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The Shift in Yugoslav-Albanian Relations: The Establishment of Ties between Albania and the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija (1966–1969)

Abstract: The intra-party conflict in Yugoslavia in 1966 resulted in a fundamental shift in the attitude of the Yugoslav leadership toward the Albanian national minority, which was also reflected in the country's foreign policy orientation. The normalization of relations with Albania was set as one of the objectives of Yugoslav foreign policy. Yugoslavia stopped responding to the anti-Yugoslav statements of Albanian officials and launched a series of cooperation initiatives with Albania. The Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija was assigned a special role in the normalization of relations with Tirana and, with the consent of Belgrade, an exchange of publications, visits of cultural-artistic associations and contacts between the cultural institutions of Kosovo and Metohija and Albania ensued. This policy resulted in the establishment of direct cultural, economic and political ties between the governments of Albania and the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, into which the Yugoslav political leadership no longer had any insight.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Albania, Kosovo and Metohija, Josip Broz, Marko Nikezić, Enver Hoxha, Fadil Hoxha

Introduction

The ousting of the most influential Serbian communist in Yugoslavia, Aleksandar Ranković, in 1966 marked a turning point in the history of the country. Yugoslavia's leader Josip Broz and his closest associates Edvard Kardelj and Vladimir Bakarić began to move towards the gradual disintegration of the Yugoslav federation, seeing Serbia as the main obstacle to their intentions.¹ The new situation had particular implications for the Autonomous Province

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¹ B. Petranović and M. Zečević, *Agonija dve Jugoslavije* (Šabac: Zaslona, 1991), 302; Lj. Dimić, *Istorija srpske državnosti*, vol. 3: *Srbija u Jugoslaviji* (Novi Sad: SANU, 2001), 404–457; M. Gatalović, *Burna vremena: Kosovo i Metohija u državnoj politici Jugoslavije 1966–1969* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2018), 44–73; R. Vidačić, *O korenima separatizma i terorizma na Kosovu* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2000), 146, 148, 149.

of Kosovo and Metohija, where local Albanian leaders, with the support of the leadership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), began to oust Serb employees from state institutions and state-owned companies.² A confidential memo of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania on the situation in Yugoslavia dated October 1967 states that the “Bakarić-Kardelj group demands the achievement of national independence for the republics, eventually leading to their secession from Yugoslavia”. The report stresses that “this group enjoys the support of the pro-Tito leadership of Kosovo, which wants to secede from Serbia.”³ The new alliance in the Yugoslav communist party came to the fore during the debate about making changes to the constitutions of Serbia and Yugoslavia, in which Josip Broz supported the demands of the Albanian leaders from Kosovo. The constitutional amendments of 1968 and 1969 substantially reduced Serbia’s sovereignty in its autonomous provinces, granting them many elements of statehood.⁴

At a meeting of the Presidency of the LCY held on 31 October 1968 to discuss constitutional changes, the most influential Slovenian communist Edvard Kardelj stated that “the position of the Kosovo Albanians, given their large number and compactness, cannot be compared with that of the other national minorities in the world.” He added that small national minorities, such as the Italian minority in Istria, could not have the right to self-determination, but that the “Kosovo situation is different” and as such warranted the question of “whether Kosovo should be a part of Yugoslavia or of Albania”. Kardelj went on to propose a thawing of relations with Albania and removing the existing border between Kosovo and Metohija and Albania: “We must strive for changing inter-

² For more detail on the court cases against Serbs employed in the police service and firing Serbs from state-owned companies in Kosovo and Metohija in 1966–1967, see Arhiv Srbije [Archives of Serbia] (AS), F(onds) DJ-2, b(ox) 22, Documentation of the Executive Council of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia (EC CC LCS) concerning the 4th Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (CC LCY), Appendix: The number of employees in the Secretariat for Interior Affairs in SR Serbia on 1 August 1966; Arkivi Qendror Shtetëror (AQSH), F 14, Arkivi i Partisë – Struktura (APSTR), v(iti) 1967, d(osja) 267/2, Nga burimet tona inforhemi per Jugosllavine, 17. IV 1967, njësia arkivore (n.a.) 10; B. Dimitrijević, “Intelligence and Security Services in Tito’s Yugoslavia 1944–1966”, *Istorija 20. veka 2* (2019), 25, 26.

³ AQSH, f. 14, APSTR, v. 1967, d. 267/2, Nga burimet tona inforhemi per Jugosllavine, 17. X 1967, n.a. 44.

⁴ Arhiv Jugoslavije [Archives of Yugoslavia] (AJ), F 837, Office of the President of the Republic, II–2/364, Reception of the delegation of the Provincial Committee of LCS for Kosovo and Metohija, Note on the conversation between President Tito and members of the Provincial Committee of LC of Kosmet, Belgrade, 24 October 1968, 12–13; *Izmene u saveznom ustavu* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1969), 86–87, 96; *Službeni list Socijalističke autonomne pokrajine Kosova*, 1969, 169–185.

national relations in the Balkans, establishing friendly relations with Albania, removing borders in their current form, and creating a different climate to make this border an administrative demarcation line rather than a border splitting a single nation.”⁵

At the meeting, the leader of the League of Communists of Croatia, Vladimir Bakarić, said that the idea of Kosovo’s autonomy had emerged in 1944 as a sort of recompense for the fact that, due to the international situation, this territory could not be incorporated into Albania. Bakarić concluded that the autonomy of Kosovo and Metohija needed to be strengthened to make the unification of Albanians a feasible long-term goal: “I believe that the autonomy needs to be developed to make the local Albanian population an active centre for the evolution of the Albanian nation with a prospect of further integration with the Albanians of Albania. To that end, we need to promote brotherhood and unity and regulate the settlement dynamic of Kosmet.”⁶ Serbian party officials did not oppose Kardelj’s and Bakarić’s proposals aimed at the Albanization of Kosovo. Having ousted Ranković, Broz put the leadership of Serbia in an inferior position to the other republic-level leaderships, and the League of Communists of Serbia (LCS) even lost authority over the party organizations of Kosovo and Metohija and Vojvodina despite their formally being part of LCS.⁷

However, there was an obstacle to the plans of Broz, Kardelj and Bakarić for Kosovo and Metohija: the constant anti-Yugoslav campaign in Albania, which in the 1960s became an everyday media phenomenon. Besides Yugoslavia’s foreign policy orientation, the campaign targeted its internal organization and social life. The Albanian press routinely reported an alleged spike in serious crime among minors in Yugoslavia, presenting it as “a typical result of the Titoist regime”. The reports focused on the difficult position of Yugoslav workers, and Radio Tirana reported that workers in Yugoslavia were being “denied fundamental human rights, the right to work and participate in social production”, interpreting this as a “consequence of the revisionist policy of Tito’s clique”.⁸

⁵ AJ, 507, CC LCY, Extended Bureau of the Presidency of CC LCY, III–K.2/2, Stenographic minutes of the Extended meeting of the Bureau of the Presidency of CC LCY of 31 October 1968, 24–26.

