

Displacements of Albanians to Turkey, according to Diplomatic Documents of Albanian Government



History

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Abstract

The study deals with the displacement of Albanians from Kosovo and other regions to Turkey, during XX century, as a consequence of Yugoslav violence, largely based on diplomatic documents of the communist government of the Albanian state. In this view, the study tends to develop the displacement of Albanians from Kosovo and other regions to Turkey, at various stages of XX century, and consequently to develop objectively the attitude of Albanian diplomacy related to this issue. Therefore, we conclude that such article widely untreated until now (based on the aforementioned documents), will be contributory to historiography.

1. Displacements of Albanians to Turkey

The Tirana state political leadership after the collapse of diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia in 1948, besides other issues dealing with Kosovo, presented at every cost as a separate issue the protection of Kosovo Albanian population from assimilation and forceful displacement from their ethnic territories. From the sources and documentation of that time, it can be noticed that despite the seriousness and high sensitivity showed in this regard, the Albanian government continuously observed a firm policy related to this issue that was increasingly strengthened in tandem with the consolidation of the state itself (Syla, 2012, 167).

The Yugoslav government, as it is known in 1926 had concluded an agreement with Turkey on repatriation of Turkish population from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In fact, the provisions of this agreement were used to displace the Albanian population from Kosovo to Turkey, considering it as Turkish. According to the Turkish press dated April 7, 1926, from Yugoslavia to Turkey based on this agreement there were about to migrate 300-400 000 persons. Meanwhile, according to calculations made by the Albanian Consular Office in Turkey there were 27-30 000 Albanian families displaced from Kosovo, including also those Albanians who had migrated after 1913. In 1938 it was initialed another agreement between Yugoslavia and Turkey upon which it was predicted the repatriation of 250 000 persons so-called Turkish. The Turkish newspaper "Vatan" dated July 12, 1938 on the occasion of the conclusion of this agreement published an communiqué and an article which said that "250 000 migrants would arrive from Yugoslavia and that their transport would start after 6 months." The same newspaper also published a declaration of the Yugoslav Consular Office that signed the agreement, which also mentioned the aforementioned high figure and other notices on the content of this agreement. From the data owned by the Albanian government, the numerous migrations of Albanians to Turkey took place from the regions of Macedonia and from Kosovo (region of Prizren, Gjilan, Prishtina, Mitrovicë, Pejë), etc (AMPJ; Babani, 1965).

The third displacement of Albanians from Yugoslavia to Turkey, based on Albanian diplomatic documents took place after 1948 especially starting from 1951-1952. The displacement was known as denationalization of Kosovo and other regions inhabited by Albanians, which was one of the main purposes of the Yugoslav policy. According to a report of Ministry of Internal Affairs (January 4, 1955), titled, "On denationalization policy of Yugoslav Government upon Albanian Minority in Yugoslavia" (AMPJ, 1955, file.386, pp.1-4), the Yugoslav government was exercising a denationalization policy by means of displacement of Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia to Turkey. As the result of the policy of terror during 1953-54, there have been displaced to Turkey from the regions of: Skopje, Kumanovo, Preshevo, Tetovo, Gostivar, as well as from villages of Zhapë e Sipërme and of Koxhaxhikut of Dibra e Madhe roughly 5 000 persons, whereas from

the village Elefc of Dibra composed of roughly 170 houses there have been displaced 40 families and other e 20 are about to be displaced and thousands of people have departed Manastir, Prilep, Resnja etc. The reasons of the departure were: national repression, illegal murders of UDB (Unutrašnja državna bezbednost - State Intelligence Service), land robbery, high taxes, unemployment, terror and propaganda pretending that Muslims are Turkish and as such they better go to Turkey, given that life is better there etc.

The denationalization process of Kosovo after World War Two was divided into stages, where each had its distinguishable record. Thus, the period after World War Two and until 1959, was characterized from the apprehension of those persons who had collaborated with the invader, physical liquidation of Albanians with the excuse of collection of weapons and displacement of Albanian families to Turkey. According to documentation in question, the last two processes of denationalization reached their peak during 1955-1957. Both these processes were combined with one-another, given that the registrations of 1953 laid the foundations for displacement, since many people were forced to be registered as Turkish nationals. In this regard, two were the causes that forced Albanians to be displaced: a) Being displaced to Turkey they could be escape tortures; b) Being of Turkish nationality they were considered as more privileged people than Albanians (AMPJ, 1962, dos. B/VII-2 (723).

