

Belated Nation

Yugoslav Communists and the “Muslim Question,” 1919-1971

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of:

Bachelor of Arts with Honors

March 29, 2010

Advised by Professor John Fine

In memory of

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Acknowledgments

I owe thanks to a number of people who, in one way or another, helped me over the course of this project. First and foremost, to my advisor Professor John Fine, whose interest and experience made this such a valuable learning experience. Also Professor Micah Auerback, who helped prepare me for the writing process as a junior, as well as to Professor Ian Moyer, who graciously dealt with any number of missed chapter deadlines.

I would also like to thank the three scholars I had the chance to meet with during my visits to Bosnia-Herzegovina – Saćir Filandra, Husnija Kamberović and Mustafa Imamović – who all took time out of their busy schedules to talk with an American undergraduate only barely in his 20s. I am particularly indebted to Hilmo Neimarlija, who went out of his way to help me arrange these meetings and have anything I need for my research during my stays in Sarajevo.

Lastly, I would like to thank all my friends and family, who supported me throughout this entire process. I hope that in the next few months I will be able to spend far more time with them than I have in the past five.

Glossary of Abbreviations

AVNOJ	Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia
CKSKBiH	Central Committee of the League of Communists of Bosnia- Herzegovina
CKSKJ	Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia
CKSKS	Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia
IZ	Islamic Community
JMO	Yugoslav Muslim Organization
JMNO	Yugoslav Muslim People's Party
KPJ	Communist Party of Yugoslavia
NDH	Independent State of Croatia
SKBiH	League of Communists of Yugoslavia
SKJ	League of Communists of Yugoslavia
UDBA	State Security Administration
ZAVNOBiH	Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Bosnia- Herzegovina
ZAVNOH	Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia

Introduction

Josip Broz, better known as Tito, the long-time leader of Yugoslavia, once famously described his country as having two scripts, three languages, four religions, five nationalities, six republics and seven neighbors.¹ It was an amusing reference to Yugoslavia's institutional complexity and cultural diversity, but by the second half of the 1960s, not even halfway through the lifespan of the country's socialist incarnation, it proved obsolete. In 1968, in the Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the local Communist leadership recognized Bosnian Muslims as Yugoslavia's sixth nation. In a matter of six years, the Party carried this recognition over to the federal level, listing Muslims as a nationality in the 1971 Yugoslav census and including them as a constituent nation in the 1974 federal constitution.

To an outside observer, this conflation of religious and nationalist terminology may seem odd. After all, on a global scale, the word "Muslim" typically refers to one of an estimated one-billion plus adherents to the religion of Islam. How is it possible that in Yugoslavia this term also acquired a national connotation, so that one could identify as nationally Muslim and religiously a Jehovah's Witness?² As a matter of fact, even among Yugoslavs, the issue was the subject of protracted political quarreling and intellectual debate. Who were the Bosnian Muslims? Were they a religious community or a nation? And if they were a nation, how and under what name were they to be recognized by the

¹ Mihailo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama* (Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p. 15.

² Ivo Banac, "From Religious Community to Statehood," in *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. Mark Pinson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 146.

Yugoslav state? These polemics were collectively termed “the Muslim Question,” and according to one scholar of socialist Yugoslavia, by the 1960 they formed one of “the chief axes of nationalist disequilibrium in the country.”³

For a number of reasons then, this “Muslim Question” represents a significant episode in the history of the modern West Balkans. To begin with, Bosnian Muslims, now officially termed “Bosniaks,” form the largest ethnic group in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and therefore understanding the development of their national identity is crucial to understanding the history of their homeland. This is all the more true because their national identity was never merely a theoretical issue, but carried significant political implications as well. In particular, the “Muslim Question” was closely intertwined with the question of Bosnian autonomy, and so a study of the idea of a Muslim nation touches upon everything from the Alexandrine dictatorship in the 1930s to the decentralization of Yugoslav federalism in the 1960s. The “Muslim Question” simultaneously has implications for a number of wider issues as well, ranging from the relationship between religion and nationalism to the position of Muslim peoples in Communist states.

The development of Bosniak national identity has also fascinated me for more personal reasons. As my name would suggest, I myself am of Bosnian Muslim heritage, born in Sarajevo and raised there until I was nearly six. Spending the rest of my childhood in the United States, I have often considered issues of personal, religious and national identity. For these reasons, I was particularly intrigued by a book I found as a teenager in my great-uncle’s home library in Chicago, Alija Isaković’s *O “nacionaliziranju” Muslimana* (On the Nationalization of Muslims). Isaković compiled

³ Sabrina Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 285.

over 70 articles dealing with the issue of Bosnian Muslim national identity from 1886 to 1987, and I was fascinated by the wealth of views, arguments and personalities involved. I was especially struck by the prolonged polemics about what Bosnian Muslims should declare themselves on the census, whether Muslim should be written with an upper-case or lower-case M and other such popular issues from the first two decades of Communist rule. Now older and further along in my academic career, I am able to better understand these issues and place them in their historical context. With this honors thesis, I hope to explain this history and its context to the general reader.

My thesis specifically focuses on Yugoslav Communist views and policies toward Bosnian Muslim identity, from the establishment of Yugoslavia in 1919 to the 1971 federal census. This project will therefore largely be an intellectual and political history, analyzing the views of relevant organizations and individuals through Party programs, newspaper articles, political speeches and propaganda brochures. At the same time, I will try to offer a synthesis of the existing secondary scholarship on the issue, which is largely in Bosnian and frequently either only mentions it briefly or has a narrower focus than the one I have set out here. Ultimately, I hope that my work can provide a sound and up-to-date overview of the subject to an English-language audience.

I have divided my thesis into three chapters, with each focusing on a distinct chronological period. Chapter 1, "Communists, Muslims and the National Question, - 1940," focuses on the situation in the first Yugoslavia, prior to World War II. Chapter 2, "Muslims and Partisans, 1941-45," deals with the Partisan resistance movement during World War II. Chapter 3, "The Muslim Question in Socialist Yugoslavia, 1946-71," looks at how the Bosnian Muslims' positions changed during the first two-and-a-half

decades of Communist rule. I have also decided to end this introduction with a brief overview of Bosnian geography and history for readers who are perhaps not familiar with this part of the world.

Historical Background

Bosnia-Herzegovina is now a state in southeast Europe and home to three closely related ethnic groups: Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. All three groups speak a mutually intelligible Slavic language which they respectively identify as Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. Historically, the primary distinguishing feature between the three groups has been religion; Bosniaks are traditionally Muslim, Croats are traditionally Catholic and Serbs are traditionally Eastern Orthodox. The term “Bosnian” is geographic and refers to any inhabitant of Bosnia regardless of ethnicity. Herzegovina is simply a historical region consisting of roughly the southern eighth of Bosnia-Herzegovina; it has no political autonomy. Bosnia itself is also a historical region going back to the middle ages that generally refers to all of Bosnia-Herzegovina besides Herzegovina (i.e. Bosnia-Herzegovina can roughly be divided into Bosnia and Herzegovina), but it is sometimes also used as short-hand for the country as a whole (for instance, “Sarajevo is the capital of Bosnia”). The country is bordered by Croatia to the north and west, Serbia to the east and Montenegro to the southeast. Croatia and Serbia are, respectively, the nation-states of the Croat and Serb people. These four current states, along with Slovenia and Macedonia (as well as Kosovo), together formed Yugoslavia.

Bosnia probably first emerged as a political entity in the centuries that followed the Slavic migrations of the 6th and 7th centuries, as older tribal forms of government gave way to feudalism. By the 14th century, this entity had grown from a small principality to a kingdom that contained much of the present-day state and a sizeable portion of the Dalmatian coast. In 1463, however, the country was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. Bosnia soon became an Ottoman province, and over the next few centuries saw a sizable portion of its population gradually convert to Islam. This phenomenon is best explained by the historical absence of strong church institutions and the corresponding weakness of Christian practice among Bosnian peasants; given the social advantages of adopting the conqueror's faith, conversion was probably an acceptable and appealing choice for many.

Throughout the Ottoman period, Bosnian society was primarily divided along the religious lines of the general Ottoman *millet* system; each confessional community (i.e. Muslims, Orthodox and Jews) conducted its own religious affairs, with the ruling Muslim millet generally privileged over the various other tolerated "people of the book."⁴ Under these conditions, Bosnian Muslims – and particularly societal elites – strongly identified themselves as subjects of the Ottoman Empire and members of the larger Islamic community (a sense of identity typical across the contemporary Ottoman world). Simultaneously, however, they recognized themselves as distinct from ethnic Turks and other non-Slavic Muslims, typically identifying as "Bosnians" in an ethno-geographic sense. Underneath this, conceptions of identity were further complicated by socio-

⁴ Bosnia's Catholics did not receive millet status, for unlike the other three faiths in the empire-wide religious communities, the true head of the Catholic Church, the Pope, resided outside of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the Catholics of Bosnia were placed by a charter under the Bosnian Franciscan mission, which authorized the friars to be responsible for its Catholic flock in Bosnia.

economic factors that often cut across or overlapped with religious lines (e.g. city dwellers vs. villagers, Muslim landowners vs. serfs, etc.).

Despite a strong sense of regional identity, the rise of nationalism in Southeast Europe did not see the development of an autochthonous Bosnian nationalism. To begin with, apart from a few Franciscans priests, Bosnia's Christian society did not have the intellectual intermediaries to spearhead a nationalist movement as did so many other Balkan territories (e.g. Greek Phanariotes, Prečani Serbs, etc.). Furthermore, Bosnia's Muslim elite was generally part of the Ottoman elite (locally and also in the central administration) until a determined reformist sultan in Istanbul clashed with the Bosnian nobles who sought to preserve their traditional privileged status. By the mid 19th century, Serb and Croat nationalism had spread to Bosnia through such channels as merchants, religious functionaries and school teachers, often nationalistically inclined. Although the process took decades to complete – and despite attempts to suppress it by Ottoman and, later, Hapsburg authorities – Bosnia's Catholic and Orthodox population gradually adopted Croat and Serb national identity respectively. Muslims, however had no reason to share in these developments.

At a time when none of Bosnia's three ethno-religious groups formed a majority of the population, Croat and Serb nationalists saw an advantage to incorporating Bosnian Muslims into their respective national corpuses. Under Austro-Hungarian administration (1878-1918), authorities tried to counter these irredentist currents by promoting a "Bosnian" nationality that would encompass all three groups, but to little success; Croat and Serb national consciousness was already too widely developed among the two Christian groups, while Bosnian Muslim elites embraced the measures somewhat

halfheartedly, many still seeing themselves as a religious community. By the time the Austro-Hungarian state dropped the project, Bosnian Muslims continued to exercise their political energy through the inter-confessional framework that had dated from the Ottoman millet system – the focus remained on the specific concerns of the *Muslim* community, rather than on some attempt to foster a secular Bosnian nationality across religious lines. Serb and Croat nationalists continued to call for Bosnian Muslims to “orient” themselves toward one or the other, but such orientation was usually limited to various intellectuals and a few community leaders; Serb and Croat national identity had developed with firmly Christian connotations, and the Bosnian Muslim masses remained essentially a-national, not siding with either.

This lack of an established national identity did not also mean that the Bosnian Muslims saw themselves exclusively in broader Islamic terms. Over the latter half of the 19th century, Bosnian Muslims developed their own political organizations, established Islamic institutions focused specifically on Bosnia and published newspapers and other publications in their native language. In short, by the turn of the 20th century, Bosnian Muslims had started to see themselves not merely as Bosnians and not merely as Muslims, but effectively as members of a particular, Bosnian Muslim ethnic community with its own unique concerns and demands. The crucial difference between the Bosnian Muslims and their Serb and Croat neighbors was not that the former were stuck in some entirely pre-nationalist mode of religious identification; in fact, the Catholic and Orthodox religious identification of the millet system provided the foundation for Bosnian Croat and Serb national identity as well. Rather, the difference was that the

Bosnian Muslims never successfully articulated a separate national identity with a secular name within which the religious nature of their community could be submerged.

1. Communists, Muslims and the National Question, 1919-1940

In the study of Yugoslavia, historians often portray the Muslim Question as an issue of the 1960s – one of several nationalist fissures preoccupying the country's leaders during that chaotic decade. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia's (KPJ) views of Bosnian Muslim national identity, however, always developed within the context of its broader national policy; understanding the origins of the Muslim Question therefore requires looking at the early development of KPJ thought on this matter. This chapter attempts to do just that, paying specific attention to the ways in which Bosnian Muslims come up in KPJ politics and ideology, from the Party's foundation in 1919 to the eve of World War II. Before focusing on the Communists, however, it is worth reviewing the political position of Muslims in the newly created Yugoslav state.

1.1 Bosnian Muslims in interwar Yugoslavia

The end of Austria-Hungarian rule and establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was marked by, among other things, outbursts of peasant violence in the countryside. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, this unrest took on an ethno-religious character, with Serbs directing their ire at rural Muslims; Džemaludin Čaušević, the chief Bosnian Muslim religious authority at this time, claimed to the Parisian *Le Temps* that 270

villages had been pillaged and some 1,000 Muslims killed.¹ This violence provided an added impetus for Bosnian Muslims to politically organize, and they formed a number of small regional factions over the course of 1919.² That February, however, Muslim elites gathered in Sarajevo and formed a more inclusive Party, named the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (*Jugoslavenska muslimanska organizacija* or JMO), aiming to represent the interests of the entire Bosnian Muslim community.³ In the November, 1920 elections for a Yugoslav constitutional assembly, the JMO gained an impressive 24 seats, winning virtually the entire Bosnian Muslim vote.⁴

At the constitutional assembly the next summer, the JMO would play a decisive role. Namely, there was a great gap between the views of the Serb parties, which favored a strong, centralized state, and the Slovene and (particularly) Croat parties, which preferred some sort of confederation. As the Serb parties enjoyed a large majority of delegates, they decided not to try and reach a compromise with the confederalist parties; instead, they appealed to the JMO and a smaller Muslim party from Kosovo and Macedonia, offering concessions in exchange for their bloc of votes. The JMO accepted, voting for the centralist constitution in exchange for guarantees of religious freedom and a never-actually-granted autonomy, some concessions ahead of the inevitable land reform and a promise to maintain Bosnia-Herzegovina's territorial integrity.⁵ Its support proved crucial and the now infamous Constitution went into effect on St. Vitus' Day, June 28, 1921.

¹ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 162.

² *Ibid.*, p. 163.

³ Francine Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 97.

⁴ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 164.

⁵ Banac, *From Religious*, p. 134.

Less than a year later, Serb politicians reneged on the promise regarding Bosnian autonomy. On June 26, 1922, the government in Belgrade redrew administrative boundaries and split Bosnia-Herzegovina into six districts.⁶ Although they were based on Bosnia-Herzegovina's traditional internal boundaries and, taken together, still formed an outline of the old Habsburg province, Muslims were a minority in all six. This caused a split in the JMO's ranks between a pro-Serb faction gathered around Ibrahim Maglajlić and a so-called "leftist" faction led by the young Mehmed Spaho. Spaho's faction won out within the Party, prompting Maglajlić and his followers to splinter off and form a new party named the Yugoslav Muslim People's Party (*Jugoslavenska muslimanska narodna organizacija*, or JMNO). Spaho's JMO trounced the JMNO in the following 1923 elections, winning 112,228 votes to the JMNO's 6,074.⁷ In the following years, under Spaho's leadership, the JMO effectively formed part of the regionalist opposition, together with the major Croat and Slovene parties of the time.

Besides the preservation and restoration of Bosnia-Herzegovina's autonomy and historical boundaries, the most important issue on the JMO's agenda at this time was that of land reform. At the same time, this was also one of the top issues for the central government in Belgrade, which faced what was by European standards an incredibly unproductive and backward agricultural sector.⁸ This was particularly the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where semi-feudal institutions dating back to the Ottoman period persisted between the predominantly Serb serfs and the largely Muslim land-owners. Not surprisingly then, the Yugoslav government issued decrees abolishing serfdom and

⁶ Ibid., p. 135.

⁷ Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, p. 97.

⁸ Ibid.

promising a re-distribution of land as early as 1919.⁹ Although the JMO lobbied hard to mitigate potential negative consequences, when the government implemented the reform, compensation for the Muslim land-owners was not only far below the market value but came in the form of long-term government bonds.¹⁰ This was sufficient for the wealthiest land owners, but most of the Muslims affected by the land reform were hardly living in luxury to begin with, even with their advantages over the serfs. Consequently, the land reform reduced a number of prominent Bosnian Muslim families to poverty.¹¹

Another issue particularly affecting the Bosnian Muslim community at this time was the intensifying intellectual polemic over their national identity. Now that the South Slavs had a state that ostensibly represented their own collective national interests, the question arose over what to do with, as many contemporary articles termed, “our” Muslims.¹² Although the consensus held that Muslims should adopt a national identity (one particularly enthusiastic 1924 article in Sarajevo’s Serb nationalist press featured the title “Let’s Nationalize the Muslims!”), the specifics of this proposal often varied.¹³ Croat ideologues held that Bosnian Muslims were nationally Croats, Serb commentators that they were nationally Serb and yet others that the Croats, Serbs and Slovenes, along with the Muslims, were all simply “tribes” of a “Yugoslav” nation that included all Slavic-speakers in Yugoslavia.

⁹ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 164.

¹⁰ Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, p. 99.

¹¹ Saćir Filandra. *Bošnjačka politika u XX. Stoljeću* (Sarajevo: Sejtarija, 1998), p. 65.

¹² Milan Čurčin, “Naši Muslimani” [1923], in *O “Nacionaliziranju” Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), pp. 54-56; Čedomil Mitrović, “Naši Muslimani” [1926], in *O “Nacionaliziranju” Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), pp. 65-71.

¹³ Krsta Marić, “Nacionalizujmo muslimane!” [1924], in *O “Nacionaliziranju” Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), pp. 62-64.

