

Kosovo Liberation Army in the Discourse of International Authors

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This paper aims to recall the main events that influenced Kosovo to receive international attention in the late 1990s. This paper contains an analysis that focuses on the circumstances of the establishment of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) from the viewpoint of international authors. KLA in International Discourse is an analytical review of international debate on what constituted KLA, its purpose and function, and examines the role of internal and international perceptions on the topic and the fundamental course of events that made Kosovo take its historical movement towards independence that it has today. A selection of special literature has been used such as scientific articles, memoirs, monographs, publications, etc. Following an objective approach, the main causes of creating the Kosovo Liberation Army and the debate that sparked its founding are discussed. The information on the international debate on KLA) managed to unite Albanians over their just cause in their struggle for liberation. As a result of the just idea of liberation, the popular effort, the issue of Kosovo managed to quickly get international attention, with the most powerful political-military states, US and NATO, lining up in defense of the Albanian people, and in cooperation with the KLA ended the Serbian regime in Kosovo.

Key words: Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), International Debate, War, Dialogue, Conference of Rambouillet.

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1. Introduction

The loss of Kosovo's autonomy on March 23, 1989 was a clear lesson for both Albanians and other Yugoslav people that with Serbian nationalists led by Slobodan Milosevic the Yugoslavia of "Brotherhood Union" was getting closer to the end day by day.

Violence, persecution, and repression systematically committed by the Milosevic regime against Albanians made life in Kosovo extremely hard, by taking almost everything they had: starting with autonomy, violating human rights, closing schools and the University, destroying the commercial and industrial life, closing major enterprises, bankrupting the Kosovo Bank, etc.

This expansion of Serbian authority had significantly concerned other Yugoslav people, fearing that in the near future they could be the subject of such violence. Yugoslavia faced bloody wars which resulted in hundreds and thousands of innocent victims, starting with Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, to end with Kosovo.

In such a reality, left with few choices, the overwhelming majority of Albanians under the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), namely Ibrahim Rugova, clearly claimed that the way they would pursue was that of peace, by boycotting all Serbian institutions such as those of security (police, army); education, health, factors, media etc. (Malcolm, p. 363; Petritsch, Pichler, p. 73; Vickers, p. 322).

The argument that the LDK leadership provided at the time was that in those circumstances that Albanians were in, particularly after the suspension of all security institutions, with no army or police, a confrontation with the Serbs would be absolutely unequal and would bring Albanians massive bloodshed.

However, excessive violence requires new pathways. At the same time, the lessons that Kosovo Albanians learned from the wars of former-Yugoslavia were a clear signal that dialogue would not help them achieve their goals to create an independent country, and the only choice left was an armed war, the result of which was the establishment of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

There are not many events that have managed to include as many historians, publicists, political scientists, diplomats and journalists as the Kosovo war has. Our research indicates that, in a very short period of time, the number of publications went up to hundreds of titles, making Kosovo, and its Liberation Army, one of the events most preferred for discussion at the end of the XX century.

“Kosovo Liberation Army in the discourse of international authors” aims to present and analyze the stance of and the way international authors, diplomats and journals wrote about the Kosovo Liberation Army. This research study includes monographs, different scientific articles, printed materials (daily/weekly press). References also include writings published from 1998 to present days.

This study is oriented in two methods:

Qualitative method through which we have reviewed objective case studies for the purpose of collecting detailed information, in order to compare opinions based on a single case study. Comparative method through which we have analyzed, compared stances, opinions of different authors on the reasons for its establishment, and activity of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

2. Idea of Resistance

The first ideas of resistance usually came from individuals and small groups whose aim in the initial stages was to bring together people who were angry to the point of collective civil disobedience against the conquerors. With regards to Kosovo, the number of those who were thinking of resisting the Serbian conqueror was increasing every day. Dissatisfaction increased, especially after the Dayton Conference (Vickers, p. 354). In this context, if we do not count earlier moments of different radical resistance fractions in Kosovo’s journey in the XX century, starting with the events of the ‘60s-80s which were believed to be the inception that motivated and created the movement which in mid ‘90s would come to be recognized for the public as the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA (Petritsch, Pichler, 2002, p. 85). Thus, international authors (Judah, 2002, p. 138), consider that the far-left organizations with Enverian inclinations had a significant role in the establishment of the KLA, who practiced its activity mainly in the diaspora, behind which was the LPK political party (People’s Movement of Kosovo), (Schmitt, 2013, p. 254). In the reality of isolation that prevailed in Kosovo until by the end of the ‘90s, the dilemmas for military resistance that would lead to the achievement of goals for independence, were huge. It was questionable, perhaps rightfully so, whether this small military group that called itself the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), consisting of no more than 50 people at the beginning, would be able to militarily face an army that was considered one of the most powerful armies in Europe (Perritt Jr., 2008, p. 41). Nonetheless, it is a fact