The displacements took place due to various direct and indirect pressures, maltreating Albanians in order to flee and for this purpose; the Yugoslav bodies used all means. In parallel, they also created favoring and facilitating conditions in order to carry out necessary formalities of displacement (AMPJ, 1962, file. 723, p. 68). Thus, the expenditures were minor, they only cost 2 000 dinars, whereas in order to be repatriated to Albania there were needed 12 000 dinars. Furthermore, the Yugoslav bodies created also material facilitations putting into disposal transportation means at low prices, allowing them in the custom house to take also domestic appliances they owned etc. In 1958 they created another secrecy with the tax on waiving Yugoslav nationality that was reduced from 12 000 dinars that was previously to 2 000 dinars per person and in 1963 this tax was removed completely. Taking into account the serious economic situation of Albanians, that was a huge relief. Until 1958 the newspaper "Nova Makedonia", in Skopje announced every day the notices of the Secretariat of Internal Affairs of Macedonia on requests filed by different people to waive Yugoslav nationality for migration purposes. According to an analysis made by Albanian Consular Office in Belgrade, the average number of these requests per each month amounted to 900-1 000. The publication of these notices was interrupted in 1958.

In 1952, in Kosovo it was officially recognized the existence of a Turkish minority with all political and cultural rights, there were opened 14 schools in 1951-1952 (AMPJ, 1963, file. 908 (B/VII-2 C). The initiator of this plan has been the Secretary of the Party of that time Gjoko Pajković, Dushan Mugosha etc. Gj. Pajković (former-Secretary of the Yugoslav Communist League in Kosovo, S. S) during his speech on March 20, 1950 had declared that, "Here in Kosovo and Metohi there exists a Turkish minority and people speak Turkish in the cities. We shall allow the people to decide freely on the nationality they want. Everyone can call himself whatever one wants..." (Babani, 1965).

The Yugoslav government since 1956/57 interrupted direct migrations from Albanian regions to Turkey, but created Macedonia and especially the city of Skopje as transitional center, where after a certain time passed, they were registered as Macedonians with Turkish nationality and afterwards they filled out migration documents to Turkey. After the earthquake in Skopje (1963), an ordinance was issued that no foreigner will be allowed to be registered in the city of Skopje (speaking about Albanians from Kosovo, S. S) creating the impression that the intermediate migration center was demolished. In essence, it was for propagandistic effect, given that they brought about no obstacles. The Albanians, after being displaced from Kosovo were registered as citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. It was sufficient with the help of two witnesses to accept the change of

nationality from Albanians to Turkish and to prepare documents for migration to Turkey (AMPJ, 1965, file. 530/1, p. 24).

According to a document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs titled “Statement of 1967 not published in the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs on the distribution of Albanian population in Turkey”, which the Albanian Government possessed, reflected the demographic distribution of the Albanian population in different cities of Turkey. The following table shows the vital importance of such data.

Number	Cities in Turkey	Personal number		Total number of Albanians	Persons who speak Albanian	
		Recognized as Albanians	Of Albanian origin		Well	A little
1	Istanbul	200 000	300 000	500 000	100 000	100 000
2	Bursa	100 000	100 000	200 000	75 000	25 000
3	Izmir	100 000	100 000	200 000	50 000	50 000
4	Ancara	50 000	75 000	125 000	20 000	30 000
5	Ballakazer	25 000	50 000	75 000	15 000	10 000
6	Eskisheher	75 000	100 000	175 000	25 000	50 000
7	Kaizer	10 000	5 000	15 000	5 000	10 000
8	Sivas	5 000	5 000	10 000	5 000	10 000
9	Edirne	25 000	50 000	75 000	15 000	-
10	Tekirdug	10 000	30 000	40 000	5 000	5 000
11	Kerkilsreli	50 000	50 000	10 0000	25 000	25 000
12	Manisa	10 000	10 000	20 000	7 000	2 500
13	Denizli	5 000	5 000	10 000	3 000	2 000
14	Adena	15 000	15 000	30 000	7 000	8 000
15	Gaziantop	10 000	5 000	15 000	5 000	5 000
16	Kytahja	15 000	15 000	30 000	10 000	5 000
17	Adapazar	25 000	-	25 000	15 000	10 000
18	Izmit	10 000	5 000	15 000	5 000	5 000
19	Elazig	20 000	10 000	30 000	10 000	10 000
20	Dijarbaker	10 000	10 000	20 000	10 000	-
21	In other cities	30 000	150 000	18 000	-	30 000
Total		800 000	1 090 000	1 890 000	412 000	373 000

