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**ALBANIANS OF KOSOVO IN
THE NATIONAL LIBERATION ANTI-FASCIST WAR
DURING WORLD WAR II (1941-1945)**

Abstract: *In April 1941, the fascist bloc states attacked Yugoslavia, destroying and dividing it. The Albanian territories under its control, which were divided into three occupation zones, shared the fate of Yugoslavia: German, Italian, and Bulgarian. In this scientific work, I will attempt to elaborate on the origins of the conflict between the fascist occupiers and their collaborators, as well as the desire of the Albanian people in general, and especially in Kosovo, for liberation and resolution of the national question. During World War II, the anti-fascist ranks were consolidated at the national and international levels—Balkan, European, and global—by proclaiming and guaranteeing the right to self-determination for all peoples participating in the anti-fascist bloc. The National Liberation Council for Kosovo, the highest political body of the National Liberation Movement (LNÇ) in Kosovo, owes much of its success to the personal contributions of the Albanian people in general and specifically in Kosovo, as documented in historical documents approved at the Bujan Conference.*

The Albanian people's struggle in Kosovo during this time period was unique, with a specific strategy and tactics developed under specific and difficult local conditions that made armed conflict in this territory difficult to organise quickly. The war in Kosovo included violence perpetrated by a variety of political actors. As a result, the issue requires a multifaceted analysis, with a focus on ideology, violence against civilians, and military conflict between two or more military powers. In this article, we attempted to present the War of the People of Kosovo in all its manifest forms: objective and subjective conditions, forms of activism, the formation and strengthening of armed forces, and the activities of anti-fascist organisations, etc.

During World War II in Kosovo, the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War is divided into two phases: The first phase (1941-1943) relates to the formation of anti-fascist organizations and national liberation councils, as well as the spread of armed struggle, specifically the methods of fighting as an

inseparable part of the National Liberation Front, up until the capitulation of Italy (1943). The second phase is the period from 1943 to 1945 of the war in Kosovo, which developed rapidly and, from an organizational standpoint, took on a complete form, resulting in massive participation of the people in the war, expressed through various actions aimed at igniting and significantly expanding the struggle.

Illuminating the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War is crucial; it requires the synthesis of extensive material, analysis, comparison, and drawing certain conclusions. Additionally, this work demands in-depth knowledge of the history between the two world wars in Kosovo, particularly the history of World War II, with a special emphasis on the history of Albanians, in which the First Conference of the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council occupies an important place as part of the Albanian national resistance. This resistance was engaged in various forms, both military and political, for the ethnic unification of Albanians, contributing significantly to the Albanian cause.

The study is organized based on a chronological order, where the main issues are broken down into sub-issues according to specific problems, and it concludes with findings, archival sources, and bibliography, while respecting scientific principles and other methodological standards.

During this period, Kosovo received support from the Atlantic Charter, which guaranteed self-determination, as well as the Moscow Declaration, Tehran Resolution, and Yalta Declaration, which stated: „Everyone on their own land and everyone to decide on the form of their own government.“ This was the guiding principle of the Anglo-Soviet-American Alliance. The Albanian people of Kosovo and other Yugoslav territories gained this right to self-determination by fighting alongside the Anti-Fascist Bloc as a people rather than a national minority. During this period, neighbouring countries attempted to contest Albanians' alignment in the Anti-Fascist Bloc, but the facts on the ground were on the Albanians' side, with approximately 50,000 fighters, the majority of who were Albanians, serving in the National Liberation Army of Kosovo. During the Movement, 6,203 people from Kosovo died, 28 of whom were declared national heroes. The significance of this level of participation in the armed struggle of the Albanian people of Kosovo is better understood when considering the participation rates of other occupied peoples in Europe in the anti-fascist struggle, which show that, relative to the population size, the contribution of the Albanians was quite substantial.

Key words: *World War II, Kosovo, occupation, organization of the National Liberation Anti-Fascist War.*

ALBANCI KOSOVA U NARODNOOSLOBODILAČKOM ANTIFAŠISTIČKOM RATU TOKOM DRUGOG SVJETSKOG RATA (1941-1945)

Apstrakt: U aprilu 1941. godine, države fašističkog bloka napale su, uništile i podijelile Jugoslaviju. Albanske teritorije pod njenom vlašću, podijeljene na tri okupacione zone – njemačku, italijansku i bugarsku – dijelile su sudbinu Jugoslavije. U ovom naučnom radu nastojat ću da detaljnije obradim porijeklo sukoba između fašističkih okupatora i njihovih saradnika, kao i težnju albanskog naroda uopšte, a posebno na Kosovu, za oslobođenjem i rješavanjem nacionalnog pitanja. Tokom Drugog svjetskog rata, antifašistički redovi su konsolidovani na nacionalnom i međunarodnom nivou – balkanskom, evropskom i globalnom – proglašavanjem i garantiranjem prava na samoopredjeljenje svim narodima učesnicima antifašističkog bloka. Antifašističko narodnooslobodilačko vijeće za Kosovo, kao najviše političko tijelo Narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta (LNC) na Kosovu, svoj uspjeh u velikoj mjeri duguje ličnom doprinosu albanskog naroda uopšte, a posebno na Kosovu, kako je dokumentovano u historijskim dokumentima usvojenim na Bujanskoj konferenciji.

Borba albanskog naroda na Kosovu u ovom periodu bila je jedinstvena, sa specifičnom strategijom i taktikom razvijenom u posebnim i teškim lokalnim uslovima koji su otežavali brzo organizovanje oružanog sukoba na ovoj teritoriji. Rat na Kosovu uključivao je nasilje koje su činili različiti politički akteri. Kao rezultat toga, ovo pitanje zahtijeva višeslojnu analizu, s fokusom na ideologiju, nasilje nad civilima i vojni sukob između dvije ili više vojnih sila. U ovom članku nastojali smo prikazati Rat naroda Kosova u svim njegovim manifestnim oblicima: objektivnim i subjektivnim uslovima, oblicima djelovanja, formiranju i jačanju oružanih snaga, te djelovanju antifašističkih organizacija itd.

Tokom Drugog svjetskog rata na Kosovu, Antifašistički narodnooslobodilački rat dijeli se na dvije faze: Prva faza (1941-1943) odnosi se na formiranje antifašističkih organizacija i narodnooslobodilačkih odbora, kao i na širenje oružane borbe, konkretno metoda borbe kao neodvojivog dijela Narodnooslobodilačkog fronta, sve do kapitulacije Italije (1943. godine). Druga faza je period od 1943. do 1945. godine rata na Kosovu, koji se brzo razvijao i, sa organizacionog stanovišta, poprimio potpunu formu, što je rezultiralo masovnim učešćem naroda u ratu, izraženim kroz različite akcije usmjerene na rasplamsavanje i značajno širenje borbe.

Rasvjetljavanje Antifašističkog narodnooslobodilačkog rata je ključno; ono zahtijeva sintezu obimnog materijala, analizu, poređenje i izvođenje određenih zaključaka. Dodatno, ovaj rad zahtijeva dubinsko poznavanje historije Kosova između dva svjetska rata, posebno historije Drugog svjetskog rata, s posebnim naglaskom na historiju Albanaca, u kojoj Prva konferencija Antifašističkog narodnooslobodilačkog vijeća zauzima važno mjesto kao dio

albanskog nacionalnog otpora. Taj otpor, koji se odvijao u različitim oblicima, kako vojnim tako i političkim, težio je etničkom ujedinjenju Albanaca, dajući značajan doprinos albanskoj stvari.

Studija je organizovana hronološkim redoslijedom, gdje su glavna pitanja raščlanjena na podteme prema specifičnim problemima, a završava se nalazima, arhivskim izvorima i bibliografijom, uz poštovanje naučnih principa i drugih metodoloških standarda.

