u velikoalbanskim planovima 1878–2000* (Belgrade: ISI, 2001), 125.

⁶This information is provided here courtesy of my colleague Zoran Janjetović. For his research results in the archives of the ministries of Interior and Defence, and the Emigration Commissariat in Zagreb, see Z. Janjetović, *Deca careva, pastorčad kraljeva. Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918–1941* (Belgrade 2005), 62–83.

to take further steps.⁷ The beneficiaries of this agreement were to be Yugoslav Muslims of Turkish origin, language and culture, some 40,000 families. According to the draft, the resettlement programme was to be completed within six years (1939–44).⁸

The motives that guided the Yugoslav government are explained well in the published documents on foreign policy or in historical analyses. Basically, the overriding factors in shaping the political mind in Yugoslavia were the experience of disloyalty to the country, Italian clientelism, Albanian irredentism and the prospect of a new European conflict.⁹

Looking at the political opposition, parties or groups, and certain cultural-political movements or organizations, one can find various analyses and proposals for a future national security policy taking into account the factor of disloyal minorities. Probably best known are the views of Vaso Čubrilović, at the time a lecturer at Belgrade University, put forth before an audience at the Serbian Cultural Club. Albanian historiography consistently refers to this text, usually claiming that it was written at the request of the Yugoslav General Staff. But there is not a shred of evidence to support this claim. Rather, it seems that it somehow had come into the possession of the military intelligence service and was eventually stored in the Military Archive. (In interwar Belgrade, it was common practice to submit one's written opinion on an issue to prominent persons in an attempt to exert influence on them.) Čubrilović was against what he described as "Western methods", usually employed by the Yugoslav governments before 1937, and instead argued for "non-Western" methods – to force the population of a certain region into exile.¹⁰

Different perspectives on the same issue

It is virtually impossible to give full attention to all works dealing with the Kosovo issue and to comment upon the figures used by their authors or

⁷ Ž. Avramovski, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1939–1941* (Belgrade 1996), 88 (after: Public Record Office, FO 371/23886, R 2765/1021/92).

⁸ For the draft of the Convention, see R. Elsie, ed., *Kosovo in the Heart of the Powder Keg* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1997), 425–434.

⁹ Elsie, *Kosovo*, 435–448; I. Andrić, "Draft on Albania" [in Serbian], see I. Andrić, *Diplomatski spisi*, ed. Miladin Milošević (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1992), 216–226. Doc. n° 118 "Referat g. Andrića", 30/1/1939; for the motives of the military, see M. Bjelajac, *Vojaska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922–1935* (Belgrade 1994).

¹⁰ Elsie, *Kosovo*, 400–424, "The Expulsion of the Albanians" Memorandum presented in Belgrade on 7 March 1937 by V. Čubrilović. The same collection contains yet another text attributed to Čubrilović: "The minority problem in the new Yugoslavia" Memorandum of 3 November 1944 (pp. 449–464). I have not seen its Serbian version.

upon their views on the Yugoslav official census. We shall therefore take a look at those that can be regarded as typical.

Muhamet Pirraku, a Kosovo-Albanian scholar, believes that the Yugoslav state policy forced Albanians either to assimilate or to flee. As for the census reports, he believes that the Albanians were reduced probably by 50 percent (from about 800,000–1,000,000 to 441,740 according to the preliminary report, or to 439,657 according to the final report). This view, or rather a political claim, has been accepted by the Croat-American scholar Ivo Banac.¹¹ In other words, they both question the reliability of the Yugoslav statistical reports.¹²

Trying to get to grips with the conflicting claims, some scholars resort to rash explanations, such as: “The authorities also carried out a massive colonization program, driving out as many as half million Albanians in these [interwar] years and turning over confiscated lands to new settlers, mostly Serbs.” This is the manner in which Sabrina P. Ramet usually writes.¹³ Virtually the same claims are found in Hugh Poulton’s more recent work: “During the interwar period an estimated 40,000 Orthodox Slav peasants (mostly Serbs and Montenegrins) moved into Kosovo. During the same period, large numbers (perhaps as many as half a million) ethnic Albanians were forced to emigrate from Kosovo.”¹⁴

¹¹ I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 297 (after: Muhamet Pirraku, “Kulturno prosvetni pokret Albanaca u Jugoslaviji 1919–1941” *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis* 1–4 [1978], 356–370).

