Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912 by Stavro Skendi
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One of the chief deficiencies in the field of East European studies is the lack of monographs which cover in breadth and depth the national movements of the area. It is noteworthy that the first work to fulfil this need concerns the smallest and least studied of the peoples of the Balkans. The book is a model of its kind. The author, uniquely qualified for this task, has covered all the important aspects of the Albanian national movement; he describes the developments within the Albanian lands, the relations of the Albanians with the Ottoman government, the cultural awakening within and without the country, and the attitude of the great powers and the Balkan states to Albanian nationalism. This study is based not only on the principal printed materials but on research in the foreign-ministry archives in Paris, Vienna, and Rome. It is to be hoped that this volume, which concentrates on the period before the formation of an Albanian government, will be followed by a second covering in equal detail the establishment of the state and its development at least through World War I.

The Albanian patriot in seeking to achieve either autonomy or national independence for his people faced perhaps greater obstacles than his counterpart in any other part of Europe. Religion, elsewhere a force of unity, was here a source of division. Language, the one great unifying factor, was weakened in significance because of the Ottoman prohibition on its use in public life and in the schools. Turkish was the language of education for the Muslim, Greek for the Orthodox. Albanian was only permitted in the Austrian-protected Catholic establishments. The difficult geography of the land and its economic backwardness similarly hindered its national development. Moreover, unlike its neighbors, Albania had no natural partisans among the great powers. Italy and Austria-Hungary supported Albanian independence for reasons of expediency; Albania’s immediate neighbors, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece, sought a partition of her lands among themselves. Nevertheless, in the period between 1878 and 1912 Albanian national consciousness and internal political organization progressed to such an extent that by 1912 the establishment of an independent state was considered feasible. This book deals with the steps by which this aim of the Albanian nationalist was accomplished.

The first concerted action for the protection of Albanian national territory was occasioned by the provisions of the treaties of San Stefano and Berlin. Here lands inhabited by Albanian populations were assigned to Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece. Protest organizations immediately and spontaneously made their appearance. The Albanian League was organized to offer armed resistance to the changes called for in the treaties. At first, when this movement appeared to support its interests, the Ottoman government approved of the actions of the League, but its attitude soon changed. The Albanian groups sought not only to protect Albanian lands against foreign conquest but also to change their political status within the empire. The program developed at this time remained that of the Albanian nationalists until circumstances forced them to seek full independence. It called for the unification of the four vilayets of Janina, Monastir (Bitolj), Usküb (Skoplje), and Shkodër into one unit with full political autonomy; the Albanian language was to be used in
administration and in the schools. These demands met with no response in Constantinople; instead the League was suppressed by Ottoman troops.

The second section of the book, covering the years between 1881 and 1908, emphasizes the development of the national movement outside Albania and the attitude of Austria-Hungary and the Balkan states. Because of the conditions prevailing within the Ottoman Empire, the greatest cultural activity took place outside of the country, in particular in Romania, Bulgaria, Egypt, and the United States. Of chief importance were the political and cultural achievements of the large Albanian colony in Italy. The rise of Albanian national consciousness was, of course, observed by the powers. Most concerned were Italy, with her interests in the Adriatic, and Austria-Hungary, with her concern over the expansion of the Balkan Slavic states. Although the two governments competed in their cultural and commercial activities, they co-operated in their support of the establishment of an autonomous or independent Albania should conditions within the Ottoman Empire further deteriorate. The Albanian leaders, in general, relied more on Austria-Hungary since they feared that Italy wished to annex their territory.

Another period of intense and open political action was inaugurated with the outbreak of the Young Turk revolution in 1908. The book describes in detail the major role played by the Albanians in this event and the steps by which the new regime in Constantinople gradually alienated various sections of Albanian opinion. Although at first the Albanian language was allowed, the growing centralist tendencies of the regime were opposed by the traditionalist Muslims as well as by the nationalists desiring national autonomy. The outbreak of the Balkan Wars thus came at a time when great dissatisfaction with Ottoman rule was felt and when Albanian national consciousness had developed. After the victories of the Balkan allies in the war doomed the Ottoman Empire in Europe, it was apparent that the previous thirty years of national awakening had laid a foundation for the establishment of an Albanian state.

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Professor Jackson seeks to "examine Comintern theory and practice . . . toward the peasantry and peasant political movements in Eastern Europe" (p. viii) in this book, based on his Columbia University dissertation. The book has three parts: "Ideology and Reality," which "describes the general social and economic problems of Eastern Europe and the solutions offered by communism and agrarianism"; "The Conflict: International," on the development of Comintern policy toward the peasant in the 1920's; and "The Conflict: National," which studies the application of Comintern peasant policy in Bulgaria, Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. The author ends with a chapter of "recapitulation," an epilogue, a bibliographical essay, and a bibliography.

The first section is not completely satisfactory. It is difficult in a