

*Fostering a Critical Account  
of History in Kosovo: Engaging with  
History Teachers' Narratives  
of the Second World War*

*by*

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## Executive Summary

This report provides unique knowledge on actual history teaching in Kosovo high schools, with a focus on the teaching of the Second World War. The findings are based on research conducted by two teams of scholars in the two separate educational systems operating in Kosovo, one governed by Kosovo authorities (Albanian high-schools), and the other by Belgrade (Serbian high-schools). By conducting in-depth interviews with twenty-five (25) teachers, the researchers came closer than other previous studies on history textbooks to capture what actually happens in classroom exchange.

The reason for choosing the teaching of the Second World War is that, as the midwife of Socialist Yugoslavia, perhaps no other event in the modern history of Kosovo and Serbia has had the same power to generate national narratives and counter-narratives. In fact, the review of primary and secondary sources on textbooks on the Second World War presented in this report shows how the history of this conflict - whether it is Albanian or Serbian history - is dominated by narrow and skewed views, reflecting a strong link between historical narratives and nation building concerns.

This report's findings, however, suggest that the problem with history teaching of the Second World War in Kosovo is not just that mutually exclusive nationalist narratives continue to dominate. The reality is much more complex:

- Teachers from both groups are “custodians” of their respective national narratives. However, these national narratives are not homogenous – every teacher is additionally influenced by his/her own ideological and political stands, while the teachers’ own background defines their teaching approach and interaction with history.
- Teachers are mistrustful of the influence of institutional authorities - foreign governments, international organizations, their respective domestic Ministries - on their teaching instruments and practices. But they are also conformist, and largely conform to administrative directives such as curricula and programs, as long as they do not contradict deeply held beliefs that are rooted in personal and communal stories about the War.
- These personal and communal stories that teachers use in their classroom communication are not just private, they correspond to political divisions running underneath the apparent homogeneity of national narratives. They are also ideological, and contribute to further cloud the understanding of fundamental questions about the history of the Second World War: What is the nature of Fascism? How do we judge collaboration with Fascism? How many forms of resistance against Fascism were there? Who were the partisans? What is the Holocaust?

The findings of this report concluded that what history teachers need in Kosovo is better scholarship. However, change cannot come from the outside, not even from the best-intentioned reformers, such as experts' groups interested in promoting historical dialogue between hostile nations.

On the contrary, in order to be effective, change must come first from the inside, from a breach in the insularity of Kosovo's and Serbia's historiographies of the Second World War. Albanian and Serbian researchers need funds to study abroad, conduct archival research in the region and beyond, and produce a new body of literature of the history of the Second World War that addresses the fundamental aspects of this conflict, which national historical narratives often exclude or distort.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

This research focuses on how Kosovo high school teachers teach the history of the Second World War to the younger generations.

In recent years, a number of publications have analyzed the role of curriculum development and history textbooks in shaping the teaching of the past in the successor states of former Yugoslavia.<sup>1</sup> However, the actual teaching of history has not yet been researched, while the role of teachers is crucial in shaping the students' engagement with, and their understanding of history, historiography, and of course the politics of memory. Differently from previous research that limited itself to comparative analyses of teaching instruments - books, official curricula, and official pedagogy - we directly address teachers, attempting to come closer to capture what actually happens in classroom exchange.

Why does our research focus on the history of the Second World War?

In Kosovo, historiographies of the Second World War, as well as individual and collective memories, continue to influence and be influenced by present political concerns. This is not unique to Kosovo of course, nor to the broader region of former Yugoslavia, whose postwar history Kosovo shares.<sup>2</sup> As perhaps one of the most traumatic events of the twentieth century, the Second World War has produced mythologized and politicized historiographies to suit projects of national legitimation, as well as negation, across Europe. This phenomenon began in the immediate aftermath of the War, when both the former Eastern Bloc and Western European Countries built their legitimacy on an iconic representation of the fight against Fascism and Nazism. For postwar Yugoslavia, the anti-Fascist struggle was the powerful creation myth that dominated education and cultural politics.<sup>3</sup>

With the fall of Communism and the enlargement of the European Union, official re-visitations of national public memories and historiographies took place in many countries. But it was in Yugoslavia that revisionist historiographies of the War, among many other factors, tragically

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1 Augusta Dimou, ed., *“Transition” and the Politics of History Education in Southeast Europe*. George Eckert institute (Gottingen: V&R Unipress), 2009; Wolfgang Hopken, ed., *Oil on Fire? Textbooks, Ethnic Stereotypes and Violence in South Eastern Europe*. Georg Eckert Institute Studies on International Textbooks Research 89 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung), 1996; Christina Kolouri, ed., *Clio in the Balkans: The Politics of History Education* (Thessaloniki: Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe: 2002); Shkelzen Gashi, “Kosova 1912-2000 in the History Textbooks of Kosova and Serbia,” in *Civic and Uncivic Values in Kosova. History, Politics, and Value Transformation*, edited by Sabrina P. Sabrina, Albert Simkus, and Ola Listhaug (Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2015), 237-272 and “Kosova 1912-2000 in the History Textbooks of Kosova, Albania and Serbia” (Prishtina: KAHCR and KEC, 2012); Dubravka Stojanović, “Secanje protiv istorije. Udzenici istorije kao globalni problem,” *Београдски историјски гласник IV* (2013): 185-204 and “Konstrukcija prošlosti – slučaj srpskih udzbenika istorije,” *Genero*, 10-11 (2007): 51-61 and “Serbia: History to Order,” (2007). <http://chalkboard.tol.org/serbia-history-to-order/> (Accessed September 27, 2016); Marijana Toma, ed., *Forum za trazicionu pravdu - Udžbenici istorije u post-konfliktnim društvima: Obrazovanje za pomirenje?* (Beograd: Fond za humanitarno pravo, 2015).

2 Among others, Christian Karner and Bram Mertens, eds., *The Use and Abuse of Memory. Interpreting World War II in Contemporary European Politics* (Transaction Publishers: 2013) and Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, Claudio Fogu, eds., *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, (Duke University Press, 2006).

3 For a comprehensive discussion of the cultural construction of this creation myth see Andrew B. Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford University Press: 1998).

provided the justification for the breakdown of the country's super-national unity, and the wars of the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> In postwar Kosovo, whose statehood continues to be challenged by Serbia,<sup>5</sup> different historiographies of the Second World War feed on different national memories of this violent event, and often shape, and are shaped by, conflicting interpretations of the past six decades of Kosovo history. These historiographies thus have the potential to deepen mutual mistrust between Albanians and Serbs.

This research investigates some of the key actors who produce and transmit Albanian and Serbian historiographies and memories in Kosovo: the public high school teachers as “vectors of memory,”<sup>6</sup> the official carriers of their respective version of historical memory. The role of the teachers and their choices in the class presentation of history is crucial, at times even more important, than the actual textbooks. That is why we aim to attain a deeper understanding of these actors and their role in shaping contested pasts as related to the present, as well as their strategies for a political use of the past.<sup>7</sup>

This report consists of three parts. First, we explain how we designed the research (Chapter 2). Second, we present a review of the changing historiography of the Second World War in Yugoslavia, Serbia and Kosovo, as well as an analysis of the textbooks used by Serbian and Albanian teachers (Chapter 3). Third, we describe and analyze the in-depth interviews that we conducted with a random sample of high school teachers, whom we asked how do they discuss the Second World War in class; what use do they make of textbooks or other material; and how do they deal with the traumatic events of the War that occurred in Kosovo (Chapters 4 and 5).

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4 On the multiple factors that led to the breakup of Yugoslavia, including historiography, see Dejan Jović, “The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: A Critical Review of Explanatory Approaches,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 4, 1 (2001): 101-120 and Jasna Dragović Soso, “Why did Yugoslavia Disintegrate? An Overview of Contending Explanations,” in *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia's Dissolution*, co-edited with Lenard J. Cohen (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press: 2008), 1-39.

5 It is not only Serbia that has not recognized Kosovo, but only Serbia is important to mention here for the purposes of our research. To date, the independence of Kosovo has been recognized by 112 out of the 193 member states of the United Nations.

6 We use the term “vectors of Memory,” as deployed in the analysis of postwar France by Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Harvard University Press, 1991). See also Nancy Wood, *Vectors of Memory: Legacy of Trauma in Postwar Europe* (Oxford University Press: 1999).

7 Memories strategies are the focus of Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer, *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Memory Games* (Palgrave, 2013); Muriel Blaive, Christian Gerbel, and Thomas Lindenberger, eds., *Clashes in European Memory. The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust* (Studien Verlag: 2011); Malgorzata Pakier, and Stráth Bo, *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance* (Berghan Books: 2010).



## Chapter 2: About the Research

In the late spring and summer of 2016, we conducted in-depth interviews with a sample of history high school teachers in Kosovo, both Albanian and Serbian.

These two groups currently work under two different governments, The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Kosovo, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia. However, this separation was not always the case in the past, when some of the respondents worked under different education authorities and policies. We were mindful of this changeable institutional framework, which we briefly address in Chapter 3, when we interviewed individual teachers on how they teach the history of the Second World War, in particular as it played locally.

For the interviews, we prepared a skeleton of questions, but we did not use a questionnaire. Rather, we conducted conversations with the teachers, as we will explain below.

### *The Authors/Researchers*

Two teams of researchers designed the study overall, identified the samples, and conducted the interviews. All interviews were conducted in the language spoken by the interviewees.

The Albanian teachers were interviewed by: Anna Di Lellio, a professor of politics at New York University (NYU) and The New School in New York City, and the Director of the Kosovo Oral History Initiative; and Abit Hoxha, a media expert and Ph.D. Candidate in Journalism, and a well-known commentator on political and cultural issues in Kosovo. In four cases, the interviews were conducted by either team members alone, respectively two by Anna Di Lellio and two by Abit Hoxha.

The Serbian teachers were interviewed by Orli Fridman, a professor of politics at the Faculty of Media and Communications (FMK), Singidunum University, and the Director of the Center for Comparative Conflict Studies (CFCCS); and Srdjan Hercigonja, a junior scholar at the Center for Comparative Conflict Studies (CFCCS) at the Faculty of Media and Communications. Hercigonja holds a master's degree in Political Sciences. Fridman's interdisciplinary research in Peace and Conflict Studies and memory studies focuses on Serbia and Kosovo-Serbia relations.

### *The Interviewees*

We conducted a total of 25 interviews, divided in two samples: Albanian and Serbian teachers. The first group is larger, as the Albanian population in Kosovo is larger than the Serbian, and the number of schools is also greater.



Among Albanians, we conducted 17 interviews with teachers and 2 with history textbooks authors; of the teachers, 1 has recently become an education administrator, and 4 are retired. Among Serbs, we conducted 5 interviews with working teachers.<sup>8</sup>

The interviews are representative of regional, gender, and age differences.

- We decided in favor of a wide regional representation for the obvious reason of acquiring a comprehensive view of history education in Kosovo. Kosovo includes regions which are economically, politically and historically distinctive, and we began the research with the assumption that where teachers come from, or work in, would influence their work.
- We interviewed Serbian teachers in two locations: North Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica and Gračanica/Gračanica. Two of the interviewees live in the vicinity of Gračanica/Gračanica (about 15 kilometers away) and commute daily to the town from their village. Because the town is south of the Ibar river, in the vicinity of Prishtina/Priština, these teachers' social, cultural and political context is post-Independence Kosovo, in which they are integrated in varying degrees. The other three Serbian teachers work in North Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, that is, north of the Ibar, or the part of Kosovo which is contiguous with Serbia. Two of them live in town, while the third, who is originally from Kosovo and was displaced in 1999, commutes from Serbia proper. They are more distant from the Kosovo state, both literally and politically.
- Regional differences play a role among Albanians as well, and we included a wide range of them. We interviewed teachers from the southern part of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica and the nearby Vushtrri/Vučitrn; Skenderaj/Srbica, from the Drenica area; Peja/Peć and Klina, from the Dukagjini/Metohija region; Prizren; Gjakova/Djakovica and Gjilan/Gnjilane. As the capital and the largest urban center, the teachers of Prishtina/Priština are overrepresented.
- We aimed to ensure gender representation, though history teachers seem to be mostly male, and subsequently women are a minority in our samples: among the Serbian teachers, 1 is a woman, among the Albanians, 5.
- Both samples include teachers who began to work before 1999, when the recent war ended, and also the status of Kosovo changed, as well as the younger generation that started teaching only after the war. Reaching back to older generations of teachers allowed us to look at the teaching of history from the time of Yugoslavia until today, which includes the training of our respondents.

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<sup>8</sup> In addition, we conducted interviews with two history PhD students from North Mitrovica who are training to become history teachers, as well as one preparatory interview with a history teacher from Belgrade. The two history PhD students are about to become history teachers as they are finalizing their studies at the University of Prishtina currently based in Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica. The interview with the history teacher from Belgrade was conducted in order to pilot and identify the difference between history teaching in Serbia proper with that in Serbian high-schools in Kosovo.

### *Selection of respondents*

The respondents were chosen randomly and through snowball effect. We identified Albanian teachers without resorting to institutional contacts, to ensure more freedom of interaction with our respondents. We began by establishing a first round of interviewees on the basis of personal experience, knowledge and contacts, and then asked the respondents for further contacts.

The Serbian respondents were first contacted via phone and email, then they were contacted again by phone prior to arrival in Kosovo. Phone communications between Kosovo and Serbia have become more than just a technical issue, but rather a political one. Mobile phone calls from Belgrade, Serbia, to any location south of the Ibar river in Kosovo, entail placing an international call, as the Serbian mobile networks have been out of function in Kosovo for more than a decade.<sup>9</sup>

Among the Albanian teachers we contacted, there was a number who refused to participate and gave a variety of reasons for their refusal. Three teachers from Prishtina/Priština claimed they didn't have time. One from Gjilan/Gnjilane also declined, once we explained there would be a report published on the basis of the interviews. Despite several attempts, it was impossible to obtain the participation from any teacher based in Deçan/Dečani, where the local association of historians has been recently involved in a heated political debate over the history of the Serbian Orthodox monastery, and declined the invitation to be part of this research. One of these teachers also declined to participate once he heard that a foreign researcher would be involved.

All the Serbian teachers who were approached agreed to part take in the study. Only one teacher from Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica stated that he was not willing to speak with someone whose native language is “*Šiptar* language.”<sup>10</sup> Although the teacher claimed he would not be able to do so due to lack of knowledge of the Albanian language, what he meant was that if his participation in the study entailed speaking with an Albanian person, he would not be willing to be interviewed. Once he realized that the interviewers were from Belgrade he agreed to participate.

### *Dynamics Between Interviewers and Interviewees*

There is still a strong sense among Serbs in Kosovo that knowledge is centered in Belgrade. This created an interesting dynamic with the interviewers, as the participants from time to time would make reference to the University of Belgrade or Serbia as the source of knowledge, and also to us, the researchers, as knowing this fact, as in, “You are from Belgrade, you know.” All the teachers who participated in our interviews fully cooperated with us and genuinely made an effort to reply to our questions, to share their positions, experiences and thoughts.

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<sup>9</sup> This is not the case with the local landlines in Kosovo that are still all in the +381 country code, and so calling from Belgrade to Kosovo by landline is still a local call. Recent new headlines suggest that Kosovo may get its landline with a new +383 country code.

<sup>10</sup> *Šiptar* is a Serbian derogatory term for Albanian.

Our experience in conducting research in Northern Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica was very different from our experience in Gračanica/Gračanica. As two outsiders, as a citizen of Israel living and working in Belgrade, and a native Belgrader, citizen of Serbia, our position and intentions needed to be explained or stated in the Northern part of Kosovo. Northern Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica is a somewhat closed community, detached from Prishtina/Priština, where we stayed while in Kosovo. Arriving from the capital, we could not enter the city with the car, and had to cross the bridge by foot. It was our sense that in this town, almost anyone coming from the outside, especially if they ask questions, are considered odd visitors and are somewhat suspected. Gračanica/Gračanica, on the other hand, is a 10 minutes car ride from the capital. There is no such sense of a closed community. The daily exchange and commute between this municipality and Prishtina/Priština has been somewhat normalized in recent years. There was no sense of suspicion towards us, on the contrary, there was even some interest in talking to us, as we were welcomed at the school. Out of 3 teachers we contacted, we succeeded in interviewing 2.

All the interviews in Gračanica/Gračanica were conducted at the school, in one classroom. The interviews in North Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica were conducted in coffee shops, while in one case we met the teacher at the school, in the teachers' room/space, and were very warmly welcomed by the only female participant in the study.

No such dynamic was present during the interviews with the Albanian teachers. We interviewed Albanian teachers both in schools and in coffee shops, it depended on the time of the interviews. If interviews had been scheduled after school, they happened in coffee shops, otherwise they took place in schools, or in two cases in an education center.

In addition to the interviews, we were able to visit some classrooms. In Vushtrri/Vučitrn, we observed a 10th grade history class, though not focused on the Second World War, while in Skenderaj/Srbica and Prishtina/Priština we met with respectively a 10th grade class and a 12th grade class and conducted a conversation with the students.

### *The Interviews*

The interviews consisted of two parts. In the first, we asked the teachers how did they study the Second World War and what do they remember of their history education. We then asked general questions on how did they teach or currently teach the history of the Second World War.

