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Ice-cream shop owners, irredentists, Yugoslavs? Albanian migration to the Yugoslav Northwest.

Paper Presented at the 2021 ASN World Convention, 5-8 May 2021

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ABSTRACT: Albanians were the largest non-Slavic population in Yugoslavia, reaching up to 8 per cent of the population by the 1980s. Predominantly rural in origin, Albanian labour migrants gravitated to industrial centres around the country in search of work, particularly from the early 1950s when a liberalisation of residence registration coincided with industrial expansion across Yugoslavia and growing tourism along the Adriatic coast. Migration to Adriatic coast occurred in tandem with Albanian participation in Gastarbeiter migration to Western European countries from the 1960s. Both processes transformed the traditional model of male labour mobility (*gurbet/pečalbarstvo*) which dominated much of the 19th and first half of the 20th century in Kosovo and elsewhere in the Balkans. Based on archival research conducted in historical archives in Belgrade, Pristina, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Istria, this paper explores the phenomenon of the migration of Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia to Slovenia and Croatia during socialism. The presence of Albanians, mostly labour migrants and private business owners from Kosovo and Macedonia, was ubiquitous in the towns and cities of the Yugoslav Northwest yet their migration has not been systematically researched. The historiography of Albanians in socialist Yugoslavia has tended to focus on Serbian-Albanian enmity and the symbolic and political role of Kosovo in Yugoslavia's destabilisation and demise. Scholars have paid far less attention to the ways other Yugoslav peoples and Albanians engaged with one another. This paper suggests that the Croatian and Slovene authorities frequently viewed Albanians with suspicion, subjecting them to practices of Othering that paralleled Western European cultural racism. Security services kept a watchful eye on the economic and political activities of Albanians, particularly after 1981. The League of Communists were skeptical of the tendency of Albanian migrants not to engage in the institutions of self-management and party-state mass organisations. Despite cultural racism and animosity however, sources of solidarity and an alignment of political interests also existed between Yugoslavia's Albanians and the northwest republics, particularly given the common fear of Serb hegemony. A common Yugoslav state framework, the ideology of Brotherhood and Unity, and a degree of cultural familiarity could help undergird Albanian migrants in the Yugoslav northwest. By the late 1980s, elements of the party-state in Croatia and Slovenia openly supported Kosovar Albanians striking against the revocation of the province's autonomy.

Introduction

This paper explores phenomenon of the migration of Albanian citizens of Yugoslavia (from Kosovo and Macedonia) to the socialist republics of Croatia and Slovenia. In engaging with the historiography of Albanians Yugoslavia, we seek to move discussion away from the frequent tropes of Serbian-Albanian historical enmity and mutually exclusive historical claims by focusing on the social history of Albanian migration to the Yugoslav Northwest - labour migration to towns like Rijeka, Labin, Pula, Poreč, Ljubljana and Koper. While these towns tended to represent themselves as multi-ethnic bastions of brotherhood and unity and centres of pan-Yugoslav labour migration,¹ the influx of Albanians in late socialism prompted racialised representations and claims of cultural distance. Catherine Baker convincingly explicates that the Yugoslav region is not 'external' to race and stresses that Albanians and Roma were the Yugoslav citizens who found themselves most 'exposed to racialized practices of Othering that resembled Western European cultural racism.'² Scholars of Albanian migration, Russel King and Nicola Mai draw upon Nira Yuval Davis, reminding that racism can take any 'biological, cultural, linguistic or religious' signifier as a boundary-marking symbol of difference, not just skin colour.³ We thus understand Albanian migration to Croatia and Slovenia as representative of a historical case of the intersection of (racialized) ethnicity, Islam, gender, class and discourses of criminality and delinquency which can interrogate the limits and contradictions of the Yugoslav emancipatory project at home.

Albanians were the largest non-Slavic population in Yugoslavia, reaching up to 8 per cent of the population by the 1980s. Predominantly rural in origin, Albanian labour migrants gravitated to industrial centres around the country in search of work, particularly from the early 1950s when a liberalisation of residence registration coincided with industrial expansion across Yugoslavia (and nascent tourism along the Adriatic coast). Albanian migration to the Yugoslav northwest occurred in tandem with Albanian participation in *Gastarbeiter* migration to Western European countries from the 1960s. Both processes transformed the traditional model

¹ Abram, Marco. "Integrating Rijeka into Socialist Yugoslavia: The Politics of National Identity and the New City's Image (1947-1955)." *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 1 (2018): 69-85.

² C. Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav region: postsocialist, post-conflict, postcolonial?* (Manchester: Manchester U. Press, 2018), 18.

