

# RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

THE  
COMMUNIST AREA

This material was prepared for the use of the  
Office and other staff of Radio Free Europe.

ALB

YUGOSLAVIA: NATIONALITIES  
18 July 1977

## NEW ELEMENTS OF NATIONALIST MANIFESTATIONS IN KOSOVO

Summary: "Hostile" church activities and the reactivation of "Chetnik" and "Ballist" forces are the latest inclusions in the array of nationalist elements in Kosovo, the largely Albanian inhabited Yugoslav province. This paper reviews recent Kosovar developments, with special attention given to statements by Bushan Rugosha and Fehmiu Sahelli, two high provincial officials with contrasting backgrounds.

Nationalist ramblings are a familiar feature of present-day Kosovo though they often tend to get lost in the maze of other Yugoslav issues. Periodic flare-ups, however, bring the political situation of the largely Albanian inhabited autonomous Province to the attention of the general Yugoslav public. Only six months have elapsed since Kosovo's last nationalist-inspired unrest was brought under control, and already there are signs that the province is experiencing another wave of nationalist tensions. Though the consequences of nationalist aspirations have not been as heavy in Kosovo as in Croatia, (1) practically all spheres of activity in Kosovo--political, economic, social, cultural and religious--are used as fields for its expression.

### Clergy Under Attack

In connection with the church's role in promoting nationalist ambitions, lately a topical issue, the Kosovar League of Communists held a plenary session to discuss "the hostile activity of the clergy and the religious." (2)

(1) See 12, "A Review of Current Developments in Kosovo," CAA Report No. 1273, Radio Free Europe Research, 21 Jan. 1977.

(2) Bilindica, 6 July 1977 and Radio Belgrade, 5 July 1977.

It was asserted that Orthodox priests are increasingly involving themselves in the protection of nationality interests. They have been collecting data on the emigration of Serbs from the province and are presenting the situation in the region "in an unfavorable light." Outdoor meetings, it was alleged, are being organized by Orthodox priests during which "fiery speeches with nationalist overtones" are delivered. The session also spoke of the "perfidious activities" of the Roman Catholic Church which "presents the state as unable to solve certain problems." On the whole, the plenary meeting delivered a very harsh indictment on the church's role in the province:

"The clergy and religion, by exploiting the freedom of religion, act from anti-socialist positions. By spreading their influence in the ranks of the citizens, they introduce intolerance and inter-nationality confrontations. The entire clergy appears as protectors of their respective nationalities."

Although the plenary session tried to give the impression that all three major confessions in the province--Roman, Orthodox, Catholic--are guilty of misbehavior, in actuality it is the Orthodox clergy which took the brunt of the attack. This was underscored by the provincial League chairman Mateus Bakalli in a recent interview with 38 foreign journalists. (3) In answer to a question by the correspondent of the Bulgarian news agency BIA, Bakalli stated:

As regards church-state relations, both sides show a certain tolerance, although at times one can feel the reactionary role of the church. We will, therefore, not permit the church's interference in politics and inter-nationality relations. Such attempts have been made recently by a section of the Orthodox clergy.

Certain representatives of Kosovo's Serbian nationality group who feel threatened by the so-called Albanian "majority," for "protective" purposes seek the aid of the Eastern Orthodox Church and that of influential former high party officials whose records date back to the partisan days.

#### Partisan Veterans Appear on the Scene

It is no secret that the old partisan veterans who maintain a strong lobby in Belgrade form a powerful block of Serb-Orthodox supporters in Kosovo. Lately they have increased their activities in the province, too. (4) The communal conference of the city of Mitrovica, for example, is examining the fratricidal activities of a local party organization, speaks of outside pressures. The case was cited of a retired colonel from Belgrade who demanded the reversal of a decision to dissolve the party organization.

(3) Elizma, 30 June 1973.

(4) See Eloboles Stanovic, "After the 34th Session of the Yugoslav Party Presidium," CEA Report No. 1483, Radio Free Europe Research, July 19, 1973.