Tokom ovog perioda, Kosovo je dobilo podršku Atlantske povelje, koja je garantirala samoopredjeljenje, kao i Moskovske deklaracije, Teheranske rezolucije i Jaltске deklaracije, u kojima je stajalo: „Svako na svojoj zemlji i svako da odlučuje o obliku vlastite vlasti.“ To je bio vodeći princip Anglo-sovjetsko-američkog saveza. Albanski narod Kosova i drugih jugoslovenskih teritorija stekao je ovo pravo na samoopredjeljenje boreći se uz Antifašistički blok kao narod, a ne kao nacionalna manjina. Tokom ovog perioda, susjedne zemlje su pokušavale osporiti svrstavanje Albanaca u Antifašistički blok, ali činjenice na terenu bile su na strani Albanaca, sa približno 50.000 boraca, većinom Albanaca, koji su služili u Narodnooslobodilačkoj vojsci Kosova. Tokom Pokreta, poginulo je 6.203 osoba sa Kosova, od kojih je 28 proglašeno narodnim herojima. Značaj ovog nivoa učešća u oružanoj borbi albanskog naroda Kosova bolje se razumije kada se uzmu u obzir stope učešća drugih okupiranih naroda Evrope u antifašističkoj borbi, koje pokazuju da je, u odnosu na broj stanovnika, doprinos Albanaca bio prilično značajan.

Ključne riječi: Drugi svjetski rat, Kosovo, okupacija, organizacija Narodnooslobodilačkog antifašističkog rata.

Introduction

After Albania was proclaimed independent and sovereign in 1912, the national problem of the Albanian people in Kosovo was not resolved. The conditions for re-examining this problem were created by World War II. The ongoing efforts of the Albanian people in Kosovo for liberation and national unification were continued throughout the entire Liberation Movement that occurred during those years in Kosovo.¹

Albanians did not consider Yugoslavia's capitulation a loss of their state because they did not enjoy the most basic rights, and some even saw the occupier as a liberator.² The Albanians' position was a result of their national contradictions with the Serbs and Montenegrins, their fear of a return to the

¹ Fehmi Rexhepi, *Gjilani me rrethinë gjatë Luftës së Dytë Botërore (1941-1945)*, Prishtinë 1998, 236.

² Sylë Dreshaj, *Pjesëmarrja e shqiptarëve të Pejës dhe të rrethinës në Luftën Nacionalçlirimtare (1941-1945)*, Kosova, 13-14, Instituti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1985, 300.

past,³ their refusal to recognise the borders that had changed as a result of fascist states occupying their territory, which had somewhat improved their situation in Kosovo and corrected historical injustices for the Albanian people, and the Yugoslav Communist Party's ambiguous declaration regarding their right to self-determination up to secession following the war. The Albanians demanded an immediate and unambiguous acknowledgement that they would be granted the chance to fulfil their desire to unite with the Albanian state. Furthermore, it was impossible to ignore the YCP's opposing actions, which supported keeping Yugoslavia within its pre-war borders (see the decisions made at the Conference in Jajce in November 1943) and creating barriers to the growth of the anti-fascist movement in Kosovo.⁴

As a result of the complex conditions in Kosovo during World War II, the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War was divided into two phases: The first phase (1941-1943) focusses on the formation of anti-fascist organisations and national liberation councils, as well as the spread of armed struggle, particularly combat methods as an integral part of the National Liberation Front, until Italy's capitulation (1943). The second phase covers the period from 1943 to 1945 when the war in Kosovo developed rapidly and, in terms of organisation, took on a complete form, with widespread public participation in the war manifested through various actions to ignite and greatly expand the struggle.⁵

The unique character and development of Kosovo's liberation movement, which has always sought objective independence. This is best demonstrated by the decisions made at this Conference, which tested the sincerity and authenticity of Yugoslav occupying politics. The Bujan Resolution was the first legislative act passed by Kosovo's representatives aimed at achieving independence based on the right to self-determination.⁶ This Conference is significant in history because it openly expresses coordination with the world's anti-fascist coalition from the start.⁷ Therefore, it had both a national and an international character, as the presence of allied representatives and their guarantees brought the issue of Kosovo to the international stage.

³ Ali Hadri, Specifika e Lëvizjes Nacionalçlirimtare të Kosovës 1941-1945, *Kosova*, 2, Enti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1973, 19.

⁴ Marenglen Verli, Antifashizmi, alternativa e prespektivës për kombin shqiptar, *Sharri*, 97-98, 2022, 13.

⁵ Fadil Hoxha, Betejat përfundimtare për çlirimin e Kosovës, *Kosova*, 4, Enti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1975, 7.

⁶ Minir Dushi, Konferenca e Bujanit ngjarje e ndritshme e historisë sonë kombëtare, *Veterani*, 18-28, 2009, 6.

⁷ Muhamet Pirraku, Vetëvendosja e Kosovës në dritën e lëvizjes antifashiste, *Gjurmime albanologjike*, 21, Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, 1993, 8.

The Nazi-fascist occupation of Kosovo

In April 1941, the fascist bloc states attacked Yugoslavia, causing it to disintegrate and divide.⁸ This happened to Albanian territories under Yugoslav rule as well. During the Nazi-fascist occupation, Albanian regions were divided into three occupation zones: German, Italian, and Bulgarian.⁹ Although the unification took place under fascist rule, it was still historically significant for the Albanian population of Kosovo and Western Macedonia. The occupying forces decided that local governance in Albanian-populated regions should be led by Albanians;¹⁰ in the meantime, Albanian was declared an official language alongside Italian. Elementary and secondary schools in Albanian were reopened for the first time, the use of national symbols was legalised, Albanian-language newspapers were permitted, and Albanian national holidays were allowed,¹¹ which had previously been prohibited during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia between the two world wars. Despite all of the rights gained by the Albanians, the division of Kosovo into three occupation zones was intended to exploit the occupied peoples' economies while also oppressing their nationalities. A difficult period for the Albanians began precisely with this occupation and the division of areas of interest.¹² „Immediately following the occupation of Kosovo, disagreements arose among the occupiers over the demarcation line between them, as each party sought to take as much territory as possible. Conflicts began to emerge among the collaborating occupiers, including Albanian, Serbian, and Bulgarian nationalists.

The situation and position of Kosovo during Nazi-fascist occupation were also dire. The brutality of the occupying regimes was evident in this

⁸ Xhelal Gjeçovi, Çështja Kombëtare Shqiptare në vitet e Luftës së Dytë Botërore, *Studime historike*, 3-4, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë: Instituti i Historisë, 2005, 147; Muharrem Dezhgiu, Kombi shqiptar në planet strategjike të fuqive ndërluftuese gjatë Luftës II Botërore, *Studime historike*, 3-4, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë: Instituti i Historisë, 2005, 160; Lefter Nasi, Kosova dhe problemi kombëtar në vitet 1941-1943, *Kosova*, 28, Instituti i Historisë-Tiranë, 2006, 213.

⁹ Arkivi Qendror Shqiptarë(më tej: AQSH), Fondi (F). 266, Ministria e Tokave të Lirume, f.1-25; Kuadri i Personelit të Nënprefekturave: Dragash, Rahovec, Suharekë, Gjakovë, Istog, Drenicë, Plavë, Cucinjë, Rozhajë, Gjilan, Ferizoviq, Tetovë, Gostivar, Kërçovë, Strugë, Rekë, Carisver (Prespë e madhe): AQSH, F. 266, Ministria e Tokave të Lirume, V. 1943, Nr. 32, f. 2: Koncept Mbretëria e Shqiptare Komisariati i Naltë Civil për Kosovë, Dibër e Strugë. Prizren 29 gen 1943; Muharrem Dezhgiu, Përpjekjet e forcave politike shqiptare për bashkëpunim gjatë Luftës së Dytë Botërore, *Studime historike*, 1-2, Instituti i Historisë-Tiranë, 2000, 189; Fehmi Rexhepi, Lufta e shqiptarëve për vetëvendosje e bashkim kombëtar gjatë Luftës së Dytë Botërore, *Shqiptarët gjatë Luftës së Dytë Botërore (Përmbledhje studimesh)*, Instituti i Historisë"Ali Hadri"-Prishtinë, Instituti i Historisë-Tiranë, 2014, 136-137.

