Albania Essay, Research Paper

The destruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina is proof, if proof were needed, that the actions of states are not determined by ethical or humanitarian consideration. The war of conquest launched by Serbia, and joined by Crotia, was allowed to take its genocide course because the defense of Bosnia and its citizens was not an imperative dictated by national or security interests of any state. There is nothing new here; nothing new to lament. This is the way we have ordered our world.

(Rabbi Ali & Lipschultz, Lawrence xi)

Introduction

In a country, where the people have been subjugated all of their lives, one can easily understand why such importance is placed on maintaining social and cultural integrity. The Albanians have lost land, money, religious freedoms and lives in their continuing struggle against tyranny. Through all of Albania s domination, it has been able to maintain certain culture mannerism. These cultural mannerisms have given the Albanian people something in common, as well as something to be identified by.

Origin of the Albanian People

Albanians are believed to be the descendants of the Illyrians. Although there is no conclusive evidence to substantiate this claim, strong indicators have lead historian to come to that conclusion. One, major indictors is the Albanian language. The similarities between both languages are apparent. In addition, the languages of the bordering countries of Albania speak completely different languages. The kingdom of Illyria originally was composed of the following countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Dalmatia, Montenegro, and a large portion of Serbia. At its apex, the kingdom of Illyria controlled the kingdoms of Molssia, and a good part of Macedonian. It seemed as though Illyria would have a prosperous future. Unfortunately, it was during this same period that Illyria would begin to weaken at the hands of Philip of Mecedon. However, it would be Rome, who first subjugated the people of Illyria.

Roman Domination of Illyria

In 165 BC, Illyria was defeated by the Romans. One of the first actions taken by the Romans was the separation of Illyrian State into three independent republics. Romans would control Illyria, which now became the province of Illyricum, for six centuries. During these six hundred years of foreign domination, the culture of Illyria would be greatly affected. Art and culture flourished, particularly in Apollonia, whose school of philosophy was celebrated in antiquity (BRS Albania 2). Another, major influence which Roman rule had on Illyria was the manifestation of Christianity in Illyria. Original religious practices in Illyria included, but were not limited to Mithra, paganism, and other Oriental cults. Although Illyrians resisted conversion into Roman culture, by the middle of the first century AD, Illyrians had become engulfed in Christianity. With the acceptance of Christianity, Illyrian tongue was transformed as well. Many Latin words were assimilated into the language, and are today a part of the Albanian language. While under Roman domination, not all aspects of life were contained. Illyrians would establish influences in the Roman military power structure; with several of them becoming emperors.

New State is Born

Along with the split of the Roman Empire, the present day territories of Albania became part of the Byzantine Empire. During the first ten years of Byzantine rule, Illyria suffered massive havoc imposed by raiding Viusgoths, Huns, and Ostrogoths. Once the Barbarians had swept through the Balkans, the Slavs appeared. From the sixth to the eight-century they settled in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia, and quickly assimilated the region inhabitants. Unlike Northern tribes, Southern tribes avoided assimilation and preserved their native tongue. In the course of several centuries, under the impact of Roman, Byzantine, and Slavic cultures, the tribes of southern Illyria underwent a transformation, and a transition occurred from the old Illyrian population to a new Albanian one (BRS Albania 3).” In 1081, for the first time in historical record, Alexius I Commenus would mention Albania and the Albanians. Unfortunately, he was referring to the Albanians in an account of resistance, to an offensive by the Normans. This became a reoccurring pattern for Albania. It would not be for joyful reasons that Albania would be refereed to; instead, it would be due to disastrous ones, accounts of invasion.