For their part, Bosnian Muslim intellectuals were themselves divided on the matter. Some, such as one Edhem Bulbulović writing in 1933, considered it obvious that “the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina are, by their temperament and mentality, Serbs.”¹⁴ On the other hand, Salko Nazečić, writing in the same year, harshly criticized a Serbian academic who had claimed that Muslims were nationally undetermined. “Above all, there is no ‘national question’ among us” Nazečić maintained, arguing that “Our Muslim masses are perhaps not formally identified with any particular tribe, but we have a deep sense of national identity and love towards our country.”¹⁵ Nazečić’s mention of particular “tribes” was a reference to the idea of a pan-Yugoslav nation touched upon in the previous paragraph, and this was also the official position of the JMO. In its 1919 platform, the Party declared itself in favor of “Yugoslavism” and against the “political nationalization” of Muslims.¹⁶ This is not to say, however, that the leaders of the JMO did not nationalize individually; of the 24 JMO delegates at the constitutional assembly, fifteen officially declared themselves as Croats, two as Serbs and two, including Spaho, as Yugoslavs.¹⁷ Still, these were personal choices with little bearing on the stance of the JMO as a whole. A 1920 editorial in the Party journal, for instance, even encouraged Muslims to declare as belonging to the nation that would give them the greatest economic advantage.¹⁸

¹⁴ Edhem Bulbulović, “Nacionalizam i muslimani” [1933], in *O “Nacionaliziranju” Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), p. 89.

¹⁵ Salko Nazečić, “O nacionalizmu naših muslimana” [1933], in *O “Nacionaliziranju” Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), p. 77.

¹⁶ Wolfgang Höpken, “Yugoslavia’s Communists and the Bosnian Muslims,” in *Muslim Communities Reemerge*, ed. Edward Allworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 221.

¹⁷ Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, pp. 93-94. The source does not cite the nationality of the remaining delegates.

¹⁸ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 166.

As Yugoslavia sank deeper into political turmoil, paralyzed by disagreements over the centralized constitutional government, the JMO's unity and political platform suffered as well. On January 6, 1929, King Aleksander I effectively disbanded the parliament and established his personal dictatorship over the country. That October, he once again redrew Yugoslavia's internal boundaries, this time replacing the various districts with nine banates (*banovine*) that avoided traditional regional borders. Bosnia-Herzegovina's six districts were replaced by four banates that completely cut across the province's historical boundaries.¹⁹ Effectively then, these banates erased Bosnia-Herzegovina from the map. As could be expected, the JMO protested, calling for new administrative divisions based on the country's historical regions (i.e. including Bosnia), but their pleas fell on deaf ears. In fact, the new boundaries were implemented in large measure precisely to curb the JMO's influence. Milan Srškić, the Bosnian Serb who pushed through the new boundaries, had an antipathy for the JMO that bordered on anti-Muslim prejudice.²⁰ Srškić regarded the Bosnian Muslim party as fundamentally illegitimate, for it organized along religious lines in what was otherwise an ethnically-defined political arena.²¹ The resulting banates left Muslims and the JMO at a distinct political disadvantage, and they were consequently underrepresented at virtually all levels of government.²²

Aleksander's assassination on October 9, 1934 ultimately changed little in terms of the JMO's declining influence. The Prime Minister at the time, Milan Stojadinović, convinced the JMO to enter a ruling coalition with the major Serb parties, but not in

¹⁹ Banac, *From Religious*, p. 139.

²⁰ He once admitted that he was pained by the sight of minarets in Bosnia. *Ibid.*, p. 138

²¹ Marko Attila Hoare, *The History of Bosnia* (London: Saqi Books, 2007), pp. 195-6.

²² Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, p. 107.

return for any guarantees concerning Bosnia-Herzegovina's status. Consequently, when Stojadinović's successor, Dragiša Cvetković, began negotiating with the leading Croat politician Vladko Maček over dividing the banates and establishing a Croatian administrative unit, the JMO's views were never taken into account.²³ The resulting Cvetković-Maček agreement, settled on August 23, 1939, established a Croatian banate, including the older Croatian-majority banates as well as large swathes of what had been Bosnia-Herzegovina. In reaching this agreement, Cvetković and Maček had completely disregarded the Bosnian Muslims, and quite literally at that; in deciding whether a particular municipality would go to the Croats or the Serbs, they assumed that its Muslim population simply did not exist.²⁴ The JMO could only stand by and watch, its powerlessness only magnified by Spaho's death in the middle of the negotiations. Simultaneously, however, a vastly different political actor – the underground Communist movement – would take advantage of the situation, labeling the JMO traitors to the idea of Bosnian autonomy and getting to work on winning over the Party's Muslim base.

1.2 Yugoslav Communists and the Social Democrat Legacy

One of the great ironies in the history of Yugoslavia is that the Communists – the party that would eventually formulate the most successful and inclusive national program of all its peers – spent much of the interwar period with no clear answer to the national question. In fact, the factionalism that bedeviled the party over this issue would grow so

²³ Banac, *From Religious*, p. 139.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

intense that contemporary Italian Communist Party leader Palmiro Togliatti accused the Yugoslavs of being “...unable to take a united position on the national question, or on any other issue, because of their disputatious Balkan temperament.”²⁵ A fairer interpretation, however, would be that the Yugoslavs simply did not care – at least not initially. The KPJ’s Unification Congress in April, 1919 only mentioned that it favored “A single national state with the widest self-government in the regions, districts and communes,” and it passed no resolutions on the national question at either the First or Second Party Congress.²⁶ For Balkan leftists, the intricacies of leading a proletarian revolution seemed a more pressing concern, and the Party therefore focused most of its attention on militant trade-union activism.

Insofar as the KPJ did have a stance toward the national question, it was largely inherited from the prewar Social Democrats, who, like some of the bourgeoisie intellectuals mentioned above, believed that the various South Slavs formed a single nation.²⁷ Consequently, existing national names were considered interchangeable, or as monikers of a “tribal” identity. As the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia-Herzegovina asserted upon its foundation in 1908, for instance, “all citizens of Bosnia are part of a people that call themselves Serbs or Croats.”²⁸ With the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, proponents of this idea, Social Democrat or not, articulated it with the phrase “one nation with three names” (*troimeni narod*). The KPJ briefly alluded

²⁵ Paul Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 13.

²⁶ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 332-3.

²⁷ Shoup, *Communism*, p. 19.

²⁸ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 218.

to this view at its Vukovar Congress in June, 1920, where it expressed a determination to “remain on the bulwark of the idea of national oneness.”²⁹

Not surprisingly, this idea of national oneness found little room for the ethno-religious identity of the Bosnian Muslims. The Bosnian Social Democrats addressed this issue directly at their Second Party Congress in 1910, where they asserted that “Our Muslims are without a national consciousness... [as a] consequence of the economic conditions in which they live and from which their cultural backwardness originates.”³⁰ By approaching the subject from a Marxist perspective, the Social Democrats typically recognized Bosnian Muslim communal identity as a sign of backwardness stemming from unfavorable material circumstances. The logical conclusion of this approach was that by entering modernity and attaining the requisite level of economic development, the Bosnian Muslims would naturally orient themselves toward the correct form of national identity (in this case unitary Yugoslavism). The post-war Communists maintained this reasoning, which would reappear in numerous later attempts to find a Marxist solution to the Muslim question. Simply put, Yugoslav Communists did not consider the religiously-rooted identity of Bosnian Muslims as validating a separate national consciousness.

Interestingly enough, however, the Communists were not above occasionally implying – or even explicitly asserting – that the Bosnian Muslims saw themselves as a separate national group. Party Secretary Sima Marković, writing in 1923, complained of a “... national alienation, stemming from the time when it was possible to say ‘*cuius religio eius natio*,’ as is still the case with the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslim masses.

²⁹ Banac, *National Question*, p. 333.

³⁰ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 218.

They consider themselves Turks even though they do not know a word of Turkish or have any other relation to the Turks besides faith.”³¹ Similarly, the October 24, 1920 issue of the *Radničke novine* (Worker News), a Communist Party newspaper, argued that in Bosnia-Herzegovina “Religious division served as means of accomplishing [the creation of three peoples]. So it was that the Orthodox inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina formed as one nation, the Catholic inhabitants as a second nation and the Muslims as a third nation. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Orthodox are taken as Serbs, Catholics as Croats and Muslims as Turks.”³²

Although their primary purpose was to criticize the phenomenon, both Marković and *Radničke novine* suggest that the Bosnian Muslims saw themselves as a separate national group. They base this assessment, however, on the erroneous claim that Bosnian Muslims identified as ethnic Turks – a common misconception with a long history. Bosnian Muslims did indeed traditionally refer to themselves as Turks (*Turci*), but this was merely a synonym for the word Muslim and expressed only a religious identification; Bosnian Catholics comparably identified sometimes themselves as Latins (*Latini*), while ethnic Turks from Anatolia were referred to with a separate term, *Turkuše*.³³

In commenting on the quotation from Marković, German historian Wolfgang Höpken took it as evidence that the Communists did not see Bosnian Muslims as “...an emerging ‘confessional nation.’”³⁴ While this is of course true, it is somewhat beside the point. The crux of Marković’s argument was not that Bosnian Muslims were not a nation,

³¹ Kasim Suljević, *Nacionalnost Muslimana* (Rijeka: Otokar Keršovani, 1981), p. 180.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

³³ Banac, *National Question*, p. 41.

³⁴ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 220.

but that they incorrectly identified themselves with the wrong one. What Marković was implying was that, because of their religion, Bosnian Muslims nationally identified with the “alien” Turks rather than with their fellow South Slavs. That Party officials relied on such outdated stereotypes to formulate their views on Bosnian Muslim national identity is a testament to both their ignorance about the group in question and the relative unimportance they gave to the issue. So long as the Party took the ideal of a single Yugoslav nation as the cornerstone of its confused and embryonic nationality policy, Bosnian Muslim communal identity would necessarily be assessed in the context of this ultimate goal and through a combination of Marxist thought and traditional misunderstandings.

By the early 1920s, a number of factors prompted the KPJ to radically reconsider its views on the national question. Internally, the Yugoslav government temporarily prohibited all Communist activity following a bloody miners’ strike outside Tuzla in December, 1920; when a violent splinter group of KPJ activists responded by assassinating the interior minister Milorad Drašković in July, 1921, the new constituent assembly banned the Party indefinitely. The ban threw the KPJ into disarray just as it was coming under increasing external pressure from the Communist International. In contrast to the Yugoslavs, the Comintern held no particular attachment to the Yugoslav state as such, and pressured the Yugoslav Party to exploit growing nationalist rivalries as a means of achieving revolution.³⁵ For many Yugoslav Communists, however, the idea of embracing nationalist sentiment as part of the class struggle seemed to be a contradiction in terms. The KPJ subsequently split between supporters of Marković, who remained

³⁵ Shoup, *Communism*, p. 22.

firmly against any concessions to federalism or collaboration with nationalist groups, and a left faction that stood behind the Comintern.³⁶

The increasingly bitter debate between the two sides saw the KPJ's first attempts to face the national question head on, and a number of proposals for federalism (as well as arguments against it) appeared in the party press. Ultimately, however, the outcome was decided by the Comintern, which took an increasingly active role in KPJ affairs. By 1928, it called for the immediate dismemberment of Yugoslavia and installed its own Soviet-trained cadres in the KPJ leadership, handing them the task of initiating revolution through an alliance with the peasantry but without collaborating with bourgeoisie elements.³⁷ Between this thoroughly unrealistic goal and the advent of King Aleksander's dictatorship in 1929, the KPJ virtually ceased to function.

Although there is little reason to believe that the KPJ's attitudes toward the Bosnian Muslims changed during this time, its stance on Bosnia-Herzegovina has been subject to academic debate. In discussing this period, Höpken contends that the Communists "completely ignored the role of Bosnia as a historically grown and individualistic region of Yugoslavia," and notes that "even in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Bosnia surfaces only sporadically in the vague plans of dissolving Yugoslavia into newly-to-be-formed individual states."³⁸ In contrast to this, Marko Attila Hoare emphasizes that, although Bosnia-Herzegovina played a very marginal role in the

³⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

³⁸ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 220.

interwar period, the Party's position was "remarkably consistent – whenever mentioned, Bosnia-Herzegovina was always treated as a legitimate entity in its own right."³⁹

On the whole, Hoare's interpretation seems closer to the truth. Although the central KPJ leadership certainly did ignore Bosnia-Herzegovina during this period, this seems to have been largely due to the isolation and insignificance of its Bosnian branch, and not to any ideological repudiation of Bosnia's historical integrity. In fact, even the calls for national rights and federalism in the 1920s seem to have been based on Yugoslavia's historical provinces and regions, as opposed to any ethnically-defined boundaries that would have cut across them. Contrary to Höpken's assertion above, Hoare cites many such proposals for Yugoslav federalism that included Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁰ While individual Communists may have considered the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a viable option, this was never the official or even dominant position of the KPJ as a whole; the scant evidence brought up in favor of such allegations remains largely unconvincing.⁴¹

1.3 The Popular Front and the Muslim Question

Whatever the case, by the mid 1930s the KPJ was once again poised for a dramatic shift in its nationality policy. Adolf Hitler and the Nazis' rise to power in Germany in 1933 triggered an about-turn in Comintern policy, giving rise to the Popular

³⁹ Hoare, *Bosnia*, pp. 195-6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-4.

Front and its call for Communist parties to forge anti-fascist alliances with progressive bourgeoisie elements. In Yugoslavia, this was first manifested at the Fourth National Conference in 1934, where the KPJ dropped its earlier calls for immediate secession and self-determination of its various peoples.⁴² In their place, it developed a new stance on the nationality question, recognizing existing national divisions but appealing to an inclusive Yugoslav identity as well. Administratively, the KPJ now championed a federal but unified Yugoslavia, which consistently included Bosnia-Herzegovina as a separate province. To that end, the Party finally took an active role in rebuilding the moribund Bosnian Party structure, sending in Bosnian students from Belgrade University to oversee the task in 1936.⁴³

The KPJ's decision to commit itself to a unified Yugoslavia forced the Party to formulate its own internal solution to the national question, prompting a growing interest in the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the national identity of Bosnian Muslims. This is particularly illustrated by a brief set of notes from a lecture given in 1936 by Communist activists to inmates at the Sremska Mitrovica penitentiary – the so-called “Red University” – simply titled “The National Question in Bosnia.” The lecture apparently offered a Marxist analysis of the political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, outlining the alignment of the various nationalist bourgeoisies and the prospect for creating an autonomous Bosnia-Herzegovina (King Aleksander had already divided the country into banates some seven years earlier). Critically, the lecture notes assert that “the specific traditions of Muslims ensure and will continue to assure that the greatest part of the Bosnian Muslims remains a unique ethnic community, a people with particular interests

⁴² Shoup, *Communism*, p. 39.

⁴³ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 178.

and wishes.”⁴⁴ In this view, Muslims are still considered “nationally unoriented” – a consequence of their late and incomplete transition to capitalism – but they are also acknowledged as “some sort of people.” In the ongoing friction between the Muslim masses and its bourgeoisie leadership in the JMO, the lecturer saw an opportunity to win their support behind the Communist initiative for Bosnian autonomy. The notes reiterated all this in their conclusion, stating that “the greatest part of the Bosnian Muslims will continue to remain a separate ethnic group, which represents the foundation of the autonomously-inclined masses in Bosnia-Herzegovina.”⁴⁵

While few conclusions can be drawn about KPJ policy from an obscure lecture to Communist prisoners, the notes nonetheless demonstrate some emerging currents in Yugoslav Communist thought on the question of Bosnian Muslim national identity. No longer expected to align themselves with a new Yugoslav nation or mistakenly be identified as Turks, Bosnian Muslims could now increasingly be seen by at least some Communists as an ambiguous ethnic group. Two years after the Sremska Mitrovica paper, Edvard Kardelj, a leading KPJ functionary, would express similar views in his *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (Development of the Slovene National Question). “We cannot say, for example, that the Muslims in Yugoslavia are a nation,” he notes, “although they don’t consider themselves either Serbs or Croats and although they, in that sense, certainly compose a separate ethnic group.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Suljević, *Nacionalnost*, p. 192.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴⁶ Edvard Kardelj, *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja*. (Ljubljana: Naša Založba, 1939), p. 347.

At around this time, voices from the Bosnian Muslim student left, centered in Belgrade and Zagreb, increasingly became involved in the discussion. In terms of the Yugoslav capital, the two key figures were Avdo Humo and Osman Karabegović, KPJ members and students at Belgrade University. In December, 1937, huddled together “in an apartment without heating, trembling from the cold in our winter coats,” Humo and Karabegović wrote a petition entitled *Proglas studenata Bosne I Hercegovine o njenoj autonomiji* (Declaration of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s Students on her Autonomy).⁴⁷ The petition was signed by over 300 Bosnian students at the Belgrade and Zagreb universities, leading to two more petitions in March, 1938 and December of 1941. Together, the student petitions echoed the emerging party line, expressing support for a federal political structure in which Bosnia-Herzegovina would be an equal and multinational constituent province. In the words of the third petition, “Bosnia-Herzegovina is covered by Serb, Croat and Muslim inhabitants living intermingled, and it is not possible to draw a frontier between the Serbs and Croats without it being a grievous injustice to the Serbs, Croats or Muslims.”⁴⁸ In terms of the national question, the petitions were explicit in their view that Bosnia-Herzegovina was home to several peoples, including the Muslims who “always comprised a unified and particular whole.”⁴⁹

Beyond treating Bosnian Muslims as a *narod* (people) equal to Serbs and Croats, the petitions also praised the political tradition of fighting for Bosnian autonomy, even while remaining cool toward the JMO leadership that had carried it out.⁵⁰ This stood in

⁴⁷ Avdo Humo, *Moja generacija* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1984), pp. 434-36.

⁴⁸ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 182.

⁴⁹ Atif Purivatra, “Savez Komunista Jugoslavije prema nacionalnom pitanju Muslimana” [1968], in *Nacionalni i politički razvitak Muslimana* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1970), p. 53.