We were mindful that they liked to talk about references in a broader sense, and we felt that they consistently assumed that the questions were about historical events in general, and not about the actual teaching method and content. Teachers also tended to give broad answers to questions on the events of the Second World war, but they also used anecdotal terminology and narrative. They did not hesitate to speak about the alternative sources they use, such as anecdotes, oral history accounts from witnesses, and the media. When asked more specifically how do they explain those different sources to the students in relation to the textbooks, the answers differed.

The last part of the interviews was designed to confront teachers with the content of history textbooks and known scholarly historiography of the Second World War. We thought that re-constructive interviews would be likely to generate more accurate and relevant answers than the ones obtained in the general part of the interviews.

Among Albanian teachers, this part of the interview generated factual debates regarding textbooks, the authors of textbooks, and discrepancies in actual teaching and historiography. Generally, this is when they disagreed with the content of the textbooks, complained about the small number of hours dedicated to the teaching of the Second World War, but also answered in a defensive mode or contradicted what they had previously said.

In the case of Serbian teachers, particularly those from Northern Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, we faced a level of discontent for posing questions challenging the popular narrative that constructs Serbs as the only anti-Fascists, and Albanians as all collaborators with the occupation forces. The majority of Serbian teachers did express some dissatisfaction with the content of the textbooks, and they did complain about the small numbers of hours dedicated to the Second World War, and the fact that often they would need to rush through this part of the curriculum as it appears towards the end of the academic year, when students are already less attentive.

### *Challenges and dilemmas*

We are aware of the fact that in order to obtain a more objective perspective on how teachers teach history, we would have needed systematic class observation, since the interviews with individual teachers did mostly provide us with a subjective representation of their work. However, we thought that class observation would present serious challenges and biases as well, because the presence of an outside observer does change the classroom dynamic, and especially in Kosovo, where history has been and is highly politicized. We found confirmation of our belief in the course of the interview process, as several teachers complained of political pressure, both in the past and in current times, and of lack of freedom of speech in the classroom. Taking into account subjective biases, the in-depth interviews we conducted still constitute a solid collection of data and information on teaching practices.

One challenge was the selection of Albanian teachers in Kosovo and the categorization of their experience, mainly due to the informal teaching that occurred during the 1990s (See Chapter 3). Because most of the schooling was held informally, in buildings such as basements and private houses, no documentation of experience or administrative record exists from that time. A good number of teachers never received recognition for their volunteer teaching of history and therefore it is very difficult to calculate the exact years of their teaching experience. They explain that during the 1990s they were not under contractual arrangement nor were they always paid. For these reasons, we decided to divide our respondents between those who taught also before the 1999 war, and those who only taught after the war. This temporal distinction reflects significant changes in the political contexts, which we wanted to take into accounts because we hypothesized that teachers taught history differently at different times. We refer to the period from the end of the Second World War until 1990 as the Yugoslav period; to the decade of the 1990s until 1999 as the time of parallel education; and to the post 1999 war as post war teaching of history.

One of the biggest challenges while setting-up the interviews with the Serbian history teachers was the possible refusal we could have encountered due to fact that the research was also taking place among Albanian teachers. Having in mind the ethical principles of scientific research, we did explain what the research was about and what areas did it cover. However, while addressing and approaching the interviewees, in many cases we had to use terms such as Kosovo and Metohija rather than Kosovo, terms that otherwise we would not use in our daily communica-

tion and research. Additionally, we also had to emphasize that the research itself was not conducted or financed by Kosovo's authorities, otherwise our request for interviews would have likely been rejected. This was particularly the case of Northern Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, where our team found itself in very nationalistic surrounding, in which we had to adjust to the given context to successfully conduct the research.

### *Ethics*

We explained the research project in details to each interviewee before the interview took place, giving them the right to withdraw from the interview and giving them the choice not to answer any question they wished to be silent about. We did not use paper based consent forms knowing the cultural context of the region and experience that people are very hesitant and suspicious of giving out signatures in documents. Instead, we asked the interviewees for their oral consent and agreement to use the interview for academic purpose and we ensured anonymity.

## Chapter 3: Historiographies of the Second World War in Yugoslavia, Serbia and Kosovo - 1945 to the present

While this research is about current teaching of the Second World War in Kosovo, we felt that we needed to address the changeable past historiographies of that event across a longer time period, that is, beginning with 1945. There are two reasons why we believe this broader context is necessary:

- First, because there is a link between the breakdown of Yugoslav historiography of the Second World War and the breakdown of Yugoslav national unity. Thus we must begin from the cultural appropriation of the powerful postwar Yugoslavia's creation myth: Tito's Communist partisans as a model of "active victimhood,"<sup>11</sup> the perfect foundational figures for a "country born from the war,"<sup>12</sup> and the perfect signifiers of supranational union, as brothers in arms fighting to free all nations from Fascism ("brotherhood and unity"). The historiography of the Second World War was the tool of the new multinational state of Yugoslavia's "strategy of identity management."<sup>13</sup> To do so, it reduced to a Manichean struggle between good (the Communist partisans) and evil (the Fascists but also all the non-Communist anti-Fascist forces), the complex dynamics of the War, which had been, like everywhere in Europe, a national but also an ideological and a civil war.<sup>14</sup> Naturally, it suppressed all other counter-narratives.
- Second, looking at the Yugoslav changing historiography of the War through the postwar period provides us with a clearer perspective on the current Albanian and Serbian historiographies of the same event. When Yugoslavia collapsed, its official historiography and public memory were not suddenly replaced in Kosovo by new and homogenizing alternative ones: the mutually exclusive Albanian and Serbian narratives. Tensions were present within each national group even before the crisis of the 1990s, as they always are even in homogenizing memories, and they continue to exist in the present time.<sup>15</sup> The review we present below aim to highlight some of these tensions, as they remain subterranean without completely disappearing, or become re-energized at particular times.

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11 Miranda Jakiša, "On Partisans and Partisanship in Yugoslavia's Art," In *Partisans in Yugoslavia. Literature Films and Visual Culture*, edited by Miranda Jakiša and Nikica Gilić (Transcript: 2015), 9-30, 17.

12 As declared in the final lines of Yugoslavia's most prized film production of the sixties, *The Battle of Neretva*.

13 Wolfgang Hoepken, "War Memory and Education in a Fragmented Society: The Case of Yugoslavia," *East European Politics and Societies*, 13, 1 (Winter 1999): 190- 227, 196.

14 We take the notion of civil war in this context from the critical work of two major Italian intellectuals: Norberto Bobbio and Claudio Pavone, *Sulla guerra civile. La resistenza a due voci* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2015) and Claudio Pavone, "La seconda guerra mondiale: una guerra civile Europea?" In *Guerre Fratricide. Le guerre civili in età contemporanea*, edited by Gabriele Ranzato, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1994), 86-128.

15 This was true elsewhere in Europe. Notable examples for the important scholarly work on the subject are: France, where the transformation of the memory of the occupation and the resistance began in the 1970s, see Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*; and Italy, with the perspective of the "memoria divisa" [divided memory] of the resistance, and its reframing as a "civil war," see among others Giovanni Contini, *La Memoria divisa* (Rizzoli, 1997); Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile: saggio storico sulla moralità della resistenza* (Bollati Boringhieri, 1991); and Alessandro Portelli, *L'ordine e' già stato eseguito: Roma, le Fosse Ardeatine e la memoria* (Donzelli, 1999). More in general, Aleida Assmann, "Europe's Divided Memory," In *Clashes in European Memory. The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust*, edited by Muriel Blaive, Christian Gerbel, and Thomas Lindenberger (Studien Verlag, 2011), 270-80.

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## Phase I – 1945-1980

The historiography of the Second World War from the end of the war until Tito's death followed the state-sanctioned interpretative framework that idealized the communist partisans, presenting their opponents and non-communist actors in the war as undeveloped negative caricatures; neglected to address the ethnic and civil war dimensions of the war; and steered away from certain taboos, such as dealing with the partisans' use of violence.<sup>16</sup> The credo of the heroic and brotherly-like partisans as the foundation of supranational Yugoslav citizenship remained officially unshaken through Tito's death.

There were a few exceptions, which revealed subterranean national tensions. In the early 1960s, a debate developed among historians about which national group had been the first to start the resistance and which had been the most collaborationist, with a focus on Serbs and Croats, but it quickly fizzled.<sup>17</sup> In 1972 a very popular *History of Yugoslavia* by Dedijer et al., published in the aftermath of a nationalist movement in Croatia and subsequent purges, opened a broader confrontation among historians about the respective contribution to the war efforts by different national groups.<sup>18</sup> A criticism of how the Second World War was treated in this book reproached it for its marginalization of non Serbs in the liberation movement.<sup>19</sup>

In this debate, the Belgrade-educated Kosovo historian Ali Hadri took the defense of Kosovo, and noted that this book did not mention Kosovo among the regions that participated in the partisan war until 1943, at the time of the famous battles of Neretva and Sutjeska, nor did it give any credit to the local forces of the national liberation army in the liberation of Kosovo in 1944.<sup>20</sup> "The pursuit of politics through historiography wound down by the middle of the 1970s, at the time of Tito's last legislative effort."<sup>21</sup>

Because Kosovo became a province of the republic Serbia in 1945, through the period under review here, it was Serbia that decided its education policies. Albanians, who had earned for the first time the right to be educated in their language, at first continued to be taught by the teachers – and the books – that had come from the Italians-occupied Albania during the war, spreading a nationalist narrative. Only in 1948, after the break between Tito and Enver Hoxha, Serbia began to exert a stronger control on education. Hundreds of Albanian teachers were expelled and books replaced by translations of Serbian textbooks into Albanian.<sup>22</sup>

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16 Hoepke, "War Memory," 198.

17 Michael B. Petrovich, "Continuing Nationalism in Yugoslav Historiography," *Nationalities Papers* Vol. VI, 2, (Fall 1978): 161-178, 173. In 1964 Tito reproached historians for debating the merits of each Yugoslav nation's history at the Eighth Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, see Ivo Banac, "Yugoslavia," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 97, 4 (1992): 1084-1104, 1087 and Wayne S. Vucinich, "Nationalism and Communism," In *Contemporary Yugoslavia: Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment*, edited by Wayne Vucinich (University of California Press, 1969), 277-78.

18 Petrovich, "Continuing Nationalism," 164. Vladimir Dedijer, Ivan Božić, Sima Ćircović and Milorad Ekmečić, [*Istorija Jugoslavije 1972*] *History of Yugoslavia* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1974).

19 Ibid., 168.

20 Ali Hadri, "Vështrim Kritik Lidhur me 'Historinë e Jugosllavisë'". In *Marrëdhëniet Shiptare-Jugosllave*, (Akademia Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës: 2003), 85-140, 132-138.

21 Ivo Banac, "Yugoslavia," 1092.

22 S. Kojćini-Ukaj. *Kuadri arsimor shiptar në Kosovë në shënjestrën e sigurimit shtetërore (1945-1951)*. Prishtinë, Instituti e Historisë, 1997, quoted in Denisa Kostovicova, *Kosovo. The Politics of Identity and Space* (Routledge, 2005), 40.

The history books of the postwar Serbian curriculum that students in Kosovo read until 1980 extolled the heroic qualities of the partisans and carefully avoided assigning blame for the violence occurred during the Second World War to any national group.<sup>23</sup> These themes were not to be found only of history books, but pervaded also the literature curriculum, a new canon subject to Stalinist-style control, which took a crucial role in the effort at schooling the new Yugoslav nation.<sup>24</sup>

Albanian students read the Serbian language required literature of the partisan resistance, whether in Serbian or in Albanian translation, thanks to the newly formed publishing house *Rilindja*. There was also a body of children literature, written by Albanian writers, based both in Kosovo and Albania, who participated in building the dominant narrative of a shared “active victimhood,” focused on children heroes engaged as partisans or fighters against various evil powers.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Devolution of Education in the late 1960s and early 1970s***

Kosovo’s curriculum continued to be decided by Serbia until the first major devolution of authority over education issues in 1967, and enjoyed even greater autonomy after the 1974 Constitution. In 1975 Kosovo acquired its own Educational Council. Yet, this provincial autonomy had its limits, since the League of Communists centrally controlled curricula, and was vigilant in rejecting any deviation.<sup>26</sup>

But with the autonomy achieved by Kosovo in 1974, the creation of an intense cultural cooperation with Albania followed suit. A program of academic exchanges and a freer circulation of books injected more Albanian history in the Kosovo curriculum. The overall result was the reproduction in Kosovo of the Enverist Albanian historiography, of which the Second World War was one of the main pillars.<sup>27</sup>

This development did not fundamentally change the Yugoslav interpretation of the Second World War. Books coming from Albania were in fact no less ideologically charged than the Yugoslav books, since the development of the Albanian scholarly tradition of historians in the postwar period was tightly linked to the legitimation of the Communist regime.<sup>28</sup>

23 An excellent analysis of 8<sup>th</sup> grade books in Serbia is by Tamara Pavašević Trost, “History Textbooks as Sites of Construction and Contestation: Croatia and Serbia 1974-2010,” ASN Convention April 15-18, 2010, Unpublished paper, cited with permission of the author.

24 Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 134-140. There was an effort to collect documentation and literature on partisan war for both political and education purposes, see Wayne S. Vucinich, “Postwar Yugoslav Historiography,” *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 23, 1 (March 1951): 41-57.

25 Baton Domi. *Yugoslav Children’s Books in Albanian: the Attempt to Build a Yugoslav National Identity in Post WWII Kosova*. Thesis submitted to the Kosova Institute of Journalism and Communication, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Journalism, August/ 2011.

26 Kostovicova, *The Politics of Identity*, 42.

27 See for this Oliver Jens Schmitt, who lists the Second World War among the pillars of Albanian historiography, together with the Illyro-Albanian continuity, Skanderbeg’s state building, and the national Awakening (*Rilindja*), “Historiography in Post-Independence Kosovo,” in *Civic and Uncivic Values*, 57. For the adoption in Kosovo of uncritical view of the Albanian national narrative, based on an ideological construction of heritage, and the exaltation of tradition, see Shkelzen Maliqi, “Hapësire kulturore shqiptare,” in *Nyja e Kosovës. As Vllasi. As Millosheviqi* (Lubljana: Knjižna zbirka KRT, 1990), 220-22.

28 Only after the Second World War did the Enver Hoxha regime start to train the scholars who would take



Not unlike Yugoslavia, the war of national liberation against Fascism under the guidance of the Communist Party, in particular of its leader Enver Hoxha, had become the strongest foundational myth of modern Albania. Albanian Communists demonized the non-Communist opposition to Fascism in the history books, and militarily and politically suppressed any remnants of it.

Kosovo's newly acquired autonomy in Yugoslavia coincided also with the height of Kosovo economic and social development, as well as integration in the Yugoslav system. In this context, *Kosovo/Kosova*, a collaborative project between local Albanian and Serbian scholars, proposes a storyline of the Second World War that is heavily symbolic of "unity and brotherhood," and where any non-Communist resistance is called "reactionary."<sup>29</sup>

A history of the Albanian people by Ali Hadri, published in 1966, also proposes the narrative of the partisan war as the unifying factor for different nations.<sup>30</sup> The same author produced a leather-bound, limited edition of the history of the anti-Fascist war of liberation in Gjakova/Djakovica, as well as a comprehensive history of the partisan resistance in Kosovo.<sup>31</sup>

In Hadri's texts, conflicts internal to Yugoslavia are determined by class and ideology, not ethnicity. If the recruitment of Albanians into the anti-Fascist war by the Communist Party was difficult, it was because of the fear of returning to "Old Yugoslavia" - read bourgeois and repressive - and not because of hatred for Serbia. Hadri portrayed the unification of Albanian populated lands by Italian Fascists as the work of a "quisling" government, lacking popular support. He celebrated Albanian partisans, and called "reactionary" and "quisling" those Albanian, such as the leaders of the Second League of Prizren, who opposed the partisan movement to pursue Albanian national unification. Finally, he identifies as "counterrevolutionary" the Albanians who towards the end of the war fought against the Yugoslav partisans in Drenica, Ferizaj/Uroševac and Gjilan/Gnjilane, where grave episodes of violence took place.<sup>32</sup>

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## Phase II – 1980-1990

After the death of Tito in 1980, the memory of the Second World War, which had been used to legitimize Yugoslavia and its leadership, came openly under attack. As the Republics struggled to gain more autonomy and eventually independence, they also nationalized the memory of the War, which in fact turned into "political capital" for the use of national political elites.<sup>33</sup> The most intense confrontation in the circles of historians was between Serbia and Croatia, with a

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up the task of writing Albanian history and, from the outset, the profession was strongly influenced by a project of state building legitimated by the partisan war. On Albanian historiography, see Ducellier, Alain. "Les Études Historiques en République Populaire d'Albanie." In *L'Albanie entre Byzance et Venise, Xe-XVe Siècles*, 125-144. Variorum Reprints, 1987. The highest achievement of the new historians was the multivolume *Historia e Shqipërisë* (Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë. Instituti i Historisë, 1959), by Pollo, Buda, Frashëri and Islami 1959.

29 See the space dedicated to the story of Boris (Boro) Vukmirović and Ramiz Sadiku, executed in 1943 and stand-ins for Albanian-Serbian good relationship: Albanians collaborators with the Nazis tried to divide them and spare Ramiz's life because of his nationality, but the two comrades decided to die together.