¹² Anyone familiar with numerous Albanian memorandums submitted to international organizations, peace conferences and foreign governments will easily trace these figures back to the Memorandum presented to the League of Nations on 5 May 1930, and word for word: “The victims of the first category are the over one hundred forty thousand Albanians who have been forced to leave their homes and belongings and to emigrate to Turkey, Albania and [...] The second category includes the population of 800,000 to 1,000,000 Albanians [...] who live in compact settlements along the border to the Kingdom of Albania up to a line including Podgorica [!], Berana and Jenibazar [Novi Pazar] in the north, the tributaries of the Morava river in the northwest and the course of the Vardar river in the south”, cf. Elsie, *Kosovo*, 362–363. Some go much farther, such as Rexhep Qosja with his claim about 300,000 Albanians forced into exile between 1919 and 1940, and 400,000 more between 1946 and 1966, cf. Elsie, *Kosovo*, 207–232.

¹³ S. P. Ramet, *Whose Democracy? Nationalism, Religion, and the Doctrine of Collective Rights in Post-1989 Eastern Europe* (Boulder–New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 1997), 144 (after: Banac, *National Question in Yugoslavia*, 298–300).

¹⁴ H. Poulton, “Macedonians and Albanians as Yugoslavs”, in D. Djokic, ed., *Yugoslavism. Histories of Failed Idea 1918–1992* (London 2003), 126 (after: E. Biberaj, “Kosovo: the Struggle for Recognition”, *Conflict Studies* 137–138 [1982]).

Noel Malcolm, a historian who has become famous but no less controversial, has tried, and failed, to resolve the discrepancy between Yugoslav official statistics and contemporary politically-motivated estimations in the following way: "Yugoslav census of 1921 did record figures for Albanian-speakers: 439,657 in the whole of Yugoslavia of whom 288,900 were in Kosovo. These figures were, however, regarded as underestimates, not only by the Albanian representatives but also by foreign observers: the Italian expert on Albania Antonio Baldacci, for example, thought there were at least 700,000 Albanians in Yugoslavia in the 1920s, and by 1931 the Romanian geographer Nicolae Popp put the total at 800,000. Had the Yugoslav census-takers found just 67,000 more Albanian speakers, the Albanians would have been listed as the second-largest linguistic minority in the country after the Slovenes, beating the Germans (505,790) and the Hungarians (467,658)."¹⁵

Miranda Vickers, another Western scholar who has tried to find a way out of this Balkan muddle, believes that the exact number of Albanians expelled from Yugoslavia cannot be determined until all data sources, particularly Turkish, are examined. And yet, she does not hesitate to add: "Nevertheless, data from administrations of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and state of Albania, namely diplomatic records of political and religious bodies and the press, and demographic analyses, show that total number of emigrants from Yugoslavia was between 200,000 and 300,000."¹⁶ It would certainly take pages and pages to examine and disprove this kind of unfounded statements.

Yugoslav official sources of data, according to Miranda Vickers, played down the number of Albanians who had left the country and treated it as fairly insignificant. Official data for 1927–39 show 19,279 ethnic Albanian emigrants to Turkey and 4,322 to Albania (Vickers consciously identifies them as Albanians in spite of the fact that the Yugoslav sources did not specify ethnicity). Compared to 30,000 Serbs, Croats and Slovenes emigrating yearly to the United States and other overseas countries for economic reasons, the migration in question was not officially seen as particularly significant.

The contemporaries, eyewitnesses, be it diplomats, politicians or scholars, left us a legacy of different figures. In coping with these figures, a scholar should bear in mind different purposes of their authors' intentions and actions. The basic intention of some of them, such as foreign consuls in

¹⁵ N. Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 268.

¹⁶ M. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 119 (after: Z. Shtylla in *Kosova Historical Review* 3 [Tirana 1994], 20).

the region, was to help their governments orient themselves. They usually sought to verify conflicting information, but sometimes they simply passed on information as it was. On the other hand, some wanted to make an impression or to gain support for a particular political cause, and used huge figures to that end. It should be stressed that the absence of publicly available Yugoslav official data left too much room for all sorts of speculations.

In the late 1930s a lot of approximations were in circulation. In February 1937 Albanian consul-general in Skoplje told a British Foreign Office source that, in his opinion, the Turkish-Yugoslav negotiations were making little progress and that for at least another three years Turkey would not be willing to receive 100,000 Muslims whom Yugoslavia planned to resettle. He also noted that most of Kosovo's Turkish population had returned to Turkey.¹⁷

Indeed, this sensitive topic was closely examined and reported on (sometimes even by cable) by the British and other diplomats serving in Yugoslavia at the time. In June 1935, the British (ambassador at Durrës) learned that the Yugoslav government called upon Albania to take into consideration the possibility of admitting some 40,000–50,000 ethnic Albanian peasants from Kosovo. The British ambassador at Belgrade checked the information with the Yugoslav government and found out that the initiative had originated in Albania. The Albanian government, having learned of Yugoslav-Turkish negotiations about resettling some 200,000 Yugoslav Muslims to Anatolia, made an official proposal to Belgrade. King Zog estimated the ethnic Albanian minority in Yugoslavia at about 800,000. According to what the Turkish ambassador at Belgrade told his British colleague, however, the region had about 600,000 Muslim Albanians, 30,000–40,000 Turkish-speaking Muslim Serb peasants and 200,000 ethnic Turks.