⁵⁰ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 180.

contrast to the sentiments expressed in the Sremska Mitrovica lecture, where Muslim support for Bosnian autonomy was essentially reduced to the JMO tricking the impoverished Muslim masses into supporting the class interests of their feudal notables. It did, however, fit into ongoing KPJ efforts to establish its influence among Bosnian Muslims disillusioned with the JMO's political calculations following the Cvetković-Maček agreement. Not surprisingly, Humo himself was an active participant in these efforts. In a lecture he gave to an audience of Tuzla Muslims in the fall of 1940, he “spoke of the history of the idea of Bosnian-Herzegovinian autonomy, [and] criticized the Yugoslav Muslim Organization for betraying this idea, as well as the other nationalist bourgeoisie parties, which threw this idea aside as unacceptable to them from a national and political standpoint.”⁵¹ In Tuzla, as in many other Bosnian towns at this time, the KPJ was hard at work trying to infiltrate and spread its message among various Muslim cultural organizations, ranging from reading rooms to sports clubs.⁵²

At around the same time, a circle of Bosnian Muslim leftists had gathered in Zagreb around the magazine *Putokaz* (Guide). Like their counterparts in Belgrade, the students and young academics behind this project were disillusioned with the politics of the JMO. Specifically, they were aghast at the material circumstances of the Bosnian Muslim masses, with whom they closely identified. As philosopher Safet Krupić stated on the front page of the opening issue, “All of us, more or less, were born in those houses built from dirt, mud and slime, where the cold and the wind feel the same as on the street.”⁵³ They blamed these conditions on the sharp break with the Ottoman feudal

⁵¹ Humo, *Moja generacija*, p. 502.

⁵² Hoare, *Bosnia*, pp. 180-81.

⁵³ Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika*, p. 143.

system, and on the corrupted and incapable leadership of the JMO, whom they identified with this feudal legacy. In their place, the members of *Putokaz* aspired to be the spokesmen of the Bosnian Muslim intelligentsia, serving as the intellectual voice of the people and helping them transcend their sorry post-feudal state. To that end, in its brief run of seven issues between 1937 and 1939, this “Paper for Social and Literary Matters” touched upon a diverse range of topics, making it unique among interwar Bosnian Muslim publications.

Among these topics was the issue of national identity. The writers at *Putokaz* may have spelled Muslims with a lower-case m, signifying a religious group as opposed to a capitalized nationality, but their conception of Bosnian Muslim identity transcended that of a mere religious community. Bosnian Muslims were instead identified as a “people” and an “ethnic community,” and the identification of some Muslim public figures as Serbs and Croats was roundly criticized.⁵⁴ As Skender Kulenović argued, “Among these intellectuals there were even those who changed these national orientations like shirts... out of clearly commercial and career-minded reasons.”⁵⁵ *Putokaz* instead advocated a Bosnian Muslim identity that, if not explicitly, was *de facto* national, comprising a consciously “unoriented” ethnic whole, separate from Serbs and Croats and entitled to its own intelligentsia. This is reflected in its unfinished “Putokaz Calendar,” a collection of proposed essays intended for the broader public, which planned to be “a sort of small, but solid, encyclopedia of all our relevant questions.”⁵⁶ Among them was “The Question of the Nationality of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina,” whose purpose was defined as

⁵⁴ Suljević, *Nacionalnost*, p. 198.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁵⁶ Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika*, p. 150.

“To determine whether there exists a sense of national feeling in any direction among the wider masses of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims, and to scientifically demonstrate that the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina form a separate Slavic, not merely religious but cultural, individual entity.”⁵⁷

Politically, the KPJ’s increasing concern with the Muslim question came to a head in November, 1940, at the Party’s Fifth National Conference in Zagreb. A mere four months earlier in July, at its Fifth Provincial Congress, the Bosnian branch of the KPJ had come out firmly in favor of Bosnian autonomy. Among other things, its declaration from the Congress stated that “the Muslim working masses have followed their leadership only because they feel that they, as an ethnic group, are under threat from the Serbian and Croatian bourgeoisie.”⁵⁸ At the subsequent National Conference, however, the Muslims’ emerging status as an ethnic group was challenged. Moše Pijade, a high-ranking KPJ official and Serbian Jew, was originally charged with outlining the Party’s stance on the national question, but his draft was rejected after objections from Tito and Central Committee members Kardelj and Milovan Đilas. The objections centered on Pijade’s description of the Macedonians and Montenegrins as “nations not yet fully formed,” but may have also included trepidations about his critical assessment of Bosnian Muslims.⁵⁹ According to Pijade, the Muslims had resisted nationalizing as Serbs or

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

⁵⁸ Purivatra, *Savez Komunista*, p. 55.

⁵⁹ Enver Redžić, *Jugoslavenski radnički pokret i nacionalno pitanje u Bosni i Hercegovini (1918-1941)* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1983), p. 413.

Croats due to their material backwardness, remaining “confessionally rather than nationally oriented.”⁶⁰

Although there are no copies of Đilas’ replacement speech, it seems that he also described Bosnian Muslim identity as confessional rather than national. To this came the now oft-cited response from Mustafa Pašić, a Muslim member of the Bosnian delegation, who challenged this stance as “[assisting] the Croatian or the Serbian bourgeoisie,” and declared that “The Muslims are not a formed nation, but they are an ethnic group.”⁶¹ Pašić, secretary of the KPJ’s regional committee for Herzegovina, probably based this view on an academic study on “Bosnian statehood and the Muslim question” commissioned earlier by the Party organization in Mostar.⁶² Considering the wording of the earlier declaration from the Fifth Provincial Conference and the fact that Mostar was at this time the center of KPJ activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the existence of such a document further implies that the provincial Party cadres were by and large comfortable with recognizing the Bosnian Muslims as an ethnic group. Serbian and Montenegrin delegates, however, including Pijade and Đilas, evidently were not; in response to Pašić’s statement, Đilas simply responded “The Bosnian Muslims are not an ethnic group.”⁶³ This tension between Bosnian and Serbo-Montenegrin Party members in regards to the Muslim question would frequently come up in subsequent Party debates on the issue. Tito’s statement that “Bosnia is one because of its [inhabitants’] centuries of coexistence, regardless of religion” upheld Bosnia-Herzegovina’s historical integrity, but did little to

⁶⁰ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 187.

⁶¹ Redžić, *Jugoslavenski*, p. 414.

⁶² Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 187-8.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

resolve the debate over Muslim national identity.⁶⁴ As a result, the documents of the Fifth National Conference did not include Bosnian Muslims when listing the ethnic groups of Yugoslavia.⁶⁵ The fact that Đilas did not even mention the incident in his memoirs highlights the relative lack of importance he assigned to the matter.⁶⁶

1.4 Conclusions

In the years leading up to World War II, therefore, the KPJ stance on the Muslim question changed as part of broader shifts in its views on the nationality question. In the early years of the new Yugoslav state, the KPJ inherited its position on the issue from the pre-war Social Democrats, who expected the Bosnian Muslims to be assimilated into a broader Yugoslav nation. By the time of the Popular Front, however, the KPJ was compelled to articulate its own nationality policy. Advocating a loose federalism with Bosnia-Herzegovina as an integral province, the Yugoslav Communists came to reconsider the status of Bosnian Muslims, with some now identifying them as an ambiguous ethnic group. At the same time, a number of Bosnian Muslim Party members and associated leftist intellectuals took up the task of outlining in Marxist terms the national status of their ethnic community. As the Fifth National Conference demonstrates, none of this amounted to a coherent or even prevailing Party line. It did,

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 188.

⁶⁵ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 223.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 243.

however, in all its ambiguity, mean that the KPJ entered the war advancing the most open-minded political option about the issue of Bosnian Muslim national identity.

2. Muslims and Partisans, 1941-45

In trumpeting its support for the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the KPJ had high hopes for the latent revolutionary potential of the “wider Bosnian Muslim masses.” Economically “pauperized” following the 1919-21 agrarian reform and disenchanted with their leadership in light of Cvetković-Maček, to many Communists the Bosnian Muslims appeared to be an ideal target constituency. When the revolution actually came following Nazi Germany’s invasion of Yugoslavia in April, 1941, however, the Bosnian Muslim response was varied – or, from a Communist perspective, underwhelming.¹ In the post-war period, this attached to the Bosnian Muslims a stigma of collaboration with the fascist occupiers, even while historical research into the subject remained taboo.² In order to better contextualize the KPJ’s wartime handling of the Muslim question, this section will begin by briefly outlining the Bosnian Muslim experience in World War II. It will then look at the issue of Muslim national identity as it comes up in the KPJ’s wartime propaganda, ideological writing and administrative decisions.

2.1 Bosnian Muslims and World War II

Following their takeover of the country, the Axis powers dismantled Yugoslavia by appropriating parts of its territory to themselves and leaving the rest in the hands of

¹ Shoup, *Communism*, p. 66.

² Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 243.

several fascist puppet regimes. The most significant of these was the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* or NDH), which the Axis entrusted to a small group of Croat fascists known as the *Ustaše*. Under the leadership of Ante Pavelić – a man later rumored to have kept a wastebasket of human eyeballs next to his work desk – the Ustaše were left in charge of a Croatia that conspicuously lacked Dalmatia (annexed by Italy) but included the entirety of the former Bosnia-Herzegovina.³ Their vision for this territory as a Croat nation state, however, was challenged by the fact that at least a quarter of inhabitants were Serbs.⁴ The Ustaša response to this predicament entailed two major components. First, Serbs were designated as ethnic undesirables who, in the infamous words of education minister Mile Budak, were to be 1/3 killed, 1/3 expelled and 1/3 converted to Catholicism (which amounted to a state-sponsored genocide of the NDH's Serb population).⁵ Second, the Ustaše adopted an altogether different stance toward the Bosnian Muslims, identifying them as Islamicized Croats and actively courting their support for the NDH. In the words of Pavelić, “There is no Muslim question, for that is a Croat question.”⁶

The Muslim response to the establishment of the NDH was varied. Pavelić's promises of equality and religious autonomy earned him the support of some prominent religious figures and politicians, but the decision over whether or not to actively work within the NDH state ultimately reflected existing divisions among the Muslim elite and individual choices. The case of Džafer Kulenović is particularly instructive here. The

³ Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 130.

⁴ Hrvoje Matković, *Povijest nezavisne države Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Naklada P.I.P. Pavičić, 1994), p. 82.

⁵ Judah, *The Serbs*, p. 126.

⁶ Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika*, p. 150.

former JMO leader entered Pavelić's government as vice president – a post that made him its highest ranking Muslim member – out of a desire to counter a Muslim rival, Hakija Hadžić, who had already gone over to the Ustaše and was using his newfound influence to meddle in the affairs of the Islamic Community (*Islamska zajednica* or IZ).⁷ Even taking such practical motivations into account, the decision to collaborate with the Ustaše was not exactly embraced by the pre-war Muslim elite; at the summer of 1941 meeting of ex-JMO members where Kulenović announced his decision, a majority of those present were against this move. Beyond Pavelić's rhetoric and the involvement of some prominent Muslim notables such as Kulenović, the NDH administration remained an essentially Catholic Croat enterprise, with Muslims vastly underrepresented at all levels of the military-political leadership.⁸

Despite the mixed response from the Muslim elite, the Bosnian Serb peasants who bore the brunt of the NDH's genocidal policies strongly identified Bosnian Muslims with the hated Ustaše. With very little historical scholarship on the issue, it is difficult to gauge to what extent this was due to active Muslim participation in Ustaša atrocities and to what extent it was driven by existing anti-Muslim prejudices and circulating stories among rural Serbs.⁹ Whatever the case, however, as the NDH's Serb population rose up in a spontaneous armed revolt against the Ustaše, one consequence was a wide-spread anti-Muslim pogrom. Some 75,000 Bosnian Muslims died in the war in Yugoslavia,

⁷ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 268.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁹ Many of those killed were Muslims in the Sandžak region of Serbia and Montenegro, which lay outside the NDH. See Mustafa Memić, *Bošnjaci-Muslimani Sandžaka i Crne Gore* (Sarajevo: Oko, 1996), pp. 317-22.

amounting to approximately 8.1% of their total population.¹⁰ Many of these died at the hands of Dragoljub “Draža” Mihailović’s Chetniks (*Četnici*), the Serb nationalist resistance movement whose plans for a renewed Serb monarchy had little room for Bosnian Muslims; the organization’s leading generals and intellectuals repeatedly called for “the cleansing of the land of all non-Serb elements.”¹¹

For Bosnian Muslims, the Chetnik massacres and the perceived inability of Ustaša authorities to stop them made the war a struggle for ethnic survival. Increasingly wary of the NDH, by the end of 1941 the Muslim elite of nearly all major Bosnian cities publicly criticized the Ustaše in a series of petitions and resolutions, condemning the genocide against Serbs and highlighting its repercussions for the Muslim population. The Sarajevo resolution from the latter half of 1941, signed by many of the city’s most prominent Muslim cultural organizations, was exemplary in demanding that “all religious intolerance be prevented, and those who in this regard have created any kind of disturbance be most strictly punished.”¹² Many of the figures behind these resolutions also organized humanitarian relief for refugees fleeing Chetnik-held territories and appealed for help to international Islamic governments and organizations from Cairo to Jakarta.¹³

Politically, Bosnian Muslims increasingly pushed for some form of Bosnian administrative and military autonomy, and to this end we see various initiatives for self-rule and the spontaneous organization of “Muslim militias” throughout the country.

¹⁰ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 192.

¹¹ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, pp. 178-9.

¹² Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 228.

¹³ Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika*, pp. 165-72.

Among the most ambitious of these initiatives was a letter sent by several Sarajevo notables to Adolf Hitler himself, in which the authors argued that Bosnian Muslims were actually descended from Goths and asked for a “County of Bosnia” with a Muslim majority to be separated from the NDH and placed under direct German administration.¹⁴ But while the Nazis eventually granted some concessions to such sentiment with the creation of a Bosnian Muslim SS division, under the war-time circumstances Muslim autonomist aspirations never coalesced into an organized political program. Even if disorganized, however, the presence of large bands of armed Muslims scattered across the country, suspicious of the NDH and hostile to the Chetniks, ensured that the Muslims became an important factor in Partisan strategy.

2.2 Bosnian Muslims in Partisan Propaganda

The Partisans had entered the war in June of 1941, in response to Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union and some two months after the capitulation of Yugoslavia.¹⁵ They quickly made up for any lost ground, however, establishing themselves as the second major antifascist resistance movement on NDH territory (Mihailović had by that time already founded his Chetniks). Like their nationalist counterparts, the Partisans’ early success was built on Serb grassroots resistance to the NDH genocide; as Serb peasants spontaneously rose up in response to Ustaša atrocities, they variously joined the two movements promising an organized military struggle against the fascist occupiers.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 174-5.

¹⁵ Shoup, *Communism*, p. 60.

Consequently, as with the Chetniks, in the early years of the war Serbs made up an overwhelming majority of Partisan ranks.¹⁶ This was intensely problematic to the Partisan leadership, however, due to the immense ideological differences between the two organizations. Whereas the Chetniks were Serb nationalists who sought to restore Yugoslavia as a monarchy under the Serb royal family and were by and large content to only include token non-Serbs throughout the war, the Communists sought to build an inclusive and genuinely multinational popular liberation struggle. The large numbers of Serb Partisans seemed to belie the KPJ's multiethnic ideology and discouraged Muslims and Croats from joining.

The problems posed to the Communists by the Serb nature of the uprising under their command are highlighted in the initially tense relations between the Partisan movement and Bosnian Muslims. In the early phase of the war, the same factors that led to Chetnik violence against Muslims in the countryside also appeared among the Communist resistance; so it was that the Partisan entry into Borač, a Muslim village in eastern Herzegovina, resulted in the wholesale destruction of the place and the killing of its inhabitants.¹⁷ Admittedly, in contrast to the Chetniks, Tito and the Partisan leadership were aghast at such incidents, and worked to minimize them. This was small comfort, however, to Bosnian Muslim peasants, who at this time appeared to have largely perceived the Partisans as a fundamentally Serb movement. When in December, 1941 the Partisans launched an attack on Sjenica in the Sandžak, local Muslims actually rose up and brought about a notable Partisan defeat.¹⁸ Even within the Partisans, Muslim

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

¹⁷ Banac, *From Religious*, p. 143.

¹⁸ Shoup, *Communism*, p. 66.

members sometimes had to deal with intense hostility from their comrades, often compelling them to hide their identities. Osman Karabegović, one of the authors of the previously discussed student petitions in Belgrade, would later recount a telling incident from early in 1942, when he and a friend stayed with an elderly Serb woman in a remote Bosnian village: “As she covered us with woolen coverings, the old woman spoke: ‘Rest, children, sleep peacefully. And may God save you from accursed Turks.’ She could not expect that my name was Osman and my Comrade’s Mujo.”¹⁹

In an attempt to bring this situation on the ground closer to the party line on “brotherhood and unity” (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*), the Partisans made a concentrated effort to recruit more non-Serbs into their ranks. Concretely, this included various forms of propaganda directed specifically at Bosnian Muslims, ranging from pamphlets distributed among peasants to pointed articles in the illegal Party press. In November, 1941, for example, the KPJ’s provincial committee for Bosnia-Herzegovina issued a proclamation to “All honorable and patriotic Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina.”²⁰ Such appeals to Muslims were often issued alongside appeals directed at Serbs and Croats. In making them, the Partisans acknowledged the Muslims as a separate community in their own right, parallel to the Serb and Croat nations and with their own distinct concerns and issues – a stance essentially carried over from the pre-war period. This made the Partisans unique among the warring parties, as they were the only side both inclusive of Muslims and considering them as a separate category; in contrast, the Ustaše only recognized

¹⁹ Banac, *From Religious*, p. 144.

²⁰ Atif Purivatra, “Stav Komunističke Partije Jugoslavije prema nacionalnom pitanju Muslimana u toku narodnooslobodilačkog rata” [1968], in *Nacionalni i politički razvitak Muslimana* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1970), p. 76.

Muslims as an element of the Croat nation, and their propaganda appeals pointedly insisted on this national designation, sometimes even avoiding explicit mention of Islam.