that excessive violence always requires new pathways. In this context, it is a general conclusion that choosing war was an option imposed on Albanians, in order to gain international attention. Therefore, as it has been emphasized by experts of regional circumstances, the international community turned a blind eye on the warnings of western observers and journalists who in their writings warned about the beginning of a new war in the Balkans, Kosovo (Pettifer, 2004, p. 144). Also, despite the warnings of the American president, George Bush that “the United States will be prepared to employ military force against the Serbians in the event of a conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action”, December 25, 1992 (The New York Times, April, 1999), the violence against Albanians by the Serbian occupiers was growing. Along with the violence, Albanian’s dissatisfaction was also growing, and so was the KLA as well. However, the word “military” seemed an exaggeration for groups of farmers and school teachers with rusty rifles and inappropriate uniforms. Yet, they had (will, B.Q) some money which had been sent to Kosovo by the large Albanian diaspora living in Switzerland, Sweden, Germany, and the United States (Tanner, 1999).

3. Factors that Influenced the Rise of KLA

The international approach pursued for years was a disappointment for Kosovars, which paved the way for the Albanian nationalist line to work on establishing the Kosovo Liberation Army, and international authors have listed a few factors that led to geostrategic changes in the Balkans. The disappointing decision was taken when Kosovo did not receive the deserved support at the conferences organized on Yugoslavia’s state heritage, initially in The Hague, and to continue with the same treatment in London. The international argument suggested that Kosovo and the other province of Vojvodina were not recognized as sovereign parts of the Yugoslav Federation, and as a result they were not recognized as parties in the issue of Yugoslav heritage (Petritsch, Pichler, 2002, p. 77). Furthermore Oliver Schmitt, (2012, p. 252) adds that many western prime ministers and their ministers of foreign affairs saw Kosovo as an internal issue of Serbia, emphasizing the status of an autonomous province, not a republic with the right of separation. These concessions were a great disappointment for Kosovo Albanians, says Richard Caplan (2005, p. 140), especially after November 1995, when the issue of Kosovo was not included in the nego-

tiations of the Dayton Conference, which ended the war in Bosnia and finally concluded the breakup of Yugoslavia.

From the western perspective, the Dayton agreement was seen as the end of the Balkans' dilemmas. This view is affirmed by the journalist and author of many books on the Balkans, namely James Pettifer (2004, p. 144), according to whom the first few months after Dayton, there was a prevailing assumption that the problems of the Balkans had been solved there, particularly since Americans had taken care of this issue, so there were no longer any reasons for concern. Christopher Hill recalls that the expectations of Albanians were ungrounded, as the Bosnia peace process did not provide for the inclusion of the Kosovo situation. Further, Hill adds: "*I was familiar with the Kosovo issue, as I had worked in neighbouring Albania, in some travels in 1994 and 1995. I had realized that this complicated issue could not be compounded with the problem of the war in Bosnia*" (Hill, 2016, p. 151). The timing was not right – western politicians thought – to open Pandora's Box, i.e., Kosovo (Glenny, 2007, p. 654). The truth is the western world was not willing to deal with the Kosovo issue since part of the American administration wanted to raise the issue to keep Milosevic, although he insisted that Kosovo was an internal issue of Serbia (Ker-Lindsay, 2009, p. 11). Time proved these assertions wrong. According to Miranda Vickers (2004, p. 354), the signing of the Dayton Agreement not only led to increased radicalization among young Albanians, but also encouraged more realistic support, similar to that employed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the same spirit, the American newspaper Washington Post wrote through its journalists, Peter Finn and R. Jeffrey Smith (1999) that the bell of death for the peaceful movement of Kosovo Albanians tolled in the Dayton Agreement, which overlooked Albanians' right to exercise their rights. Seeing that there was no room for compromise, they chose to actively oppose the Serbian dominion. Hence, in the mid-90s, Kosovo Albanians were faced with a choice between peace and war (Guzina, 2003). In such a reality, despite the disappointment, Kosovo Albanians managed to come to two conclusions, namely the Kosovo issue could never be resolved through a peaceful way. This was a clear signal that without an armed war, they could never achieve their national aspirations and goals for an independent country. In this context, it has been rightfully claimed that overlooking Kosovo only opened the door to another war (Fischer, 2007, p. 100). As Paul Taylor (1998) wrote, the main lesson Kosovo Albanians

learned from the war in Bosnia was that violence proved to be the only way to put their problem in the global agenda, and that continuous guerrilla resistance could be the only way to push the west to militarily intervene against the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic.