³ King, R & N. Mai, *Out of Albania : From Crisis Migration to Social Inclusion in Italy* (New York ; 2008), 4. See also F. Anthias, & N. Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries : Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-racist Struggle* (London 1992)

of male labour mobility (*gurbet/pečalbarstvo*) which dominated much of the 19th and first half of the 20th century in Kosovo and elsewhere in the Balkans.⁴

The presence of Albanians, mostly labour migrants from Kosovo (and Macedonia) was ubiquitous in the towns and cities across Yugoslavia during socialism. Despite this ubiquity however, the intra-Yugoslav migration and subsequent experiences of Albanians living and working in Croatia, Slovenia and other republics has not been systematically researched. Yet, a wealth of sources relating to Albanian intra-Yugoslav migration exists. This paper is based on a preliminary overview of sources from the security services of the Socialist Republic of Croatia who closely followed the activities of a growing population of Albanians in Croatia, particularly after the violently quashed demonstrations in Kosovo of 1981 which were officially interpreted as “counter-revolutionary”. We present some tentative claims that inform our ongoing research project. The project diachronically explores the phenomenon of Albanian migration from the Yugoslav southeast (Kosovo, Macedonia) to the Yugoslav northwest (Slovenia, Croatia, Vojvodina) from the post-WWII era to the 1989 revocation of Kosovo’s autonomy. The main goal is to explore the ways that Albanians in Yugoslavia experienced and understood socialist modernity⁵ through the prism of cross-cultural migration⁶ and labour migration *within* state borders.⁷

Yugoslav Albanians, socialist modernity and migration

Since the 2000s, scholarship has weighed in on how ordinary Yugoslavs understood, experienced, shaped (and were themselves shaped by) the project of socialist modernisation. Much of the initial work focused on leisure, consumption, tourism, and cultural identification with Yugoslavia and state socialism⁸ with some scholars cautioning of the invocation of ‘a

⁴ Hristov, P. 2012. ‘Balkan Gurbet: History, Traditional Patterns and Cultural Dimensions’ in Sikimić et al., *Labour migrations in the Balkans*. (München: Verlag Otto Sagner), 11.

⁵ Pichler, R. “Migration, Architecture and the Imagination of Home(land). An Albanian-Macedonian Case Study” in Brunnbauer (ed.) *Transnational societies, transterritorial politics: Migrations in the (post-) Yugoslav region, 19th - 21st century*. (München: Oldenbourg, 2009), 217.

⁶ Lucassen, J and L. Lucassen. 2017. ‘Theorizing Cross-Cultural Migrations: The Case of Eurasia since 1500’ *Social Science History*, 41(3): 445-475; Manning, P. 2005. *Migration in World History*. New York: Routledge.

⁷ Wimmer, A., & N. Glick Schiller. 2003. ‘Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology’, *The International Migration Review*, 37(3): 576-610.

⁸ H. Grandits & K. Taylor (eds.), *Yugoslavia’s Sunny Side. A History of Tourism in Socialism...* (Budapest, 2010); B. Luthar & M. Pušnik (eds.). *Remembering Utopia. The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Washington, 2010).

genderless, nationless and classless Yugoslav everyman' in such literature.⁹ Recent approaches seek to account for those who viewed the project more ambivalently – individuals and groups that found the fruits of socialist modernity to be more elusive.¹⁰ Within such literature however, scholarly accounts of Albanian experiences of Yugoslav socialism remain rather limited.

Isabel Ströhle correctly observes that the historiography prioritises mutually exclusive Serb-Albanian (and perhaps Macedonian-Albanian) historical claims and antagonisms.¹¹ Thus, our knowledge of how ordinary Albanians engaged with the Yugoslav state in the context of labour migration to the northwest of the country is rather partial despite a couple of noteworthy studies investigating particular cases of businesses associated with Albanians like patisseries in socialist Slovenia, bakeries and goldsmiths in Zagreb, and filigrees (jewellers) in Istria.¹² Ana Kladnik writes that 'By the interwar period, (Muslim) Albanians from the southern Yugoslav space were selling sweet goods in the then Drava Governorate, like many varieties of ice cream, pastries such as baklava, Turkish honey, halva or characteristic lemonade *boza*, which were not known among Slovenians.'¹³ She notes that this was not only a Slovene phenomenon – in Bosnia Herzegovina, Albanians (often considered as Gorani people), were traditionally engaged in selling confectionary in the 19th and early 20th century.¹⁴ Preliminary research in the State Archives and National Library of Kosovo also suggests that transnational networks of Albanian small businesses in crafts and hospitality existed in the late-Ottoman period and early 20th century. While certainly shaped by Yugoslav socialism after 1945, such occupational practices predate the state.

⁹ R. Jambrešić Kirin & M. Blagaić.. "The ambivalence of socialist working women's heritage", *Narodna umjetnost*, 50,1 (2013), 43

¹⁰ R. Archer et al. eds., *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism* (Abingdon, 2016); I. Ströhle, 'Of social inequalities in a socialist society: the creation of a rural underclass in Yugoslav Kosovo' in Archer at al. *Social inequalities*

¹¹ I. Ströhle, 'Of social inequalities in a socialist society: the creation of a rural underclass in Yugoslav Kosovo' in Archer at al. *Social inequalities...*, 113

¹² A. Kladnik, 'Dobri Dol – Sweet Village. Albanians and Their Ice-Cream Shops in Socialist Slovenia' in R. Fotiadis et al. (eds.) *Brotherhood and Unity at the Kitchen Table? Cooking, Cuisine and Food Culture in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, forthcoming); M. Rajković Iveta and R. Geci. 'Albanski zlatari i pekari s Kosova u Zagrebu: Migracije i etnicko poduzetništvo.' *Studia Ethnologica Croatica* 29.1 (2017): 279-304; T. Nikolić-Đerić & I. Orlić. 'Filigran U Istri: Od 'bratstva i jedinstva' do multikulturalizma.' *Етноантрополошки проблеми* 9.4 (2014): 1045-1062.

