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THE ALBANIANS AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Different from the Romans, Germans, Slavs, who in their ethnolitic process of transformation into Italians, Spaniards, Germans, Danes, Serbs or Macedonians needed to be emancipated by the pan-ideologies as panromanism, pangermanism, and panslavism, the Albanians, the inhabitants of Southeastern Europe, since the ancient times, have had a more complex ethnolitic process. This happened due to the domination of their territories by great empires, the interruption of western and eastern cultures on their ethnic body, and more clearly - due to the extreme peculiarity of their language, to the originality of receiving cultural currents coming from abroad.

What first distinguishes the Albanians from their unintermediary circle is a similar language, which accurately reflects the quality, intensity, and time of pre-indoeuropean mediterranean influences; ancient Greek and later, Latin, Roman, Slav, Turkish and oriental. Second is a complex prosperous and different culture from that of their neighbours in which co-exist the experiences of the autochthonous oral and colloquial history with the written one. And third is a traditional social and juridical organization although lacking state structures and also temporary and partial experience of a separate state in different times, comprised of three religious confessions and many sects with a high religious tolerance. The Albanians have a history full of resistance, which most probably made possible their existence, an autochthonous Illyrian-Balkan nucleus with adstraciale elements from the East and West, permeated by Christianity since its beginnings, an individual tenacity and a very widespread diaspora in time and territory. But at the same time these things bring them closer to Southern Europe and the Mediterranean basin, constituting in this way the essence of Southeastern Europe.

More than two thousand years of history in that part of Europe where it was born, fighting against the temporary experiences to turn them toward the stream of the East, led these peoples and their culture in its essence to marginate them as alien, transitory and occidental, to definitely remain in the orbit of the Western world.

The Northern Adriatic, Italy, the whole Mediterranean Basin, Attica and the Greek Isles, and Byzantium (Istanbul), represent the space of the Albanians' vast migrations over the course of centuries, as a result of which an ever more lively historical diaspora has been created: in Dalmatia, in Southern Italy, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, etc., which varies depending on the time of migration, the motive of departure, the valid orientation that led them, the religious orientation at the moment of leaving the social status and the nature of socio-political relations in the place of arrival. Therefore, their final destiny has been different.

With the National Revival and final turning point towards the West, another important facet was created for the Albanian diaspora - the facet of economic activities in the Western world, with which it manages to maintain links of national identity and which simultaneously play an important role in the course of its development.

All of Southeastern Europe, beyond the ethnic identity facet, presents a nearly natural space for them, maybe due to the fact that it was known and accessible to them during the five centuries of Ottoman rule, or due to the traces going back to the distant past, or due to the fact that after the creation of the Albanian state, more than half of the Albanians remained outside its borders.

It is precisely due to the fate of the Albanian people in the 20th century that the situation in Southeastern Europe becomes extremely complicated: having occupied Albanian territories, the national states of the Southern Slavs and the Greeks ought to have dealt with the problems of this population. That is, they ought to have arranged their relations with the Albanian state according to its demands.

Greece resorted to extremely repressive means, forcing the Moslem Albanians to move to Turkey and assimilating the orthodoxes, in order to create a total division between the Albanians of the national area and those of the diaspora in Attica and the isles. This rupture also marked the end of the century-long roads of economic and trade activities for the nearby regions, the degradation of urban centres and enormous frustration over the innumerable tragedies of family divisions. All these nourished xenophobia in Greece and added new difficulties to the democratization process of this state. The existence of the Greek minority in Southern Albania further complicates the situation on both sides of the border.

Particularly unfortunate was the creation of the state of Yugoslavia - the Southern Slavs, hardly able to be assimilated in it. Even more so, this included neither all the Southern Slavs, nor only Slavs. Built up according to the nation-state model, this state of the Slavs did not manage either to impose on the Serbs the conveyance of the Yugoslav identity, an ideology firstly created by the Croats, or to be freed from the claim of assimilating and liquidating the Albanians. So far as the multinational reality might have served as a pretext to keep the Albanians in it, its hyper-national Slav position made them an alien body. Henceforth, without finding solutions for the destinies of the Slav peoples of the South, this state made the Albanians permanent victims of the Serbs' occupationist conceptions. In this way each of the nations of the Southern Slav was obliged to assume also the responsibility of relations with the Albanians, while the Albanians had to deal with their destiny.