In 1997 Albania was involved in a powerful reaction that was followed by widespread riots, the result of which was the overturned order in the country of Albania. The collapse of the Albanian state system and institutions in 1997 changed the situation dramatically. Albanian Army and Interior Ministry warehouses and depots were looted and arms and ammunition were made available to the KLA. Because after the collapse of the security system and the ensuing lawlessness in Albania, it was possible, for the first time, to organize training facilities in northern Albania near the borders with Kosovo (Kosovo Report, 2000, p. 51). A consequence of this riot was, among others, the opening of several weapon warehouses, which, in a very short time, fell in the hands of the people. The collapse of the political and security system in the spring of 1997 in Albania caused the military barracks to be looted. A trade in small arms (especially Kalashnikovs) took place, most of which ended up in neighboring Kosovo in the hands of increasingly dissatisfied Kosovo Albanian youth, who were continuing to form militant groups. The goal was to re-establish law and order in Kosovo (Guzina, 2003). In this sense, there is no doubt that the riots in Albania had a psychological impact on the KLA leaders, who immediately interpreted this fact as an opportunity to resolve the issue of supplying the new army with weapons and ammunition (Pettifer, 2013, p. 96). According to Stacy Sullivan (2009, p. 158), the chaos in Albania gave the KLA two vital preconditions for a successful guerrilla uprising: it was an excellent refuge and it provided them access to weapons. Oliver J. Schmitt (2012, p. 254) shares a similar opinion, claiming that the events in Albania met the political precondition for an armed war, where a total of one million weapons were stolen from the warehouses of the Albanian army, some of which ended up in the hands of the KLA.

Another determining factor in the rise of the KLA was the liberalization of laws that existed in Western countries, although there was an attempt to impose an embargo on fundraising. Fundraising in the western world is legal enough (Leyne, 1999). For instance, in Switzerland, where a large part of donations came from, it was easier for fundraisers because of the Swiss banking system, its integrity and secrecy code (Perritt Jr., 2008, p. 137). This liberalization of

laws created a very suitable environment for organization, which the political-organizational leaders of the KLA used well enough to raise the funds so much needed for the creation of a separate liberation army such as the KLA.

As a result of the uprising of the KLA, international attention in the region also increased. As American authors, Ivo H Daalder and Michael E O'Hanlon (2000, p. 22) claim, the extension of Albanians in at least four different countries (Albania, Greece, Macedonia, and Yugoslavia) had 'seriously attracted the attention of the West because any of their nationalist actions would pose a major concern to Kosovo's neighbors, especially Macedonia which was the most fragile country of the former Yugoslav republics, adding to it the fact that Albanians comprised about 30% of its total population, the chances of destabilization were real (Koha Ditore, June 16, 1998). These new circumstances warned about the rumble of another nationalist earthquake, which was shaking former-Yugoslavia. More specifically, in rural Kosovo, a new political and military force was born, which was troubling the Balkans, known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (Hugdes, 1999).

4. What was Really the KLA?

The simplest answer to this question would be the great, centuries-old idea of the Albanian people to be free and independent, initially articulated by a small group of people, which, within a short period of time, would receive the admiration of the entire Albanian nation. According to the American journalists, Finn & Smith, (1999), the KLA was a radical movement, born in response to radical Serbian nationalism. Its main goal was national liberation from the centuries-old Serbo-Yugoslav regime. From a time, perspective, its beginnings were quite mysterious, and there was little information about it and its leaders. Thus, international authors also note different epithets it had in its beginnings. In some cases, it was also called the genesis of Serbian secret service agencies,² a fact that had created a dilemma among the people, about who is really behind those military formations which, through different communications, were taking responsibility for activities and attacks that were undertaken mainly against Serbian police forces (Dufour, 2010, p. 149). Indeed, until late 1997, active