Inevitably, the Communist appeals also touched upon the issue of Muslim national identity, although the impression that they give in this regard is mixed. Logically, by listing Muslims alongside the Serb and Croat nations, many Partisan documents not only acknowledged the distinctiveness of Bosnian Muslim self-identity, but assigned it an implicitly national value as well. Tito's famous article on "The National Liberation Struggle and the National Question in Yugoslavia" in the December 16, 1942 issue of *Proleter* (the Proletarian), a war-time party newspaper, is exemplary. In outlining the Partisan resistance movement's significance for the various nationalities of Yugoslavia, Tito claimed that "the very word 'national liberation struggle' would be a mere phrase, and even if a lie, if it didn't, beside the wider Yugoslav meaning, also have a national meaning for every nation individually, i.e. if it did not beside the liberation of Yugoslavia simultaneously mean the liberation of Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Macedonians, Albanians, Muslims, etc."²¹

Occasionally, this implicit national recognition would even translate into more explicit terms. A pamphlet from May, 1943, crafted by 16 Muslim partisans and directed "to the Muslims of Eastern Bosnia," for instance, identified the authors as belonging to a Muslim nation that had been subject to "lies and exploitation that have gone too far."²² The authors then encouraged Muslims to join the Partisans, noting that they themselves had done so out of conviction that only by fighting could they "earn a worthy place in the

²¹ Josip "Tito" Broz, "NOB i nacionalno pitanje u Jugoslaviji" [1942], in *O "Nacionaliziranju" Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), pp. 130-131.

²² Purivatra, *Stav Komunističke*, p. 105.

future union of Yugoslav nations.” Similarly, a proclamation by the commander and political commissar of a Partisan detachment in northwest Bosnia appealed for Muslims to “join the struggle against the Krauts, Ustaše and Chetniks – and for the freedom of the Muslim nation.” Interestingly, in both of these cases the authors were Muslims. This suggests that some Muslims joining the Partisan ranks and encountering the movement’s rhetoric of national liberation consequently identified their own community as national. On the other hand, some non-Muslim sources use similar language; a general Communist appeal issued in January, 1942, called on Muslims to “Rise up in rebellion if you wish to secure your homes, your families and your national survival.”²³

A number of factors, however, cast doubts on the notion that the KPJ firmly considered Muslims a separate nationality. In his article, Höpken points out several of them, including the existence of numerous Partisan documents that do not mention Muslims as one of Yugoslavia’s peoples, as well as the fact that many documents that do so spell the word with a lower-case m.²⁴ Indeed, a good many of the documents cited by later Muslim historians such as Atif Purivatra as demonstrating war-time national recognition remain entirely consistent when read under the assumption that Muslims constituted merely a religious community or some other non-national category. The instructions issued on March 31, 1944 by the League of Yugoslav Communist Youth to its provincial branches, for example, called for “taking into account the specific development of Muslims” and forming an organization for Muslim antifascist youth, but

²³ Ibid., p. 73.

²⁴ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 227.

says nothing as to whether this “specific development” made Muslims a separate nation. In other instances, Muslims are listed alongside the plainly non-national Jews.²⁵

Partisan war-time propaganda touching on Muslim national identity is therefore both contradictory and ambiguous, to the point that it is difficult to assign the movement a firm stance one way or the other. The most likely reason for this is the extremely diverse authorship of the documents in question; the KPJ propaganda materials and related documents that Purivatra and others collected were the work of everyone from local apparatchiks to Tito, and in that sense it is not surprising that they espoused a wide array of views. In general, however, careful analysis of the sources suggests that the Partisan movement as a whole neither explicitly recognized Bosnian Muslims as a separate nationality nor dismissed them as merely a confessional community. While war-time circumstances and strategic considerations meant that they increasingly treated Muslims as a group equal to Serbs, Croats and other nationalities, the Communist stance on the nature of Bosnian Muslim communal identity remained divided along much the same lines it had been before the war. Two war-time articles on the Muslim question by two of the leading Partisan theoreticians better illuminate these ideological differences in the Party leadership.

2.3 Partisan Intellectuals and Muslim Nationhood

²⁵ Purivatra, *Stav Komunističke*, p. 75.

The first is an article written by Veselin Masleša, simply entitled “the Muslim Question.”²⁶ In contrast to some of the anonymous or relatively unknown authors of previously cited documents, Masleša was one of the KPJ’s major pre-war intellectual figures in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Widely respected for his Marxist writings on the political situation in the first Yugoslavia, one particularly enthusiastic post-war biography described him as “the author of two brilliant studies on Young Bosnia and Svetozar Marković, a tireless contributor to our prewar press, an extraordinary commentator and publicist, a renowned economist and talented historian and sociologist, a passionate investigator and analyzer of socio-political and economic events among us, a very educated Marxist of his time and a distinguished revolutionary.”²⁷ Masleša, born to a Serb family in Banja Luka in 1906, wrote this particular article in 1942 for the seventh issue of *Vojno-politički pregled* (the Military-Political Review), about a year before his death at the Battle of the Sutjeska in the summer of 1943.²⁸

Masleša’s “the Muslim Question” is a Marxist analysis of pre-war Bosnian Muslim politics and society, including a negative assessment of their possible identification as an ethnic group. He makes this clear from the outset, stating in only the second sentence that “in [this] analysis of the origin and development of the ‘Muslim question,’ we begin from the assumption that Muslims are not a separate ethnic group.”²⁹ He soon after elaborates that “therefore... the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina are not a nation.” Masleša justifies this by referring to Joseph Stalin’s “Marxism and the National

²⁶ Veselin Masleša, “Muslimansko pitanje” [1942], in *O “Nacionaliziranju” Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), pp. 122-129.

²⁷ Milorad Gajić, *Veselin Masleša* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1970), p. 88.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

²⁹ Masleša, *Muslim Question*, p. 123.

Question,” citing each of Stalin’s criteria for nationhood (e.g. a common language, territorial unity, etc.) and arguing one by one that Bosnian Muslims lacked all of them. From there he proceeds to the heart of his analysis, in which he identifies the JMO as a “failed little feudal group” which essentially tricked the wider Muslim masses into supporting them while pushing their own feudal class interests.³⁰ He finally concludes that Muslims too must join the national liberation struggle, but that for them it would mean that the masses had thrown away their feudal representatives and learned to think for themselves – the adjective *narodno*, typically translated as “national,” would here be better rendered as “popular.”³¹

In addressing the implications of this article, the previously mentioned post-war biography – written at a time when Muslims were already recognized as a separate nation by the Yugoslav state – tried valiantly to smooth out the obvious discrepancies between Masleša’s argument and contemporary socialist practice. “Understandably, writing this article under difficult wartime circumstances, having neither the possibility nor conditions to more studiously deal with this matter and present a more definitive, well-rounded and better documented picture... Masleša wrote in response to those daily, imperative tasks imposed by the revolution,” reasoned its author Milorad Gajić, adding that “Surely Masleša himself would today change some of his views, for they could not be borne out by reality.”³² But therein lies the point: Masleša’s text demonstrates that, for the KPJ during World War II, the “Muslim Question” was not so much the question of Bosnian Muslim national identity as it was the more immediate concern of how to

³⁰ Ibid., p. 125.

³¹ Ibid., p. 129.

³² Gajić, *Veselin Masleša*, p. 91.

involve the Bosnian Muslim masses in the Partisan resistance. As Masleša's himself writes, "An ethnological discussion about that today, when compared to the fundamental political problem of resolving 'the Muslim Question' and freeing the latent strength of the Muslim masses, is superfluous and irrelevant. Truly, there are questions which in certain historical situations belong in the closet."³³ Masleša's article, therefore, focuses on the Muslims' socio-political legacy from the previous several decades (i.e. the role of the JMO, the agrarian reform, the actions of the Serb bourgeoisie, etc.), and the implications this held for the Partisan war effort.

More narrowly, however, Masleša's "The Muslim Question" represents the current of Party thought that held deep ideological reservations about the idea of a Muslim nationality. Granted, it is difficult to ascertain just how widely held these views were in the upper echelons of the KPJ, but the entrenched opposition of key figures such as Pijade and Đilas as well as subsequent developments in Party policy show that they certainly were significant. Given his stature within the Communist resistance and the orthodox Marxist nature of his argument, Masleša's article can be taken as exemplary of this line of thinking. As such, it highlights two significant ideological roadblocks to contemporary Yugoslav Marxists considering the idea of a Muslim nation.

First, the difficulty of reconciling this idea with the traditional Marxist-Leninist view of nationalism. Stalin had been quite explicit in outlining the necessary prerequisites for national identity, and some of them, such as a separate language, were very difficult to ascribe to the Bosnian Muslims. As the Yugoslav Communists were arguably the most orthodox Marxists of all the eastern European communist parties at this time, it is not

³³ Masleša, *Muslimansko pitanje*, p. 123.

surprising that Masleša took Stalin's criteria (without explicitly crediting their author) as conclusively demonstrating the impossibility of Muslim nationhood. In Masleša's own words, since Muslims did not have their own language, specific economic ties, territorial continuity or unique psychological and cultural characteristics, they lacked "the objective ingredients of nationhood."³⁴

Second, prevailing misconceptions about Bosnian Muslim history made the idea all the more problematic. Masleša effectively summarized perhaps the most notable of these when he wrote that "Bosnian-Herzegovinian feudalism has proven inflexible. It has lost the faith of its fathers, but maintained the land and privileges of its grandfathers. The fusion of feudal privileges and Islam – that is the historical root of 'the Muslim Question.'"³⁵ This claim, that the medieval Bosnian nobility had converted to Islam to preserve its feudal privileges, was certainly not new: Bosnian Franciscan Ivan Franjo Jukić had already popularized it in the mid-nineteenth century, and research by Yugoslav historians refuted it in the 1930s, although their views did not immediately gain wider acceptance.³⁶ What is interesting here, however, is how this popular historical myth lends itself to a Marxist reading of Bosnian Muslim history and society. From Masleša's point of view, Bosnian Muslims do not have a bourgeoisie but a feudal class exploiting the religious sentiment of the masses for its own interest – a feudal class directly descended from the medieval European nobility of Marxist lore. Not surprisingly, the word "feudal" and its variations appear incessantly throughout his article. With this erroneous reading of history fanning the flames of Marxist rhetoric, it makes Masleša's conclusions that much

³⁴ Ibid., p. 123.

³⁵ Gajić, *Veselin Masleša*, p. 90.

³⁶ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 63.

easier to reach. “The matter of compensation for feudal nobility,” he writes, “is not and cannot be a constituent element of a nation.”³⁷

But while Masleša’s work highlights Marxist skepticism, Rodoljub Čolaković’s “Our Muslims and the National Liberation Army” reveals a somewhat different perspective. In contrast to Masleša, Čolaković identified Muslims as “a separate ethnic whole... [who] no one will force to be that which they are not, i.e. Serbs and Croats.”³⁸ This is a continuation of the same line of thinking expressed by Edvard Kardelj five years earlier: that Muslims, identifying themselves as separate from both Serbs and Croats, form an ethnic group. Written as a brochure shortly after Masleša’s in April, 1943, Čolaković’s words carry particular weight as he was the Partisan political commissar for Bosnia-Herzegovina; his insistence on Muslim individuality no doubt partly explains the numerous appeals to Muslim equality with Serbs and Croats in the wartime propaganda discussed earlier. Nonetheless, Čolaković recognition of this individuality did not translate into the recognition of a Muslim nation. In fact, at several points during the war he was explicit in describing the Muslims as nationally undefined or still needing to eventually nationally orient themselves.³⁹ Furthermore, like Masleša, he was careful to distinguish the Partisan call for Bosnian autonomy with that of “the Bosnian beys.”⁴⁰

Čolaković’s insistence on this distinction identifies him as a subscriber to the same Marxist narrative of Bosnian Muslim history as Masleša. But whereas Masleša was unable to reconcile the feudal elements of Bosnian Muslim society with the Marxist view

³⁷ Masleša, *Muslimansko pitanje*, p. 123.

³⁸ Purivatra, *Stav Komunističke*, p. 118.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

of ethnicity and the nation, Čolaković was. His views demonstrate that the roadblocks facing Masleša and like-minded intellectuals did not necessarily extend to the entire Bosnian Partisan leadership. This ideological dichotomy helps contextualize the eventual position of the Bosnian Muslims in Partisan efforts to establish the civil institutions of a future Yugoslav state.

2.4 Muslims in the Emerging Yugoslav State Structure

By the second half of 1943, the Allies had firmly gained the initiative in World War II. With its victory at Stalingrad in February, the ensuing recapture of further occupied territory and the decisive battle of Kursk, the Red Army had broken its deadlock with the *Wehrmacht*. Meanwhile, in July, Britain and the United States launched their invasion of Italy. In Yugoslavia too, conditions were markedly different from the outset of the war. The Partisans had established themselves as the dominant antifascist resistance movement in the country, held large swathes of territory and were on the verge of allied recognition and support. Under these circumstances, Tito and his followers increasingly turned their attention to laying the foundations of a civil government separate from their movement's military wing. What was to be the form of the post-war Yugoslav state and how would it resolve the pressing national question? To deal with such issues, the Partisans had already held an Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (*Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije*, or AVNOJ) in November, 1942. This meeting had outlined some of the

movement's political goals (e.g. support for democracy), but the Partisan position had since changed significantly.⁴¹ Therefore, in order to reiterate their platform under rapidly changing circumstances, the Partisans began preparations for a second AVNOJ in 1943.

In the build-up to this second session, the KPJ leadership expected its members to organize separate antifascist councils for their respective Yugoslav regions. So it was that the Croatian communists held an Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia (*Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske*, or ZAVNOH) in June, while their Slovene counterparts convened their own assembly in October. As for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Tito expected its communists to hold their own antifascist council as well, specifically requesting this in July, 1943.⁴² Bosnia-Herzegovina's presence and integrity within the future Yugoslav state was therefore once again ensured; its precise status relative to the other regions, however, was subject to debate. This debate took place quite literally in November, when Avdo Humo and Rodoljub Čolaković, the two highest-ranking Bosnian communist officials, met up with Tito and the rest of the Partisan high command in Jajce.⁴³ Čolaković and Humo argued that Bosnia-Herzegovina should be constituted as a federal republic, while Milovan Đilas, Moša Pijade and Sreten Žujović argued for some lesser form of autonomy. Kardelj then reported the differing views to Tito, who ultimately sided with the Bosnians. With Tito's blessings, Humo and Čolaković then set about organizing the first Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Bosne i Hercegovine*, or ZAVNOBiH), to be held only a few days later in the same town.

⁴¹ Shoup, *Communism*, pp. 71-72.

⁴² Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 283.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

Several points can be raised about this momentous episode in modern Bosnian history. First, it is interesting that the participants in this debate on Bosnia-Herzegovina's political status seem to have been correspondingly split on the issue of Bosnian Muslim national identity. As discussed earlier, both Čolaković and Humo had previously identified Muslims as a unique ethnic group. Kardelj, who appears to have sided with the Bosnians on this matter as well, was in fact the first notable KPJ member to explicitly make this claim in the 1930s. In contrast, Đilas and Pijade had already made clear at the KPJ's Fifth Country Conference in 1940 that they did not consider Muslims an ethnicity, and it is probably not too great a leap of faith to suppose that Žujović felt similarly. This all testifies to the fact that "the Bosnian Question" – i.e. the question of Bosnia's political status – and the issue of Bosnian Muslim identity were closely intertwined.

There is further evidence in the arguments the two sides put forth. Čolaković and Humo appealed to the tradition of Bosnian regional patriotism and multiethnic individuality; in the words of Humo, later recounting the arguments he had put forth that day, "We emphasized that the complete freedom, sovereignty and equality of our nations, as well as their individual and common socio-political development, could most effectively be expressed only in a shared but also independent state arrangement of a multinational republican community."⁴⁴ Đilas, Pijade and Žujović, however, insisted that Yugoslavia's federal units should coincide with its constituent nations; as there was no Bosnian nation, there could not be a Bosnian federal republic. This line of argument was based on the same Stalinist theory that Masleša had used in his article the previous year. Once again, therefore, it appears that Marxist ideological constraints played a decisive

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 285.

role in shaping the views of some KPJ members on issues related to Muslim national identity. There is also, however, a geographic distinction to be made; whereas Čolaković and Humo were both Bosnians (Čolaković a Bosnian Serb and Humo a Bosnian Muslim), Đilas, Pijade and Žujović were all from either Serbia or Montenegro. In that sense, while certainly not intentionally nationalist, their suggestion that Bosnia-Herzegovina be constituted as merely an autonomous province of Serbia can be linked to a long-standing tradition of Serbian centralism, if not even nationalism.

Tito's eventual acceptance of the Bosnian argument is not overly surprising, as he had previously expressed similar sentiments about Bosnia-Herzegovina's unique regional identity. Nonetheless, it is important to look at the wider strategic considerations in this decision. Joining Bosnia-Herzegovina to Croatia as an autonomous province would have been problematic, as not only did Croats form only about a fifth of its population, but the resulting republic would have economically dominated the federation.⁴⁵ Joining Bosnia-Herzegovina to Serbia, however, was equally unthinkable, as one of Tito's chief concerns in solving the national question was limiting the possibility of Serbian hegemony. Establishing Bosnia-Herzegovina as a separate federal republic was therefore an appealing alternative, meeting both the demands of the Bosnian communists themselves and achieving a compromise between the competing demands of Croatian and Serbian nationalism.

Held on November 25 and 26, ZAVNOBiH celebrated the vision of men such as Humo and Čolaković of a sovereign and multiethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the words

⁴⁵ Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 177.

of Karabegović, “This is the greatest and happiest day in the history of all the people of this country. Never have the Bosnians and Herzegovinians, never have the Serbs, Croats and Muslims assembled with so pure a heart and so noble a striving as today at this great national task.”⁴⁶ Within the new Bosnian state formed that day in Jajce, Muslims were treated as a separate people fully equal with the Serbs and Croats. The resolution passed by the council exemplified this sentiment, stating that “Today the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina, through their single political representative body... want their country, which is neither Serb nor Croat nor Muslim but Serb and Croat and Muslim, to be a free and fraternal Bosnia-Herzegovina in which will be guaranteed full equality of all Serbs, Muslims and Croats. The peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina will participate on an equal basis with our other peoples in the building of the People’s Democratic Federative Yugoslavia.”⁴⁷ ZAVNOBiH thus marked the culmination of the Bosnian communist tradition described so far in this thesis; the growing tendency of Bosnian KPJ members to consider Bosnian Muslims as a de facto nation had now been stated explicitly at the foundational assembly of the modern Bosnian republic.