¹⁰ Stefan Karastojanov, *Kosova (Një analizë gjeopolitike)*, Shkup 2007, 152.

¹¹ Kastriot Dervishi, *Historia e Shtetit Shqiptar 1912-2005*, Tiranë 2006, 450; Valentina Duka, *Histori e Shqipërisë 1912-2000*, Tiranë 2007, 213.

¹² Emin Pllana, Vuçiterna me rrethinë në kuadrin e sistemit pushtues fashist 1941-1945, *Kosova*, 7, Instituti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1978, 297.

region as well.¹³ During World War II, Nazi-fascist occupiers arrested, beat, and interned many Albanians. The administration's chosen or appointed officials who were installed were corrupt, eliciting strong reactions from the population in the form of negative comments. They abused their positions, betrayed trust, and lacked morality, as their treatment of the people was intolerable. Many people had to wait at least two weeks in the corridors to access administrative services, and they frequently couldn't get any resolution because their issues were subjected to an endless series of formalities. This was due to some of these officials engaging in trade while neglecting their official duties.¹⁴ The economic conditions were dire. The most noticeable shortages among the population were salt, cooking oil, and sugar. Travel prices were very high due to a lack of vehicles, both for passengers and for the transport of goods, as well as a shortage of petrol, which had to be procured from abroad at a high cost.¹⁵ The change in the internal and international situation began, eroding their trust in the occupiers. This shift was caused by Germany's defeat on the Eastern Front, the impact of the National Liberation War in Yugoslavia and Albania, as well as the evolution of local circumstances and communist activities,¹⁶ all of which created favourable conditions for the resolution of the Albanian national question. The war laid the groundwork for national unification of the Albanian people within their ethnic borders, in addition to the task of liberating Albanian territories.¹⁷

Following the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in April 1941, and especially after Germany's attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia ((hereinafter referred to as CPY), aware of the internal weaknesses of the Yugoslav monarchy as a state,¹⁸ invited the Albanians of Kosovo to join the armed struggle for definitive liberation, in a joint fight with the Serbs, Montenegrins, and other peoples of Yugoslavia¹⁹. The Greater Serbian reaction was held responsible for the past and the precarious situation of the Albanians in Yugoslavia between the two world wars, rather than the masses of Serbians and Montenegrins.²⁰ In that situation, the Provincial Committee aimed to

¹³ Ali Hadri, Sistemi i pushtimit fashist në Kosovë (1941-1944), *Kosova*, 7, Instituti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1978, 52.

¹⁴ AQSH, F.161. V.19741. D.92. fl.2-3: Parashtresë mbi gjendjen në Kosovë.

¹⁵ Po aty, fl.28.

¹⁶ Ali Hadri, *Lëvizja Nacional Çlirimtare në Kosovë 1941-1945*, Prishtinë 1971, 190.

¹⁷ Kristaq Prifti, *Konsiderata etnike dhe historike rreth çështjes së bashkimit kombëtar të shqiptarëve*, *Kosova*, 2, Instituti i Historisë-Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë-Tiranë, 1994, 21.

¹⁸ Ymer Dauti, *Një aspekt mbi zhvillimin e Luftës Nacionalçlirimtare në Kosovë I*, *Rilindja*, Prishtinë, 1969, 16.

¹⁹ Muhamet Piraku, *E drejta për vetëvendosje e Bujanit është e drejtë historike shqiptare e pashpenzuar (II)*, *Fjala*, 31, Prishtinë 1991, 5: Abdurrahim Pajaziti, *Roli i komunistëve të Pejës në LNÇ IV*, *Rilindja*, Prishtinë 1969, 14.

²⁰ Izber Hoti, *Partia Komuniste e Jugosllavisë dhe vëllazërimi e bashkimi në Kosovë më 1919-1944*, *Kosova*, 16, Instituti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1987, 101.

integrate and lead the people in the National Liberation Movement (hereafter referred to as the NL) and the armed struggle, with the goal of eliminating Albanians' fear of 'Yugoslav domination' under the king's leadership. The CPY organization's activity in Kosovo extended from Jablanica to the Gjakova Highlands, Novi Pazar to Shar, and Skopje's mountains. Although the CPY's influence on the Albanian population was weak,²¹ on October 1, 1941, the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Kosovo called on Albanians in the Yugoslav territories to take up arms for the anti-fascist struggle alongside their brothers in Albania, „for true national liberation,”²² as they hoped that two factors would make this task easier. First, Yugoslav communists were instrumental in the formation of the Albanian Communist Party in 1941, and second, prior to the war, Yugoslav communists were among the most outspoken critics of the government's oppression of Albanian citizens. However, the Yugoslavs encountered significant difficulties in gaining the support of the Albanians, who still remembered their persecution in pre-war Yugoslavia and were concerned that a communist victory would result in their reintegration into Yugoslavia.²³ At the time, almost all of the invitations sent by the CPY to the peoples of Yugoslavia included Albanians.

The Organization for Anti-Fascist Resistance in Kosovo

Inciting an uprising in Kosovo from 1941 to 1943 and asking Albanians to join a common anti-fascist front with the Serbs (Yugoslavs) was either visionary idealism, naivety, or betrayal of the masses in the broadest sense. Each of these three interpretations was possible. In 1941, some Albanian anti-fascists (communists) would raise the issue of how to foster 'brotherhood and unity' with the Serbs, despite the fact that the people were well aware of what the Serbs had done between the two world wars, denying them all national rights (excluding political and national rights, confiscation of land and property due to agrarian reform, etc.)²⁴ „Emin Duraku was the first to raise this question, claiming that the population viewed communism as Pan-Slavism, similar to the previous reactionary Yugoslav regime.”²⁵ Meto Bajraktari and Zenel Salihu would then join this opinion.²⁶ Not only were the local objective conditions

²¹Ymer Dauti, Një aspekt mbi zhvillimin e Luftës Nacionalçlirimtare në Kosovë II, *Rilindja*, Prishtinë 1969, 14.

²² Muhamet Pirraku, *Ripushtimi Jugosllav i Kosovës 1945*, Prishtinë 1992, 21.

²³ Elez Biberaj, *Çështja Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Përktheu: Jorgji Qirjako, Tiranë 2014, 19.

²⁴ Agjencia Shtetërore e Arkivave të Kosovës (më tej:ASHAK), Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i Lidhjes Komuniste të Kosovës, Njësia organ: Fondi i K.N.Ç, Viti. 1945, Nr. i kutisë:23, fl.4.

²⁵ Po aty, Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i Lidhjes Komuniste të Kosovës, Njësia organike: Komiteti i Vendit Gjakovë, Viti: 1942-1944, Nr.i kutisë: 31, fl.1.

²⁶ Po aty, Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i L.K. të Kosovës. Njësia organ: Komiteti i Vendit Gjakovë. Viti. 1942-1944. Nr. i kutisë.31: Dokumeti origjinal ndodhët në Komisionin historik të KK LKS për Kosomet.fl.1.

unfavourable, but the situation on the Eastern Front did not lend itself to the formation of a larger national liberation movement in the region. German troops penetrated deep into Soviet territory, and Nazi-fascist propaganda promoted the German army's victories here.²⁷

With all of these delicate issues, the Albanians' fate would now be determined not only by the outcome of the World War, in which their role was not decisive, but also by the unification of their stance in the struggle for national independence.²⁸ Since Kosovo's geopolitical separation from the larger ethnic-territorial Albanian entity in the Balkans, the issue of Kosovo has always carried the stamp of the Albanian people's aspirations, whether for national identity, national unification, or national equality. These are the variations of national goals in the larger political circumstances and contexts of the time. However, all of these solutions are linked to the fundamental axis of the Albanian people of Kosovo's desire to be masters of their own political destiny.²⁹ The Allies made it clear with the Atlantic Charter of August 1941³⁰, that they did not recognise the Nazi-fascist occupation of Albania or Yugoslavia's dismemberment. The Allies also refused to recognise Kosovo and other regions as part of occupied Albania's political borders. Despite these sensitive matters, the anti-fascists' visionary efforts succeeded in persuading the populace that the National Liberation War was not just a communist movement but rather a fight against fascism, which would give birth to a free Kosovo on the blood of young martyrs because the majority of its citizens are Albanian, giving it the chance to join free Albania.³¹

The National Liberation Anti-Fascist Movement in Kosovo began to organise using a variety of methods and forms of illegal activity. Communist illegalists and NL supporters disseminated dissatisfaction with the occupation, instilled confidence in their own and other anti-fascist states' forces, gathered weapons, ammunition, and other military and sanitary materials, propagated resistance to the Nazi-fascists, and worked against the mobilisation of soldiers

²⁷ Ali Hadri, *Orientimi i PKJ dhe aktiviteti i saj politik n'organizimin e Lëvizjes Nacionalçlirimtare në Kosovë e Metohi më 1941*, *Përparimi*, 8, 1966, 651.