30 Ali Hadri, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar për shkollën filllore* (Prishtinë: Enti i Teksteve dhe i Mjeteve Mësimore i Krahinës Socialiste Autonome të Kosovës, 1966).

31 Ali Hadri, *Lëvizja Nacionalçlirimtare në Kosovë, 1941-1945* (Prishtinë, 1971) and *Gjakova në LNÇ* (Prishtinë: Bashkësia e Institucioneve Shkencore të KSA të Kosovës, 1974).

32 Hadri, *Lëvizja Nacionalçlirimtare*, 189-193

33 Hoepken, "War Memory," 206.

focus on collaboration and genocide.<sup>34</sup>

But a confrontation took place also between Serbs and Albanians on Kosovo history, and took a rather dramatic turn on the occasion of the 1980 publication of the *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*. Serbian members of the editorial board complained about the two entries, “Albanians” and “Albanian-Yugoslav Relationships,” which had been authored by Kosovo scholars, and reformulated the entries. They then asked subscribers of the Encyclopedia to add their revised versions to the volume.<sup>35</sup> Worth noticing for our purposes are the Serbian historians’ complaints about the representation of Serbian-Albanian relationships as too idyllically collaborative, and the exaggeration of Albanians’ participation in the partisan war.<sup>36</sup> In their version, there is not participation.

The battle over history was only a prelude to things to come. The 1981 demonstrations, begun in the University of Pristina as protests of the Albanian students, quickly turned into a movement calling for the Kosovo Republic, the first time that Albanian nationalist militants publicly expressed this demand. The demonstrations were followed by harsh repression. An Action Program of the League of Communists of Kosovo adopted the following education policies: purges of teachers in university and secondary schools and a review, based on Marxist analysis, of curricula, textbooks, theses, and all academic publications. Indeed, the purges removed schools teachers deemed disloyal to Yugoslavia, and books by Albanian authors were banned. The 1974 opening of cultural exchanges between Kosovo and Albania was completely shut down, and all books imported from Albania were removed, as the tools of “indoctrination with alien ideologies,” as *Tanjug* wrote.<sup>37</sup>

From 1982, the mention of national groups in connection to violence and danger during the Second World War, as the enemies of the only good fighters, the partisans, appeared for the first time in Serbian textbooks that were also used in Kosovo. These enemies were the Croat Fascist *ustaaše*; the *četnicks*, proponents of Greater Serbia; and the Albanian nationalist *ballists*, but they were still described in a balanced fashion. Partisan heroes from different nationalities are also mentioned. After 1988, Serbian textbooks introduced the anti-Yugoslav notion of Greater Albania as the explicit goal of Albanian *ballists*.<sup>38</sup>

The narrative of Serbian victimization in Kosovo took center place in the aftermath of Tito’s death, proposing a reevaluation of the Yugoslav partisan mythology. The new reading of the most popular book on the partisan experience included in the school curriculum, Dobrica Ćosić’s *Daleko je sunce* [Far Away is the Sun 1950], is a point in case of such transformation.<sup>39</sup> Through the confrontation between the partisan leader Pavle and the captured *četnick* Vasić, his former school friends, Dobrica Ćosić’s raised the question of whether the revolution should

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34 Bette Denich, “Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide,” *American Ethnologist*, 21 (2) 1994: 367-390.

35 A copy of the Encyclopedia consulted at the Columbia University Library has the entry “*Albanci.Ime*” (Albanians. Name) on p. 72, but the following page, an obvious attachment, is numbered p. 1, with the entry “*Albanci (alb. Shqiptarët). Ime*,” which continues until p. 12, to be followed by p. 73. A similar layout can be found after p. 86, with the entry “*Albansko-Jugoslavenski (Jugoslovenski) Odnosi*” (Albanian-Yugoslav Relations), which is followed by p. 1 of the rewrite of the same entry.

36 Ali Hadri, “Përgjigje Vërejtjeve Lidhur me Tekstet Historike të Njësive “Shqiptarët” dhe “Marrëdhëniet Shiptare-Jugosllave” në Enciklopedinë e Jugosllavisë,” in *Marrëdhëniet Shiptare-Jugosllave*, 23-84.

37 The presentation of these events is drawn from Kostovicova, *The Politics of Identity*, 53.

38 Pavasović Trost, “History Textbooks,” 19.

39 Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 150-153.

be fought at the price of betraying one's own community. While the canonical interpretation of this exchange always favored Pavle's communist cosmopolitanism, in 1991 the possibility that the author favored the ethnically rooted Vasić instead appeared very real, and so the inversion of the myth.

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### **Phase III – From 1990 to the War**

In 1989, a revision of the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution abolished Kosovo autonomy and practically ended any relationship between Serbian state authorities and the Kosovo leadership. Parallel educational systems emerged, which were both physically and legally separated, with Serbian speakers attending schools according to a Serbian state curriculum, and Albanian speakers mostly schooled at home, following a different curriculum.

What followed was the production and consumption of completely different historiographies of the Second World War, mobilized to reject the myth of Yugoslavia and advance the idea that each nation had been victimized but never did commit any crime.

It is in this decade that Albanian historiography began to deny Albanian participation in the Kosovo partisan movement; excuse collaboration with the Fascist and Nazi occupation as a patriotic duty; and portray Serbian partisans as genocidal forces. Serbian historiography presented Albanians as Fascist and Nazi collaborationists who attempted the genocide of the Serbian nation in Kosovo.

#### ***Serbian Books***

The analysis of the Serbian history textbooks published during the 1990s and after 2000 clearly indicates the reproduction of the dominant state narrative on recent history. As Dubravka Stojanović states, "Serbian politicians perceive history teaching in public schools 'as an instrument for shaping historical memory and national consciousness in order to achieve predetermined national goals and purposes'".<sup>40</sup>

During the 1990s, history teaching and history textbooks reflected an "ideological confusion," a confusion that characterized Serbian politics and society in that period.<sup>41</sup> Unlike other countries of Eastern and Central Europe, the first history textbooks published in 1993 maintained Communist ideological patterns. However, they were adjusted to the political developments of that time, as the war broke out in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, a combination of nationalism and Communism shaped the political framework of the first post-Yugoslav Serbian textbooks, what Dubravka Stojanović names, "Communism with a National Face."

From 1990 on, the threat of Albanian separatism took a more prominent role in connection with the Second World War. History textbooks introduced in 1993 in Serbia referred back to the "genocide" of the Second World War and compared it with the current war: "the situation

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40 Dubravka Stojanović, "Serbia: History to Order." <http://chalkboard.tol.org/serbia-history-to-order/> (accessed September 27, 2016).

41 Dubravka Stojanović, "Konstrukcija prošlosti," 52.

42 Ibid., 52.

from 1941 is practically identical.”<sup>43</sup>

These books introduced details of Fascist Greater Albania’s terror over the Serbian population, with the violent mass expulsion of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo. They read the proclamation of the National Liberation Council for Kosovo and Metohija at the Conference of Bujan (Dec 1943-Jan 1944), asking for Kosovo self-determination, and the 1945 uprising in Drenica, against partisans’ orders of fighting the Germans in the north, as yet other instances of Albanian separatism. As representative of a chain of events attempting to erase the trace of Serbs in Kosovo, what happened in Bujan and Drenica was compared to the more contemporary alleged plans to cleanse Kosovo of Serbs. Albanian separatism in fact became a subsection of the books.<sup>44</sup>

Serbian textbook do not make any mention of partisan violence in Kosovo or of Kosovo’s political scene once Fascist Italy capitulated.<sup>45</sup> Tito was marginalized and he and the whole partisan movement were accused of crimes, especially in the period after the War. Draza Mihajlović, the *četnik* leader, is introduced for the first time in neutral terms, and his band is presented side by side to the partisans, and there is barely any mention of *četnik* crimes during the Second World War, while the focus shifted towards atrocities committed by the partisans.<sup>46</sup>

### ***Albanian Books***

The 1990 physical separation of schools according to nationalities and the constitution of Albanian schools in a parallel system outside the authority of state law gave unprecedented freedom to Albanians to pursue their own national education and develop an independent historiography from Serbia. As in Serbia, history was used in Kosovo to build an official Albanian national narrative based on two major tropes: consistent victimhood, and the enduring heroic fight for independence, from Serbia above all.

In the textbooks of the Kosovo parallel system of education, there was no ideological confusion about Communism, just an utter rejection of it, at least in its Yugoslav form. On the contrary, the national unification of Albanian lands, which include Albania, Kosovo, Southern Serbia, and parts of Macedonia and Montenegro, which was realized first during the Italian occupation of 1941-43, shed a new, positive light on the Fascist occupiers.

Textbooks presented the consequence of the Second World War as the re-conquest of Kosovo by Serbia and the establishment of a system of terror and genocide that caused massive losses, up to tens of thousands.<sup>47</sup> For the new history books, the Declaration of Bujan of the end of 1943, in which the National Liberation Council for Kosovo and Metohija “expressed the political will of the people of Kosovo for self-determination and unification with Albania,” was crucial, right because it delegitimized Serbia’s post-war annexation of Kosovo.<sup>48</sup>

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43 Dubravka Stojanović, “Construction of Historical Consciousness, The Case of Serbian History Textbooks,” In *Balkan Identities: Nations and Memory*, edited by Maria Todorova (Hurst, 2004), 330.

44 Pavasovic Trost, “History Textbooks,” 22.

45 Gashi, *Kosova 1912-2000 in the History Textbooks*, 27.

46 Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc and Tampara Pavasović Trost, “Who Were the Anti-Fascists? Divergent Interpretations of WWII in Contemporary Post-Yugoslav History Textbooks” in *The Use and Abuse of Memory: Interpreting World War II in Contemporary European Politics*, ed. Christian Karner and Bram Mertens (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publisher), 185.

47 Kostovicova, *The Politics of Identity*, 149.

48 Ibid., 144.

All books, which presented a narrative of constant confrontation between Serbs and Albanians, highlighted the resistance of Albanians to socialist Yugoslavia with the rise of the National Democratic Committee of Albanians, a movement founded in 1945 and liquidated almost immediately in a spectacular show trial in Prizren.

Beside textbooks, a new production of history books developed in the 1990s, with a focus on politically charged taboo topics, which during Yugoslavia had been kept alive by the oral tradition, outside official teaching. Among them, the view of the anti-Fascist war of liberation as a strategy of Serbian re-conquest of Kosovo, after the hiatus of the Italian and German occupation; the memory of a “*četnik*-partisan” massacres in Drenica and of the war between the anti-Fascist liberation army against recruits led by Shaban Polluzha in the winter of 1945; and a massacre of forcibly recruited Albanian civilians in the Montenegrin city of Bar (Tivari in Albanian) at the end of March 1945.<sup>49</sup>

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## Phase IV – Post-war period

In the postwar period, the educational system of Kosovo went through a series of transformations, moving from various forms of international supervision to an independent Minister of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in 2008.<sup>50</sup> None of those entities governing education ever extended over areas where Serbs live, whether south of the Ibar River or the region of Northern Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica. There, the Ministry of Education of Serbia<sup>51</sup> continued to appoint teachers as well as provide directives on curricula and textbooks. This separation of the two school systems is sanctioned in post-independent Kosovo by the Constitution, which grants wide autonomy to Serbian majority municipalities, including the right for education to be administered by the Serbian government.

### *Serbian Books*

After 2000 and the fall of Milošević, history teaching and history textbooks were revised again in Serbia. First, the interpretation of the history of Yugoslavia dramatically changed, particularly the interpretations of the history of Socialist Yugoslavia. Logically, the most revisionist changes were introduced in relation to the official history of the Second World War. Since the Second Yugoslavia was created during the war itself, the interpretations on this war had to be re-shaped.

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49 Among others, Muhamet Shatri, *Kosova në luftën e dytë botërore 1941-1945* (Toena, 1997); Muhamet Piraku, *Ripushtimi Jugosllav i Kosovës 1945* (1992); Sabile Keçmezi-Basha, *Lëvizja Ilegale Patriotike Shqiptare në Kosovë (1945-1947)* (1998).

50 After the 1999 NATO intervention, Serbia's sovereignty over Kosovo was temporarily suspended by UNSC Resolution 1244, and a United Nations Mission (UNMIK) took over the administration of Kosovo. In 2000, UNMIK established an Administrative Department of Education and Science (UNMIK/REG/2000/11, 3 March 2000), which was headed by a foreign diplomat (Principal International Officer). In March 2002, the first Minister of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) was appointed, though still part of a Temporary Self-Government Institutions, thus not independent from UNMIK administrative monitoring because Kosovo had no independent status. The story of the first attempts at governing education in Kosovo after the war is richly told in UNESCO, *Parallel Worlds: Rebuilding the Education System in Kosovo*, 2004. <http://www.unesco.org/iiep/PDF/pubs/kosovo.pdf>

51 In 1999, Serbia was a federal unit of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; from 2003 until 2006 Serbia was in a state union with Montenegro. From 2006, Serbia has been an independent country, after Montenegro decided to leave the state union.

In the case of Serbia, the most dramatic changes affected the interpretation of the roles partisans and *četniks* had during the Second World War, and the role of Dragoljub Draža Mihajlović, the *četnik* leader, as well as the role of General Milan Nedić, who served as the President of the Serbian Puppet Government during the Nazi-German occupation. The *četnik* movement is portrayed as equally anti-Fascist as the partisan movement, while General Nedić is portrayed as someone who helped the Serbian refugees escaping from the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). The main purpose of these changes in history teaching and history textbooks was to break ties with the Yugoslav official history and narrative, and to offer a new national history of the Independent Serbian State.

It seems that the Kosovo “problem” and the Second World War were then at the heart of the changing discourse on Serbian history, where a nationalist narrative was introduced to emphasize the historical Serbs’ “collective suffering,” physical danger, and the necessity to take up arms.”<sup>52</sup> In Kosovo, there is the strong victimization narrative of Kosovo Serbs, who were subjugated through terror, just to stay with modern history, during the Second World War, during Socialist Yugoslavia, and after the 1999 NATO intervention. Yet, the most highlighted and discussed narrative of Serbian victimization is related to the Second World War genocide in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH); the events in Independent State of Croatia dominate over all others in the geographical space of former Yugoslavia in relation to the narrative of victimization.

What methods were used for these revisions and changes in history teaching and history textbooks in Serbia? And how was the new past constructed? Stojanović identified four levels of manipulation of historical facts that led to the construction of the recent past in Serbia:

1. The adjustment of history textbooks to the daily political needs: some facts are being simply erased. For example, what connected the people of Yugoslavia in the past is ignored, neglected and marginalized, while the focus is on the disintegration processes: wars, conflicts, political disagreements. As a consequence of the strong anti-communist narrative that became rather strong, particularly after 2000, facts related to the Second World War were systematically changed.<sup>53</sup> The question of war crimes: there is barely any mention of *četnik* crimes, while the focus shifts towards atrocities committed by the partisans.<sup>54</sup>
2. The processes of introducing new concepts of Serbian historical and national collective self-awareness: the creation of the stereotypical image of “our own nation and its position in history.” The focus in this identified process is on the “victorious nature of our own nation,” and on the concept of the nation-victim.<sup>55</sup>
3. The very nature of history is presented as a determined flow of events, in which it is not possible to influence the predetermined historical flows.<sup>56</sup>

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52 Hoepke, “War Memory,” 209.

53 Stojanović, *Konstrukcija prošlosti*, 53.

54 Mihajlović Trbovc and Pavasović Trost, “Who Were the Anti-Fascists?,” 184. Divergent Interpretations of WWII in Contemporary Post-Yugoslav History Textbooks,” in *The Use and Abuse of Memory: Interpreting World War II in Contemporary European Politics*, edited by Christian Karner and Bram Mertens (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publisher, 2013), 184.

55 Stojanović, *Konstrukcija prošlosti – slucaj srpskih udzbenika istorije*, 57.

56 Ibid., 59. Stojanović’s argument here pedagogically speaking is that when students are presented with history as a linear chain of events, then students are unable to develop or acquire any tools for critical thinking.

4. Finally, the inter-connectivity between the process of re-shaping the post-Yugoslav collective memories in Serbia and the official history taught in schools begs our attention. Le Goff, quoted by Stojanović: “Controlling remembrance, memory and forgetting have always been the most important task for classes, groups and individuals who dominated, or still dominate the societies, no matter what part of history is concerned.”<sup>57</sup>

The analysis of the three history textbooks shows that the events in Kosovo during the Second World War are covered quite superficially. While in some textbooks there are almost 10 pages about the events that occurred in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), the situation in Kosovo is covered only in small sub-chapters. We can identify the following common statements found in all three textbooks:

- During the Second World War, the project of Greater Albania was accomplished thanks to Fascist Italy;
- Albanians were on the Fascist side during the war, since they had the support of Mussolini’s Italy;
- Terror over Serbian population led to mass killings and the expulsion of Serbian civilians;
- There is no mention of Albanian victims.

