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Vaso Čubrilović:

## The Expulsion of the Albanians - Memorandum

*"The Expulsion of the Albanians," is a memorandum prepared and written by the noted Bosnian Serb scholar and political figure Vaso Čubrilović (1897-1990). As a student in 1914, Čubrilović had participated in the assassination in Sarajevo of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary, the event which precipitated the First World War. Between the two wars, he was professor at the Faculty of Arts in Belgrade. A leading member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Art, Čubrilović also held several ministerial portfolios after World War II. Among his writings is the monograph "Istorija političke misle u Srbiji XIX veka," Belgrade 1958 (History of political thought in Serbia in the 19th century).*

### The Expulsion of the Albanians

The problem of the Albanians in the life of our country and people did not arise yesterday. It played a major role in our life in the Middle Ages, but its importance only became decisive towards the end of the seventeenth century, at a time when the masses of the Serbian people were displaced northwards out of their former ancestral territory of Rashka / Raška, supplanted by Albanian highlanders. Gradually, the latter came down from their mountains to the fertile plains of Metohija and Kosovo. Spreading northwards, they continued in the direction of southern and western Morava and, crossing the Shar mountains, descended into Polog and, from there, towards the Vardar. Thus, by the nineteenth century was formed the Albanian triangle, a wedge which, with its Debar-Rogozna axis in the rear, penetrated as far into our territories as Nish / Niš and separated our ancient land of Rashka from Macedonia and the Vardar Valley.

In the nineteenth century, this wedge, inhabited by wild Albanian elements, prevented the maintenance of any strong cultural, educational and economic links between our

northern and southern territories. This was also the main reason why, until 1878, Serbia was unable to establish and maintain continuous links with Macedonia through Vranja and the Black Mountain of Skopje and thus to exercise its cultural and political influence on the Vardar Valley, to the extent that one would have expected in view of conducive geographical factors and historical traditions in these regions. Although the Bulgarians began their life as a nation later than the Serbs, they had greater success initially. This explains why there are permanent settlements of southern Slavs from Vidin in the north to Ohrid in the south. Serbia began to slice off pieces of this Albanian wedge as early as the first uprising, by expelling the northernmost Albanian settlers from Jagodina.

Thanks to the wide-ranging national plans of Jovan Ristic, Serbia sliced off another piece of this wedge with the annexation of Toplica and Kosanica. At that time, the regions between Jastrebac and southern Morava were radically cleared of Albanians. From 1918 onwards, it was the task of our present state to suppress what remained of the Albanian triangle, but it did not succeed. Though there are a number of reasons for this, we shall examine only the most important of them.

**1.** The fundamental mistake made by the authorities in charge at that time was that, forgetting where they were, they wanted to solve all the major ethnic problems of the troubled and bloody Balkans by Western methods. Turkey brought to the Balkans the customs of the Sheriat, according to which victory in war and the occupation of a country conferred the right on the victor to dispose of the lives and property of the subjected inhabitants. Even the Balkan Christians learned from the Turks that not only state power and domination, but also home and property could be won and lost by the sword. This concept of land ownership in the Balkans was to be softened somewhat by laws, ordinances and international agreements brought about under pressure from Europe, but it has, to a good extent, remained a primary instrument of leverage for Turkey and the Balkan states up to this very day. We need not evoke the distant past. It is sufficient to refer to a few cases which have taken place in recent times: the transfer of Greeks from Asia Minor to Greece and of Turks from Greece to Asia Minor, or the recent expulsion of Turks from Bulgaria and Romania to Turkey.

While all the Balkan states, since 1912, have solved or are on the point of solving their problems with national minorities through mass population transfers, we have stuck to the slow and cumbersome strategy of gradual colonization. The result has been negative, as evident from the statistics of the eighteen districts which make up the Albanian triangle. These figures show that the natural growth of the Albanian population in these regions is still greater than the total increase in our population from both natural growth and new settlers (from 1921 to 1931, the Albanian population increased by 68,060, while the Serbs showed an increase of 58,745, i.e. a difference of 9,315 in favour of the Albanians). Taking into account the intractable character of the Albanians, the pronounced increase in their numbers and the ever-increasing difficulties of colonization will eventually put in question even those few successes we have achieved in our colonization from 1918 onwards.

**2.** Even the strategy of gradual colonization was not properly applied. Worse still in a matter of such importance, there was no specific state plan for every government and regime to adhere to and implement. Work was intermittent, in fits and starts, with each new minister

undoing what his predecessor had done and himself creating nothing solid. Laws and regulations were amended but, weak as they were, were never implemented. Some individuals, especially deputies from other regions, who could not manage to secure a mandate at home, would go down south and butter up the non-national elements to gain a mandate there, thus sacrificing major national and state interests. The colonization apparatus was extremely costly, inflated and loaded with people who were not only incompetent, but were also frequently without scruples.

Their activities are indeed a topic in itself. Finally, one need only total up the huge sums this state has invested in colonization and divide them by the number of families settled to prove how costly every new household established since the war has been, regardless of whether or not this expenditure was met by the settlers themselves or by the state. Likewise, it would be interesting to compare the amounts paid out for personal expenditures and those for materials needed for colonization. In the past, Serbia went about this matter quite differently. Karageorge, during the first uprising, as well as Miloš, Mihajlo and Jovan Ristic had no special ministry of land reform, no general land inspectors, or costly apparatus, and still, they managed to purge Serbia of foreign elements and populate it with our own people who felled the endless forests of Shumadia (Šumadija), transforming them from the wild state they were once in to the fertile Shumadia we know today.

