Albania

Everyday life during World War I

1914-1918

The reasons why we have chosen the topic on everyday life during World War I in Albania:

- European Historiography trends today, applicable also in textbooks, in addition to the political and military aspect of war also include its social aspect.
- There is not enough attention given to the actual textbooks in Albania about the problems of everyday life during World War I.
- The dynamics and multidimensional nature of war create an opportunity for the students to develop critical thinking. They learn that in war people not only fight, but they also live their daily lives.
- The information about daily life mitigates the rough image given by the war.

© Subject

In this subject the complexity of everyday life in Albania and the social consequences of World War I will be treated. Students should create a clear idea of how everyday life was like for the Albanians and its changes as a result of World War I.

© Learning outcomes:

a) To describe the developments of World War I in territories of Albanian state.
b) To identify in the map the occupied zones in the territory of Albania.
c) To identify the features of everyday life in all levels of society in Albania during WWI.
d) To compare, using historical sources, methods used by the occupier in order to realize their war objectives. (The demagogy used by the Great Forces in purpose of the occupation, to gain Albanians sympathy).
e) To argue, using historical sources, social consequences of WWI in Albania.
f) To combine ideas about the flow and consequences of World War I in Albania, in comparison to the World War I in general.
©Objectives

- To augment critical thinking about the complexity of society, consequences and contradiction brought by World War I.
- To assess the role of propaganda during World War I.
- To interpret historical sources.
- To analyze the messages they reveal and the objectives they have.

©Teachers guideline

Teacher presents the subject of the lecture. The lecture will be divided into two phases:

a. Presentation and formation of working groups
b. Presentation of results

Step I: Formation of working groups

Working Groups:

1. Zone occupied by Austro-Hungarians
2. Zone occupied by French
3. Zone occupied by Italians

Step II: The teacher presents the work for the working groups. The students should have basic knowledge about World War I. Students should determine the occupied zones that were assigned by the teacher. They should identify the characteristics of everyday life in each occupied zone. They should identify the propaganda and demagogy used in each occupied zone.

Step III: The teacher asks questions in order to organize and direct the working group.

Step IV: A brief presentation of work of the groups.

Step V: Conclusions and reflections about the subject.

Presentation

On 28 July 1914 Austro-Hungarians declared war to Serbia, which started the World War I. During this War, Albania was occupied by armies of Balkan states and great powers.

In June 1915, Serbian military forces occupied North-Eastern Albania, while approaching Durres, whereas Montenegrin forces occupied North-Western Albania. Serbian and Montenegrin armies were forced to withdraw from the Albanian territories, from the pressure of Austro-Hungarian army which created the Austro-Hungarian occupying zone in January 1916. The occupying authorities organized a civilian administration comprised of Albanian employees
under their complete military subordination and control. They allowed the Albanian flag, opened schools in Albanian language, educated many Albanian youngsters in Austrian schools, developed the infrastructure. On 23 January 1917 in Shkoder, the occupying authorities publicly proclaimed the Albanian Autonomy under the patronage of Austro-Hungarian Kingdom, but they kept silent the issue of Albania’s political borders.

In 1916, French Army units entered the Albanian territory. They settled in Korca after they expelled Greek troops from there. On 10 December 1916 in Korca, the Autonomous Province was proclaimed. The province was administered by Albanians under the protection of French authorities. The administration language was Albanian. The Albanian flag was the symbol of the Autonomous Province, where also the French three color straps were added. Schools in Albanian language were opened. Also the French Lyceum was opened. This administration operated until February.

On 3 June 1917 the Italian invasion administration solemnly proclaimed the unity and independence of Albania under the auspices of the Kingdom of Italy. They promised that the Albanian future state would have free institutions, order forces, courts and schools. The use of the Albanian flag was allowed, and they started to construct roads, bridges, as result the infrastructure of towns had changed.

**Group I.**

1. Look carefully at the map. Identify the occupied area by Austro-Hungarians in World War I in Albania. (This map will be completed by all three working groups)
Assignments on historical sources

• Read the sources and try to discuss the facts about them:
  1. Describe everyday life in Austro-Hungarian occupied zone.
  2. Describe some of the reasons for poor economical conditions of the Albanians during World War I.
  3. Discuss the problems and difficulties brought by the war.

