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**PARALLEL UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA, 1991-1999:
FUNCTIONING, CHALLENGES AND
PEACEFUL RESISTANCE**

Abstract: *University of Prishtina, serving as an institution of education and science and as a centre of Albanian democratic and cultural movements, since its foundation was amongst the institutions on the target of Serbian regime. Upon abolition of the autonomy of Kosovo in 1989, the Serbian regime started the discriminatory policies against the Albanian population, the overwhelming majority population in Kosovo, including the expulsion of the Albanian pupils and students from the schools and university premises, massive dismissals from work, etc. It was the academic year 1991/1992 when the doors of the University of Prishtina were closed to Albanian students and teachers. The University of Prishtina and its campus in the center of the capital Prishtina, libraries, institutes and student dormitories all remained available to Serbian and other non-Albanian teachers and students.*

The Albanian population created a parallel state, a unique example in the world, and such state created the parallel institutions in various fields of life, such as health, culture and education, including also the parallel University of Prishtina. This paper, in light of the sources of the time (documents in the Archive of the Rectorate of University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", published reports of the international organisations, press of the time) and the relevant historiography aims at elaborating: the initial protests and resistance of Albanian professors and students against the violent measures imposed by the Serbian regime; how the students and teachers were expelled from the facilities of the University of Prishtina; the procedures and the circumstances under which was established the Parallel University of Prishtina; how this parallel university functioned in the situation of pressure and continuous violence from the Serbian regime, at private facilities in the suburbs of the city; how the entire Albanian population from Kosovo was mobilized to support this university. The paper

offers data from the unpublished documents which are stored at the Archive of the Rectorate of the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", regarding the number of planned and enrolled students, which indicates how the political situation was reflected on the number of students who attended the university studies. Particular attention in the paper was paid to the students' protests of 1997 by elaborating how this Parallel University, through the peaceful student protests, influenced the sensitizing of the international institutions and media on the question of the Albanian people in Kosovo. It emphasizes the important role of students represented by Independent Union of Students of the University of Prishtina (Unioni i Pavarur i Studentëve i Universitetit të Prishtinës - UPSUP), who gained the support and encouragement of international political personalities of the time for the continuation of peaceful student activism.

Despite all the drastic challenges the Parallel University of Prishtina functioned in all the segments that characterize a university. All managerial mechanisms were developed, teaching was held in three cycles of study, even though only private premises were available but no laboratories, libraries and dormitories, new students were enrolled, staff were continuously recruited and promoted, and university textbooks were prepared. However, due to many factors, including the emigration of the Albanian population, the continuous violence by the Serbian police, and the financial difficulties of Albanian families, the number of students was constantly decreasing. In addition, this situation impacted their learning. The lack of literature and laboratories, teaching and learning in private premises and homes, the constant dangers and mistreatment by the Serbian regime, were making university studies a very difficult mission. However, the Parallel University of Prishtina turned into a centre of peaceful resistance and a symbol of determination to continue studies and advancement in the Albanian language regardless of the extreme political and social situation. The University did not interrupt the work even in the state of war, until 21 March 1999. All this readiness, will and peaceful resistance had gained the attention and respect of international opinion.

Key words: *Parallel University of Prishtina, Kosovo, abolition of the autonomy, parallel system, students' protests.*

PARALELNI UNIVERZITET U PRIŠTINI, 1991-1999: FUNKCIONISANJE, IZAZOVI I MIRNI OTPOR

Apstrakt: *Univerzitet u Prištini, kao institucija obrazovanja i znanosti i centar demokratskih i kulturnih albanskih pokreta, bio je među institucijama na meti srpskog režima od svog osnivanja. Ukidanjem autonomije Kosova 1989. godine, srpski režim je započeo diskriminatornu politiku prema albanskom narodu, većinskom stanovništvu na Kosovu, uključujući izbacivanje albanskih učenika i studenata iz škola i univerzitetskih objekata, masovna otpuštanja itd.*

Bila je akademska 1991/1992. godina kada su vrata Prištinskog univerziteta bila zatvorena za albanske studente i nastavnike. Univerzitet u Prištini i njegov kampus u centru glavnog grada Prištine, biblioteke, instituti i studentski domovi ostali su dostupni srpskim i drugim nealbanskim nastavnicima i studentima.

Albanski narod je stvorio paralelnu državu, jedinstven primer u svetu, i takva država je stvorila paralelne institucije u raznim oblastima života, kao što su zdravstvo, kultura i obrazovanje, uključujući i Paralelni Univerzitet u Prištini. Ovaj članak, u svjetlu savremenih izvora (dokumenti u Arhivu Rektorata Prištinskog Univerziteta "Hasan Priština", objavljeni izveštaji međunarodnih organizacija, i štampa tog vremena) i relevantne literature, ima za cilj da elaborira: početni protesti i otpor albanskih profesora i studenata protiv nasilnih mera koje je uveo srpski režim; kako su studenti i nastavnici izbačeni iz objekata Univerziteta u Prištini; procedure i okolnosti pod kojima je osnovan Paralelni Univerzitet u Prištini; kako je ovaj paralelni univerzitet funkcionisao u situaciji stalnih pritisaka i nasilja srpskog režima, u privatnim objektima na periferiji grada; kako je celokupno albansko stanovništvo sa Kosova mobilisano da podrži ovaj univerzitet. U radu su dati podaci iz neobjavljenih dokumenata koji se čuvaju u Arhivi Rektorata Univerziteta u Prištini "Hasan Priština", o broju planiranih i prijavljenih studenata, koji pokazuju koke se politička situacija odražava na broj studenata koji su nastavili univerzitetske studije. Posebna pažnja u radu je posvećena studentskim protestima 1997. godine, elaborirajući kako je ovaj Paralelni Univerzitet kroz mirne studentske proteste uticao na svest međunarodnih institucija i medija o pitanju albanskog naroda na Kosovu. Ističe se značajnu ulogu studenata koju predstavlja Nezavisna Unija Studenata Prištinskog Univerziteta (Unioni i Pavarur i Studentëve i Universitetit të Prishtinës – UPSUP), koja je dobila podršku i ohrabrenje međunarodnih političkih ličnosti tog vremena za nastavak mirnog studentskog aktivizma.