**3.** Even those few thousand families who were settled after the war did not remain where they were originally located. There was more success in Kosovo, especially in the Lab / Llap valley, where the Topicans penetrated of their own accord from north to south. Our oldest and most stable settlements there were established with elements from various Serbian regions. In Drenica and Metohija we had no success at all. Colonization should never be carried out with Montenegrins alone. We do not think that they are suitable as colonists because of their pastoral indolence. This applies to the first generation only. The second generation is quite different, more active and more practical. The village of Petrovo in Miroc north of the Danube, the most advanced village in Krajina, is inhabited exclusively by Montenegrins.

In Serbia today, there are thousands of other flourishing towns, especially in Toplica and Kosanica, which were established by Montenegrins of the first generation who mixed with more advanced elements. The foregoing consideration, nonetheless, still applies in Metohija where, since the settlers are on their own ancestral lands, old customs still abound. A visit to any coffee-house in Peja / Pec is sufficient proof. This is why our colonization has had so little success throughout Metohija. It must be admitted, on the other hand, that these colonies were poorly situated on barren, scrub-covered land, and were almost totally lacking in basic agricultural equipment. These people should have been given more assistance than other colonists because they were among the poorest Montenegrin elements.

**4.** Without doubt, the main cause for the lack of success in our colonization of these regions was that the best land remained in the hands of the Albanians. The only possible means for our mass colonization of these regions to succeed is for us to take the land away from them. This could have been achieved easily during the rebellion after the war, when the insurgents were active, by expelling part of the Albanian population to Albania, by refusing to legalize

their usurpations and by buying up their pasture land. Here, we must refer once again to the gross error committed in our post-war strategy, that of the right to own land.

Instead of taking advantage of the strategy used by the Albanians themselves for ownership of the land they usurped (scarcely any of them had deeds issued by the Turks, and those who did, got them only for land purchased), we not only legalized all these usurpations to the detriment of our state and nation, but worse still, we accustomed the Albanians to western European attitudes to private property. Prior to that, they could never have understood such concepts. In this way, we ourselves handed them a weapon with which to defend themselves, keeping the best land for themselves and rendering impossible the nationalization of a region of supreme importance to us.

It is apparent from the above that our colonization strategy in the south has not yielded the results which ought to have been achieved and which now impose themselves upon us as a major necessity of state. We are not criticizing this strategy merely for the sake of criticism, but so that, on the basis of our past experience, we can find the right way to solve this problem.

### **The Problem of Colonization of the Southern Regions**

Reading the first part of this paper and comprehending the problem of colonization of the south, one realizes immediately that the primary issue at stake are the regions north and south of the Shar mountains. This is no coincidence. The wedge of Albanians on both sides of the Shar range is of great national and strategic significance to our state. We have already mentioned the way the population structure came into existence there and the importance of these regions for links to the lands of the Vardar Valley, which are firmly within the limits of our ancient territories. The strength of Serbian expansion ever since the foundation of the first Serbian state in the ninth century has lain in the continuity both of this expansion and of the expansion of ancient Rashka / Raška in all directions, including southwards. But this continuity has been interrupted by the Albanians, and until the ancient link between Serbia and Montenegro on the one hand, and Macedonia on the other, is re-established along the whole line from the River Drin to southern Morava, we will not be secure in the possession of our territories. From an ethnic point of view, the Macedonians will only unite with us, if they receive true ethnic support from their Serbian motherland, something which they have lacked to this day. This can only be achieved through the destruction of the Albanian wedge.

From a military and strategic point of view, the Albanian wedge occupies one of the most vital points in our country, the starting point from which major Balkan rivers flow to the Adriatic Sea, to the Black Sea and to the Aegean. Possession of this strategic point determines, to a large degree, the fate of the central Balkans, and in particular, the fate of the main line of Balkan communications from the Morava to the Vardar. It is no coincidence that many battles of decisive importance to the destiny of the Balkans were fought here (Nemanja against the Greeks, the Serbs against the Turks in 1389, Hunyadi against the Turks in 1446). In the twentieth century, only a country inhabited by its own people can be confident of its security. It is therefore imperative that we not allow such points of strategic importance to be held by hostile and alien elements. This is all the more true in this case in that the element in question has the support of a nation state of the same race. Today this

state is powerless, but even as such, it has become a base for Italian imperialism which aims to use the country as a means of penetrating into the heart of our nation. Our people, who are willing and able to defend their land and country, are the most reliable element in the fight against such penetration.

With the exception of this block of eighteen districts, the Albanians and other national minorities in other parts of the south are scattered and, therefore, constitute less of a threat to the life of our nation and state. Nationalizing the regions around the Shar mountains would mean that we can stifle irredentism once and for all, and ensure our control over these territories forever.

Colonization from the north should be kept to a minimum in the regions inhabited by the Macedonians. Here land is scarce and for this reason, the Macedonians would resist an influx of settlers from the north, all the more so because they would regard this influx as a sign of mistrust on our part. As such, even such a minimal colonization would do us more harm than good. If we do send people down there, to the region south of the Black Mountain of Skopje, they should be people from Vranje and Leskovac, who are closer in mentality and culture to the Macedonians. By no means should we send people from the Dinaric region because their irritable and uncontrolled temperaments would only arouse the hostility of the local population. We repeat that this problem will only be solved when our colonies advancing from the north through Kosovo and Metohija in the direction of the Shar mountains and Polog have reached Macedonian settlements.

