

GORANIES IN THE LIGHT OF RAMBOUILLET TALKS*

In the actual process of ethno-national differentiation and confrontation before disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the ethnic community of Goranies presents itself as a factor of stabilization of ethno-national relations with a high level of civilized behavior and firm determination to share the fate of people in their country Serbia.

Goranies constitute a relatively homogeneous ethno-demographic system of developed homeostatic distinctiveness whence a separate ethnic identity results. It was the basis for establishment of the ethnic community of Goranies, which has been created throughout a long anthropogeographical-ethnopsychological process. Orthodox-Slav population was its starting point and foundation. Islamization of Goranies was completed in the mid- 18th century. By its cultural and ethno-psychical entity, the ethnic community of Goranies essentially differs from all Moslem populations in former Yugoslavia. In spite of all pressures exerted at the most difficult times of great historical changes and erosion of geographical space, Goranies resisted dangers and did not allow disassembly and disappearance of their ethno-demographic system. They sustained as a separate ethnic community because they were firmly connected with their native land and home. Ethno-cultural identity of Goranies was unquestionably sublimed into the category of a separate ethnic community according to a declaration about the national belonging and mother tongue made during the 1991 census.

The ethnic community of Goranies is today fully integrated into the socio-economic and political life of the Republic of Serbia. The fact of integration is reflected in the continuation of a separate territorial unity – the municipality of Gora. There are 95% of Goranies and 5% of other inhabitants in it. There is also an insignificant number of Albanians. Plans for development in all spheres of social life were made through institutions of the system of the Republic of Serbia

* M.A. Ibro Vait, President of the National Community of Goranies of Kosovo and Metohia, lecturer on the Faculty of teacher-training in Prizren - Leposavić

for the purpose of quicker development of the community and better life of the citizens in that region.

Unfortunately, the latest events in Kosovo and Metohia ended up in brutal occupation by Albanians. Goranies are threatened with the loss of values characterizing their community, which was all the way through centuries overcoming temptations. All concerned countries, institutions and individuals should try to prevent such process from happening at all.

The talks in Rambouillet occupy a separate place in the life of the ethnic community of Goranies. The delegation of the Republic of Serbia participated in that meeting with the aim to solve the problem of Kosovo and Metohia in a peaceful way. It is very important to stress that the representative of the ethnic community of Goranies, the author of the present article, was the member of that delegation.

We understood the talks in Rambouillet as a possibility to find the best solutions, which would satisfy the interests of all national communities living in Kosovo and Metohia. The ethnic community of Goranies comprehended them as a priority task and the only solution, which would preserve multiethnic and multiconfessional composition of the population in Kosovo and Metohia. The fact that the ethnic community of Goranies had its representative in Rambouillet meant that their community was acknowledged as an unavoidable factor in the solution of all the problems in Kosovo and Metohia.

We preferred direct talks because the results achieved would correspond to all national communities. Possibilities for such talks did not exist. Powerful dignitaries of the West thought up a farce that it was better to have mediators. Thus, heavy and painful talks were conducted with the people who determined their goal in advance – to secede Kosovo and Metohia from Serbia and to destroy all traces of the people who do not think as they do. The national community of Goranies supported the principle of protecting the sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia and fundamental economy of Kosovo and Metohia in the framework of the constitutional and legal system of the Republic of Serbia.

Proposals of the ethnic community of Goranies were prepared in the spirit of the population's multiethnic structure. The Regional Assembly would have either two Houses or one House with an elective part in order to arrive at parity of all national communities. The right to veto decisions putting in danger interests of any national community could prevent majorization as a political method for the achievement of goals of the largest national community. The Regional government would include representatives of every national community. Local authorities in the areas with mixed population would stick to the same principles. We were against institutions, which would assume state distinctions: President of Kosovo, Constitution, Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, independent judiciary and police.

We supported establishment of the courts of national communities, which would solve the problems of inheritance and of other matters important to the

relevant community. Judges should primarily satisfy multiethnic criteria for their choice. Local police could also be established. It should both correspond to the structure of the local population and be integrated into the system of the Republic of Serbia.

Fundamental autonomy would reflect the need for inclusion of additional rights. Every national community would define its additional rights and cover the cost of their effectuation.

We did not have any opportunity to see and analyze all annexes of the proposed Agreement and especially the Military annex. The talks were finished without any signed document. The participants agreed to resume their talks in Paris.

The beginning of talks in Paris represented a shock to our delegation. The mediators announced that we have already accepted the Rambouillet proposal and that the only subject we would talk about in Paris is the Military Annex.

The NATO aggressors attacked our country and bombed it 78 days. The community of Gora was not spared from bombing. Series of bombs thrown over its small territory destroyed economic enterprises like the Joint Stock Company "Šar-Proizvodi" (Šar-Products), TV repeaters and all watchtowers along the border between Gora and the Republic of Albania. Goranies fought against the enemies in the units of the Yugoslav Army and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. One of remarkably massive responses to mobilization throughout 78 days of the war was reported in the community of Gora. Seven soldiers and civilians sacrificed their lives and several dozens were wounded in the fight for their homeland, defending the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. While Gora was bombed 3,500 inhabitants went away from it.

By conclusion of the Military-Technical Agreement and proclamation of the Resolution 1244 of the Security Council, a vacuum was created when our security forces departed from Kosovo. Terrorists of the so-called KLA (Kosovo Liberating Army) used that vacuum and together with the robber bands from Albania and the population from Opolje, already in motion, intruded into our territory.

Although Goranies observed the Resolution 1244 of the Security Council the KFOR soldiers of the German contingent did not try to protect them. Albanian extremists and terrorists of the so-called KLA, terrorizing the population in order to demonstrate their "power", established Albanian authorities, hanging out state symbols like flags, inscriptions etc. representing the Republic of Albania. Goranies were brutally driven out of their jobs and moved out of their flats. Every public service is presently out of working order, which can be dangerous to the inhabitants who want to remain and survive in that area. Goranies have been keeping on their identity for centuries by way of language. Their identity and language are now in danger because Albanian or some Bosnian (Bosniak) language is being introduced into schools. That is the greatest threat to survival of Goranies. Private property is not safe any longer.

The center of the community of Gora – Dragaš is in special jeopardy because Albanian extremists do not want to acknowledge Gora as a separate community from known reasons. Every day citizens are emigrating from Gora looking for shelters in Central Serbia or in foreign countries. Survival of their ethnic community is endangered. The members of KFOR and the civil mission do not carry out tasks anticipated by the Resolution 1244 threatening in that way the basic human rights of Goranians. Without schools with instruction in their mother tongue, without private means for every-day needs, without health protection, information resources etc. Gora is in danger of wide-ranging emigration, of losing its identity jealously guarded for centuries and of Albanization. International forces whose task is to protect all citizens in that area let Albanians maltreat Goranians before their own eyes.

We appeal to all institutions and individuals to prevent genocide of the whole community of Gora and to let Goranians choose their own way of survival and preservation of their patrimony.

We received recognition in Rambouillet for being an exceptional community and remarkable people. The subsequent events are threatening with extinction of our population that succeeded to overcome all principal historical changes and to preserve their identity. From time immemorial, Goranians had their state – Serbia for whose sovereignty and territorial integrity they have been and will be fighting forever.