Uprkos svim drastičnim izazovima, Paralelni Univerzitet u Prištini je funkcionisao u svim segmentima koji karakterišu univerzitet. Razvijeni su svi upravljački mehanizmi, nastava se odvijala u tri ciklusa studija, iako su bile dostupne samo privatne prostorije, ali ne i laboratorije, biblioteke i domovi, primani su novi studenti, kontinuirano se zapošljavalo i usavršavalo osoblje, a pripremani su univerzitetski udžbenici. Međutim, zbog mnogih faktora, uključujući emigraciju albanskog stanovništva, kontinuirano nasilje srpske policije, kao i finansijske teškoće albanskih porodica, broj studenata se konstantno smanjivao. Štaviše, ova situacija je uticala na njihovo učenje. Nedostatak literature i laboratorija, podučavanje i učenje u privatnim prostorijama i kućama, stalne opasnosti i maltretiranje od strane srpskog režima, činili su univerzitetske studije veoma teškom misijom. Međutim, Paralelni Univerzitet u Prištini postao je centar mirnog otpora i simbola odlučnosti da se nastave studije i napreduju na albanskom jeziku uprkos ekstremnoj političkoj i društvenoj situaciji. Univerzitet nije prekidao rad ni u ratnom stanju, sve do 21. marta 1999. godine. Sva ta spremnost, volja i miran otpor zadobili su pažnju i poštovanje međunarodnog mišljenja.

Ključne riječi: *Paralelni Univerzitet u Prištini, Kosovo, ukidanje autonomije, paralelni sistem, studentski protesti.*

Introduction

University of Prishtina, founded on 15 February 1970, was the first university in former Yugoslavia to provide higher education in Albanian language and had an important role in the educational and cultural development in Kosovo. Before 1970, in Kosovo operated only some higher education institutions, as offshoots of the University of Belgrade. The interest among Albanian population in Kosovo for enrolment at the University of Prishtina was very high and the number of Albanian students there increased rapidly.¹ The establishment of this university enabled the Albanian population to be educated for different professions and thus be more involved in different state institutions in Kosovo.² University of Prishtina soon also served as a centre of political awareness and movements for democracy, therefore it became a target of attack of the Serbian government in Belgrade, especially from 1981, when from a dissatisfaction in students' canteen of the University of Prishtina, started the demonstrations which took on national dimensions. These demonstrations were violently suppressed by Serbia.³ As a result of these events, the Serbian regime declared the University of Prishtina “centre for nationalist indoctrination and separatist teachings”.⁴ After the developments of 1981, the Serbian regime began punishing the University of Prishtina, first by reducing the number of students and then by orienting the programs towards technical and exact sciences, rather than the humanities, in order to divert students' attention from “nationalistic ideas”.⁵ During the 1980s, restrictive attitudes prevailed even towards Albanian cultural values in general.⁶ At the end of the decade, when the Serbian Leader of Communists, Slobodan Milosevic, actively began to ignite Serbian nationalist feelings and aspirations for Kosovo through propaganda, the political circumstances worsened significantly and resulted in the suppression of

¹ Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, London 1998, 326; Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Kosova*, Lanham, Maryland –Toronto-Oxford 2004, 184.

² Henry H. Perritt, *The Road to Independence: A chronicle of the Ahtisaari Plan*, Cambridge 2010, 21.

³ Bërçulli, Dashamir & Faton Berisha (Eds). *50 Vjet Universitet, 1979-2020: 50 Vjet Universiteti i Prishtinës*, Prishtinë: Universiteti i Prishtinës, 2020, 54-56; Minir Dushi, *Universiteti i Kosovës (1981-1983)*, Prishtinë 2004, 49-50; Perritt, *The Road to Independence*, 22.

⁴ Atdhe Hetemi, *Lëvizjet Studentore Për Republikën e Kosovës, 1968, 1981 dhe 1997*, Prishtinë 2020, 321.

⁵ Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, London 2000, 43; Dushi, *Universiteti i Kosovës (1981-1983)*, 91.

⁶ State Agency of Archives of Kosovo (Agjencioni Shtetërorë i Arkivave të Kosovës – hereinafter ASHAK), Fund: Rilindja, Zeqirja Ballata, “Restriksione të mëdha në komunikimin kulturor në shkallë gjithëkombëtare,” *Rilindja*, 5. V. 1990, 12. The newspaper Rilindja is stored in a special archival fund in State Agency of Archives of Kosovo - ASHAK.