The textbooks place Kosovo in the broader context of the occupation of Yugoslavia by Nazi Germany and its allies, and stress out the partition of the “First Yugoslavia.” Consequently, Kosovo is annexed from Yugoslav lands and is occupied and annexed by Fascist Italian Albania. Serbian textbooks mention atrocities committed by Albanians and Fascists forces. For example, in the 2013 Ljušić & Dimić’s textbook, there is the subsection entitled, “The Terror of the Italian, Albanian, Hungarian and Bulgarian Occupation Administrations.” According to the textbook: “With the danger of being exterminated, Serbs were forced to flee the Italian protectorate of ‘Greater Albania’. The terror of Albanian militia (*voluntari*) caused the expulsion of 90,000 Serbs. From 1941-1944, 10,000 Serbs were killed in Kosovo and Metohija.”<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the 2014 Radojević’s textbook discusses “every-day Albanian terror over Serbian civilians.”<sup>59</sup> However, Radojević contextualizes the violence, by mentioning Serbian settlers from the Pre-War period – “they [Albanians] mostly attacked settlers [ed. note: those who got land after the Second World War during the agriculture reform and colonization]. These lands were inhabited by Albanians from Kosovo or Albanians from Albania.”<sup>60</sup> Still, “Albanian violence against Serbs” is put out of context. Students are not introduced to the complex political situation that was caused by Italian, Bulgarian and German occupations of the southern parts of Yugoslavia. Questions such as, “What was the role of the Italians?” or “What was the role of the Germans after Italy was defeated?” remain unexplained.

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57 Dubravka Stojanović, “Sećanje protiv istorije. Udženici istorije kao globalni problem”, *Beogradsku istorijsku glasnik IV*, 2013, 186.

58 Radoš Ljušić and Ljubodrag Dimić, *Istorija za treći razred gimnazije prirodno-matematičkog smera i četvrti razred gimnazije društveno-jezičkog smera* (Beograd: Freska, 2014), 201.

59 Mira Radojević, *Istorija IV - udžbenik za treći razred gimnazije prirodno-matematičkog smera, četvrti razred gimnazije društveno-jezičkog smera i opšteg tipa i četvrti razred srednje stručne škole za obrazovne profile pravni tehničar i birotehničar* (Beograd: Klett, 2014), 272

60 Ibid., 272.

Was there any resistance in Kosovo during the Second World War against the occupation? According to the Serbian textbooks analyzed, there was, but they only mention the Serbian and Montenegrin partisans' anti-fascist struggle. "Mostly Serbs were partisans in Kosovo, however the actions of partisans were almost impossible due to the huge presence of the Albanian militia."<sup>61</sup> There is no explanation of what the "Albanian militia" actually was.

Two textbooks do mention Albanian partisans, but only within the narrative of Albanian nationalism. The Ljušić & Dimić textbook's mentions that after the liberation of Kosovo and Metohija, there was a big Albanian rebellion in December 1944. The cause of the rebellion was the refusal of Albanians to fight in the *Sremski Front*, in North-Western Serbia. However, the real reason for the rebellion was that Albanians only wanted to defend the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, and because a part of them wanted to be part of Greater Albania. According to these texts, the leader of the rebellion was Xhafer Deva, the leader of the Second Prizren League [ed. note: the leader of the Drenica insurgency was not Xhafer Deva, but Shaban Polluzha]. The rebellion was crushed in February 1945.<sup>62</sup>

In addition, the Ljušić & Dimić's textbook mentions the role of Albanians in the 21. SS Skenderbeg Division that was formed during the spring of 1944, consisting of German officers and Albanian soldiers – they were defeated by the partisans in July 1944, during the Andrijeviča operation. The Skenderbeg Division was responsible for the massacres in Plav.<sup>63</sup>

As previously mentioned, Serbian history textbooks ignore any fact that might jeopardize the victimhood narrative. The fact that there was a conflict among Albanian partisans over the national question is ignored, as well as the massacres committed by Serbian and Montenegrin partisan forces against Albanian population once the Second World War had ended.

All the Serbian history textbooks have separate sections about the Holocaust. While the focus is on the Holocaust at the European level, with a mentioning of the number of victims, and a particular emphasis on Auschwitz, the Holocaust in Serbia and in Occupied Yugoslavia is somewhat marginalized. The textbooks do mention the death and concentration camps on Serbian and Yugoslav territory, in particular Jasenovac and Staro Sajmište,<sup>64</sup> however the perpetrators are, in large, ethnically defined as "Germans" or *ustaše*. The role of the Serbian police and armed forces under the Nedić's government in the process of the annihilation of the Jewish people is not mentioned, while the perpetrators are identified as exclusively Nazi German soldiers and their allies, in particular the *ustaše*.

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61 Ibid., 284.

62 Ljušić and Dimić, *Istorija za treći*, 228.

63 Ibid., 227.

64 Jasenovac was a concentration and extermination camp on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia [NDH] during the Second World War, where dozens of thousands of people (Serbs, Jews, Bosniaks, Roma, Croatian anti-fascists) were killed. Staro Sajmište was a concentration camp on the Belgrade Fairground Site during the Second World War (today, it is located near the center of Belgrade), where thousands of people (Jews, Serbs, Roma and other) were killed, or transferred to other camps or to sites of mass executions. While in Jasenovac, there is a site of memory, there is no site of memory at the Staro Sajmište location, in spite of significant efforts to do so by a number of historians and activists.



The narrative of the Second World War proposed by post-2000 Serbian history textbooks establishes Albanian nationalism, with its enduring dream of a Greater Albania, as the reason for both the “weak” position of Serbia and the Serbian nation in postwar Yugoslavia, and its final collapse. In other words, the narrative of the War extends to include the subsequent suffering of the Serbian people up to the present.

While Albanian textbooks emphasize Bujan, and the 1944 Kosovo Communists decision to grant Kosovo self-determination after the war, Serbian textbooks emphasize the 1945 legitimate annexation of Kosovo to Serbia. For example, Djurić and Pavlović present a small section, “Serbia as a complex federal unit,” where they state that “after tensions in Kosovo were calmed, after the abolishment of military government, and during the period of closer relations with Albania, the Regional People’s Assembly of Kosovo and Metohija accepted the Resolution (on July 9 and 10, 1945) proclaiming the will of the delegates about the accession of that region to the Federal Serbia as its integral part.”<sup>65</sup> But the fact that the authors call Serbia, “Federal Serbia,” speaks about their understanding and framing of Serbia’s unprivileged position in the Yugoslav federation. Otherwise, it would be impossible to speak about “Federal Serbia” within “Federal Yugoslavia.”

According to the same textbook, the annexation of Kosovo to Serbia was conducted by Yugoslavia in ways that endangered not only Serbian statehood, but the Serbian people as well. Radojević writes that, “after the war, in the context of a possible unification with Albania, the new [Yugoslav] authorities prohibited Serb colonists who were expelled during the war from returning [to Kosovo]; moreover, they allowed Albanians to stay over there, and in many cases, Albanians came from Albania.”<sup>66</sup> This representation of the immediate aftermath of the war contributes to common misconceptions about Serb-Albanian relations, as well as to the everlasting struggle, as in many other conflicts, over the question, “who was here first.”

The threat of Albanian nationalism in Kosovo, and the weakness of Yugoslav authorities in dealing with it, is a common thread in the textbooks’ treatment of postwar Yugoslavia, the weakening of Serbia, and the final collapse of the Yugoslav state. References to the Second World War are explicit, especially with regard to the mass flights of Serbs from Kosovo in 1999, often compared to the expulsion of Serbian settlers in the 1940s.

The dissolution of Yugoslavia in the Djurić & Pavlović’s textbook is part of the chapter entitled, “Social Crisis and the Destruction of the Common Country 1980-2000.” The first subchapter is entitled, “Kosovo problems – the beginning of the break-up of the county.” Accordingly, “The first signs of the destabilization of Yugoslavia were seen in Kosovo. The explosion of Albanian nationalism and separatism during the spring of 1981 marked the rise of hidden nationalisms that would be disastrous for the whole community.”<sup>67</sup> According to the authors, rape, destructions of property, and murders based on ethnic hatred pushed Serbs to move out of Kosovo en masse, a process that actually had started during the Second World War and continued in its aftermath, leading to the reduction of the percentage of Serbs in the Kosovo general population to 13,2%.<sup>68</sup>

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65 Djordje Djurić and Momcilo Pavlović, *Istorija za treći razred gimnazije prirodno-matematičkog smera i četvrti razred gimnazije opšteg i društveno-jezičkog smera*. (Beograd: Zavod za Udžbenike, 2012), 235.

66 Radojević, *Istorija IV*, 310.

67 Djurić and Pavlović, *Istorija za treći*, 248.

68 *Ibid.*, 248.

Echoes of the Second World War can be found also in the discussion of the recent Kosovo war and its aftermath. Serbian textbooks do not mention any of the social developments in Kosovo during the 1990s, such as the mass expulsion of Albanians from state/public positions and the development of the parallel system of education, nor do they talk about the severe Serbian repression of the Albanian population. The focus is placed on the KLA “terrorist organization,” and on “NATO aggression,” and in this context only Serbian victims are mentioned and discussed. According to the Ljušić & Dimić textbook, the USA gave support to the Albanian separatists, the NATO campaign was a war of aggression, and the only ethnic cleansing was the flight of Serbs after the Kumanovo agreement in June 1999.<sup>69</sup> Again, only Serbian victims are mentioned – first, the victims of the NATO bombing, and second, the number of Serbs expelled from Kosovo.

### *Albanian Books*

The first edition of a postwar history textbook for a comprehensive high school did not dramatically differ from those produced during the parallel system. Its treatment of the Second World War continued to propose a reversal of roles, where the Yugoslav partisans are the villains and their Albanian opponents the heroes. The book presents the Anti-Communist and anti-partisan Second League of Prizren as patriotic and one of its leaders, Bedri Pejani, Hadri’s “counter-revolutionary,” as a great resistance figure against Serbia. The war of Shaban Polluzha, Tito’s repression in Kosovo in 1945, and the massacre of Tivari/Bar are highlighted.<sup>70</sup>

Beyond textbooks, the whole historiography of the Second World War more or less followed a similar storyline, but with important differences. Taboo topics took new salience in syntony with politically charged history revisions discussed in Albania.<sup>71</sup> In a very ambitious attempt to publish a Kosovo-centered history of the Albanian people, journalist Jusuf Buxhovi writes of an explicit agreement between Communist leaders Enver Hoxha and Tito in 1944 to allow the “reconquest of Kosovo by partisan forces in order to leave [Kosovo] under Serbia”<sup>72</sup> - a conspiracy that led to the forcible recruitment of Albanians and the mass killing of more than two thousands in Tivari/Bar.

However, if this indicated that the Albanian national narrative had come to be somewhat divorced from both Yugoslavia and Communism,<sup>73</sup> it did not settle the issue of what had happened at the end of the Second World War in Kosovo. In fact, in the authoritative 2011 volume by the Kosovo Academy of Arts and Sciences, *Kosovo: A Monographic Survey*, there is no mention of this alleged conspiracy and “Albanians (sic) warriors” voluntarily joined partisan forces in Tivar/Bar.<sup>74</sup>

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69 Ibid., 291.

70 Instituti të Historisë, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar për shkollat e mesme* (Libri Shkollor, 2003), 302-344.

71 Uran Butka, *Masakra e Tivarit dhe përgjegjësia e shtetit shqiptar* (Tiranë: ADS Studio, 2011).

72 Jusuf Buxhovi, *Kosova. Nga Konferenca e Londrës deri te protektorati ndërkombëtar* (Prishtinë: Faik Konica and Houston: Jalifat Publishing, 2012), 246- 269.

73 For a rejection of “Cominformist history” whose center was Tirana, read the vivid discussion of Albanian historiography in post-independent Kosovo by Oliver Jens Schmitt, “Historiography in Post-Independence Kosovo,” 60-63.

74 Rexhepi Fehmi, “Kosova in the Second World War,” in *Kosova. A Monographic Survey* (Prishtina: Kosova Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2013), 205-211, 209.

With the end of the 1999 war, the establishment of a United Nations trusteeship in Kosovo, which lasted through the declaration of independence in 2008, made for a complex process of state building under a mixed leadership of domestic and international elites. The history textbooks adopted in schools were quickly put under examination by the Education Department of the UN Civilian Administration, and went through a process of rewriting, both because of changes in the curricula and because of international pressure to review both content and language.

Beginning in 2001, the Georg Eckert Institute for international Textbook Research established a South-East Europe Textbook Network in the framework of the European Stability Pact. The first reviews of Kosovo history textbooks, focused on the old editions published in the 1990s, were extremely critical.<sup>75</sup> Kosovo textbooks continue to be examined periodically by a variety of expert groups and the reports keep piling up.<sup>76</sup>

In 2004, an international group of experts conducted a comprehensive analysis of all Albanian history textbooks (11 volumes), used from grade IV through XII, also for the George Eckert institute for International Textbook Research.<sup>77</sup> The analysis focused on identifying stereotypes, politically inappropriate language, contexts, understanding, appropriate or inappropriate historical representations, and periodization, but the investigation on the scholarly historiography was explicitly guided by the political concern that the books “lived up to the stipulations of resolution 1244,” that is, fostered a Kosovar multinational identity based on diversity.<sup>78</sup> The conclusion of the experts was that the books did not in fact comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1244, because they presented a mono-ethnic history of Kosovo.

In particular, the report concluded that the Second World War was portrayed in the books in “simplistic terms or black and white linear narrations that do not correspond to the actual complexity of the historical process.”<sup>79</sup> The main problems with the presentation of the Second World War were the negative picture of Albanians among Communist partisans as traitors to Yugoslavia, and the positive one of the anti-Communist opposition to the Italian and German occupation as well of the anti-Communist collaboration with the occupiers; but also a series of important omissions, such as the lack of mention of the collaboration with the Germans by the SS division Skanderbeg; of the broader implications of the Holocaust; and of the Nazi-German-English competition for Albanian allegiances during the War, mirrored by Albanian factionalism.<sup>80</sup> The report recommended a re-write of textbooks to answer its criticism. More recently, the Ministry itself approved standards for textbooks.<sup>81</sup> The more recently published books present some changes, but how substantial has the rewrite been is open to question.

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75 Denisa Kostovicova, Kosovo. *The Presentation of Europe and the Balkans in South-East European Textbooks. The Albanian-Language Textbooks Used in the “Parallel” Primary and Secondary Schools on Post-Autonomy Kosovo in the 1990s*, 7/28/2002.

76 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-school-textbooks-fail-accuracy-test>  
[http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document\\_ID=157](http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document_ID=157) (Accessed November 10, 2016).

77 *Evaluation of Kosovo Albanian History Textbooks* (Braunschweig, 2004).

78 *Ibid.*, Appendix 2, terms of the evaluation.

79 *Ibid.*, 11.

80 *Ibid.*, 12.

81 MEST, *Administrative Instruction on the Implementation of the Quality Standards for Textbooks*, 2011.

The national narrative emerging from the current Kosovo textbooks, reproduced in the treatment of the Second World War, is squarely founded on two major ideas:

- The Albanian nation is consistently betrayed by more powerful ones as well as her malevolent neighbors, and targeted by Serbia for genocide;
- Although small, the Albanian nation is a fighter for freedom and independence, though incapable of doing evil to any other nation, because of her proud tradition of honor and hospitality.

In order to maintain the fiction of national homogeneity and “goodness,” any discussion of civil war is omitted and no major Albanian figure is presented in negative terms. Rather, the books follow an editorial policy of balance in which each side has parallel heroes.

All the textbooks attribute the causes of the Second World War to two opposing, imperialist blocks, struggling to divide the world, but it is the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War, and the “unhappiness” with its provisions of countries such as Germany, Italy and Japan, that sparked the conflict. In this context, the failure of Versailles to allow the unification of Kosovo with Albania was just one aspect of the fundamental unfairness of Versailles. The annexation of Albania to Italy in 1939, further evidence of the disinterest of the Great Powers in the destiny of this small nation, confirms also her secondary victimization.

Yet, what looms large in the history of the first part of the War is the Albania’s resistance against the Italian occupation, both in Albania and in Kosovo, despite the unification of Kosovo with Albania as the fulfillment of old aspirations. But while in all books the history of the resistance in Albania discusses the civil war between anti-Italian nationalist groups such as *Balli Kombëtar* and *Legaliteti* on one side, and the Communists on the other, the history of Kosovo focuses on the peaceful protests of 1941 and 1942.

In Kosovo, the rise of the Yugoslav National Liberation Army under the command of Albanian leader Fadil Hoxha, is told with no reference to the Yugoslav Communist Party, which is mentioned only as an acronym.<sup>82</sup> In one book, he is officially exculpated of any possible responsibility for the partisan violence against Albanians, because Tito replaced him at the command of the partisan army with “the Serbian Sava Derlević on February 8, 1945, when he established martial law in Kosovo to fight against counter-revolutionaries.”<sup>83</sup> Fadil Hoxha and his fighters are thus unstained Albanian heroes, but also the nationalist and collaborationist leaders of the Second League of Prizren. As Oliver Jens Schmitt has observed, what is new about post-independence Kosovo historiography in general, and for what regards the Second World War as well, is “the search for a national Albanian narrative of recent history that satisfies the competing political parties of the country.”<sup>84</sup>

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82 One text that specifically laments the identification of anti-Fascist resistance with Communism is an older edition of a general history book, Istituti e Historisë, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar për shkollat e mesme* (Libri Shkollor, 2003), 302-344

83 B1 and B2, 157.

84 Schmitt, “Historiography in Post-Independence Kosovo,” 67.

The books address the unification of Kosovo and Albania as positive for the development of education and culture, and at least in two editions this aspect of the war is given separate chapters.<sup>85</sup> All the books attribute the initial lower recruitment of Albanians into the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia vis-à-vis the Serbs and Montenegrins to the fact the Fascist occupation was considered more as liberation from Serbian rule than oppression. But there is scarcely a discussion on the nature of the Fascist and Nazi regimes and their impact on vast parts of the world, including the Balkans.

