

Antonina Zhelyazkova

Urgent Anthropology.

Vol. 1.

**The Albanian National Problem
and the Balkans.**



IMIR, Sofia, 2001

Macedonia and Kosovo After the Military Operations¹

June, 1999

Approaches to the research and methodology

The approach was interdisciplinary, i.e. applied by a team of six scholars who used specific methods and tools during the fieldwork including a sociologist, a specialist in Slavonic studies, three anthropologists having individual tasks, a historian and a mediator-interpreter from Albania.²

Objective. Within five days to take a snapshot of the situation in Macedonia after the end of the military operations, measured by the attitudes of the Kosovo refugees in and out of the camps, of the Macedonian Albanians and the Macedonians themselves. To analyze indirectly the political prospects in Kosovo, based on the concentration of a potentially unlimited number of respondents from different towns and villages, representatives of different social groups in one place, i.e. through interviews, questionnaires, free conversations, video-interviews and observations.

The questionnaires for the semi-standardized interviews, prepared by Prof. Peter-Emil Mitev, were filled in in the Raduša and Bojane camps with 33 respondents who came from more than 10 settlements in Kosovo. When filling in the questionnaires a great number of campers gathered, so that usually the procedure turned into a free conversation, comments, and discussions with the participation of 5 to 15 persons. The respondents were men and women between the age of 16 and 80.

A lot of free interviews and talks were carried out with about 25-30 persons outside the camps. These were refugees from Kosovo, Albanians from Macedonia, Albanians from Albania, Macedonians, including politicians, members of the governing authorities in Macedonia, intellectuals, university graduates and workers without any education.

Social characteristics of the respondents

Albanian refugees living in camps and in private houses in Tetovo.

The social picture in the camps is mixed, i.e. from illiterate people to students at the University of Priština and people with higher education. People with primary and secondary education are the predominant group. One can hardly meet among the married women any who have higher than primary education. Among the more elderly generation of women (from 50 to 60) one can often meet illiterate women.

There is a quite clear tendency for people from ordinary families to remain in the camps, people who do not belong to either the formal or informal elite of the Kosovo Albanians. People who are apolitical or who feel strongly about the events and the future of Kosovo are prevailing, but they have never gone into politics and their opinions have never been considered.

¹ The result of this research were first published in the *Kultura* newspaper, issue 40, October 8, 1999. Published also in *Ethnologie Francaise*, 2000, 3, pp. 499-507 (in French).

² A. Zhelyazkova, A. Angelov, G. Savov, V. Tepavicharov, D. Mihaylova, Kr. Stoilov and A. Chaushi.

The material status of the deported Kosovars does not play a significant role in the social hierarchy. There are in the camps people who identify themselves as very poor, i.e. without any income or with a monthly income up to 50 DM, owners of a plot of land, as well as people who had their own business, hired workers, and a monthly income which at times amounted to 2000 or 3000 DM. Almost all the families in the camps possess some land and they have (with the exception of some families) from 1 to 5 relatives working in Western Europe as "gastarbeiters".³ They rely on them for support to a certain extent.

As soon as the camps were built, a system for supporting the refugees started functioning with funds sent by the relatives from Western Europe. Private agencies have been established and they receive the money from Europe (very often ready cash); they trace down the relative-refugee or the refugees themselves find them and receive the consignment. There were some cases when the relative from Europe arrived in the camp to visit the representatives of their clan and to give them ready cash.

There is no misery or a bad hygiene in the camps. People are neatly and tidily dressed, young people even look elegant. This is due to the internal organization of the Kosovars and to the tradition of being clean and smart which is part of the family dignity rather than to the efforts of humanitarian organizations. There are places, of course, where this order and hygiene are on a much higher level (e.g. the Raduša camp) because of the available running water.

The selection of representatives of the "fis"⁴ who are to get educated or work abroad is part of the internal order, the hierarchical family organization and the rules in the *fis*, as well as in the nucleus families that make up the *fis*. It is also by observing the traditional *potestal*⁵ model that the families detached a soldier or soldiers for the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and paid the respective levy for the support of the army.

The family authority is determined by several markers that can be arranged in terms of value in the following way: **a**) size of the family (number of the clan members), i.e. the clan authority depends to the greatest extent on the number of children and their upbringing. This basic marker for authority makes the nucleus families bring up more children. Women of the older generation (50-60 years of age) are proud to say that they have 10, 12 and even more children. One can feel, however, among the younger generation of women (18-30 years old), who already have 2 or 3 children, a strong resistance to giving birth to more children. Obviously, during the past 10-15 years, regardless of the pressure of the older men and women in the families, the birth rate has dropped down to 2-5 children; **b**) affiliation to the several old historical North Albanian clans (e.g. Kelmendi, Hoti, Taqi, Krasnići, Beriša, etc.); **c**) the moral and ethical authority of the family; and **d**) the land area owned and its quality, the number of houses and how large and imposing they are, the furniture, livestock, etc.

It should be mentioned here that the representatives of the old families, as well as the intellectual ĩlite of Kosovo, i.e. doctors, scholars, scientists, journalists, economists, sportsmen, etc., were carefully traced out by the Party of the Macedonian Albanians led by Arbĕn Xhaferi and transferred to Tetovo to be looked after in the homes of local Albanians. The widespread version that the Macedonian Albanians received kinship families in their homes is untrue. There was a strict organizational system which decided who and where to accommodate, how many and which refugees a family was to receive, the only objective being to preserve the Kosovo ĩlite.

³ *Gastarbeiter* – emigrant labourers (Ger.)

⁴ *Fis* – nature (Gr.), i.e. the big clan, relatives in the male line of descent. They all originate from one great-grandfather, observing the exogamy. Two lines of kinship are distinguished according to the traditions of the North Albanian mountaineers, i.e. on the father's side ("tree of the blood") and on the mother's side ("tree of the milk").

⁵ *Potestal* – power, authority (Lat. *Potestas*).

The respondents in Tetovo, who had no refugees in their own home were a rarity and this obviously upset them and put them at a disadvantage. This can probably be explained by the lack of appropriate conditions but they consider it as a shameful and humiliating fact. It is a question of prestige and hierarchical dignity to accommodate a certain number of elite refugees from Kosovo in the houses of the Albanians in Tetovo. According to the living conditions and opportunities, as well as according to the internal hierarchy and confidence, scientists, journalists, etc. were sometimes accommodated in the houses of illiterate people or workers. To our question, "How can you feed 30 persons?", the answers we got were invariably the same, "If there is for us, there is for them too".

According to their religious belonging all respondents in and out of the camps are Muslims, which did not give an answer to our question: *By what internal organization and where were the Albanian Catholics or Orthodox directed to go, and how many of them were deported and persecuted by the Serbian authorities?*

Religion does not rank high in the moral value system of the Kosovars. The fact that they are Muslims is something they take for granted without any special significance for them. Ever since the Middle Ages and the Ottoman period, their attachment has been to: **first**, the *fis* and the family; **second**, the territory; **third**, the common ethnonym - *shkiptari* (Albanians), and ranking almost last - to some confessional group.

Questions related to religion obviously aroused boredom in the respondents; they were considered obvious and unimportant probably because they did not feel very competent to speak on this topic in detail. Even the complex situation in the camps did not increase their religious feelings - there were only a few men who visited the mosques in the neighboring village only for the sake of change from the oppressive and monotonous life in the camp and to chat with the local people. An amazing religious indifference!

The same indifference could be perceived in the answers to the question whether they expected any help from the Muslim countries. They did not quite understand the question, they shrugged their shoulders and used to say, "Yes, everyone will help us, Arabia too", which is sort of a collective noun for the Muslim countries having no special importance for them.

It is worthwhile to mention the existence of a hierarchy in the *potestal* model in the *fis* itself, which is strictly dependent on sex and age. Men are at the top of the family hierarchy, with the oldest on the very top. The victims of the Kosovo war have resulted in the breakdown of families due to the loss of the head of the family, or the loss of the eldest son, brother, uncle, etc. Automatically, the family leadership is transferred to the oldest man that has survived. In some cases this could be even the father-in-law. Similarly the family has determined which one of the sons or the uncles would accompany the women, the children and the old people during their flight or deportation in order to be responsible for their survival.

This "male" and "age" hierarchy is clearly outlined in building up the internal camp administration. Usually the public figures, i.e. the head of the refugee camp administration and his assistants are young men, even youths, because they are educated and they speak English and other Western languages. Likewise, because of their skills to communicate with the international humanitarian organizations and the guards from the Macedonian police, the young people from the camp administration are responsible for the order and the hygiene and try to find solutions to the day-to-day problems. In fact, however, young people do not make decisions because this right belongs to the older men, those who are 50 - 70 years old. This is sort of a Council of the elders who use the young people from the administration as mediators and informers before the elders reach a decision.

Regardless of these findings about the functioning of the Kosovar clan structure, some of the anthropologists, who spoke with the younger and educated men and women, were persuaded that the *fis* organization had exhausted its potential long before; it stopped functioning as early as the 70s. Young people resist the strict hierarchy but, in fact, modernization in this respect is hardly making its first steps: a) the clan is no longer living in a territorial community, families are spread all over the world, though this does not decrease their internal commitments, relations and emotional ties; b) the small nucleus family is trying to impose its own model as regards education, the choice of an occupation, the choice of a matrimonial partner and the number of children, and yet it is still obliged to stick to traditions. The exhausting of the *potestal* clan model is a desire and aspiration of the young people rather than a real fact.

Albanians in Macedonia and Albanians in Albania. Their social relations with the Kosovars

The Albanians in Macedonia are definitely more conservative and less educated than the Kosovars and the Albanians from Albania. Along with this, according to the groups' own evaluation, the Macedonian Albanians are richer than the Kosovars, who, on their part, are much richer than the population in Albania. The town of Tetovo makes an impression of a Muslim town in central or southeastern Anatolia. The restaurants and caf s are full of men only, and the women in the streets wear kerchiefs on their heads and ankle-length topcoats. When paying a visit at home men sit down to table and women remain isolated in another room. It is not the custom for women to get an education higher than elementary or primary. The fashionably dressed women and those whom we met in restaurants were refugees from Kosovo. These women go out for a walk with their husbands and take the liberty of having a drink or a cigarette. They are smartly dressed and they feel embarrassed with the strict ways of the Albanians in Macedonia. For example, in the Bojane camp, supported by Turkey, which is within close proximity of the village of Bojane, a strict Muslim atmosphere reigns, i.e. alcohol, beer included, is nowhere to be bought.

The Albanian intellectuals in Macedonia are euphorically eager to see the establishment of an independent Kosovo where some of them could move to live and work. Many of them have graduated from the University of Pri tina, they worked there during the times of autonomy and they thought of Kosovo as the modern European center of all Albanians. Macedonia is not an alternative for the Kosovars because there exists a significant difference in the level of modernization, the level of religiousness (demonstrative and genuine), in the culture and mentality.

Albania is not an alternative for the Kosovars either, though they are closer in terms of level of education, modernization and indifference towards religion. In fact, the Kosovars are much more open to the world and they are better acquainted with the European achievements. The Kosovars have a more pragmatic and constructive approach to the personal and social perspective whereas the real Albanians have lived through the deformation of building such senseless equipment as bunkers and the necessity to maintain them for years on end regardless of their obvious inapplicability for whatever use they might be. This, to a great extent, has destroyed the constructive feeling among the Albanians and has created a deep-rooted notion of predestination as regards the prevailing chaos. The social differentiation and overwhelming poverty in Albania divide and confront the Kosovars and the Albanians. In the years after the fall of the communist regime in Albania, the rich Kosovars came there with handsome sums to do business, to buy land and estates at prices next to nothing, to use hired labor for miserable remuneration both in legal and illegal transactions. All this haughty and offhand attitude of their rich brothers from Kosovo has hurt the Albanians' feelings. A respondent from Albania mentioned that if some refugees

decided to stay in Albania, they would be hated and boycotted by the local population who had been insulted by their social superiority.

The following attitude for the future of the three Albanian communities was outlined as a conclusion drawn from the complex research analysis (the sociological inquiries included); the respondents are fully aware that they are one people, that part of the *fis* have their own clans in the neighboring territories but they do not envisage a process of unification into a common state nor do they strive for that. Probably the idea of a united Great Albania is not alien to them only on the political and ideological level. This refers mainly to the *ñ*lite circles of Albania. The educated people of Kosovo and Macedonia set their hopes on easing border crossing procedures in the more distant future, whereas in the near future their hopes are on living together in an independent Kosovo. Definitely Kosovo is perceived as a future center of primary importance for all the Albanians in the world (I would call it the Mecca of the Albanians).

The Macedonians

The Macedonian respondents represented different social strata, i.e. the ruling bodies, politicians, scholars and scientists, intellectuals, hired workers, drivers, tradesmen.

In terms of their present social characteristics the Macedonians resemble, to a certain extent, the Bulgarians, i.e. a high level of unemployment, the prevailing part of the population is poor, living close to the poverty line, the intelligentsia is also poor without any self-confidence, politicians are not sophisticated and cultured. The political *ñ*lite in Macedonia very much reminds one of the Bulgarian opposition politicians in the beginning of the 1990-1991 democratic reforms.

The problems facing the state budget due to the refugees' influx are quite obvious. The ministries that are not of vital importance at the moment (e.g. the Ministry of Culture, of Education, etc.) are functioning on a minimum budget and have practically terminated all activities, except for the most important ones. A respondent mentioned that some of these more peripheral ministries receive at the moment no more than 25-28% of their annual budget, hardly covering staff salaries.

The Macedonian respondents quite often, though unwillingly, make a comparison between their social and economic status and that of the local Albanians the comparison being not in their favour. This can be seen, by the way, when comparing the two markets in Skopje: the Albanian old market and the open-air market of Skopje. The first one is clean and well arranged with many shops, boutiques, small restaurants and caffs. A kind of cozy renaissance atmosphere is reigning there. The open-air market resembles a bazaar with Turkish goods. There is no atmosphere, no order, everything is chaotic.

Obviously, the Albanians are richer, their inner solidarity and the support they receive from their relatives from Western Europe probably contribute to this fact. In the town of Tetovo, for example (with a population of about 78,000 people), consumption has doubled because of the necessity to feed and dress thousands of refugees. This, of course, has boosted the Albanians' businesses.

After the end of the war there is an atmosphere of excitement amidst the Albanians in Macedonia who look forward to starting active business with independent Kosovo with eager anticipation;

the converse, there is an atmosphere of economic despondency that reigns among the Macedonians.

The guild of taxi-drivers, who earn their living running the risk of driving foreign journalists, humanitarian officers and all kinds of observers to and from Kosovo, consider that this is their chance to accumulate money for their families before the deep economic crisis that is to follow the foreigners' departure. Some of them mentioned, by the way, that they would try to reorient their business to transporting fuel to Kosovo, which also promises good profits. In a word, there is sort of striving for some kind of economic survival among the Macedonians through trade or semi-legal business in the post-war situation but this refers to only a small stratum of the population.

One gets the impression that there are a lot of families where only one of the employable family members has a permanent job; this should not be considered as the rule, given the small sample.

A Macedonian woman coming from a native Skopje family, complained that she was the only one with a permanent job as her husband was unemployed, her daughter, too, and her son worked from time to time doing whatever come his way. She concluded, "The Albanians in Macedonia are doing well, they earn much more than us. So it is quite normal that I am afraid that the refugees could remain here, and I wish they did not increase in number". The same woman told us that she was living next to houses inhabited by Albanian families. To our question how they were living and whether their life style differed strongly from their own, she answered shrugging her shoulders, "I don't know, they are reticent people, we, too. We don't communicate, I don't know how they live, I simply know they are rich".

Psychological portraits of different ethnic and social levels

Albanian refugees in the camps and in the houses of Tetovo

The period from June 16th to 20th was a period of relatively calm and balanced emotional state of the respondents in the camps. Conditions in the camps were good and there was no tension caused by daily discomfort.

The Kosovars were filled with emotional enthusiasm and gratitude towards the USA, for their support of independent Kosovo. That is why it was a surprise when, in the subsequent answers, they pointed out Deutsche Welle as the radio they listened to and trusted most of all. The broadcasts of Deutsche Welle in the Albanian language rank significantly higher than the BBC, Free Europe and the Voice of America, even higher than the broadcasts of Radio Tirana and the Albanian transmissions of the Macedonian Radio. Several people mentioned that they listened to the transmissions in Albanian of Radio Bulgaria. Judging by the Bulgarian transmissions of Deutsche Welle during the war, it is obvious that this radio station is offering more varied viewpoints, their comments are easier of access for listeners with different views. Just as a parallel, I would like to remind that before the fall of Zhivkov's regime, Deutsche Welle was the radio the Turks and the Muslims in Bulgaria used to listen to.

The respondents' ideas about Western Europe and the USA are different. Most of them know Europe well enough through their own experience or through the stories of relatives; they have quite a realistic idea about how far they could rely on aid and support from the European countries. Their ideas about the USA are unrealistic; so are their expectations of a "horn of

plenty· that will pour into the freedom-loving and independent Kosovo. To our questions "Why are you leaving these clothes?·, they answered, "When we reach home the Americans will give us more!·; "Will the Europeans help for the restoration of Kosovo?·, - "A little, maybe, Albright said they should help as well!·

Regardless of all they have suffered, the optimistic spirits are prevailing gradually turning into euphoria. The tenacious desire for an urgent return to their homes and to participate in the restoration of Kosovo has been motivated by the idea that this is the only (for decades past) chance for the Kosovars to win their independent state and to build their life in conformity with their own traditions. Their readiness to participate in the rebuilding of a free Kosovo eliminates the traditional attitude of achieving quick personal prosperity via emigrating to some West European country. The respondents say that even part of the refugees who were transferred to the West on special lists, as well as part of those Kosovars who have been working for years in the European countries, will come back to take part in the rapid restoration of Kosovo.

Part of the expectations are unrealistic, especially as regards the pace of the political stabilization of the region, i.e. early elections, reaching an understanding among the leaders, real civil governance, magic opportunities of the western protectorate, etc., as well as the restoration of the family material losses (e.g. demolished houses, bankrupt business, crop failure, lost livestock, etc.).