With the National Movement of the 19th century, the constituency of the nation occurred in the entity of its ethnic territory, an area where long processes of historical-social, ethnic-national and cultural transformations took place in relation to the non-intermediary circle and a broader European-Mediterranean framework. Hence, truncation would have at least the following consequences:

1. The violent truncation and relations with the neighbours and the world, built up over centuries;
2. The reduction of spiritual and material capacities and potential of this people;
3. The isolation and diminishing of the general importance of the Albanian nation in the Balkans;
4. The isolation of the Albanian world and through this the creation of a narrow path in Southern European communications from the Mediterranean towards the Black Sea;
5. The most impassable border in Europe between the two parts of a people.

and as a result of this, innumerable family tragedies.

6. Placing Albania under Serbia's (Yugoslavia's) permanent subordination, and facing Serbia with the most unresolvable dilemma for it to assimilate or eliminate them or become bearer and exponent of their interests;

7. The replacement of one bondage (that of Turkey) with another for half of the people;

8. The continuation of Slav occupation, historically frustrating for the Albanians;

9. The gangrening of a typically colonial relation in the Middle of Europe;

10. The permanent political and military destabilization of the region.

I will illustrate this with an example. The communication roads from Durrës, Shkodra and Vlora, respectively from the Mediterranean and Adriatic, towards Athens, Salonika, Bizantium (Istanbul), Odessa, Sofia, Naissi (Nish), Ragusa (Rusha), and Dubrovnik, passed through Ioannina, Konica, Korça, Pogradec, Lichnid (Ohër, Herakle), Manastir, Dibër, Tetova, Scupi (Shkup, Theranda), (Prizren), Gjakova, Ilpiana (Prishtina), Peja, Plava, Berziminium (Podgorica) and Ulcinium (Ulqin). These traditional urban centres served as starting points for economic development of their district, but at the same time served as linkage between the West and the East.

The border, settled at the London Conference (1912-1913) and sanctioned by the Versailles Treaty (1919-1920), entirely changed the function of these centres and upset the economic-trade, territorial, socio-political, and demographic relations in the whole area on both sides of the border. By lifting the role had played in Albanian integrations, on the one hand, and that of international bonds on the other, these centres were reduced to local towns of limited functions. Hence, Manastir, Struga, Dibra, Gostivar, Tetova, Shkup, Prizren, Gjakova, Peja and Ulqini, remaining on the Yugoslav side of the border, losing the rear function in Albania and communications created in course of the centuries, witnessed a gradual downfall in the economic, cultural and demographic aspects, or started to lose their national characteristics. On the other side, all of Northern Albania, mountainous and rich in livestock and minerals, remained without urban and trade centres. The same fate was shared also by the traditionally important cities of Albania as Shkodra and Korça. The repercussions of this degeneration and reorientation of the cities, and not only these, are also witnessed in the reduction of the role of the Durrës and Vlora ports and Albania's final isolation. This means that those repercussions are directly felt in the nonfunctioning of an area that had created its identity precisely through these communications, therefore also in the nonfunctioning of the Balkans as part of Europe and in further consolidating its serious hearth of potential crisis. The temporary substitution after the creation of Yugoslavia, by means of the Lubjana-Zagreb-Belgrade-Shkup-Salonika transversal, took into consideration only partially global interests and had orientated the communication only towards the East, respectively from the North. A key part of the South of Southeastern Europe was excluded from this communication, and by this even the West of Southern Europe. With the creation of three new, not-at-all facilitating borders for communication, and due to the war situation, this transversal became entirely blocked, and consequently, practically even Southeastern Europe.

In the spiritual, political and cultural aspect, the Albanian people, still in great difficulties in the construction of modern society, had been greatly damaged by

this division. Since that time they have not managed to utilize their human potential. In fact, for the last 9 decades half of their people have been put under permanent position, and in search through the ways for liberation from a colonial position, and in many cases to search for a way of survival.

Henceforth, smaller and encircled by insurmountable borders, separated and isolated from its century long function of linking the West and East of the European South and beyond, Albania becomes a small part of the final attainment, therefore not attractive and not having the power to take care, not only of the destinies of half of its population that has remained outside its borders, but neither of its most radical and indispensable integrations. Isolation and communist self-isolation served only to make more complete the suffocation of this creation created by halves. In fact it was a consistent development in the course of external logic. The extraordinary development of non Mediterranean Europe, the regime of economic and trade functions of the Black Sea, and the loss of its independence have simply favoured the other transversal.

This has endangered an important aspect of the Albanian identity.

Neither Albania nor Serbia have the chance to build a genuinely democratic society so long as Kosova's problem and that of the Albanians in former Yugoslavia is unresolved. The absurdity has already become naked following the creation of the national states on the territory of the Federation.

