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YUGOSLAV STATE INFLUENCE IN MEDIA: THE 1968 KOSOVO STUDENT UPRISING IN THE NEWSPAPER “RILINDJA”

Abstract. The purpose is to do the research on how the students demonstrations were portrayed in the contemporary press in Kosovo, focusing specifically on the daily newspaper “Rilindja”, which was

the most widely read Albanian-language newspaper in Kosovo at that time. A one-year period, from November 1968 to November 1969, has been selected as the research sample to study how "Rilindja", reported on these significant developments that happened in Kosovo during that time. **The research methodology** is based on the principles of historicism, scientificity, authorial objectivity, systematicity, as well as general scientific and special historical methods. **The novelty of this research paper** is that it is evident from these writings that the state exerted significant influence over the published articles, this can be seen in the labelling given to the organizers of these demonstrations. Even before the trial was held, the organizers were prejudiced as nationalists and accused of being influenced by external factors to orchestrate these demonstrations. Their actions were portrayed as attempts to undermine the unity and brotherhood within Yugoslavia. **Conclusion.** The analysis demonstrates how "Rilindja" served both as an informational outlet and as a tool of political influence, particularly in shaping public perception and maintaining communist control over youth and public discourse. Firstly, it is clear that "Rilindja's" initial coverage of the November 27, 1968 demonstrations relied heavily on official sources, specifically the Communiqué of the Provincial Executive Council of Kosovo. This reliance indicates a lack of independent journalistic investigation, and instead suggests that the newspaper functioned as an amplifier of state narratives. More importantly, our research highlights that "Rilindja", being the only Albanian-language daily newspaper in Kosovo at the time, adopted a distinctly biased stance. From November 1968 to May 1969, the newspaper acted as a mouthpiece for the communist leadership, publishing content aimed at discrediting the organizers and portraying the demonstrations as harmful, chauvinist, and even nationalist. The most telling aspect of "Rilindja's" coverage lies in its strategy to isolate the organizers while seeking to "save" the participants. The idea was to portray the students as misled by a small group of agitators, thus justifying both the punishment of the leaders and the ideological re-education of the majority. In this sense, "Rilindja" served as a medium of indirect communication between the communist establishment and the protesting students.

Key words: 1968 Demonstrations, Students, Rilindja, Kosovo, Yugoslavia.

ВПЛИВ ЮГОСЛАВСЬКОЇ ДЕРЖАВИ НА МЕДІА: СТУДЕНТСЬКЕ ПОВСТАННЯ В КОСОВІ 1968 РОКУ НА СТОРІНКАХ ГАЗЕТИ "РІЛІНДЬЯ"

Анотація. Метою цього наукового дослідження є вивчення того, як студентські демонстрації були висвітлені у тодішній пресі Косова, з особливим акцентом на щоденну албанськомовну газету "Ріліндья", яка на той час була найпопулярнішою в Косові. Для дослідження було обрано період в один рік – від листопада 1968 до листопада 1969 року – щоб проаналізувати, як "Ріліндья" висвітлювала важливі події, що тоді відбувалися в Косові. **Методологія дослідження** базується на принципах історизму, науковості, авторської об'єктивності, системності, а також загальнонаукових та спеціально-історичних методах. **Новизна дослідження** полягає у доведенні значного впливу держави на зміст статей у цій газеті. Це видно з того, як на її шпальтах характеризували організаторів демонстрацій. Ще до судового процесу їх упереджено називали націоналістами та звинувачували у впливі зовнішніх чинників з метою організації цих протестів. Їхні дії зображувалися як загроза єдності та братерству в межах Югославії. **Висновок.** Аналіз газетних матеріалів демонструє, що "Ріліндья" слугувала як інформаційним каналом, так і інструментом політичного впливу, зокрема у формуванні громадської думки та підтримці комуністичного контролю над молоддю і публічним дискурсом. По-перше, очевидно, що початкове висвітлення "Ріліндья" демонстрацій 27 листопада 1968 року значною мірою спиралося на офіційні джерела, зокрема на Комуніке Виконавчої ради Косова. Ця залежність свідчить про відсутність незалежного журналістського розслідування, а натомість припускає, що газета функціонувала як підсилювач державних нарративів. Що ще важливіше, наше дослідження підкреслює, що "Ріліндья", будучи у той період єдиною албанською щоденною газетою в Косово, займала чітко упереджену позицію. Від листопада 1968 року до травня 1969 року газета діяла як рупор комуністичного керівництва, публікуючи контент, спрямований на дискредитацію організаторів та трактування демонстрацій як шкідливих, шовіністичних і навіть націоналістичних. Найбільш показовим аспектом публікації "Ріліндья" є її стратегія ізоляції організаторів, і водночас демонстрація прагнення "врятувати" учасників. Ідея полягала в тому, щоб зобразити студентів як введених в оману невеликою групою агітаторів, виправдовуючи у такий спосіб як покарання лідерів, так і ідеологічне перевиховання більшіості. У цьому сенсі "Ріліндья" слугувала засобом непрямой комунікації між комуністичним істеблішментом та студентами-протестувальниками.