The unrealistic self-evaluations and expectations include the obvious myth of "Kosovo as the richest land in the Balkans· which is the reason for being claimed so disputable and longed for by everyone. The respondents, mainly the better educated people, are inclined to discuss at length this topic, starting with the rich agricultural produce, the factories and the plants, the Kosovars as the most industrious people in the Balkans, and going as far as mentioning the fantastic mineral resources, i.e. diamond and gold mines, ores, rare metals, etc. By the way, at the beginning of the war, Bulgarian respondents with "shady business· connections animatedly discussed the reasons for the US interference, i.e. the diamond and gold mines in Kosovo, the El Dorado of the Balkans.

In spite of the extreme circumstances, the collective ideas of the Kosovar Albanians of power, self-government and authority have not changed which makes them believe that the Albanian leaders will have to obey the elders of the clan and try to achieve understanding among themselves. The comments about the new leaders of KLA were accepted with approval but with the remark that, if necessary, the young leaders should stand to attention before the elders of their families.

The prevailing part of the respondents support the ideal version as regards the Kosovo leaders: they should come to an agreement, they should not split, but solve the fate of Kosovo together. To our persistent question "who would they choose if the leaders did not get along together·, most of them pointed out Rugova without any hesitation. They believe that he has been forced to negotiate with Milošević, they like the fact that he is moderate and has always endeavoured to avoid losses and casualties. On the basis of this prevailing assessment, however, one cannot make political forecasts as it is obvious that the opinion of the Kosovars will be influenced, manipulated, etc. after they return to their native places. This was stated unambiguously and with irritation by one of the political leaders of the Albanians in Macedonia: "Now they do not know the truth. When they go back to Kosovo they will find out who is the real leader and who is the traitor·.

It was a surprising discovery to perceive a deeply hidden Yugo-nostalgia among the Kosovars. The old and middle aged men repeatedly underlined during our long talks the positive aspects of

their life in Yugoslavia, especially at the time of autonomy. It was a significant memory for those who studied or worked in ethnically mixed environment. Thus Serbs, Albanians, Bosnians, Croatians, etc. were gathered in one place, they studied and worked together regardless of their ethnic or religious origin. The calm life, the opportunities to work in Europe and the accumulation of personal wealth, all this was narrated with nostalgia.

The deep and bitter hatred of the Serbs will be long lasting. All respondents declared emotionally but categorically that they could not live with the Serbs, though they added "for the time being". The desire for revenge and vengeance can be easily perceived among the refugees, and especially among those who have lost members of their families or among the young people between the age of 16 and 20. In general, the radicalism of the youngest boys was obvious. Even some young women uttered threats of revenge. The attempts to remind them of the good-neighbourly co-existence of the past clashed with the habitual stereotype: "My neighbours Jovan and Milica are good people but the Serbs are bad", or "They did a lot of evil and we can't be reconciled on the basis of our childhood memories."

Among the elderly Kosovars with higher education, even among those who had suffered heavy losses, the answer was: "Right now it is not possible to live together, but in several years' time business contacts will be restored and relations will gradually normalize. The economic logic will call for it. The major bearers of attitudes of intolerance are the youngest people and the illiterate people. However, this is not related to the burden of the sustained losses because the educated people, as well as the older ones, admitted that sooner or later, life would have its own way and they would communicate with the Serbs. This is the prospect for resignation, not for reconciliation.

The rupture with the Roma, who as early as the beginning of 1998 were used by the Serbian police and army to plunder and maraud in the Albanian estates, is dramatic. With the war being unleashed, according to the statements of the respondents, the Roma committed much heavier crimes, i.e. treacheries. It is quite inadmissible and unforgivable for the Kosovars that the Roma buried the victims in mass graves, thus desecrating the bodies without observing the most needed rituals.

Kosovars are intolerant towards the Turks as well. They explain this with the fact that the Turks collaborated with the Serbian authorities. In fact, the Albanians feel sort of ethnic superiority as regards the Turks (the same attitude was registered among the Albanians in Macedonia). They consider them people of lower quality, and they are even inclined to think that these are actually not Turks but Albanians converted to Mohammedanism (a thesis that is not new for the Balkans and exists in various versions).

In the course of our research we did not come across any case of a raped woman, nor did we hear any rape stories though we spoke about the most intimate things with women of different ages. There was even a Women's Committee in the Raduša camp, which facilitated the life of the women there and organized them for different activities; they did not mention rape as a problem either. The anthropologists, who worked with the men, after having won their confidence and established friendly relations, were also informed about some intimate issues and their advice was sought but no cases of raped women were mentioned. We were left with the impression that if there had been such cases during the war, they were isolated and not a mass practice. Our team did not feel any tension on this topic although we were told dramatic stories of losses, outrage and humiliations.

The conclusion is that the Kosovars are in a state of great excitement and euphoria which is very easy to manipulate. Very often, in the course of our discussions, the respondents wept for anger,

sorrow or gratitude. The fact that they were not in a position to observe some of their obligatory traditions and rituals, as the rituals of hospitality, for example, plunged them into despair. An old man wept when I had to leave the tent after a one-hour talk without his having treated me. He shouted to his sons, "Bring a glass of cold water at least". Then we reached a compromise, namely, that he had been my guest, so I gave a box of sweets, and promised to be his guest at his home in Priština.

It is entirely in the hands of the leaders where to direct this piled up hyper-emotionality and energy for freedom and independence, for prosperity in the future. It can very easily be pushed into a constructive direction but it could also be directed towards revenge, political polarization and vandalism.

The attitude towards Bulgaria and the Bulgarians is positive; one can feel the strong respect as for the democratic achievements. It has been evaluated quite precisely that the Bulgarians are poor, sympathy is expressed, but according to their value system this is not the most important thing. Bulgarians are considered to be the most reasonable and democratic people in the Balkans. The good ethnic understanding in Bulgaria is a well-known fact. They do not hold a grudge as regards the fact that we did not accept refugees because this is considered to have been right decision by the Bulgarians (it was right for both the Kosovar refugees and for Bulgaria). The medical teams and the Bulgarian military men, who had created good living conditions in the Raduša camp and had inspired a sense of security, (there were 30 pregnant women who expected their birth terms; some of them had not been examined by a gynecologist for the last 4-5 months, and others - never before), helped build up the good image of Bulgaria and the desire for trade and cooperation in the future. The fact that we fulfilled each promise of ours given the previous day, was met with deep satisfaction because their original positive attitude towards the Bulgarians was confirmed and the story immediately went round the entire camp. The team set the start of many friendships, some of them holding future perspectives.

It was surprising that the Kosovars did not express a sense of gratitude towards the Macedonians who had given them shelter and took care of them. They answered unwillingly to the questions referring to their attitude towards the Macedonians. Stress, offence and negative feelings had piled up in them because of what they had suffered in Blace. Even those, who had not crossed this point as deportees, knew in details about the sufferings of their compatriots and they nursed bad feelings. Only a few young respondents (about 18 years old) said in an offhand manner, "Macedonians are not good people", but to the embarrassing question whether they would trade with Macedonia, the respondents answered affirmatively (with some exceptions only), "We have traded with Macedonia and we shall trade in the future".

The Albanians from Macedonia are not willing to give an opinion about the Macedonians: "We live together normally. But you can see, our politicians have reached an agreement. Now everything is OK".

Macedonians and Macedonian society as a whole

Macedonians are in a depressed state regardless of their educational and social status level. They are seized with the feeling of hopelessness and fear in two directions thus feeling themselves as if clamped down in a vice. On the one hand, they are already in an economic crisis and are quite well aware of the prospects of a much deeper economic and social depression with all its shocks, i.e. unemployment, worsened health services, decline in the level of education and culture, growing crime rate, strengthening of the mafiotic structures and corruption, a fall in living standards to unknown low levels, etc. On the other hand, they feel threatened ethnically, nationally and civilizationally in some hypertrophic and unreal dimensions. They are afraid of

the Albanian demographic expansion in the Balkans and their expectations are that in a few years' time they will be half of the Macedonian population with the tendency of being gradually ousted from their land. The language when talking about the Albanians, is diversified with military terms: "Bitolja fell", "Tetovo is Albanian", "Struga is conquered", "Ohrid is still keeping its ground", etc. Fear lies at the root of the myths of Kosovars infiltrating Macedonia, buying houses, land and of their gradual settling, as well as the unjustified fear that a great part of the refugees will remain in Macedonia.

The respondents reacted aggressively to our questions by asking counter-questions: "Have you ever seen a Muslim with less than 5-8 children? And what about you, how many children have you got or have you any children at all?"; "How many Muslims are there in Bulgaria?"; "They will soon sweep over you as well"; "Do you have Albanians in your country?"; "Oh, the Turks are something else, one can live with them..."; "What shall we do? - "All the orthodox people in the Balkans should unite in one state in order to withstand the Albanians and the Muslims..."; "It is maybe only a confederation with Bulgaria that could frighten these *shipters*... Why did you give air corridors to NATO but not to Russia?"; "Macedonia will be small for them, they'll come to Bulgaria too. This fear, verging on neurosis explains the fact that not a single Macedonian family has invited refugees at their home and that the refugees have caused a new escalation of xenophobia among the Macedonians.

It is surprising that they have lost the will to find the way how to allay their fears. The feeling of predestination makes the two big ethnic groups withdraw into themselves. The Macedonians think that the Albanians are conservative, reticent, not admitting any external people, they consider themselves as self-sufficient and for this reason even scholars are not interested in studying them. The general assumption is that the close contacts of ethnographers, anthropologists and sociologists will not lead to any scientifically based results because even if the Albanians are willing to meet the interviewers, they will lie to them giving information imposed from above. This has proved to be absolutely false - the Albanians are open to contacts and they are willing to talk about themselves, about their traditions, habits, families, prospects, and political views.

Conclusion

Albanians and Macedonians are ethno-capsulated to each other, they do not know each other and in some cases this lack of knowledge verges on ignorance. It is obvious that the level of negative stereotypes is very high and even if this fact is concealed, quite notable is the fear of Macedonians from a demographic and cultural invasion, as well as the fear of the possibility for the Macedonian national identity being gradually obliterated.

The Albanians, on their part believe in their future as an ethnos but they are filled with suspicion and haughtiness towards the Macedonians. At this stage they cannot forgive them for the years when they were citizens of a lower social standing and they were not admitted to the Macedonian institutions and the all-Macedonian elite. An Albanian political leader described the Albanian community at the present moment in the following way: "We are like an empty house which, so far, has only had the barest necessities, i.e. a bed, a chair and a table. Everything is important for us, everything is necessary in order to furnish our house in the proper manner, like all the others". The respondents among the Albanian politicians and intellectuals formulated their ethnic interests invariably by linking the democratization and europeanization of Macedonia with the institutionalization of the Albanian interests and their legitimization through legislation and the constitution rather than with integration.

The interethnic situation is different from the one in Bulgaria, not because of the different demographic indices but because of the entirely reversed structure. The political elite in Bulgaria, as well as the different governments, were never willing to work with and for the minorities, to solve their problems, to work for their integration, etc. Usually, the ethnic confrontation and tension is between the political class and the society in its approximate entity including the minorities and the majority. In the regions with mixed population in particular, there exists a normal co-existence on a wide social level, the ethnic and religious groups being open to each other and possessing a relative good knowledge of each other. The attempts of politicians to stir up nationalistic feelings and to oppose the ethnic communities have produced no results for the past ten years due to the functioning civil society and to the democratic rules in political life. And yet, one can say that it is society that blocks the attempts to set the ethnic communities against each other and to break the traditional good-neighbourly model.

In Macedonia it is quite the contrary (the situation analysis refers to this moment): There is a coalition and integration of power on the level of the political elites and governing authorities, the TV transmits special programs for the Albanians and the Roma, newspapers for the minorities are published, etc. There exists a sort of an ostentatious, demonstrative political integration and cooperation among the ethnic communities on the high level but in all the social layers under the political elite there is no equilibrium, no balance and worked out mechanisms of mutual co-existence with confidence in and respect for the traditions and customs of "the others". There has never been such alienation in Bulgaria, not even during the years of the so-called "Renaming process". This should be studied once again in comprehensive fieldwork in Macedonia but one gets the impression that the governing authorities are trying to impose the tolerance "from high quarters", to repress but not settle the interethnic tensions. The Bulgarian experience showed that sometimes such a forced approach may work (see the resolutions imposed by the governing authorities for the ratification of the Framework Convention, as well as for the recognition of the Macedonian language), but only after some years spent in solving the problems "from below" and carrying out a wide public discussion on the topics.

The striking discrepancy between the emotional and psychological attitudes of the two big ethnic communities that constitute Macedonian society, i.e. Macedonians and Albanians, is dangerous for the civil peace in Macedonia. The first ones are pessimistic and deprived of faith which leads to depression as they do not see any near prospects for a normal development and much less for their family prosperity and that of the Macedonian nation as a whole. The second are in the apogee of their optimism for the future and they are filled with enthusiasm and confidence in their abilities, tested and confirmed in the crucial situation caused by the refugees' flows. This psychological disbalance could be gradually calmed down by establishing strong civil and non-governmental structures that will try to find a way to relieve the tension, to open and effect a rapprochement between the two communities, as well as by building up a common and constructive vision for the Macedonian state. Bulgaria is interested in supporting the development of the civil sector in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as in encouraging the Bulgarian non-governmental organizations to develop joint projects in the field of interethnic understanding and all-Balkan cooperation.

THE THREE ALBANIAN COMMUNITIES AND THEIR PROSPECTS - SIX MONTHS LATER⁶

October-November, 1999

Research approach and methodology

The second stage of the interdisciplinary survey, dedicated to the fate of Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania after the end of the military operations, was carried out in October-November 1999.⁷ This second stage of the fieldwork applied the same interdisciplinary approach but with a reduced number of scholars, i.e. a historian expert in Balkan studies, two young historians experienced in anthropology and a mediator-interpreter from Albania. Once again the scholars applied not only the methods and tools of their own science but they used the method of anthropologic discussions and a preliminary drawn questionnaire with semi-standardized sociological interviews.

The aim was within three five-day trips to Macedonia and Albania to take a snapshot of the situation of the Albanian communities in both countries, of their ideas about future prospects, their evaluation of the situation in Kosovo and the future of the Kosovo Albanian community six months after the end of the military operations.

The team was interested in the stereotypes and attitudes of each Albanian community towards the others, since the war and the refugee flows allowed them to take a direct and closer view of each other under the conditions of a critical situation. Another object of this research was to ascertain whether the national unification of the Albanians within one state is a question of present interest.

The social attitudes in Macedonia and Albania on the future status of Kosovo were also studied, as well as the views on the future of Kosovo as a whole, so that they could be compared with the attitudes of six months before.

The particular line of research of studying the ethnic and cultural specific features of the Albanians continued, i.e. generic and family relations, birth rate, restoration of the *Kanun* (the common law), attitude towards the state and the institutions, division between the North and the South, etc.

The research started in the middle of October and continued till November 5th, 1999 (with some interruptions and splitting the team, thus achieving better efficiency).

The surveys were conducted basically in Skopje, Tetovo, Tirana, Duras and the village of Droç in Albania.

The respondents were more than 30 persons aged between 25 and 70, men and women of different social status, i.e. politicians, intellectuals, clergymen, workers, farmers, etc.

⁶ The result of this research were first published in the *Kultura* newspaper, issue 4, February 4, 2000, pp. 10-11.

⁷ A. Zhelyazkova, M. Kosseva, V. Grigorov and A. Shaqiri.

Retrospective background - memories of the war and the refugees

The presence of NATO in Albania and Macedonia, the acceptance and accommodation of refugees are still very vivid in people's minds.

In the Republic of Macedonia respondents replied reluctantly to the questions because they felt deeply insulted by the international community which had not made any amends for the losses of the country that had given shelter to the refugees. Figures were circulated among people, which, irrespective whether they correspond to reality or not, have turned into a gloomy cliché about the false expectations and the failure of the democratic government. The losses from the Kosovo crisis amount to more than 600 million USD and to this very moment the international organizations have reimbursed 60 million USD.

Both Albanians and Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia are inclined to discuss the economic crisis and the consequences of the Kosovo war, and to abuse politicians rather than go back to the memory of the tension in the country and the sufferings of the refugees and their own hardships as hosts. Macedonians are faced with the distressing problem of unemployment - employed people in Macedonia now are 313 400 and the unemployed number 341 500. Of course, the Albanians have been included in these statistical data, but there is no poverty or insecurity among them - they hold the gray economy, as well as the monopoly family and clan business. By the end of August one of the Albanian leaders in Macedonia made some startling disclosures about the party of the Albanians that is ruling in coalition with the VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization), accusing them of doing all the smuggling to Kosovo. There is a special term for smuggling in Macedonia, i.e. "shverts" and "shvertasers" (coming probably from the German word schwarz). The explanation of the Macedonian journalists is that at present, a redistribution of the shadowy economy is being carried out among the Macedonian Albanians, particularly in view of the new found opportunities after the Serbian rivals have been driven away from Kosovo.

The evidence of the Albanians in Albania is different. Against the background of the much more disastrous situation of the state and the country's economy, they prefer to speak about their immediate involvement in giving shelter to the refugees. All respondents speak emotionally and enthusiastically of this. The persons interviewed emphasized on the exceptional hospitality of the Albanians when receiving their compatriots from Kosovo. They are proud that they have upheld one of the oldest and most typical Albanian tradition, i.e. hospitality.

The mass media had a great impact during the war and at the time of the refugees' arrival. Reports and announcements about the refugees' fate and the search for divided families are constantly broadcast. Many people offered parts of their homes to accommodate the refugees. They received relatives but quite frequently it was completely unknown families who were invited. The refugees insisted on living together because of the stress and fear of a possible parting, thus big families of 10-15 persons were often accommodated in one room.

The local population took care of the refugees in the camps providing them with food, blankets and inviting the refugees to visit them at their homes.

Actually, through the massive influx of refugees to Albania and Macedonia, the three Albanian communities were offered unique opportunities for mutual acquaintance and rapprochement in some spheres and estrangement in others.

There is a general feeling that the Albanians in Albania are still emotionally shocked by the stories of the refugees, by the crimes of the Serbs, and the sufferings of women and children;

they wanted to retell these dramatic stories and events over and over again. It was difficult to stop the Albanian respondents if a conversation started on this issue because they wanted to speak, and to show the scenes of the tragic events.