This explicit equality between the Muslims and the other nations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, was not carried over into the language of the subsequent second AVNOJ. At the all-Yugoslav antifascist council, the draft for the declaration dealing with the federative structure of the country only mentioned “Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins and Macedonians,” leaving Muslims out entirely. Sulejman Filipović, a leading Muslim delegate at the assembly, then successfully suggested that they amend the critical sentence to include “and of the peoples of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia,

⁴⁶ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 287.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina respectively.”⁴⁸ Filipović’s proposal ensured a de facto recognition of the Muslims, but does not change the fact that AVNOJ took a markedly different stance from ZAVNOBiH in regard to their status. The explanation for this discrepancy presumably rests in the different compositions of the two councils; while ZAVNOBiH was limited to Bosnian communists, of whom many had long been favorable to the idea of a Muslim ethnicity, AVNOJ included more hostile elements from the Central Committee such as Đilas and Pijade. It seems likely then that the men drafting the documents for the different assemblies operated under different assumptions. As the chief concern at both was Yugoslavia’s federative structure, Filipović’s proposal appears to be as much of a challenge as the Bosnians were willing to make to the assumptions of the latter. In that sense, perhaps the preceding debate in Jajce should be seen not as an outright triumph for Čolaković and Humo but as a more limited victory: Bosnian communists were given their own republic to mold as they saw fit, but on the federal level more conservative elements still held sway.

This perspective would help explain why the Bosnians, despite the different tone adopted at AVNOJ, made no changes to their position in its aftermath. In fact, documents at the subsequent second session of ZAVNOBiH only tacitly acknowledge the compromise suggested by Filipović before reverting to the language of the first ZAVNOBiH. “The people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, freely and by their own will, associate with the peoples of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro and Macedonia in a common state,” reads one resolution, adopting the wording from AVNOJ before soon after clarifying that in Bosnia-Herzegovina “Serbs, Muslims and Croats will live completely

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 290.

equally and freely.”⁴⁹ The “Declaration of Rights of the Citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina” from this same session further distinguishes this “equality of the Serbs, Muslims and Croats” from “the equality of all religions,” implying that Muslims were not being referred to as a religious community but an ethno-national group.⁵⁰ This is also evident in the comments made at the assembly by the Bosnian Partisan leader Đuro Pucar, a Bosnian Serb, who explicitly talked of “three nations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

Pucar argued that “Muslims, by way of their socio-historical position and political upbringing during the time of Yugoslavia developed certain characteristics which incredibly solidified among them the feeling of the uniqueness of Muslims as a whole,” and even suggested forming “some sort of Muslim political board which would have authority among Muslims and which would, as such, be able to influence a greater flow of Muslims into our ranks.”⁵¹ Entering the final phase of the war then, the most senior Bosnian Communist leaders – Muslims and non-Muslims alike – treated the Muslims as a separate ethno-national group equal to the Serbs and Croats. Their insistence on this led to a degree of ambiguity on the federal level, where even Pijade, writing in March, 1944, could briefly list Muslims as one of the three nations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵²

2.5 Conclusions

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 296.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 297.

⁵¹ Purivatra, *Stav Komunističke*, pp. 123-25.

⁵² Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 291.

Given that the war was centered in and most intensely fought on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where Muslims represented a significant factor in terms of population size, geographic position and military potential, it made them all the more important in KPJ considerations. As a result, in trying to gain the military initiative, the Partisans consistently appealed to Bosnian Muslims as a group in their own right, alongside and equal to Serbs and Croats. Since the Partisans also strove to present their resistance effort as a war of national liberation and “brotherhood and unity,” many Muslim members saw this as an implicit recognition of Muslim national individuality. For some non-Muslim Communists such as Čolaković and Pucar, this is essentially what it was. But for others, particularly the Serbians in the Partisan high command, ideological barriers ruled out any such national recognition. Consequently, the language in the founding documents of the Yugoslav state and Bosnian republic was contradictory, although both, in one way or another, implied Muslim equality with the more widely-recognized Yugoslav nations. This would be exactly the expectation with which Bosnian Muslim Communists and the community they represented would enter the immediate post-war period.

3. The Muslim Question in Socialist Yugoslavia, 1946-71

By 1945 Tito and the Partisans were nearing the end of their “national liberation struggle,” taking control of those urban centers still under fascist rule and sending the Axis forces reeling westward. Under these conditions, the Communists intensified their efforts to set up civilian institutions for the post-war state and implement their vision of a socialist society. This state and society, however, held surprisingly little room for Bosnian Muslims as a unique ethnic community. Whereas the Party’s wartime pronouncements and propaganda implied a quasi-national status for Muslims, Party policy after the war strictly treated them as a religious community. Some fifteen years later, however, the Party redefined its stance once again, designating Muslims as an ethnic group equal to Serbs and Croats before ultimately elevating them to the status of a constituent nation. This chapter will try to explain how and why the status of Muslims changed in the first twenty-five years of communist rule, from the immediate aftermath of World War II to the 1971 Yugoslav census.

3.1 The Return to Yugoslavism

To understand this significant shift in KPJ policy, it is important to begin by considering the initial change following World War II and how the Party came to define Bosnian Muslims as strictly a religious group. As the previous chapter showed, the KPJ’s

wartime policy was ambiguous on the matter; while many within the Party had a deep ideological conviction that Muslims could not be a nation, in practice the KPJ treated Muslims as an ethnic group on an equal and implicitly national footing with Serbs, Croats and other Yugoslav nations. As the war drew to a close, there were even some indications that the new Yugoslav state would continue to recognize Muslims as a de facto nation. In May, 1945, for example, a “General Council of Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina” was formed as a Bosnian Muslim representative body.¹ Later that year, in September, this council merged the two existing (respectively pro-Serb and pro-Croat) Muslim cultural societies to form a single one named *Preporod* (Rebirth).²

Perhaps the first signs of a reversal in this policy of de facto recognition appeared in the efforts to determine the symbols of the new Bosnian republic. Elsewhere in Yugoslavia, the republics adopted seals combining communist imagery, such as bales of wheat and factory chimneys, with traditional national symbols. Croatia’s, for instance, adopted its historical checkerboard heraldry, while Serbia’s included a modification of 19th century royal insignia. Since Bosnia-Herzegovina’s status as a sort of national conglomerate republic made this approach more difficult, the debates surrounding the selection of Bosnian republic symbols highlighted lingering disagreements over the national question. Initially, during the drafting of a republic constitution, Bosnian Communists adopted a provisional seal that featured three hands together holding a torch. Since each hand represented one of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s three nations, the seal continued the war-time KPJ practice of treating Croats, Muslims and Serbs as equal

¹ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 319

² *Ibid.*

partners in the foundation of modern Bosnia-Herzegovina.³ Later on in the drafting, however, this seal was rejected. In its place the Communists opted for twin industrial chimneys enclosed by bales of wheat and a laurel wreath – a barren testament to the increasingly favored aesthetic of industrialization.

Taken in the context of wider Yugoslav debates from this period, it seems likely that the rejection of the explicitly tri-national coat of arms was motivated in large part by changing perceptions of Bosnian Muslim identity. Indeed, on the federal level, a similar debate ended with a more explicit rejection of a national status for Muslims. Namely, in the drafting of the federal Yugoslav constitution in late 1945, the proposed seal for the new state included five torches representing the five formally-recognized Yugoslav nations: Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins and Macedonians. Husaga Čišić, a Bosnian Muslim delegate from Mostar, took offense with this proposal, calling instead for a sixth torch to be added to represent Bosnians.⁴ To that end, he wrote two letters to the Constitution-drafting Commission, arguing that Bosnia-Herzegovina had the right to its own national name as an equal Yugoslav federal unit and on account of the human sacrifice it had made in World War II. “For a Bosnian-Herzegovinian federal unit founded on the so-called equality of Serbs and Croats,” he wrote, “has no guarantees for its survival, nor can it have the prospect of a peaceful social and state life.”⁵ This proposal apparently caused some deliberation, provoking an all-night meeting between Tito and Milovan Đilas.⁶ When the dust settled, however, pressure was applied on the Muslim bloc of constitutional delegates and the proposed seal was officially adopted with

³ Suljević, *Nacionalnost*, p. 228.

⁴ Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika*, p. 201.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

five torches for five Yugoslav nations. Čišić expressed his disapproval of this decision by being the only delegate to vote against the measure.⁷

Čišić was hardly the only Muslim unhappy with this newly-adopted coat of arms; another voice of dissent came from a young Sarajevo scholar named Muhamed Hadžijahić. Hadžijahić, who later became a major contributor to the leftist Muslim intelligentsia's calls for national recognition, wrote a letter addressed to Avdo Humo, Osman Karabegović and the General Council of Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Like Čišić, Hadžijahić also wanted a sixth torch to be added to the coat-of-arms, but in his view this was a torch that would represent a Muslim nation. "The Muslim masses are not satisfied by the state coat of arms showing only five torches as the symbols of five nations," he claimed, calling for a sixth torch that would "formally show that Muslims are a subject equal to their brothers Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins."⁸ In this case Đilas was more dismissive, referring to the letter as a "characteristic proposal from a certain Muslim that a sixth torch should be added to our state coat-of-arms."⁹ "Parliament can't contemplate the question of whether Muslims are a national group or are not," he continued, "[for] that is a theoretical question over which people can argue one way or the other, but which in any case can't be solved by a decree." By purposely omitting Muslims from an official representation of Yugoslav nations, however, the KPJ made its stance clear.

Although Čišić and Hadžijahić argued for different national names to be recognized, both were expressing their concern that the new Communist order was

⁷ Ibid., p. 205.

⁸ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 322.

⁹ Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika*, p. 206.

reneging on earlier promises and leaving Bosnian Muslims without their own, officially-recognized identity. Hadžijahić's concern that recent developments were making the General Council of Muslims irrelevant proved particularly prophetic, as the authorities shut it down only a few years later.¹⁰ Around this time, the Yugoslav state also undertook a far-reaching campaign against the Islamic Community and Muslim religious worship. In 1950, for example, the wearing of a veil, hijab or burqa, as well as the teaching of children in mosques, became a criminal offence.¹¹ Although the suppression of Muslim religious institutions is obviously not in and of itself a rejection of Muslim ethnic individuality, there is little doubt that the two phenomena were closely intertwined; as Hoare perceptively points out, the people responsible for implementing these measures probably saw little difference between the two.¹²

The KPJ's increased disfavor of notions of Muslim individuality was part of a broader shift to centralization and authoritarianism in the post-war period. The 1953 revisions to the federal constitution, which were so extensive that they effectively amounted to an entirely new document, significantly curtailed the rights of the republics and emphasized instead the role of the central government in Belgrade.¹³ During this time, effective control of the country lay in the hands of only a small group of men, led by Tito and consisting largely of a dozen or so of his closest confidants.¹⁴ Within Bosnia-Herzegovina, this Yugoslav centralism was also evidenced by a period of Serb hegemony in Republic institutions. On all major levels, Serbs were overrepresented in relation to

¹⁰ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 323.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 324.

¹³ Shoup, *Communism*, pp. 191.

¹⁴ Ramet, *Three Yugoslavias*, p. 207.

Croats and Muslims, dominating in the political sphere, the military and the office of state security, as well as in the bureaucratic positions created by an expanding state apparatus.¹⁵ Under these political circumstances, Muslim SKJ members,¹⁶ who were increasingly pressured by the Party apparatus to identify themselves as either Serbs or Croats, in large measure opted to officially declare as Serbs.¹⁷

This pressure to conform and nationally orient oneself was not limited to Muslim Communists, but extended to the Bosnian Muslim population as a whole. The clearest expression of this revised policy regarding Bosnian Muslim identity were the first two post-war censuses, conducted in 1948 and 1953. The 1948 census offered Muslims three options under the nationality rubric; Croat Muslim, Serb Muslim and nationally unoriented Muslim. The implications of this approach were that, 1.) Muslim communal identity was not in and of itself national, and 2.) Muslims were expected to gradually adopt a national identity as Serbs or Croats, a stance recalling the earlier SKJ position from the time of Sima Marković. Given this choice, however, the great majority of Muslims (778,403 or 88.9%) declared themselves “nationally unoriented,” with 71,991 (8.2%) declaring as Serb Muslims and only 25,295 (2.8%) as Croat Muslims.¹⁸ On the whole then, in the 1948 census, Muslims largely rejected state pressure to adopt a Serb or Croat national identity – over 30% of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s population was officially anational.¹⁹

¹⁵ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 324-325.

¹⁶ In 1952, the Party changed its name to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia or SKJ.

¹⁷ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 230.

¹⁸ Atif Purivatra, “Etnička posebnost Muslimana rezultat istorijskih procesa i priznavanja postojeće stvarnosti u demokratskim uslovima” [1969], in *Nacionalni i politički razvitak Muslimana* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1970), p. 33.

¹⁹ Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, p. 155.

These results ultimately did little to change state policy ahead of the next census in 1953. In the lead-up to it, Moša Pijade tried to address any misconceptions about the nationality rubric by clarifying that “It is obvious, without any discussion, that the term ‘Muslim’ signifies belonging to a specific Muslim religious identity, and has nothing to do with the question of nationality.”²⁰ As a result, the option “nationally unoriented Muslim” was taken off the census entirely, with citizens left to declare their Muslim identity under a religious rubric. A significant addition, however, was the option to nationally declare as “Yugoslav unoriented.” This option came about as part of the previously-mentioned developments in Yugoslav nationality policy during the first half of the 1950s, and specifically the encouragement of a secular pan-Yugoslav sense of identity. In Pijade’s words, the designation was for “persons of south Slavic descent, who are not particularly nationally oriented.” In the 1953 census, 891,800 people in Bosnia-Herzegovina declared themselves Yugoslav, amounting to 31.3% of the republic’s population.²¹

Although there is no precise data for the number of Muslims declaring as Yugoslavs, the similar number of ‘48 Muslims and ‘53 Yugoslavs, as well as the fact that Bosnians amounted to 89.3% of all Yugoslavs in Yugoslavia, strongly suggests that those who declared themselves as Muslims nationally unoriented in 1948 overwhelmingly opted for the Yugoslav designation in 1953.²² Despite these ambiguous census results, however, the Yugoslav academic and political establishment seems to have remained convinced that Muslims would gradually nationally orient themselves to one of the two

²⁰ Moša Pijade, “O popisu stanovništva” [1953], in *O “Nacionaliziranju” Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), pp. 147-148.

²¹ Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, p. 155.

²² Purivatra, *Etnička posebnost*, p. 33.

neighboring nations. A 1959 article on “Serbo-Croat Mohammedans” by Belgrade ethnologist Milenko Filipović is illustrative of these expectations, claiming that “Although the majority of Serbo-Croat Mohammedans are still nationally undeclared, a significant part of Mohammedans recognizes itself as Serb or Croat, and this process is still occurring and progressing well.”²³

Between 1945 and the late 1950s, therefore, the SKJ went full circle from an implicit recognition of Muslim communal individuality to the assimilationist stance of the pre-Tito period. Taken together, several closely-related factors help explain this significant post-war shift in Yugoslav nationality policy. Although later Muslim historians tended to portray this period as a misguided deviation from the more enlightened policy of the war years, the SKJ did not so much renege on a promise as simply opt for the most conservative line that its ambiguous wartime stance allowed. After all, even during the war, ideologues like Masleša had advocated essentially the same approach. Now, with no immediate need to mobilize the Muslim population behind its cause, the SKJ had no particular reason to treat them as a separate quasi-national community. The early disavowal of multiparty democracy and the consequent lack of an organized voice from the pre-war Muslim elite, as well as the falling out between the SKJ and the various members of this elite who had joined it during the course of the war, probably also contributed. At its heart, however, the Muslim Question remained ideological. The primary concern of Yugoslav Communists in the post-war period was not nationalism but building socialism. In a Marxist society where religious differences were supposed to wither away, institutionalizing a new Muslim nationality would have

²³ Atif Purivatra, “Nacionalni i politički razvitak Muslimana” [1969], in *O “Nacionaliziranju” Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), p. 208.

appeared counter-productive. In fact, under these new socialist conditions, it followed that the long awaited national orientation of the Bosnian Muslim masses might finally occur.

3.2 The Turn to Acceptance

By the late 1950s, the pendulum of the Yugoslav Communist's treatment of Bosnian Muslim communal identity slowly began to swing the other way. Once again, the catalyst for this was a broader shift in Yugoslav nationality policy. The 1958 SKJ program, which had talked of a "socialist, Yugoslav consciousness, [arising] in the conditions of a socialist community of peoples," represented the high-water mark for the regime's flirtations with pan-Yugoslav identity.²⁴ Shortly thereafter, emphasis switched to decentralization and an increased role for the individual republics. The motivation behind this was a growing awareness of the deficiencies of the Titoist system; by the end of the decade, the SKJ not only had to deal with the harsh Marxist critiques of comrade-turned-dissident Đilas (his widely-acclaimed 1957 "New Class" accused the Yugoslav Communist establishment of entrenching itself as a new elite), but to the accumulated problems in the Yugoslav economy as well. An emerging liberal current in the SKJ responded to the impending crisis by prescribing market reform and democratization, and their views gained increasing favor with Tito in the years that followed.²⁵ The idea of "Yugoslavism," which the liberals associated with authoritarianism and heavy-handed

²⁴ Shoup, *Communism*, p. 209.