¹³ Kladnik, "Dobri Dol – Sweet Village".

¹⁴ Enes Omerović, *Nacionalne manjine u Bosni i Hercegovini (1918-1941)* (PhD diss., University of Sarajevo, 2017), 79, cited in Kladnik, "Dobri Dol – Sweet Village".

Comprehensive studies of Albanian migration *within* Tito's Yugoslavia are still absent from the historiography (indeed social and everyday history of Albanians within Yugoslavia more generally is a historiographical blind spot). Administrative restrictions on residence changes were lifted in 1953¹⁵ facilitating widespread mobility from the Yugoslav southeast, yet the dynamics that followed have not yet been accounted for. Studies focusing on socialist-era Macedonia (where Albanians represented a large minority) illuminate the ethicized division of labour and Albanian marginalisation vis-à-vis that socialist republic. Pichler observes that Albanians 'did not have equal opportunities to participate in the project of socialist modernisation'.¹⁶ Rozita Dimova demonstrates how the intersection of class and ethnicity bore different material results for Albanians and Macedonians during socialism with Macedonians tending to enjoy 'class advantages as a comfortable, state sponsored lifestyle'. After WWII, ethnic-Macedonians tended to migrate to cities and took industrial or white-collar jobs, while Albanians remained attached to the land through subsistence farming.¹⁷ Because of this pattern, Albanians relied less on the state/social sector for employment. This is also a trope that emerged in the migration experience to the Yugoslav northwest with Croatian (and Slovenian) authorities frequently fretting about the lack of participation of Albanians in party-state and self-management institutions in the communities in which they migrated to as well as their predilection for work in the private sector supported by kin-networks.

Initial interviews undertaken in Kosovo, Croatia and Slovenia with Albanians who have some experience of living and working in Croatia and Slovenia in the 1970s and 1980s provide further insight into the dynamics of labour migration and orientation vis-à-vis the state in the context of socialist modernity. For example, informants discussed certain geographically defined occupations. Reportedly, areas around Prizren, particularly villages on the mountain Pashtrik (Paštrik), specialised in baking and the small businesses in jewellery and *filigrani* tended to have roots in the Western parts of Kosovo (the hinterlands of Peja, Prizren and Gjakova). The plain of Eastern Kosovo tended to be a source of unskilled labour in the construction industry. In the 1950s migrants found it easier to migrate by initially working in Croatia or Slovenia in social sector enterprises and industry as unskilled workers and upon establishing themselves in the area, they could then develop private businesses like bakeries, cafes, sweetshops, ice-cream parlours etc. The development of such businesses would induce

¹⁵ Brunnbauer, U. 2004. 'Fertility, families and ethnic conflict: Macedonians and Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia, 1944–2002', *Nationalities Papers*, 32(3): 565-598, 581.

¹⁶ (2009:217)

¹⁷ Brunnbauer, "Fertility, families and ethnic conflict", 580.

further chain migration, often within kin networks.¹⁸ In other cases migration to the Yugoslav northwest would follow a period of working in capitalist Western Europe – most often West Germany. Capital raised would then finance the establishment of private businesses in Slovenia and Croatia as well as maintaining a household and/or supporting relatives in Kosovo and Macedonia. Archival sources and discussions with Albanian narrators suggest religiously stratified occupations – for example in Slovenia and Croatia there is a tendency for jewellers to be Catholics from Kosovo while businesses in hospitality (like fast food, sweetshops and ice-cream sellers) tend to be predominantly owned and run by Muslim Albanians from Macedonia.

The historiography of Albanians in socialist-era Yugoslavia has tended to focus on Serbian-Albanian enmity and the symbolic and political role of Kosovo in Yugoslavia's destabilisation and demise. Scholars have paid far less attention to the ways other Yugoslav peoples and Albanians engaged with one another. While studies emerged in the late 1980s were published about the position of Kosovo and Kosovar Albanians within the context of Yugoslavia,¹⁹ these tended to address immediate policy debate and political controversy rather than being primarily intended as scholarly works. Furthermore, the breakup of Yugoslavia and outbreak of war in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina ensured that the focus of debate shifted rapidly, and Slovenia and Croatia became increasingly disengaged with questions relating to Kosovo upon their independence in 1991.

Widespread anti-Albanian attitudes not only the preserve of Yugoslavia's Serb population. During socialism Croats, Slovenes and many other Yugoslavs sometimes viewed Albanians with suspicion, subjecting them to 'practices of Othering that resembled Western European cultural racism'.²⁰ This increased with the rise of civilizational discourse and nationalism in the 1980s.²¹ Albanians have often been represented in Croatian and Slovene public sphere in racialized terms and pathologized in ways not dissimilar to that of Roma

¹⁸ Based on interviews with conversations with Ramush Tahiri and Milazim Salihu (journalism and film students in Zagreb in the 1970s), Fahri Musliu (journalist in Belgrade for 38 years) and Gani Muliqi (employee of Kosovo Embassy in Ljubljana, journalist based in Serbia in 1980s).