Albanians in Macedonia referred coolly and tacitly to this issue, they were not willing to discuss their feelings and it was difficult to understand whether they felt any sympathy for the Kosovars during the war: "We gave them shelter because we had to, that's all," "We managed, once they are at my place, there is food for all". They did not say that they relied on the humanitarian organizations.

People in Albania value the support of the international humanitarian organizations. They highly appreciate the fact that medical care was provided free of charge and it was used by all, both refugees and local Albanians. UNICEF funded the publication of textbooks for the refugee children and at the same time it repaired and renewed the schools and provided the local children with teaching aids as well.

School hours were organized for the Kosovo children during their stay in Albania. On 6th June school holidays started for the Albanian children and on 7th June studies started for the Kosovo children. The children were brought together on 1st June alone, i.e., on Children's Day - to entertain the children in the camps and to give them presents.

Besides the local teachers, Kosovar teachers from the camps were involved as well. The opinion of the interviewed respondent-teachers is that the Albanian children are more advanced and better educated than the Kosovo children. To the question whether this was not the result of the fact that the Kosovo children had attended underground schools, probably without any planned curriculum, the respondents' answer was that this was only part of the problem. According to a respondent headmaster, some marked differences in the mentality, mainly of the younger generations, have accumulated because of the different cultural and historical development: Albanian children are modern and worldly, while the Kosovar children are patriarchal and religious. The same respondent maintained that when they gathered for friendly dinners and talks with their colleagues-refugees from Kosovo, they used to conclude: "You are much richer, but we are more intelligent and educated". The Kosovars did not dispute this assertion but they were definitely irritated.

According to the teachers respondents the aim of the Kosovars was to have at each school a representative of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) who, along with his subject - mathematics, chemistry, or literature, prepared the children and the adolescents for their return to Kosovo and for their duty to the KLA and to an independent Kosovo. Conversations on this issue were difficult because this kind of political and ideological interference at school reminded the Albanians of the recent past and this definitely embarrassed them. Respondents usually stopped this theme with the conclusion: "There were KLA representatives everywhere in the country, in the camps too, and they did their job".

The Perception of the "other" Albanian or the three Albanian identities

It is very difficult for the external observer to define what is common for and what is specific to the three Albanian communities.

Still more interesting is the fact that when starting this theme the Albanians themselves firmly rejected the idea that there were any differences among them. The first reaction of the Kosovars,

the Macedonian Albanians and the Albanians from Albania was identical: "We are of the same flesh and blood", "There are no differences - we are brothers, aren't we?", "We are one and the same ethnos, though separated", "Our customs and traditions - they all are the same".

A patient anthropological approach is needed, as well as profound pre-historical and ethnographic knowledge, in order to understand the surprise of each one of the Albanian communities when the Kosovo events made it possible for them to get closer to each other. This is the fact that they differ substantially; still more shocking for the Albanians was the finding that they did not like each other contrary to their inherent attitudes and initial expectations. Their knowledge about each other was, to a great extent, mythological and imaginary.

One should not create the wrong impression that they did not communicate and did not know each other prior to the Kosovo crisis. These, however, were incidental contacts, they referred to a very close circle of people and until the arrival of the refugees the social instinct had been unprepared to draw its concrete conclusions. Now, they have already been drawn.

Albanians from Albania about themselves

During Enver Hoxha's regime in Albania, the cultural, ethnographic, linguistic and economic differences between the North and the South were muted and suppressed with a policy of repression. According to the respondents "during the communist time everything was mixed up, the communists made a Russian salad, it had become difficult to speak about Ghegs and Tosks as something different".

Nevertheless, there exist stable stereotypes, which characterize the two basic ethnographic groups. What is more interesting in this case is that these ethnographic differences, "dialectal - we understand each other but you always know that you are speaking to a southerner or a northerner", "the literary language (the Tosk) erased these differences", "in the south they sing without instrumental accompaniment while in the north they always sing to the accompany of *chifteli*", "in the north people are taller, in the south they are shorter, i.e. a Mediterranean type", etc., have turned into fundamental social differences. According to respondents the Tosks from Southern Albania are better educated and highly cultured. They migrated to the lowlands and now they live in compact settlements maintaining close relations with the emigrants in Italy. This makes them more open to the world.

Northern Albania is inhabited by the Ghegs, but another ethnographic group called *maltso* inhabits the northernmost highlands. They live in small, scattered mountainous villages or in separate hamlets isolated in terms of their kinship ties. The population is identified as more conservative, backward and reticent. The conclusion of some respondents, made to facilitate our understanding of the differences, is a typical social evaluation: "The Tosks from the South are the intellectuals, the real politicians and creators, while the Ghegs have always been military men, the class of soldiers and the police and they have remained the same. It had always been like this - both under the Ottomans and under Enver Hoxha".

The relations between the two basic groups of Ghegs and Tosks represent a constant rivalry for superiority, which very often oversteps the laws in force. There is a rich folklore as well, mainly jokes, that emphasize the advantages and the shortcomings of the ones or the others depending on the narrators and their identity. Quite interesting is the argument about the *Kanun* of Leka Dukagjin. One of the strongest trumps of the northerners is that the *Kanun* was compiled in the North, to which the more educated southerners reply that both the *Kanun* and the *Testament* of George Castriota Scanderbeg were valid in the past and are valid at present too and they have been observed by all Albanians, both in the South and in the North.

This rivalry has reached the most acute and destructive forms in political antagonism. Southerners respondents told us how during the time of Sali Berisha they were ousted from key state positions and then Tirana was flooded by highlanders from the North. They said that the entire state machine was changed, following the clan principle first, and then - the regional one.

In 1997, after the collapse of the pyramid schemes, the South rose against Berisha's government and Southern Albania was entirely cut from governmental control. In order to get the situation under control there were appeals to the highlanders from the North to support the government and to advance armed and well equipped on the town of Vlora. Albania was faced with the real danger of civil war, which would have increased not only the tension between the North and the South but could have split the country.

The assertion that the change of the political leaders, though through elections, is actually a victory of either the South or the North, and that this leads to the corresponding change of some *fis* members with other *fis* members, is not a subject of discussion for the respondents. People in Albania are quite aware of the fact that in this way they move in a vicious circle and they hope that this circle could be broken off if Sali Berisha (the North) and Fatos Nano (the South) were removed from political life. Since the Albanians are outstanding optimists, they summarize: 'When these two guys go away and leave the government in the hands of the young people, then everything will be all right and we shall enter the EU'. This unflagging optimism in everything is probably due to the youth of the Albanian nation (the average age is 26).

Sometimes there are quite negative assessments about the *maltso* from the remote North, expressed by some Ghegs even from North Albania: 'If they ask us, let the Serbs take the northernmost parts of Albania, where the *maltso* live. They are not like us, they are savage and uncultured.'

At present one of the great Albanian problems (as seen by an external observer) is the presence of a great amount of firearms among the population. According to unofficial data only 10-12 % of the weapons that were plundered from the barracks in 1997 have been given back. The Albanian authorities assume that arms among the population amount to about 600 000 units. Even the enticing proposals for buying them up at their double and triple price compared to the price on the black market, led nowhere. 'No Albanian would sell his weapon', the respondents said, 'of course, when you have plenty you could sell some of them for the family welfare, but there should always be enough in the family'. Most Albanian families possess one or several sub-machine-guns and the smaller weapons and ammunitions are not counted at all. Arms possession is in the Albanian tradition. Men respondents speak about the past with pleasure, when the gun was placed in a prominent position above the fireplace and symbolized the independence of the owner. Now, weapons are kept in a secret place. They speak freely about weapons, they laugh, they feel proud and declare that they would not part with them: 'I cannot imagine my family life without the pistol under my pillow', a respondent said.

Albanians are indifferent to religions and they declare their atheism without any embarrassment. Religion ranks far behind in their value system. Thus intermarriages between Orthodox and Muslims, Catholics and Muslims, etc. do not cause any internal problems. Some of the children are baptized, others are circumcised, i.e. they observe the ritual systems of the three religions without putting any religious feeling in it. More interesting is the role of *bektashism* in the Albanians' value system. They call the *Bektashi* order 'the fourth religion in Albania'. Islam spread in Albania during the Ottoman rule namely through the order of *Hadji Bektash*, but this 'fourth Albanian religion' has no religious meaning for the Albanians. There is not a single Albanian, particularly from among the middle and young generation who knows the specific characteristics and the philosophy of this order, but it is considered a great advantage to be a

bektashi - this means that you belong to some spiritual and intellectual elite. All Muslim-southerners assert that their families are *bektashi*. The respondents-Tosks rejected the possibility that there were *bektashi* in the North but the northerners claimed the reverse. In Kosovo and Macedonia where Albanians come from Northern Albania there is also a *bektashi* order and the corresponding religious institutions, i.e. *tekkes* (in Pakovica and in Tetovo) but they are not popular among the local population. Actually, Tirana is the headquarters of all *bektashi* orders in the Balkans.

Albanian pragmatism outweighs all forms of nationalism. It was surprising to hear from a great number of respondents answering the question about their geopolitical attitudes, that they did not show keen interest in Albania's sovereignty. All Albanians strive to be under the protection of some strong and rich country or union, or else - to leave Albania and emigrate to the West.

During a field work in 1993, when the land had just been distributed, the new owners' dream was for rich farmers to come from the USA, to buy their land and leave them cultivate it, collecting all profits and giving them what was needed for their survival. This was a naiveté, which we witnessed six years ago in all Albanian villages.

Now the most frequently given answer was that the good prospects for Albania were for her to become an Italian district. A countless number of historical memories and concrete facts were brought to the fore, which proved the closeness of Albania and Italy: "We are one and the same with Italy, sooner or later we must unite. When we reminded them of the Second World War and the occupation, the Albanians responded, "Look at the center of Tirana, they made a town out of a village during the occupation. They never kept aside from us, as the Germans did. They treated us as equals. When the Wehrmacht soldiers came and began persecuting the Italians, we gave them shelter in our homes. You can rarely find a family which has no memories of having harboured Italian soldiers.

Getting into closer relations with Italy is the most promising thing, which places relations with the EU and the USA far behind in Albanians' dreams. "America, of course, is a super power and this is a good thing and we should take this into consideration, but neighbours are more important. We, Albanians, have always respected the great states and nations - the Soviet Union, China, and now the USA. However, while waiting for the ship with flour to arrive from America, people will have already died, that is why we look to our neighbours, especially to Italy and Greece. The USA are far away, they are just like a mirage!

Albanians have an amazingly high opinion of Bulgaria and, in a sense, they feel a piety towards the Bulgarians. During the 50s and the 60s the best Bulgarian specialists - agronomists, selectionists of grain and tobacco, were sent on a mission to Albania for a few months, some of them for years and they introduced high quality agriculture among the Albanians. Respondents invited our team to visit a wonderful tangerine garden where we rejoiced like children to see a culture, which does not grow in Bulgaria. The hosts-respondents, aged 30-32 said, "We know from our fathers, and they know from their fathers that we wouldn't have had this wealth from our land if the Bulgarians hadn't taught us. Each of us has taken a vow to pass on to his sons and they to their sons, this high agricultural culture that you have brought us. You have taught us how to grow tangerines as well. You've taught us everything.

In the bigger towns there are Albanian-Bulgarian friendship societies, established by Albanians who graduated from Bulgarian higher institutions during the 50s, i.e. mainly in agronomy, navigation, etc. In the town of Puras alone there is a society with about 40 members. They are many more in Tirana. Bulgaria's decision not to accept refugees from Kosovo during the war in Yugoslavia did not meet with a negative response in Albania. According to respondents the

Kosovar Albanians themselves did not want to be directed to Bulgaria. Their close aim was Turkey where they had relatives and they relied on better conditions. "We were more offended when the Bulgarians protested against the war, when NATO killed the Serbs, but they did not object to Albanians being killed. There were no voices in defense of the Kosovars. However, you have done a lot for us and we have no right to judge you."

Since the 50s and the 60s, when there was obviously a great mobility of students and specialists between the two countries, wonderful memories have accumulated, and mixed marriages have been contracted, which have gone through the severe trials of the repressive Albanian machine. The good feelings are lasting and the respondents fear that the Mafia, as well as the weapon and drug traffickers, discredit the Albanians with the Bulgarians.

As a whole, the Albanians in Albania feel free and optimistic. For all of them the changes that occurred after the fall of the communist regime are positive. They enjoy the possibility to speak freely, to travel, and to work abroad. Respondents said that regardless of the deep economic crisis and chaos, the living standard had risen for many of them and for some it had leapt up. Quite impressive is the large scale and chaotic construction. Albanians are trying to invest all illegally acquired funds in constructions - they build everywhere, hastily and uneconomically, huge quantities of concrete are cast, thus devastating the wonderful nature. Buildings have already bitten into the wonderful 25 km long beach strip along the Adriatic shore, the wide belt with tropic verdure was swept away long ago for building private hotels and villas. Everyone in Albania knows that it is the local, as well as the Kosovar weapon and drugs traffickers, who erect buildings in Puras and along the seacoast. Respondents think that sooner or later the Puras coast will turn into a sort of Las Vegas where one could profit by gambling and prostitution and where the Albanian Mafia will meet. When the infrastructure improves, Mafia structures from other countries will probably join as well.

Albanians about their brothers from Kosovo and Macedonia

In the Albanians' consciousness Kosovo is a province which has greater opportunities for economic development and prosperity. In the beginning and the middle of the 90s, even in the beginning of the Kosovo conflict, the prevailing opinion in Albania was: "What do the Kosovars need, they live well, much better than the Albanians themselves, why should they bring ruin upon themselves?" Respondents from Albania spoke in details about the vast prospects that the Albanians had in former Yugoslavia (Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro). They stressed on the great number of family representatives who worked in Western Europe, which made them not only richer but more different as well. To the question, "How did it happen that the Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia grew even richer than the Serbs and the Macedonians?", they gave the following answer: "The local ethnoses and the authorities kept them away from all state institutions and jobs, they dismissed the Albanians from any state positions, they were not given access to the administration, the army and the police. The only way to survive and provide for the family was to work to the utmost in the private sector, i.e. trade, crafts, agriculture, and as hired labourers abroad. One should not forget the illegal traffic, of course. That's how they grew richer." "The Serbian and Macedonian authorities forcibly directed the Albanians where they could profit better and now they should not be angry that they are poorer. Because, it seems that here, in the Balkans, all are clever but all are naive too." And they added, "Kosovars are very industrious. They are the most industrious people of all Albanians, of us and of the Macedonians." Jokes about the proverbial laziness of the local Albanians circulate in Albania. When NATO officers saw the wretched state of the roads they allotted funds to patch up the holes. The Kosovar refugees asked straight away to take up the road patching, because they felt rotten when they had nothing to do. The local respondents told us that in Albania one could often see the following picture: NATO soldiers and Kosovars working and a big group of local

Albanians-idlers standing round them commenting, laughing and smoking for hours. When those working felt quite exhausted, the idlers around shouted "go ahead, go ahead", but they would not even budge to help them. "That's how it was during the Great War, some of the adults remembered, "the Italian soldiers built up many things and we were watching them. This is a self-evaluation, which they pronounce good-naturedly and with sense of humor.

According to the opinion of the interviewed people, who had communicated all the time with the refugees, the Kosovars are colder and inhospitable. Drivers who provided the camps with foodstuffs and after the end of the war drove the refugees to their native places, and conveyed goods to Kosovo, spoke with outrage: "In spite of the hospitality that we showed them here, they refused to be our hosts in Kosovo. We spent a month in Priština, in Pakovica, in Peć, but they did not invite us to take a cup of coffee with them, they pretended they did not know us. And we worked non-stop for them, as for brothers. They even stopped our truck, which conveyed goods and they sacked it. They jeered at us saying that if this misfortune had befallen us (the Albanians from Albania), we (the Kosovars) would not have accepted you. Quite surprising for most respondents was the fact that one of the most important and traditional values of the Albanian ethnos was neglected, i.e. hospitality and gratitude towards those who had helped them in hard times. They made the following comparison: "Even the Macedonian Albanians who are more backward and less educated than the Kosovars are more hospitable people and they observe the tradition as it is according to the ancient rules. "Kosovars are arrogant and they like nobody but themselves, they think that their wealth gives them the right to that. Our Macedonian brothers, however, are no less rich, but they are not haughty to us - they feel for our poverty and they respect our erudition and intelligence.

Albanians worry that the events in Kosovo and the future status of the province could have influence, to some extent, on the reactions of the Albanian population in Macedonia. The dominating attitude among the Albanian society is that the Albanians in Macedonia should not have separatist claims. "Macedonia is a wonderful country and our brothers live there freely. They need not separate and destroy Macedonia. What is important for us is that the Albanians had their own place in policy there, as it is now.

Albanians as a whole - a look from outside and historical-psychological comments

During the past 10-15 years Albanians from the three communities were passing through a period of national identification, self-discovery and national maturity. At present, the Albanians are determined to win recognition as a nation, and are managing to overcome the centrifugal forces of the clan and territorial division. As a Macedonian political scientist said "the Albanian society is experiencing now what the Macedonians experienced 50 years ago, and the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Greeks during the nineteenth century. Albanians can be called by the term "the teenagers" in the Balkans, a term conventional for our team. This term encodes all the intricacies of the complex transition to maturity. "If Macedonians have no other option except Europe', the same scientist says, 'Albanians do have, i.e. their reunification, winning recognition as a nation and then integrating with Europe. They have an intermediate phase, which they would like probably to achieve before joining Europe.

These all-Albanian strivings are complicated by the differences among the three communities. An Albanian intellectual summarized, "Albanians from Albania have already got a perception of the Kosovars as scoundrels, liars and Mafiosi who are haughty and inhospitable, but still, these are rich Albanians. Kosovars, on their part, perceive the Albanians from Albania as wild and uncontrollable gangsters, who have been reduced to beggary. Both communities accept the Macedonian Albanians as fanatically religious, illiterate and conservative. The contradiction between lack of xenophobia among the Albanians in Albania, the Kosovars' fierce xenophobia

and the complete ethno-capsulation of the Albanians in Macedonia was really surprising. Three different directions and three different levels of relations with the "others".