⁶ Ibid. 38–39.

⁷ On the attitude of Albanian officials from Kosovo and Metohija towards the leadership of Serbia in this period, see AS, DJ-2, b. 11, Stenographic minutes of the joint meeting of the CC LCS Presidency and the EC CC LCY of 12 April 1968; Vidačić, *O korenima*, 146.

⁸ Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova [Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs] (DAMSP), Politicka arhiva [Political archive] (PA)–1967, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, Note of the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs (SSFA) on Albanian attacks on Yugoslavia in the period between 9 January and 18 March 1967, 23 March 1967, a(rchival) i(tem) 2–3.

Albanian newspapers had a section devoted to “degeneration and corruption in Yugoslavia” and the impoverishment of its population. The press routinely wrote about growing unemployment, strikes, and price hikes in Yugoslavia.⁹ Leading Albanian officials criticized Yugoslavia during the visits of foreign delegations and party congresses even when discussing domestic affairs. At a reception for the Chinese ambassador on 30 September 1965, Enver Hoxha said that “American imperialism was mobilizing its agents on the international scene, from Khrushchevian and Titoist leaders to the Pope in the Vatican.” At a rally in Beijing on 30 April 1966, Mehmet Shehu attacked “Khrushchevian and Titoist leaders” and did so again two weeks later, after his return from China, claiming that the “Titoist clique represents a special diversion battalion of American imperialism.”¹⁰ The allegation that Yugoslavia was the “fifth column” of American capitalism was an important element of the Albanian foreign policy platform, which Tirana also insisted on within its policy of rapprochement with China.¹¹

Enver Hoxha described the Brioni Plenum as a “struggle between Serbs and Croat-Slovenians for domination in the country, which also had an impact on the position of Kosovo and Metohija” and a “showdown between different capitalist groups.”¹² At the rally held in Tirana on 9 July 1966, Enver Hoxha said: “Yugoslavia has never been a socialist country.” The chief of the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA) did not mince words in his allegations against Yugoslavia: “Yugoslavia is ruled by a criminal gang; it has long had a fascist regime and the deepest dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and the country is steeped in chaos and total degeneration.”¹³

⁹ DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, Note of the SSFA on the attacks of PR Albania on Yugoslavia in the period between 5 October 1966 and 8 January 1967, 16 January 1967, a.i. 2.

¹⁰ DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, SSFA Documentation pertaining to the state of relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania in the course of 1965 and 1966, 24 February 1967, a.i. 1–2.

¹¹ E. Biberaj, *Albania and China: A Study of an Unequal Alliance* (Tirana: Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2014), 55.

¹² AQSH, f. 10, Enver Hoxha, g. II, n. III, v. 1966, d. 185, Shënime dorëshkrim të Shokut Enver Hoxha “Mbi gjëndjen aktuale në Kosovë”, mbi barbarizmate klikës Tito-Rankoviç kundrejt shqiptarëve të Kosovës, 19 September 1966.

¹³ DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, SSFA Documentation pertaining to the state of relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania in the course of 1965 and 1966, 24 February 1967, a.i. 3.

The policy of “extending the hand of reconciliation”: Yugoslavia’s new approach to Albania

Unlike in the 1950s, when the Yugoslav communists publicly condemned the regime of Enver Hoxha, the anti-Yugoslav campaign in Albania in the 1960s did not prompt negative responses from Belgrade and Priština. This shift in the attitude towards Albania was indicated already in 1964 when Yugoslavia came into the possession of evidence about Enver Hoxha’s post-1948 suppression of old PLA cadres. These documents, which revealed the ruthless methods of the Albanian dictator, were serialized in the Priština-based weekly *Jedinstvo*. The editorial board of *Rilindja*, Priština’s Albanian-language daily, refused to publish the documents.¹⁴

The Yugoslav initiative for thawing relations with Albania was launched in 1966, after the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs recommended in its foreign policy guidelines that Yugoslavia should “not heed” the constant attacks from Albania and should “treat the Albanian side in a calm and placatory tone to gradually normalize relations between the two countries.”¹⁵

Although State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Marko Nikezić was aware of the proportions of the anti-Yugoslav campaign in Albania, his statements and moves in this period suggest that reconciliation with Albania had become one of the imperatives of the Yugoslav policy in the Balkans. On 26 January 1967, his speech in the Federal Assembly about relations with Albania included the following statement: “I would like to reaffirm the readiness of our government to improve relations and resolve practical issues of mutual interest.” His deputy Miša Pavlović delivered a speech more or less to the same effect.¹⁶

On 8 March 1967, the Federal Executive Council (the main Yugoslav executive body or government) decided to continue initiating practical measures in its cooperation with Albania to normalize the two countries’ relations. On 25 October 1967, the Foreign Policy Committee of the Federal Assembly expressed support for these decisions, concluding that the improvement of relations with Albania needed to be the “long-term direction” of Yugoslav policy.¹⁷ The effort to improve relations with Albania was also underlined in the conclusions of the Federal Executive Council’s Committee for Foreign and International Relations

¹⁴ DAMSP, PA–1965, Albania, f 1, d. 3, Note of the SSFA, 13 January 1965.

¹⁵ DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f 1, d. 2, Information on the state of relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania, 14 February 1967.

¹⁶ DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f 1, d. 2, Documentation pertaining to the state of relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania in the course of 1965 and 1966, Official Yugoslav statements on Albania, 7.