¹⁹ Horvat, B. 1988. *Kosovosko Pitanje*. Zagreb: Globus; Gaber, S. and T. Kuzmanić, T (1989). *Kosovo--Srbija--Jugoslavija*. Ljubljana: Univerzitetna konferenca ZSMS, Knjižnica revolucionarne teorije; Popović et al 1990. *Kosovski čvor: drešiti ili seći?* Beograd: Biblioteka Chronos.

²⁰ Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav region*, 73.

²¹ Bakić-Hayden, M. 1995. 'Nesting orientalisms: The case of former Yugoslavia', *Slavic Review*, 54(4): 917-931, 924.

minorities.²² Baker observes the intersection of religion, ethnicity and social class for Albanians in late 1980s Yugoslavia rendered them ‘simultaneously labelled as fundamentalist Muslims in Serb nationalist media and treated as a semi-racialized, culturally and ethnically distinct underclass in Slovenia and Croatia.’²³ The ethnic slur *šiptar* encompassed both views.²⁴ The term remained (and indeed continues to remain), ubiquitous in describing both Albanians and their associated businesses in Croatia and Slovenia as well as in Serbia. For example, Ballinger writes about the lamenting of Rovinj’s ‘natives’ who lambast the increasingly visible of presence of Bosnians and Albanians in the old town during socialism and in the postsocialist era. ‘Loose talk in the town about supposedly illegal building or additions without permits often centers on wealthy Albanians (Shiptari), whose wealth—like their residences—appears suspect.’²⁵

Sources of distrust and even outright hostility towards Albanians in Yugoslavia stemmed from several interrelated factors. These include purported Albanian loyalty to the external homeland of Hoxha’s Albania (often presented as an enemy state of Yugoslavia), linguistic and cultural isolation of Albanians in relation to other Yugoslav peoples, Christian animosity towards a largely Islamic group in the context of post-Ottoman, nationalist discourse and the Kosovo myth,²⁶ and a distrust of rural homesteads and patriarchal kinship patterns according to socialist morality.

With the official (federative) Yugoslav interpretation that the 1981 demonstrations in Kosovo were ‘counterrevolutionary’ and an illegitimate expression of nationalist excesses, anti-Albanian sentiment across the country grew and security services followed the activities of potential ‘irredentists’ closely. Several state-wide security operations tackled nationalist Albanian groups during the 1980s focusing on Yugoslav-based illegal movements and Albanian emigres in Western Europe and North America who had (alleged) links to the Peoples

²² Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav region*, cf. Agarin, T. 2014. *When Stereotype Meets Prejudice: Antiziganism in European Societies*. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag; Sardelić, J. 2015. ‘Romani minorities and uneven citizenship access in the post-Yugoslav space’. *Ethnopolitics* 14 (2): 159–79; Yuval-Davis, N., G. Wemyss & K. Cassidy. 2017. ‘Introduction to the special issue: Racialized bordering discourses on European Roma’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(7): 1047-1057.

²³ Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav region*, 72.

²⁴ Čupković, G. 2015. Diachronic variations of slurs and levels of derogation: On some regional, ethnic and racial slurs in Croatian. *Language Sciences* 52: 215-230, 218.

²⁵ Ballinger, P. ““Authentic Hybrids” in the Balkan Borderlands” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (February 2004), pp. 31-60, 44.

²⁶ Mertus, J. (1999). *Kosovo: How myths and truths started a war*. Berkeley, California; London: University of California Press.

Republic of Albania and other anti-Yugoslav émigré organisations, namely Croatian ultra-nationalists and fascists.

Croatia, and in particular the north-western areas of the socialist republic (Istria and Kvarner), was a particularly important location for both Albanian intra-Yugoslav migrants drawn to the area to due favourable economic conditions (tourism, industry), and connections with Albanian transnational networks in Western Europe. Allegedly the proximity to borders with Italy and Austria rendered the region an attractive node on the transnational network of Albanians who would typically maintain a presence in their homesteads in Kosovo and Macedonia, establish a business and home in Istria/Kvarner, and have links to kin in Western Europe who would frequent the north-west Adriatic and serve as a source of capital for business and property buying.

The “Albanian complex” in Northwest Croatia after 1981

Numbers of Albanians living in the Socialist Republic of Croatia generally, and in Istria and Kvarner specifically, are unreliable with authorities noting that in addition to registered Albanians in municipalities, many were unregistered and fluctuated according to the season and the demands of the labour market. Other individuals did not declare their Albanian ethnicity and declared themselves as Yugoslavs (or for second generation migrants, Croats). While in contemporary Croatian censuses those declaring themselves as Albanians make up 1-3 percent of Istrian towns like Poreč, Rovinj and Umag,²⁷ it is likely that the numbers of Albanians (holding Yugoslav citizenship) in Northwest Croatia in the 1980s was significantly higher.

