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Constitutional Changes in 1989 and the Downturn to Kosovo's Economic Perspective

1989 Yılı Anayasal Değişiklikler ve Kosova'nın Ekonomik Açısına Yapılan Darbe

Abstract

The 1980s marked the beginning of the economic downturn for Kosovo. In those years, nationalist movements began to proclaim secession from the federation following the death of Yugoslav leader Tito. While the Socialist Republic of Serbia had claims to subjugate or bring under its hegemony most of the units of the Federation. This Serbian nationalist policy, with its oppressive regime and ethnic cleansing, began in Kosovo. The years 1989-1990 represent a very difficult period for Kosovo in terms of political, cultural, educational and economic developments. The 1989 constitutional amendments hit Kosovo's economic prospects, which clearly show Serbia's intentions to deepen economic dependence and increase political violence in the country. The manifestations of the political and economic crisis during the 90s changed not only the history of Kosovo, but also of Yugoslavia.

Keywords: Kosovo, Serbia, politics, degradation, economy.

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Öz

80’li yıllar Kosova ekonomisinin düşüşü başladığı yıllardı. Yugoslav yönetici olan Tito’nun ölümünden sonra, federasyondan ayrılmayı ortaya koyan milliyetçi hareketler başladı. Sırp Sosyalist Cumhuriyeti ise, federasyonun birimlerin bir çoğunun boynunu eğip, hegemonyası altında sokmaya çalıştı. Bu Sırp milliyetçi politikası, rejimi ve etnik temizlik hedefleyen politikası ile, işine Kosova’dan başladı. Siyasi, kültürel, eğitim ve ekonomik gelişmeler açısından 1989-1990 yılları, Kosova için yeterince ağır dönem arz etmektedir. Ekonomik fakirliğin ve siyasi şiddetin derinleşmesini açık şekilde hedefleyen 1989 yılı anayasal değişiklikleri, Kosova’nın ekonomik yönüne darbe koydu. 90’lı yıllar boyunca siyasi ve ekonomik krizlerin ortaya çıkması, sadece Kosova’nın değil, Yugoslavya’nın da tarihini değiştirdi.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kosova, Sırbistan, siyaset, dejenerasyon, ekonomi.

The protests of the Albanian people against the constitutional changes of 1989

During its existence under the Yugoslav Federation, Kosovo marked its greatest achievement with the Constitution of 1974. Kosovo as a province, together with Vojvodina, had become a constituent element of the Yugoslav Federation. The only difference between the republics and the provinces was that in the first part of Article 1 of the Constitution of the SFRY after the order of the six republics and the two provinces, which constituted the Federation, both provinces were said to be part of Serbia.¹ Also when it came to the army, Article 242 stated: “In terms of officials, cadres and the appointment of the commander and the positions of senior leaders in the Yugoslav People’s Army, the proportional representation of the republics and provinces was applied.”²

The initiative for constitutional changes dates back to 1985 when the Federation approved a program of deep economic reforms, which concluded that they could not be done without making some changes to the Yugoslav Constitution.³ Serbia cunningly began to initiate constitutional changes, especially those related to economic reforms, which aimed to open the door to faster economic development and integration into foreign market processes. But from the beginning it was seen that the main goal of Serbia was to amend Article 1 of the Constitution, which intended that the two provinces were not treated as a constitutive element of the Federation. Although much discussion took place, only constitutional changes related to economic reforms found support. In Kosovo there was no disposition from the leaders for constitutional changes, with the exception of Serbs and some individuals from among the Albanians who began working for the benefit of Serbia.

Seeing that the situation was deteriorating, that Belgrade was determined to change the 1974 Constitution, as well as Serbia’s determination for personnel changes, the first to rise in protest were the miners of “Trepca” from the city of Mitrovica. They left Stantërgu for Prishtina on foot, expressing their opposition to any pressure on Kosovo and its political leaders. The miners of

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- 1 Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1974, Belgrade: 1974, Part One, Article 1
 - 2 Ibid.,242.
 - 3 Television Documentary Archive, (Further: Archive), Constitutional Changes 1988-1989 part II, author: Fisnik Durguti, Radio Television of Kosovo 1, Prishtina: April 2015.