The vendetta has been revived and it is waged by Albanians against Albanians in Albania. When we put questions to the respondents, we made great efforts to get an answer. One of the respondents, an educated person, scolded our interpreter-mediator and said, "You should not translate everything, each home has its own secrets and you have to keep the secrets of our home". The explanation of most respondents is that the *Kanun* and the vendetta as part of the common law have been inevitably revived, due to the fact that the state is weak and the institutions do not function. What worries the educated respondents is that the *Kanun* has been revived in a distorted form in Albania.

Enver Hoxha solved the problem of the common law in a drastic way, similarly to the complete banning of religion. He killed or removed the clan Elders who knew the principles and applied the *Kanun*. Fifty years later there really exist blanks in the historical memory of the Albanians. They try to restore the customary traditions but they do that by changing or supplementing the Code due to lack of continuity. Old people-respondents said horrified that there were gross violations in the today's enforcement of the *Kanun*, especially in its blood feud part.

In Kosovo the vendetta has been revived by the extreme political situation and it is applied in everyday practice without any hesitation or attempts to restore the requirements of tradition. For example, according to deep-seated tradition women cannot be killed, or if a woman covers up a man or a male child with her body they should be reprieved. Now this practice has been forgotten.

In Macedonia blood feud is not applied, but this issue requires some additional research. For the time being, the team's conclusion is that this conservative and close community has its leaders who usually settle disputes and impose punishments.

For the researcher, who observes the revival and observance of the *Kanun* from outside, this is an obvious tendency to some *primitive form of an alternative state and of parallel social and legal institutions*.

How could they carry out the national consolidation and the national unification with these significant differences and with the feeling of mutual mistrust and sense of superiority? This simply cannot happen unless it is a common decision and a platform of the political elites of the three communities, imposed aggressively and, of course, supported by external factors. Consequences are unforeseen.

IV. Kosovo - a look from outside

Albania encourages anything that happens in Kosovo. Each achievement of the Kosovars has been acclaimed and approved. The fact that the Kosovars are cleansing the territory from Serbs and Roma, that they keep in fear and tension the *Gorani* and the Turks - all this has been explained by the consequences of the suffering endured. No one is inclined to comment on the fact that the aggression turns against their own people, against the intellectuals, former ideologists of the resistance against the Serbs, who fear now the Kosovar xenophobia and the vague prospects for the development of Kosovo.

The prevailing answer of the respondents from Albania is: "Kosovo must be independent, and after plenty of time, if need be, we could unite". Albanians know one and only one truth from

their history textbooks, namely that Kosovo is a long-standing Albanian territory, which was treacherously raided by the Serbs in 1912 and was cut off from the motherland along with its population.

A great disappointment reigns among the Albanian community in Macedonia six months after the end of the war. Contacts are kept only by businessmen and the Mafia structures, which redistribute the gray economy. Ordinary people, who gave shelter to refugees, have no contacts with their new friends from Kosovo, they do not know their fate, nor can they exchange any information with them.

We put a question to a famous Albanian intellectual and political leader, who was familiar with the first part of our research: "Well, what is going in Kosovo now? Is our conclusion that Kosovo will turn into a center of attraction, into a Mecca or a Piemonte, for all the Albanians in the world still valid?" He answered with bitterness, "Kosovo will never be anything else but one big Aviano, or in simpler words, a big American base". Question: "Are the Kosovars aware of what has happened to them for six months now?" Answer: "The only Albanians in the world who do not understand what is happening to them are the Kosovar Albanians". Another respondent from the Macedonian Albanian community added accordingly: "Actually, they cannot get out of the euphoria of victory and revenge or rather, this euphoria gradually and imperceptibly turns into a lasting fanaticism, admixed with criminality and impunity". Another respondent: "They are isolated from the outer world, for that is the reason why no one of us can warn them that they are enclosed in a ghetto which is the breeding ground of hatred only. It is only the Mafiosi and the traffickers who travel everywhere and meet whoever they want".

In Bulgaria, from where a lot of drivers transport building materials from the Ukraine and other parts of the region, there is already an ironic catchword about the new Kosovo racism: "In Kosovo the best thing is to be a black person". A Bulgarian official from the UN mission was killed because of his Slav origin, two of the Bulgarian drivers were also killed. According to the Bulgarian drivers KFOR and the international police troops are not in a position to gain command of the crime rate: "They attack and maraud. When a KFOR soldier appears, they have already disappeared, when the soldier goes away, they come again to finish off what they have started. Our work is like a Russian roulette".

The Bulgarian policemen from the international contingent, who have gained a long experience in Cambodia and Bosnia, say that their mission there is the most difficult one. They explained that both in Cambodia and in Bosnia, or wherever they had worked, they had always relied on the empathy and assistance of the local people, but this was not the case in Kosovo: "Police work is entirely based on contacts with the local people, and everywhere this has worked - in Bosnia we even made good friends. We are facing a wall here, no one is willing to ask for our help or to assist us. In fact, nobody wants us to stay there". Another Bulgarian policeman: "I have long experience and I know that nothing is black-and-white in life and that namely the nuances are the place where we lay the principles of our work. Here in Kosovo, we met for the first time an absolute black-and-white situation which made us feel helpless and our efforts - useless".

Conclusions

This research contains various information and a number of conclusions could be drawn. We shall offer only one, which is related most directly to the Kosovo future.

In the course of their history Albanians have almost never existed independently or in a state of continuous unification - going back to ancient times and the early Middle Ages. They had been for shorter or longer periods of time under the domination of Rome, Byzantium, Bulgaria, Sicily, Serbia, the Ottoman Empire, etc., until 1912. Thus, in the course of history a perfect system for alternative existence has been built, i.e. a crypto-doubling of the social relations, institutions and functions needed by an independent state.

During the Ottoman Empire the Albanian crypto-society was quite typical since it functioned for long during the historical times of the Balkans. The Ottoman power nominally existed with the assistance of representatives of the Albanian clans and the territorial communities. The Elders represented their family or town/village community before the authorities, and they fulfilled all obligations - taxes, military service, etc. De jure, for centuries Albania had been ruled by the Sublime Porte and Islam ruled over the country, but de facto - there was an alternative local administration and Crypto-Christianity. Under the obvious observance of the stringent norms of the Ottoman-Islam *shariat*, it is the *Kanun*, the common law, that was really in power.

This is a system of mechanisms of independent existence, under the ostensible form of the subjection perfectly functioning and tested during the centuries, a system of adopting or reconciling with the alien government, even of demonstrated loyalty.

Such was the existence of the Albanians within the boundaries of the Yugoslav federation especially after the Albanians in the Kosovo province were deprived of autonomy. It is then that the set principles of parallel existence in all spheres of social, political and economic life got unlocked.

Such is the future of Kosovo under the ostensible form of an international protectorate. The Elders will give power to some individuals (at present these are former KLA commanders), who wear European clothes and have European behaviour and who will demonstrate before the media and the international observers Kosovo society's absolute loyalty and affiliation to the European values and world civilization. This will be illusory - against the background of this inevitable and internationally supported scenery of an official administration and observance of legality, all parameters of an alternative, close and undemocratic system will develop, where no one will be able to penetrate in order to study it, unless he becomes part of it or risks his life for the scholarly interest displayed.

KOSOVO IN THE STIFLING HUG OF XENOPHOBIA⁸

April, 2000

Methodology and tools

Because of the intricate situation in Kosovo the team of the third expedition was not in its full strength.⁹ The fieldwork material was gathered by three scholars from interdisciplinary backgrounds, i.e. a historian - expert in Balkan studies, a historian - anthropologist and a philosopher. The fourth member of the team was a journalist and the fifth one was an interpreter-mediator from Albania.¹⁰

The research was carried out from April 24th - 30th 2000. The aim was to study and define the prospects for the development of Kosovo and the attitudes of the local people to their future one year after peace had been established in the province. The main method used was the method of anthropological discussions, combined with a system of questions for semi-standardized interviews and observations. The specific and more aggressive approach, applied by the journalist in the research team in getting information and carrying out interviews proved to be exceptionally useful and contributive. Data from OSCE's surveys, from research and journalistic publications were also analyzed.

The aim was to take a snapshot of the situation in Kosovo, to assess the results achieved by the international community, and to study the psychological state of the Kosovars and of the other inhabitants of the province, i.e. mass attitudes, expectations, attitudes towards "the others", stereotypes and prejudices.

The team was interested in the degree of modernization and safeguarding of the traditions and habits of the Albanians, their attitude towards the institutions of the protectorate and their views about the place of Kosovo in the Balkans and in Europe.

The state and the perceptions of the police contingents from UNMIK and of the representatives of the international administration were also studied.

The survey was conducted in Priština only, because the town was closed as a result of some emergency circumstances. For days on end the team worked in the blocked town by the Kosovo Albanians, not being able to go along the routes mapped out in advance.

Over 50 persons were interviewed, men and women between the age of 18 and 65. The respondents were representatives of all social groups - free lance intellectuals, university professors, politicians, students and demonstrators, from Priština and the neighbouring towns and villages, people working in the service industries and unemployed. Because of the events swiftly moving in town, the interviews often grew into group discussions, especially with the demonstrators who blocked the streets and with the students who supported them, thus the total number of the interlocutors was over 100 persons. Policemen from UNMIK were also interviewed, i.e. Bulgarians, Italians, Frenchmen, Dominicans, Englishmen, Americans, as well as representatives of KFOR and the international administration.

⁸ The result of this research were first published in the *Kultura* newspaper, issue 12, March 30, 2001, pp. 10-11.

⁹ With the courteous assistance of Arben Xhaferi our group was under the protection of his personal security guard, for which we would like to express our gratitude.

¹⁰ A. Zhelyazkova, V. Grigorov, V. Karaivanova, T. Mangalakova, A. Chaushi..

A snapshot of the situation in Kosovo

A retrospective background

According to the respondents, i.e. Kosovo and Tetovo intellectuals and politicians, the war for Kosovo is simply a phase in the process of Yugoslavia's dissolution where the question about the future status of Kosovo and Montenegro's remaining in the union comes to the fore. Most of the people interviewed think that this war was the inevitable end of the conflict in Kosovo and that the merit goes to Ibrahim Rugova who during the past few years succeeded in winning over the world to the Albanian cause.

Some respondents paid special attention to the specific ethno-cultural moulding of the Serbs, which had created an appropriate environment for conducting a repressive policy in this province. The idea of the particular mission, which the Serbian people had to fulfill not only within the borders of the Federation but in the Balkans as a whole, as well as amidst all southern Slavs, had been inculcated again and again through a purposeful propaganda. All this had formed a hyper-national self-confidence, a high level of the national spirit and, as a matter of fact, had imposed the Serbian domination in the Yugoslav Federation. As it usually happens when building up nationalistic propaganda, the choice and the determination of the unified symbol is of particular importance and in this case the ideologists had concentrated on the super-mythologization of the "Kosmet territory sacred for the Serbs".

To our questions whether this tension and this repressive policy could be peacefully settled, the respondents flatly rejected the possibility that the Serbian army and administration would withdraw from Kosovo without NATO's military intervention. Many of the interviewed people commented that, "the blame did not lie with Milošević alone. Other persons in power would have the same or a similar approach of national arrogance towards the Kosovars, as well as a fanatic and hypertrophied adherence to the province". A respondent politician: "A lot of time has to pass before the Serbs realize that Kosovo has already become a part of the historical past of Serbia and a basis for the historical future of the Albanian nation". Another intellectual added: "The reasons for this are not only demographic, as you might think. For the last 20-30 years a young nation has emerged very quickly here, i.e. the nation of the Kosovo Albanians". The Kosovo Albanian nation, according to the respondents, emerged under the conditions of the Yugoslav Federation, which was opened to the world and provided opportunities for contacts with Western Europe. This allowed the formation of a highly emancipated generation, which persistently strove after equal participation in Yugoslavia's political life. The deprivation of autonomy and the repressions during the past 10 years have radicalized the young Albanian generations, who are the bearers of political ambitions. Some of the young people who finished their education in private homes and cellars, under prohibitions and clandestine conditions, have become extreme radicals. The new political elite, formed by this generation, is not inclined any more to compromises and these people have set themselves the task of the total political secession of Kosovo from Serbia and from the remnants of the Federation. Thus, the struggle for political rights has escalated from peaceful protests to terrorist campaigns and armed guerilla struggle, where the word of the more moderate political leaders does not carry weight any more. The lack of will for compromises on the part of the Serbian authorities and subsequently by the new generation of Albanian leaders, has naturally led to a military solution of the conflict.

The guerilla war, the air-raids, the refugees' camps, the crimes committed by the paramilitary Serbian units, as well as by the armed detachments from Albania, the plundering and arson - all

this lies at the root of a deep and lasting intolerance among the ethnic communities in Kosovo, which in May 2000 looked deeply moving and incorrigible.

The snapshot

There exists a complete consensus among the Albanians on the issue that "early or later they will have their own independent Republic of Kosovo". This view is undoubtedly professed by all, i.e. the political leaders from the old generation, the young generals from the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) who are holding now party and administrative posts, the intellectuals, the students and the ordinary citizens.

We involved our respondents in discussions about the terms, the form and the future of the independent state. In the reception room of one of the main political leaders of the old generation we saw two flags - the one was the flag of Albania and the other represented the seal with which the future state documents of Kosovo would be legitimized, i.e. a red circle with the two-headed eagle from the Albanian coat of arms, combined with a shield bearing the inscription *Dardania** - all this against a dark-blue background. A respondent from the politician's security guard told us that all heraldic and other state symbols of Kosovo were ready and they eagerly expected the moment when they would come into use and would be displayed to the whole world.

The students from Priština University were the most radical people: while politicians and journalists were defending only the cause of the independent state of Kosovo, the students were inclined to discuss the time when all Albanians would unite. Many of them had been refugees in Macedonia or Albania and they spoke about what they had found out - the image of "the other Albanians". They were glad that they could see them, that some of the wrongly created stereotypes about their confreres from the neighbouring countries had proven wrong. They commensurated and juxtaposed themselves with their coevals from these countries, and though the assessments were not always favourable, the joy of discovering the truth about the "other fellow-man" was apparent. They argued about the choice of the capital of the new united Albanian state - what the advantages of Priština or maybe of Tirana were, and why not Skopje. Of course, there was a lot of enthusiasm about the preferences for Priština and about the idea for a common Albanian state with Kosovo as its center.

Maybe the most moderate in their ideas about the future independence, incredible as it may sound, were the co-party members of the former leader of KLA, and he himself. They were working together with the international administration and had encountered in reality the extremely complicated matter they were hardly familiar with, namely "*what is a state system and a legitimate government*". At the same time, they have already become the face of the Kosovars before the world, they have thrown their diplomatic suits over their military protective clothing and they are restrained in their comments. A respondent, one of the most senior officers in the Party of the Democratic Prosperity of Kosovo (PDPK), a former member of the KLA General Staff: "There cannot be any compromise as regards the main goal - free and independent Kosovo. But we do not want to achieve it hastily. With the help of the West we shall build our institutions calmly and slowly and only when are we ready we shall ask for independence. First of all, we need a Constitution or rather Provisional Statutes, then local elections, in a year's time - general elections, laws, courts, etc. As you, Bulgarians, have done in your history. We asked them about the more distant future: "Is the unification of all Albanians possible? Answer: "Both you and the world, without being afraid, must get used to seeing us together. We, the Albanians from Kosovo, from Albania, from Macedonia and Montenegro must be together, we must communicate and draw up common plans. Our communication is already an established fact. Nothing can divide the Albanians except the borders - neither the language, nor the culture, nor the future."

The structure of the Albanian society in Kosovo, the strong patriarchal and clan relationships and probably the repressions of the Serbian authorities have not allowed the formation of more differentiated political structures for the last 10 years. According to the assessment of our team Albanians in Kosovo have a strong political orientation but they are not sufficiently party-oriented.

One year after NATO air-raids the KLA dissolved and now there is an ongoing process of integration of its structures in the political life. Quite definitely, Hashim Taqi's closest generals, and according to some respondents, his trusted friends from his native place *Drenitsa*, also occupy key party positions. Ibrahim Rugova from the Kosovo Democratic League (KDL) and Hashim Taqi (PDPK) have high public support among the population for the time being. When we asked the respondents for whom they would vote if there were elections, the ratio usually was 1:1:1, the third group declaring: "Neither for Rugova, nor for Taqi or giving priority to Rugova. According to Gallup the ratio is in favour of Rugova (45 % : 30 %). We insisted on some arguments as regards this hypothetical vote. It became clear that the deeply cultivated feeling of respect towards the Elder and the sense of gratitude towards the person who was doing useful work for the community, predetermined their attitudes towards the leaders. Though Rugova has isolated himself and avoids public appearance to such an extent, that international officers whispered in our ears, "the Albanian Buda..."; this does not in the least undermine his authority. The prevailing part of the Kosovars are convinced that for the past 10 years "this was the man who told the world that there exists an Albanian nation, that there exists a huge problem in Kosovo and that there exists an iniquity that should be put an end to!". The authentic authority of the head of a family is superimposed on his undoubted merits as a Kosovo leader and intellectual. Actually, through his isolation and unwillingness to communicate with the media and get involved in any public events, Ibrahim Rugova conceals his strong political radicalism. It is basically in his milieu that one can feel most overtly people's impatience for Kosovo to be declared an independent state, which would turn into "the Mecca for the Albanian nation scattered in the Balkans and all over the world".

In the process of this emerging orientation towards parties, new leaders of the Kosovo society have also come on the political scene but it is still difficult to assess their potential adherents: Ramush Haradinaj, a former general in KLA, leader of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, has succeeded in uniting famous figures, such as Mahmut Bakali and Azem Vlassi, who occupied top positions in the communist party and government hierarchy together with politicians of the younger generation; Rexhep Qosja, an intellectual, writer and leader of the United Democratic Movement, which is the third largest political block; Okshin Hoti, a political prisoner in Serbia - exceptionally popular among the university professors and the students: "He is the real head of the Albanians in Kosovo. When he comes back, things will be put in their proper place".

Since we fell in a tense situation and were the witnesses of mass demonstrations and successful blockading of Priština by riots, we learned the name of the leader of these mass street demonstrations, which, apparently, were not organized by either Taqi or Rugova. The leader, Sabit Gashi, is the leader of the National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo and he obviously is in a position to organize public protests without being influenced by the other parties and leaders.