²⁵ V.P. Gagnon Jr., *The Myth of Ethnic War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 53-60.

centralized control, consequently fell out of favor and disappeared; a draft constitution in 1961 even went as far as stating that “Yugoslav” would no longer be considered an acceptable national identity, although this position was later toned down.²⁶

The move away from Yugoslavism allowed the SKJ to reconsider, among other things, its stance on the Muslim Question. Although Yugoslav identity was no longer in vogue, the matter of what to do with the nearly 900,000 predominantly Muslim Yugoslavs in Bosnia-Herzegovina remained. It is at this time that a circle of prominent Bosnian Communists, including Avdo Humo and Đuro Pucar, began to agitate for recognizing Bosnian Muslims as Muslims – essentially a reversal to the stance that these men had advocated during the war.²⁷ Although it would take a few years before such views gained wider currency, by 1959 there were already strong signs that the SKJ establishment was rejecting the assimilationist policy from earlier in the decade. At the Third Congress of the SKJ in 1959, for instance, delegate Andrija Krešić, while claiming that “there [is no] social-historical reason for the Muslims to feel as a nation,” noted that pressures on Muslims to nationally orient themselves as Serbs and Croats “have so far had widely differing results in different regions. Only those who are more dependent on the political realities of the present have gone along with identification, and frequently only for pragmatic reasons, while the great mass of people remained undecided.”²⁸

In a speech from that November before the Central Committee of the SKJ, Tito himself seemed tired of the polemics surrounding the Muslim question. “Those things regarding the nationality of Muslims have to be gradually liquidated,” he said. “People

²⁶ Shoup, *Communism*, p. 211.

²⁷ Mehmedalija Bojić, *Historija Bosne i Bošnjaka* (Sarajevo: Šahinpašić, 2001), p. 236.

²⁸ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 231.

need to be left alone and allowed to be nationally unoriented citizens of Yugoslavia if they want. Let that man be a Bosnian, a Herzegovinian. Outside [Bosnia-Herzegovina] they do not call you by any other name than Bosnian anyway, whether it is a Muslim, a Serb or a Croat.”²⁹ In another speech a few years later, in 1963, Tito would express similar sentiments. “Although it is clear [that being Yugoslav means being a citizen of socialist Yugoslavia], we even have fruitless discussions here on whether, for example, Muslims need to orient themselves toward some nationality. That is nonsense,” he said, arguing that “Everyone can be that which they feel they are, and no one has the right to force some national identity on them if they only feel like citizens of Yugoslavia.”³⁰ Taken together, these two speeches indicate that Tito may have been personally sympathetic to the Muslim rejection of Serb and Croat identity because he saw it as a repudiation of the divisive nationalism that interfered with his vision for Yugoslavia.

The first concrete manifestation of the changing Party policy, regarding both the Muslim Question and Yugoslavism, was the 1961 census. For the first time, the state recognized Muslims as a separate ethnos, offering the choice of “Muslims (ethnic belonging).” The census form tried to clarify the distinction between Muslims in a religious and an ethnic sense, detailing that the new option was:

...only for those persons of Yugoslav ancestry who consider themselves Muslims in the sense of ethnic belonging. Members of non-Yugoslav nations, such as Albanians and Turks, as well as Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, Macedonians and others, who consider themselves members of the Islamic religious community, do not need to register as Muslims. For these persons, the answer to the question of their nationality entails their national identity, i.e.

²⁹ Suljević, *Nacionalnost*, p. 236.

³⁰ Josip “Tito” Broz, “Nacionalno pitanje i revolucija” [1963], in *O “Nacionaliziranju” Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), pp. 158-159.

Albanian, Turk, Serb, Croat, Montenegrin, Macedonian, etc., regardless of their religious identity.³¹

In contrast to the 1948 census, therefore, there were no longer separate options for Serb or Croat Muslims; the SKJ no longer expected Muslims to gradually turn to a national category, as it now treated Muslim communal identity as de facto national. The Yugoslav option, however, remained on the census despite the SKJ's distancing from it. The result was that the Bosnian Muslim population was once again split. 842,248 people opted for the new "Muslim (ethnic belonging)" designation, but a significant portion still declared as "Yugoslav," making up a good portion of the republic's 275,883 remaining Yugoslavs.³² Höpken has perceptively pointed out that, on the municipality level, "in 24 population centers with high Muslim concentrations, the percentage of "Yugoslavs" lay far below the average for the republic [while] the percentage was above average in communities where Muslims lived together with dominant Serbian majorities."³³ According to Höpken, this indicates that acceptance of the new census category was an elite-driven process, and that Serb political influence was a retarding factor.

Two years later, in 1963, the Party's renewed implicit recognition of a separate Muslim individuality was formalized on both the federal and republic level. Federally, the new Yugoslav constitution amended the state coat of arms to include six torches instead of five. The new torch was not, however, meant to represent a new Muslim nation, but rather the six torches collectively were recast as representing the six republic

³¹ Husnija Kamberović, "Bošnjaci 1968: Politički kontekst priznanja nacionalnog identiteta," in *Rasrpave o nacionalnom identiteta Bošnjaka* (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 2009), p. 59.

³² Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, p. 155.

³³ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 232.

of Yugoslavia.³⁴ During the original post-war debate over a potential sixth torch, Đilas had said that the idea might make some sense if the torches represented the separate republics instead of the separate nations.³⁵ Now that the Bosnian Muslims were once again considered a quasi-national group, the Communists decided for this interpretation after all, offering a tacit recognition of the Muslims' new status. Meanwhile, on the republic level, that same year saw the specific mention of Muslims in the new Bosnian constitution. The preamble of this document stated that "the Serbs, Muslims and Croats, overcoming the efforts of foreign powers and domestic reactionary forces, have found themselves for the first time free, equal and as close as brothers in their Republic."³⁶ Much like the war-time Partisan sources discussed earlier, the constitution avoided explicitly describing the Muslims as a nation, but made clear that they were equal partners with the two established nationalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

By the mid 1960s then, the Muslim Question seemed to have returned to the wartime status quo, whereby Muslims were not explicitly labeled a nationality but were treated as a distinct ethnic community separate from Croats and Serbs. The Fourth Congress of the SKBiH in 1965 is particularly illustrative of this, containing the official position that "from a formal standpoint, the national affiliation of the Muslims has been decided and will be taken off the agenda, since we have made the Muslims a people – or an ethnic group – with the same rights as other peoples."³⁷ The question of the precise nature of Bosnian Muslim identity, however, remained. A young American, Paul Shoup, writing his landmark *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question* only a year later,

³⁴ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 326

³⁵ Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika*, p. 202.

³⁶ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 327.

³⁷ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 232.

noted that “One of the most interesting cases [of mid-1960s nationalism among smaller national groups and minorities] was that of the Slav Moslems of Bosnia-Hercegovina.”³⁸

Shoup noted that the SKJ had initially treated Muslims as a religious community, but now favored the idea that Muslims were a distinct ethnic group. “It only remained,” he wrote, “to argue that the Muslims were a distinct nationality.”

3.3 Constructing a Muslim Nation

This task fell to a circle of secular, Party-affiliated Muslim intellectuals, who began their work in earnest around the same time that Shoup’s book went to press in the United States. According to Muhamed Filipović, a prominent Muslim academic from this time, the debate was essentially transferred from the political to the academic sphere, in the hope that Muslim national identity would be scientifically legitimized before attaining formal state recognition.³⁹ Filipović, together with other like-minded Muslim intellectuals within the Party like Atif Purivatra, perceived the Yugoslav establishment as prejudiced against Muslim culture and history. For Muslim national affirmation to occur, it first had to be wrested, in the words of Filipović, “from the hands of the political sphere and the various and numerous pseudo-politicians and ideologues who ruled it at that time.” In the second half of the 1960s, this intellectual effort would be based around the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo (known popularly as the

³⁸ Shoup, *Communism*, p. 216.

³⁹ Husnija Kamberović, “Stav političke elite o nacionalnom identitetu Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini sredinom 1960-ih godina,” *Prilozi* No. 38 (2009): p. 166.

Politička škola), where academics like Purivatra, Mustafa Imamović, Hamdija Čemerlić and the previously-mentioned Muhamed Hadžijahić collaborated in investigating Muslim national identity.⁴⁰ They did this with the backing of Hamdija Pozderac, a member of the CKSKBiH, and some of them would eventually gain considerable clout within the Bosnian Party structure themselves. Purivatra, for instance, became the chairman of the Commission for Nationality questions in the mass organization of the Socialist Federation, while Čemerlić would be Rector of the University of Sarajevo from 1969 to 1972.⁴¹

None of this is to imply, however, that the academics around the Faculty of Political Sciences were simply historians for hire, creating a nation in response to Party decree. To the contrary, they seem to have had a long-standing interest in the issue of Muslim national identity. Hadžijahić, for instance, had advocated for Muslim national recognition as early as 1946, while Purivatra's earliest articles all dealt with the national question in Yugoslavia and the place of Bosnia's Muslims within it. Furthermore, the arguments of both men relied heavily on earlier research from the 1950s by the predominantly Muslim (and, in contrast to Hadžijahić and Purivatra, not necessarily secular) scholars at Sarajevo's Oriental Institute, who had made notable advances concerning the social and economic history of Ottoman Bosnia.⁴² In that sense, the politically motivated writings of the 1960s were also partially building on an existing Bosnian Muslim historiographic tradition. The undertaking at the Faculty of Political

⁴⁰ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 335.

⁴¹ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 233; Enver Redžić, *Sto godina Muslimanske politike* (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 2000), pp. 89-90.

⁴² Armina Omerika, "The Role of Islam in the National Identity of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1950-1980," *Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2 (2006): pp. 355-357.

Sciences is thus better seen as a symbiosis, whereby liberal currents within the Bosnian Communist elite gave an emerging Muslim Communist intelligentsia free reign to pursue its favored issues and, in return, relied upon its findings and the arguments it put forth to legitimize their shared idea of a Muslim nation.

This Muslim nation, as articulated by Hadžijahić and Purivatra and subsequently championed by Bosnian Communists, was built on several key historical and ideological arguments. To begin with, Hadžijahić and Purivatra took “Muslim” (*Musliman*, pl. *Muslimani*) to be the national name, arguing that this religious term had acquired a national character over time due to the Bosnian Muslims’ unique position in a multi-confessional post-Ottoman society. “Along with the uncontested religious meaning of the term Muslim,” wrote Hadžijahić, “here the term Muslim in an ethnic sense had also crystallized.”⁴³ Significantly, this was a rejection of the views of men such Čišić, who had argued that Bosnian Muslims already had a national identity as Bosnians (*Bosanci*) or Bosniaks (the synonymous but more archaic *Bošnjaci*). In fact, in his calls for a sixth torch to be added to the post-war Yugoslav seal, Čišić had bitterly railed against the Communist preference for the term “Muslim” rather than “Bosnian.” “They do not allow our man to register as either Bosnian or Yugoslav,” he lamented, “But when, stranded, he says that he is a Muslim, then that fits, presumably because that is a collective term for 300,000,000 people scattered across five continents and belonging to all the possible races of humankind.”⁴⁴ According to Hadžijahić, however, Muslims had already rejected Austria-Hungary’s attempts to foster a Bosnian national identity (*Bošnjaštvo*), because it threatened their unique national character as Muslims. “In the new (post-Ottoman)

⁴³ Redžić, *Sto godina*, p. 95.

⁴⁴ Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika*, p. 205.

constellation,” Hadžijahić argued, “Bošnjaštvo did not offer adequate expression to the particular interests and desires of Muslims, who felt themselves threatened.”

The secular Muslim intelligentsia of this period was far from monolithic, and the idea of a “Muslim” nation was not without its opponents. Particularly serious disagreements developed between Purivatra, Hadžijahić and the other academics gathered at the Faculty of Political Sciences and Enver Redžić, one-time director of the Institute for History of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Academy of Arts and Sciences in Sarajevo.⁴⁵ Like Hadžijahić and Purivatra, Redžić believed that Bosnian Muslims possessed ethnic individuality. In a 1961 article titled “Socio-historical Aspects of the ‘National Orientation’ of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina,” Redžić wrote that “Based on contemporary ethnographic research, as well as on the basis of historical development, I think that we can accept the thesis that the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina represent a specific ethnic whole.”⁴⁶ Writing in 1964, Purivatra even praised this article as “comprehensively reasoned and documented.”⁴⁷ But unlike Purivatra, Redžić also believed that Muslim ethnic individuality was expressed nationality through the term “Bosnian” or “Bosniak.” As Hadžijahić and Purivatra came out in favor of a “Muslim” nation and against the idea of a “Bosnian” identity, Redžić strongly disagreed, considering a Muslim nation to be an artificial construct that neglected the historical tradition of Bošnjaštvo.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 335.

⁴⁶ Enver Redžić, *Prilozi o nacionalnom pitanju* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1963), p. 118.

⁴⁷ Atif Purivatra, “O nekim koncepcijama o nacionalnom ‘opredjeljivanju’ Muslimana” [1964], in *Nacionalni i politički razvitak Muslimana* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1970), p. 25.

⁴⁸ Redžić, *Sto godina*, p. 95.

Redžić was not the only contemporary Bosnian Muslim intellectual to favor a “Bosnian” solution to the question of Muslim nationality. In the early 1960s in Vienna, for example, a group of Bosnian Muslim political émigrés headed by former Partisan Adil Zulfikarpašić published the magazine *Bosanski pogledi* (Bosnian perspectives), which continuously advocated a “Bosniak” national identity for Bosnian Muslims.⁴⁹ “I do not agree,” Zulfikarpašić would later write, “with the Communists when it comes to the recognition of a ‘Muslim’ nation”:

I think that Muslims should have been allowed to choose their national name themselves. In 1963 I criticized the regime for determining the name of a nation by an act at some session. How absurd, giving a religious name, which in reality brings us to a comical position and allows opponents of that national politics to make the argument: what kind of nation is that? That is a religious group imagined in a test tube during some session or at some Party conference... I believe that writers like Atif Purivatra and Alija Isaković, who were writing against *Bošnjastvo*, were animated and employed by the Communist Party. I am convinced that in arguing that Muslims with a capital M are national Muslims, and with a lower-case m form a religious identity, there was a fear of the reaction of Croat and Serb nationalism. Out of fear of them, above all of Serb nationalism, the Party offered an unprincipled and inadequate solution, needlessly tangling itself up and imagining a national name for Bosniaks.⁵⁰

It is telling, however, that this strongest expression of the “Bosniak” current in Bosnian Muslim national thought took place outside of Yugoslavia. Within the country, Redžić, probably the most prominent advocate of some sort of Bosnian national identity for Bosnian Muslims, was ostracized by the Muslim academic establishment; a 1971 article by Mustafa Imamović, for instance, harshly criticized him for spelling Muslim with a lower-case m and, therefore, implying a non-national status. “Redžić does not have

⁴⁹ Saćir Filandra and Enes Karić, *Bošnjačka ideja* (Zagreb: Globus, 2002), pp. 121-137.

⁵⁰ Milovan Đilas and Nadežda Gaće, *Bošnjak Adil Zulfikarpašić* (Zürich: Bošnjački Institut), pp. 104-105.

the least right,” Imamović wrote, “to deny and insult and degrade a million-person nation.”⁵¹

The reason for this state of affairs, it seems, was that any notion of “Bosnian” national identity went against the interests of the SKBiH, which was trying to formalize a Muslim nation without provoking the national feelings of Bosnian Serbs and Croats. Once again, this is not to say, as Zulfikarpašić does, that academics like Hadžijahić and Purivatra held the views they did out of political opportunism; the evidence, including Purivatra’s expressed views later during the fall of Communism, strongly suggests that they sincerely believed their “Muslim” interpretation of Bosnian Muslim national identity.⁵² Nevertheless, as the debates surrounding the subsequent formal recognition of Muslim nationhood made expressly clear, the Bosnian Communist elite strongly preferred the idea of a Muslim national identity to that of a Bosnian one.

Despite these battle lines drawn between the dominant “Muslim” camp and advocates of some sort of “Bosnian” identity, the leading Bosnian Muslim intellectuals of this period had much in common as well. To begin with, Hadžijahić, Redžić and even the exiled Zulfikarpašić all drew their roots from the pre-war Muslim left. Furthermore, virtually all were convinced of Muslim national individuality – whether as Muslims or Bosniaks – in relation to Serbs and Croats. All of them expressed this national individuality in secular terms; the religious establishment would only gain an influence in Muslim nation-building later on. Finally, in reaching their conclusions, they relied on

⁵¹ Mustafa Imamović. “Ne radi se o slučajnosti” [1970], in *Knjige i zbivanja* (Sarajevo: Magistrat, 2008), p. 77.

⁵² In the 1990s, when most Bosnian Muslim intellectuals decided to adopt the national name “Bosniak,” Purivatra initially continued to insist on the term “Muslim.”

many of the same historical arguments. Islam in Bosnia, for instance, was dated back to an alleged mass conversion by members of the supposedly Bogumil Bosnian church.⁵³ In this way, the modern advocates of Muslim nationhood extended Bosnian Muslim communal identity to the middle ages, and, crucially, kept it separate from Catholicism (associated with Croats) and Serb Orthodoxy. Also, drawing from the previously-mentioned historiography of the 1950s, Bosnian Muslims were presented as holding a unique position within the Ottoman Empire, both in relation to the surrounding Christian peoples and to fellow Ottoman Muslims.⁵⁴ And lastly, the pressure on Bosnian Muslims to “nationally orient” themselves was linked, in Marxist terms, to the imperialist ambitions of the Serb and Croat bourgeoisie, while the Communists were praised for allegedly recognizing Bosnian Muslim individuality during World War II.⁵⁵ Although the numerous scholars associated with the academic debates on the Muslim Question brought forth various other arguments as well, these were, in a nutshell, the legitimizing pillars of Bosnian Muslim national individuality as put forth in the 1960s.

3.4 Federal Recognition

1966 was a pivotal year in the rise of Yugoslav liberalism and the Muslim nation that emerged with it. That July, at a session of the CKSKJ, Tito accused Aleksandar Ranković, head of the State Security Administration (*Uprava državne bezbjednosti* or

⁵³ Omerika, “The Role of Islam,” *Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2 (2006): pp. 355.

⁵⁴ Muhamed Hadžijahić, *Od tradicije do identiteta* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1974), pp. 95-103.

⁵⁵ Purivatra, *Stav Komunističke*, p. 65-131.