Kosovo's autonomy in 1989.⁷ The oppression and persecution of the Albanian population by the Serbian regime which continued, included the illegal banning of education in Albanian language as well, and the beating and mistreatment of Albanian intellectuals.⁸ Serbian violence in an attempt to obstruct Albanian schools had even reached the point of homicides.⁹

Expulsion of Albanian students and teachers from the facilities of the University of Prishtina: Establishment of the Parallel University of Prishtina

With the suppression of the autonomy of Kosovo, Serbia had issued a series of discriminatory laws towards Kosovo, including the Law on the University.¹⁰ This law was adopted and issued by the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Serbia in January 1990, whose objective was the destruction of autonomy of the University of Prishtina. According to Article 108 of this law: “The Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Serbia determines the policy of conduct of university education in the Republic and provides the conditions for its implementation. Pursuant to the established policy, the assembly of the autonomous socialist province determines the policy of the conducting of university education in the autonomous socialist province [...]”.¹¹

In the wake of the many labels that were being given to the University of Prishtina at this time, as “the hearth of nationalism and separatism”, the real goal of the Serbian regime, which was the closure of this university, had begun to be articulated and developed. The request for the closure of the University of Prishtina represented a request for the closure of one of the most important institutions of education and equality in Kosovo, therefore it was unacceptable for the Albanian population.¹²

Efforts to implement the above-mentioned law into practice began at the beginning of 1991, when work began on harmonizing the normative acts of higher education institutions with the Law on the University. At the same time, the Serbian regime initiated the process of reducing the number of Albanian students and illegally increasing the number of Serbian-Montenegrin students

⁷ Alastair Finlan, *The Collapse of Yugoslavia 1991-99*, Great Britain, Oxford 2004, 16.

⁸ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo*, Cambridge 2005, 162.

⁹ ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, M. Kajtazi, “Bashkimi i sindikatave të Kosovës për Masakrën në Uçë të Istogut: Shkollimi Shqip – Çështje vitale e Kombit,” *Bujku*, 2.II.1992, 4. The newspaper Bujku is stored in a special archival fund in ASHAK.

¹⁰ Hajrullah Koliqi, *Mbijetesa e Universitetit të Prishtinës, 1991-1994*, Prishtinë 1995, 22; Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës, *Kosova: Vështrim Monografik*, Prishtinë 2011, 407.

¹¹ Koliqi, *Mbijetesa e Universitetit*, 22.

¹² ASHAK, Fund: Rilindja, Ymer Avdiu, “Breshëri sulmesh mbi Universitet”, *Rilindja*, 24. II. 1990, 7.

at the University of Prishtina. Violent measures also began to be applied, initially at the Faculty of Medicine, on August 1990, when the management of this faculty was dismissed and the interim managements in the faculty and in the clinics, institutes, departments and other organisations of the Faculty of Medicine were appointed. These interim managements began the expulsion of the Albanian teachers and employees from the Faculty. Such violent measures were gradually applied in other academic units as well, to be completed as a process on 27 June 1991, when the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted the decision “‘on the application of interim measures for the protection of self-governing rights and social property to the University of Prishtina [...]”¹³ Thus, violent measures were applied to 13 Faculties and the Rectorate of the University of Prishtina.¹⁴ Such events were followed by a hunger strike of Albanian students, which was planned to last 3 days, but was interrupted by the Serbian police.¹⁵

The Albanian teachers of the University of Prishtina had been persistent in their resistance to all the imposed measures, a resistance that they articulated even by refusing to sign the agreement with the Association of Post-secondary Schools and with the Association of Faculties of Serbia. This development was followed by the immediate cessation, on 1 October 1991, of the funding of studies in the Albanian language in higher education institutions by the Provincial Fund for Higher Education in Kosovo.¹⁶ The peaceful protests held by Albanian students, pupils, teachers and parents in most schools and faculties were violently interrupted by the Serbian police. University professors were among the beaten and ill-treated.¹⁷ An intolerable atmosphere reigned in all Faculties of the University of Prishtina. The Serbian police dispersed the Albanian students who were peacefully waiting in the courtyards of the faculties to enter. On the other hand, the Serbian violent management of the rectorate welcomed the Serbian students, even organizing solemn receptions for them.¹⁸ The intolerable situation of education in Kosovo was echoed in the European Conference of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Education Professions, held in

¹³ Koliqi, *Mbijetesa e Universitetit*, 22-27; Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës, *Kosova: Vështrim Monografik*, 407.

¹⁴ ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, Sh. Rexhepi, “Masa të dhunshme në Universitetin e Kosovës: U serbizuan te gjitha udhëheqjet e Fakulteteve dhe të Rektoratit”, *Bujku*, 29.VI.1991, 2.

¹⁵ ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, Ymer Avdiu, “Policia ndërpreu grevën e studentëve”, *Bujku*, 29. VI. 1991, 3.

¹⁶ Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës, *Kosova: Vështrim Monografik*, 407.

¹⁷ ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, B. Zogjani & Y. Avdiu, “Konferencë shtypi e Këshillit Koordinues për Arsimit të Kosovës: Milicia rrahu nxënës, studentë, mësime të nxënësve dhe qytetarë”, *Bujku*, 4. X. 1991, 6; Sh. Rexhepi & B. Kabashi, “Konferencë për shtyp e Këshillit Koordinues për Çështje Arsimore të Kosovës: U arrestuan dhe u maltretuan shumë pjesëmarrës të protestës së qetë”, *Bujku*, 3.X.1991, 4; Y. Avdiu, A. Salihu and R. B. Demiri, “Shkollat janë tonat, ato nuk i japim”, *Bujku*, 3.X.1991, 4.