Ключові слова: демонстрації 1968 року, студенти, "Ріліндья", Косово, Югославія.

Problem Statement. During the 1968 students demonstrations in Kosovo, the newspaper Rilindja was the only daily publication published in the Albanian language and served as a crucial source of information for the public. The articles published in this newspaper reflect not only the progression of events but also the direct influence of state structures – particularly the Kosovo Provincial Committee – on the content and direction of media discourse. Our research in archival documents has confirmed ideological intervention in shaping these narratives, with the aim of aligning them with the official positions of the political leadership in Kosovo. However, the coverage of the press during this period remains insufficiently studied in the Albanian-language scholarship. Therefore, the objective of this research is to analyze how the 1968 demonstrations were portrayed in Rilindja and to analyze the role of state politics in guiding the media reporting.

Review of Recent Research and Publications. The 1968 demonstrations in Kosovo were not a significant surprise for the time. The 1968 year, was a year when protests occurred in various European countries, including major cities in Yugoslavia such as Zagreb, Belgrade, and Sarajevo. Researchers, both local and international, have extensively studied the 1968 demonstrations in Kosovo. The main theory regarding the reasons behind these protests primarily revolves around national and political factors.

The British historian, Professor Noel Malcolm in his book ‘Kosova: A Short History’ argues that the outbreak of these demonstrations was a result of several political concessions. These concessions occurred after the Brioni Plenum*, which, according to him, created momentum for the pursuit of a republic. After Brioni Plenum 1966, Kosovo had already gained various political rights, but not yet the status of a republic. *“Now Kosovo had become a legitimate federative entity, with the potential to exercise most or all of the competencies of a republic, going forward, the political ambition of the Albanians in Kosovo would focus on the next natural step: Kosovo as a Republic”* (Malcolm, 2011, pp. 409–410).

Another scholar, Atdhe Hetemi, emphasizes that the students took to the streets with the demand for a republic. According to him, this request was designed by the Albanian political elites of the time. However, when they failed to achieve this demand, the focus shifted to the students. *“The Albanian elites in Kosovo channeled this idea for the Republic of Kosovo... when it was rejected... the vision for the Republic of Kosovo passed to the students”* (Hetemi, 2020, pp. 182–183). This theory is also found in the book by a historian Skënder Rizaj, who highlights, among other things, that the organizers of these demonstrations were the Albanian political elites of that era in Kosovo. (Rizaj, 2005, p. 57).

We find the same opinion in the book “Narratives about Kosovo”*. Daut Demaku, a student at the time, when talking about these demonstrations, emphasizes: *“I am still annoyed today that the real organizers of those demonstrations, except for one (Authors: We can allude to Professor Mark Krasniqi, who has come out publicly and asked students to write their requests on paper and deliver them to local politicians in Kosovo), whom I know has been involved, have not appeared in public. And I’m glad they were wise enough not to appear in public because they have accomplished the task they set out to do. Their goal was to get the job done, not to beat their chests and say that I did it”* (Lama, 2022, pp. 180–181).

These statements support the theory that students were “used” as “puppets” by Albanian politicians in Kosovo to advance the plan for a republic. The students were the ones through whom the idea was to express the political demands of the Albanian people in Kosovo for the creation of the Republic of Kosovo.

The opinion that these demonstrations erupted due to political reasons is also supported by Shkodran Imeraj, a professor at the Institute of History “Ali Hadri” in Pristina. In his book

Kosova 1968 – 1990: Aspects of Political Life in Kosovo during the Years 1968 – 1990, he emphasizes that these demonstrations began because of the Albanian youth's demand for "*freedom, equality, and national emancipation*" (Imeraj, 2021, p. 55). To conclude this section, as an argument that the demonstrations began for political and national reasons, we also have the speech of one of the organizers of the 1968 demonstrations, Osman Dumoshi. In his speech in Pristina on November 27, 1968, when the demands of the students were listed, the first two points were requests for: *1. Full realization of national rights and 2. Our people should enjoy all the rights that other nations enjoy* (Novosella, 2008, pp. 162–163).