UDBA), of widely abusing his responsibilities, deviating from Party policy and creating a personal power-base within the SKJ.⁵⁶ Ranković was the senior-most Serb in the Party and a long-time friend and confidant of Tito; during the war, he had been a member of the Partisan high command and fought with a distinguished record. In the ensuing trial, however, he was even accused of bugging Tito's bedroom and summarily expelled from the Party. Beyond such questionable allegations, however, Ranković's expulsion had wider political implications. Since the end of the war, Ranković was arguably the most steady advocate of centralized, top-down Party control in Yugoslavia. By 1964, perhaps emboldened by their early victories, liberal currents within the SKJ, headed by Edvard Kardelj, convinced Tito that Ranković was a serious impediment to reform and had to be removed. His expulsion from the Party and the consequent taming of the secret police apparatus ensured that liberalization kicked into overdrive.⁵⁷

A number of historians, most notably Sabrina Ramet, have portrayed Ranković's expulsion as directly leading to Muslim national recognition.⁵⁸ In her most recent book, 2006's *The Three Yugoslavias*, Ramet claimed that "The fall of Ranković was not merely a victory for the Croats or the decentralists, nor even "merely" for the forces of reform: it was a victory for Yugoslavia's Muslims." As Höpken points out however, the evidence cited for this claim usually comes from the same trial transcripts that contained numerous other questionable allegations.⁵⁹ Given this unreliable foundation, there appears to be no evidence to justify drawing an explicit link between Ranković's fall from grace and the recognition of Muslim nationhood. A relationship between the two certainly exists, but it

⁵⁶ Ramet, *Three Yugoslavias*, p. 218.

⁵⁷ Kamberović, "Bošnjaci 1968," p. 62

⁵⁸ Ramet, *Three Yugoslavias*, p. 286.

⁵⁹ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 233

is more indirect than scholars like Ramet imply. Namely, Ranković's expulsion, in removing perhaps the greatest proponent of 1950s-style Yugoslavism and centralized control, allowed the SKJ to reappraise its record on the "National question." Whereas the Party had previously maintained the dogma that the war-time Partisan experience had finally solved the "National Question," the SKJ's new critical light revealed that nationalist grievances existed even in a socialist Yugoslavia.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the first manifestation of this new awareness of a lingering "National Question" was the Mostar Conference held in September, 1966. The conference, planning for which was initiated in late 1965, was meant to address concerns about the political situation in Western Herzegovina, a region primarily inhabited by Croats. Even more so than the officially a-national Muslims, Croats were significantly underrepresented in the Bosnian Party structure of this time. This was especially true in Western Herzegovina, which had a reputation as a hotbed for far-right Croat nationalism. It was precisely the arrest and trial of some such West Herzegovinian Croat nationalists in 1965 that prompted the SKBiH to reconsider its policies in the area.⁶⁰

The resulting conference in Mostar, beyond simply considering the status of the local Croat population, opened the door for discussion on various other "national" issues that had previously been taboo. "I am convinced," noted CKSKBiH Political Secretary Cvijetin Mijatović at the beginning of the conference, "that we need to, before ourselves and before the public, openly, self-critically and bravely say that we inconsistently carried out our politics regarding the national question in a whole series of cases in our

⁶⁰ Kamberović, "Bošnjaci 1968," p. 63

Republic.”⁶¹ From there, it was not difficult to argue that SKJ policy toward the Bosnian Muslims should also be reevaluated. In fact, at the conference itself, Džemal Bijedić, a rising Muslim Communist from Mostar, complained that the preparatory material completely neglected the role of Herzegovina’s Muslims. “Although that should not have been allowed to happen considering that Muslims represent nearly a third of the population of Herzegovina,” he remarked, “This analysis does not give the impression that this element is either endangered or that this element endangers others.”⁶²

This re-examination of SKJ nationality policy was partly tied to the ascendance of a new generation of liberal-minded Bosnian Communists. In the 1960s, men like Bijedić, Branko Mikulić and Hamdija Pozderac began their climb to the top of the republic and federal Party hierarchy. In the 1970s, Bijedić would even serve as Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, while both Mikulić and Pozderac would attain high positions within the CKSKJ. Their rise was largely built on their firm loyalty to Tito and a commitment to strengthening Bosnia-Herzegovina’s position as a federal republic. They were joined in this endeavor by some more senior figures, like Humo, Karabegović and Mijatović, as well as the Party’s Muslim intellectuals mentioned earlier. Together, in the new post-Ranković political climate, these Bosnian Communists were able to articulate their own solution to the national question in the republic: the SKBiH would formally elevate Muslims to the status of a constituent nation, lobby on the federal level for their equality with the other nations in Yugoslavia and then emphasize Bosnia-Herzegovina’s autonomy as a tri-national republic within the Yugoslav federation.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 65.

⁶² Kamberović, “Stav političke elite,” *Prilozi* No. 38 (2009): p. 182.

The Bosnian Communists took the first major step in this endeavor at the 17th session of the CKSKBiH, where they extensively discussed national relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Preparations for this session began as early as mid-1967, but it was delayed for various technical reasons until January, 1968. When it finally took place, the discussion took for granted that Muslims were a separate ethnic group equal to Serbs and Croats, maintaining the position from the 1961 census and the preamble to the 1963 Bosnian constitution. The Committee Members did not, however, delve deeply into questions about the specific nature of or the ideological basis for Muslim communal identity; only Joco Marjanović touched on such issues, stating that “Muslims among us, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, are in the process of constituting themselves not only, as we are currently saying, as a unique ethnicity or as a people and so on, but as a unique nation.”⁶³ Instead, the bulk of the discussion focused on the role of Serb, Croat and Muslim national identity in the three groups’ common Bosnian homeland. Bijedić, for instance, claimed that “the national sentiments of all three of these people, Croats, Serbs and Muslims, are too well-developed to allow any of them to accept a one-sided solution [to the national question].”⁶⁴ He then argued, however, that “All three peoples in Bosnia-Herzegovina are inseparably connected, they have always lived together, they have to live together, in the revolution they fought together and together they found the best solutions.” This line of thought, emphasizing both the separate identities of Serbs, Croats and Muslims as well as their common enterprise in the socialist Bosnian republic, was typical of the session.

⁶³ Iva Lučić, “Stavovi Centralnog Komiteta Saveza Komunisti Jugoslavije o nacionalnom identiteta bosanskih Muslimana/Bošnjaka,” in *Raspave o nacionalnom identiteta Bošnjaka* (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 2009), pp. 100-105.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

The debate at the 17th session of the CKSKBiH reached its conclusion a few months later at the 20th. While the 17th had been entirely devoted to a discussion of the national question in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it was only at the 20th that Muslim nationhood was explicitly affirmed. Namely, in the session's conclusions, the CKSKBiH proclaimed that "Practice has shown the harm of various forms of the pressure and insistence in the earlier period that Muslims orient themselves in national terms as Serbs or Croats, for it was evident earlier, and present-day socialist practice confirms, that Muslims are a separate nation."⁶⁵ With this statement, Muslims were formally elevated to the status of a nation in Bosnian Communist institutions. Shortly afterwards, at a special session in Mostar, CKSKBiH member Uglješa Danilović further re-iterated this point and criticized the Party's earlier conduct. "It was evidently a mistake of us Communists in Bosnia-Herzegovina to allow the purely bourgeoisie stance that Muslims must necessarily orient themselves as Serbs or as Croats to enter our practice unnoticed" he said. "This meant forcing one nation to declare itself according to a bourgeoisie recipe."⁶⁶

Although the Bosnian Communists decided to recognize a Muslim nation for a number of reasons, their decision was primarily a result of the political project of Yugoslav liberalization and the aspirations these Communists held for Bosnia-Herzegovina within it. In the 1960s, Yugoslav liberals sought to respond to economic stagnation and charges of authoritarianism by attempting grassroots democratization, instituting decentralization and emphasizing republic economic autonomy. As pursued by Tito, this project particularly focused on bolstering the "national periphery" and

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 106.

⁶⁶ Uglješa Danilović, "Savez Komunističke Partije može svetla obraza da položi račun o svom delovanju" [1968], in *O "Nacionaliziranju" Muslimana*, ed. Alija Isaković (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), p. 178.

strengthening the institutions of Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The last in particular was critical in balancing competing political, economic and national interests in Yugoslavia, both because of its multiethnic population and because it had up until that point essentially functioned as a Serbian satellite; its Communist leadership was overwhelmingly Serb, and the republic typically followed the political lead of the Serbian Party. In addressing concerns over Croat marginalization and recognizing Muslims as a third nation, the emerging Bosnian Communist leadership broke this earlier Serb conservative hegemony and re-positioned Bosnia-Herzegovina as a more autonomous factor within the Yugoslav federation. This rejuvenated Bosnian republic fit nicely into Tito's agenda as well, not simply because it furthered efforts at decentralization, but because of the personal loyalty its new Communist cadres had for him as well; a few years later, when Tito terminated the liberalizing project and sided with Party conservatives, Bosnia-Herzegovina once again backed him, this time serving as a bulwark against Croatian nationalism.⁶⁷

Another factor in the Bosnian Communist's policy was a growing concern with the potential threat posed by certain elements in the IZ. Husnija Kamberović, the current director of the Institute for History in Sarajevo, is perhaps the most prominent proponent of this theory, although Sabrina Ramet briefly expressed similar arguments as well.⁶⁸ Essentially, although the Communists kept a close watch on the activities of Muslim religious institutions, there were growing concerns in the Party at this time about a new generation of Bosnian Muslim Islamists. For obvious reasons, Bosnian Communists were

⁶⁷ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 234.

⁶⁸ Kamberović, "Bošnjaci 1968," p. 73; Sabrina Ramet, "Primordial Ethnicity or Modern Nationalism: The Case of Yugoslavia's Muslims, Reconsidered," in *Muslim Communities Reemerge*, ed. Edward Allworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 111-134.

worried that these Islamist activists, disillusioned with the establishment stance of the senior-most IZ officials, could challenge the SKBiH's influence in Muslim communal affairs. The preparatory material for a 1969 session of the CKSKBiH is exemplary of these concerns, remarking that "in recent times, one can notice the aspiration of Muslim clericals to reform the Muslim church (probably based on the model of the Catholic church) and to bring it out of a purely theological framework and involve it in all aspects of modern life."⁶⁹ For obvious reasons, Bosnian Communists saw such a more active Islamic Community as a threat to their political project – as the above-cited preparatory material pointedly remarked, "All of this can only lead to the spread of chauvinism and the creation of distrust." As the date of this session of the CKSKBiH indicates, however, such concerns seem to have largely come up only after the Party had already recognized Muslims as a separate nation. While this was therefore an important factor in SKBiH policy in the period following national recognition, it does not necessarily explain why the Communists favored recognizing Muslims as a separate nation in the first place.

One more factor worth considering is the role that Bosnian Muslims played in Yugoslav foreign policy. Following the Tito-Stalin split and Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform, Tito joined with Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in advocating an international coalition of states not officially allied with either the United States or the Soviet Union. The resulting Non-Aligned Movement, formed in Belgrade in 1961, gained Yugoslavia international prestige in the decolonizing third world. Since many of these emerging nations were predominantly Muslim, it suddenly became politically advantageous to portray

⁶⁹ Kamberović, "Bošnjaci 1968," p. 76

Yugoslavia as “the second-strongest Muslim country in Europe, after Turkey”⁷⁰ Yugoslav policy makers therefore made sure to provide visiting Muslim dignitaries with tours of Sarajevo’s Ottoman quarter, while in turn appointing Bosnian Muslims as ambassadors to the various capitals of the Islamic world.⁷¹ Given these foreign policy interests, it also became advantageous to grant Bosnian Muslims greater institutional prominence than in earlier times. Tito was personally aware of this; when Mikulić mentioned to him in 1969 that the Bosnian Communists had solved the Muslim Question, he responded that “this [has] come at a very good time for us, because we have relations with Arab countries.”⁷² While further research would shed more light on the influence of such thinking, Tito’s statement shows that he himself certainly had this factor in mind.

To better understand the phenomenon of Muslim national recognition, however, it is not enough to explain why this recognition came when it did; it is equally important to consider why it took the *form* that it did. Namely, why did Bosnian Communists insist on the national name Muslim, as opposed to Bosnian, Bosniak or even Yugoslav? To begin with, the SKJ was not inventing a tradition in making the term Muslim a national category, but merely giving it a new significance. Since the beginning of the 20th century, “Muslim,” rather than the more offensive “Turk” or “Mohammedan,” was the official term used by Austria-Hungarian authorities to refer to the Bosnian Muslim population.⁷³ “Muslim” was also the primary identity used by these people to distinguish themselves

⁷⁰ Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, pp. 167.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Kamberović, “Stav političke elite,” *Prilozi* No. 38 (2009): p. 186.

⁷³ Mustafa Imamović. “Istorijske opservacije” [1969], in *Knjige i zbivanja* (Sarajevo: Magistrat, 2008), p. 47.

from other ethno-religious groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and intellectuals like Hadžijahić had advocated a Muslim nationhood much earlier than the 1960s.

Nonetheless, in the various sessions, speeches and articles through which the Bosnian Communists propagated the idea of a Muslim nation in the late 1960s, they not only affirmed the term “Muslim” but also rejected the terms “Bosnian,” “Bosniak,” and “Yugoslav” as acceptable markers of national identity. I have already discussed the ways in which “Yugoslav” national identity fell out of favor, and the terms “Bosnian” and “Bosniak” posed similar problems to the SKBiH. Elevating a hitherto regional term such as “Bosnian” to the status of a national identity would have implied that Bosnian Serbs and Croats were now Bosnians of a second class, or worse, should be assimilated into the new Bosnian nation. In fact, the term Bosniak, while technically synonymous with Bosnian, was interpreted as even worse, because in the Austria-Hungarian period it was associated with exactly such a policy. The Bosnian Communists were interested in according the Muslims nationhood, but not at the expense of propagating any new “unitary” national identity. “Bosnian” and “Yugoslav” were thus salvaged as markers of regional and socialist patriotic identity respectively, but by no means a possible source of nationalist sentiment.

3.5 National Affirmation

Having formally recognized Muslim nationhood, the Bosnian Communist political leadership and intellectual circles undertook a campaign to further affirm the

new policy. It was then, in that wake of the 17th and 20th sessions of the CKSKBiH, that many of the Muslim intellectuals within the SKBiH published the fruits of their previous years of academic labor. In the years 1968 and 1969, for instance, Purivatra published several different articles on the history of the JMO, the Party's stance on the Muslim question during World War II and arguments for the ethnic nature of Bosnian Muslim identity. These articles, together with his earlier work, were then published in 1970 under the title *Nacionalni i politički razvitak Muslimana* (The National and Political Development of Muslims). Meanwhile, Purivatra's collaboration with Hadžijahić at the Faculty of Political Sciences, launched in 1967, was entering high gear, and Hadžijahić was authoring a number of articles on Bosnian Muslim history that he would eventually publish in 1974 as the seminal *Od tradicije do identiteta* (From Tradition to Identity).⁷⁴ Similarly, in 1969, Salim Ćerić, another Muslim intellectual within the SKJ, published *Muslimani srpskohrvatskog jezika* (Serbo-Croat speaking Muslims), which Imamović praised in his review as “a work which further study of the history of Serbo-Croat-speaking Muslims will have to take into account.”⁷⁵

But the post-recognition intellectual affirmation of Muslim nationhood was not just carried out by the coterie of political scientists who had written on the subject earlier. Rather, historians also began to discuss the Muslim Question at a number of notable historical conferences in these years. In November, 1968, for example, shortly after the CKSKBiH's political recognition, the Institute for History in Sarajevo helped organize a conference on “The Historical Foundations of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Redžić, *Sto godina*, p. 89.

⁷⁵ Imamović, *Istorijske opservacije*, p. 55.

⁷⁶ Kamberović, “Stav političke elite,” *Prilozi* No. 38 (2009): p. 170.

Some 80 intellectuals attended, and the 30 of them who lectured touched frequently on the question of Muslim national identity; Avdo Sućeska, an academic associated with the previously-mentioned Oriental Institute, was one of them, arguing that Bosnian Muslims gradually formed a separate society in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the long period of Ottoman rule.⁷⁷ Sućeska would advance similar views at the Fifth Congress of Yugoslav Historians in Ohrid, Macedonia, in 1969. Dedicated to “Ethnic and National Processes in our Country,” this conference attracted roughly 1,000 delegates and guests.⁷⁸ Although it had a wider pan-Yugoslav focus and included many papers on Macedonian national identity,⁷⁹ Imamović, writing down his impressions in *Oslobođenje* at the end of the month, remarked that “The national question of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims was at the center of the Congressional delegates’ attention, so that there practically was not a single speaker who avoided mentioning this subject.”⁸⁰ Sućeska’s article on the “Historical Foundations of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslim Individuality” garnered particular attention, and helped pave the way for further study of Bosnian Muslim national identity in Yugoslav historiography.⁸¹

By the turn of the decade, however, the arena for discussing questions of national identity expanded beyond Party assemblies, historical conferences and the academic press. The reason for this development was the upcoming 1971 population census; whereas Yugoslav Communists, operating in a one-party political system, had hitherto

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁷⁸ Mustafa Imamović. “Pažnja prema istoriji naroda I narodnosti” [1969], in *Knjige i zbivanja* (Sarajevo: Magistrat, 2008), p. 59.

⁷⁹ Along with the “Muslim Question,” Macedonian national identity and institutions were also part of the SKJ’s campaign to strengthen the “national periphery.”

⁸⁰ Imamović, *Pažnja*, p. 61.

⁸¹ Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika*, p. 235.

been able to settle questions of nationality behind closed doors, the census essentially put their nationality policy to a popular referendum. Husnija Kamberović, writing on the political context of the recognition of Muslim nationhood in the 1960s, argued that Yugoslav Communists did not invent a new identity but rather recognized one that was already there, and that this is what explains “Why there were no great public promotions of Muslim national identity at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. The individual actions of intellectuals were limited to the period ahead of the 1971 population census.”⁸² But to the contrary, the reason why any sort of mass propagation of the Muslim nationality was limited to the build-up to the 1971 census is precisely because this was the only time that the opinion of the masses mattered. The intended audience of the Bosnian Communist leadership and intellectual circles mentioned earlier had not been the mass of people who would constitute the new Muslim nation, but other Party members and academics; even the most accessible books, such as Ćerić’s *Muslimani srpskohrvatskog jezika*, were probably limited to the bookshelves of educated Muslim families in the cities. The 1971 census was the first time since the fall of Ranković that the SKJ’s refashioned nationality policy, including the new category of “national” Muslims, was put before the entire Muslim population in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, since the census allowed respondents to register as members of whatever nation they wished, the SKJ ran the risk of Bosnian Muslims registering as Yugoslavs, Turkish minorities in Macedonia and Kosovo registering as nationally Muslim and various other undesirable outcomes. Given this very real possibility, the Bosnian Communists who had agitated within the Party for Muslim national recognition now faced pressure for the census results to legitimize their nationality policy.