A 1988 report from the State security force’s Pula branch detailed the ‘security situation in the area of Pula relating to the Albanian Complex’ (the term *Complex* in the title suggestive that *all* Albanians were seen as a potential security risk).²⁸ It describes how in the 1981 census only 768 individuals declared themselves as Albanian in Istria but that the number was certainly far larger due undeclared workers, particularly those casually employed in the private

²⁷ In the 2011 Croatian census 17,513 people declared themselves as Albanians (0.41% of total population). 9,594 identified as Muslims and 7,109 as Catholics. They were most heavily concentrated in Istria (1.15% of the overall population) and Primorje-Gorski Kotar (Kvarner) (0.81% of the population)

²⁸ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procena – Sigurnosna stanja na području centra Pula u odnosu na albanski kompleks. Pula, 28.07.1988., str. 12.

sector on a seasonal basis.²⁹ According to the authorities in Pula, Poreč and elsewhere in the region, the 1981 demonstrations in Kosovo led to an increase in the number of Albanians with estimates that at least 2,500 Albanians were living in the area and that number would increase during the tourist season with unregistered individuals coming to work in the private businesses of relatives.³⁰ Other reports provided even higher estimates. In Pula by 1988 allegedly there 1,795 permanent Albanian residents and 1,547 temporary residents registered but the authorities believed ‘that their total number in our area is significantly higher considering that many do not register their presence.’³¹ A report from the security services in Rijeka in 1988 (covering the city of Rijeka and much of the surrounding area of Kvarner) established that 2,324 Albanians were permanently registered in the area and another 3,554 Albanians had temporary residence but an estimated 6,000-9,000 Albanians were living and working in the area without ever registering with the authorities.³²

Unlike most Yugoslavs who worked in the social sector [*društveni sektor*],³³ Albanians in Istria and Kvarner tended to be employed in the nascent private sector. The number employed in the social sector was reportedly ‘negligible’ in Pula.³⁴ Most found employment in a growing number of private businesses in hospitality and crafts. In particular, goldsmiths [*filigrani*] and ice-cream parlours are mentioned as are sellers of fruit and vegetables and informal work in construction.³⁵ Similarly, in the north Istrian municipality of Buje near Poreč authorities reported: ‘Most members of the Albanian nationality work in particular areas outside of the social sector. According to our operative estimates, 90 percent of the nationality is either in possession of a private business or is employed in one.’³⁶ Figures suggested that at

²⁹ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procena – Sigurnosna stanja na području centra Pula u odnosu na albanski kompleks. Pula, 28.07.1988., str. 12.

³⁰ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procena – Sigurnosna stanja na području centra Pula u odnosu na albanski kompleks. Pula, 28.07.1988., str. 12.; HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procjena stanja prisutnosti I aktivnosti albanske narodnosti na području općine Poreč. 21.09.1988. **DSCN86190--**

³¹ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Sigurnosna procjena albanskog kompleksa na području CDS Pula, 20.09.1988 **DSCN8625**

³² **HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH , str 581**

³³ N.b. Check *statistički godišnjak 1990* for exact figures.

³⁴ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procena – Sigurnosna stanja na području centra Pula u odnosu na albanski kompleks. Pula, 28.07.1988., str. 12.

³⁵ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procena – Sigurnosna stanja na području centra Pula u odnosu na albanski kompleks. Pula, 28.07.1988., str. 12.

³⁶ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Sigurnosna procjena, prisutnosti i djelovanja pripadnika albanske narodnosti na području ovog OSUP-a, Buje, str. 11 **DSCN8608**

least 54 small businesses [*obrtnička radnja*] were owned by Albanians in the Buje area.³⁷ In Poreč, the relatively few Albanians working in the social sector were officially registered while the majority of Albanians who worked in the private sector, were not registered at all, ‘and in fact avoided registration.’³⁸ Of 44 Albanians individuals registered in Poreč with a private business there were 22 ice-cream parlours, 17 jewellers, 2 leather shops and three souvenir shops. No exact figures were available for informal seasonal stands selling fruit, trinkets, portrait drawings and other various items but many were run by Albanians.³⁹ In Rijeka and nearby towns and islands like Opatija, Krk and Pag the ratio of Albanian owned businesses in comparison to Albanian permanent residents is telling. Opatija was home to 80 permanent Albanian residents and 105 temporary residents yet housed 49 Albanian private businesses. In Krk 60 businesses were owned by Albanians yet only 26 Albanians were registered as permanent residents and another 170 as temporary residents. Pag was home to 32 Albanian businesses but only 16 Albanians were permanent residents and a further 41 temporary residents.⁴⁰

Construction was another sector employing Albanians in the Yugoslav northwest. Some construction firms were registered in Kosovo but operated in Istria and employed unskilled Albanian workers who were not reported to the authorities and whose presence was cited as representing ‘a meaningful security problem’.⁴¹ A high number of labour migrants would find accommodation privately, often in large groups of which only few would register their presence. Such accommodation served, according to authorities, to facilitate transient co-ethnics. ‘In this category most often appear law breakers, particularly during the tourist season.’⁴²

Indeed, local authorities made a direct link between the suspect category of private business owners and (alleged) networks of Albanian nationalists and more general criminality. In Poreč ‘We have information, though it is difficult to prove, that they abuse workspaces

³⁷ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Sigurnosna procjena, prisutnosti i djelovanja pripadnika albanske narodnosti na području ovog OSUP-a, Buje, str. 11 **DSCN8608**

³⁸ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procjena stanja prisutnost i aktivnosti albanske narodnosti na području općine Poreč. 21.09.1988. **DSCN86190--**

³⁹ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procjena stanja prisutnost i aktivnosti albanske narodnosti na području općine Poreč. 21.09.1988. **DSCN86190--**

⁴⁰ **HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH**, str 581-582.