¹⁷ DAMSP, PA–1968, Albania, f 1, d. 2, Information of the SSFA on the current state of Yugoslav-Albanian relations, 23 February 1968.

of October 1967 and in the conclusions of the Commission for International Relations of the LCY.¹⁸

At a meeting of the Party's Commission for Questions of International Relations on 21 September 1967, the leading Albanian official in Yugoslavia, Fadil Hoxha, spoke of relations with Albania in a conciliatory tone: "We need to be patient and prove our goodwill because, comrades, to be fair, we have been quarrelling since 1948." The leading Albanian official in Kosovo and Metohija noted that some "encouraging steps" had been made recently in the cooperation with the "Motherland", as he called Albania, such as book exchange and reciprocal visits of cultural delegations.¹⁹ Since the matter was a delicate one and given the PLA's constant attacks against the Yugoslav leadership, it seems reasonable to ask if Fadil Hoxha could have given such a response without first ensuring the consent of Josip Broz.

In line with the policy of "extending the hand of reconciliation", in 1967 and 1967 Yugoslavia launched a series of initiatives for resolving particular questions and practical issues of mutual interest. Some of these initiatives were based on the Albanian suggestions of 1955 and 1956, when relations between the two countries had temporarily headed towards normalization. In addition, Yugoslavia sent invitations to Albanian officials to participate in international conferences and sports events held in Yugoslavia, but the Albanian side did not accept them.²⁰

Over the course of 1966 and 1967, Albania agreed to sign bilateral treaties which it judged would be useful. The two countries signed protocols on commodity exchange, the Agreement on Road Traffic, and the Veterinary Conventions. The news of the Albanian acceptance of Yugoslav initiatives for bilateral agreements was welcomed at the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs (SSFA), because they were used to paint the picture of an "upward trend" in relations with Albania.²¹ Cooperation was established regarding the situation

¹⁸ Arhiv Kosova [Archives of Kosovo] (AK), F(onds) Lidhja e Komunistëve të Kosovës, Provincial LCS Committee for Kosovo and Metohija. Some problems in relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania, Priština, January 1968; Gatalović, *Burna vremena*, 260.

¹⁹ AJ, 507, CC LCY, XXIII A–K.3/1, Stenographic minutes of the meeting of the Commission for Inter-national and Inter-republic Relations of 21 September 1967, 49.

²⁰ DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, SSFA Documentation pertaining to the state of relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania in the course of 1965 and 1966, 24 February 1967, 9–10.

²¹ DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f. 2, d. 20, Report of SFRY Legation in Tirana to SSFA, 21 September 1967.

on the border and waterways, i.e., the profitable exploitation of the potentials of Lake Scutari and the rivers Bojana and Crni Drim.²²

The agreements on cooperation in tourism made between the two countries in 1966 and 1967 show that the Yugoslav leadership was willing to make concessions to Albania even at the cost of their own country's diplomatic humiliation. At the initiative of Yugoslavia, on 30 July 1966, an agreement on cooperation in the field of tourism was signed, stipulating that day trips to Albania could be organized for third-party tourists visiting Yugoslavia. However, the Albanian authorities refused to include a stipulation that would allow Yugoslav nationals to visit Albania, arguing that such a move would pose a "threat" to Albanian national security. In the ensuing period, Yugoslav nationals continued to be banned from entering Albania, but Yugoslav travel agencies offered and organized day trips to Albania for foreign tourists vacationing on the Adriatic coast, promoting Albania among international visitors and bringing it profit.

In January 1967, a Yugoslav delegation visited Tirana to sign a new agreement on cooperation in tourism for the current year. On this occasion, the Yugoslav side asked Tirana to lift its entry ban on Yugoslav nationals. However, the Albanian side said that such a move was "out of the question" and reiterated its position that Yugoslav nationals would "pose a threat to Albania's national security". The Yugoslav representative in Tirana, Miodrag Krdžić, was against the new treaty on cooperation in tourism. He informed the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs that signing the agreement would be an unnecessary concession to Albania, which would be at odds with the fundamental principles of international relations, particularly in the light of the anti-Yugoslav campaign in the country.²³

Against the advice of Krdžić, on 1 February 1967, Yugoslavia made a new agreement on tourism with Albania for the current year, although the entry ban for Yugoslav nationals of non-Albanian descent remained in force.²⁴ Foreign tourists were sent to Albania by bus from Dubrovnik and seaside resorts in Montenegro. In mid-1967, the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs received reports that there were anti-Yugoslav slogans along the full length of the road from the Yugoslav-Albanian border to Tirana (the road travelled by the visiting tourists). Once they reached their destination in Albania, anti-Yugoslav pamphlets in English and German were given out to the tourists who had come for

²² AJ, F 596, Federal Secretariat for the Economy, 1968, f. 61, Yugoslav-Albanian Commission for Water Management.

²³ DAMSP, PA-1967, Albania, f. 2, d. 10, SFRY Legation in Tirana to SSFA, telegram, 21 January 1967.

²⁴ DAMSP, PA-1967, Albania, f. 2, d. 10, Contract between the companies Albturist, Tirana, and Putnik, Belgrade, concerning the organization of day trips for transit tourists, 1 February 1967.

a day trip from Yugoslavia. Albanian tourist guides were tasked with the dissemination of these pamphlets and they tucked them into tourist guidebooks.²⁵ By sending international tourists from its resorts to visit Albania, Yugoslavia not only sponsored Albanian tourism but also risked its own reputation among foreign visitors. Identical agreements on cooperation in the field of tourism, which placed Yugoslavia in a humiliating position, were signed in 1968 and 1969.²⁶

The preferential treatment of Enver Hoxha's Albania by the Yugoslav authorities in 1966–1969 becomes particularly conspicuous when compared with the attitude of Yugoslavia towards Bulgaria. While the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs did not respond to the regular anti-Yugoslav and anti-Serbian statements of Enver Hoxha and the Albanian press and instead extended the arm of reconciliation to Tirana, in the case of Bulgaria, the Yugoslav authorities showed zero tolerance of any broaching of historically contentious topics. In January 1968, professors from Priština took part in a conference in Tirana, which was used by the Albanian authorities to declare territorial pretensions to Kosovo and Metohija. This elicited no response from the Yugoslav State Secretariat, unlike the commemoration of the centenary of the Treaty of San Stefano in the Bulgarian press, which led the Yugoslav side to deliver a letter of protest to the Bulgarian ambassador.²⁷

The Albanian rejection of the Yugoslav offer to normalize relations

Despite having signed several bilateral treaties that brought practical benefits to Albania, Tirana did not soften its hostile policy towards Yugoslavia. On 11 January 1967, the vice-president of the Albanian government, Adil Çarçani, described the situation in Yugoslavia as “a confirmation of the inevitable fall of imperialism.”²⁸ The Albanian media eagerly reported the failure of the economic reform in Yugoslavia, portraying it as “a restoration of capitalism.”²⁹

The anti-Yugoslav campaign intensified in 1967, and Enver Hoxha increasingly mentioned the question of Kosovo and Metohija in his attacks on Yugoslavia. During his tour of the Shkoder area and the territories of the Kel-

²⁵ DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, Information of the SSFA on anti-Yugoslav propaganda to foreign tourists visiting Albania through the Yugoslav Atlas travel agency.

