

Zitierhinweis

Troch, Pieter : recension de : Miomir Gatalović, Kosovo i Metohija u državnoj politici Jugoslavije 1958-1965, Beograd : Institut za savremenu istoriju / Društvo istoričara Srbije "Stojan Novaković", 2016, dans : Südost-Forschungen, 75 (2016), p. 285-287, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/e1785178cba540eeab9a208d649530e5>



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Miomir GATALOVIĆ, Kosovo i Metohija u državnoj politici Jugoslavije 1958-1965

[Kosovo und Metohija in der staatlichen Politik Jugoslawiens 1958-1965]. Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju / Društvo istoričara Srbije „Stojan Novaković“ 2016. 404 S., 21 Abb., ISBN 978-86-7403-207-7, RSD 2 400,–

This book examines the essence, methods, objectives and results of Yugoslavia's state policies in Kosovo, 1958-1965. A more common historical periodisation, which was also applied in the author's dissertation (University of Belgrade, 2015), takes the period from the mid-1950s to the consolidation of Kosovo's autonomy with the Constitution of 1974 as one analytical unit. The latter periodisation typically focuses on the intense debates and policy developments related to the status of Kosovo and the rights of the Albanian minority following the so-called Brioni Plenum of 1966. The advantage of the periodisation applied in the book under review is that it sheds light on developments in the Yugoslav state's policies regarding the political, legal, socio-economic and cultural development of Kosovo before 1966. For the full potential of this periodisation to be realised however, it remains to be seen how the author relates these developments to the larger historical timeframe in future publications based on his dissertation. The research is based on a study of Serbian-language archival sources available in Belgrade, which cover party meetings at the federal, republican and regional level, as well as contemporary Serbian-language periodicals.

The book starts with a chronological overview of major political developments in Kosovo, roughly from the period of the Albanian national awakening to 1958, which at the same time presents the book's theoretical point of departure. The emphasis is placed on the "opposing interests" of Serbs and Albanians and the Yugoslav and Albanian states when it came to Kosovo (56), instances of interethnic violence during periods of weak state control, "which destroyed the prospects for a common life in the future" (56), and the unsuccessful integration of Kosovo into the first Yugoslav state. The author goes on to argue that in the post-war period, the Yugoslav communist leadership opted to pacify Kosovo and buy political peace by meeting the demands and interests of the Albanian population (autonomy, investments in industrialisation, popular education and socio-economic conditions, and agrarian reforms). However, in doing so it sacrificed the interests of the Serbian population of Kosovo, and ultimately failed to achieve the anticipated results.

In the first chapter, Gatalović looks into the constitutional and legal developments determining Kosovo's autonomous status in a formal-legal sense, its territorial demarcation, and the position of the Albanian minority. In discussing these developments, the author gives detailed accounts of the official discourse on the theme of Kosovo's autonomy and Albanian minority rights. He demonstrates that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) focused on the social, economic and political development of the region, through increased investments, as a prerequisite for integrating the Albanian people in Yugoslavia.

The book's second chapter turns to programmatic discussions and policy-making related to Kosovo within the LCY and its Serbian and Kosovan branch, roughly between the 7th and 8th Congress. Against the background of the growing relevance of the national question and dissociation from Yugoslav unitarism, the League of Communists paid increasing attention to the status of national minorities. Internal discussions concerning the Albanian minority

mainly revolved around its socio-economic underdevelopment, anti-Yugoslav propaganda from Albania, but also the limited possibilities for education and culture in Albanian. They reveal an increasing openness for strengthening Albanian national culture in Yugoslavia and greater representation of Albanians in party and state functions – although “not enough attention was paid to their practical capacities, expertise and hidden irredentist motives” (200), which would be counterproductive in the long term. Moreover, the Yugoslav Communists had an almost dogmatic conviction that investments in the socio-economic development of the region were the main precondition for integrating the Albanian national minority into the Yugoslav socialist community. This programmatic discourse ultimately reflected in Yugoslav state policy, in particular with the establishment of the Federal Funds for Investments in Economically Insufficiently Developed Republics and Regions in 1965. The author argues that this was “a huge victory of the Kosovan leadership, which on the wings of the opening of the national question in Yugoslavia succeeded in obtaining the Province practical equality with undeveloped republics for the Province [...] and becoming better represented in the cadres in the federal organs” (178).