⁴¹ HR HAD 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procena – Sigurnosna stanja na području centra Pula u odnosu na albanski kompleks. Pula, 28.07.1988., str. 12 (full scan available).

⁴² HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Sigurnosna procjena albanskog kompleksa na području CDS Pula, 20.09.1988 **DSCN8625**

[*poslovni prostori*] wherever it is possible, they are prepared and do not chose the method and means by which they achieve their goal. This can be giving bribes, selling hard currency, smuggling and connections to the extreme émigré groups.’⁴³ Security services in Pula reported:

The most interesting group are those owners of private businesses (ice-cream parlours, jewellers) due to their exceptional[ly high] material status. It is indisputable that such a status is partly the consequence of one’s own work in combination with favourable conditions of a touristed region which enables the gaining of an enviable financial result. However, information received also suggests that a meaningful number of Albanian owners of private businesses gain huge earnings on the basis of malversations, illegal currency exchange, bypassing regulations and especially through smuggling. The problem of smuggling various goods is widespread, including smuggling in weapons. For these businesses, further opportunities are offered by fact that it is a border region, the large frequency of foreigners and the possibilities enabled by small border traffic [*malogranični promet*].⁴⁴

Municipal authorities in Buje similarly stressed the alleged connection between Albanians, private business and criminality:

A number of members of the Albanian nationality is prone to bribes and corruption. Here especially to be mentioned are owners of craft and hospitality businesses.... Most often they are inclined to giving bribes and goods and money, through small gifts to inspection, administrative and other authorities. Everyone is overwhelmingly more inclined towards illegal trade, particularly members of the Albanian nationality born in Macedonia (Tetovo, Gostivar and other places). Most often they engage in illegal trade between Italy and SFRY in goods like household machines, musical and other instruments, goods lacking on our market. They bring in the goods through illegal channels by the sea and by land, in collusion with the customs authorities. The received goods are then sold on across Yugoslavia. We also confirmed that some individual Albanians resell hard currency or bring in illegal dinar amounts to Italy, exchanging

⁴³ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procjena stanja prisutnost i aktivnosti albanske narodnosti na području općine Poreč. 21.09.1988. **DSCN86190-**

⁴⁴ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procena – Sigurnosna stanja na području centra Pula u odnosu na albanski kompleks. Pula, 28.07.1988., str. 12.

dinars to hard currency and coming to a high profit. Instigators of such business and smuggling are the H. brothers, L.I., the B. brothers and others.⁴⁵

The report claims that the H. brothers are seen as the leaders of the Albanian community in the area by fellow Albanians. The security services believed the three brothers were involved in the international drug trade noting that they travelled to Western Europe, the middle East, USA and Latin America. As well as owning a huge house in the area, they kept multiple hospitality and pastry businesses along the Slovenian and Croatian coast, multiple family homes in Umag, Gostivar, Macedonia, and ‘possibly two flats in Istanbul.’⁴⁶

Although Kvarner and Istria are synonymous with robust ‘brotherhood and unity’ and an openness to outsiders, normative multiculturalism ran parallel to an ambivalence towards and indeed ‘widespread resentment’ of incomers from the Yugoslav south.⁴⁷ A diachronic exploration of a sample of documents from the League of Communists of Rijeka reveals telling comments about Kosovo suggesting an association with delinquency and imagined civilizational hierarchies. For example, a report in the 1960s about the Northwest-Croatian port city stresses that the lack of systemic urban planning, noting the appearance of barracks, repurposed bunkers and other informal forms of housing. The report notes that 80 families from Kosovo (referred to in the report as ‘Kosmet’) migrated to Rijeka and lived in these informal conditions of housing. Allegedly, their community was involved in ‘the creation of (financial) speculation, prostitution, the abandonment of children and so on’. The report also notes that authorities ‘resorted to giving these families money to leave Rijeka and return to their place’ (i.e. Kosovo).⁴⁸ While the individuals are identified as coming from Kosovo, their ethnicity is not defined. Rather than being Albanian they may well have been Serb, Roma, Gorani or any other ethnic grouping or combination of multiple ones. However, the designation ‘Kosmet’ clearly marks them as belonging to the Yugoslav south.

Later reports from Rijeka during the 1980s also mention migration from Kosovo, in most cases specifically Albanian migration. For example, in 1987, municipal authorities

⁴⁵ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Sigurnosna procjena, prisutnosti I djelovanja pripadnika albanske narodnosti na području ovog OSUP-a, Buje, str. 11 **DSCN8608**

⁴⁶ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Sigurnosna procjena, prisutnosti I djelovanja pripadnika albanske narodnosti na području ovog OSUP-a, Buje, str. 11 **DSCN8608**

⁴⁷ Ballinger “Authentic Hybrids” in the Balkan Borderlands, 44.

⁴⁸ Državni Arhiv Hrvatske -----fond-----kutija ----- Izveštaj o obilasku Rijeke i razgovorima u radnim organizacijama, Opštinskom odboru Socijalističkog saveza i sa ženama – predstavnicima radnih organizacija u kojima je zaposlen veći broj žena.

observed that economic migration of Yugoslavia's Albanian population was constantly growing with Albanians being the 'most numerous migrants' in the region. The municipal authorities claimed that the Albanians' ways of working and living there were 'closed in comparison to [Northwest Croatia].' Allegedly, 'problems of interpersonal relations with the local population required more careful monitoring than had been conducted hitherto'.⁴⁹ The municipal authorities were suggesting that Albanians were culturally separate and tended to not participate in the local institutions of self-management and the party-state thus resembling the kind of cultural racism common in the post-war experience of migration to Western European societies.