⁸² Kamberović, “Bošnjaci 1968,” p. 69

To better understand the context of the 1971 census, it is also important to briefly look at Yugoslav society in the early 1970s “from below.” The reason that this thesis focuses so extensively on societal elites, such as Party members and various academics, is because the “National Question” in late 1960s Bosnia-Herzegovina was largely their preoccupation; the bulk of the population, ranging from peasants to blue-collar workers in the cities and towns, had a fundamentally different experience in this period. Namely, between 1948 and 1971, the urban population of Bosnia-Herzegovina had more than tripled.⁸³ The main source of this growth was the migration of people from the countryside to the cities, where they settled in large, newly-built tower-block apartment complexes. These new residential buildings obliterated the ethnic divisions of the countryside, and, along with city schools and the urban work environment, brought large groups of people with diverse ethnic and geographic origins into close contact with each other.⁸⁴ Not surprisingly, one consequence of this was an increased rate of interethnic marriage, which became common in multiethnic cities such as Sarajevo and Mostar. At the same time, between 1956 and 1972, the Yugoslav standard of living increased nearly three-and-a-half-fold, as general economic development, urbanization and the inflow of cash from guest-worker relatives in more developed countries like West Germany all came together to create an emerging consumer culture.⁸⁵ This consumer culture also bypassed traditional ethnic boundaries, because the new consumer ideal was marketed as pan-Yugoslav and available to all citizens regardless of nationality.⁸⁶ Taken together,

⁸³ Hoare, *Bosnia*, p. 329.

⁸⁴ Hannes Grandits, “Ambivalentnosti u socijalističkoj nacionalnoj politici Bosne i Hercegovine u kasnim 1960-im i u 1970-im,” in *Raspave o nacionalnom identiteta Bošnjaka* (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 2009), p. 27.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

these processes of urbanization and consumerism helped foster a supra-ethnic sense of Bosnian and pan-Yugoslav identity; many young people, in particular, found the idea of declaring their nationality as Yugoslav appealing.

Given these conditions, it is understandable that the Bosnian Communist political elite made a concerted effort to encourage Bosnians to adopt certain favored forms of identity and reject others that contradicted SKJ nationality policy. Additional pressure also came from elements in the SKJ, particularly Serbian conservative circles, who opposed Muslim national recognition in principle and would have in fact preferred the promotion of some sort of Yugoslav identity. In a May, 1968 session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia (Centralni komitet saveza komunista Srbije or CKSKS), author Dobrica Ćosić and historian Jovan Marjanović expressed dismay at “the senseless announcement of a new Muslim nation in Yugoslavia,” which they identified as the abandonment of Yugoslav identity by emphasizing “those elements by which we are different and which divide us nationally instead of those that draw us closer together.”⁸⁷ In response to such opinion, Bosnian Communist lobbied with both federal policy makers and the populace at large. In terms of the former, for example, Mikulić countered the arguments of men like Ćosić and Marjanović in a March, 1970 conversation with Tito. “We know of those reservations,” Mikulić told Tito, but argued that calls for Muslims to identify as Yugoslavs or Bosnians instead were essentially just “denials of [the Muslims’] individuality and uniqueness.”⁸⁸ Meanwhile, within the SKBiH, “heretics” who also sympathized with notions of Yugoslav and Bosnian identity

⁸⁷ Höpken, *Communists and Muslims*, p. 235; Lučić, “Stavovi,” p. 109.

⁸⁸ Kamberović, “Stav političke elite,” *Prilozi* No. 38 (2009): p. 176-177.

were summarily chastised. This was the fate of Enver Redžić, who specifically suggested that citizens maintain the right to identify with these two categories:

A session of the Presidency of the Republic conference of the SSRNBiH was called to evaluate and assess my views... First the vice president of the CKSKBiH, Hasan Grabčanović, spoke in the name of the Secretariat of the CKSKBiH and the president of the CKSKBiH Branko Mikulić. He said that Redžić's stance contained massive political implications. Atif Purivatra claimed that Redžić's stance did not contribute to the advancement of inter-national relations and that it was not clear what Redžić's goal was with this intervention. Mustafa Vilović stated that Redžić's stance was discriminatory, anti-historical and unscientific; Ivan Brigić added that Redžić's approach to Yugoslavism did not accept class or revolutionary principles. Ahmet Čatić expressed the belief that Redžić, through his stance, provoked confusion among the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina... the session of the Presidency of the Republic conference of the SSRNBiH ran as a show of single-minded support for the promotion of the "Muslim nation" and the rejection of the possibility that citizens in the population census could declare themselves as Yugoslavs or Bosnians.⁸⁹

In terms of the Bosnian population at large, Communists like Pozderac expressed concern about the appeal that Yugoslav identity held for the younger generation, and called for greater Party efforts to educate them about the errors of such views. "Yugoslavism as a national or supra-national category negates national equality and harms the positive development of national interests," he wrote in a Party newspaper on the eve of the census in 1971, adding that "There is some orientation toward Yugoslavism, especially among younger people, as a way of reacting to and resisting various forms of nationalism. This precisely shows the need for strengthening our activities in the fight against nationalism and explaining the stance of the League of Communists on the National Question."⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Grandits, "Ambivalentnosti," pp. 18-19.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 33.

On the ground, the ideologues who had fashioned the Party-approved concept of Muslim nationhood took up this responsibility to explain the SKBiH's views to the people. In a dialogue set up by *Oslobođenje* between its readers and Party intellectuals, Purivatra defended the choice of "Muslim" as a national name, arguing that the terms "Bosnian" or "Bosniak" would have "represented an attempt to revive unitary Yugoslavism through the specific national relations in this republic. This would have equally negated the national individuality of Serbs, Croats and Muslims, as well as members of other nations and nationalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina."⁹¹ But Purivatra's activities extended far beyond answering readers' letters in Bosnia-Herzegovina's largest daily newspaper. A brochure he authored with Kasim Suljević, a like-minded intellectual, was published in mass quantities and spread among Bosnian Muslims to convince them to declare themselves as nationally Muslim.⁹² Furthermore, Purivatra took full advantage of television and radio, not only appearing on them himself, but encouraging them to feature programs that would educate the population about the forthcoming census. Milan Uzelac, the director of Radio Television Sarajevo, recalled one day when Purivatra came to his office door and "with the tone of someone who had finally gotten his five minutes, still in the doorway, asked 'Shall we?' He then began to speak passionately about the coverage of national issues, meaning Muslim ones. In his mind, all regular programming should be repressed and replaced with national issues that would never be removed from the air."⁹³

⁹¹ Kamberović, "Bošnjaci 1968," p. 69

⁹² Kamberović, "Stav političke elite," *Prilozi* No. 38 (2009): p. 17.

⁹³ Kamberović, "Bošnjaci 1968," p. 69

One further interesting aspect of Purivatra's agitation ahead of the 1971 census is his collaboration with the IZ and Muslim religious authorities. Purivatra worked particularly closely with the Islamic scholar Husein Đozo, an Al-Azhar graduate and founder of *Preporod* (Renaissance), a prominent Bosnian Muslim religious newspaper. Specifically, Đozo gave Purivatra and other Bosnian Communists, including non-Muslims, a platform to write in *Preporod* and educate Muslims about the national aspect of their identity.⁹⁴ Furthermore, he even organized seminars at which Communist officials and intellectuals gave speeches on Muslim national identity to Bosnian Imams, who were then sent back to their Džemats (local congregations) with copies of Purivatra and Suljević's above-mentioned brochure and instructions to prepare local Muslim believers ahead of the census.⁹⁵ Purivatra does not appear to have altered his message in any way to match this new religious medium; the Muslim nation he was advocating remained defined in secular terms. Nonetheless, his work with Đozo illustrates the growing relationship between secular intellectuals and the religious establishment in propagating Muslim nationhood. This link would prove critical in later years, when the regime cracked down on both camps – renegade Muslim Communists and Islamic activists – with the accusation of “Muslim extremism.”

Although it is difficult to gauge exactly what influence the Bosnian Communist's agitation for Muslim nationhood had on the final results, the 1971 census almost certainly met their expectations. A total of 1,482,430 people declared as “Muslims in the sense of nationality,” representing 39.6% of the total population of Bosnia-Herzegovina and more

⁹⁴ Omerika, “The Role of Islam,” *Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2 (2006): pp. 365.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

than a three-quarter increase from the total number in 1961.⁹⁶ The number of citizens still declaring as Yugoslavs experienced a sharp decline, dropping from 275,883 to 43,796 and representing only 1.2% of the republic population. With these results, Muslims overtook Serbs as the largest ethno-confessional community in Bosnia-Herzegovina for the first time since the 19th century, becoming the new plurality in the republic. As part of this massive population increase, Muslims also went from forming a majority in 25 of Bosnia-Herzegovina's 100 municipalities to predominating in 42.⁹⁷ The 1971 census, in large part owing to the efforts of the SKBiH leadership, thus represents a landmark event in the demographic history of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

3.6 Conclusions

The first twenty-five years of socialist Yugoslavia saw a dramatic change in the institutional status of Bosnian Muslims. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the SKJ essentially reverted to its policy from the early years of the first Yugoslavia, designating Muslims a religious community and expecting them to “orient themselves” toward Serb or Croat national identity. For their own part, however, the Muslim masses consistently rejected such pressures in the post-war censuses, overwhelmingly identifying as “Muslims nationally unoriented” or, later on, as “Yugoslavs.” When the latter term fell out favor as part of the late 1950s’ move to liberalization, the long-dormant “Muslim Question” was re-opened. By the mid-1960s, under the broader umbrella of

⁹⁶ Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, pp. 155-156.

⁹⁷ Hopken, *Communists and Muslims*, pp. 235-236.

decentralization and strengthening the national periphery, the Bosnian Communist leadership and secular Muslim intellectuals began pushing for the recognition of a separate Muslim nation. They achieved this on the republic level in 1968 and, thanks in part to their efforts aimed at the wider population, reinforced their position with the results of the 1971 census. Thanks to their efforts in these years, Bosnian Muslims would go on to gain significantly increased political significance on both the republic and federal levels, as illustrated by their inclusion as one of the six Yugoslav nations mentioned in the 1974 federal constitution.

Conclusion

The three chapters I included in this thesis deal with three distinct periods in Bosnian and Yugoslav history: the constitutional deadlock and underground leftist movement of the interwar era, the Partisan resistance to the Nazi occupation during World War II and the Yugoslav Communists' struggles with the persistent "National Question" in the first few post-war decades. All together, it is a wide span of time, encompassing 52 years and six revisions to the Yugoslav constitution, four changes in Bosnia-Herzegovina's borders, a multitude of census categories and an array of intellectual and political figures ranging from Džemaludin Čaušević to Dobrica Ćosić. Although I could probably have devoted this thesis to any one of these three periods specifically, I think this approach has its benefits as well, offering a broader perspective and highlighting some long-term trends in the development of the "Muslim Question."

Phrased differently, the "Muslim Question" essentially translated to "What to do with our Muslims?" In the early years of the Yugoslav state, the consensus answer was "nationalization." Politicians across the political spectrum, from Marxists like Sima Marković to fascists like Ante Pavelić, expected Muslims to "nationally orient themselves" towards a more modern, national sense of identity, whether Serb, Croat or even Yugoslav. Among the Muslims themselves, elites within the JMO individually identified as Serbs or Croats, but the vast majority of Bosnian Muslims remained essentially a-national, identifying exclusively as Muslims in an ethno-religious sense. These Muslim masses, politically underrepresented and economically marginalized, made

an appealing potential constituency for the underground Communist movement. With the beginning of Tito's reign as Party secretary and the era of the Popular Front, the KPJ appealed to them by advocating Bosnian autonomy. As part of this appeal, Party members like Edvard Kardelj began to reconsider the nature of the Muslims' communal identity, increasingly categorizing them as an ethnic group. This was particularly true among Muslim Communists, such as Avdo Humo, Osman Karabegović and other sons of prominent Muslim families harshly affected by the botched land reform.

Entering World War II, the KPJ's Partisan resistance movement adopted the parole of "Brotherhood and Unity" and strove to lead a "national liberation struggle" that included all of the Yugoslav nations. The movement was ambiguous, however, as to whether this included the Bosnian Muslims as well. KPJ propaganda frequently listed Muslims alongside Serbs and Croats in its appeals for them to join the Partisan ranks, treating them as a *de facto* nation but without necessarily making this status explicit. Part of the reason for this hesitance was that some within the Partisan leadership, like Veselin Masleša and Milovan Đilas, were ideologically opposed to making a nation out of what they saw as strictly a religious group; from a Marxist perspective, this appeared counter-productive. Nonetheless, when the time came to set up the embryonic institutions of a post-war Yugoslav state, the Communists formally recognized Muslims as a group equal to the Serbs and Croats in the founding documents of the new Bosnian republic. The Partisans' handling of the "Muslim Question" during World War II was therefore ambiguous and occasionally contradictory, but ultimately such that, following the war, many Bosnian Muslims expected some sort of status equal to the other Yugoslav nations.

Their hopes were frustrated only shortly into the life of socialist Yugoslavia, as the Communists once again relegated the Muslims to the status of a mere religious community. In a sense then, by 1948, the KPJ had gone back full circle to its views at the time of Sima Marković, once again expecting Muslims to “nationally orient themselves.” When the Party entered a phase of liberalization in the late 1950s, however, the “Muslim Question” was taken in the entirely opposite direction, and further than the Communists had ever taken it before. In the 1960s, driven by a desire to strengthen the position of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Yugoslav federation, liberal-minded elements in the Bosnian Communist leadership began advocating for the recognition of Muslims as a separate nation. They conducted this endeavor as part of the Yugoslav liberals’ wider effort to decentralize the country, and legitimized it through recent research by secular Muslim intellectuals within the SKBiH. The Bosnians achieved this in their own republic in 1968, before entrenching the Muslims’ new status in the 1971 federal census. Three years later, in 1974, Muslims were formally recognized as a constituent nation in a new federal constitution.

This broader account of the Yugoslav Communists’ role in the development of Bosnian Muslim national identity highlights several distinct themes and invites some tentative conclusions, a few of which deserve particular mention here in this closing section of my thesis. First, Yugoslav Communists played a decisive role in the development of a separate Bosnian Muslim national identity. In fact, at the outset of World War II, Bosnian Muslims were in an extremely unfavorable geo-political position for their continued survival as a distinct ethnic group. Following Cvetković-Maček, the consensus of nearly all relevant political actors was that Bosnia-Herzegovina was dead

and buried. Whether in banates within Yugoslavia or in a separate greater-Serb or greater-Croat state, Bosnian Muslims would have been split between Serb and Croat national territories whose respective national leaderships would have favored either their immediate assimilation into the larger national body or else would not have particularly cared if they were massacred or expelled.

The Bosnian Muslims' status as a relevant ethno-religious community, much less their eventual nationhood, therefore, depended in large part on the existence of an autonomous and multiethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina. The KPJ was the only group that both favored this solution and had the means to implement it, for as an independent political or military actor, Bosnian Muslims were largely irrelevant and would probably not have been able to do so alone. Furthermore, the KPJ was the only significant political actor that even remotely considered the possibility that Muslims could form a separate ethno-national group. It did so because it was the only significant non-nationalist political party in interwar Yugoslavia, and because its practical considerations during the war prompted it to treat Bosnian Muslims as a distinct category in its calls for "national liberation."

It is also interesting to note that the Communists' views of Muslim identity changed according to the fate of "Yugoslav" as a national category. In the first few years of the Yugoslav state, the KPJ under Marković was one of several parties that believed in a single "Yugoslav" nation consisting of three "tribes." According to Marković himself, Muslim nationalization in this view amounted to their identifying as Yugoslavs instead of Turks. When the Party shifted to viewing Yugoslavia as a patriotic union of several distinct nations during the Popular Front and World War II, however, Muslims were increasingly accepted, particularly within Bosnia-Herzegovina, as a separate ethnic

group. Similarly, in the first decade following the war, the Communists once again experimented with Yugoslav as a quasi-national category and Muslims were correspondingly demoted to a nationally undetermined religious group. When this unitary Yugoslavism fell out of favor following the 1958 Party Program, the Party quickly re-elevated Muslims to the status of a *de facto* separate people, before eventually recognizing them as a separate nation in the late 1960s. As long as the Party considered the idea of some sort of quasi-national pan-Yugoslav identity therefore, it saw no real point to reconsidering the Bosnian Muslims' identity as anything more than a religious label that would eventually wither away. When Yugoslavism was rejected in favor of emphasizing the individuality of the Yugoslav nations, however, elements within the Party would sooner consider the Muslims as a group in their own right than encourage their assimilation into the bourgeoisie nationalism of the Serbs or Croats.

Lastly, it is important to re-iterate that Yugoslav Communists, in recognizing a separate Muslim nation, were not simply imposing a nation from above, but also responding to signals from below. From 1919 to 1971, despite decades of societal pressure to register as such, the overwhelming majority of Muslims continued to see themselves as separate from Serbs and Croats. Furthermore, Bosnian Muslim calls for their own separate nationality existed long before the SKBiH decided to force the issue in the late 1960s, and it is no coincidence that many of the Party members most responsible for the eventual recognition had names such as Osman, Muhamed and Mustafa. This is not to say that the development of a Muslim nation was inevitable – few things in history are – but it was certainly a process where the community's own political and intellectual elite, as in many other cases of nationalism, played a significant role.

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