From the implied meaning of our respondents' words, especially in the current situation, which had turned into radical and rebellious, it became clear that there were some leaders from KLA who did not accept the army disarmament and the transformation of the struggle for independence into a political struggle. They were ready for action, they maintained their stock of

ammunitions clandestinely and they were ready to carry the situation to excess at any time in order to speed up the fulfilment of their demands.

In fact, the restructuring of the political space lies ahead when the local elections in the autumn of this year will be held. Then it will become clear whether the surveys of our team which claim that the victory is closer to Rugova, and that about one third of the interviewees are looking for an alternative outside Rugova and Taqi, are true.

The Kosovo intellectuals look realistically upon the readiness of the society to fully participate in the local elections. The Manager of the *Koha Ditore* newspaper told us that they had assigned a page to the parties so that they could publish and publicize their platforms. The days went by and not a single party had brought its platform to be published: "Then it became clear that unfortunately, in Kosovo, there were no political parties in the true sense of the word. There was not a single party with a political programme, an economic programme, or a programme for development. Instead of party programmes, people are offered slogans for freedom, for democracy, and for independence, which are the same for all parties. There is not a real choice among different political alternatives. A question from our team: "Isn't it possible for a new party to be established which will unite those intellectuals, who are able to suggest a programme for development and future ideology? Answer of respondents journalists, philosophers and political commentators: "We, the intellectuals, are unwilling to run the risk of participating separately in politics. This is doomed to failure at this moment. We can only support the leaders who already exist in the political space. Politics is too high for us, it is out of our reach."

According to some more sceptic intellectuals and according to the analyses of our team, the forthcoming local elections will hardly result in the expected differentiation in political life. They will rather register the passing influence of the big Albanian *fis* whose descendants are from the Kosovo political leaders. If one can judge from the several year long democratic experience in Albania - torn between the North and the South - this specific form of pre-modern political choice will probably remain for a long time. One can hardly expect any well defined outlines of the ideological contours of the parties in Kosovo in the years to come.

The daily round

Life in Kosovo is strange and we tried to get the answer to the question, "what is it that makes it such? My younger colleagues from Western Europe (between the age of 25 - 35) specialists on Balkan studies have a slang reply, "It's very sexy in Priština and they do not reject the possibility to hop over to Priština for a day or two or for a weekend. This goes quite counter to our team's perceptions of Kosovo. This is actually the insurmountable gap between different viewpoints, i.e. looking at the Balkans from a bird's eye view as something exotic or living there with all the concomitant fears and troubles.

In fact, there is nothing attractive in Priština nor in the whole of Kosovo - it is simply a town and a province after the state of war. With the assistance of the international administration the water supply and the electric power have been reconstructed. Some of the demolished buildings have been repaired. They organized the cleaning of the town but only in the ideal centre where the two big hotels and the headquarters of the international forces are situated. Huge heaps of rubbish choke the side-streets and they even tower like small mountains in the outlying quarters of Priština, which are considered to be the luxury neighbourhoods.

Now, and this is likely to continue for a long time, Kosovo is a place where no institution is functioning in a normal way. Some institutions are non-existent at all, i.e. municipal government, tax offices, banks, educational establishments. The administration headed by Bernard Kouchner

exists parallel to the Kosovo reality. The international administration started from the most difficult thing - to cultivate in the local citizens an attitude to taxes. It was announced that, for a start, taxes would be collected from the few working sectors in the sphere of the services - hotel managers and restaurant keepers, tradesmen, etc. In fact the administration is faced with the absolute refusal of people to fulfil their tax liabilities because the functioning traditional model in Kosovo is that of raising funds for different purposes and needs of the community. Thus, instead of collecting taxes, the international administrators have concentrated their efforts on eradicating the informal collection of taxes for KLA, for the parties, for the local leader, for supporting the poorest people and the rural community, etc. Respondents who conducted these missions told us that they usually went to a given settlement, they convened the Elders and the community leaders, they explained the philosophy of the formal tax system and strictly prohibited the collection of traditional donations: "We are sure that before we have left the town, the traditional collection of funds starts again. This is something that nobody is able to cope with. These are ineradicable habits of many years which have proved their efficiency and people simply cannot understand, what a silly thing it is to prohibit something so plain and obvious..."

The evident unemployment, which has driven hundreds of men and fewer women in the streets, is most depressive - they walk up and down the central street or sit in the coffee bars. As a matter of fact, the only working sector is the sector of the services, i.e. hotels, lodgings, restaurants, cafés, tobacconists...

The population of Kosovo is very young and the groups of young men loitering and doing nothing emanate energy which is frightening. Some of the representatives of the international administration and the police criticise their leaders for not having developed adequate employment programmes for the Kosovars. Even for the reconstruction activities they basically use units from the military contingents and not local people.

The forests, fields and the arable land are still mined and this hinders the work of farmers and cattle breeders. The mines have been cleaned only from the roads. In fact, Kosovo is well supplied but local production has not been restored yet - they import everything either from the neighbouring countries or through the system of humanitarian aid supplied by the European Union and the USA. By the way, there is no shortage of goods in the shops and according to the respondents this is due to the largely extended system of "shverts". The Mafioso structures own the entire business and their power and influence can be felt literally in the air even by the most untempted ones. Several times our team was involved in conversations about what exactly we were doing and how much exactly we were paid for our work. Our answers aroused contemptuous laughter among the respondents and we were immediately offered to participate in some of the trafficking networks against good payment. We looked very attractive as partners for "shverts", because we were a legitimate and innocent group of scholars, who enjoyed the confidence of the most important leaders in the region.

There is no poverty in Kosovo. Everybody is well-dressed, young people wear brand jeans and tennis shoes, their hair is lavishly gelled, the restaurants and cafés are full. To our question, "The unemployment in Kosovo is 90 %, isn't it, where do these resources come from?", the answers of the prevailing part of the respondents from all social groups were: "We get money from our relatives who are abroad. We can live very well on this money." Question: "But this is very tricky. How will you return these big loans?" The respondents, amazed at our lack of understanding: "These are donations out of solidarity. They are not liable to return." Question: "But your relatives cannot send you money for ever. How long can this continue? And what about those who have no relatives in Western Europe, how do they manage?" Answer: "They will send us money as long as this is necessary. If needed this will continue for ever. Those who

have no close relatives have more distant ones who also bear some responsibility. No one has remained without *solidarity*.

Anyway, unemployment among the larger part of the population is a specific feature of everyday life in Kosovo. The lack of labour activity directs the entire social energy towards reflections, conversations and activities which maintain a high degree of aggressiveness and ethnic contradictions. This continuous unemployment, as well as the corrupting force of the money granted for "solidarity" and the easy earned money out of "shverts", drugs, women and arms trafficking, could lead to the formation of lasting destructive characteristics of the individual, and the public as a whole. By all means, this will set farther away the process of the normalization of life in the province in the unforeseeable future.

Attitudes towards the international forces and interrelations among the communities in Kosovo

The local population and the forces of KFOR and UNMIK

At first sight Priština looks like a cosmopolitan and tolerant town. This is quite illusory. This illusion is cherished by the presence of soldiers and politicians from all over the world - from Europe, the USA, India, Latin America, etc. The ethnic and racial variety is impressive but actually, only the Albanians from the local population have remained in the town - the Serbs who, for unknown reasons, have remained in town, have been ousted to an outlying quarter and are guarded ceaselessly, while the Roma have been entirely driven away. According to some approximate data of OSCE there are roughly 300 Roma in the town but all our team's efforts to find them remained fruitless.

There is a positive attitude towards the international forces located in Kosovo among the prevailing part of our respondents. Most people think that they should remain here for a longer time, at least until the final decision on the future status of Kosovo is made. KFOR is considered as the most important factor that stops Serbia from taking revenge, which actually does not correspond to reality. It is a fact, however, that the tolerant attitude of the international military and police contingents contrasts sharply with the repressive attitude of the Serbian units before the war and this strongly impresses the Albanians. At the same time, the mild attitude of the military men and the police creates an atmosphere of impunity. Nobody is afraid of the international contingents and local people regard with contempt the appeals for order and legality because they know that it is beyond the powers of the protectorate's administration to establish political rules and the rule of law.

People's attitude is strongly differentiated and stereotypes of the separate national units of UNMIK and KFOR have already been established. The French are frantically hated because they are buffer forces in Kosovska Mitrovica - the divided town where the Serbs are guarded. Nothing can change the negative, almost aggressive attitudes towards the French. Similar are the primitive hostile stereotypes towards the Poles from UNMIK: "Dirty Gypsies...! The mere sight of them... - exclamations by the Albanians who accompany us when we pass through the area guarded by the Polish contingent. A sincere surprise on the part of our team: "The Poles are here to help you. How is it possible that you don't know that the most generous slogan 'For Our Freedom and Yours!' belongs to the Poles and that it has been inscribed on their banners ever since the 15th century." Our respondents were strongly confused at hearing these words; they look at the Polish policemen proudly straightening up and smiling back when we shout at them

through the bus windows *”za nashu i za vashu vol’noshchi.”*¹¹ They try to find an excuse: *”They are guarding a group of villages inhabited by Serbs, they will let no one through. They guard the murderers... The conversation makes no sense - each international policeman or soldier who defends ”the other” is an enemy or, at best, he is useless, and this is an explicit and irrefutable stereotype. It is only the American contingents that enjoy wholehearted affection because people are convinced that they sympathize with all Albanian undertakings, as well as with the just cause of independent Kosovo.*

Many of the policemen from the different contingents whom we interviewed were in a maze. They did not understand the problems of Kosovo, nor the Kosovars, they were astonished at the complete impossibility to find informants and assistants among the local population. Italian gendarmes, who have a rich experience in international missions, tried to understand the situation in Kosovo by comparing it to their mission in Israel and the feud between Palestinians and Israelis. Policemen from France and the Dominican Republic, as well as from other countries had openly given up understanding the situation and they felt quite demotivated and frightened. It is a paradox that the imposed curfew has a reverse effect. After midnight local people walk freely along the streets while the police and military contingents stay until dawn where the curfew has caught them. It will not be far-fetched if we say that a great part of the international forces are demoralized, they try to complete their mandate without being impaired, they say that their contracts have turned out to be too long. Policemen and soldiers from different nationalities said, *”One year is too much for such a mission. In six months one feels exhausted both psychically and physically,”* claimed policemen and soldiers from different nationalities. The Bulgarian policemen confirmed these conclusions. American policemen told us that the money for which they accepted this mission is very good but they were angry with the preliminary political training they had to pass as they found it inadequate and misleading. They spoke among each other that they expected to guard and assist the victims of Kosovo but they found here a vital and aggressive population which was far from their ideas of *”a victim.”*

We witnessed how difficult it was for the police forces to get information because during our survey Priština was blocked by demonstrations demanding the release of 7000 Kosovo Albanians who were in Serbian prisons. Most of the Albanian prisoners are in the prison of Požarevac. At the end of April journalists wrote about the meeting of the Yugoslav Minister of Justice with the most famous prisoners in Kosovo charged with terrorism, such as Flora Brovina, a poetess and former minister in the *”shadow cabinet”* of Hashim Taqi and Albin Kruti.

The tension during the demonstrations usually grew at lunch time. Most of the people were walking to and fro, they talked, dressed in new clothes and after 6 p.m. the demonstration turned into sort of a social life. At any rate, supplying was broken, the town was closed and life in town was destabilized. The international police forces patrolled strenuously, but they were not able to collect reliable information about the leader and the headquarters of the protests, about the intentions of the demonstrators and the duration of the blockade. The policemen were not in a position to get any information from the local people. The only working approach was that of the British policemen who patrolled in pairs in one and the same place every day. This made it possible for them to better know the quarter and the street they were patrolling, as well as to become well-known to the young people who were in the street all day long. It was inevitable that in the course of the conversations they could establish certain confidence and the British policemen managed to get some sort of information.

Our team addressed in turn KFOR, UNMIK and OSCE asking them to assist us in leaving the blocked town. Our request was to escort us out of the town, and then, if necessary, to the

¹¹ For our and your freedom (translated from Polish).

Macedonian border. The request was flatly rejected, as it was quite obvious that the international contingents tried to avoid any risk. The UN civilian administrator in Kosovo, Bernard Kouchner, has the most lamentable reputation* .

The prevailing part of the respondents think that the international community does not know what to do with Kosovo, that it does not have a clear vision, that the decisions it makes come too late. Nevertheless, all respondents are convinced that the international community has no other choice but declare the independence of Kosovo.

Interethnic relations in Kosovo. The xenophobia

Our team registered strong and lasting tendency towards the absolute capsulation of the two basic communities. Individual identity is strongly suppressed at the expense of group identity. The relations between the Albanian and non-Albanian population are projected mainly on the group stereotypes. This makes the dividing thread between the personal guilt of the individual and the collective guilt of the community very thin. The guilt for the war is usually attributed to the anonymous space of the community, "Milošević is to blame but even without Milošević, we would fight, because the Serbs are such people... and vice versa: "It is not possible to settle problems peacefully and by political means, because the Albanians are wild and uncontrollable, they acknowledge nothing and nobody but themselves... Any dialogue with them is impossible..."

To the question: "Is a multiethnic Kosovo possible?" the answer was always negative. A famous Kosovo intellectual, a journalist said quite flatly: "The idea of multiethnic Kosovo is an ideological mantra, which the West implants, transferring it from Bosnia. But there is another demographic reality there. They have not understood that it is not possible to apply one and the same model in the Balkans. Kosovo is as multiethnic as Slovenia. You cannot create a multiethnic society in Djakovica where 99 % of the population are Albanians or in Decani where there is only one orthodox monastery and thousands of Albanians..."

A question of crucial importance for the future is whether Serbs and Albanians will be able to live together in Kosovo. Most of the interviewed declared that the Serbs who had not taken part in the repressions and murders could return to their native places. According to their evaluations this is a problem of the Serbs rather than of the Albanians. It will be very difficult for the Serbs to recognize Kosovo both as an independent state and themselves as a minority in it. According to us, however, this is actually a diplomatic shifting of the topic because the Albanians simply do not want Serbs in Kosovo and they will always oppress them.

The sense of collective guilt and hatred will hamper the normal relations between the two communities for a long time. Now, the small Serbian enclaves are living in ghettos - isolated and guarded by the international forces, surrounded by hostile Albanian population. This is an abnormal way of life, which has been going on for a year now and in fact it distorts the psyche of the Serbs living in isolation. They cannot move freely outside the guarded areas, there are no prospects for economic activity and development. It is extremely difficult for them to communicate with relatives and friends who have remained in other towns and villages in Kosovo or are refugees in Serbia. This extreme situation will hardly assist the return of the Serbs who have escaped from the province. On the contrary, more and more Serbs will leave the province and those who remain will accumulate aggressiveness. According to unofficial data about 100 thousand Serbs have remained in Kosovo now and about 200 thousand have left.

There exists intolerance towards the Roma, too. They are identified as Serbian collaborationists and it is all over with them in Kosovo. The small number of Roma who have remained in the

province are concentrating in or near the Serbian enclaves trying to survive there, again under the protection of the international forces. There are some places that are entirely cleansed of Roma. According to approximate data of OSCE about 15-18 thousand Roma have remained in the province. In fact, part of the remaining Roma are *Egyptians* who are Albanized Roma and are not so viciously persecuted by the Albanians.

The state of the other ethnic communities - Muslims, Turks, *Gorani* - is not enviable. The community of the *Gorani* numbered 17 thousand people before the war, and now, according to OSCE's data, they are about 12 thousand. The *Gorani* themselves claim that 10 thousand people have remained because they have refugees from their community in Serbia, Macedonia and Albania. The greater part of them is living in the municipality of Dragaš and a small number of them is living in *Gniljane* and *Kosovska Mitrovica*. The *Gorani* are also declared Serbian collaborationists and are an object of aggression on the part of the Kosovo Albanians. The *Gorani* are facing a new problem because they are offered a new identity in order to be saved from all the troubles caused by the Albanians. The propagandists from Bosnia who offer the *Gorani* an alternative are very active: "The language is similar, the religion is the same, the Bosnians are already an internationally recognized nation, but who on earth has ever heard of *Gorani*? The pressure to identify themselves as Bosnians is particularly strong in view of the forthcoming census in the province. The *Gorani* themselves are in search of their origin and they do not reject the idea of being Bulgarians. There are scholars among the educated circles of the *Gorani* who are carrying out a mission assigned to them by the community, i.e. to work in the archives of Turkey and Bulgaria and collect historical and other evidence proving that the *Gorani* are of Bulgarian origin. A respondent: "Albanians call us Serbs but why not Bulgarians? Before leaving the province, the Serbs distributed some weapons among the *Gorani*, which they have hidden and, for the time being, are not willing to give up: "How shall we defend ourselves from the Albanians."

Both the *Gorani* and the Turks are basically protected by units of the KFOR Turkish contingent. The *Gorani* say of the Turks: "We get on well together not because of the language but because they are Balkan people. KFOR and UNMIK must have more contingents from the Balkan countries. They are the only ones who can understand the local people. There are some Filipinos around the region of Prizren - an absolute lack of understanding..., now, we are quite friendly with the Czechs and the Poles - they are Slavs after all."

The xenophobic attitudes among the young generation are the most oppressive thing. While speaking with the students and their teachers we emphasized how striking it was for a university to be mononational. Question: "Aren't you oppressed by the fact that all students and teachers are only Albanians! You want to be proud of your university but in this situation it can't be called a university...". Answer: "No. That's how we like it and that's how it should be! It's a good university and it is ours. No Serbian student will ever set foot in this university. In the past they used to chase us out of schools...". Question: "Other nationalities could study here, e.g. Turks, Roma...". Laughter and comments made pell-mell: "They are not very studious. Have you ever seen a Roma in a university, ours don't want to go even to school...". They are so unanimous and explicit in their opinion that it is no use arguing further.