Albanian disinterest in participating in public life in their community was a perennial bone of contention. Very few were party members and generally they did not participate in party-state institutions and self-management institutions. One Istrian local authority reported:

Politically, they are totally inactive not coming to meetings of the local council [*mesna zajednica*] or other socio-political meetings through the SSRN, trade union, SSO, SKJ... Of all the members of Albanian nationality in our area, only three are members of the League of Communists. It is clear that the three are politically inactive and during the time of Ramadan, they follow religious rituals.⁵⁰

The alleged inwardness of the group was a problem for security operatives who tracked their activities. In addition to the problem of not understanding the Albanian language, security operatives complained of 'isolation, distrust and closedness of the group and, as a rule, their non-participation in any kind of social activities in their places of residence'.⁵¹

Municipal authorities and security forces regarded Albanians as insular and believed that since the 'outbreak of the counterrevolution in Kosovo' informal but suspicious gatherings of Albanians in Istria were observed by security services. Albanians were allegedly exchanging their views, commenting to one another about the situation and 'distancing themselves from the non-Albanian population'. Individual cases of overt Albanian nationalism were also

⁴⁹ Državni Arhiv u Rijeci, HR-DARI-793. Međuopćinska konferencija SKH Rijeka, 1987-1989, k. 52, 20 sjed. Pred., 24.XII.87.

⁵⁰ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Sigurnosna procjena, prisutnosti i djelovanja pripadnika albanske narodnosti na području ovog OSUP-a, Buje, str. 11 [DSCN8617](#)

⁵¹ HR HAD 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procena – Sigurnosna stanja na području centra Pula u odnosu na albanski kompleks. Pula, 28.07.1988., str. 12.

reported, including support for the Kelmendi, the Albanian recruit who had killed his fellow soldiers in the Paraćin army barracks in 1987.⁵²

Local authorities in Northwest Croatia did not consider anti-Albanian sentiment to be a meaningful problem however. In Buje, authorities ‘did not register a single case which would indicate that pressure was put upon Albanian, nor were any attacks or destruction of property reported’.⁵³ In Pula during 1987 authorities did not register a single case suggesting ‘pressure against, or attacks upon’ Albanians in the area but four cases of property damage to Albanian businesses were reported. While the culprits were not identified, the security services in Pula assumed this to be ‘the consequence of their interpersonal clashes’.⁵⁴ However the report did state negative views of Istrian inhabitants towards Albanians: ‘Various comments and revolts from the non-Albanian population relating to the dominant characteristic of the behaviour of members of the Albanian community are present. They relate to the intensive buying of property, regardless of the price and enormous enrichment’.⁵⁵

Two contradictory stereotypes of Albanians seemed to emerge in parallel. On the one hand there was an influx of unskilled workers ‘taking the hardest jobs (digging canals, collecting rubbish, physical work...)’.⁵⁶ They were seen as cultural outsiders, socially and politically disconnected to the area they moved to and largely invisible in public life and usually undocumented. On the other hand, there was also a stereotype of shrewd, very wealthy and connected Albanians who helped one another advance in private businesses and property speculation and maintained strong links with both emigre groups in Western Europe and their extended kin-networks in Kosovo and Macedonia whose mobility and wealth was a source of suspicion.

Albanians in Croatia and Slovenia and sources of solidarity in the late 1980s (Conclusion)

Despite cultural racism and animosity towards Albanians in the Yugoslav Northwest, sources of solidarity and an alignment of political interests also existed between Yugoslavia’s

⁵² HR HAD 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procena – Sigurnosna stanja na području centra Pula u odnosu na albanski kompleks. Pula, 28.07.1988., str. 12 (full scan available).

⁵³ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Sigurnosna procjena, prisutnosti I djelovanja pripadnika albanske narodnosti na području ovog OSUP-a, Buje, str. 11 [DSCN8617](#)

⁵⁴ DSCN8705

⁵⁵ DSCN8705

⁵⁶ HR HDA 1561, SDS RSUP SRH. Procjena stanja prisutnost I aktivnosti albanske narodnosti na području općine Poreč. 21.09.1988. [DSCN86190--](#)

Albanians and sections of Croatian and Slovenian society, particularly in the late 1980s given the growing fear of Serb hegemony. While the hitherto focus has been on the difficulties of migration and participation in public life for Albanians in Croatia, there were of course, factors which facilitated their mobility and helped many to thrive in the Yugoslav Northwest. First and foremost a common Yugoslav state framework, the ideology of brotherhood and unity, and some degree of cultural familiarity could help undergird Albanian migrants in Croatia.