2 W. Petritsch, R. Pichler, *The Long Road to War. Kosovo and the International Community 1989-1999*, "KOHA", 2002, Pristina, p. 85-86; M. Vickers, *Among Serbs and Albanians, A History of Kosovo*, "TOENA", Tirana, 2004, p. 351-352; O. J. Schmit, *Kosovo – A Short History of a Central Balkans Land*, "KOHA", Pristina, 2012, p. 254.

armed resistance groups in Kosovo were very small and without permanent bases in the province. They had few arms and do not seem to have had any clear leadership structure. (Kosovo Report, 2000, p. 52). The truth was that behind them were the radical groups of Albanians living in diaspora, leading the activities of the KLA. As the complete consolidation of the KLA remained a challenge, the confrontation with risks, persecution, and the continuous arrests from the Serbian regime, slowed down and made the recruitment process and organizational capacity building. Facing such daily challenges, its leaders developed their activities in two directions: policy-making (organizational, financial and logistics), a task practiced from “practitioners in exile, and “protectors at home” who initially developed their activity through attack-retreat actions, events developed illegally (Perritt Jr., 2008, p. 28).

5. Public Appearance

The final dilemma about the existence of KLA formations was scheduled to be solved on November 28, the day of the national Albanian flag. Those days, Serbian police forces had killed Halit Geci, a respected history teacher. His funeral was planned exactly on the 28th, which would be attended by over 20,000 citizens from the entire region of Drenica. The surprise was announced when three men in uniform (M. K, R. S, D. H) suddenly appeared publicly for the first time before the crowd of gathered citizens, two of which appeared with no mask while the third was wearing a mask (R.S.), who read the speech, containing these words: “Serbia is massacring Albanians. The KLA is the only serious force that is fighting to make our ideals true. For four years, the KLA has been in the front line of the war for the liberation of Kosovo. We will keep fighting” (Judah, 2002. p. 173). Apparently, the people of Drenica had been longing for such a message as they welcomed it with applause and ovations, calling “KLA, KLA”. Thus, it can be concluded that the KLA achieved its affirmation goals extremely well, in order to internationalize through violence the crisis of Kosovo, first in the media level and then in the political level. The events that followed in the upcoming years, especially during 1998-1999, turned the dilemma surrounding the leadership abilities of the KLA into the only hope, which in turn resulted in massive popular support, to become the foundation of Albanian resistance. This time it was not about a small group of soldiers but rather an army which was consolidating with each passing day, although

with no previous military experience, but with courage and moral for liberation, containing the patriotic spirit in which the soldiers of the KLA were ready to die for their national cause (Perritt Jr. 2008, p. 96). However, the emergence of the KLA was not received well at all by Milosevic, since – as it was known – the basic strategic goal of his regime was to maintain control over Kosovo. This was thought to be done by changing the demographic balance, by expelling the Albanian population, an early project by Ilia Garasanin followed by Vasa CubriloVIC³ and recently attempted to realize it by himself. But in order to finally achieve this goal, he now had to deal with the annihilation of the KLA, which had started to bring him great trouble on the ground.

6. International debate on the activity of the KLA

The green light for this action was considered to be the statement of the American envoy for the Balkans, Robert Gelbard who, after a visit to Kosovo on February 23, 1998, condemned the growing violence, harshly criticising the KLA: “*We strongly condemn terrorist acts in Kosovo. The KLA is with no doubt a terrorist group*” (Sebak, 1998). Such a statement was more a personal attitude at the moment about the KLA. However, the negative effect on the KLA remained. As Dario Malnar (2013, p. 151) notes in further analyses of the activities of the international community, the activities of the KLA, in “all” subsequent relevant documents were characterized as terrorist, by giving room to the KLA critics to produce denigrating writings about its activity. For instance, former Russian prime minister, Yevgeny Primakov (2004 p. 182), writes that the cause of the extreme outrage in the province dates back to the beginning of February 1998 after a group of terrorists from the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army attacked a Serbian police patrol.” Since then, Moscow has used all its not insignificant mechanisms, especially to warn of the danger posed by “Albanian Islamic terrorists” as they call themselves. We find similar evaluation in the article of the director of the Institute of Slavic Studies Prof. Dr. Volkov, according to whom the KLA has shown itself since the beginning as a terrorist organization with political goals. Further, he points out that the sources of its formation are highly dubious: it