In particular, the Holocaust, which never appeared in prewar textbooks, is treated differently in different editions of the books, but is commonly presented as a consequence of the war, not as one of the goals of Hitler's war. Most books include a small section with a general discussion of oppression under Nazi and Fascist occupation, in which there is only a passing mention of the persecution of Jews, the camps, and the killing of six millions Jews<sup>86</sup> in gas chambers. It is the occupiers' exploitation of all lands under their control that explains both the resistance and the Holocaust.<sup>87</sup> Jews are referred to as *çifute*, an old term which is now perceived to be unacceptable.

Longer sections on the Holocaust, due to changes requested by international experts in 2004, as one author admitted to us, remain problematic. Here the language is changed: Jews are referred to as *Hebrenjte*, there is a mention of the Holocaust as crime against humanity, though not as genocide; and a peculiarly detailed count of victims of the Nazi death camps according to nationality.<sup>88</sup> Only one textbook talks about detention camps for Jews and Communist sympathizers in Albania and Pristina.<sup>89</sup>

The violence at the end of the war, with the mass killing of Albanians in Tivari/Bar, and the repression of the insurgency of Drenica, is just mentioned, without any details or explanation. But all the books clearly state that these events are further confirmation of the genocide of Albanians at the hands of Serbs.<sup>90</sup> Only one text treats in detail the war of Drenica and presents the figure of Shaban Polluzha as a partisan leader who rose up to defend his community from *četnik* assault, refusing to move outside Kosovo to chase Germans in northern Serbia, and thus disobeying the order of partisan leader Fadil Hoxha.<sup>91</sup> The same book makes an explicit comparison between the "ethnic cleansing" exercised by Serbian and Montenegrin Communists in Drenica, and the violence of the Serbian army in 1912-15.<sup>92</sup>

All textbooks say that the participants in the Conference of Bujan were killed or imprisoned, but they do not mention that some of them participated in the Prizren Assembly, where the resolution for the annexation of Kosovo to Serbia was approved by acclamation, even though under threat.<sup>93</sup>

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85 A2, pp. 121-123; D1 and D2, pp. 131-133.

86 This figure appears only in A2.

87 The language used in this section to refer to Jews is *çifute*, old term, popularly used, but today with derogatory connotation: A1, p. 185; B1 and B2, p. 142 and C1, p. 145.

88 A2, 93-95 D1, 128-130 and D2

89 A2, p. 94. See Noel Malcom, *Kosovo. A Short History* (Mac Millan: 1998), 310.

90 B1: this book talks of Serbian genocide in the last part of the war, with 53,000 Albanian casualties.

91 D1/2, p. 124-125.

92 Both D1/2 talk about 43,000 Albanian casualties at the end of the war at the end of Serbian partisans.

93 There, only 33 of the 143 members were Albanian. See Fadil.

All textbooks justify the alignment of the Second League of Prizren with the Germans as a nationalist project, and not an ideological one, presenting the relationship between the two parties as equally opportunistic. They do not mention the violence against Serbian and Montenegrin settlers and their expulsion, which is well documented by Italian sources, including military archives,<sup>94</sup> as well as Germans sources, as documented by Ali Hadri.<sup>95</sup> One text mentions that Albanians protected Serbs and Montenegrins, under threat from Italian occupiers.<sup>96</sup>

Only in the older comprehensive text for junior high school, the leader of the League, Bedri Pejani, is presented as a great patriot deserving a separate section, and Xhafer Deva is singled out as a collaborator of the Germans in the 1944 massacre of Albanian partisan fighters in Tirana.<sup>97</sup>

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94 Carlo Umilta', *Jugoslavia e Albania. Memorie di un Diplomatico* (Milano: Garzanti, 1947) and Giovanni Lorenzoni, *Rapporto sulla Riforma Agraria Jugoslava con special riguardo ai territori interessanti l'Albania, la Dalmazia e la Croazia* (Roma: Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1942) document the columns of fleeing Serbian and Montenegrin peasants chased by armed Albanians, especially between April and October 1941.

95 Hadri, *Lëvizja Naciolnaçlirimtare*,

96 A2, p. 118.

97 Instituti e Historisë, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, 320-321 and 323. The conclusion of this book is that the war of anti-Fascist liberation in Albanian and Kosovo was like all the other wars of liberation in Europe and Albanians were on the side of the winners. They were among those who suffered the most, with losses of 7% of the population, p. 336.

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## Chapter 4: History Teachers and History teaching in Kosovo Serbian-speaking schools

### *Conditions and a sense of temporariness*

Our first impression when setting up the interviews as well as visiting schools to meet with teachers, was the very poor logistical organization of Serbian schools in Kosovo. Some of the teachers teach in more than one school. A number of schools are in fact located in one building, sharing the same facilities. Some schools project a sense of temporariness since the war ended. The names of the schools still refer to pre-1999 school names and locations in what is now independent Kosovo, i.e. Gimnazija u Vučitrnu sa privremenim smeštajem u Kosovskoj Mitrovici (Vučitrn High School temporarily based in Kosovska Mitrovica).<sup>98</sup> These names refer to schools in locations where there are no longer Serbian communities in post-1999 Kosovo. For example, the school from the capital Prishtina/Priština no longer exists and has been relocated to a new site. This seem to reflect a reality of the choice to put on hold many aspects of daily civic life and needs of these communities, living in temporary conditions, not acknowledging the new structures of power, or attempting to withhold to certain past realities that no longer exist in Kosovo. None of the teachers stated any hesitation or confusion regarding these conditions, which it seems they perceive as a ‘normal’ state of affairs.

According to one teacher, it is quite difficult to properly teach, not just history but other fields, or work in any other profession, due the fact that they live under occupation. As the teacher stated, “We have a specific situation here, since we are living under occupation. Otherwise everything would be normal, like in other parts of Serbia...” (Interview 21). Upon our attempt to clarify this statement - Who are the occupiers? What is the nature of the occupation? he referred to the international actors who now govern Kosovo. As we were talking, a group of EU police forces were passing by, and he referred to them as well as to others, such as NATO, Americans, the EU.

### *Textbooks*

All the teachers we interviewed use history textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (from here on Ministry of Education). One teacher only still uses an older version of Serbian history textbook (Interview 24). All the teachers indicated that they have no contacts or connections with the Ministry of Education of Kosovo. Although there was a mention of seminars that were organized over the years, aiming to connect Serb and Albanian teachers from Kosovo, none of the teachers was eager to attend those, and even more so, none of the teachers found them important to even be mentioned.

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98 Examples can be found on a comprehensive website featuring among other education related information, a list of schools in Serbia [elemtry and high-schools] by an alphabetical order of location [see: [www.srednjeskole.edukacija.rs/drzavne-srednje-skole/svi-gradovi](http://www.srednjeskole.edukacija.rs/drzavne-srednje-skole/svi-gradovi)]. For example: High School Laplje Selo (removed from Prishtina) or High School and Technical School in Kosovska Mitrovica, removed from Vučitrn/Vushtrri. The names of the high schools on the list from the above-mentioned website often differ from the names that are put on the signs outside of the schools, as it is the case with the High School in Vucitrn temporarily based in Kosovska Mitrovica/Mitrovica (the name of the school as it appears on the list of the Serbian high-schools from above mentioned website is: High School and Technical Schools removed from Vučitrn/Vushtrri).

Our data suggest that not all high-school history teachers in Kosovo necessarily use the official history textbooks in class, as some opt for other resources instead. Often teachers do not even require that the students purchase the assigned textbook. The majority of teachers have indicated that they encourage their student to use older history textbooks as well, due to the high price of new Serbian textbooks. Students can, therefore, borrow textbooks from older siblings, neighbors or friends. Therefore, one should be quite cautious when arguing for a direct connection between the content of current history textbooks, the lectures and all in-class communication and discussion of the material. Often, the lectures and class communications depend on the teacher's political standpoint and/or political affiliation.

### *Self-interpretations*

The interviews show a great discrepancy between the content available in the history textbooks and what teachers actually end up teaching. Each teacher emphasized the different events from the Second World War that should be particularly underlined. However, almost none of these events have anything to do with Kosovo, perhaps because the armed rebellion against the occupying forces was far more intense in other parts of Yugoslavia such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Montenegro, than in Kosovo.

The teachers focus on the invasion and partition of Yugoslavia, highlighting the Nazi-German military occupation of Inner-Serbia and the creation of the puppet state Independent State of Croatia (NDH); the genocide against Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) and at the Jasenovac concentration camp; the armed rebellions by partisan and *četnik* units; and the civil war between the partisans and the *četnik*.

For example, according to one teacher, there has always been an enormous pressure from the government on the plan and program of history as a school subject. This pressure is reflected in the history textbooks, in relation with everything that concerns the twentieth century history of the Serbian nation (Interview 21). The same teacher added that there are a number of events from the Second World War that should be addressed more properly in the textbooks. According to him, additional material about the Jasenovac concentration camp in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) should be provided in class by teachers, as the topic is not properly represented in the history textbooks.

Two history teachers explained that the students are already coming to the classroom with their own pre-knowledge of some events in which their grandparents participated (Interviews 22 and 25). Therefore, according to them, the inter-generational oral transmission of historical memories plays an important role in early socialization among Kosovo Serb families, providing interpretations of history that often stand in contradiction to what the textbooks actually present. As one teacher indicated, "Almost everyone of our students have some pre-knowledge which they gained from their fathers and older people from the family, and they perfectly know what was going on in these areas" (Interview 22).

While all the Serbian teachers used terms such as Kosovo i Metohija and *Šiptar* when referring to Albanians, we were able to identify some small markers of diversity, especially when they referred to the Second World War and current events. The differences depend on their backgrounds, for example, whether they and/or their families are pro-Yugoslavia and pro-Tito, or pro-*Četnik*. This division seems to us an internal Serbian question that still today defines how



a teacher would teach the Second World War, as well as any event that followed the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, or for that matter, that pre-dated socialist Yugoslavia.

The older the teachers were, the more likely they were to still have live memories of and references to the golden years of Yugoslavia in the 1970s, when everyday relations within their local communities were not just defined by ethnicity, even in Kosovo. We detected a sense of so-called “Yugo-nostalgia” among them - nostalgia for the time when local communities weren’t defined solely by ethnicity, even in Kosovo, and living standards were higher.

The younger participants, who had no such reference, sounded already like the product of the post-Yugoslav revisionist history of the Second World War as well as of the 1990s wars. They are more oriented against Yugoslavia, believing that independent Serbia has been “liberated” from Communism, and that, as an independent state, will be more respected by other countries and will be able to freely nurture Serbian own tradition and historical heritage.

### ***The Second World War - Events***

What matters? We have encountered a much-simplified image of the Second World War that teachers teach when they discuss it in the context of Kosovo. What are the main themes? Albanians were allied of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in order to achieve their goal, which was and is, Greater Albania. Serbs were the victims, and Albanians committed terrible crimes against them; there is no mention of crimes Serbs committed against Albanians. Additionally, Serbs were all antifascist, no matter if they were part of the partisan or *četnik* movements. And finally, there was no mention at all of Albanian resistance and of Albanians who fought against the Italians and/or the Nazis.

The majority of the teachers who were interviewed said that they explain to their students that Albanians tried to use the opportunity offered to them during the Second World War to create “Greater Albania.” The majority of the Albanian population, according to all teachers interviewed, supported the occupying forces, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, in order to fulfill their political goal.

According to one history teacher, “All Muslims were fascists,” and he portrayed all Albanians as Muslims (Interview 21). Two teachers also stressed that Albanians came to Kosovo from Albania in the aftermath of the Second World War, and settled in those areas from where Serbian settlers from the period between the two wars were expelled (Interviews 22 and 25). The majority of the teachers also believe that Serbs were fleeing to those areas that were not controlled by Albanians and *ballists* because they felt safer in other occupied areas than in parts of Kosovo controlled by Albanians under the Italian protectorate.

None of the teachers found a single event of the Second World War in Kosovo that would be worth highlighting. They are all concerned only with those events that are related to the suffering and the liberation of Serbia/Yugoslavia, that is, the genocide in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), the Jasenovac concentration camp, the liberation of Belgrade, and the *Sremski front*. While the first two are concerned with Fascist and Nazi violence, the third has to do with partisan violence. The *Sremski Front* (Syrman Front) was established in late fall 1944, after the liberation of Belgrade, and once the front was broken, the other parts of Yugoslavia were liberated. In contemporary Serbian historiography, there is a controversy about the operations that

took place at this front, in particular on one account of the event that talks about many young men from Belgrade being forcibly recruited.

As one teacher said, it depends on the teacher's preference, "Some teachers prefer the First World War; another prefer the Second World War, so he/she teaches more about it" (Interview 24). Similarly, every teacher "prefers" one event or another from the Second World War. Drawing from the interviews, it was apparent that some teachers devote more time to the Second World War and to the broader aspects of this event worldwide, while others concentrate only on the Second World War and its consequences for Yugoslavia.

Teachers said that the Second World War receives very little time and attention in the actual implementation of the curriculum. Often, by the time teachers get to teach it, it is already the end of the school year. They lack the time, and encounter lack of participation from the students, thus they have to rush through the material.

According to all teachers, they do not have the adequate time to deal with the subject in a detailed manner, nor can they enter nuanced explanations of more complex events that took place during the war, such as the intense fights between Albanian nationalist partisans and Yugoslav partisans or the massacre in Bar (Tivari in Albanian). When asked how much time they devote to teaching the Second World War in Kosovo, teachers mostly answered that they had no time to focus on it. As one teacher indicated when asked about the role of Albanians in the anti-fascist movement in Kosovo, "I do not have enough time to speak about the participation of Albanians in the partisan movement" (Interview 22). When asked about the suffering of Serbs in Kosovo during the Second World War, one teacher said, "I speak very little about that, because I do not have time" (Interview 21).

### ***Teachers' own background as defining their teaching and interaction with history***

Based on our data, we argue that the teachers' own past, background and memory, have the greatest influence over their history teaching. For example, we identified significant differences in the teachings of the teacher who is a refugee from a town in Kosovo that was ethnically mixed before the war, and the teacher whose grandfather was a sympathizer of the *četnik* movement. In the narrative and framing of the first, a Yugoslav upbringing and high level of tolerance towards certain issues influenced her teaching, while some of her colleagues have expressed very uncompromising positions, including the teacher whose grandfather was a sympathizer of the *četnik* movement.

As one teacher explained, he always begins his class on the Second World War in Yugoslavia with, "Where was your grandfather during the war? Who was your grandfather?" As he stated, "I know almost every one of my students, I know their family backgrounds and histories, I know who was a member of the partisan movement, who was a member of the *četnik* movement, although here [in Kosovo], Serbs were in general focusing on their own survival and hence were unable to join any movement at all. Here, we have more children of fighters from the First World War, 'Solunaca,' my grandfather was 'Solunac'"<sup>99</sup> (Interview 25).

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99 In Serbian, "Solunac" means, "citizen of Thessaloniki." During the First World War, many Serbian soldiers were exiled to Greece, after Serbia was occupied by Austria-Hungary, Germany and its allies, where they joined the Allied Forces, France in particular, and formed the "Solunski front" or "Macedonian front" that eventually led to the liberation of Serbia in the First World War.

All the teachers we interviewed felt they had to tell us something about their own past and about their ancestors. Three teachers stated that they share their own past and family background with their students. All three of them also indicated that they share their personal memories of 1999 with the students.

Our observation here concludes that since the teachers also disclose their own family's political background in the classroom, there is almost no space left to critically engage with any of the events they teach, from the Second World War as well as any other events for that matter, especially with those relating to the partisan-*četnik* internal divisions. It is important to mention that these divisions, particularly between partisans and *četnik*, are still very present in on-going discussions and debates in contemporary Serbia. While the partisans are perceived as pro-Yugoslav, almost anti-Serbian, among the majority of Serbian historians, the *četnik* are perceived as those who were fighting for Serbia, not for Yugoslavia.

### ***Internal Serbian conflicts and divisions as identified in Kosovo as well as in Serbia.***

Serbian teachers in Kosovo are well aware of current historiographic trends in Serbia. As we discuss above, in Chapter 3, changes in the history textbooks in the 1990s and after 2000, reflected developments within Serbian historiography, particularly in regard to the rehabilitation of the *četnik* movement. Since four out of five teachers interviewed use history textbooks approved by the Serbian Ministry of Education, these new developments and internal Serbian conflicts, the rehabilitation of the *četnik* movement in particular, can be identified in the history textbooks which teachers use.

### ***The construction of Albanians as the "Others"***

Teachers largely use the term Kosovo and Metohija, the official name of Kosovo which under the 2006 Constitution of Serbia is still a province of Serbia, to denote what in Albanian is Kosova and in common English use Kosovo. In addition, they use the term *Šiptar*, which is perceived by Albanians as a derogatory term.