Oral history narrators from Kosovo who had lived in Croatia during the 1970s and 1980s stressed the importance of Zagreb as a centre of university education for Kosovar Albanians. Although not geographically close to Kosovo, Zagreb was an attractive choice for some Albanians. The university was more established and prestigious than Pristina University (established in 1969) and could offer a more robust education for ambitious students (albeit in Serbo-Croatian). Narrators stressed that many Albanians felt less discriminated in Croatia rather than Serbia and so Zagreb was a more attractive urban centre than Belgrade for their studies. For others, religion played a role with Catholic Kosovars gravitating to the republic.⁵⁷

Despite the negative accounts of Albanian migrants among municipal and city authorities and the security services in Croatia, more positive perspectives also circulated. For example, the Sunday edition of Dalmatia's major newspaper, *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, provided a series of detailed and generally sympathetic accounts of Albanians in Dalmatia in the late 1980s, albeit from the perspective of an outsider's gaze upon an exoticized group that needed to be discovered and explained to the readership. (The title of the feuilleton ran "Albanians in Dalmatia: What they work at and how they live").⁵⁸ The series of articles stressed the internal heterogeneity of Albanians in Croatia noting divisions between Catholics and Muslims, those of a more Turkish orientation and others with a more explicitly Albanian outlook as well as professional networks – communities of jewellers, bakers construction workers and so forth. Rather than interpreting the lack of interest in participation in self-management and the party-state as a priori negative and evidence of potential subversion, the series gave voice to Albanians like Pavle Paljusi, a second generation *filigran* who stated 'We are interested in who will have more [money], we are interested in economics and not politics.'⁵⁹ Thus reports

⁵⁷ Based on interviews with conversations with Ramush Tahiri and Milazim Salihu (journalism and film students in Zagreb in the 1970s), Fahri Musliu (journalist in Belgrade for 38 years) and Gani Muliqi (employee of Kosovo Embassy in Ljubljana, journalist based in Serbia in 1980s).

⁵⁸ Dražen Gudić "Što rade i kako žive Albanci u Dalmaciji" *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* (Split, 27.11.1988, broj 917).

⁵⁹ Dražen Gudić "Što rade i kako žive Albanci u Dalmaciji" *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* (Split, 27.11.1988, broj 917).

stressed a combination of entrepreneurial and patriarchal values almost as a badge of honour and evidence of self-help: ‘Albanians, both Catholics and Muslims equally, are not inclined to seek help from society, particularly not in financial affairs and they have a developed system of credit and loans in which there do not exist interest but the obligation rules to spend the funds wisely and in a suitable way return it’.⁶⁰

Interviews in *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* provide a rare insight into the views of young Albanians on the Adriatic coast. In many cases respondents are positive and affirm their experience in the area. Riza Haliti, a 21-year-old respondent in the interview claimed to have tried to seek work everywhere across the country and claims that Dalmatia is the best place for Albanians in Yugoslavia.

You know in Slovenia ... yes there are better wages, but they look at you like you are infections [zaražen]. In Belgrade and Niš the pay is weaker, and someone always provokes you and looks at you strangely. We are at peace only here [in Croatia], even with the police with whom I really have no problems.⁶¹

Other respondents mentioned repressive political and economic conditions in their homelands. The author of the text writes:

Albanians from Macedonia tend to want to remain anonymous because they fear repercussions in their home communities where allegedly their rights and freedoms have been reduced to the minimum. They destroy their traditional walls which were not bothering anyone, they reduce social help when one has more than two children, they are cutting education in Albanian and so on. If we were not able to make do on our own it would be hard to get by, the Albanians say.⁶²

For others, Croatia was a steppingstone to capitalist Western Europe. An anonymous worker at the green market in Split described how he had no interest in ‘keeping to traditions’

⁶⁰ Dražen Gudić “Što rade i kako žive Albanci u Dalmaciji“ *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* (Split, 27.11.1988, broj 917).

⁶¹ Dražen Gudić “Što rade i kako žive Albanci u Dalmaciji“ *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* (Split, 11.12.1988, broj 919), 10.

⁶² Dražen Gudić “Što rade i kako žive Albanci u Dalmaciji“ *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* (Split, 4.12.1988, broj 918), 7.

and returning to Kosovo, but neither did he wish to remain in Croatia. His plan was to depart for Western European country whenever possible and was saving and attempting to arrange paperwork. 'We all say that we are getting on well here. And that is true. But listen, here I am still a foreigner. I just work and sleep. In some foreign country it cannot be any different, but I would be able to earn a lot more.'⁶³

With the rise of Slobodan Milošević the interests of Yugoslav Albanians and the republics of Slovenia and Croatia become more closely aligned. The two north-western republics broke from the federal (Belgrade) interpretation of the Kosovo crisis between 1988 and 1991. Elements of the party-state in Croatia and Slovenia openly supported Kosovar Albanians striking against the revocation of the province's autonomy.⁶⁴ The Cankarjev Dom rally in Ljubljana, where the Slovene communists joined the opposition in support of striking Kosovo miners in March 1989, is cited by Berishaj⁶⁵ as a 'milestone' in the emancipation of Albanian migrants in Slovenia (and arguably beyond it as well).

⁶³ Dražen Gudić "Što rade i kako žive Albanci u Dalmaciji" *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* (Split, 11.12.1988, broj 919), 11.

⁶⁴ *Novi list* (Rijeka) 01 March 1989, 2; *Naš čas* (Titovo Velenje), 02 March 1989, 1.

⁶⁵ Berishaj, M. 2004. 'Albanci v Sloveniji: Različnost percepcij', *Razprave in gradivo* (45): 144-159, 144.