“Trepça” marched about 52 km, from Stantërgu to Prishtina where about 300 of them entered the sports gym, despite the efforts of the provincial leaders of the time that the rally was held only in Mitrovica. In the sports hall, the miners were addressed by Kosovo’s leaders at the time, Kaqusha Jashari and Remzi Kolgeci, who promised their personal commitment and that of the Kosovo authorities to overcome the imposed political situation.⁴

Before long, the entire people of Kosovo showed solidarity with the miners and protests began throughout Kosovo, with some on foot, buses, cars, etc., from all over the country raiding Prishtina. This was an indication that Serbia could not impose its will on Kosovo. Protesters with the national flag and the Yugoslav one with pictures of Tito in hand cheered; “Azem”, “Kaçushë”, “We do not accept resignation”, “We are always ready”, etc. However, Serbia started playing its game, ostensibly for the defense of Yugoslavia and that it only was trying to follow in Tito’s footsteps. Only Slovenia began to oppose, but found itself stranded in front of Croatia and Bosnia, after Milosevic promised that if they remained silent Serbia would later not take action to support the large number of Serbs in the two republics. Macedonia, with a large number of Albanians, was also persuaded not to oppose the expulsion of Albanians from political power.⁵

Kosovo now did not have many opportunities and under great pressure some leaders began to resign, while their place was taken by those who were obedient and willing to blindly follow Belgrade’s instructions. There were also meetings with citizens in all cities of Kosovo where they talked about the constitutional changes to convince the Albanians that these changes were also in their best interest. From the minutes of these meetings it appears that the majority of the Albanian people were against the constitutional changes.⁶

Despite the course of events, the Albanians decided to resist through protests and strikes from November 1988, continuing until February 1989. Of all, the biggest echo was the strike of the miners of “Trepça” which began on February 20, 1989, turning into a popular movement against the pressures of Belgrade. The striking miners came out with ten demands, the first of which had to do with the 1974 Constitution, which stated: “We demand guarantees for the observance of the principles of the Constitution year 1974 (about disharmonious attitudes about changes, to remain in force what is with the Constitution of 1974).”⁷

One of the demands that was insisted on by the miners was the resignation of Ali Shukriu, Rahman Morina, Hysamedin Azemi and it was requested that Slobodan Milosevic keep his hands away from Kosovo and not interfere in the affairs of Kosovo.⁸ Rahman Morina, meanwhile, nurtured hopes that the time had come to be rewarded for his stances as a tool of Serbia.⁹

4 Aziz Abrashi, Burhan Kavaja, *The Miners’ Epic, Marches and Protests and Miners’ Strikes in 1988-1990*, (Prishtina: no publisher, 1996), p. 23.

5 Marc Weller, *Contested Citizenship, International Administration of Kosovo’s War of Independence*, (Pristina: Koha, 2009), p. 86.

6 Gjakova Inter-Municipal Archive, fund, Socialist League of Working People, no. 75, box I, Minutes of public discussions on the Constitutional amendments of the SAC of Kosovo, Gjakova: 1989.

7 Azem Vllasi, Kosovo, *The beginning that is not forgotten*, (Prishtina: Koha, February 2017), 530.

8 Archive, Miners’ Strike 1989, author: Fisnik Durguti, Radio Television of Kosovo, (Prishtina: February 2015), see also Kaqusha Jashari, *We will set the border*, (Prishtina: Koha, February 2015), p. 389.