1. The Dutch doctor Tienhoven, in his memoires writes about the invasion of Durres by Austro-German forces:

   Wednesday, February 2, 1916: “… The grenades are heard in all sides. Two planes are roaming around Durrës again. I see the grenades falling very close. Their smoke is even darker after exploding. Today in the hospital I took care of the sick refugees and the needy. We gave them some American food. There are around 200 refugees around Durrës. We spend most of the afternoon at the hotel distributing bread. More than 1000 of them are standing crowded at the gate waiting for a quarter of bread. They are ordered to line in pairs, and they walk by the table where the gendarme serves their rations …”
2. In his report, the Austro-Hungarian general counsel in Shkodra sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Habsburg Kingdom, on 20 May 1916 writes the following:

“… The woman here is not very active. Muslim women are fanatic and they don’t do anything outside of their homes”.

“As much as their wisdom is concerned it would be unjust to say that the Albanians have no intelligence, in contrary they are fast learners and they are crafty. The laggard education is the only cause of such a high number of illiterate …”

4. In his memoirs, Eqrem bej Vlora, a character of World War I, in relation to the Austro-Hungarian occupation zone wrote the following:

“In Albanian provinces governed by Austro-Hungarian invasion troops, the military authorities in Shkoder had established an Administrative Council, who was in charge of internal affairs of the country. Men such as Luigj Gurakuqi (director of education) and Fejzi bej Alizoti (director of finance) achieved very good results in their departments. Due to this joined Austrian-Albanian administration, the latter Albanian state had the capacity to build an already known official language, to open the first elementary schools and to create the first elements of state category employees.”

• **Read the historical sources carefully;**
  1. Discuss about the manner of the presentation of Austro-Hungarian occupation in order for them to realize their war objectives.
  2. Do you believe that Albanians gained from the approach of the Austro-Hungarians during the World War I?

  3. The high command order of the Austro-Hungarians, Shkodra, 17 mars 1916

Stop learning Italian language. Urgently publish books in Albanian language. Increase number of schools and some departments in the local administration to be headed by the locals.
- Considerately monitor the historical sources: photos
  1. How did the Albanians react to invasion?
  2. Analyze the photos in critical way, what do they show?
**Group II:** Look at the map. Identify the zone of French invasion during World War I in Albania.

**Assignments for historical sources**

Read the sources and try to discuss about them:

- *Describe everyday life in French invasion zone.*
- *Identify everyday life characteristics in this territory. How was that described in the press of that time.*
- *Describe some reasons of the poor economic situation of Albanians during World War I.*
- *Discuss the issues and difficulties brought by the war.*
- *Discuss the contradictions of stories told in historical sources.*

**The French zone**

1. The special representative of French journal *L’Illustration*, Robert Vaucher, on 28 February 1917 from Korca wrote:

   “… By now they are studying French in schools. Few newspapers are being published in Korca. The main one is ‘Gazeta e Korçës’, which is published in four pages in French, Albanian and Greece. There is perfect order in the territory that our troops have liberated from the Austrians, Bulgarians or Greeks. No crime has been committed for two months now, a unique fact in Albanian civilization. Post stamps with local sources were printed, those that have the double headed eagle with the logo ‘Korca, Independent Albania’, which replaced the old Greek post stamps…”

   From: Luan Rama, *Bonjour d’Albanie – Writing under the bomb shadows*, Tirana: Maluka, 2014, f. 35-36

2. Leitnanti francez, Rene Ningot në fletoren e tij të shënimeve shkruan për Korçën:

   “17 shkurt 1917

   “... Korca has the view of a small capital city and it resembles the towns in western countries. The roads are clean; the houses are appealing whereas some of them are true villas. The shops are a neighborhood in itself”.

   From: Luan Rama, *Bonjour d’Albanie – Writing under the bomb shadows*, Tirana: Maluka, 2014, f. 133
3. The French commander Bernard de Lingonnes në in his diary writes the following:

“14 February 1917

In the evening we entered Korca. The people of the town are terrorized. In the morning, the airplanes have dropped 12 bombs and 5 people have died.”

“17 February 1917

... I was placed at the house of an Albanian Muslim together with my staff. The head of the house is friendly, but we do not see his wife. She stays locked in her room. Their four children, two of them girls, wander around the kitchen, looking for bread. 1 kg and a half bread costs 4 Francs. ... My battalion is rebuilding the road of Pogradec... The local Albanian administration is giving us the tools and materials. We need to cut the trees and the artillery is helping us with their transport vehicles and the Korca merchants of steel give us the rest of the tools we need.”