British ambassador to Yugoslavia, in his annual report for 1937, noted that no further advances had been made towards resettling some of Yugoslavia's ethnic Albanians to Albania. He also added that the status of the minority had improved.¹⁸ The Albanian government was anxious about the envisaged Yugoslav-Turkish agreement of resettling the Yugoslav Turkish minority to Turkey, suspecting that it might include the Albanian minority as well.¹⁹

However, the outbreak of the Second World War put an end to the Yugoslav-Turkish resettlement negotiations.

¹⁷ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 119 (after: PRO, FO, 371/21221, 3921, 23 February 1937).

¹⁸ *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji. Godišnji izveštaji Britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921–1938*, vol. II, 540.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 648 (Annual report for the year 1938).

The Second World War

It is not quite clear how many Albanians from Albania settled illegally in Kosovo and Metohija during the war. Vickers writes that “the Italian occupation force encouraged an extensive settlement program involving up to 72,000 Albanians”.²⁰ On the other hand, many Kosovo Serbs, between 70,000 and 100,000, were forced out of Kosovo. According to Bernd Fisher, “Many of them ended up in concentration camps in Pristina and Mitrovica. These Serbs were apparently used as labor on fortification works in Italian Albania and as workers in the Trepca mines for the Germans.”²¹ Both views indicate that the war affected, once again, the region’s ethnic balance or proportions. Yugoslav historians estimated that some 11,000 Serbs and Montenegrins had died as an immediate result of harassment and atrocities.²² On the other hand, the Yugoslav Liberation Army (YLA) killed some 3,000 Albanian rebels in putting down a rebellion (December 1944 – May 1945) which had started as a mutiny of ethnic Albanian conscripts in the 7th Brigade of YLA ordered to march to the north front and which quickly spread over the Drenica region.²³ Albanian propaganda, such as the National Democratic Committee of Albanians, claims that about 48,000 Albanians died in the six months of fighting.²⁴

From 1945 to 1950

On 6 March 1945 the Yugoslav Ministry of Interior issued an interim ban on the return of an estimated 50,000–60,000 Serbian and Montenegrin

²⁰ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 123.

²¹ B. J. Fisher, *Albania at War 1939–1945* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999), 87 (after: Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 292).

²² Dj. Borozan, “Kosovo i Metohija”, 125; according to Borozan, 6,050 reports on war crimes were submitted to the State Committee for War Crimes Investigation after June 1945 (p. 126).

²³ M. Pavlović, “Albanci u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji 1944–1991”, in *Kosovo i Metohija u velikosalbanskim planovima 1878–2000*, 138 (after: Yugoslav State Archives, Fund 17, Box 4/1, Report on Albanian ethnic minority, 31 December 1952).

²⁴ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 143; a few pages later (p. 148), she writes that “various Albanian sources estimate that during 1944–46 36,000 and maybe as many as 47,000 Albanians were victims of systematic mass executions by communists during the days of revolutionary fervour, and later through ‘search and destroy’ missions, ‘pacification’, ‘disarming’ and ‘rehabilitation’ programmes, police torture, and epidemics of typhoid fever affecting military units” (after: S. Repishti, “Human rights and the Albanian Nationality in Yugoslavia”, in *Human Rights in Yugoslavia*, eds. O. Gruenwald and K. Rosenblum-Cale [New York 1986], 238).

pre-war settlers who had fled Kosovo during the war. On the other hand, until Tito's split with Stalin in 1948 the border was open to new immigrants from Albania. During that period "an estimated 25,000 of them crossed over into Kosovo to join relatives, thus following the pattern encouraged by both the Italians and the Germans during the war".²⁵

Yugoslav historians estimated that the post-Second World War revision of the rights of the pre-war settlers (families) reduced the settler population by about one third of the pre-war number (12,672 families or 59,294 persons in 1939). They were resettled, mostly in Vojvodina, Serbia's northern province.²⁶

After the Tito-Stalin split, Albania purged the Communist Party of its pro-Yugoslav faction, and persecuted all members of the general population who had any Yugoslav connection. As a result, some 5,000 persons sought refuge in Kosovo.²⁷ According to Djordje Borozan (personal communication), his ongoing research shows that the total post-war number of about 75,000 immigrants may be confirmed.