And if we analyze them at their core, we understand that these demands were of a national and political nature. The concessions made at the 1966 Brioni Plenum undoubtedly paved the way for Kosovar Albanians to seek more political rights, with the main goal being the creation of the Republic of Kosovo.

However, regarding the theory that the elite of Kosovo Albanian politicians were behind the student demonstrations of 1968 in Kosovo, we consider this theory to be unfounded. The communist Albanian politicians of Kosovo publicly condemned the organization of these demonstrations.

Ali Shukriu, one of the most prominent communists on the political scene in Kosovo, held a rally in the village of Bare in Shala e Bajgores, located in the Northeast part of Kosovo. Among other things he emphasized that: "*The organizers of these disturbing actions are provocateurs... they are enemies of socialism and a tool of hostile foreign propaganda against Yugoslavia.*" (H., M. & J., F., 1968, p. 5). The organizers of the demonstrations were also called enemies and provocateurs by Xhavit Nimani and Mahmut Bakalli (O., I., 1968, p. 6). On the other hand, the Chairman of the Provincial Committee of the Communist League of Kosovo and Metohija, Veli Deva, in his statement dated November 29, 1968, published in the newspaper "*Rilindja*", on November 30, 1968, added that the demonstrations were organized by hostile and chauvinistic forces and that an open and uncompromising war must be waged against them (Redaksia e gazetës Rilindja, 1968, p. 7). Among other things, Deva asked all Yugoslav peoples living in Kosovo to condemn these hostile demonstrations: "*All citizens of Kosovo and Metohija must condemn in the strictest terms such hostile actions. The Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, and Turks in labor organizations and in the Socialist League must uniquely paralyze their activity*" (Redaksia e gazetës Rilindja, 1968, p. 7). Fadil Hoxha, the speaker of the Provincial Assembly of Kosovo, also made a statement against the organizers of the demonstrations. Hoxha described the demonstrations as hostile and chauvinistic acts that brought damage to the people of Kosovo. He stated: "*Enemies... went hand in hand with organizing demonstrations in Pristina, Ferizaj, Gilan, and Podujevo... they are hostile and chauvinistic acts and, as such, brought harm to the people of the province*" (A., D., 1968, p. 6).

Therefore, based on these statements and the attitudes of the most important communist politicians of the Communist League of Kosovo, as well as the lack of any document evidencing their involvement in these demonstrations, we can conclude that the Albanian political elite of Kosovo was not behind these demonstrations, as was mentioned in some theories above.

Research Results. About the demonstrations of 1968 in the newspaper "*Rilindja*", which was published in Prishtina, there were various articles, which in one form or another would provide information on what was happening with those demonstrations and the organizers of these demonstrations. The first demonstrations of students and pupils of Kosovo broke

out in October 1968, but without having any great impact, while the great demonstration of Albanian students would break out in November 1968, specifically on November 27, 1968, in cities such as Prishtina, Peja, Ferizaj, Gjilan, Podujeva, (Rilindja, “Kumtesa e Këshillit Ekzekutiv Krahinor”, 1968, p. 3), where many young men and women would flock to the streets of these cities to demand political, economic, social and educational rights for the province of Kosovo.

The first article that would be published in the daily newspaper published in Kosovo in the Albanian language “*Rilindja*”, would be an article dated in November 28, 1968, when this newspaper would publish the statement of the Provincial Executive Council of Kosovo on the demonstrations that had happened in the cities of Kosovo during November 27, 1968 (Rilindja, “Kumtesa e Këshillit Ekzekutiv Krahinor”, 1968, p. 3). This would be the only material published in this newspaper in the festive issue of “*Rilindja*” in that period. The document published on November 28, 1968, was short and mainly provided information about the demonstrations that took place in the aforementioned cities of Kosovo. The newspaper “*Rilindja*” had previously announced that, on November 28, in connection with the “November celebrations”, it would publish a special festive edition. This date, among other things, also corresponded to Albania’s Independence Day, November 28, 1912. This announcement was strongly disapproved of by Xhevdet Hamza, a member of the Provincial Committee in Kosovo. At the meeting held on November 28, 1968, Hamza criticized the newspaper *Rilindja* “...for having announced that, during the November celebrations, it would be issued as a festive edition” (Çeku, 2009, pp. 36–37). Based on archival documents, this represents the first instance following these demonstrations in which politicians from Kosovo sought to intervene directly in the writings published in “*Rilindja*”.