¹⁸ ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, Sh. Rexhepi & Y. Avdiu, “Dëbohen profesorët, ndiqen studentët”, *Bujku*, 17.X.1991, 4; Miranda Vickers, *Midis Serbëve dhe Shqiptarëve: Një Histori e Kosovës*, Tiranë 2004, 306.

October 1991 in Geneva.¹⁹ In general, the year 1991 marked a year in which the basic freedoms and rights of the Albanians in Kosovo were violated. As announced by a report of the US State Department, hundreds of cases of ill-treatment of Albanians had been reported. At least 430 Albanian professors and other professional services were forcibly dismissed from the University of Prishtina.²⁰

At the beginning of the 1991-1992 academic year, as mentioned above, the entrances of the faculties of the University of Prishtina were blocked for the Albanian teachers and students by the Serbian police. In these circumstances, 13 faculties of the University and 7 post-secondary schools were forced to start lectures in unusual teaching conditions, in about 250 private facilities. On 17 February 1992, the University of Prishtina was re-opened in adopted facilities for learning whereas the students were accommodated in private houses due to the closure of the students' dormitories.²¹

In order to function as a university, Albanians had considered necessary to first elect the leading bodies of the University of Prishtina. On 26 November 1991, the constitutive session of the Assembly of this University was held. In addition, in this session the leaderships of the University and of the faculties were elected, and it was inaugurated the beginning of this new Albanian university, which indeed would continue the activities and work of the old one. Shortly following this session, in early December, the faculties' managements decided to begin preparations for starting the lectures in private adopted facilities.²² The elected rector of the University of Prishtina, just a few days later, addressed a letter to the rectors of the former Yugoslavia, as well as to the international rectors and institutions, where he clarified the shocking situation in which higher education was going through and the expulsion from the University's facilities. Moreover, on 10 January 1992, he sent a letter to the Serbian violent bodies of the Rectorate of the University of Prishtina, requesting the release of the university facilities, an effort this which resulted in his imprisonment, just a few days later, and the sentence of two months of imprisonment.²³ After the imprisonment of the rector, protests were organized by university teachers²⁴ until

¹⁹ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, Demë Jashari, "Delegacioni i LASH "Naim Frashëri" në Gjenevë: Shqiptarëve në Kosovë duhet t'u kthehet shkolla shqipe", *Bujku*, 25.X.1991, 9.

²⁰ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, Qamile Blakçori, "Raporti i Stejt – Departmentit Amerikan mbi shkeljen e të drejtave njëzëzore në Jugosllavi: Diskriminim i pakufishëm i shqiptarëve", *Bujku*, 6.II.1992, 8.

²¹Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, 101.

²²Denisa Kostovicova, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space*, London and New York 2005, 103.

²³Muhamet Mavraj, Mbijetimi i Shkollimit Shqip – Një Histori në Vete, *Bota e Re*, Year XXIX, Nr. 20, Prishtinë, X. 1996, 4.

²⁴ASHAK, Fund Bujku, Y. A., "Tubim protestues i arsimtarëve universitarë shqiptarë kundër burgosjes së Rektorit të Universitetit të Prishtinës: Kërkesat e Rektorit janë kërkesa të arsimtarëve dhe studentëve", *Bujku*, 23.I.1992, 3; Sh. R., "Lirimi i lokaleve universitar- kërkesë e ligjshme", *Bujku*, 26.I.1992, 1, 4.

his release on 28 January 1992.²⁵ Even in March 1993, the rector of the University of Prishtina, Professor Ejup Statovci, was arrested and sentenced to prison, just because he had requested the return of the university buildings to Albanian teachers and students.²⁶

As mentioned above, the deprivation of education in Albanian language and the removal of Albanian students from University facilities was only one aspect of the countless discrimination elements that were taking place in Kosovo. According to a report by the Council for the Protection of Freedoms and Human Rights (*Këshilli për Mbrojtjen e Lirive dhe të Drejtave të Njeriut – KMLDNJ*), only during the period from 1990 to August 1992, 116 Albanians were killed by the Serbian regime, while many others were injured and arrested. A total of 35 laws which severely discriminated the Albanian population of Kosovo were passed. 70% of all employees were dismissed from work, including University of Prishtina personnel, moreover, other private economic activities had been disabled and the free movement was hindered.²⁷

The year 1992 was the year of establishment of parallel institutions. Thus, in Kosovo, in addition to the official institutions, which were under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Serbia, parallel, extra-state institutions also began functioning, which were under the control of the declared Republic of Kosovo, institutions these in the field of health, education, defence, culture, sports, information, etc.²⁸ This unique “parallel society” as the researcher Robert Austin called it, was created in the circumstances when “the Albanians were quasi-stateless, so they created their own state.”²⁹ The parallel education system offered the only possibility for Albanian population to continue learning in the Albanian language, under their organisation and planning. As the scholar Denisa Kostovicova expressed: “Albanian parallel education in Kosovo emerged as an embodiment of the Albanians’ peaceful resistance, and an argument used to prove the existence of the Albanian independent state in Kosovo”.³⁰ The readiness to continue education in Albanian language was shown not only by pupils, students and teachers, but by the entire Albanian population in Kosovo, a part of which even gave up their private homes to adapt them to schools.³¹

²⁵ ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, Sh. Rexhepi & Y. Avdiu, “Përfunduan tubimet protestuese të arsimtarëve shqiptarë kundër burgosjes së Rektorit të UP, Prof. DR. Ejup Statovcit: Rektori u lirua por jo edhe Universiteti”, *Bujku*, 30.I.1992, 3.

