

MURDERS - "SUICIDES" OF ALBANIAN SOLDIERS IN THE YUGOSLAV ARMY DURING 1981–1991

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Abstract

The phenomenon of killings of Albanian soldiers during their military service in the People's Army of the former Yugoslavia, described as "suicide" and military trials with ethno-political motivation will be addressed in this paper. In the period 1981-1991 in the People's Army of the SFRY, in enigmatic circumstances many young Albanians lost their lives. There are several characteristics that identify the state terror of the Military Secret Service (KOS) and the State Security Service (UDB) of the former Yugoslavia against Albanian soldiers while performing military service. First, all murders have been described as "suicide", or accidents of various natures, and here the real perpetrators of these crimes have never been punished. Presence of the phenomenon of setups and convictions with lawsuits against Albanian soldiers, hastened and motivated by politics and ethnicity. One of its characteristics of state terror has been the staging of cases with the right to incite and inter-ethnic violence. The mosaic of state violence against Albanian soldiers during the years "81- 99" is characterized by interference and political influence in the crimes and processes carried out against Albanian soldiers in the People's Army of the former Yugoslavia.

Keywords: Murder, suicide, secret service, state terror, army, phenomenon, enigma, staging, punishment, politics, genocide etc.

1. Introduction

The manifestation of Serbo-Yugoslav state violence and terror exercised against Kosovo Albanian soldiers and other Albanian-inhabited territories in the former Yugoslavia during 1981–1991 has left no segment of society unaffected. A phenomenon that emerged in the early 1980s, to continue until 1991, was the killing of Albanian soldiers during compulsory military service in the Yugoslav People's Army. A feature that has accompanied this phenomenon for more than a decade was the staging and commission of these killings by the State Security Service (UDB) and the Secret Service of the Army (KOS) and the police of the former Yugoslavia, and manipulating public opinion, presenting these murders as suicides or accidents of various natures.

A special chapter of the political persecuted and convicted and the terrible individual and collective tragedy of half of the Albanian nation in the Serbo-Yugoslav occupation, constitutes the large number of Albanian soldiers who were killed, prosecuted and convicted by all military courts of the former Yugoslavia. Political trials mounted by the military courts of the former Yugoslavia have existed since the end of World War II. The killings and reprisals against Albanian soldiers began on the eve of the end of World War II, in the first days of the formation of the Yugoslav army . In numerical terms, the Bar massacre is the greatest crime committed by the Yugoslav army against Albanian soldiers after the Second World War. However, the intensity and degree of public display of mounted criminal trials against Albanian soldiers, as never before, occurred precisely during the years 1981–1991.

The scale of the repression and the anti-Albanian campaign is illustrated by the speech and assessment of the Yugoslav admiral, Branko Mamula, praising the activity exercised against the Albanian soldiers and officers within the Y(P)A, among other things, he stated: "In the period 1981-1987, 216 illegally organized groups were discovered in the YPA, in which 1435 members of the YPA of Albanian nationality were involved."

As a result of the chauvinist policy applied against the Albanian soldiers, only within the period of ten years (1981-1991), from the military service in YA, 108 Albanian soldiers were returned to the coffins, killed in different conditions and circumstances.

2. The phenomenon of the fatal triangle with political elements, secret service and court in the process against Albanian soldiers in the former Yugoslavia

Referring to the events that took place in the People's Army of the former Yugoslavia during the years 1980-1991, and the already world-famous facts about the killings of Albanian soldiers during military service, it is irrational to think that this process-phenomenon could result as such without coordination with constituent elements of politics, secret security and the justice system. In order to realize this scenario, the responsible bodies were favored by the fact that the command structure of the Former Yugoslav Army was approximately 80% led by the Serbo-Montenegrins. Even the secret security bodies as well as the courts both inside and outside the army were absolutely led and commanded by people of Serbo-Montenegrin nationality. These were very important factors that influenced the creation of enigmatic conditions and circumstances, creating mist and uncertainty for a decade for Albanian soldiers in the Army of the former Yugoslavia.

The mounting and staging of the killings of Albanian soldiers in the Army of the former Yugoslavia and the subsequent qualification of acts such as suicide were favored and facilitated by the central command and leading structures of the army and the secret military security. This is evidenced by the fact that Serbs and Montenegrins in the entire Yugoslav population participated with 36.6%, while in the army command participated with 80% of the commanding staff, shows the state of "equality" in this segment of the federation.

The period from 1980-1991 for Albanian soldiers in the Army of the former Yugoslavia was characterized by insecurity and enigma, which in many cases resulted in fatalities for Albanian soldiers while performing military service.