4. French colonel Ordion in the letter sent to his daughter on 14 March 1918 describes as such the Albanian village and the organization of family there:

“... What is most notable in Albania is the space of villages; compact gatherings of residencies are rare and the houses are spread out, different of what occurs in some towns in southern France. The houses are all low and they are 40-50 meters distant from one another. In general, the families live together in groups up to 30 persons, where the head of the family has the main role and his children and children of children respect him blindly. ... The Albanian hospitality is the same as in Corsica, simple and sincere, without interest and without any award with money.”

Kafe - Panda - Café. Kartolinë 1918

Titulli i seriesë “Popullsia Civile në fsurat e Korçës”
• Read attentively the written historical sources and photographs

Discuss the way French presented the invasion in order to realize their war objectives

5. In relation to the work undertaken by the army in the French occupied zone, the colonel writes:

“If the army has undertaken work of military benefits, parallel with them, the army can introduce intellectual books in order to make France known in order to enhance its influence in a country where Germany had the overall influence.”

From: An officer in the Balkans (1917-1925), Volume I, Colonel Andre Ordion writings, presented by his grandson, Tirana: Papyrus, 2014, pg. 166.
BILISHT : Shtëpi të shkatërruarë gjatë fushatës për Epirin
Group III.

Look at the map attentively. Identify the Italian invasion zone in World War I in Albania.

Assignments on historical sources

Read attentively the historical sources: photographs, written sources.

6. Discuss the way Italians undertook their invasion. What was their objective?
7. How was the invasion anticipated?
8. Identify the characteristics of everyday life in the territory.

h) The special envoy of French periodical *L’Illustration*, Robert Vaucher, on 6 January 1917, in his article ‘The beginnings of Italian invasion of Vlora, writes:

“The Vlora engineers have focused their work in two directions: defense work with shelters and civilian construction. In one year of hard work, the image of Vlora has been completely transformed, while gaining few lost centuries under the Ottoman deep sleep. The roads, that even in light rain would become creeks, were paved; drainage canals for the waters were built as well. Water pipe 7 km long brings the potable water in eight springs distributed in various neighborhoods. During this time many other structures were built: the catholic cemetery, the building of the civil court, post office, Italian and Albanian schools, a warehouse for customs and fuels, municipality building, a covered market place, and other public buildings which were constructed by our allies. These buildings would give the citizens of Vlora the benefits of a modern civilization... More than 150 km roads for trolleys were built; 400 km of telephone lines connecting even the most distant post offices within the Vlora command”.

Përmet: një shqiptar ish i burgosur nga grekët dhe i liruar nga italianët.

Shërbim i ushtrisë për popullsin civile, autobuz i linjës Erseke - Jorgucat. 1917.02.05 Vaucher, Robert
Read attentively the written historical sources and photographs:

1. Identify the Albanian women’s position in the village and town during World War I.

3. In his memoires Eqrem bej Vlora, a personality from World I, in regards to the Albanian town woman, personified by the figure of his mother, writes:

“My mother was the prototype of Albanian housewife, of the lady of the house, vigorous towards the others and herself, who knew well how to manage her home and property. She had remained all alone in Vlora during the Italian invasion. She had managed noiselessly and calmly our properties with 200 houses and stores, and also all other properties in Vlora. Even though she was illiterate, she successfully managed 5 administrators, 2 secretaries, 25 guards and a service personnel consisting of 30 people. The same woman that never before had to deal with “men’s work”, one that did not know even to count her own pocket money, now in harsh conditions, was managing millions, she was sending thousands every month to different “lazy guys” members of the family outside of the country (including myself), while managing to save millions at the same time”.


i) The Italian soldier in Albania, Damiano Bruno writes to her niece Mariela:

5 March 191 Dear Mariela!

“This morning an Albanian woman on a horse came to the infirmary: young, pretty, accompanied by her father and her husband. Here in Albania, it is out of ordinary to see a woman that gets treated so kind. For instance, this afternoon I saw a poor woman, we helped her with medications and we also gave her little coffee and soup. But her husband did not seem worried about her poverty or about the fact that she was at the end of her life, he was not touched even by our care for her. What is worse, her husband seemed that he will not be unhappy when she dies because he will find another wife”.

From: Damiano Bruno, 767 letters from War front (Albania: 1916-1919), prepared for publication Luigi Intrieri, Tirana: “Naimi”, 2013, f. 51
Gratë e Gjirokastrës
**Historical sources**

Luan Rama, *Bonjour d’Albanie – Writing under the bomb shadows*, Tirana: Maluka.

*An officer in the Balkans (1917-1925)*, Volume I, Colonel Andre Ordion writings, presented by his grandson, Tirana: Papyrus, 2014.


Institute of History Archive, Fond of Austro-Hungarian diplomatic documents (1916)