The problem of the Sandjak of Novi Pazar is solving itself and no longer plays the role it did in the life of our country before 1912. Let it suffice to mention that with the elimination of the Albanians, the last link between our Moslems in Bosnia and Novi Pazar and the rest of the Moslem world will have been cut. They are becoming a religious minority, the only Moslem minority in the Balkans, and this fact will accelerate their assimilation.

Montenegro has become a serious problem recently. This barren land cannot sustain the population which, despite resettlement, increased by 16% from 1912 to 1931. This impulsive, pastoral people has contributed many essential characteristics to our race over the centuries. Channelled in the right direction, their energy will not be destructive, and could, if directed towards the southeast, be employed for the common good of the country.

### **Summing up:**

The Albanians cannot be dispelled by means of gradual colonization alone. They are the only people who, over the last millennium, managed not only to resist the nucleus of our state, Rashka and Zeta, but also to harm us by pushing our ethnic borders northwards and eastwards. When in the last millennium our ethnic borders were shifted up to Subotica in the north and to the Kupa River in the northwest, the Albanians drove us out of the Shkodra (Scutari) region, out of the former capital of Bodin, and out of Metohija and Kosovo. The only way and only means to cope with them is through the brute force of an organized state, in which we have always been superior to them. If since 1912 we have had no success in the struggle against them, we have only ourselves to blame since we have not used this force as we should have. There is no possibility for us to assimilate the Albanians. On the contrary, because their roots are in Albania, their national awareness has been

awakened, and if we do not settle the score with them once and for all, within 20-30 years we shall have to cope with a terrible irredentism, the signs of which are already apparent and will inevitably put all our southern territories in jeopardy.

### **The International Problems of Colonization**

If we proceed on the assumption that the gradual displacement of the Albanians by means of gradual colonization is ineffective, we are then left with only one course - that of mass resettlement. In this connection, we must consider two countries: Albania and Turkey.

With its sparse population, its many undrained swamps and uncultivated valleys, Albania would have no difficulty admitting some hundred thousand Albanians from our country. With its vast and uninhabited frontiers in Asia Minor and Kurdistan, modern Turkey, for its part, offers seemingly unlimited opportunities for internal colonization. Despite efforts on the part of Kemal Atatürk, the Turks have not yet been able to fill the vacuum created by the evacuation of the Greeks from Asia Minor to Greece and of some of the Kurds to Persia. Hence, the greatest possibilities lie in sending the bulk of our displaced Albanians there.

Firstly, I stress that we must not limit ourselves to diplomatic *démarches* with the Ankara government, but must employ all means available to convince Tirana to accept some of our displaced people, too. I believe that we will come up against difficulties in Tirana because Italy will try to hinder the process. Be this as it may, money plays an important role in Tirana. In negotiations on the issue, the Albanian government should be informed that we will stop at nothing to achieve the final solution to this question. At the same time, we should tell them about colonization subsidies available, stressing that no controls will be exercised over them. Eventually, notables in Tirana will see the material gains involved and be persuaded through secret channels not to raise any objections to the whole business.

We have heard that Turkey has agreed, initially, to accept about 200,000 of our displaced persons on condition that they are Albanians, something which is most advantageous to us. We must comply with Turkey's wish immediately and sign a convention for the resettlement of the Albanian population as soon as possible. Concerning the resettlement of this Albanian population, we must study conventions which Turkey signed recently with Greece, Romania and Bulgaria, paying particular attention to two aspects: Turkey should accept the largest possible contingent and should be given maximum assistance from a financial point of view, in particular for the swift organization of transportation facilities. As is inevitable in such cases, this problem will no doubt give rise to some international concern. Over the last hundred years, whenever such actions have been carried out in the Balkans, there has always been some power which has protested because the action did not conform to its interests. In the present case, Albania and Italy may make some protest.

We have already pointed out that attempts should be made to conclude an agreement with Albania on this matter and, failing this, we should at least secure its silence on the evacuation of the Albanians to Turkey. We repeat that skilful action and money properly used in Tirana may be decisive in this matter. World opinion, especially that financed by Italy, will be upset a little. Nevertheless, the world today has grown used to things much worse than this and is so preoccupied with its day-to-day problems that this issue should not be a cause for concern. At a time when Germany can expel tens of thousands of Jews

and Russia can shift millions of people from one part of the continent to another, the evacuation of a few hundred thousand Albanians will not set off a world war. Be this as it may, decision-makers should know ahead of time what they want and unfalteringly pursue those goals, regardless of possible international repercussions.

Italy, no doubt, will raise more difficulties, but at present the country is extremely preoccupied by problems of its own in Abyssinia. Austria, for its part, will not dare to go very far in its opposition. To tell the truth, the greatest danger lies in the possibility that our great allies, France and Britain, may interfere. These two countries must be given the calm and resolute reply that the security of the Morava-Vardar line is in their interests. That this is so was confirmed during the last great war and that line can only be made more secure, for them and for us, if in ethnic terms, we completely dominate the region around the Shar mountains and Kosovo.

### **The Mode of Evacuation**

As we have already stressed, the mass evacuation of the Albanians from their triangle is the only effective course we can take. In order to relocate a whole people, the first prerequisite is the creation of a suitable psychosis. This can be done in various ways.

It is well known that the Moslem masses are generally readily influenced by religion and are prone to superstition and fanaticism. Therefore, we must first of all win over the clergy and men of influence through money and threats in order for them to give their support to the evacuation of the Albanians. Agitators, especially from Turkey, must be found as quickly as possible to promote the evacuation, if Turkey will provide them for us. They must laud the beauties of the new territories in Turkey and the easy and pleasant life to be had there, and must kindle religious fanaticism among the masses and awaken pride in the Turkish state. Our press can be of colossal assistance by describing how gently the evacuation of the Turks from Dobruja took place and how easily they settled in their new regions. Such information would create the requisite predisposition for the masses of Albanians to be willing to leave.