According to the statement, the demonstrations began in the afternoon around 16:00 near the Faculty of Philosophy in Prishtina. It was observed that the number of demonstrators was higher in this city, whereas in other cities of Kosovo, as mentioned in the statement, the number of participants was smaller. If we analyze the information obtained from this source, we notice that the largest number of participants was in Prishtina, we consider this to be due to two main reasons: 1. Prishtina was the “centre” of Albanian students who mainly attended the Faculty of Philosophy; 2. Prishtina was the coordinating centre of these demonstrations, so the number of participants is not surprisingly greater, since the “hand” of the organizers and the impact of their activity within the city where they lived and acted can be seen.

In this statement, it is also notable how these demonstrations are characterized, although there is no detailed analysis provided regarding their underlying causes. Through this statement, we consider that the elite of Kosovo Albanian politicians wanted to “clear” themselves of the possible accusations of other politicians in Yugoslavia, on the organization of these demonstrations, therefore the reaction was immediate and these demonstrations were considered hostile. “...after the demonstrations, the working people and citizens of Kosovo and Metohija are judging and condemning this unfriendly activity...they demand that the strictest measures be taken against the organizers” (Rilindja, “Kumtesa e Këshillit Ekzekutiv Krahinor”, 1968, p. 3), let alone that they reacted quickly concerning these demonstrations, but indirectly speaking on behalf of all the citizens of Kosovo, the politicians from Kosovo demanded that the organizers receive the strictest possible punishments.

The publication of articles in the newspaper “*Rilindja*” during November, did not cease with the release of this statement alone. Throughout the November month, “*Rilindja*” published 12 articles addressing the topic of the 1968 demonstrations in Kosovo. In addition

to the 12 articles that would be published in November, this newspaper would also publish 4 other statements that would condemn the activities of the demonstrators in the various cities of Kosovo. What is observed in these articles and statements published in the "*Rilindja*" newspaper, throughout November 1968, are mainly the attitudes of the: Provincial Executive Council, the collective of the Faculty of Philosophy, the councils and collectives of enterprises in Kosovo such as "Kosova", "Put", "Emin Duraku", etc., the Municipal Committee of the League of Communists of Pristina, the Provincial Committee of the Youth League, the Presidency of the League of Students of Kosovo and Metohija, the Provincial Council of the League of Trade Unions, etc.

All parties condemned the demonstrations. Regarding the position taken on these events, a chief focus should be on the statement made by the president of the Provincial Council of the Students League, Mr. Qenan Shaipi. In his stance on the demonstrations, he emphasized, among other things, that the organization he leads is prepared "...to settle accounts with all reactionary forces" (*Rilindja*, "Lidhja e Studentëve është e gatshme t'i qëroj hesapet me të gjitha forcat reaksionare", 1968, p. 8). This statement proves that the organizers of these demonstrations had nothing to do with the Provincial Council of the Students League, and at the same time this statement is an important fact that in Kosovo there were students who were dissatisfied with the activities and attitudes of the Provincial Council of the Students League. So, based on this statement, and the demonstrative activities in the cities of Kosovo, we can conclude that in Kosovo in 1968 there were two groups of students, whose attitudes differed radically from each other.

The scholar Atdhe Hetemi in his book "Student Movements for the Republic of Kosovo 1968, 1981, 1997", states that some Albanian students since 1964 had formed their informal political group otherwise known as the "Student Committee"*, part of this group were also Osman Dumoshi, Selatin Novosella, Adil Pireva, etc. (Hetemi, 2020, pp. 157–158). They were the organizers of the 1968 demonstrations in Kosovo. The existence of these student groups serves as the strongest evidence that during the 1960s in Kosovo, we had divergent political ideologies and actions among Albanian students, regarding the political future of Kosovo. The defining feature of the November 1968 publications on the demonstrations in Kosovo is primarily the support extended by various committees, including those of unions, enterprises, and municipal assemblies, to the statement issued by the Executive Council of the Province of Kosovo regarding the organization and development of these demonstrations. Unfortunately, no article can be found that highlights the murder of the student Murat Mehmeti (Arkivi i Shoqatës së të Burgosurve Politik të Kosovës, 1968, Dokumenti nr. 7), who was killed during the gunfire that erupted at these demonstrations. In addition to Murat Mehmeti, 27 other demonstrators were also injured (Archive of the Association of Political Prisoners of Kosovo, 1968, Document no. 8). The only article that provides brief statistics on those injured in these demonstrations but does not give much detail on how the execution of Murat Mehmeti came about is the article of 30 November entitled 'What Happened in Prishtina' (*Rilindja*, 'Çka ndodhi në Prishtinë', 1968, p. 7).