In the interviews, we posed the following question, "Was there any resistance among the Albanian population in Kosovo against the occupation?" The majority of teachers mentioned that it should not be surprising that Albanians were, "on the other side" during the Second World War, because Serbs and Albanians were always on different sides throughout history.

The image students therefore may form of Albanians is of the "archenemy" of Serbs. According to one teacher, "Here, in Kosovo, *ballists* were allied with the occupiers. They were mostly *Šiptars*, or Albanians. Therefore, during the Second World War, more than 200,000 Serbs fled Kosovo and Metohija, because of the terror, and because of fear. They fled to Central Serbia, and after the war they were not allowed to return to their lands. Those families remained in Serbia forever" (Interview 24).

Another teacher stated, "They [Albanians] got Greater Albania, so they were able to slaughter, kill, rob; they put Hitler's uniforms on themselves ..." (Interview 21). Since every teacher indicated that they do not have enough time in their classes to explain in detail what was happening in Kosovo during the Second World War, (i.e. internal Albanian divisions), the only image students may get is that Albanians were all "perpetrators," "allied with the Fascists and

the Nazis,” without a single example of collaboration between Serbs and Albanians, or without any mention of the fact that in Kosovo there was also Yugoslav partisan units consisting of Albanians as well.

***Differences in dynamics and reference between teachers from Gračanica/Gračanica and from Northern Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica.***

We encountered somewhat a softer tone and approach among teachers in Gračanica/Gračanica, who in many ways testify to accepting the current reality in Kosovo, in other words, the shift in power relations between Serbs and Albanians, ensured by the creation of Serbian municipalities. Here, access to their daily needs is conducted in Serbian. It is our understanding that this approach is also shaping their engagement as teachers in the classroom. This can be identified in two examples:

1. The teachers from Gračanica/Gračanica mostly used the term “Albanians” instead of “Šiptars”
2. When speaking about Albanians, teachers from Gračanica/Gračanica constantly mentioned and indirectly pointed out the need to cooperate with Albanians.

As one teacher explained, “As an historian, I cannot allow myself to be subjective. For me, the goal is to explain to those children how to understand history, and not to tell them that Croats and Albanians are bad people. I am always saying to my students, ‘Never ever hate Albanians as a nation.’ You can hate an individual if someone did harm [to you], but you cannot hate an entire nation. I share this love among the students as much as I can.” And finally he added, “After all, we are neighbors here” (Interview 25). This attitude seems to suggest how aware this teacher was of teaching history in a way that does not feed ethnic tensions.

On the other hand, none of the teachers we spoke to in Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica indicated the need to portray history teaching as a potential tool to decrease ethnic tension. In their answers, they were more focused on the relationship between official Belgrade and Northern Kosovo, which was not the case with the teachers from Gračanica/Gračanica. We noticed that in referring to colleagues and relevant work of educators in their field, the teachers from Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica only referred to historians and history teachers from Serbia. At no point did they mention or refer to Serbs south of the river Ibar when discussing history teaching in Kosovo. In other words, they seem to identify the Ibar river as both a geographical and a political boundary, marking today the border between Kosovo and Serbia.

While the sense of ignoring Serbs from the south of Kosovo was quite obvious in the interviews conducted in Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, the situation was different in the interviews conducted in Gračanica/Gračanica. There, the teachers are very aware of their Serbian colleagues from Northern Kosovo. They mentioned that they are often perceived as traitors by them.

As one teacher stated, “There is a big difference in history teaching in Mitrovica and Gračanica. Serbs from Northern Kosovo have no idea how difficult it was [for us] to survive here. The majority of them do not even cross the Ibar River, but they are calling themselves ‘Big Serbs.’ I had an opportunity to speak with my colleagues from the North, and these historians can be very hostile, they are speaking about some ‘Serbianhood.’ Come here, and see what the real

struggle is, and how difficult is to survive... They always perceived us as traitors, because it was we who began to collaborate with Albanians. I had to survive. You [Northern Kosovo Serbs] are up there, bordering with Serbia, you can travel to Serbia whenever you like. I had to get an ID in order to register my car” (Interview 25). Additionally, the teacher said, “They are Great Serbs, but I am a Great Serb too. It does not mean that I am a traitor just because I decided to survive. I am more realistic in this story, and it is untrue how they portray us. I know that I am ten times a Greater Serb than the vast majority of those living in the North. And students here also know and recognize that” (Interview 25).

However, despite differences in the perception of Albanians between teachers from Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica and Gračanica/Gračanica, we identified no differences in the actual history teaching. Every teacher considers as their own main task to teach according to the Plan and Program of the Serbian Ministry of Education, and to deliver all lectures as scheduled before the end of the school-year.

### ***Students’ lack of interest and teachers’ frustration***

The majority of teachers claim that the students are not interested in history, so they are having a hard time in capturing their attention and need to be creative in order to keep the attention of the students, mostly away from their phones games and social media. Additionally, according to some of the teachers, today’s politics interferes with their teaching of history.

As one teacher indicated, “I want to tell my students that they should study history and not deal with politics. Children today know more about politics, because their parents are talking about politics all the time, and because they use the Internet. However, they do not use the Internet in order to learn, but to have fun...” (Interview 25). The teacher went on saying, “for me, when it comes to history, everything is interesting... but I don’t think the students are at all interested, I don’t know actually, but I am giving my best to make them interested in history” (Interview 25).

### ***The Holocaust in Serbia and Yugoslavia***

All Serbian history teachers stated they do teach about the Holocaust, and they acknowledge the Holocaust is one of the most important lessons they teach about the Second World War. They focus on the Holocaust at the European level, however when we asked about the Holocaust in Serbia and Yugoslavia, we received different answers and interpretations. All teachers acknowledged that the Holocaust took place in Serbia and Yugoslavia, however they interpret it in different ways.

Teachers focus on the Holocaust committed in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), giving the Jasenovac concentration camp as the most obvious example of the genocide. However, at least two teachers lump together the killing of Jews and Serbs. As one teacher stated, “Of course we mention the Holocaust, and those sad stories from our history. Serbs, Jews and Roma really suffered a lot” (Interview 22). Two teachers mentioned the existence of the Staro Sajmište camp, and both of them attributed the responsibility for the camps and the Holocaust in Serbia to Nazi Germans and *ustaše* units. One teacher even said that Belgrade was the first European city that was declared *Juden-frei*, however the same teacher stated there is no Serbian responsibility in this matter (Interview 23). The same teacher also mentioned the deportation of

Priština/Prishtina Jews in 1944, once the Italians withdrew, and the city came under the control of Germans and the SS Skenderbeg unit (Interview 23).

Only one teacher expressed dissatisfaction with the history textbooks concerning the Holocaust. As the teacher stated, “There is a special part in the textbook about the Holocaust, which is interesting, because they are paying more attention to it, ignoring Serbian victims. If anybody was involved in the Holocaust, those were the *Šiptars*, because Germans and Italians did not want blood on their hands” (Interview 21). It is also important to mention that the same teacher made a statement which indirectly compared the situation in Auschwitz and the current position of Serbs in the Northern Kosovo.

## Chapter 5: History Teachers and History teaching in Kosovo Albanian-speaking schools

In interviewing high school history teachers, we discussed in general how do they teach the Second World War, but narrowed down our questions to key themes and events, which were silenced or emphasized in textbooks at different times for political or ideological reasons. We especially focused on the enduring tropes of the Albanian national narrative of the War, which are only reflected in the current history textbooks in an inconsistent manner, but are very present in private communications and in books published by both professional and amateur historians:

- The view of the partisan movement as an exclusively Serbian and Montenegrin creation;
- Albanians' collaboration with a welcomed Italian and German occupation as an expedient to gain independence from Serbia;
- A complete silence on the mass expulsion of Serbian and Montenegrin colonists;
- Scant attention to the Holocaust with the exception of a recognition of all Albanians as saviors of Jews;
- The definition of the mass violence perpetrated in Drenica and several towns of Kosovo, but most dramatically in Tivari / Bar at the end of the War, as Serbian genocide against Albanians.

We asked teachers how do they teach the Second World War and specifically how do they teach the above themes. After they answered our questions, we confronted them with contradictory views supported by the known scholarship on the Second World War in general and in Kosovo, but also with the current textbooks.

The overall result of our inquiry on how the history of the Second World War is taught in Albanian speaking high school in postwar Kosovo indicates the following:

1. In large part, teachers expressed a general dissatisfaction with the history textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education and in use in all Albanian-speaking schools of Kosovo. Their complaints focused on the size of the lessons on the Second World War (too short, few contact hours), and the reduction of this major historical event to dates, places, battles and figures of casualties. However, the lack of a more substantive treatment of the war is not seen as a professional shortcoming of the authors, but rather as the product of political constraints.
2. Both older and younger generations of history teachers are deeply distrustful of political authority and its influence on history teaching – whether they are subordinated to it or critical of it – a distrust that extends to all sorts of history texts and is a serious obstacle to the professionalization of history teaching.
3. Teachers said that they fundamentally follow the textbooks in their classroom instructions. They seemed to agree with the overall story-line partially hidden in the books'

apparently balanced treatment of the Second World War, which conforms to a dominant national narrative of the Albanian nation: a small nation, consistently victimized by foreign powers, especially Serbia, and striving for freedom, while incapable of doing evil to anyone.

4. Even when challenged by the interviewers - by exposing contradictions in the textbooks or between the interviewees' presentations of their teaching and the books, or different authoritative historical sources -, the teachers stood by the dominant national narrative.
5. We discovered that teachers did place different emphasis on specific themes. But this seem to be due to regional differences first, and second to generational differences, more than any other factor, suggesting the influence of family's and community's storytelling, which has consistently been the major source of historical information across generations among Albanians in Kosovo.
6. Far from being individual and private, the stories which are orally transmitted and are related to the students by the teachers, beside their families, belong to collective narratives and reveal political divisions within the dominant national narrative.

### ***Teaching by the books***

All teachers expressed a general dissatisfaction with the history textbooks, which tend to focus on facts and figures and avoid critical accounts of events and processes. We heard many comments about mistakes, contradictions, omissions, simplifications, and a more comprehensive criticism of the scholarly depth of the textbooks. This latter however is quickly mitigated by the acknowledgment of structural limitations: for example, the need to produce history books which are not too thick, or students will be scared of them, and the need to squeeze a lot of material into a very small number of contact hours.

In fact, given the time constraints they are under - from a minimum of one hour a week to a maximum of two in the social studies gymnasium – teachers said that they use the textbooks even though they don't like them much. Overall, the feeling is that there is no time to diverge from the program.

For some, there is absolutely no alternative, “Students do not want to deviate from the books, and the parents support them. If I do more, they complain, they only want to read what's in the books” (Interview 7). In one class observation, we noted that students were asked to read the text of the day's lesson and then recite it back to the class; they did not read from the book, but from photocopies of the textbook.

However, other teachers said that they give a different emphasis to a variety of themes and encourage students to research more on the internet, taking advantage of their knowledge of English. Textbooks suffer, in fact, from a general deficit of trust, which is not new or unique to postwar Kosovo. This phenomenon has a long history. It influenced and influences actual history training and education.



### *What kind of books?*

As they criticize the textbooks, rarely do teachers complain explicitly about the authors. As one teacher put it (Interview 7), “I don’t think they are free to write what they want.” In some books the war in Drenica and the killing of national hero Shaban Polluzha is presented in the passive language, with the omission of the perpetrators, who in other texts are introduced as “Serbian-Montenegrin partisans.” The teacher above said that the reason for omitting the identity of the perpetrators is that the authors had the goal of “eliminating hate speech.”

Two authors of the textbooks acknowledged the “intervention” of UNMIK and the European Union, after the war, with their request to change the language used in describing other national groups’ actions (Interview 19.1 and 19.2). One said, “Today, instead of saying that Serbs killed fifty Albanians, we say that the Serbian police and army killed fifty Albanians” (Interview 19.1). The other followed, “Because this is the truth, the nation does not kill, there is no mechanism [for a nation] to kill” (Interview 19.2) Because of the international presence in Kosovo, said one teacher, “there is no nationalist language in the books” (Interview 8).

Interestingly, only one teacher said that she participates in the international working groups of the Thessaloniki-based Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, which, she says, provide much welcome training (Interview 1). But even she did not mention the Center’s workbook on the Second World War, which intends to be an alternative source to nationalist historiographies, and is readily available online in Albanian, as in all the region’s languages.<sup>100</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the two authors of the textbooks we talked to resented much more the political pressure applied by the government of Turkey directly on the government of Kosovo. In 2010, Turkey objected to the negative language used to describe the Ottomans, (“hordes”) and to the characterization of Ottoman rule over Kosovo and the Balkans as foreign occupation, rather than “co-existence” and “co-government,” and asked for a change of language, and thus for a change in the historical judgment of the Empire.<sup>101</sup>

Political pressure can come from the domestic elites as well. In conversation, one historian told us that his co-author took his post at the Institute of History because he was a member of a prominent Albanian family during the Yugoslav period, therefore there is a limit to the criticism of the former Yugoslav elite that the books can offer. The perception that the new history textbooks might have political agendas is widely shared.

For older teachers, who completed their basic education during Yugoslavia, mistrust in books began when they were taught and had to teach the uncritical history of the Second World War as “the history of the Yugoslav people,” with “the Battle of Sutjeska and the Battle of Neretva as the Alfa and Omega of the war” (Interview 12; Interview 18 also mentions the two films), and all the other battles with “ten partisans bravely fighting the great German army, like in the films.” (Interview 1) So, the “National Liberation War history was written in a positive context. The forces that did not follow this line were represented as reactionary or collaborationist. The narration was black and white” (Interview 3).

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100 <http://cdrsee.org/publications/education/workbook-4-second-world-war> (Accessed on November 11, 2016).

101 Emine Arifi-Bakalli, “Trajtimi i Turqisë Moderne në Tekstet e Historisë të Republikës së Kosovës: Politika dhe Historiografia,” in *Përballje Historiografike* (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik, 2015).

The Yugoslav history textbooks were all written in what was then called Serbo-Croatian, and lacked information about the dynamics of the War in Albania and Kosovo. One author, a student of Ali Hadri, recalled how he defended his doctoral thesis on the history of the Second World War without his mentor, who had just been fired in the purges following the 1981 protests. After getting his degree, this historian was expelled from the League of Communists but not fired from his post at the Institute of History. Instead, the League tasked him and a colleague with writing an essay titled, “The Truth of the National Liberation War in Kosovo.” In the context of the repression of Albanian nationalism right after the 1981 protests, the essay was supposed to state that all Albanians in Kosovo always hated Tito, Yugoslavia and “brotherhood and unity;” and that all Albanians had been *ballists*, non-Communist rebels, therefore collaborators with Nazi Germany. The two historians didn’t do what they were asked, and they were summoned by the League of Communists “ideology committee” (Interview 20).

### ***Teaching what they know***

It was in the 1980s that Albanian history teachers developed different teaching practices in Kosovo, for fear of retribution from state authorities. They either followed the official curriculum without any deviation, or found indirect ways to provide instructions that consistently ran parallel to the textbooks. We encountered both practices among the teachers interviewed.

Even when they thought the books were missing important parts of history, many teachers never deviated from the official program because they were afraid of losing their job. “We had no right to use other books than the official ones, or we would be punished, we did not dare talk of Albanian national history, we said nothing, because we had pedagogical counselors, inspectors, and they controlled us” (Interview 18).

But there are also those who took their role as a patriotic duty and wrote in their daily log the lessons that they were supposed to teach according to the program, while instead they taught something else, “what we knew and what was true” (Interview 16). Not seeing their own national history reflected in books, which they considered a foreign creation and did not trust, they dictated their personal notes to add Albanian history to the history of Yugoslavia. They had learned Albanian history on their own, through the few books coming from Albania and the texts of Ali Hadri, except that quite often they perceived even those as biased. In fact, if in what they call the Serbo-Croatian books there was never a mention of the non-Communist Albanian fighters against the Germans and the Italians, the Albanian books adhered to the same Communist narrative of the war of liberation, which saw any deviation from the party-line as treason (Interview 12).<sup>102</sup>

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102 The same narrative continued to exist after the fall of Communism. In *The History of the Albanian People for the High School*, 1994, first edition, a collected work of unnamed authors, the resistance against the Germans is still presented as the national liberation war dominated by Communists, with only a partial effort at recognizing the others. Hoxha remains a central figure and inconsistencies – between extolling Hoxha or demonizing him as well as communism - are less important than the reaffirmation of the Albanian national cosmology. We drew this information from Erind Pajo, “Albanian Schoolbooks in the Context of Societal Transformation: Review Notes,” in *The Politics of History Education*, edited by Christina Koulouri (The Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, CDRSEE, 2002), 445-461.

The older teachers generally complained of the obstacles they met in completing their education, as a position in the academia, having to do with ideology, exposed them to censorship and political persecution. At least two teachers told us they had to opt out of the university because they were concerned with staying out of troubles and supporting their families. Others complained of having no funds or possibility to conduct research for lack of knowledge of foreign languages. Their professionalization suffered from these constraints.

What most teachers say they learned about the history of the Second World War has been drawn more often than not from the oral tradition. “Our history is out in the field, not in the documents of the enemy because we had no state of our own to write documents” (Interview 17). “We had the *kulla* and the *oda*<sup>103</sup> and that’s where all the history was learned through tradition and this is how I remember learning history, in gatherings” (Interview 5).