Furthermore, Bogumil Hrabak argues that the number of post-1948 refugees from Albania into Kosovo-Metohija was not nearly as high as assumed in various Yugoslav sources. By the end of 1951, there were 2,195 Albanian refugees. According to their own *Alliance of Albanian political refugees*, the highest membership of the Alliance stood at 9,000. Together with non-members and a few families, they could not have exceeded 30,000. The last prominent politician who escaped across the border into Yugoslavia was a former minister in the Albanian government, Panajot Plaku, who fled in 1957. None of the scholars cited above refers to any official immigration reports after 1962.²⁸

In 1948, according to a preliminary census, the Albanian population in Kosovo and Metohija numbered 498,242 or 68.5% (350,946 in 1939; 524,559 in 1953), while the Serbs and Montenegrins accounted for 27.5% or 199,961. The census reveals an interesting fact, namely that only 1,315 inhabitants declared themselves Turks. Only five years later, however, the census of 1953 shows the figure of 34,583 ethnic Turks or 4.3% of Kosovo's population.²⁹ This increased interest in declaring oneself Turk in terms of

²⁵ Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 143–145.

²⁶ Borozan, "Kosovo i Metohija", 103, note 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁸ B. Hrabak, "Albanski emigranti u Jugoslaviji 1948–1954 (Albanian Emigrants in Yugoslavia 1948–1954)", *Tokovi istorije* 1–2 (1994), 77–104; see also D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo i Metohija, istorija i ideologija* (Belgrade 1998), 179–180.

²⁹ Mertus, *Kosovo*, 318, Table 8. On Yugoslav level the figures are 750,431 (or 4.8%) Albanians and 97,954 (or 0.6%) Turks in 1948, and 754,245 (or 4.5%) Albanians and

ethnicity may have been caused by the prospect of emigrating to Turkey. Tito had some talks in that direction with the Turkish government.

Conclusion

Migrations of the ethnic Albanians and other ethnic groups in Kosovo and Metohija during the first half of the twentieth century caused shifts in the region's ethnic balance or proportions. One needs to be aware that any population change involving more than 10,000 people seriously affects proportions in a region whose total population is fewer than 500,000 (e.g. 1921). It is hard if not impossible to obtain accurate evidence for what had happened during the First World War, especially between December 1915 and the Armistice in 1918, and why the Orthodox Christian Slav population dropped to 21.1% or 92,490 inhabitants in 1921 (estimated at about 180,000 in 1911). On the other hand, it is debatable how many ethnic Albanians or Turks permanently emigrated or went into exile in 1918–21, or even died or were killed in the conflicts of the time. Interwar Yugoslavia sought to alleviate the disproportion between loyal and disloyal citizens by encouraging resettlement by Slavic populations and by trying to arrange with Turkey for receiving some 200,000 Muslims on the eve of the Second World War. Such an arrangement was negotiated but never carried out. According to various Yugoslav sources, some 65,000 settlers and state officials came to the province. On the other hand, about 24,000 Muslims emigrated to Turkey or Albania, but they emigrated from all parts of Yugoslavia. No reliable evidence has been offered to corroborate the claim of several Albanian scholars that some 500,000 Albanians fled from interwar Yugoslavia to Turkey or Albania. The very same figure occurs in some standard scholarly works produced in the West, but it is merely an unverified reiteration of this claim. The Second World War brought about another serious shift in terms of ethnic proportions. Almost all Orthodox Christian settler families, some 60,000 people, were expelled from the region, and according to approximations, another 10,000 were killed on the spot in 1941. The expulsion was followed by an inflow of Albanians from Albania proper. After 1947, only two thirds of the expelled were permitted to return. According to Yugoslav data, the provisional census of 1948 registered 498,242 ethnic Albanians and only 199,961 Orthodox Christian Slavs. This was a significant increase for Albanians (350,946 in 1939) and a decrease for Serbs and Montenegrins (213,746 in 1939). Expressed in percentage terms, Serbs

259,535 (or 1.5%) Turks in 1953; cf. D. T. Analis, "Le dilemme des minorités en Yougoslavie et dans les Balkans", in *Položaj manjina u Saveznoj Republici Jugoslaviji* (Belgrade 1996), 386.

dropped from 33.1% to 27.5% of the total population in the region, whereas Albanians rose from 54.4% to 68.5%. The Tito-Stalin split and disrupted relations with Albania led to another wave of immigrants from Albania; Yugoslav historians have evidence for at least 30,000, and indications, yet to be proven, for some 75,000.

In light of the analysis presented above, the reliability of the Yugoslav census of 1931 should be taken as unquestionable. Given that the figures for non-Slav minorities were kept secret and intended only for internal government use, in response to the needs of external defence or internal order, and that the same practice carried on until the outbreak of the Second World War, it seems reasonable to assume that the Yugoslav state's policies were not based on self-deception.

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