Actually, we did not meet a single respondent in Kosovo who would condemn the ethnic cleansing, or criticise the attempts to turn the province into the most ethnically cleansed zone in Europe. There were two groups of respondents - they either denied any repressions against the ethnic minorities or they admitted and approved of them: "It serves them right...". The only person who spoke on the issue of tolerance was the intellectual journalist whom we asked the following question: "You are maybe the only intellectual, who openly criticises the aggression of his own people against the Serbs and the other minorities in the province. Don't you feel tired of

this lack of understanding on the part of those around you or you have already got used to it? Aren't you very lonely?· Answer: "I got used to it. I feel like the smallest minority, consisting of one person only. But in Kosovo we are obliged to speak about tolerance and to promote it. We should force people to reflect on the fact that we had a multiethnic Priština with a big concentration of Serbs and Roma who are all gone now.· He continues with his reflections: "Even if all Albanians voted at a referendum for building a tolerant society this would not correspond to the reality, institutions are needed to this end. We can't build a tolerant society if we have no policemen, laws, courts, etc.·

That is how we came to the topic of legality and institutions, which we discussed with all other respondents, politicians and intellectuals: "Since there is no state, how are relations among people regulated? In Albania, for example, people say that where there is no state, people lean on the *Kanun*, they revive its rules. Are there any conditions in Kosovo for the *Kanun* to replace the lack of institutional settling of disputes?· Answer: "No. There is self control exercised by the citizens here, as well as discipline and internal regulation of disputes.· Question: "But we think that this actually is the *Kanun* in action. Do the Kosovars know the rules of the *Kanun* or they have been forgotten?· Answer: "No, the *Kanun* is not forgotten but the original *Kanun* exists in written form and people interpret it in their own way. Anyway, nowhere in Kosovo has the clan structure been preserved in the way it once existed. I know that in Drenica the clans are strong but this is quite relative.· Another respondent, a politician from the former *nomenklatura*, supports the facts regarding the lack of laws. He claims that 500 persons have been killed for 10 months, a great part of them Albanians, some of them because they did not approve of the aggressive policy of the KLA soldiers, others simply became victims of family feud stirred up again. According to him the lack of legislative institutions and strict rules that could regulate the relations among the ethnic communities and among the Albanians themselves, is making the situation more difficult, especially because of the available weapons: "In any case, KLA is not disarmed. They have returned 10,000 guns only, which is ridiculous since the soldiers were 20,000 according to the available data. There are a lot of weapons among the population...·

To the question, "Are the rules of the *Kanun* applied in Kosovo now?·, a respondent, a high school teacher, answered that "this was a much better variant than the utter lawlessness and by all means, much better than the alcohol and the drugs.· There is no functioning judicial system in Kosovo now. There exists an extraordinary jurisdiction with the participation of 49 magistrates. They release almost immediately most of the Albanians detained for different offences by KFOR and the police. When KFOR soldiers bring to trial some of the detainees, the former do not even enter the court for fear someone might think that they wanted to exert influence on the judges. Often the judge remains *tkte* a *tkte* with the offender, who, on his part, is under the protection of the local parallel power, of some gang or of KLA (provided that such a distinction could be made). Out of 743 cases, observed by OSCE, 327 have ended in the immediate release of the offender. In this connection some representatives of KFOR said, "We don't want to behave like a colonial army.· In fact, the rules of the *Kanun* fill in the vacuum, which has been created because the international contingent has abdicated from its quite concrete obligations when settling the disputes and for fair retribution as regards the perpetrators of crimes.

Regarding this circle of interviews, the conclusion of our team is that Kosovo will try to maintain the situation of an ethnically clear Albanian territory by all legal and illegal means. Albanians in Kosovo are living through a period when they are completely confined to themselves, they feel self-sufficient, they are self-confident, they have a sense of superiority and unflagging optimism about the future; they are not willing to live together with other communities or to conform with anyone else. Their vital nationalism is combined with the awareness of superiority of an ethnic group, which actively reproduces itself, against the background of the demographic decline of all nations in the region. At the same time, impunity is immured as a standard in the everyday life of

Kosovo and creates conditions for the revival of the traditional tribal jurisdiction and the subjugation only to unwritten laws and social rules.

Prospects: independent Kosovo or national unification

The internationalization of the Kosovo problem has explicitly posed the question of the Albanians' national identity; the Kosovars' refugee camps in Albania and Macedonia have provided a possibility for a renaissance of the feeling for national unity and solidarity. In a sense, these factors acted as a catalyst to the 20 year-long dynamic process of the formation of national consciousness, as well as of awakening the wish for national unification.

The surveys conducted in Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo in the course of two years (1999-2000) showed that at this stage national consolidation has not yet created the need of state consolidation. Or, rather the need of a gradual consolidation has been realized. All interviewed people from the three Albanian communities are convinced that the most important thing now is the establishment of an independent state in Kosovo. It is only at a later stage that they could proceed to remapping the state borders and to the formation of a bigger Albanian state. All respondents, without exception, were unwilling to articulate the term "Great Albania" but they did not refuse to reflect on a common future for all Albanians, including those from Montenegro. Probably, the deeper meaning is that it is possible for the Albanians to unite around the spiritual center of the national revival - Kosovo. This has happened several times in human history. The prevailing opinion is that, at this moment, the Albanians living in Macedonia should not destabilize it through separatistic demands but there exists a conviction that, regardless of the demographic superiority of the Macedonians, the Albanians are not able to cause destabilization.

The most radically thinking students in Priština, as well as some Albanian leaders from Kosovo and Macedonia embarked with pleasure on plans for remapping the borders and for a division of "this artificial creation of Macedonia" between Bulgarians and Albanians. One gets the impression that in search of friends and support in the Balkans, the Albanian politicians have done a detailed in-depth study of the history of Bulgaria and they believe that through the destabilization of Macedonia they could provoke Bulgaria to interfere and then the division could be effected. A question from a respondent: "Isn't it time to bang your fist on the table and say that Macedonians are pure-blooded Bulgarians and to take back what belongs to them? What about Ohrid, it's yours, it's Bulgarian." Our team: "Bulgaria will never do that because we have suffered a lot from such ventures, we have lost thousands of people on the battle-fields. Bulgarians are already an old and tired nation and we are not obsessed with irredentism and nationalism, with illusions and appetites..." Our interlocutors: "If the Bulgarians decide, we shall help you - we are young and strong. Moreover, there were times in history when we had a common border..."

They spoke reluctantly about the tension in Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja because, for them, these are incontestable Kosovo territories, which are now under Serbian occupation. According to them sooner or later their brothers there must get their freedom, no matter by what means.

An Albanian writer formulated the Albanian national longings in the following way: "The unification of all territories populated by Albanians is deeply rooted in our minds. The Albanian nationalism, even the Albanian communist nationalism during the time of Enver Hoxha, has always cherished the aspirations that one day we should all be one entity. This is part of the consciousness of each Albanian, no matter where he lives and it is very difficult for an Albanian to declare that he is against this." Question: "We spoke with many politicians and most of them

rejected the national unification in one state, they supported the inviolability of the Balkan borders... Answer: "One can always see through these statements, that they speak this way only because of the West, this is a mimicry, and actually the best thing would be to achieve a unification without force. Political leaders have adopted the cliché that "Albanians will be united in a united Europe" but every realist knows that this is an illusion - too many things separate us from Europe, i.e. our history, economy, culture..."

Conclusion

The dissolution of Yugoslavia, the fall of the communist regime in Albania and the abrupt way it broke out of the year-long isolation were a catalyst for the national-liberation and unifying longings of the Albanians in the Balkans. NATO's intervention for settling the conflict between the Albanians in Kosovo and Milošević's communist regime, the lack of knowledge, which could enable NATO to build its strategy on the basis of the specific national features of the Serbs, Albanians and Macedonians, and all other affected nations and ethnic groups in the region, has led to the breach of the fragile status quo in the Balkans. The common and the individual in the historical experience of the separate Balkan states and the peculiarities of their culture, ethnic psychology and mentality, have aroused excessive hopes for national unification among the Albanians. The international peace contingents and the protectorate in Kosovo cannot get the terroristic groups under control nor can they confiscate the weapons. The less so, with the establishment of strictly working rules and court procedures.

Our prognoses are that new waves of destabilizations will follow like tides in the Balkans, provoked by some Albanian radically-minded liberating groups in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania because nobody will be able to dissuade the Albanians in this region from achieving their long-range aim - national unification.

SERBIA - ONE YEAR AFTER NATO AIR-RAIDS. THE FRUSTRATION AND ISOLATION OF A EUROPEAN NATION¹²

May, 2000

Methodology of the research

The team consisted of five scholars with a different approach to the topic and to the respondents, with their own methodology and tools, i.e. a historian - specialist in Balkan studies, a sociologist - specialist in political science, a specialist in Slavonic studies, a philosopher and a historian - anthropologist¹³.

The research was carried out from May 24th till May 30th and it is the fourth stage of an interdisciplinary fieldwork dedicated to the fate and prospects of Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania and Serbia after the end of NATO air raids. The team members worked individually, in scattered groups, among different social and age groups. During this fourth stage the scholars applied again the method of the anthropologic discussions, as well as a system of questions drawn from semi-standardized sociological interviews and surveys regardless of their scientific profile. Data from sociological surveys, research and journalistic publications were additionally analyzed.

A new and sophisticated methodology was adopted which is implemented by an interdisciplinary team making use of the tools and knowledge of several social sciences. The French academic journal *Ethnologie française*, XXX, 2000, 3, when publishing the fieldwork records from the first stage, in an editor's note introduced a precise definition of the new methods as "urgent anthropology".

The aim was to take a snapshot of the socio-political situation in Serbia and of the psychological state of the Serbs, i.e. the mass attitudes, expectations and hopes among the population in Serbia and among the Serb and Roma refugees from Kosovo one year after the end of NATO air raids.

The stereotypes and social attitudes in Serbia and among the Serb refugees towards Western Europe, the USA and the Balkan neighbours were studied, as well as the attitudes and reactions against the recent wars in Croatia and Bosnia, and the events in Kosovo, and the Albanians.

The team was interested in the Serbs' assessment of the internal political life in the country, of the economy and culture, their attitude towards the governing bodies and the opposition.

The surveys were carried out in Belgrade and the neighbouring settlements, Novi Sad and some surrounding settlements, Ulice, Pohega and some towns in Southeastern Serbia.

The respondents were over 40 persons, men and women between the age of 20 and 65. The representatives of the intellectual ĩlite predominated among the social groups, i.e. - scholars, writers, translators, journalists and students. There were also workers from enterprises, people from the sphere of services and trade, and peasants.

¹² The result of this research were first published in the *Kultura* newspaper, issue 27, July 14, 2000.

¹³ A. Zhelyazkova, P. E. Mitev, G. Savov, V. Grigorov, V. Karaivanova.

Psychological characteristics of the Serbs and the Serbian refugees from Kosovo

Serbian society as a whole and the separate individual in Serbia have experienced a severe trauma and they are in a state of deep frustration by the events of the last 10-15 years. The dissolution of the Yugoslav federation, the wars that followed and the loss of territory and population, the big number of refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo (over 1 million people), which additionally aggravate the collapsing economic and social system in Serbia, have exhausted the Serbian vitality. People are tired, desperate and pessimistic as regards their future as a nation and as individuals.

All respondents, regardless of sex, age and social status are in a dead-lock, they are economically dependent and vulnerable, and they are afraid. Their fears are of the most wide spectrum, i.e. economic and social uncertainty, fear for their biological survival because of the collapse of the health system and the lack of medicines, fear of environmental pollution and radiation after the air raids, fear of civil war, fear of political repressions, fear of isolation. Most often respondents gave a brief answer to the question about the hopes and the future prospects of the Serbs and the Serbian state: "There are no prospects. The social catastrophe is a lasting thing. We, the Serbs are slowly, painfully and continuously pining away. Step by step we are sinking to the bottom, but we all know that there is no bottom...". A respondent historian summarizes: "Some say that the people cannot sink. This is an illusion. History is full of the tombs of peoples who had become extinct. It is quite natural that there is resignation and apathy..."

The Intellectuals

The intellectuals, dissidents and liberal circles in particular, have been making lately an in-depth analysis of everything that has happened: in Bosnia, in Croatia, in Kosovo. They have been analyzing the frightening dimensions and parameters of the consequences, of the possible scenarios for the future. Their analyses are exact, precise, as a laboratory dissection where they are absolutely cruel in their evaluations of themselves and their own guilts as Serbian ĳlite, as well as of the Serbian people as a whole. A respondent professor in history went even further saying that the situation in Serbia is extremely heuristic for the scholars: "We are a research El Dorado. There are so many non-standard situations for the anthropologist, the sociologist, and the historian on such a small territory. Sometimes the critical approach towards the national blunders borders on the tragic: "We are in the situation of the Germans. There are always two books on my bedside table which I read over and over again, i.e. "Psychology of the Masses" by G. Lebon and "Letters to the German Friend" by Herman Broch. "Each of us should reconsider what has happened and assume responsibility" - these are the words of a professor in sociology. And yet more: "We have turned into a consumers' and ragamuffins' state - the Mafioso structures are on the top, below is the ragamuffin-middle class, ragamuffin-workers and ragamuffin-intelligentsia..."

The nationalistic moods among the intellectuals are in a painful crisis. The fact that it was namely from their circles, i.e. the Academy of Sciences, the Union of Writers, the media, that nationalism had emerged and the whole social space had been irradiated with it, creates a sense of guilt and great misfortune. According to the respondents sociologists the root of the problems in Serbian society during the past 10-15 years is the fact that they had been immured in collective identity. The sense of guilt in the intellectual ĳlite is based on the fact that, along with the politicians and the common people, they also participated in the collective identity which, in principle, is not typical of the ĳlite.

The pathos towards the Kosovo problem has completely died away and people realize the total loss of the Serbian positions in the province. They are aware of the culprits for the ignition and

escalation of the Kosovo crisis. Since part of the intellectuals have euphorically participated in the propaganda machine on both sides, the regime and the opposition, which is equally nationalistic, are debating now with difficulty and displeasure the "Kosovo" issue. A respondent scholar who is a dissident and has resisted the nationalistic euphoria said, "I don't feel like speaking on this topic because we did not resist sufficiently, we were afraid, we kept silent and the present situation is a collapse of our state dignity".

Surprisingly reserved is the attitude of the *ñlite* toward the refugees. The humanitarian aspect of this issue has been recognized in principle though indifferently, and the negative effects of the refugees' presence are analyzed. Only those scholars who have devoted themselves to studying the refugees - their demographic structure, behaviour, social activity and adaptability, mental level, etc. - have closely followed the tragedy and they feel partial to the fate and suffering of their compatriots. As a whole, the *ñlite* recognizes the fact that there are almost no top intellectuals among the refugees, who could have a positive effect on the social processes in Serbia, as well as in the Serbian intellectual circles, thereby exhausting the interest in them. A writer dissident told us that the Serbian refugees from Kosovo would create additional tension: "They have settled along the border with Kosovo and there they will always be a potential initiator and instigator of the Serbian strivings towards Kosovo. One such example is the town of Kuršumlija that had ten thousand inhabitants; now it has in addition 20 thousand refugees from Kosovo".

The comments about the Serbs who have remained in their native places in Kosovo are exceptionally restrained. There exists a tacit opinion among the intellectuals that these are fanatics, who are the bearers of the worst Serbian nationalism and that they are the perpetrators of the all-Serbian misfortunes and falls. Among the official circles, however, the version is that the Kosovo Serbs who fight legally for the rights of the Serbs in Kosovo by cooperating with the European institutions, are traitors.

The attitude to the Albanians is calm and free of hatred or a superiority complex. The evaluations of them are surprisingly tolerant: "Some of the good investigators of Kosovo history and the Albanians during the Ottoman period belong to the Albanian colleagues. They are talented scholars", a respondent historian said. A Serbian writer and publisher: "According to me the Albanians are notable for their extreme vitality. Even from a biological point of view, they are probably the most vital nation in Europe - in terms of population reproduction and hardly curbed aggressiveness. We, who are around them, are, to a great extent, worn out nations. That's why I think that they'll continue in quite a natural way to implant themselves into Kosovo and will make meaningless the mytho-maniacal strivings of our national-socialists towards this province. Given the historical processes, this province has been a historical memory for us for a long time already; as a reality - it is Albanian". A professor in philosophy, publisher of an independent journal: "The Serbia problem lies in the fact that the Albanian intellectual and political *ñlite* is in Kosovo or is of Kosovo origin. It is natural for the *Albanian national revolution* to get centered around this Kosovo *ñlite*. Question: "Your wording was quite clear - you spoke of Albanian national revolution, but what are its immediate objectives?" Answer: "With us, in the Balkans, national revolutions have always aimed at national liberation and national unification. With the Albanians these objectives have been distorted and the *Albanian national revolution* demands an independent ethnically cleansed state".

People from the small towns and the villages

A big part of the respondents intellectuals are inclined to summarize that the prevailing part of the Serbs has not realized yet what happened, they have not understood the dimensions of the crisis and the isolation, they cannot get rid of some myths, illusions nor of the national arrogance. It is

obvious that now the Serbian ĳlite is focused more on itself, it has become estranged, because our interviews showed an exceptional maturity and the sadness of the bitter realism which we witnessed among the prevailing part of the people in the villages and small towns, as well as among the common people of Belgrade. We heard some of the most precise evaluations about the sobering up of the Serbian nation, about the consequences of the failure of the Great Serbia project mainly from the common people, from Serbs who had been forced to be at war, who bore the whole burden of the crisis and who, regardless of the quite gloomy future perspective, cherish the yet unrealized hope for the survival of the Serbian nation, though in a more distant perspective. The latest sociological surveys confirm the statement that people reflect soberly, pragmatically though depressively. The process of getting rid of the tangles of collective identity and returning to the individual and personal existence, thinking and responsibility, is visible.

Quite obvious is the change that has occurred in the Serbs' mentality, in their emotional and rational world. These are not superficial changes but sweeping changes which affect the foundations of the personality, the community and the nation. It would be quite wrong to continue with the old perception of the Serbs on the basis of old stereotypes and characteristics that were adequate a few years ago. Serbs stare profoundly at themselves, at their cultural and historical experience, at their own national psychology, they examine and analyse, each one individually and from a different angle the sufferings during the past 10 years, they part with illusions and myths and they remember with deep nostalgia the Yugoslav Federation.