²⁸ Muharrem Dezhgiu, *Çështja kombëtare shqiptare dhe bashkpunimi i LNÇ-së shqiptare e jugosllave gjatë Luftës së II Botërore, Shqiptarët gjatë Luftës së Dytë Botërore (Përmbledhje studimesh)*, Instituti i Historisë "Ali Hadri"- Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë - Tiranë, 2014, 40.

²⁹ Gazmend Zajmi, *Çështja e Kosovës në kuadër të çështjes shqiptare si sfidë madhore e kohës dhe ndaj kohës, Studime historike*, 3-4, Akademia e Shkencave e Republikës së Shqipërisë: Instituti i Historisë, 1991, 150.

³⁰ The Atlantic Charter is an agreement made on August 14, 1941, between U.S. President F.D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister W. Churchill on a ship in the Atlantic. According to this agreement, both countries did not recognize the fascist aggression that had caused territorial changes, respecting the right of all peoples to choose their form of government. Of the eight points of the agreement, the most important for the Albanians of Kosovo was the third, which stated: 'Self-determination is the right of all peoples.' On September 24, 1941, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics also joined this agreement.

³¹ ASHAK, *Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i Lidhjes Komuniste të Kosovës, Njësia organike: Kopjet e gazetës "Zëri dhe "Lirija", Viti: 1942-1963, Nr. i kutisë:39, fl.36.*

collaborating with the occupiers. They directed soldiers to concentration camps for their subsequent actions, sabotaged occupier demonstrations, and so on.³² The Albanians in Kosovo gradually distanced themselves from the fascist occupiers and realised that the NL was fighting for them.³³ As a result, in Kosovo, illegal national liberation councils, groups, battalions, and eventually partisan national liberation units, primarily made up of anti-fascist Albanians, would emerge. Thus, two anti-fascist alliances would emerge in Kosovo: the illegal government and the national liberation partisan army. This war differed from previous ones in that it was closely linked to the anti-fascist allies (Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union).³⁴

The First Anti-Fascist Actions in Kosovo

The Anti-Fascist Movement in Kosovo started out with a variety of actions, such as chopping down telephone poles, demolishing roads, and planning protests against fascism.³⁵ The first partisan unit, „Zejnel Hajdini,“ was established as a result of this activity. Its commander and commissar were Xheladin Kurbali and Fadil Hoxha, respectively.³⁶

Patriotic sentiments and unique and challenging local circumstances (Kosovo's division into three occupied zones, the occupiers' demagogic policies, the delusion among some Albanian populations regarding liberation, anti-Yugoslav sentiment, national contradictions, and the fear of a return to the old order) served as the impetus for the Anti-Fascist Movement's formation, growth, and mass mobilisation of youth. The National Liberation Anti-Fascist Movement of Kosovo overcame these challenges to win over the populace and establish a stronghold in Albanian households. In Kosovo, partisan groups would proliferate between 1941 and 1945. These would eventually develop into partisan national liberation battalions and units. Rarely would these partisan units fight the occupiers head-on; instead, they would use guerilla tactics. The primary objective of the units and brigades established in 1944 was to engage in frontal warfare with the occupiers and their allies. Due to these conditions, the illegal national liberation councils would play a role. The end of 1943

³² Izber Hoti, Ilegaliteti dhe qëndrimi i Partisë Komuniste të Jugosllavisë ndaj Lëvizjes Ilegale Antifashiste në Kosovë gjatë Luftës Nacionalçlirimtare 1941-1944, *Kosova*, 13-14, Instituti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1985, 253.

³³ ASHAK, Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i L.K. të Kosovës. Njësia organi: Shtabi Kryesor për Kosov. e Met. Viti.1944. Nr.i kutisë.17 A: Rexh Bala drejtuar komandes eprorë të Kosmetit. Më 20 tetor 1944. fl.1.

³⁴ Po aty, fl.12.

³⁵ Qamil Gexha, Demonstrat antifashiste në Gjakovë gjatë Lëvizjes Nacionalçlirimtare (1941-1943), *Kosova*, 2, Enti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1973,123.

³⁶ Vahide Hoxha, Aradha partizane “Zejnel Hajdini, *Kosova*, 9-10, Enti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1980/81,108.

would have formed joint National Liberation Council formed, greatly empowering Kosovo in their shared struggle with the anti-Hitler coalition.

The First Conference of the National Liberation Anti-Fascist Council

The anti-fascist movement was able to expand the NL in the hopes that the national issue would be resolved after the war, after strengthening its military and political position as a result of fascist military potential being weakened and dispersed across various fronts,³⁷ and the beginning of the end of World War II.³⁸ With this in mind, Fadil Hoxha suggested that the First Conference of the National Liberation Anti-Fascist Council take place in the Malësia of Gjakova (December 31, 1943 – January 1, 1944) at the village of Bujan, where there were safe havens and strong local support.³⁹ The meeting would later be referred to as the Bujan Conference, after the village in which it was held. The decision made by the Albanian people of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain to freely join their motherland, Albania, was the conference's most significant outcome.⁴⁰ The Atlantic Charter, which emphasised „the right of peoples to self-determination and called for the restoration of independence to those who had been deprived of it,“ fully guided this decision.⁴¹

The notion of establishing the National Liberation Council for Kosovo surfaced in December 1942 following the inaugural assembly of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in Bihać. Boro Vukmirović, the secretary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's Regional Committee for Kosovo and Metohija, and Ramiz Sadiku endorsed the idea. In February 1943, this idea was revived, but the issue was delayed due to the assassination of these two activists. Temporary National Liberation Council was discussed following Italy's surrender in September 1943. In a piece by Fadil Hoxha for the newspaper „Liria,“ the author denounced the Second League of Prizren and declared that the Conference of the Peoples of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain would take precedence over the League of Prizren (1878).⁴² The VI Consultation of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's Regional Committee for Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain, which was held in the Šar Mountains from November 3 to 5, 1943, resulted in the decision to hold the

³⁷ ASHAK, Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i Lidhjes Komuniste të Kosovës, Njësia organike: Kopjet e gazetës “Zëri dhe “Lirija”, Viti: 1942-1963, Nr. i kutisë:39, fl.1.

³⁸ *Historia e Shqipërisë dhe e shqiptarëve*, Redaktor përgjegjës: prof. dr. Hysni Myzyri, Prizren 2001, 308.

³⁹ Muharrem Dezhgiu, Operacioni gjerman në Malësinë e Gjakovës, *Konferenca e Bujanit (përmbledhje studimesh)*, Instituti i Historisë-Prishtinë, Prishtinë, 1998, 85.

⁴⁰ Ekrem Murtezai, *Fadil Hoxha siç e njoha unë*, Prishtinë 2011,79.

⁴¹ Liri Shimani, Konferenca e Bujanit dhe Karta e Atlantikut, *Konferenca e Bujanit (përmbledhje studimesh)*, Instituti i Historisë-Prishtinë, Prishtinë, 1998, 53.