3 Načertanije is the first national ideological program of modern Serbia and is undoubtedly the most perfect expression of the ideology of Serbo-centrism. As such this text is an exemplary illustration of the Serbian conception of the treatment of the Yugoslav issue and practically the first scenario of wars for the future. Grmek et al., “Ethnic Cleansing: Historical Documents on a Serbian Ideology”, “55” Tirana, 2010, pp. 63 - 161

includes mercenaries and so-called foreign volunteers - Mujahideen from Arab countries. Focusing on the cause of the crisis in Kosovo, Volkov concluded that it was the KLA activity that created the crisis, after which NATO operations and pressures on Yugoslavia began (Vukaj, 2007, p. 435). This evaluation is refuted by the KLA expert Henry H. Perritt Jr. (2008, p. 8). According to him, the KLA won relatively few battles against opposing military forces. As for the involvement of Arab mercenaries, Perritt writes, although the KLA uprising took place in a region where the majority of the population is Muslim, it turned down offers of help from Islamic fundamentalists. The closest truth according to the political vocabulary made by Oxford (Mc Lean, 2001, p. 595) is that the word terrorism in most cases is used in an aggravating sense, describing a threatening act committed by self-appointed, politically motivated, sub-national groups. But if these actions are carried out for an issue accepted by all (as was the case of Kosovo against the Serbian occupier, then the term "terrorism" is excluded, to find a more pleasant expression liberator, B.Q). Otherwise, history shows that every war, liberation of the conquered peoples, every attempt and initiative for liberation from the oppressor is considered a terrorist act. In this context, it is completely natural for the Serbian occupiers to describe the KLA war as a terrorist war (Elshani, 1997, p. 248).

7. The KLA Resistance Center

Gelbard's statement on terrorism brought tensions within Kosovo as the Belgrade government interpreted it as a signal that they could use all means against the KLA – the group they had call terrorists – without fear of being criticized by the West⁴ (Hedges, 1999). On the other hand, the American diplomat Christopher R. Hill (2016, p. 155) recalls that Gelbard's statement was a wrong attempt, allegedly impartial, as he criticized the activity of the Serbian police in Kosovo but crossed the line when he said that the KLA was a terrorist group. In fact, the Serbian authorities had long considered the KLA a terrorist organization. The effect of this statement, Hill recalls, was that within a few weeks (with the aim of extinguishing the KLA, B.Q), the Serbs started an offensive towards the center of Kosovo, more specifically, the region of Drenica, historically known as the hearth

4 Many Western authors have called Gelbard's statement a green light for the Serbian leader to take concrete steps to eliminate the Kosovo Liberation Army. For more: W. Petritsch, R. Pichler, *The Long Road*, p. 93; T. Judah, *Kosovo war*, p. 174; Chris Hill, *A Diplomat at Work*, pp. 154-156

of the Albanian resistance, where the first KLA cells were created, specifically in the village of Prekaz i Ulët. “Special anti-terrorist units” attacked KLA positions, but Serbian security actions were also directed against the civilian population. The punishment and collective intimidation were thought to hinder the growth of the “illegal army” (Petritsch, Pichler, 2002, p. 93). In response, the Serbian forces faced unprecedented resistance. On March 5, 1998, after a heroic fight in defense of their home, 56 Albanians were killed, most of them women, children and the elderly, including one of the KLA leaders, Adem Jashari, along with his family. The resistance of the Jashari family that lasted for several days gave the KLA the epithet of a real resistance organization aimed at liberation. This reality had influenced the growth and credibility among those who had doubts and those who had never believed. The conditions in which Adem Jashari died encouraged the construction of a myth of resistance set in a national heroic genealogy that goes back to Skanderbeg, (the national hero of Albanians, B.Q.), the former janissary who opposed the Ottoman occupation in the Middle Ages. A. Jashari died in battle, sacrificing himself and his family for the nation (Duclos, 2020). In a story about Prekaz, authors Anna Di Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers write:

Adem Jashari's and his family's sacrifice provides a very strong narrative and connection to memory. All these massacres mark a detachment from the present and give impetus to new actions based on an inspiring past. The protagonists were killed but could not be defeated; they are not considered victims, but heroes who did not know how to surrender. They are in fact called the martyrs of the nation. The figure of Adem Jashari had all the essential elements to become a legend. In the context of the time, especially in 1998, when more than 300 Albanian civilians were killed and massacred by Serbian forces. Prekazi is considered an extraordinary case..., the Jasharis were not simply shot, they responded to fire with fire. (Di Lellio, Schwandner-Sievers, 2006)