²⁶ DAMSP, PA–1969, Albania, f. 2, d. 14.

²⁷ Dj. Tripković, “Jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi 50-ih i 60-ih godina 20. veka,” *Tokovi istorije* 1-2 (2009), 100.

²⁸ DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, Note of the SSFA on Albanian attacks on Yugoslavia in the period between 9 January and 18 March 1967, 23 March 1967, a.i. 2–3.

²⁹ AK, Lidhja e Komunistëve të Kosovës, Provincial LCS Committee for Kosovo and Metohija. Some problems in relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania, Pristina, January 1968, 36–40.

mendi tribe, Hoxha said: "Yugoslavia is now capitalist; the Titoists have sold out to imperialism. Our Kosovar brothers had never bowed before the kings of Serbia and they will not forget their homeland, language and customs under Tito's stick."³⁰

Enver Hoxha accused the Yugoslav government of pursuing a discriminatory policy against Albanians: "The Titoist demagoguery cannot paper over Kosovo's open wounds. Her immortal mother Albania pays homage to the illustrious girl Galica, who spent twenty years heroically fighting against Serbian and Montenegrin chauvinists for national independence. Tito's clique continues to pursue its chauvinist and discriminatory policy against Albanians in Yugoslavia."³¹

The peculiar situation in the two countries' relations came to the fore after the earthquake near the Albanian-Yugoslav border on 30 November 1967. Both countries suffered human casualties and material damage, and the Red Cross organizations of Yugoslavia and Albania offered to help each other in rebuilding houses and caring for victims. On 19 December, the Belgrade daily *Politika* published a photograph of Enver Hoxha visiting the town of Dibra, which had suffered damage in the earthquake, along with a text promoting a positive attitude towards the leader of the PLA. On the other hand, the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs learned that on the very same occasion Enver Hoxha had lambasted the Yugoslav leadership, accusing the "Titoist clique" of having done nothing to help the victims "because the Albanian parts in Yugoslavia had suffered the heaviest damage in the earthquake."³²

In April and May 1968, the Albanian press published thirteen attacks on Yugoslavia; commenting on domestic and international matters, Enver Hoxha hardly missed an opportunity to mention Yugoslavia in a negative context. At the joint session of the Presidency and Executive Committee of the LCY held on 11 March 1968, it was concluded that Kosovo was the focus of the Albanian

³⁰ AQSH, f. 10, Enver Hoxha, g. III, n. IV, v. 1967, d. 300, Takim i shokut Enver Hoxha marrë me datën 2 shtator 1967 me popullin e katundit rrapsh-stare të rrethit të Shkodrës dhe me përfaqësues të malësisë së kelmendit, 18–20.

³¹ AK, Lidhja e Komunistëve të Kosovës, Provincial LCS Committee for Kosovo and Metohija. Some problems in relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania, Pristina, January 1968.

³² DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f. 2, d. 9, Note of the SSFA on the correspondence between the Yugoslav and Albanian Red Cross organizations after the earthquake in the Yugoslav-Albanian border area on 30 November 1967, 21 December 1967; A , Lidhja e Komunistëve të Kosovës, Provincial LCS Committee for Kosovo and Metohija. Some problems in relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania, Pristina, January 1968.

foreign policy and that Tirana was showing territorial pretensions to the Yugoslav and Serbian province.³³

The failure of the Yugoslav attempt to normalize relations with Albania was noted in diplomatic circles and the Western press. In November 1967, the London *Times* published an article by its Vienna-based reporter about the “Albanian rejection of Yugoslav attempts to create better relations between the two countries”.³⁴ At the joint session of the Presidency and the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the LCY in March 1968, it was concluded that the efforts of the Yugoslav leadership to normalize relations with Albania had “yielded paltry results”, with the exception of the stabilization of the situation on the border.³⁵

Unlike the temporary thaw of relations in 1955, which was gradual and cautious on both sides, in 1966 and 1967, the Yugoslav government suddenly and unilaterally initiated reconciliation with Albania, disregarding the anti-Yugoslav campaign in the country. While the speeches of Enver Hoxha sounded as if the two countries were in a state of war, the Yugoslav authorities offered to sign bilateral treaties with Albania, some of which essentially represented financial aid to Albania. The most convincing explanation for this Yugoslav policy towards Albania can be found in internal political factors. The events in Yugoslavia suggest that Yugoslav-Albanian relations in 1966–1968 were not shaped by the strategy of the Yugoslav leadership towards Albania but by their strategy towards Serbia. The Albanian leadership’s attacks against Yugoslavia and Broz were one of the obstacles to the Albanization of Kosovo and Metohija. Therefore, attacks from Albania began to be hushed up by Yugoslav officials, while the efforts of the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs led to the signing of several bilateral agreements that could be used as “proof” to the Yugoslav public that relations between the two countries had an upward trend.

The political campaign that ensued after the Brioni Plenum paved the way for the internationalization of the question of Kosovo and the position of Albanians in Serbia. One of the main allegations that the Yugoslav officials (including Josip Broz) levied against Ranković was that the Directorate of State Security implemented a “ruthless regime” against the Albanian population of Kosovo and Metohija, which de facto meant that the Yugoslav communists

³³ AJ, 507, CC LCY, III/130, Joint meeting of the Presidency and EC CC LCY on 11 March 1968, Appendix 1, 21.