The older generation of teachers said that although they thought that they had the historical knowledge provided by the testimonies of the elders from their families and neighborhoods, they could not talk about it openly, because there was strong surveillance in schools, especially after 1981. Everyone was simply afraid of being spied upon by everybody else. “It depended on who the professor was, but the Second World War was learned between the lines, not the way it was. You had to stick to the lines because the politics of the time was abusive, but with friends we learned it in between the lines. For instance, when we elaborated on the Second World War, we did it through Bismarck, because as the proverb says, ‘your tongue goes to the tooth that hurts.’ We referred to the separation of Germany as a metaphor to explain the separation of the Albanian lands so that we would not fall prey to the Serbian politics of the time” (Interview 5).

For these teachers, the parallel school system of the 1990s was a liberation, because they could teach what they wanted. There were no longer Yugoslav books to impose a narrative, but there were also no books at all, at least until 1994. Thus, teachers dictated their lessons, with unprecedented freedom. “I personally dictated [notes] about the *Balli Kombëtar*, I dictated [notes about] themes that were anathema” (Interview 12).

For the younger generations, those who attended high school and sometimes university in the 1990s, the parallel system was a different experience. What they remember of their education are, more often than not, the discomfort and the fear. They had to take the teacher’s dictation sitting on the floor and balancing their notebooks on their lap. And for those who lived in rural areas there was the trauma of having to walk miles to reach a place called school, which frequently was a private house. With some luck, lessons lasted as long as 20 minutes, if the teachers managed to pass police checkpoints without being held.

One teacher, then a high-school student, told us how the police stopped him once on his way to school (Interview 4). They harassed him, called him “irredentist,” and took the book he had just bought, a history of the Albanians whose author he cannot recall now. When he reached home, he cried more because of losing that book than for the physical abuse suffered at the checkpoints. The memory of academic subjects is much more vague. He could not recall instructions on the Second World War. He only remembers 1912 and the history of the Albanian independence, “because it was the history of the Albanian people.” And that is the “miserable consequence of the parallel system.”

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103 *Kulla*, is the traditional Albanian tower-like house, and *oda* is the traditional men’s chamber.

Others said, “About the Second World War I don’t remember anything, absolutely anything” (Interview 7); “We only kept the word education alive” (Interview 13); and “It was about survival, quantity, not quality” (Interview 8). After all, what they needed to learn about history was learned in the *oda*, “where we talked a lot about the national question” (Interview 3).

One teacher, who had much motivation to study, remembered the five-to– six pages of notes dictated to him back then, and the introduction to a war which was, paraphrasing, between two major power blocks, in which Albanians took two positions, one on the side of Germany hoping to free themselves from Serbia, and one against Fascism as a more general risk (Interview 2).

The teaching of history has also been influenced by ideologies. One teacher claims that depending on the teacher’s ideological stand, they would favor sides in their explanation of the Second World War. “If you were leftist, you give more credit to the partisans and the national liberation, but if you are a right-wing supporter, you give more credit to the *ballists*” (Interview 3).

### ***Partisans as the ethnic “Other”***

One teacher said that he tries to debunk the widespread belief that partisans were exclusively Serbs, which in the textbooks is derived from the total silence on the Albanian participation in the partisan movement, mirroring a popular belief among Albanians in Kosovo, however incongruous and contradictory, that “the partisans were Serbo-Slavs” and “*četniks*,” and they perpetrated massive violence against Albanians. “The students understand that the *ballists* were Albanians, and partisans were not Albanians, but I explain that the issue is ideological, the partisans had a different notion of politics” (Interview 13).

But for many other teachers, the subject of the partisans is still not open to free discussion. “The war and the partisans are quite taboos and that is why the generations of 1999 and 2000 don’t understand it” (Interview 3). We found at least an anecdotal confirmation of this when visiting the 12<sup>th</sup> grade class of the gymnasium Sami Frashëri in Prishtina/Priština, where no student could answer the simple question, “Who were the partisans?” until one, fishing for an answer, wrongly mentioned the outlaws operating in Kosovo between the two World Wars.<sup>104</sup>

The perception of partisans as the enemy ethnic “other” is maintained as a mythical belief even when facing contrary evidence. The commander of the Kosovo anti-Fascist liberation army was an Albanian, Fadil Hoxha, who in the postwar came to occupy important positions in the Yugoslav Communist establishment, first locally and later nationally. Obviously, there were Albanian Communists as well among the partisans, but most teachers do not dwell on this fact. When they do, they must explain how could any Albanian possibly join the army that led Kosovo to be annexed to Yugoslavia.

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104 Sami Frashëri Gymnasium, class observation May 16, 2016.

One teacher said that he explains to his students the relationship between Albanians and the partisans in Kosovo with the story of Enver Hoxha's influence and the campaign that leaders such as Fadil Hoxha and Xhavit Nimani conducted locally to recruit Albanians to a mostly Serbian and Montenegrin partisan forces. When these latter tried to persuade the imam of Rezalla, "that today Serbia is not the Serbia of the King, it is a different Serbia in line with the Communist ideology of development and prosperity, the imam simply answered him, 'the old onion and the spring onion smell the same, it is an onion'." (Interview 11).

### *Did partisans ever wear the plis?*<sup>105</sup>

All the teachers attribute to Serbian and Montenegrin plans for genocide the partisan violence during the repression of the Drenica insurgency at the end of 1944, when local partisans refused to go to the Northern front and stayed behind to defend their homes from *četnik* attacks. Yet, teachers taught and teach these events in different ways.

Before the war, when the Drenica leader Shaban Polluzha was presented as an enemy of the people, teachers would handle the lessons on his insurgency by way of dissimulating. "I would write down that we had conducted those lessons, but I didn't elaborate them in front of the students. I would either give it a different spin or I wouldn't talk about it at all" (Interview 17). "You would say the opposite, he was not an enemy but a patriot." "We were taught that, 'with great force Fadil Hoxha and the Communist army lead by Moša Pijade, then Ramiz Sadiku [sic], worked a lot and pushed back the Albanian hordes until they disappeared completely,' but I explained this differently to my students...that Shaban Polluzha was an old man, but he was a great man...supported also in Rugova an everywhere else in Kosova" (Interview 15).

According to the teachers, it was only after 1990 that they began talking about the fight in Drenica, "as it really was" (Interview 11). "Albanians were unhappy because they witnessed genocide, they saw people killed in ambushes, they saw people killed at night and drowned in rivers and other things that it's difficult to comprehend. There was a lot of pent up anger, Shaban Polluzha had no choice, but to react the way he did then."

Yet, the story of Shaban Polluzha is currently just briefly mentioned in most books, and is also barely mentioned by several teachers in their classrooms. The story perhaps is too complicated, explained one teacher (Interview 2). It involves telling that Polluzha fought on the side of the partisans, and only when he saw that Serbs were endangering his region he split from the Yugoslav partisans. But in a complete reversal of historical fortunes, admitting that Polluzha was a partisan is the contemporary anathema. "Today instead he only has a nationalist connotation and nobody talks about that split in the textbooks, only in university texts."

The same teacher said that he tells his students the story of Polluzha's insurgency "as it is," though briefly, and how after the war the Communists came to power, and "people who had collaborated with Polluzha and Shaban Polluzha himself were labeled [enemies]." History is written by the winners, he said, and that is why for fifty years Polluzha has never been mentioned in the classroom. "The Gjakova intellectuals were the political elite and they built history, a political history and kept Shaban Polluzha hidden but now that the political constellation has changed; fortunately, we can study history again (Interview 4).

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105 Traditional white felt conic hat worn by Albanians in rural areas.

It is obviously safer for teachers to connect the reemergence of Polluzha's name after the war to the Albanian national pantheon of heroes from Skanderbeg down, rather than to a specific episode of local partisan violence (Interview 7). Only one teacher mentioned that he knows and teaches that Shaban Polluzha was a partisan until he broke off with Fadil Hoxha, the commander of the anti-Fascist liberation army, "because of the massacres that were happening" in Drenica (Interview 16).

### ***The mass killing in Tivari/Bar***

The mass killing in Tivari/Bar in 1945, when the war had already ended in Kosovo, is the big elephant in the room. All the teachers said that they don't teach what happened in Tivari/Bar, because there are no sources and no scholarly account of that event. But they all know about it, most are aware of the small available body of literature on the event, and have talked to relatives or neighbors who survived the massacre.

Because the event was censored in the Yugoslav history books, many teachers said that they did not even know about it until the early 1990s. "We knew about it only privately, from someone in school or from home but nobody had the guts to mention it. We could talk about this only in the family, but with my father or an uncle, not in front of guests or neighbors" (Interview 11). There were various variants circulating among storytellers at the time. A teacher recalls that, "numbers were exaggerated from 7000 to 11000 dead, but we only started publicly talking about this after the early 1990s, and it was not historians who did, but publicists" (Interview 3).

One teacher told us about his curiosity about this event in the late 1970s, after he read something in a book titled 41, because there were 41 authors. He included a mention of the Tivari/Bar event in his thesis, but when he presented the thesis to his professor, he was told to drop that part, there was too much fear of possible repercussions (Interview 9).

When the story of the massacre was introduced into the curricula, after the segregation of schools, it was mainly on the basis of two sources: the first was the history book for high school that was prepared and published in the early 1990s,<sup>106</sup> and the second was the testimonies of survivors and word of mouth information about the event. Everybody heard something from someone. "There was no literature about these things, especially not about Tivari, which is very bad and has not been treated well because there were a lot of victims in Tivari. My cousin was one of the survivors and he told me that he has seen the sea in Tivari become red and those white Albanian hats...he was released and saved" (Interview 1). "I know a survivor, a neighbor, he died 4-5 years ago" (Interview 2).

For one teacher, the story is intensely personal. He heard from his grandfather of how his great-grandfather was killed in Tivari/Bar and how the state tried to erase the memory of both the massacre and his great-grandfather by delivering a death certificate that was silent on the cause and place of his death. The same teacher builds on this traumatic family story a more general theory of the event: "In eighty per cent of the cases they took men who only had one child, with no brother... to destroy all traces of them" (Interview 10).

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106 Instituti e Historisë, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, 335.

Yet, there has consistently been a strong reluctance to teach the events of Tivari/Bar. One teacher told us how he could allude to it without being specific. “I told students that there was a seven meters long street full of plis, and later they understood what the teacher said, but I did not say, ‘Tivari was full of blood, he did that, this happened this way’.” (Interview 12).

This reluctance persists especially in the midst of the more recent high politicization of the events of Tivari/Bar, after the fall of Communism in Albania. The core issue of the effort to give new salience to the massacre is the alleged complicity of Enver Hoxha and Tito in the execution of five thousand Albanians at Tivari/Bar and of further one thousand who had fled from Kosovo to Albania after the war.<sup>107</sup> In 2010, the Parliament of the Republic of Albania established an Investigative Committee to research these events, a development closely followed in Kosovo. The result of the Committee’s work was a publication that stresses the shared responsibility of the two Communist leaders for the massacre.<sup>108</sup>

In Kosovo, the preoccupation with establishing who ordered the killing is also very common, and is likely the reason why teachers do not talk much in class of the events in Tivari/Bar. “The dilemma is who initiated the massacre, whether there was an agreement with the Communist Party of Albania or not” (Int. 6). “I am not surprised that it happened, anyone who thought differently was an “enemy.” The responsibility is of Enver Hoxha and Fadil Hoxha, they hid documents, sources...” (Interview 2).

### ***Fadil Hoxha and Gjakova***

The confusing discussion on the Albanians’ participation in the partisan movement comes to a head when the name of Fadil Hoxha is mentioned. Although the Kosovo government recognized him when he died in 2001 with a state funeral and full military honors, the figure of Fadil Hoxha is still controversial. There are groups that support his role in the partisan war, and later in the Yugoslav nomenclature, and groups that reject a positive memory of Hoxha. The judgment is on the participation of Albanians in the political establishment of postwar Yugoslavia.

History teachers said that they generally follow the textbooks, where Hoxha is represented as the heroic commander of the anti-Fascist movement and a champion of Albanians in socialist Yugoslavia. However, they do not mention his role in the repression of Shaban Polluzha’s forces in Drenica in the winter of 1945 and in other episodes of partisan violence, which are so vivid in the context of Kosovo memory of the Second World War.

One teacher said that Fadil Hoxha was only the commander of Albanian partisans (Interview 3). Another teaches the Fadil Hoxha who “opened schools and the university,” and had a major role to play in the political development of Kosovo as part of Yugoslavia (Interview 6). But almost all hesitate to speak about his role in the war. One of the interviewees said, “Do you know that Fadil Hoxha and many politicians from that time still have family members who are alive?” implying that nobody should speak ill about the man, whatever his political responsibility was for the partisan violence in Kosovo (Interview 16).

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107 Elsidia Luku, “Albanian-Yugoslav Relations (1945-1948) and their Presentation in School History Textbooks,” Paper delivered at the Georg Eckert Institute, The Institute of Spiritual and Cultural Heritage of the Albanians and the Institute for National History Conference on *Historiography and History Education in the South-Slavic and Albanian Speaking Regions*, Skopje, 3-4 June, 2015, 42-43, quoting from Beqir Meta, Muharrem Dezhgiu, Xhevair Lleshi, *History of the Albanian people* 12 (Tirana: Uegen 2009), 300-301.

108 For this see Butka, *Masakra e Tivarit*.

At least one of the teachers tells his class that, “On the right, the *Ballists* had the aim to liberate and unite all Albanian lands, and Fadil Hoxha and his Communist clique on the left tried to wrap up the Second World War issues and determine the borders, which was not in his power to do so” (Interview 9).

In Gjakova the historical verdict on this political figure is entirely positive. A teacher assigned his students the task of writing a paper on Fadil Hoxha. This was in the context of a heated local controversy in 2010 on the dedication of a monument to Hoxha. The majority of the papers turned out to be positive. “They were influenced by families and the environment, as well as the internet. When we take an approach that consists on arguing about facts such as educational employment, the development of culture, the fact that he was a commander in time of war, the autonomy of 1974, of course the opinion is positive” (Interview 8).

This might not have been the opinion in Drenica, where no investment was ever made during Yugoslavia, “While if Gjakova had 37,000 people employed in factories, that was due to Fadil Hoxha” (Interview 8). When we asked why there was no investment in Drenica the same teacher said, “If I were given the chance to build a road, I would of course build it in my village, not yours.”

### ***The Holocaust in Kosovo and Albania***

Following the textbooks, all teachers said that they teach the Holocaust as a consequence of the war, with the exception of one, who said that he presents it as a goal of the Nazi war. He is also the only one to mention the detention camps in Albania and Pristina, “You can still see the old wall of the prison in Ulpiana” (Interview 4).

All teachers said that they stress the innocence of Albanians in the context of the Holocaust, and in fact they said that they tell the students that a parallel between the Albanians and the Jews can be made. Like the Jews, Albanians have been constructed as “the enemy” by Serbs and targeted for extermination (Interview 2). Like the Jews, Albanians were persecuted and therefore protected the Jews, because of their humanitarianism (Interview 4).

One teacher uses the Holocaust to propose a comparison of genocidal nations. “I tell my students, don’t trust what you read on social networks or see in documents, the Slavic nations have done worse” (Interview 5).

### ***Collaboration and sympathy with Germany/Italy***

All teachers follow the dominant story-line that the Italian and German occupations of Kosovo were a form of liberation from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The occupiers did bring schools and culture for the first time in Albania. Collaboration with the occupiers is therefore not seen as problematic.

Teachers do not identify renowned Albanian collaborators with the Germans and Italian occupiers as “traitors,” as all textbooks, Serbian and Albanian, did before the war. “Those books should be kept from students,” said one teacher (Interview 2). Hoxha’s historians might have called Mehdi Frashëri and Rexhep Mitrovica traitors to Germany, “but that was the logic of the time, Albanians could not oppose the Germans and if we cannot call them patriots from today’s



prism, we should not call them traitors either. By the same token, Albanians who participated in the transitional government of Kosovo after 1999 are traitors because they were influenced by Germans, Americans, etc.” Nobody should forget, they tell the students, that “Albanians had two enemies, an old one and a new one” (Interview 13).

The syndrome of the small innocent nation is proposed by a teacher, who thus explains the alliance of Albanians with the Italy in Albania and Kosovo: “I ask students, was it good that Zog collaborated with Italy? ...at the time, don’t forget, we could not be with Greece, we could not be with Serbia, or Macedonia, with these, with those, what would you have done? [The student] says, yes professor, we would have been with Italy” (Interview 12).

One teacher said that because Albanians were favored by Italians, old people remember the occupation with affection, they don’t have bad memories of them nor of the Germans, “but I am talking about the population, not what they write in books...and I am saying this only after the 1990s” (Interview 11).

We were unable to engage any teacher on an evaluation of Fascism or Nazism in themselves, apart their role in the unification of Albania and Kosovo. The two authors of the textbooks we interviewed confirmed in fact that a deep sympathy for the two leaders Mussolini and Hitler still endures among the elderly: “They call them Daja Muse, Daja Hete (Uncle Musa, Uncle Hete)” (Interview 19)

We heard from at least three teachers of the fascination that the figure of Hitler exerts on students, who use the internet to deepen their knowledge of that historical figure, even pursuing weird conspiratorial theories about his survival in Latin America after the war.