²⁶ Tim Judah, *Kosova: Luftë dhe Hakmarrje*, Prishtinë 2002, 89.

²⁷ Petrit Imami, *Serbët dhe Shqiptarët Ndër Shekuj, Vëllimi II*, Beograd 2017, 232.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 234.

²⁹ Robert C. Austin, *Making and Remaking the Balkans: Nations and States since 1878*, Toronto, Buffalo, London 2019, 49.

³⁰ Kostovicova, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space*, 97.

³¹ ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, M. Kajtazi, “Konferencë shtypi e bashkimit të sindikatave të pavarura të Kosovës: Madhështi kur shtëpitë bëhen shkolla”, *Bujku*, 6.II.1992, 4.

In fact, it was the Democratic League of Kosovo³² which had created this parallel state, with its Government established in 1991. Taxes for the operation of the parallel system began to be collected by Albanians in Kosovo and in diaspora, and 90% of them were dedicated to the parallel education system, a system this, which was developed to be as functional as possible. Thus, in 1993, it included about 20,000 teachers, professors and administrative staff. Only primary schools were allowed by the Serbian regime to hold classes in school facilities, while secondary schools and faculties held classes in homes, garages or other facilities, all of which were released on a voluntary basis.³³ The teaching and administrative staff and students were often maltreated, beaten or arrested by Serbian police. The latter, whenever having the opportunity, also confiscated the finances that had been collected for education needs.³⁴

The Assembly of the University of Prishtina, at the beginning of 1993 had approved the recommendations that all University of Prishtina employees whose employment relationship had been terminated by the violent bodies and who continued to work at the Parallel University of Prishtina, should be issued a decision to continue working, as of the day when the employment relationship was terminated.³⁵ The following year, precisely on 22 June 1994, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo took the decision to approve the *Decree on Higher Education*, according to which decree, the higher education in Kosovo would be organized and operate.³⁶ The date of the decree of 22 June 1994 will remain a historic date for the University of Prishtina and as the rector Ejup Statovci stated, it was based on the experience of European and world universities.³⁷

Challenges of the operation of the Parallel University of Prishtina: learning in private facilities

While in the first academic year of parallel education the professors and students had to move from one private facility to another for the teaching process, in the second academic year, there was a permanence in terms of the places where the lesson was held, since a house or several houses in the same neighbourhood were assigned where exactly the lesson was taking place,

³² *Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës – LDK* - a political party, established on 23 December 1989. Led by Dr. Ibrahim Rugova it became the leading political party which represented the Albanian population in Kosovo during the 1990s, see: Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Kosova*, 47.

³³ Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *Kosovo Report: Conflict, International response, Lessons learned*, Oxford 2000, 45-46.

³⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo*. New York, Washington, London, Brussels 2001, 29.

³⁵ See the published document in: Koliqi, *Mbijetesa*, 141.

³⁶ See the published document in: Koliqi, *Mbijetesa*, 147, 148-163.

³⁷ ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, Rexhep Demiri, "Intervistë: Prof. Dr. Ejup Statovci, Rektor i Universitetit të Prishtinës: Vendosi mëria dhe mençuria po e mban Universitetin", *Bujku*, 3.X.1994, 5.

depending on what faculties they housed. Scholar Denisa Kostovicova highlights a phenomenon in this period, the "Albanians' spatial marginalization". While Serbian and other non-Albanian students were continuing their studies in University facilities in the centre of Prishtina, and were using the entire university campus, Albanian students were studying entirely on the outskirts of the capital, in houses or facilities adopted for learning.³⁸ In an article published by the student newspaper of the University of Prishtina *Bota e Re*, at the beginning of the academic year 1996-1997, the sixth in a row in private facilities, it was emphasized: "[...] these young students were also received in the same atmosphere and under the same conditions as their older colleagues: in private homes in all neighbourhoods of Prishtina, the University-City [...]"³⁹ The Parallel University of Prishtina continued to have the support of all the Albanian entities of Kosovo.⁴⁰ During the 90s, the appearance of the campus of the University of Prishtina gradually changed. Inside its area, right in the middle, without any urban plan, an Orthodox cathedral was built. At the same time, within the university space, all the existing monuments, although of a universal character, were destroyed and removed, to be replaced by busts of Serbian ecclesiastical or historical figures.⁴¹

Normally, under such circumstances the number of students at the Parallel University decreased significantly. Male students were more likely to drop out, a considerable number of whom had to emigrate in different countries in Europe, to avoid conscription and provide for the families.⁴²

In this situation, the number of students registering for the first time at the University was smaller than planned. The reasons for the decline in the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions were numerous and directly related to the political situation in the country. The difficult and extraordinary conditions in which learning was carried out, financial difficulties and the impossibility of pursuing studies, the lack of opportunities for employment, the small markets of the labour economy, the constant migration of the youth to ensure the existence of the whole family, were some of the reasons for the continuous decline of number of students at the University of Prishtina.⁴³ Thus, during the operation of the Parallel University, the number of planned

³⁸ Kostovicova, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity*, 111.

³⁹ Habibe Maliqi, *Viti i Ri Akademik: Gjithçka me të Vjetrën*, *Bota e Re*, Year XXIX, Nr. 20, Prishtinë, X, 1996, 3.

⁴⁰ ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, Y. Avdiu, "Universiteti i Prishtinës, sot shënon 27 vjetorin: Institucion që jetoj kohën", *Bujku*, 15.II.1997, 1.