3. Politics as the originator and key factor of the infamous scenario against Albanian soldiers

The development of political events in the former Yugoslavia and the just political demands of Kosovo Albanians for equality within the Yugoslav Federation, were used as a pretext for initiating discriminatory campaigns against Albanian soldiers in the Army of the former Yugoslavia. After organizing demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981 and 1989, which as their motto had demands for equality within the former federation, in response the government was not only violence exercised against demonstrators in Kosovo, but from here a savage political scenario began against Albanian soldiers serving in the Army of the former Yugoslavia, a scenario that would continue for a decade, leading to killings, violence, convictions and persecution of all kinds against Albanian soldiers during their military service.

The planning, scheduling, mounting of political criminal trials and the killing of Albanian

soldiers in this period of time, had well-programmed objectives from the Serbo-Yugoslav state policy. As Kosovo entered a cycle of no return to coexistence in the former Yugoslavia, Serbian politics had as its main objective and goal the departure of new generations from Kosovo. A strategic point they chose to oust these young men was the Serbian state terror manifested by the killing of Albanian soldiers, whom they declared "suicidal". In this scenario of the Serbian state, two main goals were to be achieved:

First - knowing that war between Kosovo and Serbia would be inevitable, Serbia, through the killings of Albanian soldiers, forced Albanian youth to leave military service. With this, Serbia aimed to face tomorrow a people that did not possess militarily trained troops.

Second - chasing the young people under the pretext that they were not performing military service, he forced them and expelled them from Kosovo, so that in the future would not face them in an expected war. Serbia after the 1990s called young Albanians to military service, but in fact it was a call for death or a call to flee.

In order to achieve this political platform and the implementation of this scenario against Albanian soldiers, politics instrumentalized two state segments. The first was the secret state security and the military security, through which he carried out various murders, staging and mountings against Albanian soldiers. The second segment instrumentalized by politics was the justice system, specifically the military courts, which convicted innocent Albanian soldiers, to lose track of the criminal actions of state and military secret politics and security. So here worked and was being coordinated a triangle between politics, secret security and the justice system. In order to camouflage the crimes committed against Albanian soldiers, secret politics and security strategies are used to lose track. Out of 108 soldiers killed, only 8 of them were killed in the territory of Serbia, the others were executed in other units of the federation .

This was the strategy of Serbian politics, which he applied through the secret services, with the aim of camouflaging in front of the public, applying the method "throw the stone, hide the hand".

4. Crimes of the State Secret Service (UDB) and the Military Secret Service (KOS), against Albanian Soldiers

The practical realization of the political scenario for the killing of Albanian soldiers in the former Yugoslavia would be impossible to implement without the concrete role and contribution of the State Secret Service (UDB), and the Military Secret Service (KOS). The fact that such criminal acts had to be carried out in full conspiracy, this task under the guidance of politics for a decade has been carried out by UDB and KOS.

In the biggest anti-Albanian campaign and political criminal trials that were organized against Albanian soldiers, the infamous case of Paracin was also known. On September 2, 1987, the Yugoslav Army Secret Service planned and carried out a large-scale massacre at the Paracin barracks. At 3 o'clock after midnight, while the innocent soldiers were sleeping, 4 soldiers were killed in their sleep by automatic rifles and 5 others were wounded. Characteristic of this massacre was the fact that the soldiers killed and wounded were members of almost all nationalities of the former Yugoslavia. The perpetrator of this massacre, of course, had to be declared an Albanian soldier. According to the Secret Service of the Yugoslav Army, the perpetrator of this crime was the young Albanian soldier Aziz Kelmendi. A law student in Prishtina, a man with exemplary behavior and no indication or sign of any mental illness. That same night, according to the official statement of the military circles of the barracks of the municipality of Paracin, in order to cover the traces of this crime, "the perpetrator " Aziz

Kelemendi committed suicide not far from the scene. For this crime, "the culprit" Aziz Kelmendi could not be convicted, because he "committed suicide", but 8 Albanian soldiers were sentenced to 95 years in prison, allegedly as instigators and helpers of Aziz Kelmendi .