⁴² Sami Repishti, Rezoluta e Bujanit- 2 janar 1944 një analizë, *Studime historike*, 1-4, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë: Instituti i Historisë, 1995, 90.

conference.⁴³ Through this conference, the Albanians expressed their desire that, even though the Communist Party of Yugoslavia led the Liberation Movement in Kosovo, the movement still aimed to be fully national liberation orientated, autonomous in its decision-making, independent of Serbian and Yugoslav structures and instances, and, of course, connected to Albania.⁴⁴ Due to these factors, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo issued a warning on the eve of the Bujan Conference regarding the purported decline of the political-military leadership in Kosovo due to nationalist influence, accusing it of genuinely enforcing a „greater Albanian line.“⁴⁵

The National Liberation Movement of Kosovo experienced a surge in activity towards the end of 1943 and the start of 1944. Its leaders made the decision to convene the National Liberation Council of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain founding conference. Kosovo's Albanian population was growing more and more certain that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was incapable of providing them with a resolution to their national issue. The Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) held its second meeting in Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina, just one month prior to the Bujan Conference. The decisions made there were that Yugoslavia would become a federal state consisting of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Sandžak after the war, and that national minorities would be guaranteed their rights.⁴⁶ This meant that the promises and earlier propaganda of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which held that the peoples residing in the former Yugoslavian monarchy would decide their own fate after the war, were rejected with the fourth point of this decision.⁴⁷ This worried the Albanians, who realised they could no longer live in delusions and that they could not confront the situation by staying silent when the Albanian national question was being disregarded and treated more like a „national minority“ than a nation.⁴⁸ Under these conditions, calling the Conference was thought to be the first step towards resolving this issue. A number of issues surfaced during the Conference preparations. Some Albanian nationalist factions stated that they would not be attending this conference, claiming that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's platform did not promise a resolution to

⁴³ Po aty.

⁴⁴ Fehmi Agani, Konferenca e Bujanit dhe mëvetësia e Kosovë, *Konferenca e Bujanit (përmbledhje studimesh)*, Instituti i Historisë-Prishtinë, Prishtinë, 1998,10.

⁴⁵ Muhamet Shatri, *Kosova në Luftën e Dytë Botërore*, Prishtinë 1997, 19.

⁴⁶ http://www.arhivyu.gov.rs/active/sr-cyrillic/home/glavna_navigacija/leksikon_jugoslavije/konstitutivni_akti_jugoslavije/deklaracija_drugog_zasedanja_avnoja.html.

⁴⁷ Sadik Bekteshi, Konferenca e Bujanit, *Konferenca e Bujanit (përmbledhje studimesh)*, Instituti i Historisë-Prishtinë, Prishtinë 1998, 143.

⁴⁸ Xhelal Gjeçovi, Rezoluta e Bujanit aspiratë e popullit shqiptar, *Konferenca e Bujanit(Materiale nga Sesioni Shkencor kushuar 55 vjetorit të Konferencës së Bujanit, mbajtur në Tiranë më 20 janar 1999)*, Akademia e Shkencave e Republikës së Shqipërisë: Instituti i Historisë, Tiranë 1999, 8.

the Albanian issue. The communist positions held by Serbian and Montenegrin members of the Kosovo Provincial Committee also caused problems.⁴⁹ The National Liberation Antifascist Front of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain organised the Conference, which got underway in the village of Bujan on December 31, 1943, and ran concurrently until January 1 and 2, 1944.⁵⁰

It was decided that representatives from Kosovo's various regions, socioeconomic classes, and ethnic groups would attend the conference. Given that there was still no free area in Kosovo,⁵¹ and that the Gjakova Highlands had played a major role in the formation and growth of the National Liberation Movement there, the conference was held in the village of Bujan.⁵² The conference was conducted in the tower of Krasniqa leader Sali Mani, which was close to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's provincial committee as well as the Dukagjin Plain and the Provincial Staff headquarters of the National Liberation Army of Kosovo. In the triangle formed by Gjakova, Malësi, and Plavë, this tower served as a strong support point and one of the Antifascist Movement's safest bases at the time.⁵³ Just 49 of the 61 delegates who were invited to the Conference actually showed up. Hendsi, the English delegate, was one of the invitees and he expressed his enthusiasm and support for the conference's organisation.⁵⁴ To prevent offending anyone, there were no flags, slogans, or other distinguishing signs in the room where the meeting was held. The delegates' makeup and the reason for the meeting were mirrored in the understated décor.⁵⁵ Fadil Hoxha, commander of the National Liberation Army for Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain, welcomed the conference. Xhafer Vokshi spoke on behalf of the youth, and Sabrije Vokshi spoke on behalf of the antifascist women. Mehmet Bajraktari from Krasniqa, Albania, and Xhevdet Doda, a representative from the Kosovo-Macedonian Brigade,⁵⁶ also spoke at the conference. Following the introductory statements made by the leaders of

⁴⁹ *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vëll. IV. 2008, 141.

⁵⁰ ASHAK, Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i Lidhjes Komuniste të Kosovës, Fondi i Shtabit të Këshillave Nacionalçlirimtar, Viti 1944, Nr. i kutisë 23, Nr i Inv. 1329, Rezolucion nga Konferenca e parë e Këshillit Nacionalçlirimtar për Kosovë e Rrafsh të Dukagjinit e mbajtur më 31 dhjetor 1943 dhe 1 e 2 janar 1944, Nr. 1329, fl.1-7.

⁵¹ Mark Palnikaj, *Konferenca e Bujanit 31 dhjetor 1943-2 janar 1944*, Tiranë 2006, 5.

⁵² Tahir Mala & Myftar Memia, Disa momente të Luftës Nacionalçlirimtare në Malësinë e Gjakovës dhe ndihma e saj për zhvillimin e Lëvizjes Nacionalçlirimtare në Kosovë, *Studime historike*, 1, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës: Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, 1970, 47.

⁵³ Jusuf Bajraktari, Jah Salih Mani (1921-1944), *Në flakën e revolucionit*, libri i tetë, Instituti i Historisë së Kosovës, Prishtinë 1980, 172.

⁵⁴ ASHAK, Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i Lidhjes Komuniste të Kosovës, Njësia organ: Komiteti i Vendit Gjakovë, Viti: 1942-1944, Nr. i kutisë: 31, fl.1.

⁵⁵ Xhelal Gjegovi, *Kosova në relacionet shqiptaro-jugosllave në vitet e Luftës së Dytë Botrore (1939-1944)*, Tiranë 2020, 254.

⁵⁶ Hysen Azemi, *Mbledhja e Bujanit dhe kuslinget sipas autorve serbe*, (Materiali në dorshkrim), f. 7.

the participating organisations, the men Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, and Enver Hoxha were elected to the Honorary Presidency.⁵⁷

Decisions of the First Conference of the National Liberation Council

The conference concluded with the establishment of the National Liberation Council of Kosovo as Kosovo's highest governing body. The following were elected to the Presidency: Mehmet Hoxha, Rifat Berisha, Pavle Joviqeviq, Zekeria Rexha, Xhevdet Doda, Millan Zeqar, Fadil Hoxha, Ali Shukriu, and Hajdar Dushi.⁵⁸ Out of the 49 delegates present, 32 were not affiliated with any party but represented the Antifascist Front. Others were members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, representing their membership from all regions of Kosovo.⁵⁹

Mehmet Hoxha read his paper, „The Political Situation and the Formation of the National Liberation Council,” to start the discussions. In it, he explained that Albanians' limited involvement in the National Liberation War was because they were afraid of and mistrusted Serbs and Montenegrins. In addition to experiencing political and economic oppression, Albanians were also persecuted as a nationality by the Serbian state apparatus. Mehmet Hoxha invited everyone who had not smeared their hands with the blood of the people to join the common antifascist front at the conclusion of the discussion. In the meantime, Xhavit Nimani concentrated on the general duties and the necessity of bolstering the resistance against the occupier in his presentation.⁶⁰

The process for approving the Conference documents, the Resolution, and the Declaration addressed to the people of Kosovo commenced after the discussions on the reports that had been presented were over.⁶¹ Zekeria Rexha and Hajdar Dushi worked together to draft the conference's resolution, with assistance from Mehmet Hoxha, Pavle Jovačević, and Fadil Hoxha.⁶² The Bujan Resolution's political platform outlined its stances: just as they have always done in the past, the Albanians of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain want to unite with Albania today. The best way for Albanians to come together is to fight alongside the other Yugoslavian peoples against the occupier and their mercenaries. With their dedication to the fight against the occupier, the Albanian people of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain will succeed in securing

⁵⁷ Mark Palnikaj, *Konferenca e Bujanit 31 dhjetor 1943-2 janar 1944*, f. 6.