9 Jashari, *We will...*, p. 383.

Although it was the largest miners' strike that had taken place for political demands, the strike ended on February 28th. The miners were deceived by the government because their demands were not heeded. Seeing the situation in Kosovo, Milosevic turned to nationalist rallies and meetings where Serbs would play a leading role. The overthrow of the Albanian party leadership in Kosovo marked the beginning of the end of Yugoslav Kosovo, and along with Milosevic's successful coups in Montenegro and Vojvodina, also of the Yugoslav state.¹⁰

At the meeting of the presidency of the SFRY it was decided to declare a state of emergency in Kosovo. Many Serbs came and took over various power structures in Kosovo, they commanded and made decisions. There were also Albanians who had accepted the role of Milosevic's servant.¹¹

Creating a favorable political ground in Kosovo, on March 23, 1989 in the Assembly of Kosovo, contrary to the debate of the Albanian citizens and their will, the session began under strict Serbian security measures for the amendments and supplements of the 1974 Constitution. The session was chaired by Vukasin Jokanovic, an ardent follower of Belgrade's policy, who had quickly put to the vote the text of the constitutional changes drafted in Belgrade, which had never been in public discussion. The majority was in favor and about 13 votes against. So the proposed amendments were declared approved.¹²

The Assembly of Serbia, on March 28, 1989, organized a party after approving the constitutional amendments by which Serbia was extending full constitutional jurisdiction over the two provinces, even though this violated the Constitutional principles of the Federation, as the Constitution of the SFRY was still in force.¹³ The President of the Assembly of the RS of Serbia read: "Pursuant to Article 431 of the Constitution of the RS of Serbia, the Assembly at its meeting, in the joint labor associations, municipalities and societies on March 28, 1989, made the decision to self-declaration on amendments 9/49 of the Constitution of the RS of Serbia. The declarations for amendments 9/49, which were approved by the Assembly of the RS of Serbia, were also approved by the labor association from February 23, 1989, with which the assemblies of the autonomous socialist provinces of the SAC of Vojvodina and the SAC of Kosovo agreed, on March 10, 1989 in the Assembly of the Province of Vojvodina and on March 23, 1989 in the Assembly of Kosovo.¹⁴ As the Belgrade daily "Politika" wrote: "Serbia won, unique and sovereign throughout its territory, the new Constitution does not sever ties with other Yugoslav nations and nationalities in Yugoslavia, but rather extends its hand and offers a common life."¹⁵

Three months later, on June 28, 1989, the president of the League of Communists of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, gathered a large number of Serbs in the Gazimestan area near Prishtina, "celebrating" the Battle of Kosovo, which took place 600 years ago (1389). At this rally he delivered a speech with a provocative rhetoric. The nationalist speech, in which he encouraged Serbs not to leave Kosovo and no one dared to touch them, was declared a War between Kosovo

10 Oliver J. Schmitt, *Kosovo, a short history of a Balkan region*, (Prishtina: Koha, 2012), p 242.

11 Ibid., 550.

12 Vllasi, *Kosovo...*, 562.

13 Ibid., 564.

14 Archive, Constitutional changes '88 -89, part II, author: Fisnik Derguti, Prishtina: April 2015.

15 Policy, Beograd: 29 September 1990.

and Yugoslavia.¹⁶ The main source of the crisis for Milosevic would be Kosovo to start its stance on the issue of its nationalist and provocative campaign in Kosovo.¹⁷

Now history was told through politics, as it was at its service. After the abolition of autonomy, history changed, Kosovo came under strict measures of the police and the army. The Serbization of every sphere of life began, Albanians were now second-class citizens, where the implementation of the policy began after the Second World War, when Rankovi was in power. Serbization first started in the field of education which was of special importance, in national terms. Serbia drafted curricula that were not accepted by Albanians, so as a result students and teachers were expelled from schools, which was the same situation at the University. With the “Law on Extraordinary Circumstances” of 1990, the exercise of the power of the Republic of Serbia in Kosovo became official. It became active with the decision of June 26, 1990, which enabled Serbian officials to directly administer the affairs of Kosovo and to annul the decisions taken by Kosovo itself. This also meant taking criminal and other judicial responsibilities from Kosovo courts and appointing Serbs to run commercial entities in Kosovo, which were still socially-owned enterprises at the time. July 5th, 1990 Serbia took the final step to end the functioning of the Assembly and the Executive Council of Kosovo.¹⁸