The third chapter treats the controversial role of the State Security Service between “state protection and repression” (236). It briefly describes three cases of repression (forced emigration of Albanians to Turkey, the Prizren Process and the disarmament campaign during the 1950s) that would become exemplary of the abuse of power and of Serbian nationalism within the state security after a series of internal investigations against the security service following the Brioni Plenum of 1966.¹ Although the author does recognise that the security organs played a role in putting pressure on Albanians to emigrate to Turkey, and used excessive violence against the Albanian population in particular, it is tendentious that he chose not to address these events in more detail.

Indeed, in the remainder of the chapter, the author shifts his attention to reports by the state security services preserved in the Archive of Serbia and “selectively opened to the public since a couple of years” (11) on irredentist activities by illegal groups and cases of espionage, as well as more innocent cases of Albanian nationalism in Kosovo. The author argues that the repressive measures taken by the state security services were in fact necessary to protect the integrity of the state but did not succeed in putting an end to irredentist actions in Kosovo. Moreover he adds that the security service was “bound by the tolerant politics of the Yugoslav leadership toward Albanians in this area, who in large numbers fought for the realisation of national unification with the Albanian motherland” (257).

In the final sub-chapter, the author examines the emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo. He provides detailed statistical data based on reports by the state security services, and argues that the emigration was the result of direct and indirect pressure exerted by the Kosovo Albanian majority. To support this argument, the author draws heavily on contemporary reports by the Serbian Orthodox Bishop of Raška-Prizren and later Patriarch Pavle Stojčević, which offer a valuable but one-sided view from the point of an oppressed religious institution. The author also refers to a number of party meetings and internal reports on interethnic relations in Kosovo, which related increased emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins to rising Albanian nationalism and pressure. According to the author, the League of Communists did not take the phenomenon seriously because

Serbian communist leaders in Kosovo were afraid of losing their personal privileges, while Albanian communists acted in their own national interests. As such, “the Yugoslav state for the sake of peace and loyalty of the Albanians, as the majority population [...] in Kosovo and Metohija, deliberately sacrificed the Serb and Montenegrin population which had to emigrate due to lacking any adequate protection” (270).

In the final two chapters of the book, the author presents the state policy and developments in the domains of the economy (chapter 4), as well as culture, education and health (chapter 5). The author provides an abundance of statistical data taken from the relevant official commissions and sessions, reflecting the Yugoslav socialist state’s preoccupation with quantitative data. The main argument is that the state invested in the economic and cultural development of Kosovo and its Albanian minority, but failed to close the gap with the country’s more developed regions.

All in all, this book presents a welcome contribution to Serbian-language historiography on Socialist Yugoslavia’s policies toward Kosovo in the period of constitutional and socio-economic reforms preceding the Brioni Plenum of 1966. The work is particularly rich in presenting a wealth of archival sources of internal party discussions and developments in decision and policy making with regard to Kosovo at the federal, republican and regional level.

The role of actors at the regional and local level is somewhat underrepresented, probably due to the fact that the author did not have access to the Archive of Kosovo and to Albanian-language sources. The readability of the work suffers from an abundance of quotations, statistical data and lack of thematic coherence. The book often jumps from one theme to another and back, in line with the agendas of sessions of party and state institutions. A final shortcoming is the organisation of references, which groups all references per paragraph, hampering verification and research of sources.

In terms of its argumentation and theoretical approach, I would question the book’s point of departure that the history of Kosovo is predetermined by ethnic competition between its Serbian and Albanian populations. The book’s argument goes that the Yugoslav Communists’ Kosovo policy was in fact not much more than a proxy for ethnic competition. The Yugoslav Communists’ attempt to pacify and integrate the Albanian population into the Yugoslav socialist framework benefited the Albanian case in Kosovo and inevitably harmed Serbian national interests. Moreover, the Albanian population was solidly irredentist, which made any attempt at Yugoslav integration pointless to begin with. Although the factor of ethnic division should not be discarded all too easily, the particular socio-economic, political and ideological context should be taken into consideration when scrutinising and differentiating individual actions, social (including ethnic and national) relations and political decision-making that substantiated Yugoslavia’s state policy in Kosovo.

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¹ Isabel STRÖHLE, *Aus den Ruinen der alten erschaffen wir die neue Welt! Herrschaftspraxis und Loyalitäten in Kosovo (1944-1974)*. München 2016 (*Südosteuropäische Arbeiten*, 155), 239-287.