While December would be completely different. The newspaper "*Rilindja*" would continue to publish articles about these demonstrations. What distinguished December from November 1968 and the first 4 months of 1969 is the fact that in December 1968 in the newspaper "*Rilindja*" we can find 57 articles (or 71.3% of the articles in total) that were published, which would deal with the realization of these demonstrations in several directions.

Unlike November, December 1968 saw a shift in focus towards statements and calls for punishing the organizers of the demonstrations. For instance, on December 3, the Municipal

Committee of the League of Communists of Gjakova demanded the harshest possible measures for the organizers (M., K., 1968, p. 5). Similarly, on December 4, the Communists of the Chair of Albanian Studies in Pristina convened a meeting regarding the demonstrations, and their stance, published on December 5, 1968, called for the punishment of the organizers. (Pireva, 1968, p. 6) The Executive Council of the Municipal Conference of Ferizaj also joined in, demanding “...effective measures against the main organizers” (Rifati, 1968, p. 7). Thus, there were consistent demands from unions and various committees for appropriate action against the organizers. We consider that such statements came for the reason that no one wanted to be implicated as a co-organizer or supporter of these demonstrations, otherwise, his position in the then communist Kosovo would not have been more favourable, which is why we have so much support for the Executive Committee of the Province and the positions that this committee took about the demonstrations.

The articles of December 1968 are notably characterized by the statements of Albanian and Kosovo Serb politicians and their respective positions about the demonstrations. Throughout this month, the “*Rilindja*” newspaper published 18 statements or speeches from politicians in Kosovo. For instance, in the issues of December 4, 1968, were published thoughts of Iljaz Kurtesh, Salih Nushi, Hajredin Hoxha, Hashim Mustafa, Mustafa Plakiqi, Jovo Shotra, and Sherafedin Sylejmani, (*Rilindja*, “Diskutime në mbledhjen e Kryesisë së konferencës krahinore të LSPP”, 1968, p. 6), all members of the Presidency of the LSSP Provincial Conference about these protests. They unanimously condemned the activities of the organizers of the 1968 demonstrations in Kosovo.

Also, on December 5, 1968, the Central Committee of the Communist League in Kosovo would meet once again to «condemn» the organization of these demonstrations. From this meeting, in the issue of December 7, 1968, in the “*Rilindja*” newspaper, were published the speeches and thoughts of Veli Deva, Orhan Nevzat, Zoran Matkovic, Llatnika Perovic, Ali Shukriu, Mirko Ganadanovic, Simeon Zatezajlo, Slavko Veselinov, Pedrog Ajtiq, Marko Nikezqit, and Mirko Popovic about these demonstrations (*Rilindja*, “Lidhja Komuniste ka gëzue e gëzon përkrahjen e plotë të mbarë popullit”, 1968, pp. 5–10).

Both Albanian and Serbian politicians aimed to downplay the significance of the demonstrations and portray the organizers as people without any support from the population in Kosovo. Additionally, there was a tendency to emphasize as much as possible that the demonstrations had not succeeded in disrupting the political system in Kosovo. This sentiment is exemplified in Ali Shukri’s speech, where he emphasized that while the demonstrations in Kosovo were indeed a setback, but they were never a defeat for them (*Rilindja*, “Nga mbledhja e dytë e KQ të LKS”, 1968, p. 7).

In these speeches, we see a tendency to overcome the situation without making much noise, and without paying much attention to the demonstrations and demonstrators, we consider that the idea was that these demonstrations should not remain as actualities, because we think that such a thing would have a negative impact for the political system in Yugoslavia as it could encourage popular measures against the government.

Also, based on the fact that there were student demonstrations all over the Balkans during 1968, local politicians were interested in overcoming this situation without publicly giving them the importance that these demonstrations had, all this so that the measure is easier to manage.

The communists of the “*Rilindja*” newspaper also opposed the demonstrators and demonstrations. At their meeting held on December 11, 1968, they condemned the Albanian chauvinism and nationalism shown in the demonstrations of 1968. The communists of the

newspaper "*Rilindja*", described these demonstrations as being in direct opposition to the interests of the Albanians in Yugoslavia (*Rilindja*, "Nacionalizmi dhe shovinizmi damtojnë ma së shumti kombin ku paraqitën", 1968, pp. 1–5). The publication of this article in the newspaper "*Rilindja*" came in the wake of criticism by Fadil Hoxha, one of the most influential politicians in Kosovo after World War II, directed toward the communists of "*Rilindja*". At the meeting of the Provincial Committee of Kosovo and Metohija held on December 9, 1968, Hoxha, in his speech, sharply criticized the journalists of "*Rilindja*", stressing that they had done nothing to counter the propaganda of the Albanian newspapers published in Albania. In his address, Hoxha proposed that all individuals who had failed to meet the demands of their positions should be replaced (Ceku, 2009, pp. 151–154). This speech appears to have had its intended effect, as only three days later "*Rilindja*" published an article entitled "Nationalism and Chauvinism Harm Most the Nation in Which They Appear," which attacked the demonstrations and their organizers as Albanian nationalists and chauvinists whose actions had, above all, harmed the Albanian population of Kosovo.