⁴¹ Maliqi, *Viti i Ri Akademik: Gjithçka me të Vjetrën*, 3; Christ the Savior Serb Orthodox Church began to be built on the campus of the University of Prishtina, in 1995. Its construction was never completed and to this day it remains unfinished in the middle of the campus, at the heart of Prishtina, see: Austin, *Making and Remaking of the Balkans*, 49.

⁴² Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, 101; Natasha Kandiç *Nën Lupë: Të Drejtat në Kosovë*, Beograd, 1998, 88.

⁴³ Archive of the Rectorate of University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", 72, *Realizmi i Regjistrimit të Studentëve 1994/1995, 1996/1997*.

students was greater than those who actually enrolled. For example, in the academic year 1991/1992, the year when students and professors were forced to leave the University, it was planned to enrol 7.161 students, while 4.380 students, or 61.24%, were in fact enrolled.⁴⁴ In the academic year 1992/1993 there was a slight increase compared to the year 1991/1992, since out of 7.179 students planned for registration, a total of 5.645 students were registered, or 78.63%.⁴⁵ In the year 1993-1994, 74.45% of the students were enrolled, out of the total number of students planned to be enrolled,⁴⁶ in the academic year 1994/1995 this figure was 75.91%,⁴⁷ while in the academic year 1995/1996, 71.58%.⁴⁸

While the insistence of the Serbian leadership to fill the University of Prishtina with Serbian students continued, this was not always attractive for the Serbs of Belgrade, so space was also given to Greek students who, as researcher Raymond Detrez claims, “could get a diploma in Kosovo for a favourable price”.⁴⁹

In addition to continuing the education, even under extraordinary conditions, the Parallel University continued with all other processes related to the operation of a University, for example with the election and re-election of the regular academic staff and associates,⁵⁰ several agreements were reached with several universities of other countries, and even student activities were reactivated.⁵¹

Given that the publishing houses were also closed, a very big challenge was to provide the Albanian language textbooks for schools and university. Initially, they were brought from Albania, but over time they began to be published by Kosovo Albanians, mostly abroad. These textbooks were secretly brought to Kosovo and distributed.⁵²

So, despite the difficult circumstances, the process of publishing university textbooks continued. The documentation in the archive of the Rectorate of the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina" confirms that only during the period from June 1994 to November 1996, 54 university textbooks were published.⁵³ The Parallel University possessed also The Publishing Council of the University, which consisted of the president and ten members.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the University had approved the Regulation on Publishing Activity

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁸ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁹ Raymond Detrez, *Kosova - Lufta e Shtyrë*, Tiranë 2004, 98-99.

⁵⁰ Archive of the Rectorate of University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”, 72, Realizimi i Regjistrimit të Studentëve 1994/1995, 1996/1997.

⁵¹ Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës, *Fjalori Enciklopedik i Kosovës II: L-ZH*, Prishtinë, 2018, 1707.

⁵² Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, 99.

⁵³ Archive of the Rectorate of University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”, Këshilli Botues.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem.*

of the University of Prishtina.⁵⁵ Under these difficult conditions, post-graduate studies continued in some faculties, while within the University it was possible the establishment of a new faculty in 1997, the Faculty of Teaching.⁵⁶

Of course, the operation of the Parallel University of Prishtina under such conditions was extremely difficult. In many fields it was difficult to professionalize the students. As Professor Luljeta Pula points out: “Pretending that you have prepared a technology engineer who tomorrow will be able to lead production in various factories and enterprises without ever seeing even an ordinary test tube during his education is at least nonsense”.⁵⁷ Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Dr. Zenel Kelmendi highlighted for Human Rights Watch in 1993, the difficulties to carry out the teaching with the students of medicine and dentistry, who, due to the lack of conditions, had to practice in private clinics. As he emphasized, “one of our biggest problems is that we can’t get corpses so our students have to go to Albania to study anatomy. They interrupted entrance exams this year [1993/94 school year], so we had to hold it secretly several days later”.⁵⁸ Despite the severe conditions, the Council of Teachers of the Faculty of Medicine had expressed the determination that they would work as hard as possible for the achievement of the highest quality of studies and for the professional and scientific development of new staff.⁵⁹

The beginning of the war in Kosovo worsened further the severe situation, as far as the results in studies are concerned. In an interview with several students, conducted in April 1998 by the student newspaper *Bota e Re*, the vast majority of them stated that the created situation was affecting their learning results considerably.⁶⁰

In September 1996, an agreement was signed between the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Dr. Ibrahim Rugova and the President of the Republic of Serbia Slobodan Milosevic for the normalization of the education system and the return of pupils and students to schools,⁶¹ although this agreement would never be implemented completely. The day before the release of the Technical Faculty was foreseen in the agreement, the Serbian students had barbarically demolished the faculty.⁶²

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës, *Kosova: Vështrim Monografik*, 408.

⁵⁷ Luljeta Pula, *Rrëfimi i Një Jete Për Kosovën*, Prishtinë 2020, 183.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Open Wounds: Human Rights Abuses in Kosovo*, New York, Washington, Los Angeles, London 1993, 117-118.

⁵⁹ ASHAK, Fund: Bujku, Sh. Rexhepi, “Mbledhja e Këshillit të Arsimitarëve të Fakultetit të Mjekësisë të Prishtinës: Zotime këmbëngulëse për vazhdimin e studimeve”, *Bujku*, 2.II.1992, 4.