Naturally everything becomes more complicated with the implications of the Albanian question in the Macedonian area and the not fully-recognised status of Macedonia. This means that the Albanian question affects almost non-intermediary Bulgaria. At the same time it brings to light the absurdity of the Albanians' division: to insure the existence of the state of Macedonia, another unsurmountable border would have to be created among the Albanians, and the disintegration of what had been integrated for the last 50 years would be required.

Kosova's weight in the framework of the entirety, of economic, strategic and other potentials of the Albanians, the cultural developments and those of consciousness, question of identity, the mutual contacts and conditions of the democratic movements on both sides of the border, the important diaspora in Europe and the USA, the intensive Albanian-Albanian contacts throughout Europe, which are thinking of uniting, preserving the identity of the peoples, set forth Kosova's question as an imperative of the existence of the nation as one of the crucial questions for the development of Southeastern Europe. As for the science that deals with the relations among the peoples, cultures and languages of Southeastern Europe, Balkanology, it has already been said to be a blunder that it is without the Albanian. Analogically it can be said that peace in Southeastern Europe will remain a dream without solving the Albanian question.

The unjust borders have made it impossible for the Albanians to develop their potential on the one hand, and have inadmissibly involved the underdeveloped states of Southeastern Europe in the destinies of this people on the other. This involvement goes so far that it menaces the existence of this people. Being single exponent states representing the interests of separate peoples, being unable to find any kind of civil integration, makes them slaves of the occupationist envies. Therefore, they consume their energies in search of paths to preserve this situation by oppressing the Albanians, respectively by maintaining the domains of occupation.

Despite the high degree of tolerance towards one another, created as an

internal necessity of coexistence of many religions and the opening towards other various cultures, (opposite from their neighbours whose identity relies on exclusion or alienation-religious, cultural, and ethnic), the Albanians cannot further tolerate this division, because it would mean suicide. Ninety years of such a division with all the consequences of genocide in a part of the nation that remained outside the Albanian state, the isolation imposed on Albania, and the systematic ruining of the identity of a people, is a long time of extremely bitter experiences to testify that such a road of division is not successful for the others nearby either.

It is high time to seriously think of a new peaceful solution for the destiny of this people and by so doing, the destiny of the majority of the conflict sources in Southeastern Europe. The hegemony of the 8-10 million Serbian, Greek or Bulgarian peoples over 7 million Albanian people is neither acceptable nor possible. Now that the pan-Slav hegemony, with all its by-products, Yugoslav, communist etc., definitively failed, now that Eastern Europe and the Black Sea Basin are definitely resuming cooperation with the West in which cooperation with the Albanian world has its role and millenary position of connection, it is time for the Albanian state, the exponent nation which it is, to play its important role in transforming the Balkans from "a powder keg" into a zone of peace and cooperation, in freeing the Balkans from the minor warmongering envies, but also in bringing about genuine European integrations. Through their position, the Albanians are an important key in the two directions of these integrations: north/south of the Balkans and east/west of the Southern Europe. Being clearer, the Albanian question can simultaneously be more easily solved and has more significant effects with regard to the processes in Europe.

We have the right to call on Europe to assume responsibilities with regard to the impositions on us. Are we able to assume the responsibilities about the delays, the defensive incapability and other shortages in setting up a modern integrated society?

Maccedonian party, and particularly the Communist Party, and the other parties banded during this period of time, did not manage to secure an cooperation and sharing of power with the Albanians. This became evident during the drafting of the Law elections, which required the application of the system of majority and not of proportionality. The government completed this draft-law, which was adopted by the Assembly as they were being convinced that the Maccedonians would obtain the majority in the elections and would keep all the power in their hands, without sharing it with the Albanians, although they knew that the number of Albanians in this Republic was considerable. They were aware of the fact by applying the proportional system, and possibly, would be created for the Albanians to obtain 50-55% of the total power and consistent power. For this reason they did their utmost to adopt a law which was in favour of the majority election system. It was in fact not that the then government acted in preparing the law on consciousness that this measure they made for themself to obtain Maccedonian dominance in these conditions, to force the Albanians to maintain a minority and in this way a great number of Maccedonian candidates and deputies would be elected. Nevertheless, this law was prepared during the elections in these regions where the Albanians were the majority selected the polls were repeated twice or three simply of providing the possibility for Maccedonians to win more candidates and deputies. In this way approximately 50% votes for the Albanian deputies whereas for the Maccedonian