On September 28th, 1990, Serbia adopted its Constitution, which stated in Article 1: “The Republic of Serbia is a state of all citizens living in it, established on the rights and freedom of man and citizens, with the rule of law and social justice.”¹⁹ These changes also had to be made in the amendment of the Constitution of the RSF of Yugoslavia. Kosovo’s consent was needed here, which was not a problem for Serbia as its obedient people were there. However, it was not long before the federation itself began to disintegrate. Slovenia and Croatia, seeing the rise of Serbian hegemony, which tried to impose themselves on everyone, were the first to turn their backs on the Federation. This was the period of the beginning of the bloody wars in Yugoslavia. Serbia spread the slogan “where there is a Serbian grave there will be a Serbian state”, which led to successive wars.

Beginning of the economic downturn for Kosovo

Preparing to abolish the Constitution of Kosovo, Serbia also worked towards the integration of Kosovo’s economy with that of Serbia. Now there was no going into the classical colonization of Kosovo or Kosovar enterprises, but according to Serbian authorities, the transformation process and the privatization of enterprises in Kosovo began, as well as their merge with those in Serbia. For example, seamless pipe factory from Ferizaj joined the Smederevo metallurgical plant on 13 November 1990, and that according to the daily “Politika” in an extraordinary meeting, since such a decision was taken a month earlier in Ferizaj.²⁰

16 Jusuf Buxhovi, *Kosovo 3: From the London conference to the international protectorate*, (Pristina: Faik Konica, 2012), p. 433.

17 Enver Bytyqi, *The Right of Self-Determination. The Case of Kosovo*, (Tirana: Koha, 2007), p. 127.

18 Waller, *Contested Citizenship...*, 88.

19 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade: September 28, 1990, Article 1, 1.

20 Factory of welded pipes from Ferizaj annexed to the ICC, Politika, Belgrade: November 14, 1990

This was just the beginning, because the transfer of capital of Kosovo enterprises to those of Serbia began. With the economic and social system of the SFRY the capital was socially owned. The transformation process of social capital began in 1989 with the transformation of social enterprises in public-state enterprises. The process started with the larger enterprises as it falls word, with Electro-economics, “Trepça”, PTT, railways, etc. The Constitution of Serbia had left them without any competencies of the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, taking these competencies in own hands. Serbia did not stop there, in the meeting held on 30.07.1991 it approved Courts Law. With it was repealed and ceased to operate the Law on Regular Courts as well as the Law on Joint Labor Courts. According to the law, the transitional and final provisions, Article 74, in conjunction with Article 71 paragraph 2, from 31.12. 1991 from the existing court system in Kosovo, ceased to exist and act:

- Supreme Court of Kosovo,
- Court of Joint Labor of Kosovo,
- Basic Court of Joint Labor in Prishtina,
- Basic Court of Joint Labor in Gjakova,
- District Commercial Court in Gjakova,
- Municipal Court in Skënderaj, while the Municipal Court of Podujeva continued its work as a branch of the Municipal Court of Kursumlija, while in Zubinpotok a Branch of Municipal Court of Mitrovica.²¹

The law stipulated that the cases, which had reached the labor courts, by the day it began law enforcement (1.1.1992), together with the archive of the Supreme Courts of the Autonomous Provinces, were received by the Supreme Court of Serbia. While the subjects and archives of the economic branches’ will were submitted to the Supreme Economic Court in Belgrade.²² Objects and other property passed to be owned by the Republic of Serbia or transferred directly to Serbia. In this way, Serbia apart from factories, brought under control all state assets of Kosovo. With the decision “On the implementation of special circumstances in Kosovo” (1990), Serbia created for itself an opportunity that at any time and in any case to take actions of both political and police character. Commerce of Serbia, Development Fund, Capital Appraisal Agency and ministries respectively became the owners of most of Kosovo’s economic assets. The effects of political pressure on the economy were devastating for Kosovo’s economy, the decline began of production and at the same time the decline of the financial result. This affected the physical volume of industrial production in Kosovo, starting with the decline in 1988 to continue with the decline of large in 1989, respectively 1990.²³