A notable aspect of the articles published in this newspaper is the tendency of the communists from Kosovo to present the students who participated in the 1968 protests as individuals deceived by various illegal Albanian political groups. As such, they believed these students should be treated and guided back to the right path, which is Yugoslav communism.

For this reason, in December 1968, "*Rilindja*", published two important articles addressing this issue. The first article, published on December 13, 1968, titled "*Even the Demonstrators are Returning to the Positions of the LR*", discusses about the high school students of Prishtina that were part of these protests. It reveals that these students after the participating in the protests realized that they were deceived and now they are supporting Provincial Committees Communique against these demonstrations. "...the young people who participated in the demonstrations regretted their act, because they were deceived..." (J., B., 1968, p. 6). The second article on this matter was published on December 22, 1968, revealing the positions of the Communists of the Faculty of Philosophy in Pristina. They believed that necessary measures should be taken against the organizers, while the participants who were "probably deceived" should be educated to improve their ideological and political understanding. (I., N., 1968)

Here we see a tendency among the communists from Kosovo, specifically within two groups: The League of Communist Youth and the Communists of the Faculty of Philosophy, which we think came out with these two statements not by chance. Why do we say these statements did not appear by chance? It is because we consider the following: 1. The League of Communist Youth did not have the luxury of demanding strict measures to against the participants in the demonstrations. Their idea was to bring these participants closer to the Party, ultimately amnestying their participation and presenting it as "deception" by the organizers. In this way, the young people, afraid of the strictest possible punishments, would give up their «hostile» activity, and at the same time they would add to the ranks of the communist youth in Kosovo, of course always being closely watched; 2. The Faculty of Philosophy, which had the most Albanian students, likely viewed any harsh measures against the majority of students as dangerous. They agreed to target the organizers, but not the participants, understanding that the large number of involved students could lead to even greater riots if struck directly. Thus, we believe that their interest was in "buying" peace with the students who participated in the demonstrations. By portraying them as deceived before the public opinion, they aimed to amnesty their protest actions during November 27, 1968.

Thus, it was natural for these two groups to issue these statements, because directly or indirectly, the Communists of the Faculty of Philosophy and the League of Communist Youth were responsible for the ideological and political emancipation of students and pupils in Kosovo. The faculty communists were mainly responsible for staff and students, while the LCY*, was responsible for youth.

Among other things, we consider that there is another reason for the call to punish the organizers and “amnesty” the participants. We think this lies in a wise strategic action: the punishment of the organizers would be useful for the communists, but more useful for them was to leave the organizers without support and to eliminate the potential legacy left by the organizers of the demonstrations. Therefore, the attempt to “protect” the participants can be seen as a “visionary” strategy for the goals of the communist groups in Kosovo. The “disappearance of the hostile legacy” (as they saw it) would leave the way open for the ideological emancipation of the Albanian youth of Kosovo. However, this strategy ultimately failed, as evidenced by subsequent demonstrations against Yugoslavia in Kosovo during 1981, 1982, 1989, and 1997, which constitute special topics for further discussion.

The situation regarding the coverage of these demonstrations in the “Rilindja” newspaper begins to change in 1969. We believe that the importance of covering these demonstrations in the newspaper begins to decline. This is evidenced by the fact that in 1969, there are only 11 recorded articles that directly address the 1968 demonstrations in Kosovo. The first article about these demonstrations in 1969 was published on January 4. This article informed public that the trial of the organizers of demonstrations would begin very soon. The article titled: “*Demonstrators soon before the Court*”, announced that until January 4, the court had fully convicted 55 demonstrators who had participated in the November 27, 1968 demonstrations. (Rilindja, “*Demonstruesit së shpejti para Gjyqjit*”, 1969, p. 4). On January 5, 1969, in “*Rilindja*”, published another article exposing the positions of the Communists of the Military Zone of Skopje, they also considered these demonstrations as chauvinistic demonstrations (Rilindja, “*Dënuen demonstratat në Kosovë e Tetovë*”, 1969, p. 5). January 1969 would end only with these two articles which provided information directly about the fate of the organizers of these demonstrations in Prishtina.