Another means would be coercion by the state apparatus. The law must be enforced to the letter so as to make staying intolerable for the Albanians: fines, imprisonment, the ruthless application of all police regulations, such as the prohibition of smuggling, cutting forests, damaging agriculture, leaving dogs unchained, compulsory labour and any other measure that an experienced police force can contrive. From the economic aspect, this should include the refusal to recognize old land deeds. The work of the land registry should be accompanied from the start by the ruthless collection of taxes and the payment of all private and public debts, the requisitioning of all public and municipal pasture land, the cancellation of concessions, the withdrawal of permits to exercise an occupation, dismissal from government, private and municipal offices etc., all of which will speed up the process of evacuation.

Health measures should include the harsh application of all regulations, even within homes, the pulling down of encircling walls and high hedges around private houses, and the rigorous implementation of veterinary measures which will result in a ban on selling livestock on the market, etc. All these measures can be applied in a practical and effective

way. The Albanians are very touchy when it comes to religion. They must therefore be harassed on this score, too. This can be achieved through the ill-treatment of their clergy, the demolition of their cemeteries, the prohibition of polygamy, and especially the inflexible application of the regulation compelling girls to attend elementary school, wherever they are.

Private initiative, too, can assist greatly in this direction. We should distribute weapons to our colonists, as need be. The old form of Chetnik action should be organized and secretly assisted. In particular, a mass migration of Montenegrins should be launched from the mountain pastures in order to create a large-scale conflict with the Albanians in Metohija. This conflict should be prepared and encouraged by people we can trust. This can be easily achieved since the Albanians have, indeed, revolted. The whole affair can be presented as a conflict between clans and, if need be, can be ascribed to economic reasons. Finally, local riots can be incited. These will be bloodily suppressed by the most effective means, though by colonists from the Montenegrin clans and the Chetniks, rather than by means of the army.

There remains one more method Serbia employed with great practical effect after 1878, that is, secretly razing Albanian villages and urban settlements to the ground.

### **The Organization of the Evacuation**

From the attached map (1), it is apparent what regions must be cleared. They are: Upper Dibër / Debar, Lower Polog, Upper Polog, the Shar mountains, Drenica, Peja / Pec, Istog / Istok, Vuçitërna / Vucitrn, Stavica, Llap / Lab, Graçanica / Gračanica, Nerodimja / Nerodimje, Gjakova / Djakovica, Podgor, Gora (Dragash), Lugu i Drinit / Podrimje, Gjilan / Gnjilane and Kaçanik / Kacanik. Of these regions, which together form the Albanian wedge, the most important for us at the moment are: Peja / Pec, Gjakova / Djakovica, Lugu i Drinit / Podrimje, Gora (Dragash), Podgor, Shar, Istog / Istok and Drenica, all to the north of the Shar mountains, Upper Dibër / Debar and the two Pologs to the south, and the Shar mountains themselves. These are border regions that must be cleared of Albanians at any cost. The internal regions such as Kaçanik / Kacanik, Gjilan / Gnjilane, Nerodimja / Nerodimje, Graçanica / Gračanica, Llap / Lab, and Vuçitërna / Vucitrn etc. must be weakened if possible, particularly Kaçanik / Kacanik and Llap / Lab, while the others should be gradually and systematically colonized over a period of decades.

The above-mentioned methods should be used primarily in the border regions, if we wish to clear them of Albanians.

During resettlement, the following must be kept in mind:

In the first place, resettlement should begin in the villages and then move to the towns. The villages are the more dangerous, being more compact. Then, the mistake of removing only the poor should be avoided. The middle and wealthy classes make up the backbone of every nation. They, too, must therefore be persecuted and driven out. Lacking the support which their economically independent compatriots have, the poor will then submit more quickly. This question is of great importance, and I emphasize this, because one of the main causes for the failure of our colonization in the south has been that the poor were expelled



while the rich remained. We were, thus, no better off because we gained very little land for the settlement of our colonists. To create a proper psychosis for resettlement, everything possible must be done to evacuate whole villages, or at least whole families. It must be prevented at all costs that part of a family is transferred while other members remain behind. Our state is willing to spend millions not to make life easier for the Albanians, but to get rid of as many of them as possible. For this reason, those who remain behind must be barred absolutely from purchasing property from those evacuated. This should be taken into consideration in the evacuation of individuals and of whole villages if we want to make things as easy as possible for them during the process of relocation.

Once they agree to move, they should be given all the assistance they require. Administrative formalities should be simplified, their property paid for on the spot, travel documents issued without the least formality, and they should be assisted in getting to the nearest railway station. Trains should be made available for them as far as Salonika, and from there, they should be transported immediately by ship to Asia. It is very important that the journey be easy, comfortable and cheap. Train travel should perhaps be made free of charge and displaced persons should be assisted with food because, whether or not large masses of people can be evacuated or not depends largely on conditions of transport. Fear of difficulties en route is a major factor in keeping people from departing. This fear must be overcome by solving all the problems connected with the journey quickly and energetically. Particular care must therefore be taken to ensure that these people have the fewest possible difficulties en route. Simple people often have trouble finding their way, so it would be advisable to have major travel enterprises study transportation systems and adapt them accordingly. The displaced person must pass from hand to hand without feeling that his movement is a burden. Only in this way will it be possible to create a proper flow of Albanian evacuees and empty the south of them.