In this case, the intention of the Serbian regime was clear: to bring peace in Kosovo through the use of force, murder, intimidation and extermination of the KLA, what did they achieve; they lost Kosovo, forever. The truth is that they won the battle, killing almost the entire Jasharaj tribe, but not the goal. This is how an 18-year-old describes joining the ranks of the KLA: “*the reason why I joined the KLA was the terror my people suffered from the Serbs, particularly*

after the massacre in Prekaz, where people were massacred so badly, including women, children, and old people. I just felt that I had to do something for my people” (Frontline, 1999). The Drenica offensive had affected at least three issues. First, the KLA became more and more powerful because the reaction of the people was much greater, with the murder of their leader and his family becoming an additional motive to follow their path while simultaneously growing the KLA. Second, Western Europe and the United States became more involved in the issue of this conflict. Third, regional stability in neighboring countries was disturbed, especially in Albania and Macedonia (Glenny, 2007, p. 655). Everyone knew the situation was getting worse day by day. Wesley Clark⁵ (2007, p. 201) recalls a meeting with the Communist president of the former-Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov, who knew Milosevic very well. Clark recalls that he had expressed his concern in the meeting with Gligorov, highlighting that: “The special Serbian police in Kosovo has just pushed into a corner and killed around sixty members of the Albanian family Jashari. This is Milosevic’s way of dealing with his internal security problem, and this is going to lead to a war. Albanians,” Gligorov explained, “are not like Bosnians, they are not afraid. They will come back. And Milosevic will use force. He will say that he is going to negotiate but he will not. All he really respects is force”. On the other hand, Albanians were getting closer to war, so much so that until July 1998, the KLA was called the guerrilla military with the fastest growth in the world. People whose only military experience originated from the idea of a day of uprising to kill their Serbian oppressors, started to flood the ranks of the organization when villages started being attacked in February 1998. Women, children and the elderly moved over the mountains along the long rocky paths leading to Albania, to bring weapons to the men who stayed to fight (Campbell, 2000, p. 140).

8. Emergence of the KLA

The fair cause of the KLA was finding increasing support internally, and people had started to see it as the only hope for liberation. Actually, as a result of its appearance at the right place and time, it managed to influence NATO to win the war for it (Judah, 2008, p. 75). Its time was coming, the voices of inter-

5 Was a commander of Operation Allied Force in the Kosovo War during his term as the Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO from 1997 to 2000

national support were growing day by day. According to James Pettifer (2004, p. 358), this was a great achievement, as the Kosovo Liberation Army achieved a lot, which many other democratic movements in the Balkans had not achieved, by gaining the open support of the Great Powers, in this case the biggest military alliance in the world, NATO. Since then, international contacts with KLA representatives started to increase, in particular Americans who were interested to include the Kosovo Liberation Army in the political discussions for the resolution of the Kosovo conflict, as an armed party in the conflict, by accepting the fact that any agreement without its approval could not ensure stability. In other words, a commanding address was required, which would be able to take permanent decisions on behalf of the organization. Initially, there were rumors of secret contacts between US officials and representatives of the KLA. In this regard, it is worth mentioning Richard Holdbrook's meeting in Junik, one of the main areas of the KLA. Coincidence or photography was interpreted as US acceptance of the KLA and as such produced significant political consequences (Malnar, 2013, p. 166). On the other hand, in the following months, the fighting increased, which further increased the number of innocent civilians being forcibly removed from their homes. This fact obviously worried the international community even more, which was forced to promote diplomacy on the ground to solve the problem. This situation is best reflected in the October agreement between Holbrooke and Milosevic, the content of which did not promise sustainable peace in the region or, as some international diplomats would point out, was intended to buy time to allow the diplomacy to act more seriously. As illustrated, there was pessimism on the part of the Western leadership about the implementation of the agreement by Milosevic. For former German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, the agreement had its weaknesses due to the fact that the KLA was not included in the agreement (Fischer, 2007, p. 116). And, as expected by many connoisseurs within a short period of time, the situation started to escalate. For Moscow, the main guilty party in the escalation of the situation was the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army, which was trying to fill the "gap" created after the departure of the Yugoslav security forces, accusing the Albanians that their actions were becoming the key obstacles to starting the negotiations (Lauka, Ymeri, 2012, p. 64). There was a similar opinion among Western journalists and diplomats, believing that the non-involvement of the KLA in the agreement removed it from the obligation to implement it.