Waves of Invasions and Foreign Domination

Due to the weakness of the Byzantine Empire, Albania would be invaded by Serbia in the Twelfth century. Then, in 1204, after western crusaders sacked Constaninople, Venice won nominal control over Albania and the Epirus region of northern Greece and took possession of Durres (BRS Ottoman Conquest of Albania 2). With the assistance of a prince, from an overthrown Byzantine family, Albania successfully forced Venice from its country. Then, in 1272 the king of Naples, Charles I of Anjou, occupied Durres and formed an Albanian Kingdom, which flourished for the next century. Unfortunately, due to the weakness of the Byzantine Empire, Serbia was able to established in Empire in Albania during the fourteenth century. Serbians would not remain in power for long. The division of the Albanian populated lands into small, quarreling fiefdoms ruled by independent feudal lords and tribal chiefs made them easy prey for the ottoman armies. In 1385, the Albanian ruler of Durres, Karl Thopia, appealed to the sultan for support against his rivals, the Balsha family. An Ottoman force quickly marched into Albania along the Via Egnatia and routed the Balsha. The principal in the Balkans in 1423, and the Turks took Janina in 1431 and Arta on the Ionian coast, in 1449. The Turks allowed the conquered Albanian clan chiefs to maintain their position and property, but they had to pay tribute, send their sons to the Turkish court as hostages, and provide the Ottoman Army with Auxiliary troops (BRS Ottoman Conquest of Albania 2). Turks would enjoy present conditions until Gjergi Kastriot, one of Albania s greatest national heroes, declared a holy war against the Turks. As a young boy, Kastriot, who was later named Skanderbeg, was converted to Islam. This was one of the above-mentioned conditions, which allowed Albanian chiefs to maintain their position. However, as soon as Skanderbeg was given the opportunity to defect, he did and he reembraced Roman Catholicism as well. On March 1, 1444, Albanian chieftains gathered in the cathedral of Lezhe with the prince of Montenegro and the delegates from Venice and proclaimed Skanderbeg commander of the Albanian resistance (BRS Albania Under Ottoman Rule 1). For the following twenty-four years, Skanderbeg held off ferocious Ottoman campaigns. He was even able to fight off attacks lead by Sultan Mehmed II. Would there be a chance for Albania to establish itself as a country? Would the people of Albania not have to covert to Islam? Unfortunately not, in 1468 Skanderbeg died. This brought great joy to the Sultan, who is said to have said, Asia and Europe are mine at last. Woe to Christendom! She has lost her sword and shield (BRS Albania Reemergence after World War I 1). Even with the assistance of Naples and the Vatican, Albania was not able to hold of the Ottoman Empire. In 1478, Kruja fell to the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, in fear of assimilation, many Albanians flee to neighboring countries such as Sicily, Greece, Romania, and Egypt, and converted to Roman Catholicism. As for the ones who decided to stay behind, they were forced to convert to Islam. The Ottoman Turks first focused their conversions campaigns on the Roman Catholics, Albanians of the north and then on the Orthodox population of the south. For example, the authorities increased taxes, especially poll taxes, to make conversions economically attractive. During and after a Christian counteroffensive against the Ottoman Empire from 1687 to 1690, when Albanian Catholics revolted against the Muslim overlords, the Ottoman Pasha of Pec, a town in the south of present day Yugoslavia, retaliated by forcing the entire Albanian villages to accept Islam. Albanians who converted to Islam, found jobs in the military and government, but it did not mean that they were unconditionally accepted by the Ottoman Military. In fact in 1830, 1000 Albanian leaders were invited to meet an Ottoman General, who killed approximately half of them. Then, in 1835 Albanian populated lands are divided into vilayets of Janina, Manastir, Shkodra, and Kosovo with Ottoman administrators.

Birth of Albania

In 1877, the treaty of San Stefano assigned Areas populated by Albanian to Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Serbia. Fortunately, Austria-Hungry and Britain blocked the treaty implementation. After that, Albanian leaders would create the Prizren League in 1878, who sole purpose was to secure territorial autonomy. In 1912, right before the war in the Balkans, as surrounding countries tried to claim areas of Albania, the League declared Albanian independence. In 1913, the great powers endorsed Albania s independence. Unfortunately, when the great powers decided to grant Albania its independence, they also decided the geographical boundaries of Albania. But in drawing the borders of the new state, owing to strong pressure from Albanian s neighbors, the Great Powers largely ignored demographic realities and ceded the vast region of Kosovo to Serbia . However, Albania s independence was short lived. Alone with the outbreak of the First World War, came the collapse of Albania. Political chaos engulfed Albania after the outbreak of World War I. Surrounded by insurgent Durres, Prince Wilhem departed the country in September 1914, just six months after arriving, and subsequently joined the German army and served on the Eastern Front. The Albanian people split among religious and tribal lines after the princess departure. Muslims demanded a Muslim prince and looked to Turkey as the protector of the privileges they had enjoyed. Other Albanians became little more than agents of Italy and Serbia, still others, including many boys and clan chief, recognized no superior authority. It did not matter much what anyone thought, because when the war ended most of Albania had been occupied by Italian troops. This action was supported by National Assembly, The National Assembly, anxious to keep Albania intact, expressed willingness to accept Italian protection and even an Italian prince as ruler so long as it would mean Albania did not lose territory.

