



VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Albania-U.S. relations not all positive

EVERYONE DOES
SAY THINGS
DURING
WARS
NOW DAYS
LIVING!

This is in response to "Lessons from Albania: Bush's warm reception shows that thoughtful, consistent diplomacy still works" (Commentary, June 20) by Charles W. Levesque, a former U.S. diplomat who served as the economic and commercial officer at the U.S. Embassy in Tirana, Albania, from 1999 through 2001. As I read the column, I noticed an interesting comment. Levesque wrote that "the U.S. military intervention in neighboring Kosovo freed ethnic Albanians from Serb oppression and set the majority Albanian province on the path to future independence." I don't see anything positive about this statement.

The Serbs have been overly vilified in the tragic history of the Balkans. Nobody ever seems to mention the "Turkish oppression" or the fact that Marshal Josip Broz Tito ruled the former Yugoslavia with an iron fist. Kosovo was part of Yugoslavia and is Serb territory, regardless of the ethnic Albanian majority, as much as New Mexico is part of the United States, regardless of its predominantly ethnic Mexican population. The U.S. intervention in Kosovo gave the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army), a United Nations-listed terrorist organization, a chance to rearm and start fighting. Both sides in this conflict

have been guilty of atrocities, and this includes all sides, Muslim, Croat and Serb, in the entire Balkans. While the United States was wasting time and military effort in Bosnia and Kosovo, areas that posed absolutely no threat to us whatsoever, we failed to deal effectively with both Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. It is a sad testament to global self-interest that both NATO and the UN were so eager for U.S. involvement in the Balkans, yet so reluctant to get involved in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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