⁵⁸ “Konferenca e Bujanit”, (*përmbledhje studimesh*), Instituti i Historisë-Prishtinë, Prishtinë 1998, 194-195.

⁵⁹ Hakif Bajrami, *Kosova prej Bujanit deri në Kaçanik*, Prishtinë 1997, 123.

⁶⁰ Hysen Azemi, *Mbledhja e Bujanit dhe kuslinget sipas autorve serbe*, 7-8.

⁶¹ *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vëll. IV 2008, 142-143.

⁶² Vehap Shita, Hajdar Dushi- njëri nga sajuesit e rezolutës së Konferencës së Bujanit, *Hajdar (Beg) Dushi jeta dhe veprimtaria patriotike e heroit të popullit*” (*përmbledhje kumtesash të përgatitura nga Minir (Beg) Dushi*), Shoqata e Veteranëve të Luftës Antifashiste Nacional-Çlirimtare të Kosovës dhe Shoqata e Intelektualëve “Jakova”, Gjakovë 2012, 88.

their right to self-determination up to secession. The Antifascist Allies (the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States), the National Liberation Wars of Yugoslavia⁶³ and Albania, the Atlantic Charter, and the Conferences of Moscow and Tehran⁶⁴ all support this right. The Provincial Committee of Kosovo and Dukagjin received the conference proclamation and were tasked with distributing it to all regions by February 10, 1944.⁶⁵

The Albanian people of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain joined the anti-Hitler coalition through the resolution of the First Conference of the National Liberation Anti-Fascist Council and their involvement in the anti-fascist war. This position and this just war upended the schemes and plans of Serbian nationalist circles, obstructing their ability to use the charge that we were fascist collaborators as justification for their anti-Albanian policies.

The Serbian Reaction to the First National Liberation Conference Against Fascism

The proclamation and guarantee of the right to self-determination for all peoples participating in the anti-fascist bloc served as the foundation for the strengthening of national and international anti-fascist ranks during World War II.⁶⁶ In the meantime, the communists of Serbia and Montenegro (Milovan Djilas, Aleksandar Ranković, and Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo) rushed to denounce the decisions made at the Bujan Conference, thus undermining the legitimacy of the political demands of the Albanians who remained outside of Albania's „London“ borders. Despite being masterfully composed, Milovan Djilas's letter from March 28, 1944, on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, hit at the core of the resolution by criticising the section that expressed the aspirations of the Albanian people of Kosovo to unite with Albania.⁶⁷ Allegations of pro-fascist behaviour by the Albanians would lead to additional measures intended to weaken both Kosovo and the

⁶³ ASHAK, Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i Lidhjes Komuniste të Kosovës, Fondi i Shtabit të Këshillave Nacionalçlirimtar, Viti.1944, Nr i kutisë 23, Nr. i Inv. 1329, Rezolucion nga Konferenca e parë e Këshillit Nacionalçlirimtar për Kosovë e Rrafsh të Dukagjinit e mbajtur më 31 dhjetor 1943 dhe 1 e 2 janar 1944, Nr. 1329, fl.1.

⁶⁴ S. Repishti, *Rezoluta e Bujanit- 2 janar 1944 një analizë*, 90.

⁶⁵ ASHAK, Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i Lidhjes Komuniste të Kosovës, Njësia organ: Komiteti Vendit Gjakovë, Viti.1940-1944, Nr. i kutisë:30, fl.1.

⁶⁶ Muhamet Pirraku, Vetëvendosja e Kosovës në dritën e lëvizjes antifashiste, *Gjurmime albanologjike*, 21, Instituti Albanologjik-Prishtinë, 1993, 8.

⁶⁷ Zekeria Cana, Mbledhja e Mukjes, Lidhja e Dytë e Prizrenit, Konferenca e Bujanit dhe Çështja e Bashkimit Kombëtar, *Studime historike*, 1-4, Akademia e Shkencave e RSH: Instituti i Historisë, Tiranë 1992, 102.

Albanian people, ultimately resulting in the nullification of the Bujan Resolution.⁶⁸

The Bujan Conference was clearly a culmination of the successes attained and a logical outcome of the National Liberation Movement's development, as well as an expression of the movement's permanent program, as evidenced by the unanimous approval of the Conference's documents, the resonance it created among the populace, and the tolerant spirit of cooperation among the delegates.⁶⁹ As a result, the Bujan Conference had an impact on the National Liberation Movement's popularisation and the mobilisation of the Albanian population in Kosovo in support of the movement.⁷⁰ To put it briefly, it was as important to Albanian history as the League of Prizren (1878), the Congress of Lushnjë (1920), the Assembly of Lezhë (1444), etc.⁷¹ Both the spirit of communist ideology, which proclaimed national equality and the right to self-determination, and the assertion and demand for the realisation of the right to self-determination up to secession were fully in line with this. While international institutions only recognise a nation's right to self-determination after that nation has achieved it, international legislation does. This implies that while the right to self-determination is not a given for nations, it is also not prevented from being implemented.⁷² The decisions made at the Bujan Conference hold significance not only for the Albanian people's future but also from a historical standpoint. The political situation in Kosovo was a reflection of this natural link between Albanian history and future politics. The Bujan Conference was always seen as the primary source for Kosovo's independence; conversely, if Kosovo's status was downplayed, the Bujan Conference was also called into question.⁷³

Neither the Albanians nor the leaders of the First Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council, also known as the Bujan Conference, nor the unification of Kosovo with Albania benefited from the events that occurred at the end of World War II. Unfortunately, the Bujan Resolution was officially superseded by another resolution that stated the province's desire to stay a part of

⁶⁸ Seit Lipa, Rezoluta e Bujanit dhe atakimi saj nga ideologjia shtetërore serbe, *Gjurmime albanologjike*, 22, Instituti i Albanologjik-Prishtinë, 1994, 145.

⁶⁹ Marenglen Verli, Politika ekonomike e Jugosllavisë në Kosovë pas Luftës së Dytë Botërore, *Konferenca e Bujanit (Materiale nga Sesioni Shkencor kushtuar 55 vjetorit të Konferencës së Bujanit, mbajtur në Tiranë më 20 janar 1999)*, Akademia e Shkencave e Republikës së Shqipërisë: Instituti i Historisë, Tiranë, 1999, 102.

⁷⁰ Fehmi Rexhepi, Vendimet e Konferencës së Bujanit-frymëzim për pjesëmarrje aktive të shqiptarëve të Kosovës në luftën çlirimtare antifashiste, *Konferenca e Bujanit (përmbledhje studimesh)*, Instituti i Historisë-Prishtinë, Prishtinë, 1998, 36-38.

⁷¹ ASHAK, Fondi: Komiteti Krahinor i Lidhjes Komuniste të Kosovës, Njësia organike: Kopjet e gaxetës "Zëri dhe "Lirija", Viti: 1942-1963, Nr. i kutisë: 39, fl. 38.

⁷² Ana Lalaj, E drejta e vetëvendosjes dhe shqiptarët e Kosovës (Vështrim i shkurtër historiko-juridik), *Gjurmime albanologjike*, 30, Instituti Albanologjik-Prishtinë, 2000, 26.