In the months of February and March 1969, a total of four articles were published, containing positions and condemnations by Yugoslav politicians regarding the organization of these demonstrations. One important article stands out: The March 1, 1969 article titled “*A Lawsuit was Filed against the Organizers of the Demonstrations in Pristina*”. Although not very long, this article provides information on the indictments brought against the students who were the organizers of the demonstrations on November 27, 1968 in Pristina. According to this article, the lawsuit was filed against: Osman Dumoshi, Hasan Dermak, Selatin Novosella, Afrim Loxha, Skender Mucollit, Xheladin Rekaliu, Skender Kastrati, Adil Pireva and Iljaz Pireva, who were accused of organizing hostile demonstrations in Prishtina on November 27, 1968 (Rilindja, “*U ngrreh padia kundër organizatorëve të demonstratave në Prishtinë*”, 1969, p. 5). It should be emphasized that the students mentioned in this article were the organizational heads of these demonstrations. Their severe punishment would be a guarantee for the Yugoslav state that there would be no more leaders to lead the students. Therefore, it was important for the state to punish the leaders as harshly as possible (and for this the lawsuit should be prepared as soon as possible), so that the mass of students would remain leaderless. Meanwhile, the participants should be amnestied to buy peace with the Albanian students, and these two actions would help to normalize the political situation in Kosovo.

The information about the trial of the organizers continued throughout April 1969. A total of five articles discuss about the trial of the organizers of these demonstrations. The first article was published on April 3, 1969, titled: *"The Trial of the Organizers of the Demonstrations Began"* (Rilindja R. e., 1969, p. 6). This article can be seen as a continuation of the March 1, 1969, article, as it provides information on the trial of the aforementioned students.

If we carefully analyze the article, we notice that the average age of the organizational heads of these demonstrations was 23 years. The youngest was Skënder Muçolli 20 years old, while the oldest was Iljaz Pireva at 25 years old. The article provides information that the prosecutor of the case was Sahit Meraku, while the chairman of the jury was Nazmi Juniku, while the accused students were defended by Filo Filota and Jovan Vuçkevic from Belgrade, and Bllazha Stankovic and Mehmet Dushku, from Pristina (Rilindja R. e., 1969, p. 6).

The trial of the accused students was covered by "Rilindja", through another article dated April 4, 1969. This article provided information on how the organizers admitted their guilt and disclosed details about how they organized these demonstrations (N., L., 1969, p. 6). It should be noted that "Rilindja", in the article *"The Verdict is Announced on Monday"*, provided information that the verdict for the accused students will be announced on April 7, 1969 (Rilindja R. e., "Të hënen shpallet aktgjykimi", 1969, p. 4).

We consider that the most important article regarding these demonstrations, was published on April 8, 1969, titled: *"The Organizers of the Demonstrations were Sentenced"*. This article provides crucial information on the punishments received by the organizers of the protests. According to this article, the organizers of the demonstrations were sentenced as follows: 5 years of imprisonment were given to: Osman Dumoshi, Hasan Dërmaku, Selatin Novosella and Adil Pireva, 4 years of imprisonment were given to Skënder Kastrati and Xheladin Rekalju, 3 years of imprisonment were given to Iljaz Pireva, Skënder Muçolli and Afrim Loxha. (Rilindja R. e., "U dënuan organizatorët e demonstratave", 1969, p. 6).

The organizers of these demonstrations were tried under the charge of conducting hostile propaganda, as defined by Article 118 of the Criminal Code and Article 509, Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Arkivi i Shoqatës së të Burgosurve Politik të Kosovës, 1968, Dokumenti nr. 13). While it should be noted that the trial for the organizers was held on 7 April 1969, on the same day when the decision was taken for their punishment (Arkivi i Shoqatës së të Burgosurve Politik të Kosovës, 1969, Dokumenti nr. 18).

The newspaper "Rilindja" did not publish only the punishments for the organizers of the demonstrations in the city of Prishtina but also followed the trials of the organizers in other cities of Kosovo. One such instance is the trial against the organizers of the demonstrations in the city of Podujevo. An article dated April 11, 1969, discusses the punishments received by the organizers of the demonstrations in Podujevo. The article titled: *"Organizers of demonstrations in Podujevo 42 months in prison"*, provides information that the organizers of these demonstrations: Hamit Abdullahu, Sabit Sylja, Hakif Sheholli, were sentenced to a total of 42 months in prison. According to this article: Hamit Abdullahu, a security guard, was sentenced to 16 months in prison; Sabit Sylja, a student, was sentenced to 14 months in prison; Hakif Sheholli, a teacher, was sentenced to 12 months or 1 year in prison (Islami, 1969, p. 5).