And as many experts expected, the situation which led to the decisive escalation occurred on January 15, 1999 in the village of Reçak near Shtime, to verify what was being said. The head of the OSCE Verification Mission, William Walker, went to the scene, accompanied by a large number of journalists. The Mission ultimately came to the conclusion that the number of people killed was 45, including three women and a child. In relation to it, the head of KVM, Walker, claimed: all I saw were old men who were obviously simple villagers, suffering people. None of them was wearing anything other than civilian clothes, and no signs of uniforms or weapons were noted...I cannot find the words to describe my personal revulsion....at the sight of what can only be described as unspeakable atrocity, although I am not a lawyer, from what I saw, I have no doubt that what I saw is a massacre, a crime against humanity. I also accuse government security forces for being responsible for this.” (FRONTLINE 1999; Koha Ditore, 1999). On the other hand, from the Serbian viewpoint, the whole event had been staged by the KLA, by creating a scene of a fake massacre. In order to further shed light on this event, the European Union hired a forensic team a month later led by Dr. Helena Ranta to draft a report stating: “There was nothing to indicate that these people were anything other than unarmed civilians” (Jadah, 2002, p. 240). It took only a few hours for the images of massacred victims to flood the world, making Reçak one of the main events in the global press. M. Albright (2003, p. 458) writes in her memoir that she had heard the news on the radio in the early hours of the morning. Concerned about this action, she recalls spending the rest of Saturday (January 16) on the phone talking with the rest of the world about the immediate steps that had to be taken. The pressure of the media resulted in the images of the victims inciting huge indignation in the western world (Petritsch, Pichler, 2002, p. 161). To put an end to the conflict once and for all, the Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group at the meeting held in London on January 29, 1999 agreed to convene an international conference on Kosovo which would be similar to that of Dayton which was developed for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The demand of the internationals was that: the warring parties Serbs and Albanians be summoned almost ultimately to the Conference which would begin on February 6 at the Rambouillet Castle in France (Hill, 2016, p. 185). From the beginning, the delegations would be made aware of the consequences for the party that would refuse to sign the agreement. For Albanians with a special emphasis on the KLA, the consequen-

ces would be the following: First, actions will be taken to stop the flow of funds from the diaspora, especially from the USA, Germany and possibly also from neutral Switzerland, which in essence formed the basis for financing KLA (In this context it should be mentioned that among the members of the Contact Group but not limited to, there were requests for more than a year to prevent funding of the KLA, however except for a few occasional attempts they were never applied in practice. Secondly, there would be pressure, respectively, an international presence would be established in Albania and Macedonia in order to monitor the borders that would ultimately end training and supply of weapons to the KLA. Third, there were attempts to end/block the supporting network from abroad, then the KLA would be announced a “terrorist” organization, and it would be treated as such. And fourth, which was the most threatening, was that Kosovo would reject the Rambouillet project, the NATO state members, including the USA, would claim that the situation is hopeless and they would retreat from the crisis (Weller, 2009, p. 210). In this context, despite the contradictions from both sides, both Albanians and Serbs had their reservations, especially the Serbian delegation who until the last moment refused to participate in the conference, not agreeing under any circumstances to talk to Albanian “terrorists” of the KLA as they called them. Despite their reluctance, both sides agreed to participate. The issue which aroused a kind of pessimism among the internationals was the composition of the delegations (especially the Serbian one) with differences in representation being so radical, which T. Judah (2002, p. 246) would describe as different as night and day. On the one hand, the Kosovo delegation consisted of people with influence in the political-military and civil society life in the last decade, with Hashim Thaçi, a representative of the KLA, being the head of the delegation. On the other hand, the Serbian delegation consisted of legal experts, politicians with government positions, but none of them had any actual influence in decision making, since decisions in Serbia are taken by one man only, and he was not part of the delegation. There were essentially two crucial issues which could result in failure to sign the agreement: insistence of Albanians on the right to have a referendum after the temporary three-year period; the categorical rejection of the Serbian party of the presence of peacekeeping NATO forces, as peace guarantee in Kosovo. Faced with the possibility that the Conference was going to fail, the Contact Group, particularly the USA, intensified the diplomatic agenda. In fact, thanks