Regarding the case of Paraqin, we can conclude that it was a political plot carried out through the Military Secret Service, planned in detail in view of the consequences it would cause for the Albanian soldiers serving in the Yugoslav army. The complexity of this case lies in the fact that, being victims targeted by the secret service, soldiers of all nationalities in the former Yugoslavia would mobilize the Yugoslav crowd against Kosovo Albanians. Based on the propaganda, which implied chauvinist hatred against the entire Albanian nation and soldiers, which according to unofficial data, accounted for about 30% of all soldiers recruited in the former Yugoslav army, began a massive campaign of framing of political criminal trials against Albanian soldiers. Serbian policy aimed to stigmatize the Albanian people in Kosovo through such acts and to prepare the ground for the legitimation of violence and state terror against the Albanian people.

The consequences suffered by Albanian soldiers in the former Yugoslavia after the framing of these cases were very serious. Most of these soldiers who had just turned 18, were put in cells and other closed places, and by exerting psychological pressure and physical abuse by not being given food and water for days, forced them to admit that they had allegedly formed groups of various and prepared plans to poison the soldiers of other nations, even to the point of preparing attacks to seize weapons in military depots to attack the former Yugoslavia. All of these were imaginary plots of former Yugoslav politics and secret military security which were carried out with the aim of persecuting Albanian soldiers.

In the period 1981-1991 in the PA, the following Albanian soldiers were killed: 1. Sami Gashi, 2. Besim Bajraktari 3. Qerim Aliu, 4. Halil Hajrullahu, 5. Shaban Prushi, 6. Asllan Gashi, 7. Rasim Zeka, 8. Nazmi Muja, 9. Izeir Sadiku, 10. Hasan Sezairi, 11. Latif Zeqiraj, 12. Sami Krasniqi, 13. Ismet Bojku, 14. Shefqet Prekazi, 15. Halil Binaku, 16. Abedin Balaj, 17. Mustafë Hoxhaj, 18. Enver Elezi, 19. Murat Jusufi, 20. Adem Osmanaj, 21. Mustafë Pantina, 22. Naser Gashi, 23. Agron Ferizaj, 24. Beqir Sahiti, 25. Mujë Muçaj, 26. Fadil Gashi, 27. Fadil Bërdynaj, 28. Ejup Sahiti, 29. Rexhep Blakaj, 30. Enver Hasi, 31. Haki Shatri, 32. Sami Shabani, 33. Inajet Istrefi, 34. Erdogan Morina, 35. Bedri Bajgora, 36. Miftar Tali, 37. Mustafë Ramadani, 38. Aziz Kelmendi, 39. Ibrahim Kastrati, 40. Tafil Hyseni, 41. Afrim Hyseni, 42. Qani Shabani, 43. Raif Isufi, 44. Besim Fazliu, 45. Ramush Shala, 46. Shemsi Shala, 47. Abedin Buleshkaj, 48. Naim Ajgeri, 49. Naser Gashi, 50. Afrim Lushtaku, 51. Osman Ismajli, 52. Enver Ramadani, 53. Isuf Krasniqi, 54. Qamil Thaçi, 55. Halim Litaj, 56. Xhavit Berisha, 57. Rustem Bejta, 58. Vahedin Hajrizi, 59. Jetullah Desku, 60. Hamit Haxhiu, 61. Xhevdet Aruqi, 62. Fatmir Tafaj, 63. Enver Maksutaj, 64. Zenun Lushaj, 65. Izet Bushi, 66. Lulzim Rexhepi, 67. Raif Miftari, 68. Fatmir Krasniqi, 69. Florim Kasumi, 70. Muhamet Biçkaj, 71. Rexhep Ahmeti, 72. Samedin Krasniqi, 73. Muharrem Robelli, 74. Sefer Ramadani, 75. Fahrush Emini, 76. Skënder Kryeziu, 77. Mumin Shkodra, 78. Haki Morina, 79. Tahir Gashi, 80. Selman Metaj, 81. Bashkim Krasniqi, 82. Ejup Bedrolli, 83. Agim Gllareva, 84. Burim Behrami, 85. Ali Rrustemi, 86. Ejup Gashi, 87. Vesel Duraku, 88. Ali Sahiti, 89. Rasim Istrefi, 90. Xhevdet Musliukaj, 91. Afrim Zylfiu, 92. Elez Halipi, 93. Fadil Salihu, 94. Halim Gashi, 95. Ilaz Fazliu, 96. Ilmi Popaj, 97. Mirsad Cekiqi, 98. Muharrem Muharremi, 99. Nexhmedin Osmani, 100. Numan Rexhepi, 101. Shaip Behrami, 102. Sherif Kashtanjeva, 103. Shukri Kelani, 104. Xhevdet Pomak, 105. Xhiman Alia, 106. Abedin Krasniqi, 107. Gëzim Hasani, 108. Sefer Qukoci.