According to the table provided in the document, the number of persons recognized as Albanians was 800 000, of Albanian origin- 1 090 000, total number of Albanians-1 890 000, persons who speak Albanian well- 412 000 and those who speak Albanian a little 373 000. According to some their information, “On the Albanian immigration from Kosovo and other regions inhabited by Albanians in the West”, of the Ministry of Interior (Directorate III) of the Albanian state, date 18 May 1981, the largest number of Albanian immigrants was concentrated in Turkey. The distribution of immigration in different cities of Turkey has been particularly evident and massive in years 1913-1937, 1937-1941 and 1949-1970. 200 000, 380 000 and 283 000 persons were respectively displaced in each of these periods. Further, the distribution of Albanian immigration in other countries, based on the above cited Albanian information, was as follows: in the Federal Republic of Germany- 70 000 persons, in Belgium - 50 000 (of these - 22 000 are among the Albanians who had left Turkey), in the USA - 40 000, in Australia - 40 000, in Argentina- 30 000, in France - 13 000, in Austria - 8 000, in Switzerland- 6 000, in Sweden - 3 000, in Syria - 4 000, in Libya - 700 and according to the agreement reached by Yugoslavia

with that country, this number is expected to amount to 12 000 persons (AMPJ, 1981, file. 1140/1, p. 342; Sylva, 2012, pp.168-169).

2. Position of the Albanian Government

The state political leadership of Tirana regarding the displacement of Albanians from Kosovo and other Albanian has adopted the position that Albanians should not have been displaced to Turkey, rather instead they had to stay in their country as a compact population (AMPJ, 1960, file. 530, p. 4). Displacements had instilled a deep indignation to the Albanian Government. Information about the displacements makes the Albanian government coordinate its activity at political and diplomatic level. Without doubt, the alert signal from Tirana affected the Turkish government in Ankara and caused disturbance within the Yugoslavian governmental circles. The latter was continuously discredited for the denationalization of the Albanian population, forcing them to leave their land and immigrate to Turkey. Apart from other state sectors, the Albanian Consular Offices were in charge for the protection of the national rights of Albanians in Yugoslavia, which would materialize the interest through visits, press, direct contacts and coming up with concrete proposals on the methods of their execution. A key task was the prevention and hindrance of Albanians in Turkey by establishing contacts with the Albanians displaced from the Albanian territories to Yugoslavia. This objective was especially assigned to the Albanian Consular Offices in Ankara and Belgrade (AMPJ, 1960, file. 530, pp. 73-75; AMPJ, 1960, file. 530/1, pp. 88-89).

For Tirana, the informative-diplomatic data continued to be a main source of information for Albanians in Yugoslavia. The Albanian Consular Offices sent special reports on the situation of Albanians of those regions and the Yugoslavian policy of their displacement to Turkey etc. Even the minister Bato Karafili had paid a visit in Kosovo and Macedonia, in order to be closely informed of the situation of Albanians and the number of those who would depart to Turkey. After the visit he sent a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Second Branch) in Tirana, which contained a series of data about the issue in question (AMPJ, 1956, file. 378 (B/VII-2), pp. 12-19).