### **Depopulating and Repopulating Regions**

The problem of the establishment of colonies in the depopulated regions is no less important than the expulsion of the Albanians.

The first question to arise is: Who is to be settled here? The most natural thing would be to populate these regions with elements of our people from destitute areas: Montenegrins in the first place, but also Hercegovinians, Licanas and Krajšniks. The Montenegrins are the most appropriate for several reasons, and Metohija, Drenica and Kosovo are the most natural places for them to descend into from their impoverished mountain homelands. The increase of population in Montenegro has caused much poverty there which, in recent times, has given rise to continual social and political unrest. This is unfavourable for our control of the country and is very dangerous for the maintenance of law and order in the future. Giving them maize and pensions is useless. The only solution is to send them down into the fertile regions of Metohija, Drenica and Kosovo.

The Montenegrins will prove to be excellent instruments to overcome the Albanians since they are akin to them in mentality and temperament. They must be settled initially in the regions north of the Shar mountains. Along with them, however, people from Lican, Krajšnica, Serbia, Cacak, Užice and Toplica should be brought in as colonists as well. This is necessary in order to create improved working habits and organization among the

Montenegrians, and to break down the nomadic group mentality, the spirit of collectivity which characterizes the highlanders, by mixing and by intermarriage with people from various Dinaric regions. In this way, a new type of Montenegrin can be created with a less local and more broad-minded, Serbian outlook.

Suitable conditions should be created for southern Serbian emigrants living in the regions south of the Shar mountains so that they can take possession of the fertile lands. They are honest, hardworking people who would be grateful to the state all their lives if better living conditions could be created for them in rural areas. The rural southern Serbs have a right to expect more care and attention than we are giving them today. Settling these poor people in Polog (Upper and Lower) and Dibër / Debar and allocating pasture land to them instead of to the Albanians will give them a sense of belonging to the state and they will be more willing, accordingly, to defend its borders.

Colonization south of the Shar mountains and the Black Mountain of Skopje can also be achieved with Serbs from Vranje, Leskovac, Pirot and Vlasenica, especially those from destitute mountain villages. We repeat that the Dinarics should not be allowed to expand south of the line formed by the Black Mountain of Skopje and the Shar mountain range.

It is essential to avoid bureaucracy and petty formalities in the settlement of villages cleared of Albanians. The first and immediate step is to give the colonists deeds to the land they are settling. One of the main reasons for the failure of our colonization so far has been that settlers did not feel secure on their land because they did not receive a title to it and were thus left to the mercy of unscrupulous petty officials and local politicians. The peasant only feels secure if he knows that no one can take his land away from him. Such a guarantee should therefore be provided from the start. On the other hand, it is dangerous to give colonists the full and unrestricted ownership to land. In principle, homesteaders are carrying out a mission on behalf of the state and the nation, and must carry through with their mission if they are to keep their homesteads. They should not, therefore, have full and unrestricted ownership of the property in question. Because there are so many different types of people among them, from village workers who have lost their inner attachment to land to herdsmen who will have to adapt themselves to agriculture, their attachment to the land must have force of law. This will ensure that they begin to love their new home and region, and if they do not succeed in this, their children at least will.

For this reason, colonists should be prevented by law from obtaining full ownership of the land for any period of less than thirty years, even though the deeds are handed out at the start. According to the laws of our country, women do not enjoy the right to inherit property. In order to avoid fragmentation of property into tiny parcels, women must be excluded from inheriting such homesteads except in cases where the colonist has no male descendant and plans to bring a bridegroom into the household. The properties which have been given to the colonists up to now have been small. Bearing in mind intensive farming methods here, the fall in prices for farm products, and the large size of families among the colonists, 5-10 hectares of land is insufficient to ensure the economic survival of the settlers.

It is better to settle a region with a smaller number of colonists, giving them better conditions for development, than with a large number of rural semi-proletarians. This is another cause of failure in our colonization of the south and of the north up to now.

Individuals suitable for settling land under very difficult conditions are rare among other nations. Those few successes we have achieved in our colonization strategy have been the result of the aptitude of our race for colonization. It is only our peasants who are able to survive when shifted from one environment to another and put up against scrubland which has never been used for agriculture. Think of how they would flourish if the state were to carry out its duties and provide them with everything they needed.

On 10 February 1865, the government of Prince Mihajlo passed a law on the 'Settlement of Foreigners in Serbia'. Under this law, the Serbian government granted poor colonists from neighbouring regions 1.8 hectares of arable land, 1.8 hectares of non-arable land, a house, a yoke of oxen, a cart, two goats or sheep, a sow, necessary tools and 120 grosh in cash. In addition to this, they were of course given maize for food to last them until the first harvest. One plough was provided for every two families. These fixed and movable assets were granted to the settlers for a term of fifteen years, without the right to sell them. At the end of this period, the assets became their property. For the first five years, the settlers were exempt from all kinds of government taxes. For ten years they were also exempt from universal compulsory service in the regular army and for five years from service in the people's militia. The response from all sides was such that within a few months all homesteads were taken and we were immediately able to colonize more land than we have been able to do for several years since the war. Had the government granted such favourable conditions for settlers after 1918, our situation in the Vojvodina and in southern Serbia would be much different. This is how we must act in the future, if we want to achieve success.