³⁴ DAMSP, PA–1967, Great Britain, f. 213, d. 3, SFRY Embassy in London to SSFA, encrypted telegram, 1 December 1967.

³⁵ AJ, 507, CC LCY, III/130, Joint meeting of the Presidency and EC CC LCY on 11 March 1968, Appendix 1, 20.

had accused their own authorities of harsh treatment of the Albanian national minority.³⁶

This allegation did not go unnoticed in European political circles, and international media soon began publishing texts on the difficult position of Albanians in Yugoslavia. A commentary broadcast on Radio Prague on 13 February 1968 mentioned a territorial dispute between Yugoslavia and Albania, adding that Yugoslavia had “with some of its moves given arguments in favour of the Albanian view on Kosovo.” To support the latter claim, the so-called Prizren Trial (1956) was brought up and the “prosecution of officials of Albanian nationality,” leading to the spread of misinformation that had been circulating beyond the borders of Yugoslavia since the Brioni Plenum.³⁷

A text published on 1 February 1968 in the Swiss paper *La Tribune de Geneve* described Albanian-Yugoslav relations as follows: “The ideological quarrel between Albania and Yugoslavia is fuelled by nationalism and a territorial dispute. The Albanians have certainly been victimized by Serbian officials.”³⁸ Although the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs mentioned the involvement of the Albanian secret service and some Western intelligence agencies in these reports, the texts were in fact based on a new political narrative in Yugoslavia planted by the LCY after the Brioni Plenum.³⁹

An important factor in spreading Albanian propaganda in the West was the Albanian emigration. Unlike the Yugoslav authorities, which saw Serbian and Croatian émigrés as a threat to the political system, Enver Hoxha’s Albania put aside its ideological hostility and in the 1960s began using the Albanian nationalist and anti-communist emigration for bolstering its aspirations towards Kosovo and Metohija. The émigré paper *Albanian Resistance* was published in Paris; it fully supported the 1968 protests in Priština, describing them as “pro-

³⁶ AJ, F 837, KPR, II-2/316, Reception of the delegation of Kosovo and Metohija, Note on the reception 4–19 March 1967; AS, DJ-2, b. 22, Assessment of aberrations in the Secretariat for Interior Affairs and State Security services, their causes, ideological roots and consequences, and proposed measures for overcoming them.

³⁷ DAMSP, PA-1968, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, Information of the SSFA on the current state of Yugoslav-Albanian relations, 23 February 1968, 7.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ The post-Brioni narrative about “Ranković’s oppression of Albanians in 1945–1966” was so strong that in the following decades this claim became firmly embedded in the consciousness of the Albanian intellectual elite. See AS, DJ-2, b. 22, Assessment of aberrations in the Secretariat for Interior Affairs and State Security services; Hajredin Hodža, *Afirmacija albanske nacionalnosti u Jugoslaviji. Staljinistički nacionalizam i iredentizam u Albaniji* (Priština: Rilindja, 1984), 77; A. Demjaha, “Kosovski sukob: unutrašnja perspektiva”, *Nova srpska politička misao* 3-4 (1999), 82.

tests of a youth who have been enslaved for the whole 55 years” and who are “fully aware that their true homeland is Albania.”⁴⁰

The result of the Yugoslav initiative: connecting Tirana and Priština

While Yugoslavia continued to be a constant target for the attacks of the Albanian press and leadership, a fundamental shift occurred in the relations between Tirana and the province-level political and intellectual elite in Kosovo and Metohija. According to the guidelines of Secretariate for Foreign Affairs, led by Marko Nikezić at the time, the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija was supposed to play an important role in connecting Yugoslavia and Albania. Nikezić believed that cultural cooperation between Kosovo and Metohija and Albania should be encouraged, including exchanging publications, procuring books from Albania, organizing visits of cultural-artistic associations, and establishing ties between cultural associations of Kosovo and Metohija and Albania.⁴¹

Enver Hoxha harboured a bitter personal animosity towards Josip Broz and initially described the concessions of the Yugoslav regime to the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija as a “sham”, in which “Broz pretended to be the saviour of Albanians in Kosovo and blamed Ranković for everything bad.”⁴² Even so, Hoxha chose to take advantage of Belgrade’s initiative for cultural and economic cooperation between Albania and Kosovo and Metohija.

The Albanian authorities accepted Priština’s invitation to cultural and educational cooperation and, for their part, began inviting intellectuals from Kosovo and Metohija to attend cultural events and academic conferences in Albania. Tirana’s explanation for this shift was that it was “what the Albanians masses wanted”.⁴³ A delegation of university teachers and scholars of the Institute of Albanology in Priština visited Tirana in late 1967. On this occasion, it was agreed to continue similar contacts and to begin printing schoolbooks for the needs of curricula in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija in Albania.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ DAMSP, PA–1969, Albania, f. 1, d. 3, Note of the SSFA on the activities of Albanian emigration abroad, 5 March 1969.

⁴¹ DAMSP, PA–1967, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, Information on the state of relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania, 14 February 1967, 9, 10.

⁴² AQSH, f. 10, Enver Hoxha, g. II, n. III, v. 1966, d. 185, Shënime dorëshkim të Shokut Enver Hoxha “Mbi gjëndjen aktuale në Kosovë”, mbi barbarizmate klikës Tito-Ranković kundrejt shqiptarëve të Kosovës, 19 September 1966.

⁴³ DAMSP, PA–1968, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, Information of the SSFA on the current state of Yugoslav-Albanian relations, 23 February 1968, 3.

⁴⁴ DAMSP, PA–1969, Albania, f. 1, d. 11, SFRY Legation in Tirana to SSFA, encrypted telegram, 12 June 1969.

According to the testimony of Enver Hoxha's wife Nexhmije Hoxha, in the second half of the 1960s, the leadership of Kosovo and Metohija intimated to Tirana that the closest possible relations between Albania and the province should be established "while Tito was still alive" and that the status of the Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia after his death was uncertain. Nexhmije Hoxha also said that, regardless of his unwavering fight against Titoism, Enver Hoxha had been aware of the political benefit which Tito's regime had brought to the Kosovo Albanians: "Enver judged that, as a Croatian nationalist, Tito was very interested in using the Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia as a counterbalance to the Serbs."⁴⁵ According to this statement, in the late 1960s, Tirana became aware to a certain extent that the Yugoslav political leadership was using the autonomy of Kosovo as a leverage to weaken Serbia.