The process of re-appraising themselves and of maturing is still in its initial stage, but there are already some tangible results. There is not even a trace of national haughtiness among the prevailing part of the respondents and one can clearly feel a sense of guilt and shame among not a small part of the respondents. Not infrequently did people speculate on the brutalities committed, on the dark layers, which war can unlock in each person. A respondent, a young and educated man, said, "I grew up in a small provincial town. When they mobilized us, I hid myself but my friends went to war. I have always thought that I knew them as I knew myself and I could not believe that they had killed whole families, but this was a fact. Now I think that I deserted not because I had fears for myself but because I was afraid of myself. I am terrified at the thought that if I had gone to the front I would have turned into a killer too. I am not sure of myself anymore..."

It is amazing that there are no xenophobic attitudes towards the Albanians among the common people, there is not any sense of hatred and seeking revenge. In many cases, the questions that we put as Bulgarian scholars were filled with more prejudice than the answers we got. There are about 200 thousand Albanians in Belgrade who are working and living there without being troubled by anyone. A respondent from the village of Leštani has a job in a company in the capital where 100 Albanian workers from Kosovo are working: "It's not fair, because my colleagues have jobs, they get their salaries and they can travel freely to their relatives in Kosovo, while no Serb can set foot there, they have no idea whether their relatives are alive or not. The relatives of the Albanians from Kosovo also come here - for medical treatment, for pensions, for some documents - all this without any problems." A respondent Serb, refugee from Prizren, said, "I understand what you expect to hear - bad words against the Albanians, accusations of violence. I cannot lie and that is why you will not hear such evaluations. We lived very well and we helped each other even when NATO was bombing. We were brought up in one and the same way as regards the most important things - they are conservative and patriarchal, so are we. The criminal detachments of the Albanians from Albania were those who resorted to violence against us and drove us away from our homes - we are close to the border, they invaded us and pillaged. When KFOR started settling and we started fleeing, our neighbours wept. Not long ago they sent us a video-tape of how we fled from our homes - Albanian friends were filming with a camera so that we had documents about the evil done." Another refugee added:

"They have bent them too, because the refugees who came here two or three months ago say that the Albanian neighbours are afraid to help the Serbs anymore. They fear their own people... Some respondents told us a dramatic story of an Albanian from a Prizren village who took care of two old disabled Serbs who had not managed to escape. In the course of almost six months he looked after them, he brought them food, but the social attitude towards him got worse and worse. One day he told the old persons that he could not look after them any more and in order to make them flee he threatened them with his weapon. The two old persons managed somehow to run away, they hid and at last they reached the Serbian border where they died of exhaustion and fright. There are plenty of such stories because the war and the dramatic events have laid the beginnings of a new history, new folklore and new mythology.

For years on end the Serbs have got used to compare themselves to the Balkan neighbours with a sense of superiority, irony and disregard for the others. Quite deliberately they have always compared themselves with their main rival - the Bulgarians. The only war, which the Serbs lost in the modern history is the Serbo-Bulgarian War in 1885, which even to this day, has been reflected but in one sentence only in the Serbian history textbooks and the national memory is obligingly trying to forget this fact. Until recently, the Serbs' favorite juxtaposing clichés were: "Serbs are heroes, Bulgarians are slaves", "We are easy-going and Bohemians while Bulgarians are surly fellows, stingy and philistines", "Bulgarians know how to plough and dig and we know how to fight and drink", etc. Now they probe into the Bulgarian experience from the past, into the losses suffered by the Bulgarians, as well as into what has been achieved for the past years. They already understand the reasons for the Bulgarian resignation with the territorial losses, the lack of irredentism and chauvinistic claims, they understand the lack of national self-confidence amidst Bulgarians, which often verges on national nihilism. Much more impartial and sympathetic is their evaluation of some historical, political and regional events, which they previously treated with indifference or a sense of superiority.

Our team, deeply disappointed after having participated in several feeble demonstrations and meetings of the students from *Otpor*, as well as of the united opposition, which was alleged to change Serbia, had some discussions with the demonstrators: To our question, "Why is the anti-governmental demonstration so feeble?" we got the following answers: "I am ashamed to be a Serb, I'll call myself Montenegrin now, at any rate they live as free people", "Everybody is afraid, the opposition leaders most of all, they fear Milošević's killers", "We do not have any opposition, we have been listening to this stuff and nonsense for years. You better tell us how you, the Bulgarians struggled. Come and help us, bring more reinforcements because we are very weak...". A retort from our team: "How come? You, the Serbs were the heroes, weren't you, and we, the Bulgarians were slaves?". An answer from a group of respondents - economists and businessmen who work in a big private enterprise: "This is nonsense, this is part of the myths. We, the Serbs, we are not heroes at all, we are simply cuckoos (in the sense of fools). If we escape from the myth, the truth is that we, the Serbs, start as a herd when the chieftain, the king, or the tyrant shows us the enemy and tells us to go fight and die. And we, the Serbs, go, fight and die without asking ourselves "why?". But when we have to start alone, from below, we, in order to fight for our freedom, for ourselves, we are frightened, we don't know how, we are not in a position to do it." "You, Bulgarians are sly, when they send you to death, you think first of all whether it is worth dying!". Another respondent: "We are patient like animals, that is why it will be difficult to introduce democratic changes in Serbia". A retort from our team: "It is known that we, the Bulgarians, are the most patient people in the Balkans". A reply with laughter from a group of respondents: "These are false stereotypes, we, the Serbs are much more patient than you are. Your patience, when it wears out - you become dangerous, you have it your own way. You see, we even don't have tenacity".

A respondent from the village of Umka, a tradesman, 32 years old, diplomaed engineer. He fought in Croatia and when they mobilized him to go to Kosovo he deserted: "Such is our nation, people are not to blame, they suffer and they do what they are told to do. They sent us there (in Croatia), and every day they brought killed and wounded people. I was a radio operator, I was not on the front line and that is why I survived. We did not understand why we were there. We spoke in between, we asked ourselves and most of us found it wrong that we were there shooting. We said it was sheer nonsense to die just to change the people on one territory with other people. Chauvinism is something very bad". Question: "How are you living now, what is lacking?". Answer: "We are lacking liberty, travelling the world. We are short of money. We are short of everything. The world has isolated us and is punishing us but they do not realize that people now have become quite as blind, as horses with blinkers, because they are sort of imprisoned. This is a big mistake". Question: "Who is guilty for what has happened?". Answer: "It is true that power is in the hands of one man and his close associates - an absolutist. Like Tito, but Tito was clever, good-hearted, taking care of the people. In fact, the truth is that we all are guilty - the politicians, the people, the external forces. I am guilty too, as well as my neighbour and all the Serbs. I came to hate politics for ever. After I returned from the war I stopped reading newspapers, watching TV, I don't want to know anything - I don't know who is ruling our country, who's ruling Bulgaria, Russia. I know nothing and I don't care". Question: "There will be a big rally tomorrow in Belgrade, it can change things in Serbia, are you coming?". Answer: "No use going to rallies. If I go, they'll break my head with a truncheon at the worst, and I want to work, I am ready to change myself, I am ready to work a lot but I do not want to be at war and to become a mainstay of any politician - a new one will come and steal for himself".

The refugees

The Kosovo refugees who are now on the territory of Serbia and Montenegro are officially called "*internally displaced*". They do not have an acknowledged status of refugees and this additionally aggravates their social status.

According to approximate data the number of refugees is the following: from Krajina - 600 thousand people, from Bosnia - 150 thousand people and from Kosovo - about 250 thousand people.

In Serbia, one can outline quite clearly the differentiation among the refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. There is one group of settlers who have arrived in the metropolis with "sackfuls of money". Undoubtedly, they are those criminals who have enriched themselves at the expense of the plundering during the military operations, i.e. marauders, participants in punitive detachments, criminals, traffickers, etc. They have settled in villages, they have built big houses with yards, gardens and all possible extras, they have started their own business for laundering the military profits. Imperceptibly and quietly they are trying to merge with the local residents. In some villages close to Belgrade local people have become less in number than the families of these new settlers.

Such villages are very difficult for the researcher because people are reticent, inaccessible and they hardly confide their secrets. Most of the retail shops in these villages are in the hands of the new settlers and their families, e.g. a hairdresser's - owned by a local woman who married a refugee from Bosnia; a supermarket - by a family of refugees from Bosnia, a coffee shop - by refugees from Kosovo, etc. Local people know, or rather they guess the origin of the wealth but they speak about this in a low voice, furtively looking around. These new settlers with unlimited possibilities, state that in their opinion, local people have also enriched themselves out of the wars: "We all are tarred with the same brush, let's not pick holes!"

The villages, where rich refugees have settled, have not been accidentally chosen - usually the natives are also well off, they look back to the old times with yugo-nostalgia, they are ill disposed towards America and NATO. They accept Bulgarians with reserve but not with a sense of superiority. In the course of our conversations they became more friendly and started asking in order to compare the standards in both countries and the hardships which both nations, Bulgarians and Serbs, are passing throughout. Very often, the respondents' opening up started with the following words: "We know that you, Bulgarians, were against NATO air raids. We are grateful for your sympathy, one cannot forget such a gesture. Your politicians are just as dull and criminal as ours - let them steal and finish the people" or "We watched carefully on TV the demonstrations in Bulgaria against NATO - this was very important for us because we were scared, the bombs were falling quite close, we endured great stress. The Bulgarians' support was an important solace, namely that someone was thinking about us, that we were not alone."

A small refugee camp with Serbs from Kosovo is located in a similar village. The hostility of the local people and the new rich settlers towards the refugees is striking. They have isolated themselves from the camp, they do not offer any help and do not allow their children to communicate with the refugee children. People in the camp rely on the help of a non-governmental organization from Belgrade, on the Red Cross and the monks from the neighbouring monastery, who visit them every day and supply them with provisions from the monastery lands. This attempt to marginalize the refugees and keep them aside is due, according to our observations, to guilty conscience and fear. It is in the refugee camps that you can find the real tragic victims of the war. The new settlers and the *nouveau riches* from the local population are those who made the most of the war. It is impossible to establish contacts and reconciliation among these people.

It is namely in the camps or in some miserable ghettos that thousands of refugees from Kosovo, Serbs and Roma, all of them in a tragic state and in shock depression, are living, neglected by all - not only by the official authorities and Milošević but by the international humanitarian organizations as well. This state of depression and dead-lock has alarming dimensions among the Serbian refugees of all ages. States of neurosis can be noticed among the youngest children, as well as among the oldest people. The middle generation is exerting painful efforts to provide for their families the minimum for biological survival, trying to find opportunities for some readaptation. Young people between the age of 16 and 20 are in the worst psychological state. Some of them sit for examinations not to lose the academic year. They are overwhelmed with the isolation and the lack of any prospects. After having stayed for one year in the camps, their depression is on the brink of degenerating into profound distress and aggression - without a clear addressee for the time being. They do not want to go back to Kosovo, nor are they willing to stay in Yugoslavia - what they want is to get far away from the Balkans.

The Serbian refugees, who are innocent victims in the Kosovo war (the culprits have long since created their own prosperity), have one will and only one hope, since they are not guilty for what has happened, i.e. *to go back to their native places and their homes in Kosovo*. Their nostalgia and willingness to return are so strong that they are ready to be settled not even in their own homes if they are already occupied by the Albanians, but to be close to their homeland at least. They rely on the international community for their safety. They hate Milošević and the ruling circles in Serbia for all they have done to them, for the sad plight they have been in for an year now.

The version that they had coexisted very well with their Albanian neighbours was repeated and verified over and over again. Terrorists from Albania have forbidden the Albanians from Kosovo to communicate with their neighbour Serbs. The same terroristic troops, which came from across

the border, set the Serbian houses on fire (this terrorism grew particularly after 1998) and punished those Albanians who were labelled as collaborators of the Serbian regime.

The theme about Albanians crossing the frontier from Albania is a recurrent one. Respondents from the Citizens' Society in Prizren and the environs maintained that according to their knowledge, after the flight of Serbs and Roma from Prizren, the town grew up to 360 thousand inhabitants. They were 180 thousand before. According to them, most of the new settlers came from Albania. They gave another example with the almost twice as large number of citizens in Priština.

Respondents from a small refugee camp in Zemun - 70 persons from Priština, Suva Reka, Gniljane and Prizren: "Now we are trying to find an answer to the question 'what happened', because we lived together very well. Obviously, we were honest in our living together but they, the Albanians, were not. We would like to stay together, to continue living as before, but no one is asking us. People are not guilty, guilty are our politicians and the Albanian politicians, NATO too. A respondent - a teacher for 23 years in a village entirely populated by Albanians: "I felt all of a sudden the deterioration of relations because the village children and the parents stopped greeting me. It was very oppressing. In 1992-1993 the Elders suddenly and tacitly ordered the young Albanians, who had only 2 children, to give immediately birth to a third and fourth child. They imposed it severely, as an ultimatum - many of the young women had to drop their studies or their good jobs in order to obey. Another respondent added: "They obey according to the patriarchal tradition, so it is no surprise that alienation set in between us somehow all of a sudden - probably this was the Elders' decision.

A respondent says, "I grew up in a village with mixed population. Since childhood we have raised cattle together, we have studied, played football, wooed the lasses all together. We had the first cigarettes and sips of brandy in secret also together. Everything together. Neither we nor they believed that NATO could be so unjust and that they would bomb. It was dreadful for all, us and them. You see, it is only for one year that I have been talking like this - we - they, us - them. It seems I am not the same person, we have gone out of our senses. There are no prospects, madam! The same respondent, after we informed him that we were coming from Kosovo, started asking us feverishly about land: "Is it tilled, is it under crop, what exactly is the crop, what has grown up...? Our answer that the land has not been touched, that no one was cultivating it now in Kosovo induced strong excitement, sadness and tears among the refugees from the villages.

In this camp we heard a slightly different version about the guilt of the Albanians who came from Albania: "There was a period when the Albanians escaped from the communist regime in Albania and they were saying that terror was reigning there. The state gave them land, houses, shelter. Thus they gained strength and then they claimed the throne... A respondent, a middle aged woman, added: "They lived as Lords - they had more money than us, they had jobs, they got foreign currency from their relatives living abroad...

There exist strong anti-American feelings among the refugees. "Americans are to blame for everything, they used the Albanians for some goals of theirs, but nobody knows what exactly these goals are," "We shall be on their conscience, if they have any - they blamed us that we killed the Albanians, but we have always lived together," "They equipped the terrorists and traffickers whom we all tried to keep clear of, both we and the Albanians. Somewhere in the woods, the terrorists and Milošević policemen were shooting at each other but we, down in the villages, we lived peacefully and helped each other.

They are looking at Europe and the international police contingents with hope and confidence. They hope that soon they will be offered safety guarantees to go back to Kosovo. Living in exile and cast out by everybody they are at the end of their tether. It is hardly likely for them to believe that they will not come back. They all dream of their houses, the waters, the springs, the trees - a behaviour typical of painful nostalgia.

The Roma refugees have settled mainly in the existing ghettos in and out of town. Some of them found relatives and were sheltered in their dirty bidon villas, others are paying rent¹⁴ for miserable cardboard and wooden constructions in the ghettos. Their state is wretched. They are forced to sell off the scanty aids, which they get through the Red Cross and the Serbian Orthodox Church in order to pay their rent and buy food for their children. They have been pushed in the most miserable places polluted with chemical and solid waste where the stench, the noxious dust, the rats and the lack of sewerage and water, expose the children's survival to a permanent risk (for example the ghetto under the bridge in Pančevo). Authorities are not interested in Gypsies. There are much harder problems and society and the institutions pay absolutely no attention to the local Roma and the refugee Roma.

Some of the Roma told us that the reason to escape, to leave houses, gardens and sizable property, was because the KLA partisans, and in our opinion, probably the armed gangs from Albania, made them buy their children off at 1000 DEM to 3000 DEM per child. Otherwise they threatened to kill the Roma children. To the question: "Did they threaten you or did you see it with your eyes?" some respondents answered that they saw how they shot their neighbour's child after the parents refused to pay the ransom but most of them said that they had heard stories from their relatives, and without hesitating they immediately left their houses to save their children without taking anything with them. They are frightened to the extreme. Respondents from Uroševac, Gračanica and the villages around Prizren, said that KLA people killed ruthlessly all the Roma, they destroyed their houses, and then they fled en masse in June 1999. Soldiers from KFOR encouraged them: "Run, run and save yourselves", but no one made an attempt to defend them. They are convinced that their houses have already been burnt down and razed to the ground.

A Roma respondent from Sarbica said, "We lived very well, we were a well-off clan and we were on good terms with both Serbs and *Shiptars*. But somehow, suddenly, there was something wrong with the *Shiptars*, quite suddenly, first they stopped greeting us. They did not say "good morning" in the street. And then, after they drove us away, they started plundering. We are nine families and we left seven big houses. At present, according to OSCE expert evaluations there is not a single resident of Roma origin in Sarbica.

A Roma refugee from Vučitrin: "I had to flee with my family quite unexpectedly, we took nothing with us, it was a matter of survival. We left a big and luxurious two-storey house. There was something wrong with the *Shiptars* and we felt that they wanted to live alone. They don't want anyone else. But later, when we came here, to Pančevo, we realized that they wanted to make a state of their own. It is not possible to go back.

Unlike the Serb refugees, the Roma do not believe in the support and protection of the European forces. All Roma respondents are unanimous: "We cannot go back. If only our army (i.e. the Serbian) and our police come back we, only then could we also return. Otherwise - no!

As we have heard the most contradictory evaluations about the state and behaviour of the Roma who identify themselves as 'Egyptians' (by the way, there are such people in Bulgaria as well

¹⁴ About 30 DEM (the average salary in Serbia now is 70-80 DEM)

under the name *agbpts*) we put the following question: "We have heard that there are people among you who call themselves 'Egyptians'. Are they Roma, did they escape from the *Shiptars* along with you?". Answer: "The Egyptians have always been with the *Shiptars*, they always pretended to be *Shiptars*, too. They have never acknowledged to be Roma or Gypsies. They maltreated the Roma, the Serbs and the *Gorani* together with the *Shiptars*. They might have chased them now too, once you ask, but it serves them right."