⁷³ Ana Lalaj, Konferenca e Bujanit, 31 dhjetor 1943-2 janar 1944, një analizë e rivlerësuar, *Studime historike*, 3-4, Qendra e Studimeve Albanologjike: Instituti i Historisë, 2011, 137.

Yugoslavia in 1945 as a result of the manipulations carried out by the Serbian communists.

In July 1945, the well-known Prizren Conference was held by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's highest leadership in order to legitimise the occupation of Albanian territories in the eyes of the international community. This meeting was held in collaboration with the party and military leadership of Kosovo, which had experienced significant personnel changes and was now primarily controlled by Serbo-Montenegrin cadres. Using force, the decision was made to annex Kosovo to Serbia.

Therefore, the Communist Party would not accept the Bujan Conference; on the contrary, it would be denied and rejected, even though it legitimised a natural and just demand of the Albanians and was fully grounded in the principles of the Atlantic Charter and the global anti-fascist coalition. For the Communist Party, the Atlantic Charter remained little more than a piece of paper. They used it for propaganda purposes whenever possible and, when it was not politically expedient, referred to it as „the offspring of the bitter experience of the Versailles peace,“ which they claimed had „brought catastrophic consequences for the peoples of Yugoslavia.“

„The most horrific war in human history, the imperialist invasion war brought about by the Versailles peace also resulted in the status of Kosovo, which was imposed from above against the will of the majority of Albanians on both sides of the border and in defiance of Communist Party and Tito propaganda.

To conclude, throughout World War II, all organised Albanian political forces shared the same objective of liberation and national unification. Despite assurances from the international community that their demands for self-determination would be taken into account, these demands were ignored in order to appease Great Serbia's territorial ambitions for Albania.

Summary

Even in Kosovo, as in all ethnically Albanian territories, the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Movement took place during World War II. Significant efforts were needed to convince the Albanian people in Kosovo that only through war against the occupiers could national rights be gained. The Albanians of Kosovo participated in World War II on the side of the anti-Hitler coalition, aiming to realize their aspirations for unification with Albania after the war ended. During World War II, two main currents emerged in Kosovo, as in all Albanian ethnic territories: the communist and the nationalist-democratic. These two currents shaped their political views regarding the future of the Albanian people in Kosovo: communist and nationalist. Both internal political and military subjects, as well as external factors influenced the formation of these political views. The basis for the division of political views was the issue

of the future political and social organization of the Albanian state. Significant efforts were needed to convince the Albanian people in Kosovo that only through war against the occupiers could national rights be achieved. The Albanians of Kosovo participated in World War II on the side of the anti-Hitler coalition, aiming to realize their aspirations for unification with Albania.

The organization, development, and mass mobilization of youth in the Anti-Fascist Movement in Kosovo were inspired by patriotic sentiments and specific local circumstances (the division of Kosovo into three occupied zones, the demagogic policies of the occupier, the illusion among some sections of the Albanian masses regarding liberation, anti-Yugoslav sentiments, national contradictions, and fear of a return to the past). Despite these obstacles, the National Liberation Anti-Fascist Movement of Kosovo managed to gain the trust of the people and take deep root in Albanian families. During the years 1941-1945, many partisan units were formed in Kosovo. Over time, these would be elevated to battalions and national liberation partisan groups. These partisan units would engage in guerrilla warfare and rarely in frontal confrontations with the occupier. The brigades and battalions formed during 1944 would primarily focus on frontal warfare against the occupier and its collaborators. In these circumstances, the illegal national liberation councils would contribute, which, by the end of 1943, would result in the formation of joint National Liberation Council, significantly strengthening Kosovo's role in the joint struggle with the anti-Hitler coalition.

The anti-fascist movement, after strengthening its military and political position—resulting from the weakening and dispersal of fascist military potential across various fronts—also influenced the expansion of the National Liberation Movement (LNÇ), with the hope that after the war, the national question would also be resolved. In this spirit, Fadil Hoxha proposed holding a conference in the village of Bujan in the Malësia e Gjakovës (December 31, 1943 – January 1-2, 1944), an area that had secure bases and support from the local population. The most important point of this conference was the decision that the Albanian people of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain expressed their free will to join the mother state—Albania. This decision was entirely in accordance with the Atlantic Charter, which clearly stated „the right of peoples to self-determination and sought to restore independence to those who had been deprived of it.“

The conference was held in the village of Bujan in the Malësia e Gjakovës because there was still no free zone in Kosovo, as well as the fact that this region had made a significant contribution to the organization and development of the National Liberation Movement in Kosovo. The conference was held in the tower of Sali Mani, the bajraktar of Krasniqes, located near the base of the Regional Headquarters of the National Liberation Army of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain and the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (PKJ). At that time, this tower had become one of the safest bases of the Anti-Fascist Movement and a strong support point in the triangle of

Gjakova-Malësi-Plavë. A total of 61 delegates were invited to the conference, but only 49 attended. Among the invitees were English representatives, Hendsi and Barley, who expressed their enthusiasm and support for the organization of the conference.

At this conference, a resolution was unanimously adopted, which outlined its positions, according to which the Albanians of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain, as always in the past and today, desired unification with Albania. The best path for the Albanians of these regions toward unification with Albania is the joint struggle with other peoples of Yugoslavia against the occupier and their collaborators. The Albanian people of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain, through their commitment to fighting against the occupier, would gain the right to self-determination up to separation. This right is guaranteed by the National Liberation War of Yugoslavia, the National Liberation War of Albania, the Anti-Fascist Allies (the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States), and is supported by the Atlantic Charter and the Moscow and Tehran Conferences. The proclamation of the conference was sent to the Regional Committee of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain, with the task of distributing it to all regions by February 10, 1944. The Bujan Conference, with its far-sighted decisions, is among the most significant events in the history of Kosovo and the Albanians in general. At this conference, the voice of the Albanians in former Yugoslavia was conveyed, asserting the right to unite with Albania and not with Yugoslavia. The Bujan Conference was organized at the initiative of the Main Staff of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain of the National Liberation Army of Kosovo, on December 31, 1943, and January 1-2, 1944. Delegates from all regions of Kosovo gathered to elevate it to the First National Liberation Conference, where they collectively elected the Council, the Presidency, and drafted the Resolution, which would serve as the political platform that the Albanian people of Kosovo would follow in World War II against the Nazi-fascist occupiers until their liberation with the right of self-determination up to separation. The Resolution of the Bujan Conference is a fundamental document during the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War for the history of the Albanian people in Kosovo and Yugoslavia, as the most delicate issue requiring political resolution during World War II was the national question.

The events that unfolded at the end of World War II did not favor the Albanians or the leaders of the Bujan Conference, nor did they favor the unification of Kosovo with Albania. Unfortunately, due to manipulations undertaken by the Titoists in 1945, the Resolution of Bujan was formally replaced by another resolution, which expressed the province's will to remain under the umbrella of Yugoslavia. To legitimize the occupation of Albanian territories before world opinion, the highest leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (PKJ), in collaboration with the party and military leadership of Kosovo (which had undergone significant cadre changes and was now primarily in the hands of Serbian-Montenegrin cadres), organized the well-

known Prizren Conference in July 1945, where, by the force of arms, the decision regarding the annexation of Kosovo by Serbia was made.

We can conclude that all organized political forces of Albanians in World War II had a single goal: liberation and national unification, and although they had received guarantees from the international factor that their aspirations for self-determination would be taken into consideration, they were forgotten solely to satisfy the appetites of the Serbian nationalists toward Albanian territories.