⁶⁰ Shkumbin Tetaj, Sa ka ndikuar gjendja momentale në rezultatet mësimore të studentëve, *Bota e Re*, Year XXX, Nr. 42/43, 5.IV.1998, 12.

⁶¹ Archive of the Rectorate of University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”, Konkurs për arsimtarë, shtator 98.

⁶² Driton Lajqi, Studentët serbë demoluan objektin e Fakultetit Teknik, *Bota e Re*, Year XXX, Nr. 47, 26.V.1998, 3.

As time went on, especially since the beginning of the war in Kosovo, the continuation and progress of teaching at the University was increasingly becoming more impossible. The situation was so extraordinary that the Parallel University had created a Council for the verification of areas involved in war and attacked by war, which notified the competent bodies, such as the relevant dean's offices, which areas were at war.⁶³ In such cases, decisions were made according to the situation, such as exempting candidates from paying the registration fee for the semester.⁶⁴ In this state of emergency, the Parallel University of Prishtina functioned until 21 March 1999, when its operation was interrupted due to the war. During the war 322 students and 8 teachers of the Parallel University of Prishtina were killed.⁶⁵

Activism of students of the Parallel University of Prishtina

In Kosovo, great changes in the society came from university students. The University of Prishtina was a centre of numerous social and political debates. Albanian students began to react against the abuses of human rights and freedoms in Kosovo, in general, as well as against their marginalisation and unjust treatment at the University by the Serbian regime.⁶⁶ In this context, the years 1968, 1981 and 1997, mark the years when the student movements had the most significant role.⁶⁷

The student protest of 1 October 1997 attracted the most the attention of the international public, sensitizing it to the issue of Kosovo. This protest, which was attended by thousands of students, and thousands of citizens who joined their call, started from Velania neighbourhood, where the rectorate of the Parallel University of Prishtina had been improvised, with the plan to continue to the university campus, from which they had been expelled years ago. The protest was organized to be peaceful and the banners mainly called for an end to apartheid in Kosovo and for vigilance and help from Europe and the world. Very soon after the start of the protest, the Serbian police cordon stopped the participants and brutally intervened on the protesters, beating them, mistreating and arresting them, even under the lenses of the most prestigious international media that were covering the protest.⁶⁸ This protest had such an echo that in its aftermath, on 6 October 1997, a delegation of students, at the invitation of the

⁶³ Archive of the Rectorate of University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", Konkurs për mësimdhënës, 1998, shkurt.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁵ Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës, *Kosova: Vështrim Monografik*, 408; Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës, *Fjalori Enciklopedik i Kosovës II*, 1707.

⁶⁶ Nicole Fransworth, *History is herstory Too: The History of Women in Civil Society in Kosovo 1980 – 2004*, Prishtinë, Kosovo 2008, 24.

⁶⁷ Hetemi, *Lëvizjet Studentore*, 23-24.

⁶⁸ Bërçullli, Berisha, *50 Vjet Universitet*, 67-68. Bujar Dugolli, *1 Tetori i Kthesës: Lëvizja Studentore 1997-1998*, Prishtinë 2013, 151-155.

special emissary of the US President, Robert Gelbard, met at the US Embassy in Belgrade, with the group of senior American diplomats, headed by Gelbard himself. The student delegation was congratulated by the hosts for organizing the peaceful protest and was assured that the US would support student protests even more strongly in the future.⁶⁹

That the Independent Union of Students of the University of Prishtina (*Unioni i Pavarur i Studentëve i Universitetit të Prishtinës – UPSUP*) was already a very important factor of the national question in general is also shown by an overview of the meetings of their leadership with eminent international political personalities of the time. Only during the period of February-March 1998, they had met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain, the special envoy of President Bill Clinton for the Balkans, the German ambassador in Belgrade, The American Information Centre in Prishtina, the Italian Ambassador in Belgrade, the First Secretary of the Albanian Representation in Belgrade, the Delegation of the European Commission in Belgrade, the First Secretary of the French Embassy, the First Secretary at the American Embassy in Belgrade, the vast majority of whom encouraged the continuation of the peaceful path for the accomplishment of their demands.⁷⁰

For the resistance and the peaceful student movement for the return to the university facilities from which they were expelled by the Milosevic regime, the UPSUP also received a prestigious international award, that of the Federation of European Student Organizations AEGEE (Association des Etats Generaux des Etudiants de l'Europe) for the year 1998, what showed how the protest of 1 October 1997 had particularly sensitized both the academic community and the international student community. This award was given to those who had promoted democracy, tolerance and a united Europe.⁷¹

Students continued the protests further in 1997, on 29 October, 29 November and 30 December, and in 1998, four mass protests were organized in March and on 30 April.⁷² By all means, student protests and activities had indisputable support from the population. For example, over 150,000 citizens participated in a student protest held in Prishtina, in Dragodan neighbourhood on 13 March 1998, supported by all groups of the population.⁷³

In addition to all the above-mentioned activities, UPSUP, especially after the beginning of the war, stood out for its humanitarian and solidarity activities, not only for students but for the entire population in need. They did this commitment in coordination with local and international humanitarian organizations.⁷⁴ At the same time, being at war, UPSUP, in cooperation with the

⁶⁹ See the published document in: Dugolli, *I Tetori i Kthesës*, 335

⁷⁰ UPSUP, Pasqyrë kontaktesh ndërkombëtare të UPSUP, në periudhën shkurt-mars 1998, *Bota e Re*, Year XXX, Nr. 42/43, 5.IV.1998, 18-19.