There are also lessons to be learned from the colonization of Toplica and Kosanica after 1878 when the Albanians were expelled from this region. The method of colonization here was laid down in the law of 3 January 1880. On 3 February of the same year, the People's Council approved an amendment to the law on agrarian relations under the motto "land for the peasants." Without hesitation, Serbia applied for its first foreign loan in order to pay Turkey for the lands taken. It did not set up any ministry of agrarian reform or costly apparatus to deal with the problem of colonization. Everything was managed in a simple and practical manner. The police distributed land to all those who were willing to work it. People came from Montenegro, Sjenica, Vranje, Kosovo, Peja / Pec etc. and, in a matter of thirty years, Toplica and Kosanica, once Albanian regions of ill-repute, gave Serbia the finest regiment of the 1912-1918 wars, the Second Iron Regiment. During that period, Toplica and Kosanica paid and repaid, with the blood of their sons, for the millions of dinars which Serbia had spent to settle these regions.

It is only by following this example and understanding what is required, sparing neither money nor blood, that our nation can create a new Toplica out of Kosovo and Metohija.

Hence, if we want the colonists to remain where they are, we must assure them of all necessary means of livelihood within the first few years and severely prohibit any speculation with the houses and property of the displaced Albanians. The government must reserve itself the unlimited right to dispose of the fixed and movable assets of the Albanians and must settle its own colonists there as soon as the Albanians have departed. This is important because it rarely happens that a whole village departs at once. The first to be settled in these villages should be the Montenegrins who, with their arrogant, irascible and merciless behaviour, will drive the remaining Albanians away. Then colonists from other regions can be brought in.

This paper deals with the colonization of southern Serbia only. The problem of the Vojvodina, in particular with the Hungarian triangle in Backa, i.e. Senta - Kula - Backa Topola, is however no less important to us. Destroying this triangle in the Vojvodina is indeed just as essential as eradicating the Albanian wedge around the Shar mountains. Tens of thousands of Hungarian farmhands have been left behind since the break-up of the big estates in the Vojvodina and constitute a great burden for the Serbian and German farm owners in the region. Some of these Hungarian and even German farm labourers and small proprietors could be sent to the south because in Backa, on the border with Hungary, they constitute a real threat, all the more so since the Serbs in Backa represent only 25% of the population.

In southern Serbia, they would become good citizens by defending their property against Albania and would integrate well into our people. What is more important, since they are more progressive and of a higher cultural level than our peasants, they would provide a good example of advanced farming methods. We stress, however, that Serbs from the Vojvodina should not be sent to the south for colonization. There is still much land to be colonized in the Vojvodina so that they should be given homesteads there instead. It must be noted that in the 1928-1929 period, there was a widespread movement among Hungarians and Germans from the Vojvodina to move to southern Serbia. Not understanding the problem, our authorities were against such a movement and nipped it in the bud. Any such reaction on the part of the government today must be countered, and the public must be instructed to encourage the movement of Hungarians and Germans from the Vojvodina, especially those from Backa, to the south.

### **The Colonization Apparatus**

Of particular importance for the solution of the question under discussion is the existence of a proper apparatus to direct the whole business. The poor work done by the apparatus implementing our colonization strategy in the past was in good part responsible for its failures. To avoid the same mistakes in the future, we must carry out a reorganization.

No other question demands such continuity of implementation as our colonization strategy. We have pointed out that one of the main reasons for the failure of our colonies both in the north and in the south has been the inconsistent work and the vacillations on policy implemented after each change of government. If this is to be avoided in the future, our colonization strategy must be entrusted to the General Staff of the army. Why? Simply for reasons of defence. Our army is intent on settling our people along the borders, especially in the most delicate sectors. To this end, it will do its utmost to secure these borders with the firmest possible settlements. The General Staff, as the prime institution for the defence of our national interests, can contribute a great deal to our colonization strategy as a whole. It will know very well how to protect the colonization strategy from the private interference of those who want to use it for their own personal interests, and from external influence. Another important fact is that it would be easier for the General Staff to convince the responsible bodies of the importance of the issue and to force them to take effective action. The People's Council would have more faith in it and would grant the necessary credits to it more readily than to others.

The General Staff would guide all the work via a government Commission for Colonization. This Commission would be quite independent, though under the direct

supervision of the Chief of General Staff, and would have under its control all bodies involved in our colonization strategy. Representatives of various interested ministries, national associations, technical organizations and scholarly institutions would also be made to take part in this Commission.

The greatest mistake of our colonization strategy in the past lay in the fact that the untrained and incompetent bureaucrats had the main say, and dealt with problems only superficially and in a piecemeal manner. We need only recall the settlement campaign carried out by volunteers from Hungary in Ovce Polje and Kadriškovo, or the emigrants from Istria and Gorica who settled around Demir Kapija. The matter requires close collaboration between the government, private initiative and scholarly institutions. Private initiative can operate in many directions. The People's Defence, the Sokolašas, the Chetnik Associations etc. could take action against the Albanians which would be inappropriate for the state. Associations of agronomists, doctors, engineers and cooperatives etc. could provide valuable assistance with their technical advisors in solving the many problems which will arise during the colonization campaign. Cultural associations, such as Prosveta in Sarajevo, Matica Srbska in Novi Sad, the St. Sava Associations in Belgrade etc. have their role to play, too.

Undoubtedly, our institutions of higher learning have begun to lose the prestige they once had. The main reason for this is that the university and the Academy of Sciences are becoming increasingly estranged from real life and are neglecting their main duty in a relatively backward country such as ours: i. e. paving the way for the application of the scientific achievements of the twentieth century. Many billions would have been saved in this country, many mistakes would have been avoided in our government policy, including our colonization policy, had the problems been studied seriously and objectively in advance by competent scholars before they were taken up for solution. Our policy of colonization, likewise, would have acquired a more serious approach, greater continuity and effective application, had the opinions of experts and scholars been sought in advance.