The general agreement on cultural and educational cooperation of 1967 came to fruition in July 1968, when the newspaper *Rilindja* signed a contract with the Albanian company Artex for the purchase of books, music records and educational material in Albania for the needs of Albanian students in schools in Kosovo and Metohija. The terms of the contract had not been sent to the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, and the diplomatic mission of the SFRY in Tirana called Belgrade's attention to the fact that foreign diplomats in Tirana were "at a loss" to understand why Yugoslavia was allowing schoolbooks intended for its citizens to be imported from a country that was pursuing a bitter anti-Yugoslav campaign.⁴⁶

In January 1968, the Provincial Committee of the LCS concluded that more attention should be paid to local border traffic between the Province and Albania and that more direct contacts with businessmen from Albania should be secured.⁴⁷

An opportunity for a larger-scale meeting was the fifth centenary of the death of Djuradj Kastriot Skenderbeg (Alb. Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu), which Albania marked with a series of cultural and academic events in 1968. Tirana sent a formal invitation to the Assembly of AP Kosovo and Metohija, asking the Province to dispatch a large political, cultural and academic delegation and sending its regards to "the representatives of all Albanian areas in Yugoslavia". The authorities of Kosovo and Metohija decided to send a delegation

⁴⁵ N. Hoxha, *Kosova e lirë* (Gjirokastër: Argjiro, 2015), 53.

⁴⁶ DAMSP, PA-1969, Albania, f. 1, d. 11, SFRY Legation in Tirana to SSFA, encrypted telegram, 12 June 1969.

⁴⁷ AK, Lidhja e Komunistëve të Kosovës, 1968, Provincial LCS Committee for Kosovo and Metohija. Some problems in relations between SFR Yugoslavia and PR Albania, Pristina, January 1968, 30.

of Priština university professors and intellectuals led by Idriz Ajeti, Anton Çeta, Fehmi Agani, Syrja Pupovci and Zef Mirdita.⁴⁸

According to a report of the Yugoslav Legation in Tirana, the Albanian government used the world congress of Albanologists held on 11–18 January 1968 as an opportunity to spread nationalist propaganda and demonstrate territorial pretensions toward Yugoslavia. The delegation from Priština had preferential treatment at the congress and, at one point, it was separated from other participants and taken to a reception room to be received by the entire PLA Politburo. In his conversation with the Priština delegation, Enver Hoxha said that the practice of reprinting imported Albanian books in Kosovo and Metohija should be continued and that, in the light of political considerations, he would not object to having his picture removed from the reprinted books. He also said that he was aware of Priština's initiative to have some Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija sent to universities in Albania, adding that Albania was prepared to offer 200–300 scholarships for this purpose, provided that the authorities of Kosovo and Metohija manage to get the Yugoslav political leadership to approve the project. Albanian leaders stressed that they were not speaking to the Priština Albanologists as "politicians" and "officials" but as "Albanians". The delegation of Priština Albanologists spent the following few days in Albania touring the country's larger towns.⁴⁹

The Hungarian diplomatic representative in Tirana informed the Yugoslav Legation about a conversation between the Albanian historian Aleks Buda and the delegation of Hungarian Albanologists at the congress. Aleks Buda claimed that Albania was working on collecting documentation that would "prove that Kosovo and Metohija were part of Albanian territory" and allow it to "demand the incorporation of this territory into Albania".⁵⁰ The Hungarian Legation concluded that it had been no accident that the Albanians had communicated their plan for staking territorial claims on Yugoslavia to the Hungarian Albanologists. The Albanian government had hoped to find out if, given the significant size of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia, Hungary harboured similar territorial aspirations. The Yugoslav Legation did not rule out the possibility that the same idea had been mentioned to the Bulgarian delegation.⁵¹

⁴⁸ E. Myftari, *Kosova dhe Enver Hoxha* (Tirana: Botimet Princi, 2016), 66–69; Gatalović, *Burna vremena*, 265, 338.

⁴⁹ DAMSP, PA–1968, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, SFRY Legation in Tirana to SSFA, telegram, 25 January 1968; S. Syla, "Qëndrimi i Shqipërisë ndaj demonstrative në Kosovë më 1968", *Studime Historike* 3–4 (2012), 284.

⁵⁰ DAMSP, PA–1968, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, Information of the SSFA on the current state of Yugoslav-Albanian relations, 23 February 1968.

⁵¹ DAMSP, PA–1968, Albania, f. 1, d. 13, SFRY Legation in Tirana to SSFA, telegram, 14 February 1968.

On 11 May 1968, a symposium was held in Priština to mark the 500th anniversary of Skenderbeg's death. Three days earlier, a delegation of the University of Tirana had arrived in Kosovo and Metohija; its members were Aleks Buda, Ndreçi Plasari, Bujar Hoxha, Dorka Damo, Thoma Murzaku, and Mediha Shuteriqi.⁵² The history professor Aleks Buda had caught the eye of the Yugoslav authorities three months earlier with his statement that Albania would ask to annex Kosovo. The State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs was displeased that it had learned of his participation in the conference in Priština from the press and that it had not been informed by the authorities of Kosovo and Metohija of this visit in a timely manner. The Secretariat sent an official letter to the Executive Council (government) of Kosovo and Metohija asking to be informed of any similar visits from Albania in the future and to receive a report after the visit ended.⁵³ The Yugoslav diplomatic mission in Albania was unhappy with the behaviour of AP Kosovo and Metohija's organs, criticizing them for having concealed their contacts with Albania. In a telegram dated 11 June 1969, the envoy Hrnjak stated that the institutions and organs of Kosovo and Metohija had kept the Secretariat and other institutions underinformed of the agreements and conclusions they had reached with the Albanian side.⁵⁴

Hrnjak's telegram revealed the fear of the SFRY Legation in Tirana that Priština and Tirana had established parallel bilateral relations beyond the full control of the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs. Vojin Lukić, formerly the head of the federal-level Secretariat for Interior Affairs, said that the report of the diplomatic mission in Tirana had expressly informed the political leaderships of Serbia and the federation about "direct and unusual ties between Kosovo and Albania" and the growing interference and influence of Albania's policies in the academic, cultural and educational life of Kosovo, but that they had tolerated this development.⁵⁵

The establishment of direct political relations between Priština and Tirana led to the temporary suspension of Albania's anti-Yugoslav campaign in the autumn of 1968, at the time when the constitutional changes that would bolster the autonomy of Kosovo and Metohija were being prepared. According to the findings of the historian Ana Lalaj, Enver Hoxha's easing of anti-Yugoslav

⁵² A. Lalaj, "1968-1969. Shkrireja e akujve në bashkëpunimin kulturor shqipëri-kosove", *Studime Historike* 3-4 (2015), 250; Myftari, *Kosova dhe Enver Hoxha*, 70; Gatalović, *Burna vremena*, 338.