⁷¹ See the published document in: Dugolli, *I Tetori i Kthesës*, 339.

⁷² Bërxulli, Berisha, *50 Vjet Universitet*, 68.

⁷³ M. M, Ditari – Mars 98', *Bota e Re*, Year XXX, Nr. 42/43, 5.IV.1998, 8.

⁷⁴ Dugolli, *I Tetori i Kthesës*, 294-295.

Albanian Women's League, headed by Dr. Flora Brovina had initiated the holding of "First Aid" courses, which were held in groups of 25 students and had instructors consisting of two doctors and a medical nurse.⁷⁵ This and many other examples show the conditions under which Albanian students were being educated and their concerns compared to their peers in other European countries and beyond.

Summary

The discriminatory laws issued by Serbia after the suppression of Kosovo's autonomy had also struck the University of Prishtina. Violent measures were first applied to this University, and then, at the beginning of the 1991-1992 academic year, entry was denied for Albanian students. In these circumstances, Albanian professors and students had started lessons in private facilities, adopted for learning. Thus, the Parallel University of Prishtina would become just one of the parallel institutions that were created in Kosovo. The challenges of teaching and learning in these terrible conditions were enormous. The students and teachers, were often mistreated, beaten, and arrested by the Serbian police.

While the Albanian students remained learning in the outskirts of the city, in houses, adopted facilities, garages, etc., the University facilities, in the centre of Prishtina, were frequented mainly by Serbian students, or students of other nationalities, such as Greek or Montenegrin. The campus became a place of monuments constructed for Serbian political motives, such as busts of Serbian ecclesiastical or historical figures or an Orthodox cathedral built in the centre of the campus.

Despite this extraordinary situation, the Parallel University managed to operate in all fields, such as teaching, raising staff, enrolling new students and even opening a new program and publishing textbooks. Management and professors were determined to work with maximum dedication and professionalism to maintain the quality of university studies.

Being a student at the Parallel University of Prishtina was very different from being a student in other countries in the world. In addition to learning in unusual conditions, many of them took the responsibility of involvement in national issues, peaceful resistance and stood out with their humanitarian activities all over Kosovo. Such were the circumstances that during the war they had to attend the "First Aid" courses.

⁷⁵ Mentor Bogaj, Para se të bëhet vonë: Përgatitjet elementare për rreziqet e luftës mirëpritën nga studentët, *Bota e Re*, Year XXX, Nr. 47, 26.V.1998, 3; Human Rights Watch informed that a student of University of Prishtina, and 8 students of post-secondary school "Xhevdet Doda" in Prizren, were arrested on May 23, 1998. They were sentenced to prison from one year to seven and a half years, only because they organized the courses of First Aid in Prizren, see: Human Rights Watch, *Humanitarian Law Violations in Kosovo*, New York, Washington, London, Brussels, 1998, 54-55.

Parallel University of Prishtina became a hearth of the peace movement and the peaceful protests organized by its students that gained attention and support from international politics and the public. With this dynamic, it worked until the interruption of its operation in March 1999 due to the war, to be reopened again immediately after the war.

Zaključak

Diskriminatorni zakoni koje je Srbija usvojila nakon ukidanja autonomije Kosova uticali su i na Univerzitet u Prištini. Na ovom univerzitetu su prvo primenjivane nasilne mere, a potom, početkom školske 1991-1992. godine, albanskim studentima je odbijen ulazak. U ovim okolnostima, albanski profesori i studenti su započeli nastavu u privatnim prostorijama, usvojenim za nastavu. Tako bi Paralelni Univerzitet u Prištini postao samo jedna od paralelnih institucija koje su uspostavljene na Kosovu. Izazovi podučavanja i učenja u ovim užasnim uslovima bili su veliki. Studenti i profesori je srpska policija često maltretirala, tukla i hapsila.

Dok su albanski studenti nastavili da studiraju na periferiji grada, u kućama, usvojenim zgradama, garažama itd, objekte Univerziteta, u centru Prištine, uglavnom su pohađali srpski studenti ili studenti drugih nacionalnosti, poput Grka ili Crnogorski. Kampus je postao mesto spomenika izgrađenih iz srpskih političkih motiva, kao što su biste srpskih crkvenih ili istorijskih ličnosti ili pravoslavna katedrala podignuta u centru kampusa.

Uprkos ovoj izvanrednoj situaciji, Paralelni Univerzitet je uspio da djeluje u svim oblastima, kao što su nastava, podizanje kadrova, upis novih studenata, pa čak i otvaranje novog programa i izdavanje udžbenika. Menadžment i profesori su bili odlučni da rade maksimalno predano i profesionalno na održavanju kvaliteta univerzitetskih studija.

Biti student na Paralelnom Univerzitetu u Prištini se veoma razlikovalo od toga da budeš student u drugim zemljama sveta. Pored učenja u neuobičajenim uslovima, mnogi od njih su preuzeli odgovornost uključivanja u nacionalna pitanja, mirni otpor i istakli se svojim humanitarnim aktivnostima širom Kosova. Takve su bili okolnosti da su tokom rata morali pohađati kurseve "Prve pomoći".

Paralelni Univerzitet u Prištini postao je centar mirnog pokreta i mirnih protesta koje su organizovali njegovi studenti, što je privuklo pažnju i podršku međunarodne politike i javnosti. Ovom dinamikom je radio do prekida rada u martu 1999. godine zbog rata, da bi odmah nakon rata ponovo bio otvoren.

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