To start with, the Royal Serbian Academy of Sciences and the University of Belgrade ought to take the initiative to organize scientific studies of the whole problem of colonization in our country. This would be feasible for many reasons. At the university we have experts on every aspect of colonization. Teachers and academicians at the university are independent scholars, less subject to external political influence. They already have good experience in such fields and their scholarly work is a guarantee of objectivity. They should, therefore, take the initiative of setting up a colonization institute, the task of which would be to pursue colonization studies. The government, for its part, should detach from the ministries all the institutions which have been engaged with this problem so far, and create a special institution, "The Colonization Inspection Office"

The Colonization Inspection Office would be headed by an Inspector General, appointed by decree on the recommendation of the Minister of War, the Chief of General Staff and the Prime Minister. All the work in the colonization institute and in the Colonization Inspection Office would be carried out on orders from and under the supervision of the government Commission for Colonization, while the Inspector General would be answerable to the Chief of General Staff.

The colonization institute would be divided into the following sections:

- 1) organization,
- 2) education and culture,
- 3) finance,
- 4) agriculture,
- 5) construction,
- 6) hygiene, etc.

In agreement with scientific, cultural and educational associations and institutions, and with national associations, the various sections would study problems of colonization and prepare directives, thus supplying our colonization policy with solid, scientifically elaborated material on the basis of which decisions could be taken. Managing this institute would be people from the Commission for Colonization, including representatives of the above-mentioned ministries, the university, the Academy of Sciences and private, national, education and cultural organizations who would be elected or appointed to this body. In this case, care must be taken not to bring in people just for honour's sake, but only men who love and are dedicated to this great work.

The heads and employees of the institute should be selected by competition. The institute would then supply the Colonization Inspection Office with scientifically elaborated material for the implementation of our colonization strategy. Should differences of opinion arise between the Colonization Inspection Office and the institute over some fundamental question, the Chief of General Staff would have the final say.

The Colonization Inspection Office must have its executive headquarters in the territory and be made up of people selected for their enthusiasm and readiness for this work, whether or not they are employed by the government. They should, if possible, be selected by means of competition and should be appointed upon the proposal of the Chief of General Staff. Compromised or incompetent cadres must be dismissed. During its work, the Colonization Inspection Office and its organs must avoid bureaucracy as much as possible, while keeping in mind one thing only - the expulsion of the Albanians as quickly as possible and resettlement by our colonists.

The police apparatus will play a very important role in this action. It is, therefore, essential to select and second the most energetic and honest officers. Their transfer should be made with the approval of the Chief of General Staff, and for such a difficult job they should be paid from secret loans. Stern measures must be taken against anyone who commits the slightest infraction. A special commissar, who would execute the orders of the state colonization inspector, must be appointed for the whole of the eighteen districts mentioned. The prefects of the districts must be given special, wide-ranging powers for their work, as well as appropriate instructions. Our political parties should be told curtly that rivalry among them during elections in these districts is strictly prohibited, and that any interference by deputies in favour of the Albanians is categorically forbidden.

The government institute and the Colonization Inspection Office would elaborate the technical details for organizing the evacuation of the Albanians and the relocation of our

settlers. It would not be bad, perhaps, if another private organization were to be created, in addition to these two official institutions. This private organization would be created out of existing associations and have the task of assisting in the implementation of our colonization strategy through private initiative. It would be best if the federation of our cultural and education associations could take over this job. Its main task would be to coordinate and assist in the promotion of links between them and the colonization institute.

## **Funding**

Whenever our colonization strategy has been criticized for its lack of success, its defenders have always excused themselves with the inadequacy of funds the government has allocated to this work. We do not deny that this has been the case up to a point. It must be said, however, that more has been spent in our country on the maintenance of this apparatus and its irrational activities than on the work of colonization itself. Nevertheless, even though the government has not provided as much as it should have, it must be understood that every country has its own primary and secondary interests to look after. Among a country's primary interests, without doubt, is the maintenance of its rule in regions of national insecurity by colonizing such regions with its own people. All other commitments are of an importance secondary to this. Funds can and must be found to deal with this problem. We have already mentioned the colonization of Toplica and Kosanica and the benefits derived from this. Given that the small Kingdom of Serbia did not hesitate to make great financial sacrifices, indeed did not even hesitate as a free and independent kingdom to seek its first loan for colonization, is it possible that our present-day Yugoslavia would be unable to do the same? It can and must. That it lacks the means to do so, is simply not true.

Let us calculate approximately how much it would cost our country to expel 200,000 Albanians and settle the region with as great a number of our people.