### ***Whose expulsion?***

It is an established historical fact that between the two wars, it was through an agrarian reform that the Yugoslav Kingdom allotted land to Serbian and Montenegrin colonists, expropriating Albanians landowners. During the Second World War, after the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Italian occupation of Kosovo, Serbian and Montenegrin colonists were expelled in mass. When asked about how to teach this event, almost universally, teachers misunderstood the question and answered citing the expulsion of Albanians between the two wars. Thanks to the Second World War, as one popular argument goes, the expulsion of Albanians to Turkey was stopped.

One teacher answered that he teaches how Serbian propaganda used the flights of Serbs from Kosovo in 1999 but also 1689-90 and the retreat of their troops in 1915 to spread doubts on the demographic dominance of Albanians. Only when we insisted and cited foreign sources about the expulsions of 1941-44, he admitted of having read about it (previously he said there was no source), and said Serbian sources are exaggerated, “it was not forty thousand or fifty thousand refugees, maybe there were expulsions, but not that many” (Interview 2). In other words, “If there were expulsion, they were not organized” (Interview 13).

Another teacher said, “When I talk to my students, Serbian colonists came and occupied our land and took the best land, at that time this calls for blood...but we don’t treat [the issue] this way...we treat it according to the textbooks” (Interview 12). One who taught the expulsions

of the colonists who had come to Kosovo between the wars, said that he adds that Albanians protected the same colonists from violence (Interview 16). The “good Albanian” who follows the tradition of *besa* and protects all in need, including Serbian enemies, appeared also in the discussion with another teacher (Interview 14).

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

We conducted in-depth interviews with a group of Serbian and Albanian history teachers in Kosovo to obtain a better grasp on how the history of the Second World War is taught in the local public high schools. Since the research and debate on official textbooks has found the prevalence of official nationalist and mutually hostile narratives in the publications of each national groups, we set out to find whether teachers use and follow those texts. We wanted to test their adherence to official narratives by seeing how would they react to challenges to those same narratives.

Our findings are based on qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews and a review of written works. Our sample consists of 25 structured interviews with high school history teachers. The interviews are semi-structured, with an open-ended set of questions. To randomize the sample, we interviewed teachers in all the main regions of Kosovo, which have a distinct and different experience with the Second World War, to best capture the differences and similarities in classrooms across Kosovo. Before the interviews, we reviewed of how the official history textbooks approved by the Ministries of Education of Kosovo and Serbia present the War.

We discovered a reality that cannot be easily captured by ready-made categorizations.

First, teachers from both groups are “custodians” of their respective national narratives, but none of these two groups is homogeneous within, as the Second World War is a powerful signifier of the birth of Socialist Yugoslavia and thus it elicits contradictory feelings and political stands.

Second, teachers from both groups are mistrustful of the influence of institutional authorities - foreign governments, international organizations, their respective domestic Ministries - on their teaching instruments and practices. But they are also conformist, and largely conform to administrative directives such as curricula and programs, as long as they do not contradict deeply held beliefs that are rooted in personal and communal stories about the War.

### *“Custodians” of their national narratives*

The role of Serbian teachers as custodians of their national narrative is grounded in their current material and political conditions. Their life and work occur in very difficult circumstances, or even under occupation, as one of them claimed. They work in schools that are named after Serbian educational institutions which no longer exist in the place where they were once located. They depend on Belgrade for administrative direction, and teach a history of the Second World War in which Kosovo is only a small part, as the major tragedies and glories of the Serbian nation happened somewhere else.

They largely teach the history of the Second World War that has crystallized in Serbian official textbooks since the late 1990s, in which there is an attempt to balance the Yugoslav ideological narrative of the good, multinational partisan war, with the rehabilitation of the *četnik* movement, which was both anti-foreign occupation and anti-partisans, at times collaborating with the Nazis. In this storyline, all Serbs fought on the right side against Fascism and Nazism,

while almost all other nations in Yugoslavia fought on the wrong side and victimized Serbs; all Albanians in Kosovo are guilty, as collaborators of the Fascist enemies, of ethnically cleansing Kosovo of Serbs and taking it away from Serbia.

Albanian history teachers live in different circumstances, as citizens of the Republic of Kosovo, but they too are custodians of their national narrative. Some feel they must react to outsiders' lobbying to change how history is written for political purposes, whether it is Turkey's will to impose the image of a benign Ottoman Empire, or international organizations' pressure to rewrite history in order to de-escalate ethnic tensions. Others became custodian of their national narrative under Yugoslavia, when they were either cowed into conformism, or learned how to be subterranean critics of Yugoslav history; in the decade before the recent war, they taught and attended makeshift schools where they learned and also taught national resistance more than history.

The Albanian national narrative of the Second World War, reproduced in the official textbooks, is squarely founded on the ideas that the Albanian nation, consistently betrayed by more powerful ones as well as her malevolent neighbors, had to collaborate with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany to free itself from Serbia; and that it is always a fighter for freedom and independence, incapable of doing evil to any other nation, including their archenemy Serbia. In this storyline, Albanian partisans and Albanian nationalists who fought each other, as well as Albanian collaborators, are all equally heroes.

### *Contestations within national narratives*

Yet, teachers from both groups told us that in their classrooms they stress different events of the War and give different interpretations of such events, on the basis of what they learned outside textbooks. They tell students what they know from personal or communal experience, and the stories they heard from their families. But these stories are not simply private or anecdotal, because they are linked to broader ideological and political frameworks, which express both divisions and fragmentations within their national narratives, and an intense preoccupation with the present.

For example, Serbian teachers told us that they make explicit in class their siding with the partisans or the *četnik*. Both groups are presented as anti-Fascist, on the "good side" of history. The position of these individual teachers might be rooted in their family experience, but it is also a reflection of the fragmentation of the national narrative itself. Teachers who present partisans in a positive light also have a positive perspective on Socialist Yugoslavia, and might even feel nostalgia for it, including its credo of ethnic co-existence. But those who proudly embrace *četnik* identity as a family legacy are also telling their students more than their personal story; they hold a more critical perspective on Yugoslavia, as a country which weakened Serbia.

These different approaches reflect broader debates. The notion of the *četnik* movement as fighting on the "good side" of the war against Fascism and Nazism began with their legal rehabilitation after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, but as a historical fact is contested in both academic circles and public debates. The name *četnik* itself is politically highly charged: during the wars of the 1990s it was widely used in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and by Albanians in Kosovo to label Serbian perpetrators of war crimes, but in many cases those Serbs who committed the most notorious crimes described themselves as *četnik*. The *četnik*-partisan division among

Serbs is not purely about memory and history; it reveals political affiliations or opinions in regard to Socialist Yugoslavia as well as the wars of the 1990s. Thus, it is also a political issue with practical consequences, particularly in the relations between Serbia and its neighbouring countries. Generally speaking, as these divisions play themselves out, those who are pro-*četnik* tend to be more nationalist and conservative, while the pro-partisan and pro-Yugoslav can be considered more liberal and socialist, though we argue that these divisions require a deeper discussion which may be necessary if we will continue and further develop this research topic.

We found that what Albanian teachers teach is influenced by their regional context. Kosovo is made of small communities, and the violent experience of the Second World War left deep marks on them, especially on those where the war lingered after the liberation from the Germans - whether it was because of inter-ethnic settling of accounts, or the fight of Yugoslav partisans for the total control of the territory, which was also a civil war. Those regional differences, which sharpened after the War, and because of the War, persist even today in a completely changed Kosovo. Regions are, famously, the home of different political elites, whether as former partisans they led Kosovo under Yugoslavia, or as descendants of those defeated by the partisans they govern contemporary Kosovo.

Teachers emphasize and justify, in their classrooms, events and figures of the partisan movement, or episodes of partisan violence against Albanians, according to the experience of their families and communities. But there is not just a personal perspective, it has political connotations. It proposes a contestation of the participation in the anti-Fascist war, which led to the liberation from Fascism and Nazism and the return of Serbia in Kosovo.

We found that teachers from both groups are thus caught between their overall role as custodian of national narratives of the Second World War and their active participation in the political contestation of the same historical narratives. They appear to communicate to the younger generations precisely this mix of acceptance of general storylines and specific criticisms which are rooted in personal, communal, and political experiences. But this variety of forms of communication, from relating personal experience, telling anecdotes, or using metaphors, where self-censorship is practiced, hide political stands.

### ***A problem of insularity and trust***

What is apparent from the conversations we had with all the teachers is that both the Albanian and Serbian bodies of academic work on the history of the Second World War are rather insular, still highly ideological, and do not engage much with the broader international scholarship on this period. As alternative source to the official textbooks, they encourage students to rely on the Internet to research major historical events or figures. But the Internet is a problematic source of information, without close academic guidance, and might perpetuate disinformation and conspiracy theories.

A major problem of such lack of scholarly produced history on the Second World War is that because the official national histories, both among Serbs and Albanians, are so focused on portraying each nation as victim of crimes and never as perpetrator of any crime, none of them deal with controversial and complex issues, such as collaboration with the Nazi and Fascist regime. This is also not unique to Kosovo and Serbia, as a recent authoritative book by Istvan Deak discusses in detail.<sup>109</sup>

Collaboration is minimized to justify a national purpose, as in the case of Albanians' cooperation with the Fascist and Nazi occupiers in order to keep Kosovo and Albania unified, or in the case of General Nedić's Serbia collaboration with Nazi Germans, whereas Nedić is perceived as the "savior" of the Serbs who were fleeing from Independent State of Croatia (NDH). Collaboration can also be crudely discussed to place an entire national group in the "wrong side," as in the case of Serbs' denial of any participation of Albanians to the anti-Fascist resistance.

Nor do these national histories acknowledge well established facts, which would put their nation under a negative light. Albanians deny the violent expulsion of Serbian and Montenegrin colonists during the War. Serbs deny the violence committed against the Albanian population by any side - whether partisan or *četnik*, involved in the Second World War.

When we confronted the teachers with narratives on the War that are alternative to their national narratives, we found resistance in both groups. Mistrust of historiographies that challenge their national narratives or, to be more precise, the historical narratives influenced by their social and political communities, is deeply rooted in the legacy of historiography after the Second World War - consistently highly ideological and changeable, according to the political status of Kosovo and Serbia.

The one person who put this more explicitly was a student in Prishtina/Priština, who said, "I don't like history, I don't trust history, because there are no facts, there is always someone coming to tell us what history is - first the Yugoslavs, then UNMIK, then Turkey." Yet, political pressure is not felt only from the outside, it is a feature of domestic politics and social control.

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109 Istvan Deak, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution During World War II* (Westview, 2015).

## Appendix A – The Legal Context

In today's Kosovo, the publication of textbooks continues to be governed by law no.02/L – 67, based on UNMIK Regulation no.2001/9 of 15 May 2001 (UNMIK is the UN Mission for Kosovo). The law is approved by the parliament of the Republic of Kosovo on 29 June 2006. It stipulates that school textbooks should fulfil educational, scientific, pedagogical, psychological, didactical/methodological, ethical, linguistic, artistic and technical requirements in compliance with the standards and objectives given in educational syllabi. Textbooks may not contain propaganda against Kosovo, material promoting the violation of human rights or of principles gender equality, or material that promotes hatred on grounds of religion, politics or nationality. The law likewise determines that textbooks are to be edited by specialists in the relevant school subject. These specialists are to be elected via competitions announced by the country's Ministry of Education and Science (MASHT).. Procedures for the compilation and editing of textbooks are supervised by experts from MASHT. Critical evaluation of the writing in textbooks is done by reviewers.

The law for pre-university education, in the country, law no. 04/L – 032 of 29 August 2011 is based on article 65 (1) of the constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. The law stipulates that pre university education is organized according to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) levels and in compliance with the main phases of Kosovo's national curriculum framework (EU Key Competences LLL 2009). Pre-university education in the Republic of Kosovo is organized in stages of first five, then four, then a further three years.

According to the 2015 Law on School Textbooks in Serbia, schools should select at least three textbooks for each subject from a list provided by Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. The list of history textbooks covering the period of the 20th and early 21st Century contains four main textbooks (See Appendix B). Our analysis here is focused on the three most recent textbooks, while the fourth textbook is analyzed based on secondary sources.

## Appendix B - Textbooks

### *Kosovo textbooks [coded as they appear in the text]*

A1. Fehmi Rexhepi and Isa Bicaj, *Historia 9*. Libri Shkollor, 2004.

A2. Fehmi Rexhepi, *Historia 9*. Libri Shkollor 2015.

B1. Jusuf Bajraktari, Fehmi Rexhepi, Frashër Demaj. *Historia (10)*. Gjinnazi matematikë dhe informatikë/Gjinnazi I shkencave natyrore. Libri Shkollor, Prishtinë, 2004

B2. Jusuf Bajraktari, Fehmi Rexhepi, Frashër Demaj. *Historia (10)*. Gjinnazi matematikë dhe informatikë/Gjinnazi I shkencave natyrore. Libri Shkollor, Prishtinë, 2012

C. Fehmi Rexhepi and Frashër Demaj, *Historia 11*. Gjinnazi I gjuhëve, Libri Shkollor 2004

C2. Fehmi Rexhepi and Frashër Demaj, *Historia 11*. Gjinnazi I gjuhëve, Libri Shkollor 2013

D1. Isa Bicaj and Isuf Ahmeti, *Historia 12*. Gjinnazi Shoqëror. Libri Shkollor, 2005

D2. Isa Bicaj and Isuf Ahmeti, *Historia 12*. Gjinnazi Shoqëror. Libri Shkollor, 2012.

### *Serbian textbooks*

1. Mira Radojević, *Istorija IV - udžbenik za treći razred gimnazije prirodno-matematičkog smera, četvrti razred gimnazije društveno-jezičkog smera i opšteg tipa i četvrti razred srednje stručne škole za obrazovne profile pravni tehničar i birotehničar*, 2014 [History IV – textbook for the third year of Grammar School Science-Mathematics and the fourth year of Grammar school General and Language-Humanities, and for specialized schools for Law, Technicians and Bureau Technicians].

2. Djordje Djurić and Momcilo Pavlović, *Istorija za treći razred gimnazije prirodno-matematičkog smera i četvrti razred gimnazije opšteg i društveno-jezičkog smera*, 2010 and 2012 [History for the third year of Grammar School Science-Mathematics and the fourth year of Grammar school General and Language-Humanities].

3. Radoš Ljušić and Ljubodrag Dimić, *Istorija za treći razred gimnazije prirodno-matematičkog smera i četvrti razred gimnazije društveno-jezičkog smera*, 2013 [History for the third year of Grammar School Science-Mathematics and the fourth year of Grammar school General and Language-Humanities].

4. Kosta Nikolić, Nikola Zutić, Momcilo Pavlović, Zorica Špadijer, *Istorija za gimnazije opšteg i društveno-jezičkog smera + dodatak*, 2002 [History, for Grammar School, General and Language-Humanities + addition].



## Appendix C – List of Interviews

Interview	Region	Gender	Date of Birth	Experience	Status	Date of interview
1.	Prishtina/Priština	F	1968	Pre+after war	Teaching	19/5
2.	Vushtrri/Vučitrn	M	1980	After war	Teaching	19/5
3.	Prizren/Prizren	M	1958	After war	Teaching	26/5
4.	Vushtrri/Vučitrn	M	1980	After war	Teaching	19/5
5.	Klina/Klina	F	1959	Pre+after war	Teaching	23/5
6.	Prishtina/Priština	M	1960s	Pre+after war	Teaching	17/5
7.	Mitrovica/Mitrovica	F	1982	After war	Teaching	19/5
8.	Gjakova/Djakovica	M	1962	Pre+after war	Teaching	31/5
9.	Mitrovica/Mitrovica	M	1955	Pre+after war	Teaching	19/5
10.	Prizren/Prizren	M	1977	After war	Teaching	26/5
11.	Klina/Klina	M	1953	Pre+after war	Teaching	23/5
12.	Gjakova/Djakovica	M	1962	Pre+after war	Administrator	26/5 & 31/5
13.	Skënderaj/Srbica	M	1980	After war	Teaching	21/5
14.	Gjakova/Djakovica	F	1960s	Pre+after war	Teaching	31/5
15.	Peja/Peć	M	1951	Pre+after war	Retired	24/8
16.	Prishtina/Priština	M	1950	Pre+after war	Retired	17/5
17.	Gjilan/Gnjilane	M	1943	Pre+after war	Retired	25/8
18.	Prishtina/Priština	F	1950s	Pre+after war	Retired	17/5
19.	Prishtina/Priština	M	1973	Pre+after war	Teaching	25/5
20.	Prishtina/Priština	M	1945		Retired	25/5
21.	Kosovska Mitrovica/ Mitrovica veriore	M	1973	10 years	Teaching	9/6
22.	Kosovska Mitrovica/ Mitrovica veriore	F	1969	23 years	Teaching	9/6
23.	Kosovska Mitrovica/ Mitrovica veriore	M	1985	6 years	Teaching	9/6
24.	Gračanica/Gračanica	M	1977	12 years	Teaching	10/6
25.	Gračanica/Gračanica	M	1972	16 years	Teaching	10/6