⁵³ DAMSP, PA-1968, Albania, f. 1, d. 8, SSFA to EC of AP of Kosovo and Metohija, 24 May 1968.

⁵⁴ DAMSP, PA-1969, Albania, f. 1, d. 11, SFRY Legation in Tirana to SSFA, encrypted telegram, 11 June 1969.

⁵⁵ V. Lukić, *Sećanja i saznanja. Aleksandar Ranković i Brionski plenum* (Titograd: Novica Jovović, 1989), 219.

propaganda in the second half of 1968 was the result of Fadil Hoxha's direct intervention. He had informed Enver Hoxha that constitutional amendments that would bolster the autonomy of Kosovo were being planned and that Tiraná's anti-Yugoslav statements could hamper this process. As a result, Albania temporarily stopped its attacks on Tito and Yugoslavia.⁵⁶

A striking characteristic of the Albanian demonstrations in Kosovo and Metohija on 27 November 1968 was the absence of reactions from Albania. While in the previous period the Albanian press had written extensively about various aspects of life in Yugoslavia and paid particularly close attention to the position of Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, not a single article was published about the protests in Priština. It was not until late December 1968 that Hysni Kapo, at a rally of Albanian-Chinese friendship, mentioned the Albanians of Kosovo and Metohija, praising their "freedom-loving tradition".⁵⁷ In the following months, the Albanian media also eased their anti-Yugoslav campaign to an extent.

On 5 December 1968, Enver Hoxha compiled his notes on the violent protests in Kosovo. The text begins with a denial of Tiraná's involvement in the protests and a refutation of the allegations that Albania had spies in the territory of Yugoslavia.⁵⁸ Hoxha recorded that the "Kosovars were proud" and that they would "not be subjugated by Tito's regime", which he had previously accused of a terrorist policy towards Albanians: "Ranković's crimes are well known. Tito wanted to put out the fire, but the fire has now been kindled and no one can put it out."⁵⁹ Some Albanian historians believe that these notes were in fact made later and that they were dated 5 December 1968 to relativize Enver Hoxha's silence about the November protests in Kosovo.

Albania's silence regarding the protests was variously interpreted in diplomatic circles. Hrnjak, the Yugoslav envoy in Tirana, was of the opinion that the Albanian diplomats had been amiable with their Yugoslav interlocutors and the Albanian press had scaled back its animosity only for the duration of the trial against the organizers of the protests. Hrnjak concluded that, having achieved their objective and secured more lenient sentences for the organizers, the Alba-

⁵⁶ A. Lalaj, "Ngjashmëri dhe pangjashmëri në lëvizjes e 1968-s (Një vështrim krahasues me demonstratat e shqiptarëve në Prishtinë, Tetovë dhe Shqipëri)", *Studime Historike* 3-4 (2018), 251–253.

⁵⁷ For more detail, see A. Životić, "Jugoslavija, Albanija i Čehoslovačka kriza (1968–1971)", *Tokovi istorije* 3 (2012), 77.

⁵⁸ AQSH, f. 10, Enver Hoxha, g. II, n. III, v. 1968, d. 238, Shënime dorëshkim të Shokut Enver Hoxha date 5. 12. 1968 "Demonstratat e Shqiptarëve në Kosovë".

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

nians “immediately launched another offensive” and the anti-Yugoslav campaign again intensified in the second half of 1969.⁶⁰

The secretary of the Romanian Legacy in Tirana, Micu, believed that the Albanian leadership had refrained from commenting on the protests to “avoid exacerbating the position of the members of the Albanian minority in Yugoslavia.”⁶¹ The Hungarian envoy Mátrai thought that the Albanian press had not reported on the protests because the Albanian government had been involved in them. After Mátrai told him this, Hrnjak responded that he did not know to what extent the Albanian government had been involved but that Albania’s anti-Yugoslav campaign had certainly influenced the mood of the protesters.⁶² Tirana’s policy had been so strongly targeted against Yugoslavia in the previous period that the dominant belief in European diplomatic circles was that Albania had indeed been involved in organizing the protests.⁶³

The possibility that Tirana and the Priština leadership had an oral agreement about the temporary suspension of the anti-Yugoslav campaign during the preparation of the constitutional amendments is also suggested by the conversation between Enver Hoxha and Rexhep Duraku of 1 March 1969. On this occasion, Enver stressed several times that Albania had not been involved in the events of 27 November in Priština and asked Duraku to relay this information to Fadil Hoxha. However, the Albanian leader did conclude with satisfaction that all global media had reported the protests and that the question of Kosovo had become an international concern.⁶⁴

A useful source for understanding the relations between Albania and the Kosovo leadership in the late 1960s is the minutes of the conversation of Enver Hoxha with Rexhep Duraku, who headed a delegation of family members of Albanian WWII People’s Heroes from Kosovo in early March 1969. At the beginning of the meeting, Enver Hoxha warned his interlocutor that Tito did not genuinely want to make concessions to Kosovo Albanians but that he had been “forced” to do so.⁶⁵ Speaking of Broz with disdain, the Albanian leader

⁶⁰ DAMSP, PA–1969, Albania, f. 1, d. 1, SFRY Legation in Tirana to SSFA, encrypted telegram, 11 July 1969.

⁶¹ DAMSP, PA–1969, Albania, f. 1, d. 11, SFRY Legation in Tirana to SSFA, encrypted telegram, 25 February 1969.

⁶² DAMSP, PA–1969, Albania, f. 1, d. 11, SFRY Legation in Tirana to SSFA, encrypted telegram, 4 March 1969.