Continuos Struggle to Remain a Nation

When would Albanians be able to live in peace, without the worry of invasions, persecutions, and war? It may never happen. Albania has been used as a deck of cards. With world Powers being the players of the game. During the course of the game, they have forgot that they were dealing with a culture, not just a piece of land that could be divided evenly amongst them. Due to disregard of Ethnic background when the borders of Albania were established, the people’s future is grim. Starting in 1919, the Serbs attacked the Albanians inhabitants of Gusinje and Plav with regular troops and artillery after the Albanians appealed to Britain for protection. The Serbs massacred some of the Albanians and forced about 35,000 people to flee the Shkoder area. In Kosovo the Serbs subjected the Albanians to brutalities, stripped them of territory under the guise of land reform. 1925, after a political struggle, a man by the name of Zogu emerges as president (1925-1928, then as King Zog I (1928-1939). Due to the economic state of Albania, Zog signed numerous accords with Italy. However, they all proved unsuccessful, as in 1939 Italy invaded Albania. Rome, however, delivered Tirane an ultimatum on March 25 1939, demanding that it accede to Italy s occupation of Albania. Zog refused to accept money in the exchange for countenancing a full Italian takeover and colonization of Albania, and on April 7,1939, Mussolini s troops invaded Albania . In 1941, after Nazi Germany defeated Greece and Yugoslavia, the regions of Camria and Kosovo were joined to Albania, finally, creating an ethnically united Albania state. However, in 1943, following Italy s surrender, Germany withdrew from Albania, and Kosovo was reincorporated into the Serbian part of Yugoslavia. Now that there was a void in Albania Leadership, who would take charge? Who would secure the countries culture? The answer would be the communist party. The communist resistance movement would be lead by Enver Hoxha. Hoxha was a very ambitious, ruthless, cunning and fanatical Communist Guerrilla leader. In 1944, the communist set up there own government under Hoxha. Would this man be the awnsers to the Albania question? Would he be able to defend Albanian borders? Would Albanians be able to live happily in peace?

Present-day Condition- Albanians in Kosovo

The sovereignty of Kosovo was established in 1974, by the Constitution of the former Socialistic Republic of Yugoslavia, which stated that Kosovo, was one of the eight federal units of the state. The constitution also stated that the boundaries of the units that made up the state were not to be changed without the consent of all eight units. Finally, the Albanians lived peacefully in a land where they were able to control their own destiny. Unfortunately, these conditions did not last long. The Socialist Republic of Serbia made an amendment (amendment 47, article 3) which stated: The Assembly of Serbia before deciding upon a proposal to act for changes in the Constitution of Serbia, presents the proposal for consideration to the assemblies of the autonomous provinces, takes into account the opinion of the assemblies of the autonomous provinces, and takes decision upon those opinions (BRS Kosovo Under the Burden of the Serbian Discriminatory Laws 5). Therefore, Kosovo no longer determined its own outcome. It can give an opinion, which has no legally binding effect, to Serbia for consideration, but it does not mean that Serbia will comply with Kosovo s advice. Serbians also added an amendment, which implemented the use of Serbo-Croat language and its alphabet. This was in direct violation of the Constitutional principal of equality of languages, especially since the Albanians made up 90% of the population. The only reason that the Kosova government agreed to the amendments was due to the use of Serbian Force.

The second aspect of the unconstitutionality of the mentioned amendments has to do with the procedure itself and the situation that prevailed at the time of their approval. In fact, immediately before their approval, on 27 February 1989 to be exact, the presidency of SFRY introduced a state of emergency to Kosova, which was still in power on 23 March 1989, when the assembly of Kosova passed a decision for granting its consent to constitutional amendments 9-49 of the SRS Constitution. The building of the Parliament of Kosova was surrounded by the army and police, tanks and armored vehicles, and military aircraft and helicopters hovered low over it at the very time of the decision making, which means that the consent was given under strong pressure (BRS Ethnic Albanians 5).