The most intriguing aspect of the new developments in the province, however, is the re-introduction of the alleged threat posed by such old enemies as the Serb "Chetnik" and Albanian "Ballist" forces. Whether by coincidence or by deliberate intention (and the latter is more likely), the identification of another group operating in Kosovo a situation similar to that in Croatia where the Ustaasi serve as a rallying point for external host nationalist elements. The specter of the two wartime nationalist groups was raised by no less than Sushan Hagozha during the unveiling of a partisan memorial in the city of Faja (Fec). Hagozha was one of Kosovo's top figures in the Yugoslav partisan leadership and is well known for his important role as Tito's emissary in helping launch the Albanian communist movement. He handled military assignments at that time. Following Rankovic's downfall, Hagozha's influence in Kosovo decreased perceptibly and he moved to Belgrade. The power subsequently shifted to the younger generation of provincial leaders and to the ranks of the Albanian ethnic group led by Mehmet Bakalli. In fact the most revealing aspect of the Faja meeting was the striking contrast between Hagozha's speech and that of Bakalli who also addressed the gathering. (5) The former's stress was on issues related to the past whereas the latter dealt with problems of the present. Not once did Hagozha mention Rankovic by name in his attack on all sorts of anti-Socialist forces in the province, whereas Bakalli repeatedly attacked Rankovic directly. Instead Hagozha unexpectedly raised the specter of the "Chetnik" and "Ballist" danger:

The Chetniks, the Ballists, and the Irredentists were militarily defeated here among us. Ideologically, however, they are still active among us. They view our democratic society as suitable for their anti-popular and anti-Yugoslav activities. Today, they do not appear on the scene as Chetniks and Ballists although they act from the same positions....Both groups claim that their national interests are being threatened: the Albanians by the Serbs and the Montenegrins and vice-versa. They have a common name: enemies of self-managing socialist Yugoslavia. They are ready to make a pact even with the "devil himself...." We must treat them in the same manner as we do the valid enemies of self-managing socialist Yugoslavia.

This line serves Hagozha well in his attempt to justify the principles of those who fought in the national-liberation movement. It is possible that with Tito's era coming to an end, Hagozha and other old partisan forces are beginning to reactivate themselves in Kosovo by concentrating their guns mainly on the old enemy. It is a tactic which finds a favorable response among some dissatisfied strata of the population.

---

(5) Silindria, 3 July 1972.

In contrast to Rugosha, the progressive, young (38 years old) Bakalli concentrated his attention on the "social and national liberation" platform of the post-World war, i.e., the period since Rankovic's fall. He first delivered an implicit attack on the hardliners, boldly declaring that "we are neither impressed nor convinced by the various propaganda sheets charging us with having revised Marxism-Leninism." He then reiterated the favorite theme of the Albanian ethnic group today in Kosovo:

The bureaucratic deformations of socialism in our midst led to an inevitable slow-down in the affirmation of national equality and encouraged authoritarian and hegemonistic relations. The disregard shown to inter-nationality relations had grave consequences for Kosovo and the Albanian ethnic group. As a result of the revolutionary vision of Tito, the Yugoslav League of Communists reaped a great victory at the Fourth Plenum against the bureaucratic-decayistic Rankovic forces. A new phase was instituted in the affirmation of national equality and in the reaffirmation of the party policy in inter-nationality relations, which was the basis of the national liberation movement.

Thus, both speakers defend the basic principles of the national-liberation war, but with entirely different purposes. Rugosha uses them to attack the war-time enemy which allegedly continues its activity even today, whereas Bakalli uses the occasion to attack the enemy of more recent origin.

Bakalli's implicit rejection of recent Albanian anti-Tito polemics (8) was also a shrewd move. He tries to dispel any misconception regarding the Prishtina leaders' demands for complete national equality, which presupposes the further improvement of Kosovo-Albanian relations. Bakalli's main interest, however, is to re-emphasize the fact that the achievements, interests and fate of Yugoslavia's 1.5 million Albanian ethnics are closely linked with Tito's name.

Like all other peoples and nationalities of Yugoslavia, so the Albanians in Kosovo and in Yugoslavia have connected the fate of their own liberation and affirmation with Tito, with Tito's self-managing socialist Yugoslavia, with the unity and equality of the peoples and of the nationalities with which they live and experience their true social, national and human aspirations. Precisely for this reason, the smallest attack, from wherever it may come, against the personality of Tito--not only as chief of state and head of our Party, but also as a symbolic figure in our revolution, our freedom and affirmation--will be considered as an attack against our revolution, an attack against what is dearest and most sacred to

(8) See la., "The Meaning of the Anti-Yugoslav Attack," GAA Report No. 143D, Radio Free Europe Research, 18 June 1972.

us, we will consider it a direct attack against us and therefore, like true revolutionaries, we will be merciless against these attacks. Because, Tito-men are here!

The contrast which can be noted in the speeches delivered by the two high Moscow functionaries is evidence of the efforts by various powerful forces in the province to gather support for their present positions and future intentions. It is quite obvious that Tito's personality now acts as a very strong unifying force in this restless area. The big question to be answered is: what will happen after Tito?