⁶³ E. Çeku, “Kosova during 1960–1970 and Albania’s position”, *Thesis Kosova 2* (2009), 27, 28.

⁶⁴ AQSH, f. 10, Enver Hoxha, g. III, n. IV, v. 1969, d. 337/1. Bisedë e shokut Enver Hoxha, më datën 1.3.1969 me patriotin plak Kosovar Rexhep Duraku, babai i dëshmorit Emin Duraku, 1. III 1969, 19.

⁶⁵ AQSH, f. 10, Enver Hoxha, g. III, n. IV, v. 1969, d. 337/1. Bisedë e shokut Enver Hoxha, më datën 1.3.1969 me patriotin plak Kosovar Rexhep Duraku, babai i dëshmorit Emin Duraku,

showed strong personal sympathy towards Fadil Hoxha, the most influential Albanian official in Yugoslavia. Enver said that he had worked with many incumbent Kosovo officials before the Second World War in Albania and that, out of all of them, he “only trusted Fadil”. This was explained by the view that “Fadil Hoxha loved the people of Kosovo” and that “the people of Kosovo loved him”. He added that Fadil Hoxha and he had a common goal: that “the people of Kosovo should win.”⁶⁶

Enver Hoxha said that he was aware of the peculiar position of the Kosovo leadership, which could not publicly criticize Tito like the regime in Tirana was doing. He even said that he “had not been angry” even when Fadil Hoxha criticized him at some conference because he “understood his position.”⁶⁷

Rexhep Duraku promised to pass on all of this to Fadil and then asked the Albanian leader for help in procuring armaments: “Things are looking up but one thing is missing. It’s the armament problem. We have no idea how things will unfold in the future and we have no weapons.” Enver replied that this would be “rectified” and that the German and Italian fascists had also seemed “indestructible” but had been ultimately defeated.⁶⁸ It is unclear if Rexhep Duraku mentioned “the armament problem” to Enver Hoxha of his own accord or if he was conveying a message of the provincial leadership in Priština.

The unofficial political contacts between Priština and Tirana were given constitutional grounds in 1969. The Constitutional Act of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo of 24 February 1969 authorized the province to conduct affairs in the field of international relations.⁶⁹ The constitutional amendments of 1968 and 1969, which largely made Kosovo and Metohija the Albanian national territory in Yugoslavia, show that the parallel bilateral relations of Priština and Tirana enjoyed the support of Josip Broz and the Yugoslav leadership. In late 1968, Marko Nikezić – who had facilitated the spread of Albania’s influence in Kosovo and Metohija through the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs – was appointed chairman of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, the most important political office at the republic level in Yugoslavia.

1. III 1969, n.a. 9.

⁶⁶ AQSH, f. 10, Enver Hoxha, g. III, n. IV, v. 1969, d. 337/1. Bisedë e shokut Enver Hoxha, më datën 1.3.1969 me patriotin plak Kosovar Rexhep Duraku, babai i dëshmorit Emin Duraku, 1. III 1969, 13.

⁶⁷ AQSH, f. 10, Enver Hoxha, g. III, n. IV, v. 1969, d. 337/1. Bisedë e shokut Enver Hoxha, më datën 1.3.1969 me patriotin plak Kosovar Rexhep Duraku, babai i dëshmorit Emin Duraku, 1. III 1969, 19.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ *Službeni list Socijalističke autonomne pokrajine Kosova*, 1969, 176.

Firmly supported by the policies of Josip Broz, the Albanian officials from Kosovo and Metohija also communicated with Tirana through the Albanian Legacy in Belgrade. In September 1970, Fadil Hoxha, a member of the Presidency of the LCY, told the Albanian *chargé d'affaires* in Yugoslavia Lik Seiti that in the case of an armed attack of any country against Albania he “would personally serve as Enver Hoxha’s loyal soldier” and that “no Albanian from Kosovo would ever fight against Albania”.⁷⁰

Conclusion

The proclaimed objective of the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs – that Yugoslavia should get closer to Albania through the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija – did not come to fruition and the relations of the two countries failed to be normalized. At the same time, Yugoslavia allowed Albania to exert its influence in a part of Yugoslav territory, leading to the establishment of special links between Albanian and Kosovo political representatives into which the Yugoslav and Serbian authorities had no insight. While Yugoslav citizens were banned from entering Albania, citizens and officials of Albanian nationality had no trouble securing visas for Albania, where they could visit their relatives, and often met with top-ranking Albanian officials.⁷¹

The initiative of the Yugoslav authorities to expand relations Priština–Tirana was but one in a series of moves at odds with the established diplomatic practice and the purpose of foreign policy – to protect national interests. The facilitated cultural, economic and political ties between Priština and Enver Hoxha’s anti-Yugoslav regime additionally weakened Serbia’s and Yugoslavia’s ability to protect their sovereignty in Kosovo and Metohija.

This policy towards Albania was criticized only by the Yugoslav representatives in Tirana and some employees of the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs; the leadership of Yugoslavia continued to encourage the rapprochement between Kosovo and Metohija and Albania. In late 1968, Broz rewarded Marko Nikezić, the head of Yugoslav diplomacy, by appointing him chairman of the League of Communists of Serbia. In early 1969, the Constitutional Act of Kosovo was promulgated, giving the province powers in the field of international re-

⁷⁰ Seiti passed on this message to Enver Hoxha on 19 September 1971. For more detail, see AQSH, f. 10, Enver Hoxha, g. III, n. IV, v. 1969, d. 387/1; Takimi i sekretarit të parë të KQ të PPSH, shokut Enver Hoxha me të ngarkuarin me punë të Republikës Popullore të Shqipërisë në Jugosllavi, Lik Seitin, në Tiranë, në datën 19. 9. 1970; E. Çeku, *Kosovo and Diplomacy since World War II. Yugoslavia, Albania and the Path to Kosovan Independence* (London–New York: IB Taurus, 2015), 117.

⁷¹ DAMSP, PA–1969, Albania, f. 1, d. 2, Information of the SSFA on Yugoslav-Albanian relations, 20 October 1969.

lations. The Albanian officials who had covertly communicated with Tirana in the previous period were appointed to the highest political and administrative positions in the country. By creating a problem for Serbia in Kosovo, Broz weakened its capacity to withstand and oppose separatist tendencies in other parts of Yugoslavia.

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