Zaključak

I na Kosovu, kao i na svim etnički albanskim teritorijama, tokom Drugog svjetskog rata odvijao se Antifašistički narodnooslobodilački pokret. Bili su potrebni značajni naponi da se albanski narod na Kosovu ubijedi da se samo ratom protiv okupatora mogu steći nacionalna prava. Albanci Kosova učestvovali su u Drugom svjetskom ratu na strani antihitlerovske koalicije, s ciljem da nakon završetka rata ostvare svoje težnje za ujedinjenjem s Albanijom. Tokom Drugog svjetskog rata, na Kosovu, kao i na svim albanskim etničkim teritorijama, pojavile su se dvije glavne struje: komunistička i nacionalno-demokratska. Ove dvije struje oblikovale su svoje političke stavove u pogledu budućnosti albanskog naroda na Kosovu: komunističke i nacionalističke. Na formiranje ovih političkih stavova utjecali su kako unutrašnji politički i vojni subjekti, tako i vanjski faktori. Osnova za podjelu političkih stavova bilo je pitanje buduće političke i društvene organizacije albanske države. Bili su potrebni značajni naponi da se albanski narod na Kosovu ubijedi da se samo ratom protiv okupatora mogu ostvariti nacionalna prava. Albanci Kosova učestvovali su u Drugom svjetskom ratu na strani antihitlerovske koalicije, s ciljem da ostvare svoje težnje za ujedinjenjem s Albanijom.

Organizacija, razvoj i masovna mobilizacija omladine u Antifašističkom pokretu na Kosovu bili su inspirisani patriotskim osjećanjima i specifičnim lokalnim okolnostima (podjela Kosova na tri okupacione zone, demagoška politika okupatora, iluzija kod dijela albanskih masa o oslobođenju, antijugoslovenska osjećanja, nacionalne suprotnosti i strah od povratka u prošlost). Uprkos ovim preprekama, Narodnooslobodilački antifašistički pokret Kosova uspio je steći povjerenje naroda i duboko se ukorijeniti u albanskim porodicama. Tokom godina 1941-1945, na Kosovu su formirane mnoge partizanske jedinice. Vremenom će one prerasti u bataljone i narodnooslobodilačke partizanske grupe. Ove partizanske jedinice vodile bi gerilski rat i rijetko ulazile u frontalne sukobe s okupatorom. Brigade i bataljoni formirani tokom 1944. godine prvenstveno će se fokusirati na frontalni rat protiv okupatora i njegovih saradnika. U tim okolnostima, doprinos će dati ilegalni narodnooslobodilački odbori, što će do kraja 1943. godine rezultirati

formiranjem zajedničkog Narodnooslobodilačkog vijeća, značajno jačajući ulogu Kosova u zajedničkoj borbi s antihitlerovskom koalicijom.

Antifašistički pokret, nakon jačanja svog vojnog i političkog položaja – kao rezultat slabljenja i raspršivanja fašističkog vojnog potencijala na različitim frontovima – utjecao je i na širenje Narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta (LNÇ), s nadom da će se nakon rata riješiti i nacionalno pitanje. U tom duhu, Fadil Hoxha je predložio održavanje konferencije u selu Bujan u Malesiji e Gjakovës (31. decembar 1943 – 1-2. januar 1944), području koje je imalo sigurne baze i podršku lokalnog stanovništva. Najvažnija tačka ove konferencije bila je odluka da albanski narod Kosova i Dukadinske ravnice izražava svoju slobodnu volju da se priključi matičnoj državi – Albaniji. Ova odluka bila je u potpunosti u skladu s Atlantskom poveljom, koja je jasno navodila „pravo naroda na samoopredjeljenje i težila da vrati nezavisnost onima kojima je oduzeta.“

Konferencija je održana u selu Bujan u Malesiji e Gjakovës jer na Kosovu još uvijek nije postojala slobodna zona, kao i zbog činjenice da je ova regija dala značajan doprinos organizaciji i razvoju Narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta na Kosovu. Konferencija je održana u kuli Sali Manija, bajraktara Krasnića, koja se nalazila u blizini baze Oblasnog štaba Narodnooslobodilačke vojske Kosova i Dukadinske ravnice i Oblasnog komiteta Komunističke partije Jugoslavije (KPJ). U to vrijeme, ova kula postala je jedna od najsigurnijih baza Antifašističkog pokreta i snažno uporište u trouglu Đakovica-Malesija-Plav. Na konferenciju je pozvan ukupno 61 delegat, ali je prisustvovalo samo njih 49. Među pozvanima bili su i engleski predstavnici, Hendsi i Barley, koji su izrazili svoj entuzijazam i podršku organizaciji konferencije.

Na ovoj konferenciji jednoglasno je usvojena rezolucija koja je iznijela njene stavove, prema kojima Albanci Kosova i Dukadinske ravnice, kao uvijek u prošlosti i danas, žele ujedinjenje s Albanijom. Najbolji put za Albance ovih krajeva ka ujedinjenju s Albanijom jeste zajednička borba s drugim narodima Jugoslavije protiv okupatora i njihovih saradnika. Albanski narod Kosova i Dukadinske ravnice, svojom posvećenošću borbi protiv okupatora, stekao bi pravo na samoopredjeljenje do otcjepljenja. Ovo pravo garantuje Narodnooslobodilačka borba Jugoslavije, Narodnooslobodilačka borba Albanije, Antifašistički saveznici (Sovjetski Savez, Velika Britanija i Sjedinjene Države), a podržavaju ga Atlantska povelja te Moskovska i Teheranska konferencija. Proglas konferencije poslat je Oblasnom komitetu Kosova i Dukadinske ravnice, sa zadatkom da se distribuiraju svim krajevima do 10. februara 1944. godine. Bujanska konferencija, sa svojim dalekosežnim odlukama, spada među najznačajnije događaje u historiji Kosova i Albanaca uopšte. Na ovoj konferenciji prenesen je glas Albanaca u bivšoj Jugoslaviji, potvrđujući pravo na ujedinjenje s Albanijom, a ne s Jugoslavijom. Bujanska konferencija organizovana je na inicijativu Glavnog štaba Kosova i Dukadinske ravnice Narodnooslobodilačke vojske Kosova, 31. decembra 1943. i 1-2. januara 1944. godine. Delegati iz svih krajeva Kosova okupili su se da je uzdignu na nivo Prve narodnooslobodilačke konferencije, gdje su zajednički

izabrali Vijeće, Predsjedništvo i sastavili Rezoluciju, koja će služiti kao politička platforma koju će albanski narod Kosova slijediti u Drugom svjetskom ratu protiv nacifašističkih okupatora sve do njihovog oslobođenja s pravom na samoopredjeljenje do otcjepljenja. Rezolucija Bujanske konferencije je temeljni dokument tokom Antifašističkog narodnooslobodilačkog rata za historiju albanskog naroda na Kosovu i u Jugoslaviji, budući da je najosjetljivije pitanje koje je zahtijevalo političko rješenje tokom Drugog svjetskog rata bilo nacionalno pitanje.

Događaji koji su se odigrali na kraju Drugog svjetskog rata nisu išli u prilog Albancima niti vođama Bujanske konferencije, niti su išli u prilog ujedinjenju Kosova s Albanijom. Nažalost, zbog manipulacija koje su poduzeli titoisti 1945. godine, Rezolucija iz Bujana formalno je zamijenjena drugom rezolucijom, koja je izražavala volju pokrajine da ostane pod okriljem Jugoslavije. Da bi legitimisalo okupaciju albanskih teritorija pred svjetskim mnijenjem, najviše rukovodstvo Komunističke partije Jugoslavije (KPJ), u saradnji s partijskim i vojnim rukovodstvom Kosova (koje je pretrpjelo značajne kadrovske promjene i sada je prvenstveno bilo u rukama srpsko-crnogorskih kadrova), organizovalo je poznatu Prizrensku konferenciju u julu 1945. godine, gdje je, silom oružja, donesena odluka o pripajanju Kosova Srbiji.

Možemo zaključiti da su sve organizovane političke snage Albanaca u Drugom svjetskom ratu imale jedan cilj: oslobođenje i nacionalno ujedinjenje, i iako su dobile garancije od međunarodnog faktora da će njihove težnje za samoopredjeljenjem biti uzete u obzir, one su zaboravljene isključivo da bi se zadovoljili apetiti srpskih nacionalista prema albanskim teritorijama.

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