The political processes in Serbia - retrospection and a snapshot in June 2000

Retrospective background

The disintegration processes in the Yugoslav Federation started apparently after 1985 when the federation lost its strategic role of a buffer between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Nationalistic ideology and propaganda started to develop in each of the federative state units, anticipating the future distribution of the federative resources. These processes naturally reflected on the Yugoslav Communist Party, which split after the 14th Congress, with the Slovenian communist party leaving first, followed by the Croatian communist party. Each of the republican parties started activities for the establishment of an independent political and economic foundation. This process was described by a respondent, a famous opposition politician and scholar, with a sense of humour in the following way: "Suddenly each national communist party was given the incredible opportunity to have its own state and they (i.e. the communist leaders) made it in the shortest time".

Activation of the nationalistic propaganda in each of the republics was the most direct lever to fulfil this scheme. When in the beginning of the 90s changes became more radical, the leaders of the communist parties from the six republics carried out a series of meetings in order to find a common and acceptable solution for stopping the disintegration processes or for their finalization. Future problems had already been outlined: in fact, there are no ethnically clean republics. The Serbs have been scattered everywhere and in the largest number and that is why the collapse of Yugoslavia would turn into a big problem. The Serbs' native places are everywhere in the six republics and in the autonomous provinces, thousands and thousands are the intermarriages, and according to our respondent sociologists, 3 million persons identified themselves as Yugoslavs at that time.

During the Autumn of 1991 a meeting of parliamentary delegations from all republics was held in Sarajevo. Each delegation presented its vision for solving the crisis: the Slovenes proposed the preservation of the monetary union; the Croatians preferred the transformation of the federation into a confederation; the Bosnians and Macedonians preferred the three-tier federation variant, the Serbs and Montenegrins insisted on keeping the centralized federation.

According to our respondents, politicians and political analysts, Milošević's crime is that when he understood about the forthcoming break up of the federation he tried to forcibly solve the problem. Most of the military and economic resources of the federation were in the hands of the Serbs and Milošević, which reassured him that he was in a position to include the territories populated by Serbs by extending Serbia borders at the expense of the republics that were breaking away.

Of course, one can see here the disunited and egoistic policy of the West European countries and the USA towards Yugoslavia's dissolution. Milošević relied on the neutrality of the West and

Russia but it turned out that each country had its own position and its own interest supporting the dissolution or against it, as well as in the possible division of territories

Another conflict zone was outlined which accompanied Yugoslavia dissolution, i.e. the use of the principle of sovereignty. It was again the opposition politician, our respondent with the sense of humour, who made the following statement, "We have come to a sort of a theatre of the absurd, to something like a delirium for sovereignty!". In order to illustrate the problem, the same respondent gave an example with the village of Kievo in the Republic of Croatia: "In 1991 Croatia declared that it did not recognize the sovereignty of Yugoslavia but only the Croatian sovereignty. The Serbs in Krajina declared themselves against Croatia's sovereignty and recognized the Krajina sovereignty. There is a Croatian village in Krajina, named Kievo, which denounced Krajina sovereignty and recognized Kievo sovereignty only. A Serb was living in the village of Kievo who hoisted the flag in his yard and declared: "I am a Serb and I have my own sovereignty, so I do not recognize Kievo sovereignty!". This story would be a wonderful joke if it were not an illustration of a national catastrophe, or rather the catastrophes of several nations. In what way should the principle of sovereignty be applied by the separate republics and in the regions with ethnically mixed population? In the concrete example of Yugoslavia the principle of sovereignty led to absurdity, to cruelties and to the absolute fragmentation of society.

A respondent political analyst added to the theme of the break-up of Yugoslavia and the obsession with sovereignty: "The point of intersection of two political and geopolitical mistakes has turned into a historical tragedy, i.e. the mistake of the international community embraced the aggression and chauvinism of the national politicians and all this happened against the background of immature civil societies, of people who were not in a position to prevent the deadly venturesome policy".

It is of particular importance how the international community will approach the definition of the minority communities status. Former activities have shown that a different approach was applied to the different republics. In Krajina the Serbs were not allowed to obtain an autonomous status, the Serbs in Bosnia succeeded in obtaining the right to cantonization. The issue of Kosovo's status is on the agenda because the Albanians are capable of forcing the international community to bless the formation of a new Albanian state.

One year after the end of NATO's air raids against Yugoslavia public opinion in Serbia is convinced that "the territory of Kosovo has been amputated from Serbia", that "Kosovo is lost", that "Serbs have nothing to do there anymore". It is only the Serb refugees from Kosovo who are willing that Serbian power returns to the province. Respondents are unanimous that now in Kosovo "a vulgar nationalistic Albanian establishment" exists and the depressing point is that "even the most liberal Albanian intellectuals do not say that the Serbian refugees should return to their homes". The opinion of most respondents is that "if the problem with the Serbs in Kosovo is not settled, a deep trauma will remain which will permanently provoke the desire for revenge and it will be a fertile soil for extreme, fascist-like and nationalistic politicians and formations".

According to most respondents-intellectuals the effect of sobering up and of demythologization of public consciousness in Serbia has been achieved after Yugoslavia's break-up, the wars that followed, and the heavy losses. Respondent: "It was extremely difficult for us, the historians in the past, to present objectively history and to convince our compatriots that it was not the Serbs who defeated the Ottoman empire, the Austrian-Hungarian empire, Nazi Germany and finally Stalinist Russia. The great masses of people were convinced that these were historical facts and they would not accept other interpretations". Another respondent - scholar: "End of the over self-confidence, self-satisfaction, end of the partial approach to history and the unrealistic approach to the present day...". The dreams of Great Serbia have remained in the past and its map exists

only in the propaganda publications of Šešelj's Serbian radical party. Šešelj's party official documents demanded the extradition of all non-Serbs and an ethnically cleansed Serbia. Presently, sociological surveys unambiguously show that the majority of Serbs accept "the others" calmly (the other nationalities are accepted by 86% of the Serbs, 4% reject them and 10% give no answer), and in some cases they even show demonstrative tolerance. A respondent from the village of Umka - a saleswoman said, "I am not interested what is the person by faith and ethnic affiliations. I only wish he were clever and thought about people. Let the new ruler be the first Gypsy down the street, provided Milošević leaves and life returns to normal in the country". The same woman added, "We have never made any difference among people. One of my daughters-in-law is Croatian, the other is Slovene, we have Bulgarian relatives from Tsaribrod. We have always respected each other and lived well. Politicians have forcibly separated us."

Now the philosophy of the common people in Serbia is deideologized, demythologized, and reduced to the basic principles of survival. This is life on the brink of survival or, as a respondent professor in philosophy said, "survival as a life style and philosophy where the real life of the individual and the family is perceived as a greater value than the collective national identification". According to our team driving the Serbs to the wall can have surprisingly grave consequences. Impoverishment with unclear or hopeless outcomes on a psychological plane not only frustrates but also leads to anomie. Social and psychological downfall may have unforeseen consequences.

Economy according to respondents but not according to statistics

A drastic drop of output has been recorded in Serbia. The regime of sanctions is stifling industry and trade companies. Enterprises are working at 20-30% of their capacity. According to the data of the G-17 economic analysts the direct and indirect losses for Serbia from NATO air raids amount to about 30 billion US dollars. The average monthly salary varies between 70-80 DEM, but in most of the enterprises workers get their salaries with a 2-3 month delay. Official unemployment is 30%, but real unemployment exceeds 50%. There are still no visible traces of the social and economic catastrophe, which has its explanation.

First of all, agriculture is functioning flawlessly which, in terms of the prevailing forms of property, has always been private. The production of foodstuffs is well organized and it gluts the market with agricultural produce. Meanwhile, through fixed low prices the state is trying to guarantee the consumption of electricity, thermal energy, and water, as well as of some basic foodstuffs that are in short supply, i.e. vegetable oil, sugar, rice, etc. Actually, the domestic energy prices are so strongly reduced that the respondents, when complaining of impoverishment and their daily problems, never even mention electricity and heating - this is a trifling expense for the family budget.

The free regime that Yugoslavian citizens had for decades to travel and work in Europe and around the world, has secured some foreign currency reserve for the prevailing part of the families in Serbia. Before the war, citizens had over 20 billion dollars savings - though the money has vanished, these reserves still allow the Serbs to live comparatively well and to keep to the possible existence minimum. As it usually happens, there are leaks in the embargo for the state and private Mafia, so that one can find fuel and imported foodstuffs in the country. There is no famine, though people fear famine dreadfully, but they worry about the great deficit of medicines or about the incredibly high prices of life saving medicines and quite ordinary drugs.

The basic economic resources, which Milošević's regime continues to draw out, are the assets that have remained from the Yugoslav Federation. According to respondents economists they amount to some dozens of billion of dollars. By the way, a sort of mythology has been created

about these significant financial resources. Part of the respondents maintained, "Once Tito received credits from the USA amounting to 100 billion US dollars and he immediately invested part of this capital in different foreign companies and enterprises that are now properties of the ruling circles. Already in the beginning of the 90s the remainder of these funds that was still in Serbia, was exported by the regime to foreign banks or it was invested in enterprises abroad. Thus, during the embargo period and the wars, the internal and external deficits were balanced through the foreign assets. Most probably, part of this financial resource was used in "shverts" (illegal business) and in the illegal trade in weapons and drugs in particular.

Our question was, "Where does the money, which Milošević uses to restore the damages from NATO bombings in an economy stifled by the embargo, come from?" Almost every day, the Government is carrying out wide propaganda campaigns on the restoration of bridges, buildings and private houses. This success, which is widely covered by the press and the national electronic media, keeps Milošević's prestige and restores the confidence of part of society in the managerial abilities of the regime. Some respondents maintained that during the war, people loyal to Milošević, imported foreign currency in suitcases and part of it is being used for recovery activities and for subsidizing electricity and heating for household needs. The same is true of the present: "This sly person is stealing not only for himself, he invests in construction, hence winning people..."

The party state firms and enterprises, as well as the private companies of the ruling top and Milošević's family, represent an important economic basis for the regime. It sounds paradoxically, but some respondents maintained, "In Serbia it is natural for a member of the supreme leadership of Milošević's party or, Mira Marković's party to be the director of a big enterprise at the same time. In this way they exercise absolute control not only over the state enterprises, but over a great part of the private ones, too.

From a psychological point of view a big part of the population feels to be at the social and economic bottom. This is due to the strain and the sense of utter hopelessness rather than to the process of really sinking to the lower depths. Although the Serbs have not experienced any hunger after ten years of war, they feel entirely discouraged with the present situation of the economy. A respondent economist, head of a small enterprise: "Seven or eight years ago I used to pay the workers a salary of 3000 DEM. You can judge alone how much I received myself. Now I pay these same workers 30 DEM and I receive 80 DEM. This is a sheer misery. After I buy some food for the dog and have two beers with my friends, my salary is gone. But what oppresses me most is the impossibility to travel. In the past my passport was permanently in my pocket and I travelled whenever I felt like it. Now I cannot go anywhere - I have neither money, nor can I get any visa. A respondent saleswoman in a shop: "Ten or fifteen years ago I used to travel all the time. I visited my relatives in Bulgaria and I really wondered how you were living - poorly, stupidly isolated. And what about Romania - misery and fear. Now look how the map has changed! Now you, Bulgarians, are free while in this country - just misery and fear."

Some friends of ours with whom we watched the panorama from the Belgrade fortress, down below, where the two big rivers, the Danube and Sava, meet, said: "You are enraptured with the view, aren't you? One of the most splendid views in Europe. But actually, we have now two dead rivers - merchant ships are not sailing, there is no trade, fishing is dead because the bombs have polluted the waters. These rivers personify life in Belgrade, that is why we can say that we also are dead, marginalized by the whole world."

The prolonged embargo proved that it had successfully stifled the economy but was helpless against Milošević's regime. The continuation of the isolation is justified neither economically, nor politically. A gesture of solidarity of the European states towards the Serbs could have an extremely positive effect now, when they are looking critically at themselves and feel frustrated and lonely. Each friendly gesture on the part of Bulgaria now will be paid off many times over when building future mutual relations. Bulgaria must make an attempt, through the Bulgarian Red Cross and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, through some NGOs, to help the refugees from Kosovo. As they suffer most of all from lack of medical care and drugs, Bulgaria can make an adequate and equal gesture as it did for the Albanian refugees in the Raduša camp by sending there physicians and medicines. Our conclusion is that isolation and embargo, as well as all international punitive measures, are disuniting the Serbian society and it is not in a position to stand united and oppose Milošević with a clear will.

One of the most negative effects of the isolationist policy is the capsulation in which young generations grow up. At present, the *Otpor* activists represent the generation whose childhood and adolescence passed in a period of wars, nationalistic propaganda and reticence to the world. The new Serbian generation is quite different from the middle-aged generation. To a certain extent, they are not able to debate among themselves and to clarify their platform and ideology. Maybe for this reason, the most accessible thing for them is to borrow from what is undoubtedly positive in the consciousness of each Serb, i.e. the revolutionary activity and the symbols of the antifascist resistance.

There is no mechanism in Serbia to carry out a change in the regime or to change the government from inside. The regime is monolythic, it holds the power solidly and uses a specially established repressive machine. Throughout Belgrade and the province people discuss the fact that Milošević has accommodated in the barracks near Belgrade about 120 or 150 thousand militiamen, i.e. people who have stained their hands with blood in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. According to legend he pays them very high salaries, provides them with clothing and feeds them. They are so felonious that they have nothing to lose and defend Milošević's regime tooth and nail. They are ready to kill at any time. This is the factor that keeps in fear both the opposition and the citizens. Part of our team saw them in action, when for dispersing not more than 30 or 50 students who had blocked the traffic at one of the basic Belgrade junctions, they sent about eight armoured jeeps. While still moving three or four uniformed persons got off each jeep holding not truncheons but levelled pump-guns. As we were running away together with the students, we came to know from the inside the feeling of fear and were convinced that these people were ready to shoot.

The closing down and the nationalization of the free TV Studio B was also done brutally and violently by the personal paramilitary formations of Vojislav Šešelj, who provided them, in his capacity of Vice Prime-Minister, with State Security documents. The free B2-92 radio was nationalized too, and more than 50 editors and journalists were blacklisted which bans their access to the media. More than 850 *Otpor* activists or adherents of this students' movement were arrested and detained for several hours or even a whole day, and were interrogated.

Otpor is the students' resistance against the further transformation of the regime into a fascist one. Unlike the official united opposition it enjoys very high social support. Respondents in the province said: "These are our children, our hope is on them. They are clever and educated, they should know how to save us from this suffering!". The tendency is for the students' *Otpor* to gradually turn into a national resistance movement. According to a respondent political analyst, *Otpor* has already turned into something entirely different: "I think, students are only 5% of the membership strength of the movement. Disappointed members and adherents of the opposition parties and people disappointed with the official and ruling parties are joining it (especially in the

province), together with some former members of the paramilitary formations, who are looking for a place where to hide or to be able to give vent to their aggression. We could not find any confirmation to what extent these assertions were true. Most of the respondents whom we asked for confirmation did not deny it but they thought that the ratio was strongly exaggerated and the students were still the basic strength. By the way, Dobrica Cosic is already a member of the students' movement.

Milošević is using all tools of terror and propaganda to crush the youth movement, which is a certain indicator that at the moment, he is afraid mainly of it. All Belgrade is plastered with big coloured posters which portray a youth in a nazi uniform with the *Otpor* emblem on the peaked cap (an outstretched hand with a clenched fist), and *Madeline jugend* inscriptions. All this has an effect on the more illiterate people because it illustrates the basic thesis of the regime about the enemies of the Serb people - "the external fascists - the USA and "the internal fascists - the fascist hirelings - the students' movement and the opposition. Students are ascribed acts of terrorism, even political assassinations. After the assassination of Boško Perošević, the Minister of education gave orders that the school year be interrupted on May 24th; faculties were closed and students were banned from entering the universities. The murder of Perošević, before being investigated, was used as a motive for the Combating Terrorism Act, drafted by the Yugoslavian Left, to be submitted to Parliament for discussions.

The united opposition, such as it is at the moment, is not a threat to Milošević. The leaders have neither realistic, nor topical programmes for democratic changes, nor do they have a clear idea about how to take the country out of the international isolation. Instead, they are wasting days and nights in fruitless discussions about their unification, preparing the scenarios of rallies and demonstrations, which are on the wane. The only trump of the opposition (and this is the only thing that clearly demarcates it from the regime) is the will to overcome the policy of isolation, which is suitable and is part of Milošević's policy. In fact, the sanctions of the international community are in favour of the regime's policy of isolation. The opposition, on its part, fears to demonstrate pro-European attitudes, maybe because it is not aware that such attitudes exist among the people.* The opposition leaders put all their eggs in just one basket, that of Russia. These are the legitimate arguments most suited to public opinion - the support of Russia: "Moscow will support us, Moscow will exert pressure on Milošević. All this does not carry conviction and when one adds the visible enrichment of some of the opposition leaders through their own Mafioso and business structures, one can understand the entire mistrust and despair of the Serbian society that they could ever find an appropriate opposition force to show them a way out of the crisis.

Milošević, on his part, is probably also aware of his predestination. His regime can exist only in a situation of absolute and unlimited totalitarian opportunities. However, opportunities are absolutely limited and that is why he will have to give in, sooner or later. In the words of a scholar from our team: Serbia is in a vicious circle - impasse for the regime, impasse for the opposition, impasse for the international community, impasse for the ordinary Serb.

Conclusions

Within the already established tradition of our previous fieldwork records we shall not systemize all conclusions that could be drawn on the basis of the information collected. We have focussed on one or two findings, which, according to all members of the team, are urgent in order to gain wide publicity. In this case we shall make only two conclusions:

- The international community is demonstrating a **double standard** as regards the Serb and Roma refugees in Serbia. Our team worked in the Kosovo refugee camps on the territories of Macedonia and Albania and we witnessed the deep concern of the world towards the refugees during the spring and summer of last year. We also witnessed serious concern after the withdrawal of the Serbian army and police from the province so that the refugees could quickly and successfully return to their native places.

The Kosovo refugees who are "internally displaced" in Serbia at the moment, are neglected by all, left without any hope and financial and moral support. There is no institution which promises them any security guaranties so that they could return to their homes, which is their sincere wish.

- The international policy of sanctions and embargo against **Serbia is not undermining** Milošević's regime. At this stage this policy is convenient for and harmonizes with his own policy of isolation. The sanctions guarantee an environment where the Mafioso structures are getting richer and richer, and more and more powerful, spreading their influence outside the Serbian borders and former Yugoslavia.