Of the 108 soldiers killed, 35 bodies of slain soldiers were sealed in special coffins (hermetically sealed). The families of the slain soldiers were not allowed to open the coffins, nor see their sons

for the last time .

As the senior official in the former Yugoslavia, Azem Vllasi, declares, after the events of 1981 in Kosovo, being an Albanian in the army was not only difficult, but also dangerous. Officers, especially Serbs, saw in every new Albanian recruit the potential enemy of Yugoslavia.

5. The role and importance of military courts in the realization of the scenario against Albanian soldiers

During the period 1981-1991, the military and regular courts played an extremely negative role in the trials framed-up against Albanian soldiers during the performance of military service. The negative role of these institutions consists in the fact that they have justified and legitimized the criminal actions motivated by politics and executed by the secret services against Albanian soldiers. So, it was the judicial system in the guise of law and in the name of justice, which for a whole decade legitimized the criminal actions of the secret services against the Albanian soldiers in the former Yugoslavia. In the ten-year period 1981-1991 alone, 1,100 Albanian soldiers were sentenced to long prison terms in politically rigged trials .

Military and regular courts, in full coordination with the political and intelligence services, have been systematically performing "witch hunts" against Albanian soldiers for a decade, lynching, torturing, executing and punishing them.

Despite the fact that, in most cases, crimes and trials against Albanian soldiers were committed outside the territory of Serbia, so in other federal units, the manner of action and the type of charges prove that the cases were well coordinated between state bodies. For example, Indictment of the Military Prosecutor's Office of Skopje, PPU. 146/87, dated 14 December 1987, links the case of the accused with other pre-assembled cases. This indictment, like most other indictments against Albanian soldiers, continued the pattern of previous criminal proceedings before military courts throughout the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The group of soldiers met, commented on the events, created the illegal organization, conspired against Enver Hoxha, demanded "Kosovo Republic" ... Since many of the accused worked in the kitchen, similar to the case of Split, they were accused of wanting to poison the soldiers. Here it was specific that the group commented on the killing of soldiers in Paraqin and commented "Kelmendi did well". "If it were me, I would have killed more soldiers, but first and foremost the captain and other superiors." The new accusation was that soldier Gashi says: "I will take my captain's uniform because I look like him, I am the same as him, then we Albanians will gather in the designated place with weapons, we will take ammunition, we will kill everyone in the barracks, we will take trucks and tanks and we will go to Kosovo, we will leave from my platoon, all Albanians know how to drive trucks and tanks and I will drive the truck so that as soon as possible we arrive in Kosovo, boys, prepare well, you have weapons, get as much ammunition" .

With the Judgment of the Military Court in Skopje, IP. Nr. 108/87 dated 18 January 1988 , were tried:

- 1) Naser Krasniqi, with a prison sentence of eight (8) years;
- 2) Besim Gashi, with a prison sentence of five (5) years;
- 3) Ramiz Ahmeti, with a prison sentence of five (5) years;
- 4) Bajram Kelmendi, with a prison sentence of three (3) years;
- 5) Xhemail Maroshi, with a prison sentence of five (5) years;
- 6) Zekerija Burniku, with a prison sentence of one (1) year and six (6) months;

- 7) Zef Preni, with a prison sentence of four (4) years and six (6) months;
- 8) Ramiz Bajrami, with a prison sentence of two (2) years;
- 9) Sul Dembogaj, with a prison sentence of one (1) year and six (6) months.

Supreme Military Court in Belgrade, with IIP verdict. 129/88, dated 27 May 1988 , partially accepts the appeal and adjudicates:

- 1) Naser Krasniqi with a prison sentence of ten (10) years (sentence increased to two years);
- 2) Besim Gashi with a prison sentence of six (6) years (one year has been added to the sentence);
- 3) Zef Preni with a prison sentence of three (3) years and six (6) months;
- 4) Sul Dembogaj with imprisonment for a period of one (1) year (reduction for six (6) months).

The verdict was overturned for Ramiz Bajrami and the detention on remand was terminated.

These judgments among the soldiers created distrust and fear. But the unity and fellowship of soldiers according to nationality. Thus, the consequence became the cause - hostile activity caused division in the army as well. Thus, a wide field was created for the activity of the security secret service for political purposes. The service, by organizing mass trials against "soldiers of certain hostilely oriented nationalities," created evidence of political and state climax and militant nationalism among those ethnic groups. From here to settling scores with political leaders from the ranks of "those unsuitable nationalities", was separated only by a thin thread.