The resettlement of 40,000 Albanian families, taking an average family as having five members and an average of 15,000 dinars for each family, would cost a total of 600 million dinars. The colonization apparatus for the settling of 40,000 Serbian families might reach a total of 200 million dinars. In any case, the whole operation would not cost more than 800 million dinars. This is because:

- 1.** The evacuated Albanians would leave behind not only land, but also their houses and implements. Thus, not only would the overwhelming majority of our colonists be settled in the homes of the Albanians but, with a little assistance in food and livestock, they would soon recover economically and become independent. We stress in this connection that absolutely no private speculation with the possessions left behind by the Albanians would be tolerated. The government must be the one to take control of these possessions and distribute them to the settlers.
- 2.** Military forces should be employed, where required, during the setting up of new colonies, as was the case with the construction of Sremska Raca and the reconstruction of the villages destroyed by the 1931 earthquake. To this end, the army should be given the right and possibility to set up a kind of compulsory labour service for public projects, just as Stambolisky created the *Trudova pronist* in Bulgaria and Hitler the *Arbeitsdienst* in Germany, that is, by calling up reservists or extending the term of military service. It would be an

especially good idea for our young people, after finishing their training and after graduating from university, to be entrusted with such work. Were this to be the case, many of them, by taking part in constructive activities in the public interest, would become more conscious and look at things from a more realistic perspective. Such a scheme could be carried out easily by giving priority in public service employment to those young people who have spent a specific period of time working on behalf of our colonization strategy. This would also help reduce unemployment among our young intelligentsia, which is an increasingly acute social problem in our country.

**3.** In collaboration with specialized organizations and associations, we must find the cheapest means of clearing the land of scrub, of irrigating farms, of draining swamps, etc. as well as of constructing homes. Private companies should be informed that, since the government assists them with reduced customs and railway tariffs, loans and other means for the procurement of supplies and material necessary for their work, it also has the right, considering the importance of this action, to insist that such supplies and material be made available at the lowest possible price. Supplies and material should be procured by means of cartels, in agreement with which, the government would specify the quantity, quality and price of the material in question without fictitious deals being involved. Government enterprises, the railways and, in particular, forestry enterprises such as Šipad etc. should be placed at the unrestricted disposal of the government Commission for Colonization.

**4.** During colonization, the government may grant settlers property on credit or for cash. Many of the settlers will purchase land in the new regions by selling their original property in their place of birth. This will enable the government to recuperate a good portion of the money it has laid out. However, we stress that land must only be sold to persons who give proof that they will settle on it permanently and work it. Land given on credit must not be too expensive. The interest rate must be minimal and repayment should be deferred for several years to give the settlers time to get established, i. e. repayment should only begin when the settlers have sufficient economic strength.

Taking this as a basis, the government, which must cover all administrative expenses for these activities from its normal revenues, can procure funds from two sources. One would be the pruning of unnecessary expenditures and expenditures earmarked for other less urgent sectors. The other possible source of funds would be loans, which would be provided by state banks, alone or with private capital on the basis of a compulsory domestic credit line. This would be backed up by securities issued by the government as well as by contributions from the settlers themselves when they become independent.

It might not be a bad idea if the financing and purchasing of land were to be arranged by agricultural banks working in collaboration with co-operatives under the direct supervision and direction of the government Commission for Colonization. However, it is still too early to make any definitive pronouncement on this matter because the conditions under which Turkey will accept the population displaced from our territories are not yet known.

Taken altogether, the sum of a few hundred million dinars is no great expense for the government when compared to the real benefits gained from such an action. By securing the most sensitive regions in the south of our country for our own people, we could save the lives of several divisions in case of war. Giving land to several tens of thousands of families from economically weaker regions, Montenegro in particular, would, on the one hand, help ease the appalling economic suffering of such regions and, on the other hand, create many



new jobs during the process of colonization. It would be possible to find employment for 10,000 workers, thus giving a boost to our sluggish economy.

In view of the supreme national, military, strategic and economic significance of this action, it is clearly the duty of the government to sacrifice a few hundred million dinars. At a time when the government can spend one billion dinars on the construction of an international highway from Subotica to Caribrod, the possible benefits of which we shall only enjoy at some time in the distant future, it can and must be in a position to come up with a few hundred million dinars to give us back possession of the cradle of our nation.

## Conclusions

In view of all that has been said, it is no coincidence that in our examination of colonization in the south, we hold the view that the only effective means of solving this problem is the mass expulsion of the Albanians. Gradual colonization has had no success in our country, nor in other countries for that matter. If the state wishes to intervene in favour of its own people in the struggle for land, it can only be successful by acting brutally. Otherwise, the native, who has his roots in his place of birth and is at home there, will always be stronger than the colonist. In our case, we must keep this fact very much in mind, because we have to do with a hardy, resistant and prolific race which the late Cvijic described as being the most expansive in the Balkans.

From 1870 to 1914, Germany spent billions of marks on the gradual colonization of its eastern territories by purchasing land from the Poles, but the fecundity of Polish women defeated German organization and money. Thus, Poland regained its Poznan in 1918. Our above-mentioned statistics of the 1921-1931 period show that it was the fecundity of Albanian women which defeated our colonization policy, too. We must draw our conclusions from this, and we must do so quickly while there is still time to correct matters.

All of Europe is in a state of turmoil. We do not know what each new day and night will bring. Albanian nationalism is on the rise in our territories, too. Should a global conflict or social revolution occur, both of which are possible in the near future, leaving the situation as it is would jeopardize all our territories in the south. The purpose of this paper is to avert such an occurrence.

Dr Vaso Cubrilovic  
(signed)

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(1) The author of the memorandum attaches to the document a detailed map of the region to be cleared [editor's note].

[Taken from *Isejavanje Arnauta*. Manuscript in the Institute of Military History of the Yugoslav People's Army (Vojno Istorijski Institut JNA). Archives of the former Yugoslav Army (Arhiv Bivše Jugoslovenske Vojske), Belgrade, 7 March 1937, No. 2, Fasc. 4, Box 69, 19 pp. Retranslated from the Serbo-Croatian by Robert Elsie, on the basis of an existing English version. First published in R. Elsie, *Gathering Clouds: the Roots of Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo and Macedonia*, Dukagjini Balkan Books (Peja 2002), p. 97-130.]