The saga of the treatment of the of November 1968 in Kosovo, as covered in the newspaper "Rilindja", concludes with the article of April 11, 1969. We believe that there are two reasons that contributed to this early conclusion: 1. The end of the trials marked the end of the process, diminishing reader interest in further analysis once the organizers had been

punished; 2. We think that the newspaper's focus shifted to Macedonia, particularly to the city of Tetovo, where students demonstrations began on December 24, 1968. "*Rilindja*", closely monitored these developments in Tetovo, publishing about twenty-five articles that provides continuous updates on events unfolding in another region of Yugoslavia.

Conclusion. Based on our comprehensive and systematic research, we have reached several critical conclusions regarding the role of the *Rilindja* newspaper during the 1968 student demonstrations in Kosovo. Our findings not only reflect the historical context of the events, but also reveal the political motives and media strategy employed during that time. The analysis demonstrates how "*Rilindja*" served both as an informational outlet and as a tool of political influence, particularly in shaping public reception and maintaining communist control over youth and public discourse.

Firstly, it is clear that "*Rilindja*'s" initial coverage of the November 27, 1968 demonstrations relied heavily on official sources, specifically the Communique of the Provincial Executive Council of Kosovo. This reliance indicates a lack of independent journalistic investigation, and instead suggests that the newspaper functioned as an amplifier of state narratives. The emphasis on Pristina as the main center of the protests reflects both the demographic reality – being the hub of Albanian students – and the organizational leadership located there.

More importantly, our research highlights that "*Rilindja*", being the only Albanian-language daily newspaper in Kosovo at the time, adopted a distinctly biased stance. From November 1968 to May 1969, the newspaper acted as a mouthpiece for the communist leadership, publishing content aimed at discrediting the organizers and portraying the demonstrations as harmful, chauvinist, and even nationalist. It is evident that the goal was to generate a negative public opinion and to suppress any narrative that could challenge the political status quo.

A deeper examination of the content reveals political polarization among students, divided between the state-influenced Provincial Council of the Students' League and the more radical Student Committee that led the protests. This division is crucial to understanding the broader political climate and the pressures facing youth activism at the time.

The most telling aspect of "*Rilindja*'s" coverage lies in its strategy to isolate the organizers while seeking to "save" the participants. The idea was to portray the students as misled by a small group of agitators, thus justifying both the punishment of the leaders and the ideological re-education of the majority. In this sense, "*Rilindja*" served as a medium of indirect communication between the communist establishment and the protesting students. The articles published in December 1968 exemplify this: the attempt to bring demonstrators "back to the positions of the League of Communists" was a calculated move to neutralize dissent while maintaining the appearance of ideological authority.

Moreover, the statements issued by the League of Communist Youth and the Communist Cell of the Faculty of Philosophy were not coincidental. In our view, these were part of a deliberate and strategic maneuver. These two groups, responsible for the ideological oversight of students, recognized the risk of alienating the youth. Instead of mass punishment, their strategy was to "buy peace" by offering amnesty to the participants, while isolating and discrediting the organizers. This approach allowed the regime to suppress the legacy of the demonstrations without provoking further unrest.

Finally, the closure of "*Rilindja*'s" coverage in April 1969, shortly after the trials concluded, suggests a conscious effort to shift focus and minimize the long-term political relevance of the demonstrations. The newspaper then redirected its focus to similar events

in Macedonia, particularly Tetovo, indicating a regional pattern of unrest that the authorities sought to manage discreetly.

In conclusion, "Rilindja" played a crucial role in shaping the political narrative of the 1968 demonstrations. Articles published in "Rilindja" were, not infrequently, "crafted" during meetings of the Provincial Committee of Kosovo and Metohija. As evidenced in the case of the criticisms voiced by Xhevdet Hamza, followed by the "threats" from Fadil Hoxha – who stressed that those failing to perform their duties properly should be replaced – such interventions played a crucial role in shaping the narrative on the demonstrations within the newspaper's own articles. This constitutes significant evidence of the extent to which the state influenced the writing of articles opposing the demonstrations and their participants. Through careful messaging and strategic alignment with state interests, it contributed to the suppression of student activism while preserving the image of ideological control. This case illustrates how media under authoritarian influence can serve to neutralize dissent not only through direct condemnation but also through calculated psychological and ideological manipulation.

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