This was the first step, in Serbia s policy to rid Kosova of its Albanian inhabitants. From there on Serbia would implement a plan of ethnic cleansing in Kosova. A method used to enforce the ethnic cleansing policy by the Serbian government was the use of police abuse against ethnic Albanians, this specific method which has drawn the attention of Amnesty International. Due to the severity of the problem, in June 1992 the organization issued a report, Yugoslavia: Ethnic Albanians victims of torture and ill treatment by police in Kosovo province Even though the Yugoslav Criminal Code has a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment and the Serbian Criminal Code provides a maximum sentence of up to five years, Amnesty International noted that in 1993 there have been no SBD officers prosecuted under these conditions. The right no to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishments is protected by Article 7 of the International Convent on Civil and Political Rights and under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or degrading treatment or Punishment. Both of he mentioned treaties are legally binding on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Unfortunately for the Albanian people, this would just be the beginning. In 1997, the Council of the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, based in Prishtina, which has been monitoring violations of human rights since its foundation (1989), has concluded that during 1997 there was no single right or freedom which was not the subject of violation (BRS Human Rights Violation in Kosovo in the course of 1997 1).

During the year of 1997, CDHRF registered:

- 35 Albanians were killed or died in a violent way, of whom

- 5 died due to police torture

- 11 were killed with weapons used by police or army,

- one was stabbed by a Serb,

- 18 were killed or died under unknown circumstances,

- 1073 persons were arrested, of whom 12 were convicted,

- 596 persons were arbitrarily arrested,

- 803 persons were sought out and summoned to police stations,

- 480 were taken in for informative talks

- 427 Albanian families were raided,

- 1 rape attempt,

- 207 cases of threats against individuals or families,

- 5 hostage cases,

- 3 kidnapping cases,

- 57 cases of police intervention in educational institutions,

- 8 cases of police intervention regarding political parties and associations,

- 5 cases of police intervention regarding humanitarian associations,

- 10 cases of profanation of national symbols,

- 10 cases of real estate usurpation,

- 9 cases of real estate confiscation

- 10 cases of hampering economic activity,

- 3 cases of hampering private festivals,

- 8 cases of police intervention in political institutions,

- 3 cases of police interventions in cultural institutions,

- 1 case of police intervention in religious institutions,

- 39 passports were seized,

- 14 cases of prevention of repatriation,

- 12 summons for drafting in the Serbian army.

During the month of January 1998, CDHRF registered:

- 3 Albanians were killed;

- 5 persons were wounded;

- 54 persons underwent routine checking;

- 80 persons were subject to arbitrary arrest;

- 11 persons were taken for informative talks ;

- 101 persons were subjected to physical torture;

- 1 person was unjustly sentence for a penal act;

- 2 persons were sentenced for petty-offenses;

- 5 persons received drafts summons from the Serbian Army;

- 2 passports were seized;

- 1 person disappeared;

- 80 cases of raids occurred;

- 24 persons were subject to ill treatment for weapons;

- 33 person suffered injuries;

- 17 women were subject to different forms of ill-treatment;

- 3 children were ill-treated;

- 2 journalist were subject to ill-treatment;

- 5 persons were kidnapped

Moreover, all of the above mention incidents occurred during the first month of 1998. So, the conditions got worst for the Albanians who lived in Kosovo. Finally, after years of Humanitarian Laws being violated NATO finally decide to intervene, and assist the Albanians in returning home. The transition will not be an easy one. Albanians have only known only hatred and anger. Maybe the situation will get better for them now.

In conclusion, what will happen to the Albanian people now that the Serbians Forces have been forced out of Kosovo? Well they be able to live in peace? If so, how much help will they require from outside sources? How many of their rights need to be violated before someone is willing to help them? Maybe such accounts will help nations realize the observance of Human Rights are very important. In addition, that not doing so will eventually lead to long drawn out wars with a high number of civilian casualties.

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