to the direct intervention of Secretary Albright in the process (2003, p. 464), the guarantee of the USA that “we will never leave you alone”, then the support given by the Albanian state, made the majority of the delegation with all their differences obey to sign the agreement in principle, which the Contact group required understanding to discuss the details of the agreement with their people (commanders) in Kosovo, and after two weeks they would be ready to sign it. On the other hand, the willingness of the delegation to sign the agreement was welcomed by the international community, which intensified the focus on Yugoslav leaders. This time, things were very clear about the party rejecting to sign the agreement. We recall here that in order to persuade the Yugoslav leadership to sign the agreement, Belgrade had taken on the character of diplomatic pilgrimage in March, being visited by various international ministers and diplomats (Fischer, 2007, p. 144). This fact is also confirmed by Massimo D'alema (2004, p. 21), then Prime Minister of Italy, in the question of the Italian journalist Federico Rampini who recalls the kind advice he gave to the Serbian President Milan Milutinovic during a meeting in Rome (March, 1999). “It was a tough discussion, D'alema replied. From the beginning I showed him the images of the Reçak massacre, saying: “Do you not understand what stain you have put on yourself? In this context I tried to convince him that the only way to stop NATO's bombings is the Rambouillet platform”. Eventually, despite relentless efforts, when the Albanians signed the agreement in Paris, Belgrade's willingness to compromise was small, if not nonexistent. The Yugoslav leadership had made the decision to confront NATO. Thus, on March 24, 1999, around 20:00, the threat of some early events became a reality. NATO air forces attacked Serbian positions, attacks that would last 78 days in a row, long enough to force the Yugoslav leader to surrender.

9. Conclusion

The war of the Kosovo Liberation Army was a clear reflection of the centuries-old desire of the Albanian people to be free and independent. Its journey was long and arduous. Despite the many prejudices held against it, from the very beginning, even from within, its inability to resist, its lack of experience, or even its real difficulties in securing arms and funds, or even from accusations from various circles against its activity that were mainly related to Russian-Serbian sources where the KLA was accused of being an Islamic terrorist organization.

The Kosovo Liberation Army managed to unite Albanians over their just cause in their struggle for liberation. The best boys and girls of the country joined. As a result of the just idea of liberation, the popular effort, the issue of Kosovo managed to quickly get international attention, with the most powerful political-military states, US and NATO, lining up in defense of the Albanian people, and in cooperation with the KLA ended,⁶ the Serbian regime in Kosovo. Liberation of Kosovo was the realization of the legacy of all those martyrs, men and women who in different periods fought the centuries-old Serbian occupiers. Their dream came true in 2008 with the official act of declaring the independence of Kosovo.

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6 As a result of the international agreement for termination of the war a part of the KLA was transformed into the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), the rest into Kosovo Police and some continue living the life of a civilian.

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Oslobodilačka vojska Kosova u diskursu međunarodnih autora

Sažetak

Javni nastup Oslobodilačke vojske Kosova otvara novo poglavlje u novijoj povijesti Kosova. Nastao je kao reakcija naroda kosovskih Albanaca na sustavno nasilje koje je desetljećima provodila srpska vlada. Očaj Albanaca proizašao je iz Daytonske konferencije kada međunarodna zajednica uopće nije uključila albansko pitanje u razgovore. Za Albance je to bio jasan signal da mirovna strategija nije dala željene rezultate. Pokazalo se da je ovo bila jasna lekcija kosovskim Albancima da je hvatanje puške jedini način da svoj problem stave na svjetski dnevni red. OVK je osnovana s ciljem da jednom zauvijek oslobodi Kosovo od srpske vlasti. Kosovski rat, OVK izazvao je izvanredan interes međunarodnih autora. Naše istraživanje pokazuje da samo nakratko broj objavljenih naslova doseže brojku od nekoliko stotina naslova što Kosovo, njegovu Oslobodilačku vojsku čini jednim od najomiljenijih događaja za liječenje s kraja dvadesetog stoljeća. Ovaj je članak analitički sažetak opsežne bibliografije koja uključuje: Monografije, memoare, znanstvene radove, časopise, dnevni tisak. Rad pokriva tri glavna pitanja: čimbenici, okolnosti koje su utjecale na uspostavu Oslobodilačke vojske Kosova; njegovo faktoring sudjelovanje u međunarodnim pregovorima konferencija u Rambouilletu; i treće pitanje je tekuća međunarodna rasprava o njezinu djelovanju. Kako je ova tema izazvala veliko zanimanje u raznim međunarodnim krugovima, čak i 20 godina nakon završetka rata ostaje kao tema od velikog interesa za znanstvene istraživače.

Ključne riječi: Oslobodilačka vojska Kosova (OVK), međunarodna debata, rat, dijalog, Konferencija Rambuje.