The Albanian state officially made efforts to prevent the displacement of Albanians to Turkey. Regarding this matter, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania, Behar Shtylla, instructed the representative of the Albanian Consular Office in Ankara to negotiate with the Turkish authorities for preventing such a phenomenon (AMPJ, 1961, file. 535/1, pp. 149-150). In 1959, based on instructions, the Albanian diplomatic representative intervened with the Turkish authorities to not accept the immigration of Albanians in Turkey and the Turkish Government had provided the safeguard a number of times that “by duly understanding national feelings, it would take measures to prevent immigration and continue a tough control over the nationality of immigrants” (Babani, 1965). Meanwhile, a year later (in 1960), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a “Plan of measures for propaganda in relation to Kosovo”. It appealed, inter alia, to encourage the Albanians in Turkey to go to their people in Yugoslavia, so that not to be displaced to Turkey (AMPJ, 1960, file. 530, pp. 73-75; AMPJ, 1960, file. 530/1, pp. 88-89).

Apart from the intervention with Turkish authorities, the Consular Office in Ankara had asked from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the utmost commitment of Albania to respond to the Yugoslavian propaganda in various forms, in order that the Albanian population is not discouraged from the Yugoslavian propaganda and make its efforts to safeguard its own national identity. In particular, it suggested to Tirana to thwart the displacement of Albanian population to Turkey (AMPJ, 1962, file. B/VII.2 (723), pp. 15-22), and inter alia, it proposed: a) To further discredit the criminal actions of Yugoslavians for the encouragement of immigrations; b) since Radio Tirana here in Turkey is well-attended, it would be favorable to launch a program for Albanians in Turkey and Kosovo, where programs would discredit the criminal actions of Yugoslavians and rather publicize folk songs of Kosovo and Northern Highland. This would be a very effective tool to attract Albanians for education and upgrading national feelings to a higher level. As a result, these actions will further refrain the

measures of immigration, assimilation and denationalization of Yugoslavians against the Albanian mass in Kosovo and in Albanian regions in Macedonia and Montenegro (AMPJ, 1965, file. 530/1, p. 24).

The Albanian Consular Office in Ankara had strong doubts about the use of Albanian political immigration in Western Europe and Albanians forcedly displaced to Turkey against it. It doubted they might be used for secret intelligence purposes by foreign intelligence services in order to overthrow the communist regime in Albania. Regarding this issue, on 20 December 1965 it recommended to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana: a) to not allow the massive use of people influenced by imperialists and reactionary governments of the neighboring countries, in order to use them against the People's Socialist Republic of Albania; b) to work comprehensively for safeguarding the Albanian immigration in Turkey from the influences of enemies and its assimilation, attempting to have it as support to the People's Republic of Albania. To achieve these objectives, it was recommended the adoption of measures related to the expansion of propaganda-oriented activity through radio programs, work focused on persons of special influence, use and improvement of tourist services and various visitors to Albania, participations of Albania in sports, folkloristic activities and its participation in Izmir fair to echo the achievements of Albania etc (AMPJ, 1966, file. p. 122).

3. Conclusion

As a consequence of discriminations and persecutions from the Yugoslavian governments and the whole state authorities of Yugoslavia, Albanians from Kosovo and other regions were forced to immigrate to Turkey. The archive documents of the Albanian government dwell on the forced displacements of Albanians to Turkey, evacuation of other areas inhabited by Albanians in former Yugoslavia, their difficult economic situation, etc.

The state political leadership of Tirana, as testified by the archive documentation, was aware of the situation of Albanians and the Yugoslavian policy of their displacement to Turkey, as well as a number of other issues faced by the Albanian people in Yugoslavia. Tirana is continuously informed of the internal developments in Yugoslavia via diplomatic and informative sources. In particular, the Albanian Consular Offices in Belgrade and Ankara were important information centers for the state leadership of Tirana.

Regarding this phenomenon, Albania maintained they should not have been displaced to Turkey, rather instead to stay in their country as a compact population. The Albanian government denounced the anti-Albanian position of Serbia, which suppressed and infringed the lawful rights of the Albanian population, forcing them to leave their land and immigrate to Turkey. In order to prevent the displacement, Albania had referred to Turkey via diplomatic channels. The Albanian leadership was afraid of the involvement and use of Albanians displaced to Turkey, doubting that they might be used for spy network purposes secret intelligence by foreign intelligence services.

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