The repression exercised by the Serbo-Yugoslav state authorities against the Kosovo Albanians was experienced in their skin by the young Albanian soldiers, who were insidiously and macabrely deprived of life by the secret military and state security structures. Characteristic of these political and state scenarios is the fact that for all these murders no perpetrator has been convicted by the structures of the bodies that planned and executed these macabre crimes against Albanian soldiers, not to mention that they were made with a work plan and previously prepared and approved decisions. This shows that the scenarios were a synchronization of all federal and republican state institutions, in function of chauvinist policies against the Albanian people of Kosovo and that were realized under the state power bubble.

The period 1981-1989 will be remembered as a period when every third Albanian would go to the Yugoslav police offices. The 1981 student demonstrations will be used as a pretext to imprison almost a third of the Albanian population living under the former Yugoslavia. During this period 3348 people were sentenced to no less than 25,002.8 years in prison. The Yugoslav prisons will also include young Albanians serving in the Yugoslav army, and, according to some data, over 1346 Albanian soldiers were sentenced to 9556 years and 6 months in prison .

The period 1981-1991 in Kosovo for the Albanian soldiers who served in the former Yugoslavia is known as the period of murder, terror, torture, lynching, insecurity, enigma and the manifesto of justice policy. So, during this time, the Albanian soldiers suffered in the most inhuman forms, and not a few of them were secretly executed by the secret security bodies.

6. State genocide against Albanian soldiers in the Yugoslav Army

Based on many researches and scientifically documented facts, it is undeniable that systematic genocide was carried out against Albanian soldiers in the Yugoslav Army after the Second World War, until 1993. The Convention on the Prohibition and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in Article 2, defines genocide as "any of the following acts committed with the aim of

destroying, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group: such as:"

- a) Killing members of the group;
- b) Serious physical or mental injury to members of the group;
- c) Intentional causing of life conditions calculated to bring about partial or total physical destruction;
- d) Taking measures to stop births within the group;
- e) Forcible transfer of children from one group to another;

There are hundreds of undeniable facts documented with scientific arguments that genocide was practiced against Albanian soldiers in the Yugoslav Army as an ethnic and national group. Professor and researcher, Qazim Berisha, best argues the position of Albanian soldiers in the Yugoslav Armed Forces in the period from 1951 to 1993. In the monographic book of prof. Berisha, the killing of 135 Albanian soldiers by the Yugoslav state regime is proven and documented.

Regarding the definition of genocide and what can be called, accepted as genocide, there have been, and continue to be different discussions, opinions and oppositions. But, the creator of the term genocide himself, Rafael Lemkin, who in an international lecture at the Geneva Congresses, declares: "In general, genocide does not mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when it comes from the mass killing of all members of a nation. On the contrary, it is meant to imply a coordinated plan of various actions, with the aim of destroying the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of political and social institutions, culture, language, national sentiments, religion, and the economic survival of national groups, and the destruction of personal security, freedom, health, dignity, and even the lives of individuals belonging to such groups

Therefore, referring to the events that took place in the Yugoslav Army, where for five decades Albanian soldiers were systematically killed and persecuted by the infamous triangle of state politics, secret service and judicial system, we can conclude that, against Albanian soldiers as an ethnic and national group category in the Yugoslav Army, state genocide has been practiced for decades, with the aim of their extermination.

Conclusion

-The criminal acts committed against Albanian soldiers in the former Yugoslavia were well planned and coordinated between the Serbian political line, the secret services and the military courts;

-The vast majority of homicides committed outside of Serbia, with the aim of camouflaging public opinion and erasing traces of crime;

-The killings of Albanian soldiers and the fabrications of trials are planned in the interests of politics, are executed by the secret services, and are camouflaged-legitimized by the trials;

-The stigmatization of Albanian soldiers was done with the aim of inciting inter-national hatred, in particular, hatred against the Albanian people living in the former Yugoslavia;

-The killings of Albanian soldiers were carried out with the aim of forcibly changing the ethnic structure in Kosovo;

-The daily politics and demonstrations that took place in Kosovo during the years 1981-1991, have influenced and been used as a pretext for the staging, frame-up of court trials and the killings of Albanian soldiers;

- By lynching, torturing, rigging trials, and enigmatically executing them, the policy was aimed at removing Albanian youth from the AP and removing them from Kosovo so that in the future Kosovo would not have troops militarily prepared for war;
- For several decades after World War II, systematic state genocide was practiced against Albanian soldiers in the Yugoslav Army, attacking them as a national group category.

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