The industrial level of Kosovo at this time (1989) was estimated to be that of 1978, and continued to fall, this because of the political boils that took place in Kosovo.²⁴ By applying violent measures, Serbia managed to dismiss the Albanian management, began ethnic cleansing

21 Adil Fetahu, *The Creation and Demolition of the Kosovo Judiciary*, (Prishtina: 2011), p. 181.

22 Ibid.

23 Obligation for failure, Bujku, (Prishtina: March 8, 1991), p. 12.

24 Discouraging data for the economy of Kosovo, Bujku, Prishtina: 4. V. 1991, 5.

in working organizations, made violent integration of enterprises, robbed enterprise assets. The implementation of administrative measures in the banking system left Kosovo without no financial capital. Legal infrastructure established and approved by the Assembly of Serbia e turned the Kosovo Serb minority into a beneficiary of all goods.

The basic bearer of the governance of the public economy and material goods now became the population Kosovo minority which had a turnout of only 10%, which it achieved with the support of police apparatus. Violent administrative measures were imposed on all enterprises social, informative (RTP), scientific, health, etc. Opening of many bank branches which was done was not intended to invest in the economy of Kosovo but to collect as much as possible foreign exchange tools. Kosovo became an absorbing market for products from Serbia, becoming placed at higher prices as there was no competition.²⁵

The interruption of public investments also affected the economic development, even though the harvest of regular of various taxes and fees, investments were lacking in all spheres. In this at the time the only investments made were in new neighborhoods for refugees brought from various places of the federation, who came to Kosovo to change the ethnic structure of the population. On the other hand, Albanians fired, having no income as a solution saw migration abroad. Job closures in the 1990s became a phenomenon, then relocation from one job position to another were common occurrences, the rejection will said automatically leave the workplace.

Conclusion

During the years 1989-1990 the economic situation in Kosovo deteriorated further as a result of the political upheavals that had engulfed Kosovo. After the forcible abolition of the Constitution and autonomy, Kosovo was turned into a colony by the Serbian government. This condition hit me mostly industry and now there could be no talk of any increase in productivity, on the contrary industrial production was halved. Violent measures had involved all enterprises dismissing more than 70% of Albanian workers. Albanian management was replaced by mono-national and unqualified structures.

This was not just the beginning, because Serbian politics fired most Albanian workers who were involved in the country's industry. This caused the decline in utilization of capacity and in many cases even the closure of many industrial branches. Closing of labor seats in the 90s became a phenomenon, then shifting from one job position to another were frequent occurrences, rejection meant leaving the workplace automatically.

Out of dissatisfaction, the Albanian workers and those workers who were left out, protested in their workplaces. Their efforts were in vain because it happened when workers complained to Kosovo courts, where Serb prosecutors and judges were located, reviewed cases for years, but no justice could be expected. The deteriorating situation pushed a large number of Albanians to take to the streets of Europe in order to make a living, it is estimated that over 300,000 were the number who left Kosovo. It was this time when a general economic downturn ensued followed by police persecutions, where as a result over 140 thousand Albanian workers remained unemployed. They

25 The state of Kosovo's economy after the war, Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, (Pristina: October 1999), p. 4

not only lost their jobs, but also all their rights like: social, health insurance etc. These processes have greatly hampered the economic position of Kosovo which forcibly joined that of Serbia. Also began the decline in the use of capacities throughout Kosovo.

Resources

Archival resources and documents

Gjakova Inter-Municipal Archive, Gjakova

Fund: Executive Council of the Municipal Assembly of Gjakova

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